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THE MARTYR-FIGURE IN FRENCH THEATRE, 1596–1675

PAUL ADAM SCOTT

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE

OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH



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ABSTRACT

Paul A. Scott, *The Martyr-Figure in French Theatre, 1596–1675*, Ph.D., 2001

This doctoral project is the first comprehensive study of plays about Christian martyrdom on the French stage from 1596 to 1675. I have compiled a corpus of such tragedies (Appendix). In Chapter One, I argue that such plays should be treated as a characteristic tragic sub-genre, distinct from other forms of religious plays. I also examine the background to the appearance of the martyr-play, in particular the exaltation of martyrdom in both Protestant and Catholic communities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as other artistic representations of the martyr-hero. Religious literature has often been studied in the light of theological controversy. Since a martyr-play deals with an individual resisting lawful authority, I have concentrated on looking at plays from a political aspect: the depiction of revolt.

Accordingly, at the end of Chapter One, I consider how the French king was widely portrayed under the traits of a Roman emperor in popular iconography, demonstrating that this allegory was so widespread, that an audience viewing an emperor on stage would see a link with their own monarch. In Chapters Two, Three and Four, I examine the extant tragedies from the period, with a particular emphasis on how authors treat the question of obedience and the martyr's struggle. Writers with court connections mellow and neutralise the martyr's refusal to obey, notably Corneille and Rotrou. Other dramatists emphasise and highlight the element of individual conscience, particularly La Serre and Desfontaines. The martyr-play peaks during the 1640s and early 1650s, that is to say during a time of civil war, and I believe that the play was a vehicle through which authors could express their discontent with contemporary authority, or even use the example of the martyr as a deterrent to active revolt (Gaspard Olivier is the most striking case).

In Chapter Five, I explore the inherent ambivalence of the martyr, and look at the tragedies from the perspective of suicide and the portrayal of gender. I conclude that the martyr is always an ambiguous model, and that this is reflected in the French stage portrayals.

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Unless otherwise stated, act and scene numbers following quotations are from first editions of the tragedies, full details for which are provided in the Bibliography. All citations from the French texts have been reproduced as in the original. However, the letters u/v and i/j have been resolved to accord with modern usage, and contractions in the text (including the ampersand) have also been resolved throughout. Spaces before colons and punctuation marks have been eliminated. Where modern critical editions have been used, the quotations follow the conventions of the editor. The standard abbreviation *ELR* for *English Literary Renaissance*, *MLN* for *Modern Language Notes* and *RHLF Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* have been used throughout.

I declare that none of the material in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this, or any other university. Small parts of material in Chapter One (namely section 5), and some ideas in Chapters Two, Three and Four, were used in two articles: 'The Martyr-Figure as Transgressor in Seventeenth-Century French Theatre', in *Les Lieux Interdits: Transgressions and French Literature*, ed. by L. Duffy and A. Tudor (Hull: Hull University Press, 1998), pp. 63-89, and 'Resistance Theories. Orthodoxy and Subversive Drama in Early Modern France', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 21 (1999), 57-73. A primitive version of the corpus of plays, included as an appendix in this thesis, was published with both articles, and has been subsequently revised. The thesis has, in many respects, superseded and expanded on some of the arguments in these two articles.

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THE MARTYR-HERO IN EUROPE

CHAPTER ONE

Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century Martyr-Hero

By dying for doctrine about which Christians disagreed, martyrs infused religious dispute with a sense of urgency. Any compromise could unfold only "over their dead bodies" and the memory of their refusal to submit.

—Brad S. Gregory¹

1.1 General Introduction

The aim of this project is to provide a study of the martyr-play on the French stage between 1596 and 1675: that is to say after the restoration of political stability following Henri IV's conversion and his possession of Paris, up to the consolidation of the personal authority of the monarch and the peak of the prestige that arrived during Louis XIV's reign in the mid-1670s. Commentators have tended to situate plays about martyrs as belonging to a wider category of saint-plays, or simply as part of religious drama as a whole. Even the monumental study of seventeenth-century drama by Henry Carrington Lancaster lists martyr-plays either in the bracket of saint-plays set during the Roman Empire, or simply as 'plays about Other Saints'.² Christopher Smith does consider martyr-tragedies as an 'emerging sub-genre', but limits his attention to the vogue for such plays in the 1640s and does not include more than a dozen tragedies.³ John Street discusses all 'sacred drama' from 1550 to 1650, including biblical plays and any play based on saints' lives.⁴ However, as is evident in the corpus (see Appendix), the plays already had a substantial history by the time of their commercial popularity and did not suddenly appear on the stage without precedent and unheralded. The figure of the martyr is one that is attractive to certain cultures at specific times: one aim of this thesis will be to attempt to evaluate why it

¹ Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*, Harvard Historical Studies, 134 (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 7.

² John Carrington Lancaster, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, 5 vols (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1929–42; repr. New York: Gordonian Press, 1966). Lancaster subdivides these types of tragedy into 'Biblical plays' (III, 401), plays about 'Saints of the Roman Empire' (III, 405) and 'plays about Other Saints' (III, 417). This work will hereafter be referred to as *History*.

³ C. N. Smith, 'Tragedies of the Saints', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 8 (1986), 75–87 (p. 81).

⁴ J. S. Street, *French Sacred Drama from Bèze to Corneille: Dramatic Forms and their Purposes in the Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

enjoyed popularity in the mid-seventeenth-century French world.⁵ While drama about martyrs had a small measure of success in some European countries, the number of these plays does not approach the quantity of plays performed in France.⁶ This doctoral research is therefore the study of a substantial, neglected and hitherto unacknowledged body of theatre.⁷

There are two principal reasons for classifying plays on this subject into the grouping of martyr-plays. Firstly, these plays, on the whole, have elements that are invariable, and which their authors seemingly felt bound to include in order to constitute an authentic play of its type. The central element is the presence of a protagonist who is a Christian, or at least who converts at the beginning of the tragedy. He, she, or indeed they (as in the case of family, twin or companion martyrs) are subsequently placed in a position of resistance to a secular authority. There is a necessary confrontation, an opportunity to recant, following which the martyr willingly embraces death. The culmination is the actual martyrdom itself, usually reported by another character. There are often minor motifs such as the conversion of secondary characters and a love interest.⁸ The fact that the individual plays conform to an unvarying model does seem to reveal an authorial consciousness about writing within a framework. The second factor is that the authors of these plays usually appear to be cognisant of writing within a tradition and borrow from earlier plays to a greater extent than with secular drama. The exemplars of this are Corneille and Rotrou, the two most commercially viable dramatists of their time. Both authors turned their hand to the martyr-theme, acknowledging the debt owed to previous

⁵ José M. Ruano de la Haza accepts that the hagiographical play was a popular form of theatrical entertainment in seventeenth-century Spain, yet contends that this trend had no counterpart in England (p. 252), yet also ventures 'nor in France', 'Unparalleled Lives: Hagiographical Drama in Seventeenth-Century England and Spain', in *Parallel Lives: Spanish and English National Drama, 1580–1680*, ed. by Louise and Peter Fothergill-Payne (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991), pp. 252–266 (p. 263 n.1).

⁶ Elida Maria Szarota gives a general overview of ten European martyr plays in *Künstler, Grübler und Rebellen: Studien zum europäischen Martyrerdrama des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Francke, 1967), though fails to appreciate the uniqueness of France in terms of its superior quantity of plays compared to the rest of Europe, listing only four French plays by Desfontaines, La Serre, Corneille and Rotrou.

⁷ It is perhaps worth mentioning an older work, Ferdinand Delavigne's *La Tragédie chrétienne au XVII^e siècle* (Toulouse: Henault, 1847), as it is the first modern study of sacred drama. It considers a mere handful of martyr-plays and contains several errors. For example, Puget de La Serre's name is misspelt as 'Pujet' (p. 117). As well as the gaps, the author admits not having been able to obtain a copy of the anonymous 1649 tragedy on St Catherine (in fact, there are copies in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Arsenal).

⁸ Franke J. Warnke enumerates similar elements in his analysis of the European 'representative martyr-drama of the seventeenth century', *Versions of the Baroque: European Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 198.

representations of the subject matter. The inner-play performed in the course of Rotrou's *Le véritable St Genest* is based on the earlier work of Pierre Caussin, *Sanctus Adrianus* (1630). Corneille explicitly mentions other forerunners of the theme, showing an awareness of his plays belonging to a tradition, and also revealing a need to justify the theme as not being a novel one.⁹ His *Théodore* had antecedents in its choice of virgin-martyr by a play dating back 30 years earlier, Pierre Troterel's *La Tragedie de Sainte Agnes* (1615), printed in Corneille's hometown of Rouen (see Chapter Two, p. 68).

It is clear that it is not satisfactory to treat the martyr-plays as belonging to the general grouping of saints' plays. The constituent plot-details of a martyr-tragedy are fixed and therefore inevitable. This contrasts with the staged life of a saint which could concern any incident in the legends of a virgin, a mother, a monk or any condition from the myriad collection of saints in the Roman Calendar or other less official sources such as the *Legenda Aurea*. A martyr-play is an individual variation on a standardised theme.

1.2 Thematic Approach

In undertaking the study of this neglected and distinct group of plays, the first difficulty that must be dealt with, albeit a theoretical one, is one of classification. This is not merely hypothetical or metalinguistic, nor for the obvious reason that 'terminology gives a point of departure'.¹⁰ One of the main functions of applying genres and genre theory to literature is not simply to group it, but rather for the overall strategy of 'communication and interpretation'.¹¹ How the critic perceives the constitution of these tragedies and reads their relation to each other is intimately linked to understanding the manner in which author and spectators interpreted them. As A. E. Knight points out:

⁹ Corneille refers to Heinsius's play *Herodes infanticida* as a precedent to undertaking this subject: 'pour confirmer ce que j'en ai dit par quelques autorités', Examen to *Polyeucte* (*Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), p. 291.

¹⁰ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: an Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 106.

¹¹ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 36. This approach is also succinctly summarised by Karl Viëtor: 'il faut tout d'abord, s'entendre, d'un mot, sur la terminologie', 'L'histoire des genres littéraires', in *Théorie des genres*, ed. by G. Genette, H. R. Jauss, J.-M. Schaeffer and R. Scholes (Paris: Seuil, 1986), pp. 9-35 (p. 9).

The question of genres is of fundamental importance for understanding all forms of literary and dramatic expression, because the concept of genre connotes, among other things, the set of expectations with which we approach a given work and through which we interpret the work.¹²

René Wellek and Austin Warren have invented the terms 'outer form' and 'inner form' to identify the relationship between genre as the author conceives the work, and genre as the reader identifies it.¹³ This evaluation stresses that any 'theory of genres is a principle of order: it classifies literature and literary history not by time and place but by specifically literary types of organization or structure' (ibid. p. 226). It seems obvious, therefore, that this is even more valid for the analysis of a body of plays comprising of over one hundred individual items.

The traditional, that is to say Aristotelian, approach divides drama into the two fundamental genres of tragedy and comedy, with tragedy operating on superior level to that of comedy.¹⁴ By the seventeenth century, a hybrid genre combining elements of both, the tragi-comedy, had been recognised, emerging from sixteenth-century Italian traditions. The overwhelming majority of the playwrights dealing with martyr-drama identified, indeed labelled, their plays as tragedies: a cursory glance at the titles in the corpus confirms this, since a significant proportion contains the title-word *tragédie*. John Synder's outlook on genre hinges on this, as, for him:

the concept of genre itself means, if anything, simply "presentation as..." thus a tragedy or satire or essay is there to be considered for what is being presented, not for "its" intention or the speaker's or the author's, which are erroneously presumed to be re-presented by the work. In short, genre in this sense amounts to self-advertisement of a work, or a grouping of works, to be deliberated upon for what it appears to be.¹⁵

We should, perhaps, take the dramatists at face value: the fact that they considered their martyr-themed works as tragic does not have to constitute a major problem of interpretation for the modern critic. However, the martyr-drama apparently

¹² A. E. Knight, *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. vi.

¹³ 'Genre should be conceived, we think, as a grouping of literary works based, theoretically, upon both outer form (specific metre and structure) and also upon inner form (attitude, tone, purpose – more crudely subject and audience)', R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 231.

¹⁴ Gérard Genette, *Introduction à l'architexte* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), pp. 14-15. Genette interprets Aristotle as having two literary modes, that of the dramatic and the narrative, which can also be termed as fictional and historical.

transgresses any seventeenth-century notion of tragedy.¹⁶ Instead of the Aristotelian model of a hero being destroyed as a result of a tragic flaw and death invariably ensuing as a result —this death factor often constituting the substance of the tragedy— here the audience witnesses a hero whose death is the essence of his or her nobility. Echoing St Paul, the martyr can rightly proclaim: ‘Ubi est mors victoria tua ubi est mors stimulus tuus?’¹⁷ Louis Martz highlights this apparent dichotomy between the religious theme and the tragic genre. He asks the fundamental question that necessarily is brought to mind with regard to this type of play: ‘can a saint’s play ever be truly tragic? This is the problem we must explore today, for saints and martyrs have frequently been regarded as impossible subjects for true tragedy’.¹⁸ The martyr is elevated by grace to a superhuman level, overcoming the natural and universal fear of self-extinction. Therefore, the primary difficulty in classing the martyr’s death as tragic is that it presents to the audience in an unambiguous fashion ‘the victory of the individual’.¹⁹

In *The Poetics*, Aristotle envisages as the archetypal tragic hero ‘the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement’.²⁰ Some contemporary *exégètes*, notably François Hedélin d’Aubignac and Jean Chapelain, refused to admit certain plays as tragedies, in particular those of Corneille, for they held that the substance of tragedy ‘consist[ait] dans la présence d’un sort ou d’un destin inévitable auquel les personnages ne sauraient échapper et qui ne leur laisse aucun espoir’.²¹ This sentiment accords with the principles dictated

¹⁵ John Synder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay and the Theory of Genre* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), p. 10.

¹⁶ Chris Baldick’s definition of tragedy as a serious play ‘representing the disastrous downfall of a central character’ conforms, on the whole, to that of seventeenth-century purists such as d’Aubignac. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 226.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:55 (Vulgate).

¹⁸ L. Martz, ‘The Saint as Tragic-Hero: *Saint Joan and Murder in the Cathedral*’, in *Tragic Themes in Western Literature*, ed. by Cleanth Brooks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 150-178 (p. 150).

¹⁹ S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics* (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 311.

²⁰ Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, trans. by Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 48.

²¹ Marie-Odile Sweetser, *La Dramaturgie de Corneille, Histoire des Idées et Critique Littéraire*, 169 (Geneva: Droz, 1977), p. 54. In this connection one can single out Chapelain’s role in the Académie française’s negative judgement on *Le Cid* (*Les Sentimens de l’Académie Françoyse sur la tragi-comédie du Cid* (Paris: I. Camusat, 1638)) and also François Hédélin d’Aubignac, *Le Pratique du Theatre: Œuvre tres-necessaire à tous ceux qui veulent s’appliquer à la Composition des Poèmes Dramatiques, qui font profession de les Reciter en public, ou qui prennent plaisir d’en voir les representations* (Paris: Antoine de Sommerville, 1657).

by Aristotle. This seemingly contrasts with the individual examples present in the martyr-plays in which ‘nous voyons un personnage choisir délibérément de mourir sans que ce choix ne lui soit dicté par aucune considération extérieure d’injustice ou d’affront à son honneur’.²² Far from removing them from their position, loves and life itself, their choice of death gains them eternal benefits. Furthermore, the martyr’s death is not usually necessary, there are other options available through which the protagonist can avoid dying. This is an important feature of the martyr-tragedy: the central character must have the clear opportunity to renounce the Christian religion and return to his or her previous high standing within the pagan community. Polyeucte is not duty-bound to attend a sacrifice and desecrate pagan idols: in fact, he resolves to go to the sacrifice for the sole purpose of declaring his faith, thus precipitating his own end. Similarly, Eustache is advised to go home and reconsider his behaviour by Trajan. Genest does not have to declare his faith so ostentatiously before the court during the performance in the course of which he is touched by the operation of divine grace.

It is difficult therefore to see why a martyr-play actually qualifies as a tragedy at all, since death is the desired avenue through which the hero achieves ultimate *gloire*. It is the only possible ending, for a martyr, by definition, only becomes so at the point of dying.²³ This is a point seized on by I. A. Richards, who when speaking generally of tragedy, remarks that: ‘the least touch of any theology which has a compensating Heaven to offer the tragic hero is fatal’, for it detracts from any overall cathartic effect.²⁴ This is an assessment shared by some of Corneille’s peers, despite the number of religious plays. Saint-Évremond criticised *Polyeucte* on the grounds that religion and tragedy cannot be successfully combined.²⁵ It is not the death of the

²² Jacqueline van Baelen, *Rotrou, le héros tragique et la révolte* (Paris: Nizet, 1965), p. 145.

²³ This is in any usual definition of the martyr: physical death must be inflicted, though Thomas Aquinas is of the opinion that since the graces attached to martyrdom are given by God at the moment of acceptance, then it is from this point one becomes a martyr (‘meritum martyrii non est post mortem, sed in ipsa voluntaria sustinentia mortis’, II^o II^o, 124. 4, *Summa Theologica*, ed. by Rubeis, Billuart and others, 6 vols (Turin: Marietti, 1922), IV, 5). The problem with this stance lies with those early Christians who originally accepted to die, but at some point recanted their faith, the *traditores*. Were they then martyrs until their abjuration?

²⁴ I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner, 1930), p. 246. John Synder takes an opposing view: ‘still another misconception is that tragedy and Christianity are incompatible. Yet the Passion is a tragedy.’ One of his proofs is the fact that there are ‘secularised Christian tragedies’, among which he names Corneille, *Propects of Power*, p. 88.

²⁵ ‘L’esprit de notre religion est directement opposé à celui de la tragédie’ and ‘les choses saintes perdent beaucoup de la religieuse opinion qu’on leur doit, quand on les représente sur le théâtre’, Charles de Saint-Évremond, *De la tragédie ancienne et moderne*, in *Œuvres de Saint-Évremond*, ed. by René de Planhol, 3 vols (Paris: Cité des Livres, 1927), I, 175.

martyr that automatically bestows tragic status on the plays, for violence was not viewed as a wholly necessary component. Thus Corneille has his bloodless *Cinna* (1642), and Racine's *Bérénice* (1670) contains a total absence of blood-letting. Although admittedly exceptional in the lack of any apparent gore or killing, the two major French dramatists of the seventeenth-century demonstrated that the inclusion of violence was merely customary and not integral.²⁶ Augustine's observation on martyrdom can apply to the essence of tragedy: '[tragediam] non facit poena sed causa'. It is the tragic cause, not the pain or violence within a drama that makes it a tragedy. Northrop Frye observes that throughout history, from the Greeks to the present, tragedy 'is not confined to actions that end in disaster', naming some seventeenth-century plays as justification for tragedies 'ending in serenity'.²⁷ However, the happily resolved tragedies of Racine could represent a shift in opinion during the course of the century. Poytevin dedicates 'une Tragedie [des] infortunes' of St Catherine to the Queen, implying that the term applies uniquely to misfortune rather than a prerequisite nobility. The author of the 1622 *Tragédie des Rebelles* judges that: 'toute Tragédie est sanglante, et ne se finit jamais que par un [sic] Catastrophe de malheurs qui s'esclattent en fin au desavantage de ceux qui en sont les premiers auteurs'.²⁸ By the end of the century, received opinion as expressed in the dictionaries, seems to indicate a change of emphasis. Furetière classes *tragédie* as: '[un] Pöeme Dramatique, qui represente sur le theatre quelque action signalée de personnages illustres, laquelle souvent a une issue funeste'.²⁹ The two crucial constituents appear to be the nobility of the hero and a nasty ending, though significantly the latter is viewed as being usual and not indispensable. The first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* similarly defines *tragédie* as '[une] Pièce de theatre, qui represente une action grande et serieuse entre personnes illustres, et qui ordinairement finit par la mort de quelqu'un des principaux personnages'.³⁰ Again, we

²⁶ Racine remarks in his Préface to *Bérénice*: 'ce n'est point une nécessité qu'il y ait du sang et des morts dans une tragédie; il suffit que l'action en soit grande, que les acteurs en soient héroïques, que les passions y soient excitées', *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by R. Picard (Paris: Gallimard, 1950–52), I, 465. The very fact that Racine felt the obligation to justify the absence of blood-shedding in this particular tragedy, tends to indicate that it was exceptional and deviating from usual practice.

²⁷ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 209–210. Frye names *Cymbeline*, *Alceste* and Racine's *Esther* to support his point.

²⁸ [Pierre Brinon], *La Tragedie des rebelles, ou sont les noms feints, on void leurs conspirations, machines, monopoles, assemblees, pratiques et rebellions decouvertes* (Paris: Ducaroy, 1622), p. 5.

²⁹ Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel contenant generalement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes*, 3 vols (The Hague and Rotterdam: Arnout and Reinier Leers, 1690), III, sig. [4a4].

³⁰ *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 2 vols (Paris: Coignard, 1694), II, 583.

have the concept 'ordinairement', which corresponds with Furetière's 'souvent'. What is noteworthy about these two differing interpretations of the tragic genre, is that both conform entirely to the details of the martyr-play, in which the death of the martyr cannot, by definition, fail to happen.

Street acknowledges this problem head on in the introduction to his study:

Many of the plays to be studied were described as tragedies by their authors. The question whether a play can be both religious and tragic has long aroused controversy; the predominant opinion is that it cannot, despite the religious basis of Greek tragedy. [...] it need only be remembered that the playwrights themselves saw no incompatibility between a religious subject and a tragic treatment.³¹

Street draws attention to an obvious yet easily overlooked point: the authors deemed their works tragedies. This labelling was even accepted by strict conventionalists such as the Abbé d'Aubignac, and this invites the obvious question of how this was almost universal, without any apparent qualm or intellectual misgiving.³² D'Aubignac's criticisms of *Polyeucte* were stylistic ones; for example, he objects that a member of Polyeucte's household is of too low a social rank.³³ D'Aubignac singles out *Théodore* as a model tragedy having 'point d'Auteur parmy les Anciens et les Modernes, qui s'y gouverne avec plus d'adresse'.³⁴ Street goes back to the problem in the conclusion to his study. He stresses that if a pre-determined ending and the eternal rapture of the hero preclude a work from being tragic then 'on these grounds Sophocles too would be disqualified'.³⁵ In attempting to interpret authors' collective acceptance of religious tragedy in the period, Street believes that 'catharsis is the recognition that the universe contains laws which surpass human understanding, and a fate that seems cruel in men's judgement may nevertheless be just according to this superior pattern of right'.³⁶ Thus, the martyr's struggle may seem futile in the eyes of the pagan characters in the plays, and even, perhaps, to elements in the audience. The point is that despite future spiritual fruits, contingent on a fitting death, the martyr does undergo pain, and has to abandon the life previously enjoyed, commonly an affluent

³¹ Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 5.

³² D'Aubignac wrote a tragedy on the legend of Joan of Arc, *La Pucelle d'Orléans* (Paris: A. de Sommerville et A. Courbé, 1642).

³³ D'Aubignac is referring to Stratonice, *La Pratique du Theatre*, p. 327. Another one of the author's criticisms concerns some of the pagan characters' comments on Christianity.

³⁴ D'Aubignac, *La Pratique du Theatre*, p. 132. Corneille did not share this opinion, as he came to the conclusion that the lack of commercial popularity was due to the play's inherent flaws. He wrote in the *Examen* (1660) that: 'je veux bien ne m'en prendre qu'à ses défauts' (*Œuvres complètes*, p. 392).

³⁵ Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 217.

and stable one, for a higher purpose. This is a sacrifice, even though there is an ultimate prize, and it leaves loved ones behind to suffer. Does not the Western concept of sacrifice always entail some form of recompense? Pagan religious sacrifices centred on appeasing the gods or obtaining favour. The Christian concept of the sacrificial nature of the Mass is one that necessarily involves the distribution of grace. The self-immolation of the traditional hero is invariably to preserve the honour of a family name or to uphold personal probity. Moreover, a link has been detailed between the notion of sacrifice and criminal violence, something that is readily applicable to a martyr, who can be deemed a hero or a transgressor.³⁷ René Girard judges that 'il n'y a guère de violence, en retour, qui ne puisse se décrire en termes de sacrifice'; martyr-plays, like Greek tragedy, testify to this.³⁸

The problem of why these plays were universally regarded as tragedies, by authors and audience alike, may partly be elucidated by inferring that the creator of any martyr-play saw him or herself producing a work belonging to an altogether unique grouping within the genre of tragedy. Corneille gave both *Polyeucte* and *Théodore* the unusual subheading of *tragédie chrétienne*, implying that a play on this theme did not belong within the ordinary mode of tragic drama.³⁹ Jacques Morel and some recent critics have argued that Corneille invented a new concept of the tragic with *Le Cid*, in that he endows his characters with the power of turning around an initially tragic situation, and thus it should be regarded as a tragedy with a happy ending rather than as tragi-comedy.⁴⁰ This is worth bearing in mind, as Corneille's original treatment of the tragic genre led him to dramatise a martyr-play four years after *Le Cid*. Corneille admits the unusual status of *Polyeucte*, accepting that this play 'n'imprime que de la pitié sans aucune crainte'.⁴¹ Any body of literary work that 'forms a specific class within a larger genre' is termed a sub-genre.⁴² If the commentator deems the martyr-play as constituting a distinct sub-genre within

³⁶ Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 217.

³⁷ 'Dans de nombreux rituels, le sacrifice se présente de deux façons opposées, tantôt comme une "chose très sainte" dont on ne saurait s'abstenir sans négligence grave, tantôt au contraire comme une espèce de crime qu'on ne saurait commettre sans s'exposer à des risques également très graves', René Girard, *La Violence et le sacré* (Paris: Grasset, 1972), p. 1.

³⁸ Girard, *La Violence*, p. 2.

³⁹ This categorisation was emulated by other authors, notably by Marthe Cosnard, *Les Chaste Martirs tragedie chrestienne* (Paris: N. & J. de La Coste, 1650) and Charles de Lignières in his *Caecilia virgo et martyr, tragoedia christiana* (Paris: Thiboust, 1657).

⁴⁰ Jacques Morel, *La Tragédie* (Paris: Colin, 1964), pp. 47-48.

⁴¹ Corneille, *Discours de la tragédie et des moyens de la traiter selon le vraisemblable ou le nécessaire* in *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 832-33.

tragedy, which is certainly what the authors have done, then this can go some way to meeting the apparent difficulties raised by the felicitous ending.⁴³ Corneille regarded *Polyeucte* as a tragic play in a distinctive class, designed to stimulate a different audience reaction from secular tragedy. Georges Forestier comments that the Illustre Théâtre engaged Nicolas-Marc Desfontaines even though he was largely unknown and his work 's'était spécialisé depuis deux ans dans le genre de la tragédie chrétienne', an allusion to the dramatist's three martyr-plays.⁴⁴ This implies that the author was working within a characteristic framework, though I would argue for a more specific classification.

A similar form of tragedy may be found in the period with an equally troubling ending. In his study of the figure of Brutus in the Renaissance, Manfredi Piccolomini is struck by the ending of some plays treating the history of Caesar. He highlights how, in Muret's *Julius Caesar*, 'the conclusion is purposefully antitragic, as it sublimates the tragic element with the promise of life after death for those who deserve it. The Christian message takes precedence over the tragic one'.⁴⁵ Piccolomini demonstrates how, in this particular play, it is only the conclusion that is untypical of tragedy: this does not deprive the play as a whole of its tragic credentials. It appears then that 'we reach the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that Christianity is anti-tragic, but that tragedy belongs to a world which is religiously committed'.⁴⁶ At the plays' close there is usually an allusion to the divine judge who will reward the martyr. La Mesnardière's apologia for tragic expression insists that all tragedy fulfil the moral function of demonstrating the punishment of wickedness.⁴⁷ This opinion is compatible with the martyr-play, where the martyrs' outwardly calm demeanour contrasts with the inner corruption of the tyrant who will ultimately be consigned to Hell. However, on the terrestrial stage the tyrant judge remains, still capable as in life,

⁴² Baldick, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 215.

⁴³ Jean-Marie Schaeffer comments that if one accepts the notion of sub-genre, 'on admettra facilement que souvent un texte peut appartenir à deux ou à plusieurs classes', *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. 69. In this sense, the martyr-play contains the elements of tragedy, yet operates within the tradition of saint-plays.

⁴⁴ Georges Forestier, 'Le Véritable Saint Genest de Rotrou: Enquête sur l'élaboration d'une tragédie chrétienne', *XVII^e Siècle*, 179 (1993), 305-322 (p. 307).

⁴⁵ M. Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival: Parricide and Tyrannicide During the Renaissance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 103.

⁴⁶ R. P. Draper, *Tragedy: Developments in Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 29.

⁴⁷ Jules de La Mesnardière, *La Poétique* (Paris: Antoine de Sommerville, 1640), pp. 216-17.

of meting out injustice or acting according to misguided lights.⁴⁸ The martyr-play whose conclusion may be labelled anti-tragic can, nevertheless, be viewed as a sub-branch of tragic drama.

Indeed, the very fact that tragedies were being produced without an apparently unhappy climax is a sign of the evolution of drama in the seventeenth century, for in the Middle Ages a tragedy 'was simply a story which ended unhappily'.⁴⁹ The genre of tragedy had matured, its range was now more encompassing, and it is within this development that one can more readily identify and contextualise the emergence of the sub-genre of the martyr-play. The specific elements of plot detail and the other ingredients common to the martyr-play are the more limited specifications within genres that confer sub-genre status.⁵⁰ The traditional division of literary expression into three principal genres is, of itself, evidently incapable of encompassing the nuances of diversity within a branch of artistic endeavour.⁵¹

The plays treat a weighty subject, that is the question of a clash of obedience between secular and sacred authority, and the martyrs must leave behind their earthly bonds of love. Even though the resolution of the play lays stress on the ultimate posthumous honour of the martyr, we, the spectators, are left with the loved ones on the stage, death providing an effective separation to lovers.⁵² It is quite revealing that many of the plays within this sub-genre resist the conversion of martyrs' spouses. Thus a partner is left bereft and deprived of their beloved yet without the emotional consolations of faith. As in classical tragedy, the hero of the martyr drama stands alone in his choice, and consequently 'le héros tragique sait que le monde l'écrase mais il est plus grand parce qu'il sait que le monde l'écrase, et que le monde, lui, n'en

⁴⁸ There are levels of injustice in different plays. Roman governors who faithfully execute their masters' commands, albeit with misgivings, are clearly of a different order to those persecuting tyrants who punish martyrs because they will not submit to their sexual demands.

⁴⁹ Clifford Leech, *Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 15.

⁵⁰ Genette describes the 'sous-genre' as having 'des spécifications plus étroites à l'intérieur des genres', *L'Introduction à l'architexte*, p. 79.

⁵¹ 'L'hypothèse des trois genres lyrique, épique et dramatique ne rend pas compte du statut d'autres formes littéraires que nous avons l'habitude d'appeler des genres, tels que la satire ou le roman noir', A. Kibédi Varga, 'Réception et classement: lettres — arts — genres', in *Théorie de la littérature*, ed. by A. K. Varga (Paris: Picard, 1981), pp. 210-227 (p. 220). Claudio Guillén proposes using Aristotelian conceptualisations of generic and specific, where specific qualities are individual characteristics equivalent to the modern sub-genre. See *Literature as System: Essays toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), especially pp. 11-17.

⁵² Roland Barthes sees the Racinian tragic hero 'engagé dans un paradoxe insoluble [...]; il ne peut choisir entre un pouvoir absolu et un amour absolu, entre le viol et l'oblation. La tragédie est précisément la représentation de cette immobilité', *Sur Racine* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), p. 37. This summary seems valid for the martyr-play.

sait rien'.⁵³ The martyr resists the established order and this struggle only makes sense in the light of faith. The tragic hero has been likened to an 'agent aveugle', at the mercy of conditions or forces beyond his or her control and comprehension, and the martyr can be viewed as being at the mercy of the divine grace which effects conversion and the acceptance of a painful death.⁵⁴ In considering why 'Christianity is an anti-tragic vision of the world', George Steiner concludes that the mutual incompatibility of tragic drama and Christian dogma is a result of his belief that 'the tragic theatre is an expression of the pre-rational phrase in history; it is founded on the assumption that there are in nature and in the psyche occult, uncontrollable forces able to madden or destroy the mind'.⁵⁵ These comments suggest that ancient tragedy was the product of a 'pre-rational' society. If this is the case, then he seemingly ignores the obvious: the predicament of figures such as Phedra or Œdipus is always shown to have a cause, be it human weakness or the punishment for some transgression perpetuated by them or their ancestors. Moreover, this judgement does not allow for the unpredictable nature of divine grace, the outpouring of which makes martyr-rebels of loyal subjects, and transforms the actor Genesius into the role he is emulating. Grace is as 'uncontrollable' an element as those of antiquity to which Steiner alludes.⁵⁶ In *Polyeucte* the actions of the hero after his baptism 'are so unexpected that one has to see in them divine inspiration leading the protagonist to martyrdom'.⁵⁷ It is precisely due to the presence of this force in Christian tragedy that it is possible to

⁵³ Lucien Goldmann, *Le Théâtre tragique* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965), p. 257.

⁵⁴ G. Girard, R. Ouellet and C. Rigault, *L'Univers du théâtre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), p. 165.

⁵⁵ G. Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 331 and p. 342. Despite his opposition to any idea of Christian tragedy, Steiner happily accepts Corneille's *Polyeucte* as tragic (p. 53 and p. 332). Antoine Adam remarks: '*Polyeucte* est la tragédie de la grâce. C'est-à-dire que cette pièce fait intervenir une force mystérieuse, surnaturelle, qui échappe aux prises de l'homme, de sa raison et de sa conscience', *Histoire de la littérature française au XVII^e siècle*, 5 vols (Paris: Monchrestien, 1948-56), I, 537.

⁵⁶ Gordon Pocock's observation that 'tragedy in its strict sense depends on a recognition that absolute and inscrutable forces dominate man's fate' (*Corneille and Racine: Problems of Tragic Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 64) is true of both Christian and secular tragedy.

⁵⁷ Marie-Odile Sweetser, 'Tragic Situation and Providential Intervention: the Case for a New Concept of Tragedy in Seventeenth-Century Tragedy', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 7 (1985), 65-73 (p. 69). The conversion of the ignoble Félix at the end of the play 'demonstrates all the more impressively the effect of divine grace, by showing that God's power is not limited to working on noble souls of refined moral sensibility, but can also reach baser clay like Félix', Gillian Jondorf, *French Renaissance Tragedy: The Dramatic Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 97.

reconcile it with Steiner's criteria.⁵⁸ Benjamin Griffin comments that 'the traditions of modern European drama are historically under the shadow of the Christian sacrifice'.⁵⁹ This author sees no contest between martyrdom and theatre, as, for him, 'the *theme* of sacrifice, the *theme* of the miraculous — they are to be encountered nearly everywhere, and can exist in a drama without determining its shape' (ibid., p. 231).

Another aspect to take into account when examining the tragic rank of the martyr-play, is that of the status of tragedy, universally defined as the finest expression of cultural endeavour.⁶⁰ The moral function of tragedy was greater than that of comedy, for it centred on the moral conduct of *les grands*. The dramatic exposition of the struggle of the hero standing at the pinnacle of the Church's concept of sanctity was evidently fitting for such a noble literary form. A useful definition of the characteristics of tragic drama has been provided by Marie-Odile Sweetser, and it merits quoting in full:

The tragic dilemma in French classical tragedy is usually presented in terms of conflicting interests, feelings, passions, duties, values: ambition and politics versus love and private happiness, family and civic duty versus duty to another or to oneself. The outcome depends both on external and internal factors: unexpected events, intervention of a character with supreme authority, the king generally, or change of heart in the protagonists. All these can be seen as ways which a providential force is working through human, worldly events or characters.⁶¹

This synopsis of the essence of tragedy encompasses martyr-play and historical, secular-themed drama alike. The difference is simply the points of reference: the 'providential force' that Sweetser sees as underpinning Corneille's tragedies happens to be assigned to providential grace in his two martyr-plays. It has been suggested that the application of the title *tragédie* or *tragi-comédie* to plays treating martyrdoms was a novel device originating in the mid-sixteenth century. The purpose of this was to

⁵⁸ Furetière defines grace as: '[une] faveur qu'un Superieur fait à un inferieur sans qu'il l'ait meritée', *Dictionnaire universel*, II, sig. [t4]'. This stresses the extraordinary character of grace, beyond human manipulation and control.

⁵⁹ Benjamin Griffin, 'The Birth of the History Play: Saint, Sacrifice and Reformation', *Studies in English Literature*, 39 (1999), 217-237 (p. 217).

⁶⁰ Jan Clarke signals how this helps explain the hostility of contemporary critics towards tragediennes, 'for they often found it hard to reconcile this nobility with the lifestyle of say Mlle Champmeslé or Mlle Du Parc', 'Women Theatre Professionals in Seventeenth-Century France: Acting, Attracting and Administrating', *Women in Theatre Occasional Papers*, 2 (1994), 88-106 (p. 96).

⁶¹ Sweetser, 'Tragic Situation and Providential Intervention', p. 68.

avoid falling foul of the 1548 prohibition against mysteries in the capital.⁶² While this may have been undertaken as a precaution to ensure the continuing performance of a popular theme, applying a new name would also have facilitated the evolution of drama and allowed for antiquated features, such as a choir and lack of act division, gradually to become obsolete.⁶³ Jacques Morel remarks that '*Antigone, Iphigénie, Bélissaire et Saint Genest* sont construits comme des mystères, où les diverses passions humaines n'ont qu'un rôle d'acheminement à d'heureux martyrs'.⁶⁴ He mentions Rotrou's martyr-play, but his comment applies to any other martyr-tragedy in that it takes up the motif of the mystery-plays; martyrdom is the only possible outcome to a martyr-play, it must take place. Everything in the action tends towards this.

1.3 Historical Background

Before the appearance of these plays after the establishment of peace and greater internal stability following the Wars of Religion, there had been a strong tradition in France of localised *mystères*. As well as the Passion, these often staged saints' lives, in particular, martyrs, and it is consequently unsurprising that some of the popular choices for these performances were later taken up by seventeenth-century authors.⁶⁵ These include versions of the lives —and indeed deaths— of St Catherine and St Genesius, both subjects of later dramatists. In 1548, an *arrêt* of the Paris Parlement banned mysteries of the passion and on any other religious theme. The Parlement's formal decree:

Deffend auxdits suppliants de jouer le mystere de la Passion Nostre Sauveur, ne autres mysteres sacrez, sur peine d'amende arbitraire, leur permettant neantmoins de pouvoir jouer autres mysteres profanes,

⁶² Grace Frank, *The Medieval French Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954; reprint. 1972), p. 270. In fact, by the end of the sixteenth century 'it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between mysteries and tragedies' (p. 270).

⁶³ 'En province, on continua de jouer des mystères, longs ou courts, tout en substituant à ce nom celui d'*histoire, de vie ou de tragédie*.' Raymond Lebègue, 'Les survivances des personnages des mystères français', in *Studi in onore di Carlo Pellegrini*, Biblioteca di Studi Francesi, 2 (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1963), pp. 205-216 (p. 203).

⁶⁴ J. Morel, *Jean Rotrou dramaturge de l'ambiguïté* (Paris: Colin, 1968), p. 178.

⁶⁵ An excellent article on the history of the saint play, which extends in its scope to cover the early seventeenth century, is Lynette R. Muir, 'The Saint Play in Medieval France', in *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), pp. 123-180.

honnêtes et licites, sans offencer ne injurier personne; et deffend a tous aultres de jouer ou représenter doresnavant, tant en la ville, fauxbourgs que banlieue de Paris, sinon sous le nom de ladicte confrerie et au profit d'icelle.⁶⁶

This legislative action was to keep religious tragedy off the capital's stages until the emergence of martyr-plays towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ The edict affected only the capital, and religious drama survived in the provinces, an aspect that accounts for the relative strength of the martyr-play outside of Paris until the 1640s.⁶⁸ This was a response to the widespread discrediting of the *mystères*, which had become synonymous in the public imagination with an excuse for local revelry and disreputable behaviour. This is certainly reflected in the wording of the 1548 decree, which allows those actors involved in *mystères* only to act in non-offensive and non-sacred performances. In his study of religious tragedy in the sixteenth century, Raymond Lebègue notes, as a major reason for the decline and interdiction of the mystery-plays, 'l'attitude des acteurs ou du public étaient souvent une occasion de scandale. La conduite de certains acteurs contrastait grandement avec celle des saints dont ils tenaient le rôle'.⁶⁹ Graham Runnalls contends that one particular staging of the *Mystère des Actes des Apôtres* at the Hôtel de Flandres in 1541 was to seal the fate of the *mystère* and led to the ban, uniting both Protestant and Catholic sections of the capital in disapproval.⁷⁰ The medium of the stage became very much associated with Protestant authors during the civil discord of the Wars of Religion.⁷¹ Familiarity with the stage is a possible cause for Henri IV's tolerance of theatrical performance in

⁶⁶ Quoted in L. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du théâtre en France: les Mystères*, 2 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1880), I, 429.

⁶⁷ Street, *French Sacred Drama*, pp. 19-22. Some smaller, non-fee paying *mystères* do seem to have escaped the terms of the edict, such as the sequence of twelve plays by Jehan Louvet and 'it is undoubtedly the case that performances took place in 1548, 1549 and 1550', Graham A. Runnalls, 'Sponsorship and Control in Medieval French Drama: 1402-1548', *French Studies*, 51 (1997), 257-266 (p. 261).

⁶⁸ See Jacques Chocheyras, *Le Théâtre religieux en Savoie au XVI^e siècle*, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 115 (Geneva: Droz, 1971), pp. xiii-xxiii and pp. 76-78.

⁶⁹ Raymond Lebègue, *La Tragédie religieuse en France, les débuts (1514-1573)* (Paris: Champion, 1929), p. 52.

⁷⁰ G. A. Runnalls, 'Drama and Community in Late Medieval Paris', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alan Hindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 18-33 (32-33). Runnalls notes that 'by the middle of the sixteenth century, miracle and mystery plays were beginning to incur the disapproval of their most influential supporters. The Church, formerly a defender and indeed historically the recreator of drama in the Middle Ages, now found many aspects of miracle and mystery plays distasteful and shocking. The plays no longer appeared to be in keeping with recent changes in theology, either Catholic or Protestant' (p. 23).

⁷¹ 'Les tragédies religieuses du XVII^e siècle sont surtout le fait d'une élite protestante qui s'inspire exclusivement de la Bible', Jean Emelina, 'La vie théâtrale dans les provinces du Midi', in *Actes du II^e Colloque de Grasse, 1976*, ed. by Yves Giraud (Paris: Place, 1980), pp. 139-157 (p. 140).

Paris, even to the extent of allowing the *Confrérie de la Passion* to resurrect the abandoned form of mystery plays.⁷² The strife of the civil wars had undoubtedly impaired the growth of the French stage, especially in the capital.⁷³ Nevertheless, the overall influence of the religious disputes is reflected in the subject matter of late sixteenth-century theatrical productions:

The influence of the Reformation is even more noticeable. Caught between the Catholic humanist desire for reform within the Church and the Protestant insistence on cleansing the biblical narrative from apocryphal and legendary accretions, France reflects in its drama both Reformation and Counter-Reform.⁷⁴

This can be seen in practice with the choice of representations of martyrdom. Early Christian martyrs were hailed as supreme examples of pious self-sacrifice by both Protestant and Catholic communities, consequently during Henri IV's reign there was a 'predominance of texts using material from the Bible and saints' lives over the emerging tragedies', and therefore it appears that the emergence of classical tragedy was linked from its beginnings with religious themes.⁷⁵ The difference between this burgeoning body of religious theatre and the *mystères* is palpable in the manner in which dramatists adapt the stories, and modify essential elements of the source legends. Runnalls observes on this point that:

Dans les mystères et miracles fondés sur des vies de saints (latins ou français), les dramaturges respectaient souvent au pied de la lettre leurs sources écrites. On n'a qu'à consulter les éditions critiques modernes, où les éditeurs renvoient aux sources du mystère dans les notes infrapaginales, pour voir à quel point les fatistes reprenaient leurs sources bibliques ou autres.⁷⁶

By the time that Corneille chooses to retell the narrative of Polyeucte's martyrdom, there is a real shift in outlook, as the playwright treats the theme as he would a secular tale: even altering details to render the play more entertaining.

⁷² M. Barras, *The Stage Controversy in France from Corneille to Rousseau* (New York: Institute of French Studies, 1933), pp. 42-44. The reappearance of the *mystère* was short-lived, as in 1598 the Paris *parlement* reinforced the spirit of the original 1548 edict of interdiction.

⁷³ Lancaster, *History*, I, 13.

⁷⁴ Muir, 'The Saint Play in Medieval France', pp. 167-68.

⁷⁵ Frank, *The Medieval French Drama*, p. 270. This is not to imply that French tragedy was born overnight as a result of the 1548 interdiction, since 'depuis une cinquantaine d'années au moins les humanistes italiens et français en élaboraient patiemment la doctrine', Morel, *La Tragédie*, p. 8.

⁷⁶ Graham A. Runnalls, 'Le Personnage dans les mystères à la fin du Moyen Age et au XVI^e siècle: stéréotypes et originalité', *Réforme Humanisme Renaissance*, 44 (1997), 11-26 (pp. 14-15). The *fatiste* was a local noteworthy responsible for each fresh staging of a mystery-play, a choice based on his standing and erudition.

There was a movement within Catholicism, mindful perhaps of former excesses, of caution towards the stage, due to the traditional penalty of excommunication and the state of infamy which had been inflicted on actors since the early censures of the Council of Elvira (305), and the two Councils of Arles (314 and 452). In some cases, particularly among some influential sections of French clergy, this culminated in open condemnation of the theatre. This Counter-Reformation zeal against the stage was spearheaded by Carlo Borromeo, archbishop of Milan from 1565 to 1684 (and Pope Pius IV's nephew). This campaign was relatively successful and the theatre began to be stigmatised in certain ecclesiastical circles, the movement receiving a reinforced impetus with the canonisation of Borromeo in 1610. It is worthwhile to consider the causes behind this crusade. Foremost among the religious moralists' motives was the opinion that 'drama led directly and inevitably to the deterioration of our future conduct both social and religious'.⁷⁷ Attendance at spectacles was deemed to be a dangerous activity (an occasion of sin), whereby one risked falling from a state of grace. There were several tangible reasons to support this analysis:

The focus of the Church's suspicions of public theatre often fell on the actor as the transmitter of harmful passions, and especially on actresses who were held to demean the status of their sex and deliberately to arouse lubricious feelings in their male audience.⁷⁸

The presence of actresses on stage further meant that plots involving seduction or relations between the genders and love intrigues were afforded a realism that would have been impossible with an entirely male cast: this is evidently another factor the opposition took into account.⁷⁹ The case of the theatre was one of hostility towards the sinner as opposed to the sin. Henry Phillips judges this attitude to have been

⁷⁷ Henry Phillips, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 113.

⁷⁸ Henry Phillips, 'Italy and France in the Seventeenth-Century Stage Controversy', *The Seventeenth Century*, 11 (1996), 187-207 (p. 187).

⁷⁹ 'The introduction of actresses must have affected the drama of the period considerably. Love and marriage and adultery could be enacted with a frankness and realism impossible in a theatre where all performers were male. Actresses were both fêted and much criticised, and their impact on the drama of the period can hardly be exaggerated'. These comments made about English theatre are applicable to the French stage, Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737* (London: Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1988), p. 26.

derived from 'historical prejudice', that is to say 'since the actor has been condemned for centuries past it follows that it must always be so'.⁸⁰

The founder of the Jesuits took a different stand regarding the theatre, seeing it as a means for propaganda as well as entertainment.⁸¹ Ignatius of Loyola's supreme tactical advantage was that, unlike Borromeo, he left an efficiently organised religious order to propagate his ideas, and with Ignatius's canonisation (1622) the battle of the stage was effectively won by the Jesuits. Popular approbation of the theatre in France was given a boost by François de Sales, who in his *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1608) considered such entertainment as not inherently immoral. The pro-theatre stance was further reinforced by scholarly defences of stagecraft, such as Scudéry's *Apologie du théâtre* (Paris, 1639) and D'Aubignac's *Dissertation sur la condamnation des théâtres* (Lyon, 1674). The ecclesiastical approbation fostered by the Jesuits meant that the theological arguments were open to debate. In fact, if it were not for the Jesuits writing, performing and encouraging plays within their ever-expanding distribution of colleges, it is probable that the output of drama inspired by Catholic themes would have virtually ceased within France.⁸² Gofflot reminds us that 'c'est sur une scène de collège, il ne faut pas l'oublier qu'est née la tragédie française'.⁸³ Due to the cultivation of drama within Jesuit houses, 'by the beginning of the seventeenth century the theatre had established its footing in the Jesuit colleges with the benediction, though not without reserve, of the highest superiors of the order in Rome'.⁸⁴ Certain authors of martyr-plays were educated or had connections with Jesuit colleges, where performances based on martyrs' lives were not uncommon on public occasions such as prize-giving days.⁸⁵ It is necessary to remember that these events were not confined simply to the personnel of the college: they reached a wider audience. Significantly, when the plays were performed in Latin, there was an

⁸⁰ Phillips, *The Theatre and its Critics*, p. 175.

⁸¹ In instructions dictated for the new college in Ingolstadt in 1556, Ignatius explicitly mentions the merits of stage productions in the life of the institute. See *Ratio studiorum et Institutiones scholasticæ Societatis Jesu per Germaniam olim vigentes*, ed. by G. M. Pachtler, 4 vols (Berlin: n.pub, 1887-1894), III, 472.

⁸² 'Jesuit colleges with their emphasis on *eloquentia* soon developed a strong tradition in drama and were famous for their musical and stage productions', Thomas H. Clancy, *An Introduction to Jesuit Life: the Constitution and History through 435 Years* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), p. 130.

⁸³ L.-V. Gofflot, *Le Théâtre au collège du moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Champion, 1907), p. 83.

⁸⁴ William H. McCabe, *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater: a Posthumous Work*, ed. by L. J. Oldani (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983), p. 14.

explanation of the action in pamphlets, or *précis*, distributed before the performances, usually the synopsis of the events of each act. Jesuits were not only dramatising the Church's primary rank of sainthood, it also could be argued that they were also glorifying their own order, since Jesuit missionaries who were actively engaged in the proselytisation of the New World were also preparing their students for possible reality of future martyrdom.⁸⁶ The dramatic possibilities afforded by the martyr tragedy, with its ready-made plot details of love, violence and death cannot be ignored as motives behind the staging of such plays.⁸⁷

Viewed against this background, a climate of ambiguity towards public theatre, with elements of both lay and clerical societies holding dichotomous positions, the emergence of the martyr-play in the first decades of the seventeenth century becomes of particular interest. It is possible to interpret the martyr-play as an effort to convince adverse parties of the function of theatre as moral instruction. Phillips notes that 'many writers believed that the performance of religious drama could contribute to the justification of actors and drama in general'.⁸⁸ This is a pertinent factor, when one considers the period in which martyr-plays blossomed on the French stage, that is to say the 1640s. Louis XIII promulgated an edict in 1641 absolving actors of the charge of infamy, in which he decreed:

Nous voulons que leur exercice qui peut innocemment divertir nos Peuples, de diverses occupations mauvaises, ne puisse leur être imputé à blâme, ni préjudicier à leur réputation dans le commerce public, ce que nous faisons, afin que le desir qu'ils auront d'éviter le reproche qu'on leur a fait jusqu'icy.⁸⁹

The acting profession now enjoyed royal favour in the most public fashion.⁹⁰ This document regulates the behaviour of actors, as well as detailing the beneficial aspects

⁸⁵ Georges Forestier singles out Baro, Corneille, Desfontaines and Rotrou as authors influenced by the French Jesuit heritage, *Le Théâtre dans le théâtre sur la scène française du XVII^e siècle*, Titre Courant, 3, 2nd edn (Geneva: Droz, 1996), p. 57.

⁸⁶ Maurice Gravier emphasises the fact that in these plays 'il ne s'agit pas seulement de donner une leçon au-public', and that there were multiple parts, dance and chant to allow the audience to show how proficient the pupils were in the arts, 'Le Théâtre des Jésuites et la tragédie du salut et de la conversion', in *Le Théâtre tragique*, ed. by Jean Jacquot (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965), pp. 119-129 (p. 121).

⁸⁷ Peter Mullaney's comments on Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* (1622) seem equally applicable to French martyr-plays, as its authors use a 'religious story for exclusively theatrical purposes' and 'the conflict between Christian and pagan attitudes and beliefs is the stimulus to the emotional response', 'Religion in Massinger and Dekker's *The Virgin Martyr*', *KOMOS*, 2 (1970), 89-97 (pp. 90 and 95).

⁸⁸ Phillips, *The Theatre and its Critics*, p. 221.

⁸⁹ *Declaration du Roy Louis XIII au Sujet des Comédiens*. The edict is reproduced in F. and C. Parfaict, *Histoire du théâtre français, depuis son origine jusu'à présent*, 15 vols (Paris: P. G. Le Mercier and Saillant, 1734-49), VI (1746), 131-134 (132-33). This work will hereafter be cited as *Histoire*.

to theatrical performances; if theatres kept to the spirit of the edict, avoiding 'de représentations peu honnêtes', then the stage henceforward had arms with which to defend itself against critics.⁹¹ It is revealing to note that the monarch reproaches debauched actors and dubious subject matter as causes for the theatre's discredit. The canonical state of infamy had no real practical consequences, save that a man who had held this status was permanently barred from the clergy, as it constituted a major impediment to entering the clerical state.⁹² There was now the theoretical possibility of having priests who had formerly been in the acting profession.

It is evident that the King was sympathetic to the theatre, since in the same year as the *querelle du Cid*, he granted letters of nobility to Corneille. Also in 1637, a theatre opened in the Palais-Cardinal, which had a strong clerical presence, presided by Richelieu.⁹³ These tactics seem to represent an establishment response to the stage controversy. At this juncture, Corneille turns his hand to *Polyeucte*, the first performance of which was possibly staged as early as the Autumn of 1641 at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.⁹⁴ This play and other martyr-tragedies of this decade could represent *œuvres de guerre* against religious critics. Corneille is at particular pains to name antecedents to his play's theme, demonstrating that religious tragedy had historical roots in France. The selection of the martyrdom of Genesius, dramatised by Rotrou and Desfontaines, seems to be an appropriate choice in this campaign, for it was a reminder that the Church had assigned an official patron to the acting profession.⁹⁵ Rotrou goes into some detail about the intricacies of the stage, having a minor role for the *décorateur*. In the first act, we are presented with an apologia for drama in both its comic and tragic aspects:

DIOCLETIAN

Par ton Art les Heros plustost ressuscite,
Qu'imitiez en effet, et qui representez,

⁹⁰ The edict of 1641 was masterminded by the King and Cardinal, both 'soucieux de tirer davantage du climat favorable ainsi créé dans l'opinion et de répondre d'une manière définitive aux deux objections au théâtre signalées par l'abbé d'Aubignac', Jean Dubu, *Les Églises chrétiennes et le théâtre (1550-1850)* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1997), p. 59.

⁹¹ Parfaict, *Histoire*, IV, 131.

⁹² On infamy and the clerical state, see Henry Phillips, 'Les acteurs et la loi au XVII^e siècle en France', *Littératures Classiques*, 40 (2000), 87-101 (in particular pp. 92-95).

⁹³ 'Avant 1634, on relève quelques marques d'intérêt de la part du Cardinal de Richelieu pour le théâtre [...]. A la fin de 1634 et en 1635, tout change: les événements se précipitent et il paraît clairement que le Cardinal s'est décidé à avoir une politique et spécialement une politique théâtrale', Georges Couton, *Richelieu et le théâtre* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1986), p. 7.

⁹⁴ R. A. Sayce (ed.), *Polyeucte* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), pp. v-vi.

⁹⁵ Samuel Chappuzeau sees Rotrou's play canonising the acting profession, calling it 'une tres glorieuse Tragedie', *Le theatre françois divisé en trois livres* (Paris: René Guignard, 1674), p. 140.

Des cent et des mil ans apre leur funerailles,
 Font encor des progresz, et gagnent des batailles,
 Et sous leurs noms fameux etablissent des Loix;
 Le Comique, où ton Art également succede,
 Est contre la tristesse un si presente remede,
 Qu'un seul mot, (quand tu veux,) un pas, une action,
 Ne laisse plus de prise à cette passion,
 Et par une soudaine, et sensible merveille,
 Jette la joye au cœur, par l'œil ou par l'oreille. (I, 5)

The theatre is held to be a useful arbiter of emotions, capable of moving spectators. Towards the end of the play, we are afforded an insight into the author's discontent with the anti-theatre lobby through the mouth of the heroine:

MARCELE Nostre mestier sur tout, quoy que tant admiré,
 Est l'Art où le mérite est moins considéré. (V, 2)

The play constitutes 'le commentaire très étendu que nous y trouvons sur le théâtre et l'art du comédien'.⁹⁶ This seems to be one of the intentions of the revived interest of the martyr-play in the capital, and the plays can be viewed as a united attempt to combat a common enemy. Marc Fumaroli notes that the supreme ambition of many actors and writers was simply 'prouver à l'Europe entière prise à témoin que la dignité de leurs mœurs, la noblesse de leur jeu, la sincérité de leur foi, les rendaient dignes d'interpréter des rôles sacrés'.⁹⁷ This is reflected in a play satirising the social position of actors, Quinault's *La Comédie sans comédie*.⁹⁸ This comedy details two actors who are afraid of the negative reaction of their respective loves' fathers on discovering their profession. One of these actors sums up the struggle for recognition:

HAUTEROUCHE Mais vos bontez en vain fondent mon esperence,
 La Fortune entre nous met trop de difference.
 Votre pere est fort riche et cherissant le bien
 Il aura du mespris pour un Comedien.
 Je crains qu'il soit atteint de l'horreur ordinaire
 Que nostre nom imprime en l'ame du vulgaire.
 Et comme de nostre art il ignore le prix,
 Nostre amour n'obtiendra de luy que du mespris. (I, 2)

⁹⁶ Van Baelen, *Rotrou, le héros tragique et la révolte*, p. 146.

⁹⁷ Marc Fumaroli, 'La querelle de la moralité du théâtre avant Nicole et Bossuet', *RHLF*, 70 (1970), 1007-1030 (p. 1023).

⁹⁸ Philippe Quinault, *La Comédie sans comédie* (Paris: Guillaume de Luynem, 1657).

The vogue for religious plays, in particular those treating the martyr, cannot be isolated from this theatrical tactic: arguments propagated about the subjects and behaviour of the profane stage could not easily be applied to drama with a religious flavour. Some religious commentators had already advanced the argument that religious drama was best left to religious communities, including the Jesuit Louis Cellot, himself the author of two martyr-plays.

1.4 Choice of Martyrdom Theme

In embarking on the theme of the martyr, tragedians were using one of 'the preoccupations of the age'.⁹⁹ Martyrdom was not merely a concern for theologians or hagiographers, but was a topic embraced in all branches of the arts: in painting, sculpture, poetry and music, and as has been noted, 'peintres et poètes célébraient donc sans relâche ces scènes sanglantes'.¹⁰⁰ It is an omnipresent subject that pervades the age, not confined to Catholic countries in the full throes of Counter-Reformation propaganda, as 'martyrdom and sacrifice are glorified as acts of the highest heroism throughout the literature of the Baroque era, narrative as well as dramatic, in the works of both Catholic and Protestant authors'.¹⁰¹ This trend has often been commented on, and naturally raises the question, why was there such an obsession with the martyr-figure in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe? One obvious cause is the fact that the continent was undergoing its first sustained period of martyrdom since the conversion of northern Europe a millennium earlier.¹⁰² England had experienced its first martyrs since Thomas of Canterbury. The immediacy of martyrdom was real:

L'aspiration au martyre était un sentiment très fort chez les chrétiens de l'époque de la Contre-Réforme, et l'on aurait tort de penser que le temps des martyrs, que peu à peu ils apprenaient à connaître à travers les travaux de Galliano, de Bosio et plus tard de dom Ruinart, fût par eux considéré

⁹⁹ Sayce, *Polyeucte*, p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁰ Yvan Loskoutoff, *La Sainte et La Fée: dévotion à l'enfant Jésus et mode des contes merveilleux à la fin du règne de Louis XIV*, *Histoire des Idées et Critique Littéraire*, 255 (Geneva: Droz, 1987), p. 25.

¹⁰¹ Warnke, *Versions of the Baroque*, p. 191.

¹⁰² 'With the Protestant Reformation an age of martyrs came once again to Western Christendom. Not since the early church and the conversion of the European tribes had fresh tales of ultimate sacrifice and bold heroism for the sake of the faith stirred and inspired pious hearts', Robert Kolb, *For All the Saints: Changing Perceptions of Martyrdom and Sainthood in the Lutheran Reformation* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), p. 1.

comme entièrement révolu. Les missions lointaines, les luttes religieuses en Europe, les missions des prêtres catholiques en Angleterre, et, jusqu'à la fin du XVII^e siècle, les guerres contre les Turcs offraient encore des occasions de martyre qui n'étaient pas imaginaires.¹⁰³

Martyrdom could no longer be considered a phenomenon of a past age of an embryonic Church. Both Catholic and Protestant authors saw the value of creating martyr-narratives, for persecution had long been seen as a traditional sign of divine favour, a sort of hallmark of a righteous cause. Thus, throughout Europe,

the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth could be termed a golden age of martyrology, as all confessions sought to validate their positions by celebrating the heroic sacrifice of their contemporary coreligionists and placing current sufferings in the context of a continuous tradition of the Church under the cross extending back to the apostolic age.¹⁰⁴

A mass of adherents willing to die for a movement demonstrated the value of the organisation as worthy of the supreme sacrifice, the surrender of one's life.¹⁰⁵ It was not only in Europe that this fresh wave of martyrdom was occurring. With the evangelisation of the New World came inevitable persecution from indigenous cultures. There is a sizeable number of seventeenth-century French works narrating the martyrdom of Jesuits in Canada and elsewhere including Rudolfo Acquaviva, the nephew of the fifth Jesuit general, Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615), who was martyred in the Indian mission.¹⁰⁶ The Canadian massacres began in 1642 with the murder of René Goupil by the Iroquois and continued on a regular basis for the next decade.¹⁰⁷ The systematic way in which details about the heroic deaths of the Jesuits in Canada was manipulated and mythologised, has recently been examined by Guy Laflèche.¹⁰⁸ Along with increased prestige coming the order's way, another indirect

¹⁰³ Jacques Le Brun, 'Mutations de la notion de martyre au XVII^e siècle d'après les biographies spirituelles féminines', in *Sainteté et martyre dans les religions du livre*, ed. by Jacques Marx, *Problèmes d'Histoire du Christianisme*, 19 (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1989), pp. 77-90 (p. 77).

¹⁰⁴ Trevor Johnson, 'Holy Fabrications: The Catacomb Saints and the Counter-Reformation in Bavaria', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47 (1996), 274-297 (p. 280).

¹⁰⁵ Eugene and Anita Weiner argue that a cultural or value system only gains plausibility when there is the possibility of dying for it, making the most decisive and ultimate sacrifice, *The Martyr's Conviction: a Sociological Analysis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 53.

¹⁰⁶ Rudolfo Acquaviva (1550–1583) was murdered on the orders of a village sorcerer near Goa who was angered by the impact of the Christian mission.

¹⁰⁷ See Henri Fouqueray, *Martyrs du Canada* (Paris: Téqui, 1930), particularly pp. 174-328 which deal with the circumstances of individual martyrdoms.

¹⁰⁸ 'Il s'agit d'un mythe parce que l'Eglise du Canada français, avec la complicité de Rome, a fait passer pour martyrs, au sens canonique, c'est-à-dire historique et juridique, un groupe de missionnaires jésuites morts violemment à cause et au cours de la guerre des Iroquois entre 1642 et 1650. En fait, il n'y a jamais eu de groupe, mais une suite de huit morts violentes, souvent très différentes les unes des

effect was an increase in its membership (during his 34 years as Superior, Acquaviva was to see the size of the society increase from 5,000 to 13,000). The glorification of the order's martyrs was also intended to lead to their eventual canonisation. This was partly to compete with other orders but also to further increase the order's spiritual standing, against the tenacious campaign of criticism from outside and within the Church. Ironically, the first Jesuit missionaries to be martyred for the faith were killed not on the mission fields, but by Huguenots on 15 July 1570 off the Portuguese coast in the ship *Saint Jacques*.¹⁰⁹ There were similar occurrences in South America and Japan. During the sixteenth century Jesuits had worked with Franciscans stationed in the Philippines for the conversion of Japan. In 1597, Emperor Toikosama decreed the persecution of Christians, which commenced with the crucifixion at Nagasaki of twenty-six Catholics. Knowledge of their deaths became widespread throughout Europe, primarily through the pamphleteering of the Jesuit and Franciscan orders (in total there were three Jesuits, six Franciscans and seventeen laymen put to death).¹¹⁰

When Urban VIII beatified the twenty-six Nagasaki martyrs in 1627, this was the first insertion of Oriental names into the Roman Calendar. The ceremony took place during a renewed massacre of Japanese Christians, and presumably had the intention of encouraging those suffering for the faith. Accounts of these deaths, together with the publicity of the new ranks being raised to the altars, fired the public imagination.¹¹¹ The majority of Catholic priests destined for inevitable execution in England were trained at the seminary of Douai, later at Reims in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The college was founded in 1568 by William, Cardinal Allen (1532–1594) at Douai, then part of the Spanish Netherlands, as an attempt to rejuvenate the English clergy, which largely consisted of ageing priests appointed by

autres', G. Laflèche, 'Les Jésuites de la Nouvelle-France et le mythe de leurs martyrs', in *Les Jésuites parmi les hommes aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, ed. by G. and G. Demerson, B. Dompnier and A. Regond (Clermont-Ferrand: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1987), pp. 35-45 (p. 35).

¹⁰⁹ Émile Mâle, *l'Art religieux de la fin du XVI^e siècle, du XVII^e siècle et du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Colin, 1951), p. 116.

¹¹⁰ For example, there is Jean de Bordes's *Recit véritable de la diverse mort de vingt et six Chrestiens mis en Croix. Par le commandement du Roy du Japon, le 5 de Fevrier 1597* (Paris: Claude Chappelet, 1604). Jacques Callot produced an engraving on the crucifixions for the canonisations. However, it is thought that he was commissioned by the Lorraine Franciscans, for he depicts twenty-martyrs and omits any representation of the three Jesuits (Mâle, *l'Art religieux*, p. 118). This underlines the competitive nature of reclaiming martyrs.

¹¹¹ To take one typical example, the anonymous *Relation de l'admirable constance des chrestiens japonais à endurer le martyre* (Lille: Rache, 1630). See p. 248 of this thesis for further considerations about this work.

Queen Mary.¹¹² This site was chosen for the training house, as a University had been founded there in 1559 under the chancellorship of Richard Smith, an Oxonian like Allen. Due to unfavourable intelligence reports implicating the college of being in contact with French authorities, the college was obliged to move *en masse* and it decamped to Reims. This was at the invitation of the archbishop, Cardinal de Guise, and it spent fifteen years there before the political climate allowed it to return to Douai.¹¹³ Robert Persons founded the College of St Omer in 1593 at Saint-Omer, as a Jesuit school to educate English students and refugees.¹¹⁴ This visible presence together with a prolific printing output from the seminary created a marked impression in the French consciousness.¹¹⁵ The courage and notoriety of members of the seminaries in France, not to mention awareness of the hopeless fate awaiting its alumni upon their return to England, ensured that many French Catholics were made aware of the presence of communities with ‘a strong martyrological sensibility among those likeliest to be killed’.¹¹⁶ It is not only Catholics who were suffering for their beliefs in France, as ‘the catalogue of mutilations performed on Huguenots during the wars is as gruesome as it is long’.¹¹⁷ With this background it is not surprising that ‘the exaltation of martyrdom for the faith was in fact to become a major and central concern of the baroque world’.¹¹⁸ It is noteworthy that the campaign of martyrdom was not directed by Rome or Geneva; it had a more grassroots spread. In Catholic

¹¹² ‘The purple of his cardinal’s hat might be said to have been dyed with the blood of the martyrs he had educated’, Michael E. Williams, ‘William Allen: The Sixteenth-Century Spanish Connection’, *Recusant History*, 22 (1994), 123-140 (p. 133).

¹¹³ H. Toofell, *The History of the English College at Doway, From its First Foundation in 1568, To the Present Time* (London: B. Lintott, 1713), pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁴ ‘During the first half of the seventeenth century the College press, under the direction of John Wilson, SJ, was the most important source of the proscribed Catholic literature that nourished the piety and loyalty of English recusants’, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 17 vols (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1967; repr. Jack Heraty, 1981), XII, 927.

¹¹⁵ ‘The English College was a constant presence on the Continent, and its plays, some known to us, some lost, were seen almost annually by Englishmen and foreigners alike’, Suzanne Gossett, ‘Drama in the English College, Rome, 1591-1660’, *ELR*, 1973 (3), 60-93 (pp. 90-91). Gossett is referring to the French colleges as well. An example of a work published at Saint-Omer is *The English Martyrologe conteyning a summary of the lives of the glorious and renowned Saintes of the three Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1608) by a ‘Catholick Priest’, in reality John Wilson (he leaves his initials on the last page, I.W.). There is an appendix, ‘a catalogue of those who have suffered death in England for defence of the Catholick Cause, synce the year of Christ 1535. and 27. of King Henry the VIII. his raigne, unto this yeare 1608’ (beginning at sig. 2a).

¹¹⁶ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, p. 275.

¹¹⁷ ‘Huguenot citizens were murdered in their homes or dragged into public view, assaulted in the streets or in nearby fields, as they returned from services, temporary exile or imprisonment’, Penny Roberts, ‘Martyrdoms and Martyrs in the French Reformation: Heretics to Subversives in Troyes’, in *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, ed. by Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History*, 30 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 221-229 (p. 225).

circles, for example, it was proclaimed 'by religious orders who wrote accounts of their members who died'.¹¹⁹

The actual process of martyrdom being enacted globally contextualises the ubiquity of the martyrdom topic. Like the early Church martyrs, many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century victims of persecution 'were immediately recognised as saints by their co-religionists, without reference to a judicial procedure', so relics were eagerly sought of Japanese and English martyrs at their executions.¹²⁰ Another factor to be taken into account is the increasingly academic pursuit of researching saints' lives, purging *vitæ* of later accretions and fabulous or dubious components: in short, a scientific approach. This intellectual endeavour stirred up interest in the more widespread vernacular works:

Au total ces vies de saints ont nourri la piété populaire de façon originale: à l'époque où l'érudition monastique commence le grand travail d'épuration critique de l'hagiographie médiévale, la littérature populaire la reprend à son compte, et assure une nouvelle diffusion.¹²¹

This can be viewed as a by-product of the Reformation, as Catholic apologists needed to have an intellectually respectable basis to defend the highest ideal of Christian example. This was given official ignition in the twenty-fifth (and last) session of the Council of Trent. On 3 December 1563, the Council Fathers declared:

In has autem sanctas et salutare observationes si qui abusus irreperint: eos prorsus aboleri sancta Synodus vehementer cupit, ita ut nullae falsi dogmatis imagines et rudibus periculosi erroris occasionem praebentes statuatur. [...] Omnis porro superstitio in Sanctorum invocatione, reliquiarum veneratione et imaginum sacro usu tollatur, omni turpis quaestus eliminatur, omnis denique lascivia vitetur.¹²²

This decision carried the full weight of dogmatic infallibility and formulated the official response of the *magisterium* to one of the crucial areas of Protestant attack on Rome. The most immediate effect was the banning of nudity in church imagery,

¹¹⁸ Peter N. Skrine, *The Baroque: Literature and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (London: Methuen, 1978), p. 54.

¹¹⁹ Moreover, as in the martyr-play, 'the stories adhered to a formula', Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 69.

¹²⁰ J. T. Rhodes, 'English Books of Martyrs and Saints of the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Recusant History*, 22 (1994), 7-25 (p. 7).

¹²¹ Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Stock, 1964), p. 97.

leading to the infamous incident of Paul IV hiring Daniel de Volterre in 1559 to cover up the genitalia of figures in Michelangelo's work on the ceiling and walls of the Sistine Chapel. The long-term impact was a greater awareness of the propaganda value of spiritual works of art. Moreover, the Council of Trent's directive ordering the ecclesiastical supervision of art was also 'used to the same end by writers' and others in the varying branches of the arts.¹²³ The Church's prime example of sacrifice and piety, the martyr-hero, was henceforward to become an even greater efficacious tool with which to manipulate the faithful.

The movement towards reliable hagiography was in many ways pioneered by the Roman historian and cardinal, Cesare Baronius (1538–1607). Entrusted by Gregory XIII with the revisions of the *Martyrologium* (published in 1586 and 1589), he later used part of this research to publish a monumental history of the Church from the death of Christ up to the twelfth century. Volumes of this multi-volume chronology, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, were published from 1588 until the year of his death. The work meticulously provides references to sources, and evident exaggerations in saints' lives are silently omitted; it became a highly influential seventeenth-century apologetic guide and served as an inspiration to artists seeking historical themes.¹²⁴ After an earthquake of 1578 in Rome unearthed thereunto unknown catacombs at the cemetery of St Priscilla on the via Salaria, interest was raised in studying these new catacombs unhindered by the bias of centuries and according to archaeological principles.¹²⁵ Gregory XIII commissioned a team to investigate the find, which was followed by a Jesuit group exploring the cemetery of Callixtus in 1589.¹²⁶ This intellectual pursuit culminated in the founding of the Bollandists, a group of Belgian Jesuits devoted to hagiographic excellence and the promotion of credible lives of

¹²² *Decretum de invocatione, veneratione et reliquiis Sanctorum, et sacris imaginibus*, in H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Rome: Herder, 1967), p. 420.

¹²³ David Freedberg, 'The Representation of Martyrdoms during the Early Counter-Reformation in Antwerp', *The Burlington Magazine*, 118 (1976), 128-138 (p. 128).

¹²⁴ 'L'auteur des *Annales ecclésiastiques* avait ouvert de grands chantiers historiques et multipliait les collaborations savantes', Alain Cullière, 'La Conversion de Sainte Thècle, de G. Reboul', *Travaux de Littérature*, 13 (2000), 81-100 (p. 86). See also Marc Fumaroli, *L'École du silence: le sentiment des images au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), pp. 341 and 372-74.

¹²⁵ One result of work on the project was Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea, opera postuma*, ed. by Giovanni Severani (Rome: G. Faccioli, 1632), whose reproduction of images from the catacombs was widely believed to be an effective answer to Protestant attacks on Catholic iconography.

¹²⁶ 'Following these discoveries, Rome itself became a holy object worthy of worship; in Pius V's (1566–72) response to pilgrims asking for relics, visitors to the city were told to take the earth of Rome, for it had been tinged with the blood of the martyrs', Kirstin Noreen, 'Ecclesiae militantis

saints, expunged of superfluous or ridiculous accretions. Founded by Jean von Bolland (1596–1665), the group's primary achievement was the appearance of the *Acta Sanctorum*, the first two volumes of which were published in 1643.¹²⁷ Such works were obviously out of the financial reach of a large proportion of the laity. Due to the popularity of these frequently printed volumes in ecclesiastical circles, re-workings of heroic lives and deaths filtered to all ranks of the laity from the clergy's reliance on them in homilies and catechical instruction.¹²⁸

Another event that had deep and popular emotive value was the opening of the tomb of St Cecilia on 20 October 1599, presided over by Paul Sfondart, Cardinal priest of the church of St Cecilia. This saint had been laid to rest in a bejewelled coffin by Pope Pascal I, after the solemn transferral of her relics in 821.¹²⁹ Witness accounts report the saint being in an attitude of sleep and apparently lacking any corporeal corruption, a feature associated with the bodies of the blessed. Those who observed the phenomenon included Baronius, and Pope Clement VIII hastened his way from Frascati to view the miraculous uncovering. The sculptor Stefano Maderna was engaged to produce a permanent reminder of the martyr for the Roman church of Santa Cecilia in Transtevius. This powerful portrayal of an impressive religious event seemingly confirmed divine pleasure with the cultus of martyrs, and Cecilia became a favourite choice in poetry, painting, and is the subject of three martyr-plays.¹³⁰ An account published in 1618 on the life of Cecilia's short-lived spouse, Valerian, goes into some depth not only about the execution of the couple, but also the 1599 solemn reposition of her body, mentioning her intact hair and preserved blood-stained clothing.¹³¹ The scene is described of Cecilia being uncovered 'la face vers la terre, comme qui dormiroit'.¹³² With such a vivid story to draw on, that is to say, the original legend as well as the 1599 miraculous sepulchre opening, it is not at all

triumphi: Jesuit Iconography and the Counter-Reformation, *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 29 (1998), 689-715 (p. 713).

¹²⁷ *Acta Sanctorum*, 21 vols (Antwerp: n. pub., 1643–81). These two initial volumes covered January and February in the Roman liturgical calendar. By 1681 they had published 21 volumes and it was largely agreed that 'the new publication surpassed anything of the kind known at the time', *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, I, 263.

¹²⁸ P. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 97.

¹²⁹ Antonio Bosio, *La chasteté victorieuse en l'admirable conversion de S. Valerian espoux de Sainte Cecile, de Tiburce, Maximus et autres de la Traduction de C.D.S.C.D. Welles* (Arras: Robert Maudhuy, 1618), p. 274.

¹³⁰ The three plays are: Nicolas Soret, *La Ceciliade ou martyre sanglant de sainte Cecile* (1606); Charles de Lignières, *Cecilia virgo et martyr* (1657); Jean de Nismes, *Sainte Cécile couronnée* (1662).

¹³¹ Bosio, *La chasteté victorieuse*, p. 281.

surprising that the legend of the young woman inspired many seventeenth-century artists.¹³³ As the patroness of music, she was naturally a popular choice for musical composition. This was part of a movement ‘to promote the early martyrs through the diffusion of their physical remains’ and as a result ‘from the 1620s the catacombs began to be enthusiastically ransacked for relics’.¹³⁴

This hagiographic movement allowed Catholic preachers to make a strong defence of the value of the veneration of saints, for they could now counter-argue that the Church had taken steps to eliminate any errors in official saints’ lives. From the inception of the Reformed religion, some Protestants placed value on their place within the framework of history, often with eschatological emphasis.¹³⁵ In his commentary on the Apocalypse, the former Franciscan Sebastian Meyer (1492–1528), who became a minister in Bern, provides a history of martyrdom prompted by the details of the slaying of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:7). He includes Jan Hus, Savonarola and the Waldensians as historical instances of followers of the truth wiped out by Rome. Meyer’s brief history of martyrdom was one of the earliest treatises linking contemporary Protestants with historical forerunners, a model that was elaborated and expanded on throughout the sixteenth century.¹³⁶ Some French Calvinist writers realised the intrinsic attachment amongst the laity to the genre of saints’ legends. When the Reformed movement began to have its own martyrs to witness for the faith, ‘their potential as Christian teachers had to be preserved in a new

¹³² Bosio, *La chasteté victorieuse*, p. 282.

¹³³ ‘The discovery of the relics entire had kindled the popular enthusiasm to an extraordinary degree: during the next half century there were few artists who did not attempt a St Cecilia’, Anna Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1890), II, 594. Domenichio, who was at Rome when the sarcophagus was opened, later painted six figures of the martyr.

¹³⁴ Johnson, ‘Catacomb Saints’, p. 281.

¹³⁵ One work that typifies this historical overview is Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques*, composed from 1577 onwards and published in 1616. In this epic there are three periods: the Old Testament; the Early Church; the age of persecution. Aubigné gives many examples of contemporary martyrs, for example the martyrdom of Giovanni Mollio who was burnt at Rome in 1553 and who is included in Goulart’s 1582 edition of Crespin. Aubigné portrays martyrs both as an example and as proof of the authenticity of the Protestant faith: ‘Montalchine, l’honneur de Lombardie, il faut/ Qu’en ce lieu je t’esleve un plus brave eschafaut/ Que celui sur lequel aux portes du grand temple/ Tu fus Martyr de Dieu et des Martyrs l’exemple’, *Les Tragiques*, ed. by Jean-Raymond Fanlo, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1995), I, 395 (Livre IV, Les Feux, ll. 619-622).

¹³⁶ Meyer’s conception of a proto-Protestant history is a ‘vignette of what we will see expanded in Flacius’s *Catalogue* or John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*’, Rodney L. Peterson, *Preaching in the Last Days: the Theme of ‘Two Witnesses’ in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 155.

context, and the reliquary was duly replaced by a new species of martyr book'.¹³⁷ This culminated in the appearance of works which held essentially revisionist views of the history of Christendom. This they did with a 'concern not to emulate Catholic saints' lives', but rather 'to carve out a *new* genre clearly distinct from and uncontaminated by its *apparent* model'.¹³⁸ Jean Crespin's *Histoire des Martyrs* (1554) reclaimed the martyr-hero to the Reformed religion, and the work was followed by six French editions between 1555 and 1619, as well as two Latin versions.¹³⁹ Crespin performed the tasks of author, editor and printer of the editions from 1554 to 1570. Théodore de Bèze followed with the *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées* (1580), compiled from information sent to him from churches throughout France. It amounted to combating the Church of Rome on its own territory:

En empoignant à bras le corps cette violence imposée par l'adversaire et en retournant les prétendus "martyrs du diable" en "témoins de Dieu", les Protestants finissent par combattre les Catholiques sur leur terrain et en se servant de leurs propres armes.¹⁴⁰

Crespin's work covers the Christian religion from the early ages. By including the martyrs of the early Church, infuriating many Catholic partisans, he gave Protestantism a link with the primitive Church, providing an apologia for its early existence. The 1582 folio edition devotes 40 pages to martyrs of the first centuries, with the remaining 841 pages of the rest of the martyrology being dedicated to contemporary martyrs, beginning with Jean Hus and ending with the St Bartholomew's Day Massacres (fol. 41-862). The message is explicit: modern martyrs are as significant as those of the time of Christ and their contribution is as valuable. The parallels were clear: the true Church of Christ was undergoing a persecution as vicious as that of the primitive Church, the various Protestant communities also constituted a minority victimised by established secular and spiritual authorities. Furthermore, there is no place in this martyrology for dubious figures such as

¹³⁷ A. G. Dickens and John Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 40.

¹³⁸ Catherine Randall Coats, *(Em)bodying the Word: Textual Resurrections in the Martyrological Narratives of Foxe, Crespin, de Bèze and d'Aubigné*, Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts, 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), p. 10.

¹³⁹ It should be noted that Crespin continually changed the title of his work. Jean Crespin died in 1572, though before the Massacres. After his death, the Genevan pastor Simon Goulart (1543-1628) edited and revised the work from the editions of 1582 to 1619, expanding the martyrology with accounts of the 1572 atrocities.

Catherine or Agnes: Crespin states in the preface ‘j’en ay donné advertissement, ce ne sont point des os, ne des cheveux, ne membres de leurs corps, ne quelques haillons ou pieces de leurs habillemens, ne fables de Legendes dorées’.¹⁴¹ In his understanding of what constituted a martyr, ‘Crespin ne limite pas la définition au fait de la mort violente. Cette mort doit être le témoignage d’une foi authentique’.¹⁴² The martyr-figure was one that had political as well as artistic and dramatic value. Placing emphasis on martyrs did not always find easy acceptance in some Protestant quarters, for it appeared to be a quintessentially Catholic trait. In fact when the *Livre des Martyrs* was initially presented to the Council of Geneva (23 August 1554), consent was given on the condition that the terms ‘saint’ and ‘martire’ were changed altogether. The Council only retreated from its intransigence on this issue after a particularly damning sermon by Calvin justifying the appropriation of the concepts.¹⁴³

While the number of Protestants executed for their reformed faith was small, the various massacres of 1572 in Paris and elsewhere in France were to replenish the stock of victim-subjects suitable for commemoration. As well as inspiring Protestant communities to remain steadfast, reminding the readership of the community and sacrifice of fellow believers, Crespin succeeded in stressing that the ‘persecution was no respecter of nationalities or social distinction’.¹⁴⁴ The long-term effect of the appearance of the martyrologies is reflected in the subsequent place of the martyr in the arts; the martyr-play is a later literary expression of this interest. It is particularly ironic that in some late sixteenth-century communities, Catholic authors developed new martyrological strategies when faced with the printed threat of an organised Protestant campaign, particularly in the non-Christian New World into which

¹⁴⁰ Frank Lestringant, *La Cause des martyrs dans Les Tragiques d’Agrippe d’Aubigné* (Mont-de-Marsan: Éditions InterUniversitaires, 1991), pp. 13-14.

¹⁴¹ Jean Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la verité de l’Evangile, depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l’an 1574* (n.p.: n.pub., 1582), fol. ii. New martyrologies owed a debt to the *Legenda Aurea* in terms of its format, and lay audience. ‘Bien qu’elle ne soit pas véritablement innovante, la martyrologe réformée rompt avec la tradition hagiographique médiévale’, David El Kenz, *Les Bûchers du Roi: la culture protestante des martyrs (1523–1572)* (Seysse: Champ Vallon, 1997), p. 124.

¹⁴² Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Crespin: un éditeur réformé du XVI^e siècle*, Travaux d’Humanisme et de Renaissance, 186 (Geneva: Droz, 1981), pp. 168-69. David El Kenz notes of this new understanding: ‘la dévalorisation du culte des saints implique une nouvelle approche du martyr. Les saints sont limités à un modèle d’édification pour les autres fidèles. Ils glorifient Dieu par leur mort. [...] Ils confirment la foi de l’Église par leur constance. Enfin, ils étonnent les ennemis par leur obstination’, *Les Bûchers du Roi*, p. 97.

¹⁴³ Lestringant, *La Cause des martyrs*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁴ David Watson, ‘Jean Crespin and the First English Martyrology of the Reformation’, in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. by David Loades (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), pp. 192-209 (p. 207).

Protestantism was making inroads.¹⁴⁵ Catholic martyrologies had been primarily liturgical, a list of saints' lives read out during the office of prime. One unintended consequence of Crespin and other Protestant martyrologists lies in the fact that they forced Catholics to reinterpret their own model of saints' lives. This resulted in the effective abandonment of the *Legenda Aurea*, though at the same time guaranteeing the popular status of the genre of martyrs' lives and legends.¹⁴⁶ Extolling the example of the martyr was a common tactic in post-Tridentine homilies, part of a pan-European Catholic strategy encouraging the faithful to return to the discipline of the early Church and the influence of the Fathers.¹⁴⁷

Along with intention and style, one feature that soon was to distinguish the new genre of Protestant martyrologies from their Catholic rivals, was the presence of illustrations. This was pioneered in England by John Foxe (1516–1587).¹⁴⁸ He produced his first account of Christian martyrs in 1559, with an English version in 1563, both editions featuring woodcuts. This work seems to have initiated the inclusion of images as a matter of course, though it should be noted that those in Foxe are notable for their lack of gratuitous violence, most designs showing incidents in (predominantly contemporary) martyrs' lives, or depicting them before their torments. Another essential difference is that the representation of Protestant martyrs did not dwell on their apparently superhuman resilience to torture and pain, but rather presented martyrs who were human, who did not seek martyrdom, sometimes attempting to escape their fate.¹⁴⁹ This compares to Counter-Reformation illustrations which tended to glorify explicit carnage (see Fig. 1). These were victims that a lay readership could relate to; above all, it was a legitimisation of the Protestant cause.

¹⁴⁵ See Kolb, *For All the Saints*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ 'Le renouvellement de ce genre littéraire pratiqué par le Réformés insère les livres de martyrs dans le grand courant de l'histoire ecclésiastique, dont il ne doivent pas être retranchés', Hugh R. Boudin, 'Les Martyrologes protestants de la Réforme: instruments de propagande ou documents de témoignage?', in *Sainteté et martyre dans les religions du livre*, ed. by Jacques Marx, *Problèmes d'Histoire du Christianisme*, 19 (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1989), pp. 67-75 (pp. 67-68).

¹⁴⁷ Frederick J. McGinness, *Right Thinking and Sacred Oratory in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 120-122.

¹⁴⁸ 'Foxe's reliance on images —while tempered by his constant reference to the word— is one factor which marks him as a transitional figure between hagiography and martyrology. Warren Wooden makes the case that Foxe added images in order to strengthen it, to add a visual dimension to it. This was perhaps a strategy to reach those readers who might not measure up to the ideal of vigilance he had postulated', Coats, *(Em)bodying the Word*, p. 47. Foxe's source of inspiration may have been Martin Luther who had an illustration on the title page of a martyr at the stake in *Die recht wahrhafft und gründtlich Hystori oder geschicht von bruder Hainrich inn Diethmar verprent* (Augsburg, 1525).

¹⁴⁹ 'The martyrologists are frank about the instinct for survival of some of the victims in their descriptions', Roberts, 'Martyrdoms and Martyrs in the French Reformation', p. 228.

If martyrdom was gaining intellectual and polemical importance, it also had the eye of patrons of the arts.¹⁵⁰ Paintings of martyrdom were commissioned in large quantities, and taken up by leading artists of the day with the new basilica of St Peter's in Rome acquiring a sizeable number.¹⁵¹ As already mentioned, the last session of the Council of Trent expressed concern about the use of images in churches being open to abuse. One reaction to this was the phenomenon that the Church began to set the precedent for tastes in art:

L'Eglise fera mieux que de censurer et d'interdire, elle inspira et dirigera l'Art, elle en fera un précieux auxiliaire de la Contre-Réforme. Ainsi l'Art épuré prendra désormais part à la polémique de l'Eglise contre le Protestantisme, il la défendra contre les attaques des hérétiques et participera à son enthousiasme. Le martyr jouera un rôle prépondérant dans cette iconographie nouvelle.¹⁵²

The reconstruction of St Peter's Basilica was the major artistic project of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Some of Europe's most renowned artists were engaged in aspects of the work; artists producing pictures of martyrdom scenes were to be emulated, or to recycle the theme themselves, not only for religious institutions but also for private collectors. Some of the more celebrated martyrdom scenes in painting are El Greco's painting of *St Maurice and the Theban legion* (c. 1580), Caravaggio's *The Crucifixion of St Peter* (1600) painted for the Cerasi chapel in the Roman church of Santa Maria del Popolo, and Rubens's *Martyrdom of St Livinus* (1635). With the two French artists Poussin and Claude spending most of their active lives abroad, it was 'by a curious freak [that] French painting of the seventeenth century produced its most remarkable and its most typical works not in Paris but in Rome'.¹⁵³ Poussin had a marked influence on the visual arts in his native country, and painted martyrdom scenes on a number of occasions.¹⁵⁴ The countless instances of such paintings presented the theme, 'ainsi, l'art, fidèle interprète des sentiments de l'Eglise, mettait sans cesse le martyr sous les yeux des fidèles et leur

¹⁵⁰ 'Valeria is anxious to witness scenes of martyrdom; this taste she shares with those patrons of the arts who ordered paintings of saints being drawn and quartered or having their tongues cut out', Imbrie Buffum, *Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 213.

¹⁵¹ On the history of the decoration of the new Roman basilica, see Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of the New St Peter's: Outfitting the Basilica, 1621-1666* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁵² Vincent Kraehling, *Saint Sébastien dans l'art* (Paris: Alsatia, 1938), p. 37.

¹⁵³ Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France 1500 to 1700* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 182.

rappelait, dans ces jours de feu et de sang, la vertu du sacrifice'.¹⁵⁵ By the time that martyrdom became fashionable, spectators were already familiar with martyr imagery in devotional works, sermons and visual imagery and such was the extent of the familiarity with the theme, that 'le côté populaire du thème du martyr au début du XVII^e siècle peut nous étonner'.¹⁵⁶ One example that illustrates just how the visual display of martyrdom scenes was widespread, is the case of the 'église paroissiale et Royale de Saint Eustache' at Les Halles. This building, important due to its central location and significance as the market traders' local church, was constructed for over a century and was formally consecrated on 26 April 1637. The church was dominated by two altar-pieces representing the deaths of St Eustache and his family, and it is perhaps not accidental that the legend of St Eustache was selected by three Parisian playwrights around the same period.¹⁵⁷ The central painting also inspired other artists, such as La Champagne Le Feye who based his *Martyre de Saint Eustache* for a church at Caen on the Parisian version. The localised cult of this martyr at Paris can be seen to have inspired works of arts and plays. We can assume that this was not an isolated phenomenon.

In the early modern period, the one work that ordinary members of the populace were likely to possess was a vernacular version of the *Legenda Aurea*.¹⁵⁸ While this treated saints' lives of varying conditions, 'les martyrs forment la milice nombreuse et massive de la sainteté' with 91 of the 153 chapters narrating martyrs' histories.¹⁵⁹ There were several martyr tales to be found in the burgeoning genre of the novel, notably by the popular novelist-bishop Jean-Pierre Camus, whose novel *Agathonphile* (1621) was to inspire at least two martyr-plays: Cosnard's *Les Chastes Martirs* (1650) and Françoise Pascal's *Agathonphile Martyr* (1654).¹⁶⁰ Members of all

¹⁵⁴ Along with his representations of St Erasmus, Poussin also turned his hand to a *Massacre of the Innocents* (1613) and a *St Cecilia* (c.1627–28).

¹⁵⁵ Mâle, *l'Art religieux*, p. 122.

¹⁵⁶ R. Triboulet, 'Corneille et l'aspiration au martyr', *RHLF*, 5 (1985), 774.

¹⁵⁷ The altar-pieces were the work of Simon Vouet (1590–1649), *Le martyre de Saint Eustache*. His individual treatment of martyrs and other pious subjects brought Roman fashions to the French capital: 'On his arrival in Paris, Vouet seems at first to have been mainly occupied with painting religious subjects, and in this field the style which he brought from Rome was bound to be successful with the French public', Blunt, *Art and Architecture*, p. 168.

¹⁵⁸ Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 211. The *Golden Legend* was one of the first works to be printed in England by William Caxton (1483).

¹⁵⁹ Alain Boureau, *Le Légende Dorée: le système narratif de Jacques de Voragine (†1298)* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), p. 112.

¹⁶⁰ Mille Cosnard, *La tragédie des Chastes Martirs*, ed. by L. de la Sicotière (Rouen: Cagniard, 1888), pp. xv and xvii. Other martyr-themed novels did exist, though their writers did not have the same

social strata had access to written forms of martyrs' lives and consequently 'martyrdom and related themes regularly surfaced in correspondence, theological treatises, political writings, devotional tracts, poetry, biblical commentaries, and memoirs'.¹⁶¹ The faithful were accustomed to the aspects, and often details of individual martyr-figures.¹⁶²

The interest in representations of martyrdom was also linked to a wider movement favouring vivid portrayals of death, sometimes in harrowing forms on funerary monuments and tombs. How a society deals with the public signs of death can, to some extent, reveal its attitudes to destruction. Underpinning this fascination with the *spectacle de la mort*, Elliot Forsyth suggests that:

En France, un tel goût s'explique en partie par les conséquences sociales du temps. Les combats et massacres des guerres de religion avaient laissé chez tous les Français d'ineffaçables souvenirs. Sous le règne d'Henri IV, d'ailleurs, la violence des mœurs imposait encore quotidiennement à leur esprit la "réalité" de la mort.¹⁶³

This general transition towards death personified, typified by skeletons on cenotaphs, originates around 1570, though the attention of the laity had been focussed on the last stage of their lives through the *ars moriendi* that became prevalent in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century communities. Katharine Park suggests that the growth of public and medical dissection and the expansion of the science of anatomy, are related to the popular appeal of the imagery of death. She contends that 'the later sixteenth century fascination with laying and dismemberment was not confined to the arenas of medicine and justice [...] it also marked the arts of the period, with their graphic images of torture, punishment, martyrdom and rape'.¹⁶⁴ The radical move to what had hitherto been exceptional may partly be due to 'l'esprit de la Contre-Réforme, qui rendit au christianisme son austerité et apprit aux fidèles à regarder la mort en

success as Camus. Guillaume Reboul's *la conversion de sainte Thècle par saint Paul et son martyre miraculeux* (Paris: Jamet et Pierre Mettayer, 1602) is another lesser known example. See Cullière, 'La Conversion de Sainte Thècle, de G. Reboul'.

¹⁶¹ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, p. 5.

¹⁶² For an example of this familiarity, the case of Catherine of Alexandria, see Chapter Five, p. 223.

¹⁶³ E. Forsyth, *La Tragédie française de Jodelle à Corneille (1553-1640)* (Paris: Nizet, 1962), p. 252.

¹⁶⁴ K. Park, 'The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47 (1994), 1-33 (p. 21). William S. Hecksher has a more extreme view, arguing that it was public anatomies that directly inspired artists' choice of death related works. This judgement ignores the impact of war, violence and the martyrdom of missionaries, as well as isolating the works from other stimuli, *Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolas Tulp: An Iconological Study* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), p. 87.

face'.¹⁶⁵ One manifestation of this phenomenon is the popularised method of devotional practices pioneered by Ignatius of Loyola, the *Spiritual Exercises*. This hinged on the frequent meditation of the Four Last Things, in particular death itself. Moreover, Ignatius encouraged the use of a skull as a tool of meditation.¹⁶⁶ These practices are particularly pertinent to martyr-tragedies with their stress on a bloody death; some plays include quite intricate and grisly details.

The Jesuit contribution to the development of art should not be neglected. Ignatius succeeded in initiating a more earthy and immediate form of ascetic spirituality, whereby the faithful would seize the reality of death, suffering and eternity. This was also apparent in the art-works commissioned for their churches, and emulated throughout Europe.¹⁶⁷ The impact of Jesuit iconography was not confined to themes, for the order facilitated the 'passage des gravures de petit format au grand tableau d'autel, reproduction des grands tableaux d'autel dans des gravures de petit format'.¹⁶⁸ Such vivid works of art were part of the Jesuit Counter-Reformation propaganda machine, which ensured that representations of saints, death and martyrdom, were visible and accessible to all the faithful:

In the hands of the Jesuits, the martyr was established as the quintessential warrior of the Counter-Reformation. All martyrs were, of course, distinguished because of the nature of their deaths, but in keeping with the Tridentine revival of the cult of the saints, these Church heroes quickly acquired other attributes as well. Two favorite Jesuit martyrs, St. Eustachius and St. Catherine of Alexandria, for example—whose popularity lasted well into the eighteenth century—were appreciated equally for their courage and their relevancy to the sixteenth-century intellectual scene.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Mâle, *l'Art religieux*, p. 206.

¹⁶⁶ A practice that is possibly alluded to in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, when Hamlet ponders Yorick's skull (V, 1; II. 77-201). See Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: a Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), in which Martz contends that *The Spiritual Exercises* had a marked influence both on the spirituality and popular culture of Elizabethan England. He also signals a similar Ignatian imprint in seventeenth-century English verse, not only in the poetry of the Jesuit Robert Southwell but also of such Anglicans as John Donne, George Herbert and (the pre-conversion) Richard Crashaw.

¹⁶⁷ 'Early Modern Catholics differed from Protestants and Anabaptists in their emphasis on visual representations of martyrs, continuing a centuries-old embrace of art and architecture for religious ends', Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, p. 253.

¹⁶⁸ Pierre-Antoine Fabre, 'Les Visions d'Ignace de Loyola dans la diffusion de l'art jésuite', *MLN*, 114 (1999), 816-847 (p. 817). Brad Gregory observes that 'Catholic martyr images encapsulated central Counter-Reformation virtues, such as obedience and self-denial', *Salvation at Stake*, p. 305.

¹⁶⁹ James A. Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition: Christian Theater in Germany and the Netherlands 1500-1680*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 187-188.

If the Jesuits were successful in these aims, then it is reflected in the martyr-play of seventeenth-century France, for Catherine and Eustache are two favourite subjects (see p. 104).

What conforms to this social death-fixated trend and to a greater concern for more accurate accounts of martyrs, was a closer interest in more anatomically correct representation of martyrs' suffering and the brutality of their demise. The most prominent exposition was by an Oratorian priest named Antonio Gallonio, a friend of Baronius, whose work became a standard reference source for all interested in the minutiae of torture methods and instruments, and was 'incessantly reprinted'.¹⁷⁰ It was first published in Italian in 1591, *Trattato degli instrumenti di martirio e delle varie maniere de martirizare*. At the request of Pope Clement VIII it was translated into Latin in 1594 and this quarto edition included a series of copper plates designed by Giovanni de Guerra of Modena, painter to Sixtus V (see Figs. 1, 6 and 10), executed by Antonio Tempesta.¹⁷¹ The attention paid at such a powerful level to undertake a new edition, in a universal language, illustrated by expensive plates (superior in quality to woodcuts), seems to highlight a concern with producing a definitive volume. The finished product is accordingly intellectually, ecclesiastically and artistically of the highest possible calibre to serve the purpose of demonstrating that 'les inventions des Romains, sur le terrain de la cruauté, ne faisaient que préfigurer et inspirer ce que magistrats et bourreaux, contemporains de Shakespeare et de la reine Élisabeth, devaient mettre en œuvre'.¹⁷²

In his work on Christian imagery, *De sacris et profanis imaginibus* (1582), Cardinal Paleotti devotes the thirty-fifth chapter to a defence of graphic portrayals of martyrs' torments. The most widespread of this type of intricately detailed work was Richard Verstegan's *Theatrum Crudelitatum Haereticorum nostri temporis*, originally published in 1587 in Latin. A French edition appeared in the following year, hinting not only that the work had been commercially successful, but also that there was a desire to have a wider lay readership.¹⁷³ As with editions of Gallonio's treatise, the

¹⁷⁰ Lionello Puppi, *Torment in Art: Pain, Violence and Martyrdom*, trans. by Jeremy Scott (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), p. 56. The influence of Gallonio's reference work is somewhat neglected by modern scholarship.

¹⁷¹ A. Gallonio, *Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs*, trans. by A. R. Allinson (Paris: The Fortune Press, 1930), pp. viii-ix.

¹⁷² Antonio Gallonio, *Traité des instruments de martyre et des divers modes de supplices employés par les païens contre les chrétiens*, ed. by Claude Louis-Combat (Grenoble: Millon, 2002), p. 26.

¹⁷³ The preface reveals authorial intention, criticising Protestantism and its founders, labelling Calvin and Bèze as 'hommes abondants en iniquitez et vices abominables' (p. 5), Richard Verstegan, *Theatre*

work is supplemented by a series of engravings, one for each individual instance of martyrdom (see Fig. 2). Verstegan's book depicts, in elaborate detail, the tortures that contemporary martyrs in England, France and Germany were enduring at Protestant hands, and this iconographical tactic is part of '[un] retournement par les polémistes catholiques d'un arsenal symbolique constitué par le camp opposé'.¹⁷⁴ Verstegan's iconography marks a subtle shift in the presentation of martyrdom, for his martyrs do not seek out death and 'endure with resigned patience a fate over which they have no control'.¹⁷⁵

The influence of the research of these works on paintings can be detected in the layout of Poussin's *Martyrdom of St Erasmus* (1628–29), in which there is a fairly gruesome representation of the devisceralisation of the martyr.¹⁷⁶ Both the posture, attitude of the spectators and the actual technique of the execution seem to owe much to Gallonio, and it appears likely that Poussin referred to this work for inspiration.¹⁷⁷ Commenting on the Flemish taste for martyrdoms at the close of the sixteenth century, David Freedberg observes that: 'with this sort of work [i.e. Gallonio and Baronius] emanating from Rome, it is clear that the Antwerp martyrdoms were by no means an isolated phenomenon'.¹⁷⁸ The influence of these Roman works literally reached far and wide. There are tangible effects of such treatises, and of the general movement towards open portrayals of death, in drama. In the 1596 re-working of the scriptural tale of the Maccabees, the tyrannical king threatens his victims in an imaginative fashion:

ANTIOCHUS

Soldats, presentement: grilles, crucifimens,
Rocs, poinctes, garrots, chaudieres, estrapades,
Frixoires et gibets, poignettes, et onglades,
Tenaille, gands de fer, manotes et roleaux,
Qu'on ne laisse pas un des instrumens nouveaux
Lesquels j'ay fait bastir pour meurtrir et pour poindre,
Pour les jambes et bras cruellement estraindre,

des Cruautez des Heretiques de nostre temps traduit du Latin en Français (Antwerp: Adrien Hubert, 1588).

¹⁷⁴ Frank Lestringant, *Une Sainte horreur ou le voyage en eucharistie XVI^e–XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), p. 165.

¹⁷⁵ Christopher Highley, 'Richard Verstegan's Book of Martyrs', in *John Foxe and his World*, ed. by Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 189.

¹⁷⁶ See Jane Costello's *Nicolas Poussin: The Martyrdom of St Erasmus* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1973) for an informative study into the background of the painting.

¹⁷⁷ Antonio Gallonio, *De Sanctorum martyrum cruciatibus* (Paris: Claude Cramoisy, 1660), especially illustrations on pp. 41, 43, 135 and in particular p. 109.

¹⁷⁸ Freedberg, 'The Representations of Martyrdoms', p. 138.

Pour serrer doigts et mains, et punir les mutins.¹⁷⁹

These intricate methods of threatened torment accurately reflect the type of detail found in Gallonio's engravings.¹⁸⁰

Evelyn Vitz has detailed the progression from oral traditions to written versions of saints' lives, stressing how this 'great shift from voiced to read, from lectionary to legendary, from storytelling to text-editing' encouraged a greater familiarity and more accurate science in hagiography, that is to say, hagiology.¹⁸¹ Popular, more widely available versions of martyrs' lives became one of the tools in the denominational war. I suggest that the use of imagery in such accounts and other works already detailed in this chapter, had the further effect of visualising scenes of martyrdoms to the extent of making them commonplace. Alison Saunders has called the increasing reliance on imagery in sixteenth-century books, a case of 'visual versus verbal'. She draws attention to the fact that 'what strikes the eye most forcibly is the more dominant and easily understandable visual representation' of an author's message.¹⁸² Martyrdom prevailed as an artistic subject and since 'painting is a universally accessible 'language', the book of scholars as well as of the poor', seventeenth-century audiences seeing martyr-plays were watching the dramatisation of a theme they felt they could understand, and therefore to which they could relate.¹⁸³ The written tradition became ocular, and one can see the emergence of the martyr-tragedy as a corollary to this progression, a representation of the martyr that combines both the verbal and the visual.

Rome did not inaugurate the artistic fashion for martyrdom, but monopolised its ensuing momentum once the vogue was in full swing:

The martyr [...] served as a model for the Church militant: his physical suffering and death bore witness to the faith. So it should come as no surprise that a veritable genre of martyrdom paintings emerge. This was the moment of the application of the decrees of the Council of Trent, the period of

¹⁷⁹ Jean de Virey, *La Machabée, tragoedie du martyre des septz frères, et de Solomone leur mere* (Rouen: du Petit Val, 1596), p. 34. This edition does not contain act or scene divisions.

¹⁸⁰ For further examples of the depiction of torture in the martyr-play, see Chapter Five, pp. 216-17.

¹⁸¹ Evelyn B. Vitz, 'From the Oral to the Written in Medieval and Renaissance Saints' Lives', in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. by R. Blumenfield-Kosinski and T. Szell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 97-114 (p. 113).

¹⁸² A. Saunders, 'Visual versus Verbal: Changing Uses of Imagery in Sixteenth-Century Verse', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 81 (1999), 269-298 (p. 271).

¹⁸³ Henry Phillips, 'Sacred Text and Sacred Image: France in the Seventeenth Century', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 81 (1999), 299-319 (p. 303).

the Counter-Reformation; a lucid and precise program was drawn up to organize the emotions that lay behind the martyrdom paintings.¹⁸⁴

Given the extent of the prevalence of the subject of martyrdom throughout the early modern period, it is little wonder that it became a literary subject. During the course of the seventeenth century, Europe's populace, whether lay or clerical, Protestant or Catholic, was increasingly familiar with the martyr-figure, presented to them in either written or visual guise. Brad S. Gregory has recently dealt with the manifestation of martyrdom in early modern European society, concluding that

Martyrdom is a sharp wedge with which to penetrate the beliefs and behaviors of devout early modern Christians. It leads through distinct traditions, across national and linguistic boundaries, among the privileged and the humble. The learned and the unlettered, men and women, clergy and laity, into many type of sources, from the fifteenth century into the seventeenth.¹⁸⁵

Gregory's analysis centres on the religious and cultural facets to the theme, so he does not discuss the martyr on stage, what may be called martyrdom's entertainment aspects. The second half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries was a climate in which both Catholic and Protestant adherents were bombarded with devotional literature glorifying the theatre of martyrdom.¹⁸⁶ Martyrdom is, by definition, theatrical: it has to be witnessed and is striking, dramatic, in its unfolding.¹⁸⁷ In other words, the perfect subject for the stage, as witnessed by the two authors of representations on the actor-martyr Genesius. The narrative of this saint raises the issue of mimesis in a startling manner. The principal aim of the remainder of this thesis is to examine the figure's dramatic expression, and to emphasise the existence of a theatrical corpus in every way as distinct as the artistic and polemic one. If it is true that 'the martyr has played a central role in western consciousness for

¹⁸⁴ Puppi, *Torment in Art*, p. 56. Kirstin Noreen contends that the 'German-Hungarian College [in Rome] may have spread the representations of Early Christian martyrdom found in the *Ecclesiae militantis triumph* to countries occupied by heretical factions as a means of reinforcing the Catholic faith' and that such portrayals demonstrate that 'Jesuits also used art to substantiate religious ideology contested during the Counter-Reformation', *Ecclesiae militantis triumph: Jesuit Iconography and the Counter-Reformation*, pp. 699 and 689. The *Ecclesiae* is a print series of 1585 by Giovanni Battista Cavillieri, based on frescoes in Santo Stefano Rotondo.

¹⁸⁵ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, p. 342.

¹⁸⁶ 'Foxe gave much of his attention to documenting the persecution of those who were to become martyrs, reporting in detail their imprisonment and examination as well as the ordeal at the stake', John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1594-1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 83.

hundreds of years', then an examination of the origins and apogee of this lingering presence in the theatre is of exceptional significance.¹⁸⁸

1.5 From Bibles to Bullets

Edward Kearns has noted that 'central to any discussion of ideas in seventeenth-century France must be the question of authority', concentrating on the 'profound changes in the mental climate of France' that occurred during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV.¹⁸⁹ One recent biographer of Descartes sums up the transformations of this period:

The transition from the 'medieval' to the 'modern' world outlook was a lengthy, gradual and exceedingly complex affair, but if there can be said to be one generation that represents the pivotal phase of that transition, it is the generation of Descartes and his contemporaries.¹⁹⁰

Before dealing with the content of the plays themselves, it is necessary to consider the society into which they appeared. While, at first glance, the martyr-figure may seem a safe and orthodox subject for dramatisation, it is entirely possible to view the martyr as an incarnation of rebellion against the established order. He or she resists a lawful superior and is prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice rather than compromise or yield to secular authority.

A turning point in the development of political ideas in France was the assassination of Henri IV on 14 May 1610. This King's death was seen in some quarters as the result of the influence of certain political doctrines, favouring the right of resistance to an erroneous monarch. One of the effects of the Reformation was that the ruler or administrator of a district could belong to a different confession from that of the majority of his subjects. In France at the end of the sixteenth century this led to the resurrection and propagation of a political doctrine, largely dormant since the

¹⁸⁷ 'Martyrdom was a three act drama when the victim was a lay person, a four-act drama for clerics', David Nicholls, 'The Theatre of Martyrdom in the French Reformation', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), 49-73 (p. 52).

¹⁸⁸ Weiner, *The Martyr's Conviction*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁹ E. J. Kearns, *Ideas in Seventeenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ John Cottingham, *Descartes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 1.

scholastic thinkers, that of tyrannicide.¹⁹¹ Henri IV's assassin, François Ravaillac, had justified his regicide in the light of such theological reasoning.¹⁹² The murder can be seen as the legacy of sixteenth-century theorists such as the monarchomachs.¹⁹³ In order to prevent any interpretation of republicanism, sixteenth-century apologias for revolt against royal authority were usually accompanied with the intellectual ammunition of politico-historical theories, usually placing ultimate authority with the people. French Huguenot ideology had evolved: 'dans les textes de propagande, le rituel politique de la prise d'armes remplace le rituel religieux du martyr'.¹⁹⁴ In the last decades of the sixteenth century martyrdom was reclaimed as a resistant act, while at the same time religious drama became a political instrument.¹⁹⁵

It is unsurprising that such theories were developed and expanded during a time of great internal conflict and crisis, but it should be remembered that tyrannicide had been a subject of speculation for over three centuries. Even after the end of the Wars of Religion the theories continued to be discussed and disseminated. A noteworthy instance is the Spanish Jesuit Juan de Mariana whose treatise *De Rege* was published in 1599.¹⁹⁶ This was to prove a reference work on the topic, running into several editions; the 1603 edition became widely used by Jesuits in the French province as a standard work of political theory.¹⁹⁷ Mariana covers all the familiar arguments on the subject, maintaining that royal power derived from the citizens of the realm. He makes an essential distinction in the treatment of a tyrant by oppression and a tyrant by usurpation; while anyone can licitly kill the latter, Mariana insists on

¹⁹¹ 'There is perhaps no other period in which the doctrine of tyrannicide was considered in such detail, both in scholarly and in popular writings, as in France in the latter half of the sixteenth century', Oscar Jászi and John D. Lewis, *Against the Tyrant* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957), p. 73.

¹⁹² Jean de Baricave, a Toulouse priest, published a detailed critique of the *Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos* and attributes a great influence to this work: 'ô très maudite et pernicieuse doctrine de laquelle François Ravaillac avait appris sa leçon', *La Defence de la monarchie françoise, et autres monarchies, contre les detestables et execrables maximes d'estat des ministres Calvinistes* (Toulouse: Jean Boude, 1614), p. 754. This work will hereafter be called *Defence*.

¹⁹³ Tyrannicidal theories 'provoquèrent des crimes: à elles remontent la responsabilité de l'assassinat de Henri III et de Henri IV, la mort du duc de Guise et du cardinal Beaton, derrière elles se retranche celui qui fit tuer Guillaume le Taciturne' Ernest Nys, *Les Théories politiques et le Droit International en France jusqu'au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Alcan, 1891), p. 97. Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* (1573) was 'originale par sa méthode historique, la *Franco-Gallia* a fourni des arguments aux adversaires de l'absolutisme jusqu'à la fin du XVII^e siècle'. Michel Pernot, *Les Guerres de religion en France 1559-1598* (Paris: Sedes, 1987), p. 196.

¹⁹⁴ El Kenz, *Les Bûchers du Roi*, p. 202.

¹⁹⁵ 'After the massacres of 1572, it is impossible to ignore the fact that tyrannicide 'became a real political (and theoretical) issue and many Protestant works discussed the question of tyrannicide and justified it morally and legally', Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 31.

¹⁹⁶ Juan de Mariana, *De Rege et Regis Institutione* (Toledo: Roderigo, 1599).

the need for a trial to judge an erring monarch. He concludes that if such a trial be impossible, any individual is at liberty to put the tyrant to the sword or to poison. The author examines the circumstances of Henri III's death, judging this not only an example of legitimate tyrannicide, but also a lesson to other princes. This work was allowed free distribution in France, with the single minor requirement that the phrase 'æternum Galliaë decus' be expunged, a description applied to Jacques Clément, the assassin of Henri III.¹⁹⁸ The justification of the murder of this king remained; the high praise for the assassin did not.

The concept of tyrannicide was consonant with orthodox Christian belief, and was accepted as a respectable notion by both Catholic and Protestant scholars. The doctrine was defended by leading Roman theologians such as Cardinal Bellarmine, who engaged in a prolonged dispute with James VI and I over the theory. It had the prestige of being approved by authoritative theologians, principally Thomas Aquinas, who concurred with the killing of a tyrant by usurpation.¹⁹⁹ While not entirely the case, 'in the early seventeenth century Catholic polemicists were among the most vigorous assertors of the notion that kings are accountable to their people'.²⁰⁰ The discussion on the nature of government, and the limits of kingship, was a feature of the first half of the seventeenth century in Europe:

The tremendous upheaval of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation ignited fiery polemics on the rights of subjects and on the nature and foundations of civil order. At various times Protestants and Catholics arose to challenge the authority of the earthly crown and to claim the right of deposition and tyrannicide. Monarchomachs like Christopher Goodman, John Ponet, George Buchanan, François Hoffman, Théodore de Bèze, the author of the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, the Ligue, and the Jesuits Robert Persons, Francisco Suarez and Juan de Mariana drew upon the classics (especially Aristotle), the Bible, and other works (especially those of Aquinas, Salutati and Bartolus) to reexamine fundamental assumptions about political order. The question of tyrannicide (with all of its attendant inquiries) preoccupied the England of Shakespeare's time as it did the rest of Europe.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Jászi and Lewis, *Against the Tyrant*, p. 69.

¹⁹⁸ 'The little work was examined by order of the king and fully approved. What is more, it bore the licence of the superiors of the Society of Jesus. It had, in fact, received the approbation of the Society in 1599, and it was not until 1610 that the doctrine of regicide was definitively banned by Aquaviva', G. Kaster Tallmadge, 'Juan de Mariana', in *Jesuit Thinkers of the Renaissance*, ed. by Gerard Smith (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1939), pp. 157-192 (p. 188).

¹⁹⁹ Aquinas sets out his teachings on the subject in *In 2 Sententiæ*, 44.2.2.5, and in the *Summa Theologica*, II^o II^o, 42. 3.

²⁰⁰ J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640* (London: Longman, 1999), p. 50.

²⁰¹ Robert A. Miola, 'Julius Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), 271-289 (p. 271).

Given such prominent deaths as those of the duc de Guise in 1563, the slaughter of William the Silent in 1584, Henri III's assassination in 1589, not to mention Henri IV's murder in 1610, it is evident that 'the mortality rate among political and religious leaders was very high, compared with that for the Middle Ages or for the era beginning about 1650'.²⁰² During the reign of Henri IV with its greater internal stability, theories of tyrannicide had circulated with virtually no censure.²⁰³ Georges Minois observes that 'à la veille de 1610, l'assassinat politique est devenu une véritable obsession en France. La multiplication des traités discutant de leur légitimité se conjugue avec la répétition des tentatives et des exécutions pour entretenir une véritable psychose du régicide'.²⁰⁴

This was all to change, in France at least, for the king's assassination was not merely an isolated fanatical killing, since the assassin Ravaillac 'only took to their conclusion widely held views about heresy and the case for tyrannicide'.²⁰⁵ The cause 'de l'émotion, de la honte, de la colère universelles' was the realisation that the assassin had not only been motivated, but also directly influenced in his course of action by conclusions in the respectable, established notion of tyrannicide.²⁰⁶ The response to these theories, largely considered as having played a significant part in the king's death, was not to condemn the misapplication of the doctrine of tyrannicide, making a case that Henri IV did not in any way constitute a tyrant. The general reaction was to negate the theory altogether. In the wider Catholic world, 'after the seventeenth century, Catholic moralists, influenced undoubtedly by the new revolutionary theories and their consequences, abandoned the scholastic teaching regarding tyrannicide'; in France this process occurred in a more pronounced fashion in 1610.²⁰⁷ The swift volte-face that swept across France was an organised and conscious campaign, since the death of the monarch 'seemed to confirm the worst

²⁰² Franklin L. Ford, *Political Murder: from Tyrannicide to Terrorism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 146. James VI and I was reluctant to take anti-Catholic measures as they 'might provoke committed defenders of the faith to take violent action against him, and the assassinations of William the Silent in 1584 and Henri III in 1589 showed that this was a very real risk', Roger Lockyer, *James VI and I* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 20.

²⁰³ Philippe Deforme, *Les Rois assassinés* (Paris: Bartillat, 1993), p. 46.

²⁰⁴ Georges Minois, *Le Couteau et le poison: l'assassinat politique en Europe (1400-1800)* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 187.

²⁰⁵ Geoffrey Treasure, *Mazarin: the Crisis of Absolutism in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 96.

²⁰⁶ Jacques Hennequin, *Henri IV dans ses oraisons funèbres, ou la naissance d'une légende* Bibliothèque Française et Romane Série C: Études Littéraires, 62 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), p. 64. Pierre Chevallier observes that 'la mort d'Henri IV suscita un regret profond et quasi universel' and the king's demise 'ne provoqua d'autre sentiment que la douleur la plus vive et la plus unanimement partagée', *Les Régicides: Clément, Ravaillac, Damiens* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), pp. 103 and 266.

fears which the allegedly Jesuit doctrine of tyrannicide had inspired'.²⁰⁸ With a nine-year-old boy on the throne, the danger of France becoming victim to divisive civil wars was a new and real danger. Furthermore, the lingering discussion of arguments used during the Wars of Religion to justify resisting authority was proven to have had serious consequences. The disaster of the king's murder had more at stake than the loss of a beloved figurehead, it was also a question of the consolidation of the nation, as internal warfare would undermine 'the re-emergence of France as a major power under Henri IV'.²⁰⁹

The campaign against theories of resistance was also one to save the monarchical system, for a monarchy 'can survive a thousand assassinations but not one execution'.²¹⁰ The Catholic establishment changed its outlook on theories of contractual government, not to mention tyrannicidal solutions, as drastically as the Huguenots had previously abandoned the same theories in 1584.²¹¹ Henri IV ushered in an age of religious pacification, and Denis Crouzet is of the opinion that this was 'the result of a veritable revolution in political ideology'.²¹² According to this interpretation, the monarch's reign created a new royalty marked out 'as the providential accomplishment of a human order called upon to conform to universal order'.²¹³ In this light, the King's murder can be seen as a sacrifice that results in the continuation of this more mystical form of kingship, a true regicide.²¹⁴ Henri IV fostered a personal cultus more extensively than had been seen before, and as Michael Wolfe points out, the settlement of the Wars of Religion 'forced Catholics and

²⁰⁷ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XIV, 354.

²⁰⁸ J. H. M. Salmon, 'Catholic Resistance Theory, Ultramontanism, and the Royalist Response, 1580–1620', in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. by J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 219–253 (p. 252).

²⁰⁹ Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: a Political History of England 1603–1642*, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1999), p. 154.

²¹⁰ Michael Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, trans. by M. Rothstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 5.

²¹¹ Huguenot thinkers, hitherto the originators of works such as the *Vindiciæ*, now considered patriotism '[une] question vitale'. Moreover, 'tous les écrits protestants qui paraissent entre les années 1585–1589 sont placés sous le signe d'un ardent patriotisme', Myriam Yardeni, *La Conscience nationale en France pendant les guerres de religion (1559–1598)* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1971), p. 183.

²¹² D. Crouzet, 'Henri IV, King of Reason', in *From Valois to Bourbon: Dynasty, State and Society in Early Modern France*, ed. by Keith Cameron, Exeter Studies in History, 24 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), pp. 73–106 (p. 73).

²¹³ Crouzet, 'Henri IV', p. 97.

²¹⁴ A. Lloyd Moote concludes that the delay in Louis XIII's *sacre* until the Autumn of 1610 'mirrored the shift of the French coronation rite from its medieval function of validating a new ruler's authority to its more modest early-modern ceremonial role of celebrating the king's special place above his subjects', *Louis XIII, the Just* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 42.

Huguenots alike to recast many of the divisive issues raised during the wars so that their resolution came to depend on the conscience of one man, Henri IV'.²¹⁵ With the birth of a second son, Gaston, in 1608, the second generation was secure; there was an heir-in-waiting, should any misfortune befall the dauphin. The survival chances of the Bourbon style of government were increased.²¹⁶

The stark reality facing the upholders of stability and the forces of order in the kingdom of France when Henri IV was assassinated, was the fact that two monarchs had been murdered by Catholic subjects in the space of two decades.²¹⁷ Before this time, centuries had passed without a single assassination. The murders of 1598 and 1610 had largely been motivated by the assassins' religious reasoning. Decisive action was deemed necessary to counter this disastrous trend: 'en fait, c'est l'assassinat d'Henri IV, en 1610, qui va être le choc décisif et provoquer le reflux de tyrannicide pendant un siècle et demi'.²¹⁸ The effectiveness of the campaign against doctrines supporting resistance theories and tyrannicide conducted by both the secular and spiritual arms of French society may be seen in the results. The next attempt on a French ruler's life was to occur almost a century and a half later with the notorious failed regicide of Robert-François Damiens on 5 January 1757 against Louis XV. The process of distancing the established authorities from tyrannicide primarily involved the embracing of a concept of kingship that elevated the regal office. Both Protestant and Catholic proponents of tyrannicide had stressed the humanity of the sovereign, so that 'the king is simply a man who occupies an office'.²¹⁹ The events of 1610 therefore heralded the canonisation of a new system of political orthodoxy and order, and the effectiveness of this transformation can be seen in the behaviour of the participants of the Estates General of 1614–15. Traditionally a body that forced the

²¹⁵ M. Wolfe, *The Conversion of Henri IV: Politics, Power and Religious Belief in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 44.

²¹⁶ Richard Bonney aptly describes this as 'the capacity of the Bourbon dynasty for survival', in 'Was there a Bourbon Style of Government?', in *From Valois to Bourbon: Dynasty, State and Society in Early Modern France*, ed. by Keith Cameron, Exeter Studies in History, 24 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), pp. 161-177 (p. 176).

²¹⁷ 'Ravillac was a throwback to a past that nearly all French Catholics wished to forget, however, and whereas the assassination of the impeccably Catholic Henri III in 1589 had brought widespread rejoicing among the Leaguers, the reaction in 1610 was one of revulsion and horror', Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tension in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 182.

²¹⁸ Minois, *Le Couteau et le poison*, p. 187.

²¹⁹ 'The Protestant tradition of tyrannicide may be seen as one which starts to view the king, the law, and the king-slayer in strongly human terms', whereas 'the Catholic tradition represented mainly by Mariana and Suárez, continues the process of secularisation which is found in humanists like Buchanan', A. Robert Lauer, *Tyrannicide and Drama* (Stuttgart: Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987), p. 48

king to mellow royal policies, in this instance the delegates 'abandoned France to royal absolutism. Ultimately, this outcome can be traced in large measure back to Ravaillac's stabbing of Henri IV'.²²⁰ Previous meetings of Estates, still in living memory, had not run so smoothly. At the previous assembly of 1588, the Estates had elected the ageing Cardinal de Bourbon as king, though this gathering was convoked during the League.²²¹ At the assembly prior to this held in 1576, Henri III had been rebuked by a stern *remonstrance* which had obliged the king to make a humiliating reply.²²² After Henri IV's murder, the Estates 'acceptèrent de remettre tout le pouvoir au roi. Ils ont reconnu sans ambages et à l'unanimité son autorité souveraine'.²²³

As I have highlighted earlier, it was not merely the secular authorities that were intent on eradicating notions of tyrannicide, the French Catholic hierarchy was fully supportive of this manoeuvre. Even the Jesuits succeeded in denying their past.²²⁴ Despite the fact that some ecclesiastics had countenanced Henri III's assassination, the Parisian clergy of 1610 denounced what their predecessors had acclaimed, sometimes from the same pulpits. This commenced in the immediate aftermath of Henry's assassination, for within hours of the king's death a *lit de justice* was used on 15 May, despite Sully's objections, to transfer royal power, and therefore a regency was declared before the dead king had even been buried.²²⁵ This tended to

²²⁰ Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598–1789*, trans. by A. Goldhammer, 2 vols (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), II, 228. A recent article by the historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie interprets the events in a contradictory way to Mousnier, for he believes that 'le fait qu'il y ait encore des états généraux en 1614, indice antiabsolutiste très évident, montre bien que, sur ce point, le couteau de Ravaillac n'a pas transformé grande-chose', 'Les Grandes énigmes de l'histoire: qui a armé l'assassin d'Henri IV?', *Le Figaro Magazine*, 15 July 2000, p. 85. In fact, despite the promising title, the author concurs with the general opinion that Ravaillac acted alone, and the author attempts to undermine the long-term influence of Henry's assassination without any new material and *pace* the majority view of historians.

²²¹ Among the many publications supporting the autonomy of the Estates and favourable to the League, there is a reprint of a speech delivered to Charles VI by Jean Gerson, *Harangue faite au Roy, en presence de tous les Princes, et de l'assemblée des Estats, touchant le bien et gouvernement du Royaume* (Paris: Nicolas Roffet, 1588). This reminded the king of his duty, and also of the Estates' responsibility towards the sovereign: 'puis que la Foy Chrestienne, est le fondement de la vie espirituelle [sic], elle doit apparoir singulierement au Roy tres-chrestien tant de parole comme de fait' (p. 151). The unflattering application to Henri III would not be lost on an informed reader.

²²² J. Russell Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1994), p. 54.

²²³ Chevallier, *Les Régicides*, p. 287. See also Chapter Two, p. 66.

²²⁴ Jesuits' attempts at reinventing their past still continue it would seem. Francis Edwards claims that 'while the subject was discussed amongst Jesuits in the schools as a proposition of moral theology, they never countenanced tyrannicide as a practical solution. Even the theoretical discussion was forbidden after 1614. Attempts were made to pin such things on them, as in France, but with no success', 'Still Investigating Gunpowder Plot', *Recusant History*, 21 (1993), 305-346 (p. 326).

²²⁵ 'Dès le soir du 14 mai, les avocats du roi firent part à Messieurs [du parlement] du désir de la reine de les voir pouvoir promptement à la régence', Chevallier, *Les Régicides*, p. 268. See also David

support the principle that *le roi ne meurt jamais* and this idea was reinforced by the *sacre* at Reims taking place only five months later.²²⁶

It is at this time that the martyr-play is becoming a subject on the French stage. A tragedy about a martyr is not an obvious criticism of monarchy, or an openly sympathetic justification of rebellion. In my opinion, during the climate following Henri IV's death and an increasingly consolidated absolutist system of government, certain martyr-plays can be read as critiques of royal authority. While other dramatic subjects could not deal with the topic of tyrannicide, and authors felt the need to be careful when dealing with any representation of tyranny, in some instances the martyr-play has a subtle anti-absolutist agenda. This is not only because of the representation of a hero who disobeys, but also because of the fact that it is a Roman emperor who is disobeyed. Iconographical representations of the French monarch as a Roman emperor were ubiquitous. This link was so deeply engrained in the public imagination, that seeing a Roman emperor on stage would inevitably call to mind the spectator's sovereign. This imperial iconography is associated foremost with Louis XIV, but has its origins much earlier: François I appeared in Rocco's frescoes at Fontainebleau dressed in Roman armour and crowned with a laurel wreath (*Ignorance chassée*, 1534). Much later 'in the age of Louis XIII, Guez de Balzac had suggested the imitation of Roman emperor-worship' and to this end 'ceremonial experts such as Godefroy and Saintot studied the rituals of ancient Rome'.²²⁷ It is important to recognise that the allegory was consciously fostered. In the early modern period 'monarchs addressed their subjects in progresses and festivals, as well as in speeches and proclamations'.²²⁸ The royal entry ceremony into cities of the realm was a planned and elaborate occasion designed to demonstrate the wealth of a city, as well as its loyalty to the crown.²²⁹ It was also one of the only occasions that provincial

Parker, *Class and State in Ancien Régime France: The Road to Modernity?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 164.

²²⁶ The *ordonnance* of 1407 of Charles VI established the principle of the succession passing without interruption, as well as legislating that the queen would act as regent in a minority, and in this 'Charles VI semble donner toutes les garanties de stabilité', Fanny Cosandey, 'La blancheur de nos lys'. La reine de France au cœur de l'État royal', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 44 (1997), 387-403 (p. 389).

²²⁷ Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 195.

²²⁸ Nicholas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 140.

²²⁹ 'After the death of Henry II, ceremonies were used as instruments for governing on an unprecedented scale, but there was an important difference in that planners and audiences treated them and their images, even those of the king, as "mere" propaganda rather than mysterious continuities of the traditions of the French monarchy', Laurence M. Bryant, 'Politics, Ceremonies, and Embodiments

subjects could have of seeing their king, and the ritual had real ideological importance, as 'l'entrée royale est sans doute la fête dans laquelle l'intention politique est la plus évidente'.²³⁰ The scale of these royal visits can be seen in their geographical diversity. In 1622, for example, Louis XIII and his Queen visited Arles, Carcassonne, Aix, Avignon, Grenoble and Lyon.²³¹ The imagery was increasingly based on that of a Roman triumph. Lawrence Bryant argues that Henri II's entry into Paris heralds a 'landmark year in the history of royal entries' for 'the program and the deportment of both king and subjects follow the formulas of exalted kingship'.²³² More striking is the fact that 'the 1549 [ceremony] had one innovation – it also took some elements from the Roman triumph' and to this end triumphal arches replaced *tableaux vivants*, the king was portrayed in classical guise and the procession was on a grander scale.²³³ In Charles IX's *entrée* into Paris on 6 March 1571:

C'estoit un grand piedestail, soutenu par quatre Dauphins, sur lequel estoit erigé un chariot triomphal, embelly de plusieurs ornemens, et enrichisemens, trainé par deux lyons, ayans les armoires de la Ville au col. Dans ce chariot estoit assise Cibeles, mere des Dieux Neptune, et Pluton, et de la Deesse Junon, representant Messeigneurs freres, et Madame, sœur du Roy. Cette Cibeles regardoit un Jupiter, representant nostre Roy, eslevé sur deux colonnes, l'une d'or, l'autre d'argent, avec l'inscription de sa devise *Pietate et Iustitia*. Sous lequel estoit une grande Couronne Imperiale.²³⁴

This gives some idea of the opulence of aspects of the ceremonial, as well as the Roman imagery. Similarly in Louis XIII's *entrée* into Aix on 3 November 1622, the monarch was represented on top of the second triumphal arch in full Roman dress, save for the presence of fleur-de-lys on his breast-plate.²³⁵ Between 1571 and 1622,

of Majesty in Henry II's France', in *European Monarchy: its Evolution and Practice from Roman Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. by Heinz Duchardt, Richard A. Jackson and David Sturdy (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992), pp. 127-154 (p. 151).

²³⁰ Marie-Christine Moine, *Les Fêtes à la cour du Roi-Soleil, 1653-1715* (Paris: Lanore, 1984), p. 19. 'Après une période marquée par les conflits religieux, une succession monarchique problématique et une régicide, l'entrée solennelle, sous Louis XIII sert à maintenir un rituel qu'elle fixe dans les mémoires au moyen de symboles', Eric Méchoulan, Daniel Vaillancourt and Marie-France Wagner, 'L'Entrée dans Toulouse ou la ville théâtralisée', *XVII^e Siècle*, 201 (1998), 613-637 (pp. 614-15).

²³¹ T. Godefroy, *Projet d'un nouveau ceremonial français* (Paris: Prault, 1746), pp. 33-34.

²³² Lawrence M. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual and Art in the Renaissance*, *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 216 (Geneva: Droz, 1986), pp. 61 and 63.

²³³ Bryant, *The King and the City*, p. 66.

²³⁴ Théodore Godefroy, *Le Ceremonial de France ou description des Ceremonies, Rangs, et Seances observées aux Couronnemens, Entrées, et Enterremens des Roys et Reynes de France, et autres Actes et Assemblées solomnelles, Recueilly des Memoires de plusieurs Secretaires du roy, Herauts d'armes, et autres* (Paris: Abraham Pacard, 1619), p. 505.

²³⁵ Jean Galaup de Chasteuil, *Discours surs les arcs triomphaux dressés en la ville d'Aix à l'heureuse arrivée de tres-Chrestien, tres-Grand, et tres-Juste Monarque Louys XIII. Roy de France et de Navarre* (Aix: Jean Tholoson, 1622), p. 5.

the imperial metaphor has clearly become more apparent.²³⁶ It is not only in the entry itself that subjects are familiarised with their sovereign, but also in works detailing these processions, almost invariably illustrated.

Along with the entry ceremony, another depiction of the sovereign that heavily used Roman symbolism was that of medallions struck for momentous occasions.²³⁷ Jacques de Bie lists medals of both Henri II and Henri IV that portray both monarchs in armour wearing laurel wreaths, as well cataloguing numerous instances of Louis XIII appearing as an emperor on medals.²³⁸ It is with Louis XIV, however, that the allegory reaches its apogee, as he was represented in Roman guise from the moment of his birth (see Figs. 3, 4 and 5).²³⁹ Henry Estienne mentions how the fires lit across France to mark the royal birth resembled 'le feu qui precedoit les anciens Césars', and goes on to comment on how the prince had the air of Apollo with 'cette blonde chevelure et crespée, cette Jeunesse, et les traits du visage nous font assez connoistre qu'il represente le Roy'.²⁴⁰ These examples demonstrate the fact that Roman representations of Louis XIV preceded his personal rule.

The Roman imagery is also to be found in engravings. As with coinage and triumphs, this comparison stretched far beyond Louis XIV. In Jean Valdor's work in folio, *Les Triomphes de Louis le Juste*, on an engraving of the bust of the king accompanying the title page, the figure of Louis XIII is next to Hercules (who is

²³⁶ Gérard Sabatier links this to a general process of neglecting Christian imagery in ceremonial, starting with Louis XII. With the royal entrées: 'disparus les tableaux vivants, "mystères" bibliques, et autres références chrétiennes. A leur place, arcs à l'antique, environnement mythologique et héroïque, habillage romain du roi et de sa suite', 'Imagerie heroique et sacralité monarchique', in *La Royauté sacrée dans le monde chrétien*, ed. by Alain Boreau and Claudio-Sergio Ingerfom (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1992), pp. 115-127 (p. 117).

²³⁷ Louis Marin argues that the iconographical impact of medals was significant: 'la médaille, une représentation-pouvoir, en ce sens primitif que, portant dans sa matière (et non à sa surface comme les couches de peintre ou les traces d'encre), par empreinte, gravure et inscription, la marque d'une autorité souveraine et indiquant par là même la présence légitime de cette autorité, autorisant cette autorité, la médaille-monnaie se fonde et s'autorise elle-même: elle est en elle-même vérité et loi', *Le Portrait du roi* (Paris: Minuit, 1981), p. 154.

²³⁸ Jacques de Bie, *La France Metallique contenant les actions celebres tant publiques que privées des Rois et Reynes. Remarquées en leurs Medailles d'Or, d'Argent et Bronze. Tirées des plus Curieux Cabinetz* (Paris: Jean Camusat, 1636), pp. 317 and 349.

²³⁹ See Claude François Menestrier, *Histoire du Roy Louis le Grand par les Medailles, Emblèmes, Devises, Jettons, Inscriptions, Armoires, et autres Monumens Publics*, 2nd edn (Paris: J. B. Nolin, 1693).

²⁴⁰ Henry Estienne, *Exposition et explication des Devises, Emblemes, et figures Enigmatiques du feu construit devant l'Hostel de Ville, par Messieurs les Prevost des Marchands et Eschevins de Paris, sur l'heureuse Naissance et Retour du Roy* (Paris: Antoine Estiene, 1649). Quotations from pp. 2 and 4.

naked), and the monarch is in laurel wreath and Roman dress.²⁴¹ Throughout this history of Louis XIII's reign, the sovereign is represented in Roman costume.²⁴² It is also in statues, another means of the populace to see the features of the monarch, that an imperial flavour is omnipresent. Michel Martin stresses that 'le développement des régimes monarchiques à partir du XVI^e siècle accroît l'importance et accentue la signification de la statuaire équestre: son apparition et sa généralisation correspondent à l'essor de l'absolutisme.'²⁴³ When Jean de Bologne and Pietro Tacca designed an equestrian statue in memory of Henri IV on the Pont Neuf, officially inaugurated on 23 August 1614, this constituted the 'premier grand monument équestre composite érigé dans un lieu public à Paris'. While the king wears a laurel wreath, 'ce sera aussi la dernière à représenter le roi en costume du temps de façon réaliste en armure à la française de l'époque'.²⁴⁴ Louis XIII was first to have a equestrian statue in a public place of the capital during his lifetime: in 1639 a statue by Pierre Biard at the Place Royale portrayed 'l'effigie du roi [...] présentait l'originalité pour l'époque d'être costumée à l'antique, suivant une formule du baroque romain'.²⁴⁵ A statue erected in the prominent public space of the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville, was the 1654 *Louis Terrassant La Fronde* by Gilles Guérin. This erection, planned from the moment of the King's return in 1653, was paid for by the *prévôt des marchands* to celebrate the restoration of order (and to court favour with the monarch).²⁴⁶ It was sculpted in white marble and portrays the ruler entirely vested in Roman armour.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ Jean Valdor, *Les Triomphes de Louis le Juste XIII du nom, roy de France et de Navarre* (Paris: Antoine Estienne, 1649). The engraving is with an ode in the first few pages which are unpaginated.

²⁴² In an engraving entitled 'Caen', the king is entirely attired in Roman armour, sword and helmet (p. 3). In 'Saumur', he is seated receiving the keys to this city dressed in Roman dress with a helmet embellished by ostrich plumes, holding a Roman sword with an eagle's head (p. 15). In 'Punition des villes rebelles', Louis is outside a city which has been set on fire: he is wearing a laurel wreath and a Roman toga and sandals (p. 27). In 'Perpignan', Louis enters this city on horseback, dressed in toga, sandals and plumed helmet. The horse has its front leg held up in the pose of that of the statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitol (p. 83).

²⁴³ Michel Martin, *Les Monuments équestres de Louis XIV: une grande entreprise de propagande monarchique* (Paris: Picard, 1986), p. 20.

²⁴⁴ Martin, *Les Monuments équestres*, both quotes from p. 43.

²⁴⁵ Martin, *Les Monuments équestres*, p. 44. In 1636 a statue was inaugurated at Reims of the king in armour and a laurel wreath, see René de la Cheze, *Le Roy triomphant ou la statue equestre de l'invincible monarque Louys le Juste, XIII. du nom, Roy de France et de Navarre. Posée sur le front de l'Hostel de-Ville de Reims, à la gloire de sa Majesté, l'an M.DC.XXXVI* (Reims: François Bernard, 1637).

²⁴⁶ The statue was commissioned the day after the end of the Frondes. Joël Cornette sees this work as 'l'exemple et l'initiative de cette grande entreprise française de propagande monarchique par le bronze et la pierre', *Essai sur la souveraineté dans la France du Grand Siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1993), p. 266.

²⁴⁷ The King appears 'habillé en César victorieux avec un manteau à la romaine', C. Maumené and L. C. d'Harcourt, *Iconographie des Rois de France*, 2 vols (Paris: Colin, 1931), II, 183.

It is not surprising that attention was paid to drawing an historical parallel between the military victories of the France and those of Rome. Care was therefore taken with official portrayals of the king, but it was also 'a literary commonplace that Louis [XIV] was a new Augustus'.²⁴⁸ Like Augustus, Louis took great care with his public image.²⁴⁹ His Court, like that of Augustus, was dedicated to Apollo, and Louis danced attired as Apollo on several occasions in the 1660s. At the same time as consolidating his own personal authority, it has been argued that Louis strived to increase the concept of kingship from his immediate person.²⁵⁰ The young ruler even appeared dressed as a Roman emperor at the *course de bague* held at the Palais-Cardinal in 1656, and again at the *caroussel* at the Louvre in 1662.²⁵¹ The sovereign evidently cultivated, and enjoyed being seen in the light of, this classical allegory. This preference was not lost on those responsible for manufacturing his image, and Pierre Mignard's later painting of Louis in Roman dress and laurel wreath (1673), typifies what had become by then the standard regal portrait. It is the entry into Paris of 26 August 1660 that particularly represents the glorification of absolutist ideals of kingship. Louis chose to make the entry through the porte Saint-Antoine: this was the precise place where, during the Fronde des Princes, la grande Mademoiselle had ordered canon to be fired on his troops and Condé had fought against Turenne on 2 July 1652 (see Chapter Two, p. 117). Moreover, the symbolism continued with the ceremonial: 'dans la défilée figuraient le Prince de Condé pardonné, son frère le Prince de Conty, et son fils le Duc d'Enghien; tous trois incarnaient en quelque sorte la soumission féodale, faisant figure de vaincus dans le cortège d'un triomphe à la romaine'.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, p. 195.

²⁴⁹ The association of Louis with Augustus arguably was present from the first souvenirs of his birth. François Charpentier sees a connection between the manner in which the royal birth was commemorated and that of Augustus: 'comme les Romains on eu soin de frapper des Médailles, pour perpetuer dans les siècles le souvenir de constellation, sous laquelle l'Empereur Auguste était né', *Médailles sur les principaux événements du règne de Louis le Grand* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1702), p. 2.

²⁵⁰ 'Louis XIV breathed life into the abstract state by persuading himself and others that the royal gaze could be detached from the person of the king and embedded in an institutional matrix. The sovereign vision thus assumed double life – at once personal and impersonal.' So Louis overcome limitations of personal gaze only including those in front of him', Jay M. Smith, '“Our Sovereign's Gaze”: Kings, Nobles, and State Formation in Seventeenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies*, 18 (1993), 396-415 (p. 413).

²⁵¹ The image of the King attired à la romaine featured in Charles Perrault, *Courses des Testes et de Bague faites par le roy, et par les princes et seigneurs de sa Cour, en l'année 1662* (Paris: Fléchier, 1670). This work was commentary on the events and costumes of the *caroussel* and was accompanied with a parallel Latin version (*Festiva ad capita*, identical publisher).

²⁵² Moine, *Les Fêtes à la Cour du Roi-Soleil*, p. 130.

Jean-Marie Apostolidès argues that ‘l’entrée devient l’équivalent politique de la Fête-Dieu’, and it is clear that Louis XIV’s 1660 arrival into Paris was planned to have maximal propaganda effect.²⁵³ It was also a ritual that relied heavily on Roman usage and metaphor to present the King as an emperor, perhaps more consciously than had been done until that point.²⁵⁴ For the public, this association between the king and emperor was patent and widespread: certainly by 1661, any representation of Louis XIV they were likely to encounter would commonly be in some form of imperial iconography.²⁵⁵ The 1662 *entrée* of the King and Queen into Paris is loaded with Roman imagery.²⁵⁶ From this time on, Louis XIV ‘n’est pas la réincarnation d’Auguste; il n’est pas non plus le roi de France voulant imiter l’empereur romain; il devient Louis-Auguste’.²⁵⁷ The connection was so prevalent, that it is natural that spectators at plays staging Roman emperors should see their own king: indeed as with *Cinna* and later with *Bérénice*, this association was sometimes intentional.²⁵⁸ Jean Billard writing in 1655, only a couple of years after the end of the Frondes, attempts to justify seeing Louis as the successor of the Roman emperors: indeed the King is ‘plus Auguste, qu’Auguste mesme’.²⁵⁹ Even though the *bienséances* forbade any theatrical presence of the reigning monarch, ‘cela ne signifie pas l’absence totale de Louis XIII ou Louis XIV sur la scène de théâtres, mais leur présence sur une autre mode’.²⁶⁰ With the martyr-play, however, the spectator is reminded that the Roman

²⁵³ Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Roi-Machine: spectacle et politique sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Minuit, 1981), p. 16.

²⁵⁴ ‘Ce n’est pas sans raison qu’on a pu comparer l’entrée de 1660 à un véritable triomphe romain’, Moine, *Les Fêtes à la Cour du Roi-Soleil*, p. 110.

²⁵⁵ In this connection, Apostolidès mentions: ‘pour les individus instruits, l’entrée royale recèle un sens qu’il s’agit de reconnaître; les allégories, les inscriptions latines leur sont familières, car on les trouve dans toutes les manifestations spectaculaires’, *Le Roi-Machine*, p. 21.

²⁵⁶ See *L’Entrée triomphante de leurs majestés Louis XIV. Roy de France et Marie Therese d’Autriche son épouse dans la ville de Paris capitale de leurs royaumes, au retour de la signature de la paix générale et leur heureux mariage* (Paris: Pierre le Petit, Thomas Joly et Louis Bilaine, 1662).

²⁵⁷ Apostolidès, *Le Roi-Machine*, p. 67. ‘Louis ressemble à Auguste, Apollon, etc. Mais ces modèles n’existent pas en dehors de lui, à titre de comparaison. Ils sont invocables grâce à leurs attributs, que porte Louis. En fait, Louis est Auguste, Apollon, etc’, Sabatier, ‘Imagerie heroique’, p. 121.

²⁵⁸ Though said in a different context, Maxime’s observation that ‘le nom d’empereur cach[e] celui de roi’ is valid in this case, Pierre Corneille, *Cinna*, (II, 1).

²⁵⁹ J. Billard, *Triumphes de Louis Dieu-Donné, Roy de France et de Navarre; Pieux, Clement, Debonnaire, Juste, Auguste, et toujours Victorieux* (Paris: Chez l’Auteur, 1655), p. 252.

²⁶⁰ Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Prince sacrifié: théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), p. 29. Michel Foucault esteems that the reason for which French tragedy during the seventeenth century avoided direct portrayals of recent monarchs, unlike English drama, was simply because ‘c’est bien le même type de pouvoir et le même type de monarchie’, “*Il faut défendre la société*”: *cours au Collège de France (1975–1976)*, ed. by François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Gallimard et Seuil, 1997), p. 156.

emperors were often erroneous, tyrannical and unpleasant rulers.²⁶¹ I argue in Chapters Three and Four that, during the period when the Roman allegory becomes standard, namely the 1650s and 1660s, the martyr-play declines in popularity. I believe these two phenomena are not unconnected.

²⁶¹ Frank Lestringant comments that, already during the sixteenth century, 'les empereurs païens se réincarnaient dans les papes et dans les rois persécuteurs', *La Cause des martyrs*, p. 47.

THE MARTYR-HERO IN TRAGEDY

CHAPTER TWO

Politicising the Religious

La douleur était unanime, et la compassion
provoquée par la mort du roi exalta la foi
monarchique à un point inconnu jusque-là.

—Pierre Chevallier¹

2.1 The Spectre of Tyranny

As I have outlined in the previous chapter, the death of Henri IV had immense repercussions for the discussion of political ideas in France and for those theories deemed as normative. With this in mind, I would like to examine possible consequences of this climate on a category of play constant throughout most of the seventeenth century: plays with Christian martyrdom as their theme. Drama of this period often dealt with the question of authority, and since the political status quo of 1610 was steadfastly consolidated, this naturally affected literary expression. As the primary locus of entertainment for all social classes, seventeenth-century French theatre ‘achieved a prominence which in many ways eclipsed other art-forms of the time’.² Colette Scherer proposes that the theatre was the meeting-place of Parisian society, ‘non seulement un divertissement, mais un miroir’.³ Nicholas Hammond points out that active patronage of Louis XIV and Cardinal Richelieu gave the theatre ‘a political and national importance’, and highlights the ‘political pressure exerted by the all-seeing gaze of the monarch’.⁴ Yet, although this royal constraint was a visible element during the reign of Louis XIV, I suggest that similar considerations were taken into account in the aftermath of Henri IV’s death. In 1610 it was not only a question of defending writers against the consequences of angering the authorities, the very existence of royal government also seemed to be at stake.

¹ Chevallier, *Les Régicides*, p. 269.

² Nicholas Hammond, *Creative Tensions: an Introduction to Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 1997), p. 26.

³ Colette Scherer, *Comédie et société sous Louis XIII: Corneille, Rotrou et les autres* (Paris: Nizet, 1993), p. 11.

⁴ Hammond, *Creative Tensions*, p. 26.

What then were the effects on literature of the post-1610 orthodoxy? The most immediate outcome was concerning plays whose subjects could be interpreted as sympathetic towards tyrannicide or resistance theories: they effectively vanished for several decades. This covered material such as dramatisations of the history of Julius Cæsar or the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes, hitherto popular topics.⁵ During the Wars of Religion, Robert Garnier typified those playwrights who chose to deal with matter 'propre aux malheurs de nostre siècle'.⁶ Garnier refers to tyranny and tyrannicide in *Cornélie* and also in his *Marc-Antoine* (1578) the 'parallel between Marc-Antoine and Henri III was likely to occur to his readers'.⁷ This is not to say that representations of tyranny were no longer staged, since 'à cause de l'étendue du pouvoir absolu, la hantise de la tyrannie traverse toute la pensée politique et la littérature du XVII^e siècle'.⁸ While the topic was 'not as ubiquitous as young lovers, fathers or kings, the tyrant is a persistent subset of this last group throughout the period'.⁹ Tyranny could be —and more than often was— represented in a way that contrasted with the French monarchy to the advantage of the latter, as is the case with the frequent plays on Oriental or Turkish despots. Any toleration displayed towards ideas supporting checks on royal authority could be read as complicity with Henri's murder, and was almost universally avoided. The Abbé d'Aubignac details the communal position of dramatists on the subject:

Nous ne voulons point croire que le Roys puissent estre mechans, ni souffrir que leurs Sujets, quoy qu'en apparence maltraitez, touchent leurs Personnes sacrees, ny se rebellent contre leur Puissance, non pas mesme en peinture; et je ne croy pas que l'on puisse faire assassiner un Tyran sur nostre Theatre avec applaudissement, sans de tres-signalées précautions [...] mais la seule usurpation contre la volonté des Sujets ne seroit pas assez considerable pour faire mourir sans quelque horreur un Souverain par la main des rebelles.¹⁰

⁵ These were common themes in narrative verse, notably Du Bartas *Judith* (1573) and Thierry Petremond, *Judith* (Lyon, 1578), though this motif disappeared from verse until after the mid-seventeenth century. See R. A. Sayce, *The French Biblical Epic in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 39-45 and 112-117.

⁶ Robert Garnier, *Cornélie, tragedie* (Paris: R. Estienne, 1574), préface.

⁷ Jondorf, *Robert Garnier*, p. 35. This is not to say that Garnier supported tyrannicide, he was simply alluding to a subject of contemporary speculation. Jondorf observes that 'as the position of French monarchy deteriorates, he presents a more respectful attitude towards monarchy in his plays', (pp. 45-46).

⁸ Jean-Marie Apostolidès, 'Image du père et peur du tyran au XVII^e siècle', *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, 10 (1978), 195-208 (p. 200).

⁹ Nina Ekstein, 'Staging the Tyrant on the Seventeenth-Century French Stage', *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, 25 (1999), 111-129 (p. 111).

¹⁰ D'Aubignac, *La Pratique du Theatre*, p. 73.

Tyrants are generally not murdered on the seventeenth-century French stage, since any portrayal of a dispute with authority, even corrupted, was obviously contentious, and could lead to suspicion of political heterodoxy.¹¹ Moreover, the assassination of Henri IV had demonstrated that the application of the label of tyrant was one that could depend on the eye of the beholder.

2.2 Plays and Power

I would argue that having the martyr on stage could, in itself, indicate a muted response to the repression of literature favourable towards more limited royal authority.¹² In order to be able to draw any cohesive conclusions about the theme of tyranny as shown in the martyr-play, it is evidently essential to consult individual plays. It may appear surprising that there were no martyr-plays performed or written during the Wars of Religion. Dramatic production stood at a small fraction of what it was before the civil wars, but Protestant authors did use religious plays for propaganda purposes. This infers that the martyr-play did not have an intrinsic anti-Protestant value for most Catholic authors, since had this been the case, then it would have prospered during the most divisive period. One question that must be asked, is at which point can a martyr-play be deemed classical French tragedy and not a *mystère*? Since there had been a significant passage of time from the mysteries, and they had been effectively outlawed—at least in Paris—from 1548, it is possible to regard the post-Religious War plays as constituting an evolved form of drama. They are not always modern in the sense of having act and scene divisions, and may still possess elements such as a *chœur*, but by and large they are closer to seventeenth-century drama than to medieval theatre. During the sixteenth century ‘la tragédie religieuse n’emprunte guère qu’à la Bible’.¹³ It is only at the end of the century that saints’ lives are used again for the stage, and this represents a shift away from the previous direction of sacred theatre.

¹¹ Helen L. Harrison judges that there are only two plays in which legitimate rulers are killed by virtuous murders, Gillet de La Tessonnerie’s *La Mort de Valentinian* (1648) and Thomas Corneille’s *La Mort de l’empereur Commode* (1657), ‘Slaying Sovereigns: Tyrannicide in Thomas Corneille’s *La Mort de l’empereur Commode*’, *Romance Notes*, 40 (2000), 287-294 (p. 287).

¹² Speaking of plays with classical themes, though equally valid of the martyr-play, Michel Foucault sees ‘[un] codage lié sans doute à la prudence politique’, ‘*Il faut défendre la société*’, p. 156.

One of the first plays to treat the theme is a 1596 tragedy by Jean de Virey on the martyrdom of the seven brothers found in 2 Maccabees, *La Machabee, tragedie, du martyre des septz freres, et de Solomone leur mere*.¹⁴ While the subject is scriptural, for Catholics at least, it is also to be found in the *Legenda Aurea*.¹⁵ This play was published in Rouen and has a dedication dated 25 March 1596 to 'Mme la marechale de Matignon'. The Parfaict brothers remark that 'cette Tragédie ressemble beaucoup aux anciens Mysteres, on ne trouve aucune division d'Actes, ni de Scenes'.¹⁶ There is a medieval character, a 'Furie infernale', though she does not directly influence the course of events and never speaks to another character, although she is onstage for the bulk of the play.¹⁷ Virey assigns a prominent role to the mother of the rebel brothers.¹⁸ When summoned before the King, she sets out her people's grievances against his authority:

SOLOMONE

Nous ne quitterons point nostre loy Mosiaque.
C'est un acte meschant cruel et tyrannique,
De nous vouloir forcer par telle impieté
Changer les saintes loix de nostre antiquité. (p. 19)¹⁹

The revolt against the king is based on Antiochus's prohibition of free worship, not on usurpation. When taken prisoner, she encourages her sons to be strong in their beliefs:

¹³ Kosta Loukovitch, *l'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse classique en France* (Paris: E. Droz, 1933), p. 40.

¹⁴ Jacques Scybillé's *Dioclétiane* est probablement la première pièce tirée d'une vie de saint (saint Sébastien) où s'affirme l'intention d'adapter un sujet de mystère à la forme d'une tragédie. Car la pièce est en cinq actes, divisés en scènes', Loukavitch, *L'Évolution de la tragédie*, p. 111. This is undated but from the end of the sixteenth century. There was another 1596 tragedy of the same name, Pierre de Laudun d'Aigaliers, *Dioclétian, tragedie* (Languedoc), appearing in the same year as Virey's *Machabee*.

¹⁵ Jacques de Voragine, *La legende dorée et vie de saintz et saintes. Translatée de latin en francoys. Mise en ordre en ensuyvant le Kalendrier* (Poitiers: Jehan de Marnef, 1530), p. 121. The widespread devotion to these martyrs is reflected in the fact that Jan Hus alludes to them during his imprisonment: 'hence for my encouragement [the story of] the seven martyrs, the sons of the widows of Maccabeus, occurs to me. They desired to be cut in pieces rather than to eat flesh contrary to the law of God', *The Letters of John Hus*, trans. by Matthew Spinka (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p. 176 (letter 80, c. 20 June 1415).

¹⁶ Parfaict, *Histoire*, III, 509. Also see Raymond Lebègue, *Études sur le théâtre français*, 2 vols (Paris: Nizet, 1977-78), II, 101.

¹⁷ On the *furie*'s ineffectual role, see Perry Gethner, 'Rhetoric and Modification of Scripture in French Biblical Tragedy from de Bèze to Racine' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1977), pp. 62 and 163-64.

¹⁸ 'The mother of the Maccabees is not named in the Apocrypha, but in calling her Salomone, Le Moyne is using the name commonly found in French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', Richard G. Maber, 'Pierre Le Moyne's encomium of Margaret Roper, translated by John Paulet Marquis of Winchester (1652)', *Moreana*, 23 (1986), 47-52 (p. 52 n. 3).

¹⁹ I have quoted the pagination of the 1596 edition. There were also editions in 1598, 1599 and 1611. The copy of the first edition at the British Library seems to be the sole surviving example.

SOLOMONE

Mes bien aimez enfans, ce tyran execrable,
 Pense til vaincre ainsi nostre cœur indomptable,
 Pour nous avoir tirez de nos plaisans chasteaux
 Et fait conduire icy par ses sanglans bourreaux? (p. 22)

Suffering for maintaining the ancient faith and being prevented from practising one's religion were topics familiar to an audience that had recently witnessed the end of the Wars of Religion. Indeed, Virey had personal experience of the conflicts, having served under the Maréchal de Matignon.²⁰ However, what is interesting in the play is the Maccabees' attitude towards the ruler as he persists in persecuting them:

MACHABEE

O quell' pitié de voir nostre cité deserte,
 Et nostre terre aussi de morts toute couverte,
 Qu'il faille toutesfois que ce usurpateur
 De tant de sang humain n'assouvisse son cœur?
 Helas! Helas! faut-il par la haute malice
 D'un tyran si cruel tant de peuple perisse (pp. 22-23)

The wrong-doing leader is now termed a usurper by the eldest of the brothers. As well as being judged on his failure to respect their religion, his very status as a king is called into doubt, due to his behaviour.²¹ As one of the soldiers observes to his comrade, while all members of the Jewish family are going to their deaths:

SECOND SOLDAT

Je croy qu'ils veulent bien que le Roy leur pardonne
 Mais de luy obeir, il n'en faut point parler. (p. 27)

The household is entitled to disobey the king because his actions are unworthy of his office. Aber, the second son, conceives of him in terms of 'injuste usurpateur' (p. 45), and Solomone considers him to be 'ce faux Roy' (p. 52). The fact that the ruler has forfeited their obedience, no longer being treated as a king by them, is a position totally conforming to theories of resistance.²² Writing some decades later, Bossuet is conscious of such a reading of this incident of martyrdom and the Maccabean wars:

²⁰ Parfaict, *Histoire*, III, 559. This accounts for the dedication to the wife of the *maréchal*.

²¹ 'In 4 Maccabees the two types of sovereignty associated with masculinity —sovereignty over others and sovereignty over oneself— are implicitly contrasted', Stephen B. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, 'Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 117 (1998), 249-273 (p. 253).

²² The author of the *Vindiciæ* cites Antiochus as an Old Testament example of tyranny: 'si nous considerons Mathias, il estoit pere des Machabees de la lignee de Levi: tellement qu'il ne luy estoit loisible, selon le droit de sa race, de preferer le royaume de la tyrannie d'Antiochus', Étienne Junius Brutus, *De la puissance legitime du prince sur le peuple, et du peuple sur le prince. Traité tres-utile et*

Nous ne voyons pas que l'Église persécutée par les Princes infideles ou heretiques, se soit jamais avisée de l'exemple des Machabées pour s'animer à la resistance. Il estoit trop clair que cét exemple estoit extraordinaire: dans un cas et dans un état tout particulier: manifestement divin dans ses effets et dans ses causes; en sorte que, pour s'en servir il falloit pouvoir dire et justifier qu'on estoit manifestement et particulièrement inspiré de Dieu.²³

Bossuet recognises that the Maccabees engaged in active struggle, but justifies this as a unique example. All members of the family are vocal in their opinion of the king, so theirs is not a passive death. Solomone urges her children immediately before their execution: 'ne crains point un tyran, qui est usurpateur' (p. 53). At the beginning of the tragedy, the Jewish people wanted to be allowed to worship freely. Antiochus becomes labelled a usurper when he continues in his tyranny, implying that he loses his claim to the throne at some point during the course of the play.²⁴ Some Leaguers, notably Jean Boucher, held that Henri III had forfeited his title when he arranged the killing of the Guise brothers, so he and his successor were usurpers.²⁵ Consequently they regarded themselves as disobeying a man who had lost the crown rather than refusing royal authority. This theory had the advantage that it could be reconciled with the idea of absolute kingship. It also removes the burden of judgement, as the ruler is auto-deposed.

Virey wrote a second play on the same topic, *Tragedie de la divine et heureuse victoire des Machabees, sur le Roy Antiochus: Avecques la Repurgation du Temple de Hierusalem* (1600), dedicated to the bishop of Constances.²⁶ While this is not a martyr-play, it is a continuation of events set out in the first tragedy, and

digne de lecture en ce temps, escrit en Latin par Estienne Junius Brutus, et nouvellement traduit en François (n.p.: n.pub, 1581), p. 68. See also pp. 36 and 234. This work will hereafter be rendered as *Puissance*.

²³ Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Premier Avertissement aux Protestans sur les lettres du ministre Jurieu contre l'Histoire des Variations* (Paris: Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1689), pp. 355-56.

²⁴ This corresponds to some interpretations of the source account: 'the author states the martyrs surpassed Antiochus in virtue, disqualified him as king and even defeated him', Jan Willem Van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: a Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 57 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997), p. 267.

²⁵ From the slaying of the Guises, Boucher refers to the king only as Henri de Valois, see *Ad quæstionem an pro rege orandum in canone missæ facultatis Parisiensis responsum* (Paris: Chaudiere, 1589), where Boucher and members of the Sorbonne faculty discuss the form of prayers to insert in the Mass to replace those customarily recited for the monarch's intention. In his *Sermons de la simulée conversion, et nullité de la pretendue absolution de Henry de Bourbon, Prince de Bearn, à St Denys en France, le Dimanche 25 Juillet, 1593* (Paris: Chaudiere, 1594), Boucher treats Henri IV as a usurper after his conversion.

²⁶ 'Du Virey créa une seconde Tragédie de la même manière que la précédente', Parfait, *Histoire*, III, 560.

provides an insight into the political views of Virey. In the dedication, the author explains why he further pursues the same story:

Ce bon Dieu et Pere tout-puissant pour l'execution de tels Commandemens s'est le plus souvent servi des tyrans. Mais aussi a-il tousjours fait paroistre que leurs illicites entreprises ont pris fin aussi tost que les pauvres pecheurs Catholiques s'estoyent convertis à luy. (pp. 3-4)

It is evident that Virey is drawing modern parallels in using the word 'catholique'; this mindset could be construed as supporting Jacques Clément's deadly act in 1589.

Il ya trois ans que sous la faveur de tres illustre Dame Madame la Mareschale de Matignon, j'en fis voir un échantillon en la Machabee Tragedie, extraite d'un mien plus grand labour que j'avois basti, lors que le repos de la Paix me le permettoit, lequel peut estre je feray voir quelque jour, si je trouve par le conseil de mes amis qu'il en soit digne. Cependant afin que chacun sçache que les cruauz de ce tyran ne peuvent continuer plus outre que le temps que Dieu avoit ordonné pour le chastiment de son peuple penitent: Et pour faire cognoistre que toute la force des plus grands Roys et Monarques devient à rien en un clin d'œil, et qu'elle peut estre rompue par une poignée de gens de guerre quand il luy plaist, les victoires procedantes de luy et non des hommes: J'ay pensé que je ne ferois point mal d'extraire encor dudit labour la divine et heureuse victoire des Machabees sur ledit Antiochus. (pp. 4-5)

This is an implicit admission of discontent with Henri IV, in which the former soldier calls to mind the capacity of monarchs to fall into tyranny. What is entirely left to speculation is whether the author intends his work to be interpreted as favourable to the right of resisting a tyrant. Since the appearance of his last play, Henri IV had promulgated the Edict of Nantes (1598). To some Catholics, this was a betrayal of his coronation oath, and proof of the insincerity of his conversion. Virey reminds the reader of his military background: 'par l'espace de XXX. ans d'avoir fait bon et fidelle service à feu Monseigneur le Mareschal' (p. 5). During some of this time he would have taken up arms against the future Henri IV. Virey may have written another work having a similar martyr theme, *Jeanne d'Arques dite la Pucelle d'Orléans* (Rouen, 1606), though this is a dubious attribution.²⁷

²⁷ The play seems to have been performed from 1600 onwards at Rouen, see *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: le XVII^e siècle*, ed. by Patrick Dandrey (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 625. The original play, *Tragedie de Jeanne D'Arques dite la Pucelle d'Orléans* (Rouen: Raphaël du Petit Val, 1606), was reprinted later at Troyes (Nicolas Oudot, 1627). Louise George Clubb claims that this tragedy 'represents one way in which the Counter-Reformation *tragedia sacra* was Gallicized', 'The Virgin Martyr and the *Tragedia Sacra*', *Renaissance Drama*, 7 (1964), 103-126 (p. 112). A tragedy by Fronton du Duc, *Histoire tragique de la Pucelle d'Orléans*, was performed at the Université de Pont-à-Mousson in 1580, and was 'une des premières et certainement une des meilleures pièces du répertoire français de la Compagnie de Jésus', Gofflot, *Le Théâtre au Collège*, p. 104.

The first martyr-play of note to be published in Paris, and one which was possibly performed, was by Nicolas Soret, a native of Reims holding the prominent position of 'maistre de Grammaire des enfens de Chœur de l'Eglise de Paris'.²⁸ Soret wrote two religious plays, which hints that the first was successful enough to encourage him to embark on a second.²⁹ His tragedy, *La Ceciliade ou martyre sanglant de sainte Cecile, patron des musiciens* was published in 1606, and was performed that year at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.³⁰ The title echoes Ronsard's epic *Franziade*, and Klára Csűrös places this within a literary 'vogue des titres pseudo-épiques'.³¹ As with most martyr-plays before 1640, the play is dedicated to ecclesiastics, in this case to the dean and canons of Notre Dame, with a dedicatory poem addressed to Henri de Gondi, archbishop of Paris. This work dramatises the events leading up to the death of St Cecilia, patroness of music and musicians, and as already mentioned in the previous chapter, the opening of her tomb in 1599 was well-publicised throughout Catholic Europe (see Chapter One, pp. 28-29). It is even possible that this event inspired Soret. The *Martyrologium Romanum* relates:

A Rome Sainte Cecile Vierge, ayant converty à la Foy, et excité au mariage son espoux Valerian, et son beau frere Tiburce, apres qu'ils eurent enduré le martyre, fut prise par le commandement d'Almaque, Gouverneur de ladicté ville, où elle ne fut en dommagée, et puis decapitée, du temps de l'Empereur Alexandre, l'ans deux cents trente deux.³²

These skeletal details are the central elements of the more familiar legend.³³

From the start, Cecile explicitly wishes to accomplish God's will. This does not preclude her from terrestrial obedience, as she informs her parents:

²⁸ A supplement after the play, *Chœurs de l'Histoire tragique sainte Cecile, vierge-martyre, patronne des musiciens*, is evidence that the play was performed. This was the work of Abraham Blondel, canon and *maistre de musique* at Notre Dame (Paris: Ballard, 1606), and alludes to possible collaboration between the two musicians. Blondel's lyrics are mainly in French, which indicates they were intended for performance rather than liturgical worship.

²⁹ The other play is *Saint Nicolas* (Reims: Nicolas Constant, 1624). This possibly reveals that Soret had moved to Reims later in his career. See the *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: le XVII^e siècle*, p. 1195. There seems to be a degree of egocentricity in Soret: he was inspired to write about his namesake and the patron of his profession. Soret is not mentioned by the frères Parfaict.

³⁰ Margaret E. Pascoe, *Les Drames religieux du milieu du XVII^e siècle 1636–1650* (Paris: Boivin, 1934), p. 18.

³¹ Klára Csűrös, *Variétés et vicissitudes du genre épique de Ronsard à Voltaire*, *Littérature Générale et Comparée*, 21 (Paris: Champion, 1999), p. 38. The author mentions another saint's play, *Lambertiade*, published at Luxembourg in 1628 (p. 39).

³² *Martyrologe Romain pour tous les jours de l'année, suyvant la Reformation du Kalendrier, traduit par un Pere de la Compagnie de Jesus* (Lyon: Pierre Rigaud, 1620), p. 267.

CECILE Tout ce qu'il vous plaira, faut que je l'accomplisse:
Car le prompt obeyr, vaut mieux qu'un sacrifice. (I)

This is one martyr who is not rushing headstrong into death, and seems well aware of her two-fold obligations as a Roman and as a daughter. The play opens with her parents arranging her marriage to a suitable nobleman.³⁴ At first, their child seems happy at these plans, but she makes an unusual condition of Valerian, her new spouse:

CECILE Monsieur excusez moy, jamais tant que je vive
De l'impudicité amoureuse lascive
Avec homme vivant je ne me souïlleray:
Mais s'il plaist à mon Dieu, ferme je garderay
Cette vierge candeur, que je luy ay vouée. (II)

Unsurprisingly, her prospective bridegroom reacts badly to this:

VALERIAN Quoy donc, me faudra-t'il pour jouïr de ma femme
Servir d'enchantemens d'une sorciere infame? (II)

Cecile displays due deference to the authority of her parents and her new husband. However, as they are questioned by secular authority, incarnated by Almachie, prefect of Rome under the Emperor Alexander, there is a notable lack of etiquette. Act IV opens with a long speech, in which Almachie speaks of his duty to persecute Christians:

ALMACHIE Non seulement d'autant que c'est la loy frequente:
Mais d'Alexandre aussi la volonté fervente,
Qui ne veut qu'on honore autres Dieux que les siens:
Mais qui veut qu'on chastie aprement les Chrestiens.
Comme il tient en cecy la Supreme puissance,
Et moy, tenant de luy, sous luy, la Lieutenance,
Aussi suis-je resous à ce point, quant et [*sic*] luy:
Si j'en puis descouvrir, il ny aura celuy,
(Soit de servil estat, soit de noble lignage)
Qui ne sente aux tormens mon implacable rage,
Sans que, par humble veux, on la puisse appaiser. (IV)

³³ 'L'histoire du culte de S^{te} Cécile est si compliquée et si peu mûre qu'il faut renoncer à l'exposer en quelques pages', Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les Origines du culte des martyrs* (Brussels: Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1912), p. 324.

³⁴ The complications of staging a wedding are avoided by Soret: he opens Act II with the words: 'Marriage conclud'.

Almachie reiterates that he acts in the Emperor's name, and that it is also fear, as well as duty, that inspires him. Upon discovering that Cecile and her family are Christians, he threatens them with torture. They list their priorities:

VALERIAN ET TIB.	Nous reverons le Dieu qu'il faut que l'on revere, Empereur souverain des cieux, et de la terre.
ALMACHIE	Empereur souverain?
VALERIAN	Souverain Empereur.
ALMACHIE	Alexandre qu'est-il?
VALERIAN	Ton maistre et gouverneur: Et luy de nostre Dieu la creature vile, Trop plus que n'est à l'homme une beste servile.
ALMACHIE	Que j'endure cecy a ma barbe a mon front, Que l'on face a mon Roy, un si vilain affront. (IV)

This seems to negate the earthly jurisdiction of the Emperor, only allowing God to have the title. Cecile later calls Almachie 'tyran, maudit tyran' (V) and bluntly tells Almachie that 'ton Empereur plus vilain, qu'il n'est Roy' (V). These vocal disputes with civil authority, and a disregard for the Emperor's office, are features that would become rare in the wake of Henri IV's assassination, four years after the publication of this play. The disdain towards imperial authority —and the Emperor is also tellingly termed 'Roy'— is symptomatic of a generation of Parisians that had only seventeen years earlier largely supported the removal of Henri III, and were to be shocked out of their pro-resistance theory views by the monarch's slaying. The play stands at a transitional stage of theatre: 'la pièce elle-même marque un compromis entre des pièces comme *La Machabée* de Virey [...], et celles de l'époque classique'.³⁵ Furthermore, there is visibly less bloodshed on stage, a possible indication of shifts in audience expectations.

As noted in the previous chapter, organised religion co-operated with secular authority in the aftershock of Henri IV's death. One method of this operation was through the medium of the pulpit. A wide audience of listeners was reached through homilies preached at requiem masses celebrated for the late King, or anniversary masses on the first anniversary. An unprecedented number of *oraisons funèbres* were printed: thirty-eight in all.³⁶ Thirty-one of these were in French indicating that the readership was not, nor intended to be, confined to ecclesiastics or scholars. The

³⁵ Pascoe, *Les Drames religieux*, p. 19.

³⁶ This compares to three published *oraisons* for Henri III, and four for Charles IX, Hennequin, *Henri IV dans ses Oraisons Funèbres*, p. 64.

clergy in these sermons denounce tyrannicide with one voice, many of them naming the doctrine and signalling its principal proponents. In a sermon printed at Paris, the bishop of Montpellier judges that 'les loix divines et humaines ont esté violées'.³⁷ This collusion between church and state tended to assert the Gallican independence of the French ecclesiastical community. At the meeting of the Estates-General in 1614–15, the third estate attempted to pass an article declaring the insuperability of the French king. It further wanted the assembly to endorse decisions of the Council of Constance condemning tyrannicide:

Mais [nous] mesmes criens à haute voix avec le sacré Concile de Constance, contre les meurtriers des Roys, voire de ceux que l'on pretendroit estre devenus tyrans: Anatheme à quiconque assassine les Roys; Malediction eternelle, à quiconque assassine les Roys. Le second poinct est la dignité et souveraineté temporelle des Roys de France: Et de cesluy-la nous en sommes aussi d'accord. Car nous croyons que nos Roys sont souverains de toute sorte de souveraineté temporelle en leur Royaume, et ne sont secondaires ny du Pape, comme ceux qui ont receu ou obligé leurs couronnes à cette condition, ny d'aucun autre Prince; mais que'en la nüe administration de choses temporelles, ils dependent immediatement de Dieu, et ne reconnaissent aucune puissance par dessus eux que la sienne. Ces deux poincts donc, nous ne tenons pour certains et indubitables.³⁸

When this address was given by Cardinal du Perron, archbishop of Sens, Primate of the Gauls and *grand aumosnier de France*, on 2 January 1615, he spoke with the authority of the French church and, for once, 'le tiers traduisait bien le sentiment populaire'.³⁹ The same body that had appealed to Rome to judge Henri III and welcomed the arrival of Cardinal Cajetan was now taking an opposing view.

The frères Parfaict mention an anonymous *Tragédie de Jeanne d'Arques* of 1611, though they caution that: 'nous la croyons beaucoup plus ancienne, que l'année de son impression'.⁴⁰ The circumstances of Joan of Arc's execution mirror that of early Christian martyrs. Like them, she suffers an unjust death and is offered a similar opportunity to recant. The existence of this play indicates that the Maid's

³⁷ Pierre Fenollet, *Discours funebre sur la mort de Henry le Grand Roy de France et de Navarre* (Paris: Rolin Thierry, 1610), p. 17.

³⁸ *Harangue faicte de la part de la chambre ecclesiastique, En celle du tiers Estat, sur l'Article du Serment* (Paris: Antoine Estienne, 1615), p. 10. The Council of Constance is a contentious council, for it did not receive the approbation of Martin V or any of his successors, and thus lacked any canonical jurisdiction. It has been noted that 'in certain of its widely different phases this council enacted decrees that were as contradictory of fundamental Catholic practice as anything any heretic [...] had ever held', Phillip Hughes, *A History of the Church*, 4 vols (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), II, 283.

³⁹ Chevallier, *Les Régicides*, p. 285.

⁴⁰ Parfaict, *Histoire*, IV, 161. In fact, this is a copy of the 1606 play mentioned earlier. The British Library catalogues a copy of the 1611 edition under the authorship of Virey.

rehabilitation was well in place. At the end of the tragedy, the audience is given this judgement:

GENTILHOMME
ANGLAIS Vienne ce qu'il pourra, nous dirons toutefois
 Que la France a vaincu par charmes les Anglois. (V)⁴¹

The execution of Joan takes place behind the theatre not on stage, and while this play may predate 1611, this feature is characteristic of the *bienséances* of developed seventeenth-century theatre: the *mystères* did not shrink from presenting grisly deaths on stage.⁴²

The history of the Machabees was not dramatised again until 1624 by Pierre Audibert, *Histoire des Machabées* (Draguignat), though unfortunately no copy has survived.⁴³ The next version of note is that of Jean-Baptiste le Franq, a French Dominican who moved away from French territory at the age of five.⁴⁴ Like Virey, this author is 'interested also in the troubled times in which he lives and writes to draw a parallel between the period of the Machabees and the present'.⁴⁵ The feast day of the Maccabees is the only instance where Old-Testament figures enjoy the same liturgical ranking as saints of the New Testament. St Bernard of Clairvaux accords an important place to these martyrs, judging that:

Les seuls Machabées, de tous ceux de l'Ancienne Loy ayans esté tourmentez pour la mesme cause et de la mesme maniere que les Martyrs de la nouvelle, comme j'ay déjà dit, ont justement merité dans l'Eglise le mesme honneur de la solemnité ordinaire qui se fait pour les nouveaux Martyrs de l'Eglise.⁴⁶

In his adaptation of the legend, Le Franq presents the king in every way as wicked as Virey's portrayal:

ANTIOCHE: Ils mouront, ils mouront: d'un supplice commun

⁴¹ Quoted in Parfait, *Histoire*, IV, 162.

⁴² 'Until about 1640 murders were quite common on the stage and the most grisly tortures and deaths continued to be described in *récits* until even later. However, by about the middle of the century such horrible details had been banished from *récits* as well as from the stage', John Lough, *Seventeenth-Century French Drama: the Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 112.

⁴³ Lancaster, *History*, I, 161.

⁴⁴ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 734.

⁴⁵ Lancaster, *History*, I, 200.

⁴⁶ *Les Lettres de S. Bernard, premier abbé de Clairvaux, nouvellement traduites en François*, trans. by Antoine de S. Gabriel, 4 vols (Paris: Pierre de Bresche et I. de Laize de Bresche, 1672), I, 494 (lettre 98 à Hughes S. Victor).

adequately describes the drama's lack of sophistication.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the author's portrayal of resisting authority is entirely seventeenth-century and is closer to Corneille than to Virey.

In 1615, Pierre Troterel produced *La Tragedie de Sainte Agnes* at Rouen.⁵⁰ This writer was best known as '[un] épicurien, auteur de comédies facétieuses', and seems to have turned to a religious topic at the request of Françoise d'Averton, baronne de Bazoches, a woman known for her piety.⁵¹ The play is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, it is 'with *Sainte Agnès* that the story of martyrdom definitively becomes a possible subject for a modern French tragedy'.⁵² A small number of martyr-plays had already been written, particularly in the colleges: here, we find an established author turning his hand to the theme and in some ways setting out the blueprint for later dramatists.⁵³ It is important to acknowledge this fact, for it strengthens the case for the martyr-play being recognised as a distinct sub-genre. If authors are cognisant of writing within a tradition, according to a format, then the martyr-play must stand apart from other religious drama. The second reason for the importance of Troterel's play is related to the first: the play did inspire other playwrights. It is possible that Corneille, a native of Rouen, was familiarised with the play as a young man: certainly, there seem to be some parallels between *Théodore* and the legend of St Agnes.⁵⁴ Gustave Lanson goes so far as to conclude that the invention and style of Troterel's play 'annonce *Polyeucte*'.⁵⁵

The details of the legend date to at least the fourth century (Agnes is thought to have died around 305 during the persecutions of Diocletian), and the young virgin martyr was mentioned in Ambrose's *De Virginitibus* (377).⁵⁶ The young girl was born of rich Roman parents, and when she was just twelve years old, 'un jeune Chevalier, fils du Prefect du Rome Simphrone, la voyant telle s'enamoura de sa grace et

⁴⁹ Lancaster, *History*, I, 201.

⁵⁰ While the original 1615 edition has 'Troterel', the frères Parfaict use 'Trotterel', and are not alone in this rendering, *Histoire*, IV, 210.

⁵¹ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 1233.

⁵² Lancaster, *History*, I, 106. This sentence is suspiciously echoed in Pascoe: 'avec la *Sainte Agnès* le martyrologe fournit pour la première fois un sujet de tragédie française moderne', *Les Dramas religieux*, p. 20.

⁵³ Lancaster talks of 'types reappearing in the other tragedies of the group', and considers that '*Sainte Agnès* contains all that writers of the next generation needed for imitation', *History*, I, 107 and 111.

⁵⁴ Troterel's play 'a peut-être suggéré à Corneille l'idée de *Théodore*', Loukovitch, *l'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse*, p. 118.

⁵⁵ Gustave Lanson, *Esquisse d'une histoire de la tragédie française* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1920), p. 34.

beauté'.⁵⁷ Her forthright refusal of his attention and advances infuriates the young man's father. He arranges for her to be placed in a brothel, yet her chastity is preserved and she is given up for martyrdom.⁵⁸ The play opens with a portrayal of Martian in the full throes of love, and his friend Censorin spurs him on to act on this sentiment. The distinct streak of vulgarity that underpins the tragedy begins with Censorin's questioning of his friend's motives:

CENSORIN	Mais dites, je vous prie, est-ce pour mariage, Que vous allez aimant ceste jeune beauté, Ou si c'est pour jouïr de sa pudicité. (I)
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This level of humour, indeed the presence of humour altogether, would be severely curtailed in martyr-plays appearing after this one. Martian's father, the prefect of Rome, visits Agnes's father (neither of her parents is given a name) to discuss their children's future. The topic of authority is lightly touched on:

LE PERE	Monseigneur, je le sçay, j'en ay prou connoissance: Et sçay mesme combien je dois obeissance A vostre autorité, laquelle, grace à Dieu, Commande doucement en cet aimable lieu. (I)
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He then objects that his daughter is too young for such an undertaking, though Simphonie meets this criticism by pointing out that he himself was married at that age. Even though he is a Christian and disagrees with Simphonie's matrimonial plans, Agnes's father still recognises the jurisdiction of the prefect:

LE PERE	Monseigneur, je ne veux contre vous disputer, Je suis à vous du tout, vous n'esn devez douter: Commandez seulement, je vous feray paroistre, Que jamais serviteur ne sert mieux son maistre.
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⁵⁶ Saint Ambrose, *De Virginibus*, in *De Virginitate opuscula sanctorum doctorum, Ambrosii, Hieronymi, et Augustini* (Rome: Paulus Manutius, 1612), pp. 2-49 (p. 3).

⁵⁷ *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames, Vierges et Martyres de l'Eglise*, trans. by Jacques Foderé, 4th edn (Lyon: Claude Obert, 1638), p. 60.

⁵⁸ See Fig. 6. Agnes's confinement in the brothel is common to many virgin martyrs, though, apart from Troterel, only Corneille alludes to it in *Théodore*. Kathleen Jones comments that this 'tradition that some of these girls were placed in brothels is so persistent that it must have represented a brutal but deeply-felt reaction to their stand from Roman men', *Women Saints: Lives of Faith and Courage* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1999), p. 39. For a discussion of the implications of the virginity of the female martyr, see Chapter Five, pp. 236-38.

He prays for God's help when the official leaves, in order that his daughter's chastity be spared. Simphronie's next strategy is to visit Agnes's home. Her mother declares her own Christianity, and Agnes is adamant she will keep her virginity intact.

Alone with the young virgin, Simphronie exerts pressure on her to relinquish her struggle. He criticises her religion, and notices a change in her demeanour: 'Quoy je vous voy pallir? et desja vous tremblez,/ Vous estes toute émeüe et vos sens sont troublez'. He thinks this is due to fear on her part, but she contradicts him:

AGNES

Si mon teint se pallit cela ne vient de peur,
Mais trop bien de dépit, de chagrin, de douleur,
De vous voir blasphemer, d'une telle maniere,
Contre le Dieu du ciel, le pere de lumiere. (III)

Her emotional reactions are a reminder of her extreme youth.⁵⁹ Finally, the governor gives her an ultimatum; either to join the Vestal Virgins if she is keen to preserve her purity, or he will have her placed in a brothel. She stubbornly refuses to join a pagan community, preferring to endanger her purity rather than her faith. The prefect directs that she be escorted to a house of ill-repute, and the girl meets this command by imploring divine assistance. She is accompanied by 'le trompette, les paillards, et les macquerelles', these characters providing several occasions for innuendo.⁶⁰ Once they arrive at the brothel, an angel appears, assuring her of supernatural protection. This is soon proved true, as when she is stripped of her clothes, her hair instantly grows long, preventing her naked body from being seen.⁶¹ Martian arrives with Censorin. He enters the house of prostitution with the intention of raping the young inmate. The next thing Censorin hears is that his friend is dead. Simphronie is desolate when he learns this news, mixed with sentiments of guilt and responsibility. Agnes explains it was her 'Ange triomphant' and not she who killed the aggressor (V). The prefect improbably asks her to enlist Jesus's help in bringing his son back from the dead, and Agnes prays for this intention. Martian is resurrected and announces he has been to Hell. The first thing Martian has to say is that he has become a Christian. Despite the

⁵⁹ Curiously, Lancaster interprets Simphronie's remarks about her emotional distress as evidence of her human frailty and a reaction to his threats, seemingly ignoring Agnes's justification, *History*, I, 104.

⁶⁰ La trompette cries out a mock song in which he invites warriors to lance 'au milieu de l'anneau' (IV).

⁶¹ 'The regularity with which the female body and female nakedness were featured in *acta* and popular novels indicates that their readers expected such details', Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1992), p. 56. See Chapter Four, p. 205.

miracle and his earlier pleas to Agnes for her aid, Simphonie now recoils from this profession of faith. A party of pagan priests arrives with some of the Roman populace, demanding the blood of Agnes and other Christians. Simphonie is understandably reluctant, so the priests remind him of his civic duty to enact imperial edicts. He condemns Agnes:

SIMPHRONIE

De cens mille regrets je me sens affliger,
Que ceste pauvre fille il me faille juger,
Mais je ne puis que faire, ô fiere destinée,
Las il faut qu'elle soit malgré moy condamnée. (V)

He concedes that his responsibilities are difficult, nevertheless he obeys his orders.⁶² A messenger comes on scene to narrate how she died, and after enduring various torments, the young martyr finally had her throat cut. The play closes with Agnes's father thanking God. Troterel's play only deals with the question of authority indirectly, this being subordinated to the principal plot of love affair and fate of Agnes. Simphonie eventually elicits some sympathy and obedience is stressed in the play, even if it is at a cost. The martyr is not so much a rebel who resists authority, as a young girl intent on safeguarding the vow she has made to God.

In 1618, a short time after Troterel's play and before Le Franq's, Jean Boissin de Gallardon dramatised the deaths of two of the most popular martyrs, St Catherine and St Vincent. This author was 'un des auteurs de théâtre les plus féconds de son époque', though scarcely anything is known of his life.⁶³ These two tragedies were published as part of a collection, *Les Tragedies et histoires saintes de Jean Boissin de Gallardon*, which is paginated as a volume. The two martyr tragedies, the last two plays in the volume, constitute the sacred part; the other three plays being about Andromeda, Meleagar and Phelidon. *Le martyre de sainte Catherine* is dedicated to a cleric, François de Lievre, abbot of Cruas: 'agreez donc s'il vous plait le martyre de cette divine Amazone', which indicates the author's motives may have been primarily

⁶² Despite the occasionally ruthless depiction of judges in martyrologies and plays, Simphonie's difficulties must reflect many cases. In 1654, Serjeant Steel, Recorder of London, was visibly moved when he reluctantly sentenced Father John Southworth to death.

⁶³ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 169. The frères Parfaict call this author Jean de Boissin de Gallardon, the only source to have an extra *particule*. They consider his *Saint Vincent* to be 'aussi foible que les autres du même Poète' and in Catherine's dispute with the pagans, '[des raisonnemens] que le Poète prête à la Sainte, ne sont guères meilleures' than those of the pagan philosophers, *Histoire*, IV, 285 and 287.

pious.⁶⁴ The first description of obedience in the play comes in the first act, before any confrontation. The Emperor commissions a herald to go out and publish news of a sacrifice. In a soliloquy he muses:

MAXENCE C'est un acte tres bon d'obeir à son Roy,
 Vers lequel on ne doit jamais fausser sa foy:
 Rois sont mis des dieux icy bas sur la terre,⁶⁵
 Pour rendre à tout jamais immortelle leur gloire.
 Les dieux donnent aux Rois le beau sceptre doré,
 Et du nom d'Empereur m'ont rendu honoré,
 Ils veulent qu'icy bas à leurs oingts on refere
 Honneur, ainsi qu'au ciel chacun leur en doit faire,
 Le Ciel est protecteur des Monarques puissans. (I)

This sets out a Christian and absolutist view of kingship. When the herald returns and informs the Emperor that the people are obeying his orders, he recognises their fidelity. The dissenting voice of Catherine is audible at this point:

CATHERINE C'est en vain, c'est en vain que l'on fait ce massacre
 Pour des dieux inventez et à leur simulacre. (I)

Her first concern is not to disobey, rather to highlight the impotency of the sacrifice: a position based on esteem for the Emperor. She continues in her tirade to Maxence:

CATHERINE Il me faut hazarder,
 Pour un bon sujet sans crainte l'aborder.
 O Prince souverain, Monarque redoutable
 Je vous prie escouter mon discours veritable,
 Il est maintenant temps Empereur de sçavoir
 D'où vous avez receu vostre estat. (I)

Her discourse is markedly respectful, and her concern is for God to be honoured, rather than to judge her monarch.

Catherine provides a further reason to justify her non-conformity with the Emperor's orders to sacrifice: she reveals that she is of the blood royal, and that Maxence served her father: 'Mon pere devant vous commandoit en Monarque' (I). He considers that her attitude offends the gods, rather than his personal honour or imperial dignity. He warns that if she does not worship the gods:

⁶⁴ Cruas was a Benedictine foundation in the diocese of Viviers (Ardeche), L. H. Cottineau, *Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbayes et priéurés*, 2 vols (Macon: Protat, 1939), I, 926.

Boissin de Gallardon's other play, *Le martyr de Saint Vincent*, is dedicated to the chapter of Viviers Cathedral. As with his version of St Catherine, the playwright demonstrates his religious credentials from the outset:

Vous auriez juste occasion de m'appeller ingrat, si m'avoir porté tant de bien-veillance depuis que je suis resident en vostre Cité, et faisant voir le jour à quelques tragedies et histoires que je desire mettre sous la presse, je ne vous faisois participans de fruct de mes labeurs. (dedicace)

The tragedy begins with one of its other martyrs giving a lengthy discourse about the benefits and divine plan of the social hierarchy:

VALERE Les pasteurs et prelates qui ont en leur puissance
L'administration, la totale dispense
Des dons spirituels en l'église établis
Par la devotion se verront ennoblis
De ce bien souverain, car ils sont la lumiere
Sur les mondains courans la terrestre carriere:
Les Monarques, les Rois, les Empereurs puissans
De ce dons eternels se verront jouyssans,
Comme les oings de Dieu, sa gloire estant leur lice,
Et faisant observer saintement la justice. (I)

The ruler has his place in the divine scheme, notwithstanding what creed he professes. The Emperor first appears, as in Gallardon's other play, musing on the extent of his personal power. Dacian calls to mind Valere and Vincent and their 'loy rebelle'. Once again, their rebellion is not against his person but rather against traditional religion:

DACIAN Que s'ils ne font honneur aux dieux ainsi qu'il faut,
Ma fureur leur fera souffrir un dur assaut. (I)

When the two Christians are brought before him, Valere states that he acts out of spiritual motivation: 'Nenny, ca je le fay pour ma religion' (II). Dacian counters that the Roman religion is holier:

DACIAN Si contre le vouloir des Rois elle est trouvee:
Or Diocletian et moy son lieutenant. (II)

Dacian is shocked by their lack of deference, but their slight is directed against his faith, not his person:

VINCENS

Crie Dacian, crie,

Tes Dieux sont endormis, ils n'ont ta voix ouye. (II)

The Emperor perceives this as *lèse-majesté*:

DACIAN	Pourray-je supporter la voix tant arrogante De ce jeune effronté vide de jugement, Qui me mesprise ainsi sans estre nullement Enclin à m'obeir. (II)
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After offering Vincent clemency if he will retract his Christian ideas, there is a final debate between the Emperor and the martyr. Dacian appeals to him: 'Daigne te conformer à la loy du Monarque' (IV). Vincent cannot comply, and as he is being led off to execution, he adds:

S. VINCENS LES BOURREAUX S. VINCENS	Ah! Quelle cruauté punir un innocen Voila que de bien vivre, et estre obeissant. J'obey à mon Dieu, non pas a vostre maistre. (IV)
---	--

Vincent rejects the Emperor's orders to the last.⁶⁶ However, the martyr's position does not mean that the monarch has no right to rule, nor that a subject can disobey in all things, simply in this matter of conscience. Vincent does utter some strong statements in the third act ('ne me parle plus de ces loix inhumaines' and 'je ne puis t'obeir, car t'es un barbare'), yet this is after having accepted his imminent death. Furthermore, these remarks are directly related to imperial repression of the Christian faith and follow earlier, positive comments about the necessity of being subject to kingly rule. From the beginning of both plays, Gallardon's characters mention the necessity of kingship and the author subtly distances himself from resistance theories. His links with the ecclesiastical hierarchy tend to give credence to this pro-monarchical reading of the two plays.

The tale of St Catherine was taken up by Étienne Poytevin in 1619, the year following Boissin de Gallardon's version, with *Sainte Catherine tragedie*.⁶⁷ This was printed in Paris and Poytevin dedicates to the Queen the dramatisation of 'ceste Royne Egyptienne tyrannisee (pour JESUS CHRIST,) en son Royaume'. His sequence of events differs from Boissin's, in that the Emperor has already met

⁶⁶ According to legend, Valère, or Valerius, shares the imprisonment of Vincent but is sent into exile and dies of natural causes. See Attwater, *Dictionary of Saints* (London: Penguin, 1965; repr. 1974), p. 336.

Catherine and is in love with her, and there is an additional character, Catherine's mother, 'la Royne d'Egypte'. In the opinion of Margaret Pascoe, this version of the legend of St Catherine 'est plus originale et plus romanesque', and this is evident from the start of the play.⁶⁸ While the tragedy begins with a common motif in the martyr-play, the Emperor musing on the extent of his power, the entire course of the action is laid bare from the start:

MAXIMIN L'Empire des Romains flechit dessous mes lois:
 Et si pourtant je croy plus heureux mille fois
 Le simple pasteur, qui dans sa bergerie,
 Ne sçait pas les malheurs que traîne nostre vie,
 Et sans obstacles peut, et la nuict, et le jour
 Nager et s'enyurer dans les plaisirs d'amour.
 Que me sert-il hélas! Ma chere Catherine
 Que je quitte pour toy l'amour de ma Faustine,
 Si tes yeux m'ont plongé dans un antre d'horreurs. (I)

Poytevin is the first author to introduce a love element in the history of this martyr, and this would become an integral feature of other martyr dramatisations. The Emperor is revealed to be suffering from the ills of love, and her later rejection of his advances provides yet another reason for him to despise Christianity. Poytevin portrays Maximin as being swayed by his counsellor's arguments to persecute the sect in order to gain Catherine. The tragedy thus has some superficial affinities to the figure of Esther. This representation exonerates Maximin, for it allows him to be criticised indirectly on the sole grounds of having taken bad counsel:

MAXIMIN Calpurne, tu dis vray, et je t'en ayme mieux,
 Il faut executer pour l'amour de nos Dieux
 Ton advis salutaire, afin que Catherine
 M'ayme doresnavant, et je lairray Faustine.
 ça [sic] qu'on ne tarde plus, allons nous apprester,
 Ce conseil est fort bon, il faut l'executer,
 Entrons dedans, sur moy, je veux que l'on publie
 Un edit sur cela dedans Alexandrie.
 Que me voila heureux, que j'ay de bons amis,
 Qui m'ont en un moment hors de gran'peine mis,
 Je m'en vois de ce pas ceste affaire resoudre,
 Il faut que les Chrestiens soyent bien tost mis en poudre. (I)

⁶⁷ This play and its author do not feature in the frères Parfaict, and he has no mention in the *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*.

⁶⁸ Pascoe, *Les Drame religieux*, p. 22.

The Emperor is vulnerable, though being so open to manipulation does afford him a small degree of audience sympathy.

In the following scene Catherine is accompanied by her *nourrice* and the princess utters a prayer to '[l']Auteur de mon desir, seul Dieu de ma pensée'. She is therefore consumed with a passion of a different order from Maximin:

CATHERINE	Que mes ardants desirs devant ta Majesté, Consacrent à tes pieds ma pure chasteté. Arriere loing de moy toute autre frenesie, Autre penser ne soit dedans ma fantasie, Sers-moy Seigneur, sers-moy de pere et de mary, Ton amour à jamais ne soit dans moy tary. (I)
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This leaves no doubting that Catherine will receive everything she needs from God, and carnal considerations are sublimated to this zeal. She declares her intention to receive baptism, another invention of Poytevin, as the princess is already a Christian in the *Legenda Aurea*. Other dramatic martyrs converted during the course of a play are Eustache, Polyeucte and Genest.⁶⁹ In the second act, Maximin publicly calls for a thanksgiving and ordains a sacrifice to the gods. The evil advisor persuades his master that homage ought to be due to him rather than to the deities:

PORTIAN	Sire, chacun vous louë, et vostre Majesté Se verra reverer comme une deïté: Il vous faut resjouyr, tout le monde respire D'un desir non pareil le bien de vostre Empire. (II)
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He convinces Maximin to kill dissenters 'par un cruel bourreau'. The Emperor forgets himself when he first catches sight of Catherine:

MAXIMIN	Dieu du Ciel la splendeur de son corps environne Eblouyt et mes yeux, et mes sens estonne.
CATHERINE	Magnanime Empereur, je m'estonne comment Vous faictes adorer des Dieux sans sentiment?

⁶⁹ Genesis's baptism is somewhat complicated in theological terms, as it is not clear whether he undergoes a valid baptism of water during the mock ceremony during the inner-play, which would account for his sudden conversion. If not, then he receives either the grace of baptism of desire, or baptism of blood at the moment of his martyrdom, though quite which one is difficult to establish.

He is firmly brought back to earth by her reprimand, but counters this with an offer: 'Tien, prens mon Sceptre en main et gouverne à ton aise'. He persists in spite of her refusals:

MAXIMIN	Ma belle, voulez-vous quelque chose de moy.
CATHERINE	Je desire ardamment que tu quittes ta loy.
MAXIMIN	Pourveu que vous vouliez à mes vœux favourable Vous unir avec moy d'un lien perdurable.
CATHERINE	Tyran, retire-toy tu pers icy tes pas Avorton de l'Enfer, monstre affreux de là bas. (II)

He seems more concerned with the desire to possess her, rather than to restore honour to his gods. His feelings are predominantly physical, confirmed by how speedily they dissipate when he is spurned: 'Je pers les sens d'Amour' (II). He is told of the death of Catherine's mother, and immediately sees this as a possible means of conquest:

MAXIMIN	Un plaisir nonpareil dans mon ame s'escole. Je sens dedans mon cœur s'eslever un espoir Qui me promet enfin de la pouvoir avoir. (III)
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He resolves to visit her at her castle for one purpose: 'esperer d'avoir ma Catherine' (IV).

When he realises that she tenaciously refuses his best efforts, he decides to enlist the help of scholars in his quest 'convaincre ceste fille imprudente d'erreur' (IV). We do not see the actual debate with the philosophers (named as Psametiche, Calcana, Scach, Tamnaar and Ptolomee), instead the scene opens:

MAXIMIN	Avoir esté vaincus par une simple fille? O Dieux! et qu'est cecy? Ca que'on les deshable, Qu'on les mene au suplice, et qu'apres cent tourments Ils ayent dans un feu tous vifs leurs monuments. (IV)
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This leads directly on to the final act, which consists of a monologue of the martyr, completed by an angel's speech at the very end. Catherine draws a moral from the events:

CATHERINE	L'on voit donc aujourd'huy qu'une injuste licence, Au grand mespris du ciel, oprime l'innocence! Que la haine et la rage a tourné son poison Encontre les effets que produit la raison. (V)
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The execution, which is not dramatised by Poytevin, is accepted by Catherine with the angel encouraging her 'l'ornement de là haut'. This ending, together with the presence of Alecton (albeit a negligible one), are sixteenth-century remnants. Nonetheless, Poytevin does inject a degree of originality into the legend, though it is difficult to judge whether the lack of execution is due to staging difficulties or is symptomatic of growing disapproval of dramatised violence. Poytevin respects the unity of time, but there is no scene division. By concentrating on the love element, and portraying Maximin as weakened by a deadly combination of unrequited love and corrupt counsel, Poytevin avoids having to deal with the problem of depicting a ruler being judged.⁷⁰ Since the play was printed in the capital and dedicated to the Queen Regent, it can be assumed that the absence of revolt is deliberate, in order to avoid offending French authorities.

Nicolas Caussin published a collection of five plays in 1620 under the title *Tragœdiæ sacræ* and this volume contains two martyr-tragedies, *Felicitas* and *Hermenigildus*. Caussin was a Jesuit and became confessor to Louis XIII in 1637. The fact that the plays were published in their entirety can be seen as a measure of their success.⁷¹ Even though each college professor was expected to compose at least one play during the course of every academic year, 'few of these plays were ever published, undoubtedly owing in part to the fact that they were written for use as exercises and performances in the school'.⁷² In the words of one biographer, Caussin 'turned to lives of the saints which had been excluded from the popular theatre of Paris but continued to form subjects of school plays'.⁷³ However, the presence of saints on stage was not, by now, entirely without precedent. The martyrs' confrontations with the Emperor are markedly deferential. Felicity takes care to use

⁷⁰ Poytevin and Gallardon introduce some original details into their plays: 'les deux *Sainte Catherine* de Boissin de Gallardon (1618) et de Poytevin (1619) ont toutes deux comme empereur Maximin, alors que les pièces jésuites mettent en scène Maxence. Elles ont en commun le rôle important de Porphyre, et un ange y apparaît. Néanmoins, Poytevin semble refaire différemment Boissin, à partir, vraisemblablement d'une récente tragédie italienne', André Stegmann, *L'Héroïsme cornélien: genèse et signification*, 2 vols (Paris: Colin, 1968), II, 69.

⁷¹ 'La preuve de son mérite, c'est qu'il a été traduit en Latin, en Italien, en Espagnol, en Portugais, en Allemand, et même en Anglois', Antoine Sabatier de Castres, *Les Trois siècles de la littérature française ou tableau de l'esprit de nos écrivains depuis François I, jusqu'en 1781*, 4 vols (The Hague and Paris: Moutard, 1781), I, 458-59. This judgement refers primarily to *La Cour sainte*.

⁷² George Drew Hocking, *A Study of the Tragœdiæ Sacræ of Father Caussin (1583-1651)*, The John Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, 44 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1943), p. 22.

⁷³ Hocking, *A Study of the Tragœdiæ Sacræ*, p. 45.

Marcus Aurelius's formal title when addressing him (V, p. 325). Caussin's two plays do not dwell on the transgressive nature of the martyrs, and this is hardly surprising given Caussin's links with the Court. Moreover, from 1610, Jesuits had been distancing themselves from any theory tending to justify revolt.⁷⁴ This play is the first in which Caussin conforms to the unities, and is also the only tragedy in which he assigns a female role, unavoidable given his choice of martyr.

Caussin's treatment of the legend of Hermenigildus inspired four other playwrights to undertake the story. Although Hermenigildus was executed in 586 after refusing to take communion from an Arian bishop, he was not formally canonised until 1585 by Pius V, and was therefore a topical subject.⁷⁵ In 1650 Gaspard Olivier pays homage to Caussin, admitting that he is dramatising a martyr whose story '[a] occupé la plume de l'Homme du Siecle le plus accompli (qui est l'objet et le desespoir de mon imitation)'.⁷⁶ This demonstrates the influence and durability of Caussin's work, while at the same time supporting the thesis that authors recognised a body of martyr drama from which to draw. *Hermenigildus* was written in prose, and in this 'Caussin's example may have influenced later writers'.⁷⁷ It is interesting that Puget de La Serre also writes two martyr-plays in prose, indicating that, for some authors, the sub-genre served as a vehicle for experimental writing, at least to a small degree. *Felicitas* was later translated into German by Andreas Gryphius as *Beständige Mutter oder Die Heilige Felicitas*.⁷⁸

Another Jesuit author, Louis Cellot, produced a martyr-play in the same year as Caussin concerning the legend of St Adrian, favourite of the Emperor Galerius. This was performed at La Flèche in 1620.⁷⁹ It was subsequently published a decade later in the capital as part of a collection, *Opera Poetica* (1630), again like Caussin. As with other dramatists of hagiographical topics, the author consulted Baronius as a

⁷⁴ There was an attempt to implicate Pierre Cotton with the publication of *Anticoton, ou Réfutation de la lettre déclaratoire du père Cotton* (n. p.: n.pub., 1610).

⁷⁵ Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, 3 vols (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), III, 643.

⁷⁶ The quotation is taken from the dedication 'au lecteur'. There was La Calprènedé's 1643 *Herménigilde*, but Olivier makes it clear that he is praising Caussin when he mentions that 'je le fais parler d'un langage François' (au lecteur).

⁷⁷ Hocking, *A Study of the Tragœdiæ Sacræ*, p. 54.

⁷⁸ Hocking mentions the play was probably translated around 1646, and first appeared in the 1657 edition of Gryphius's work, reappearing in the complete edition of 1663 with some minor amendments, *A Study of the Tragœdiæ Sacræ*, p. 51 (n. 22).

⁷⁹ Gofflot, *Le Théâtre au Collège*, p. 103.

principal source.⁸⁰ This particular play was known to Rotrou, who drew from it for his martyr's inner-play. The tradition of clerical writers continues with a tragedy written by Pierre Bello, a native of Dinant and rector of the church of St Laurent in the same town. His *Tragédie sur la vie et martyre de S. Eustache* was published at Liège in 1632.⁸¹ Eustache was the theme of the only saint's play performed in England during the later years of Elizabeth I's reign, *Sir Placidus* by Henry Chettle (1599), no longer extant.⁸² There was a Liegeois tradition of staging public plays at the Carmelite or Jesuit colleges, sometimes attended by the prince-bishop, so there is every indication that Bello's work was performed.⁸³ There are certain features in this vernacular tragedy that would not be followed by subsequent authors of the same saint. Unlike later versions, Eustache is not alone when he is converted. Like Saul, he hears a heavenly voice asking him: 'Pourquoi Placide, hélas, me persécutes tu?' (I, 1). The addition of a loquacious 'prestre des Chrestiens' provides an opportunity for authorial intervention, as his apologetical instruction of Placide is doubtless destined for the tragedy's spectators (I, 3). Archaic additions such as Belzebub and a witch named Canidie, together with the recurring occurrence of the celestial voice and a *chœur* at the close of acts, create a distinctly old-fashioned flavour. After many adventures, Eustache is able to serve Trajan by defeating the Parthians, and returns to receive the compliments of his successor, Adrian. The soldier is highly deferential towards his ruler, and when he refuses to offer thanks to Jupiter, it is so subdued that there is no question of subversion:

EUSTACHE	Tenez Sire, voilà ceste espée par qui J'ai, pour vous, tant de gloire et de bonheur acquis; Je suivrai désormais la céleste milice. [...]
ADRIAN	Ne me connois tu pas, ton seigneur et ton roi?
EUSTACHE	Oui, je vous connois pour tel et vous revère.
ADRIAN	Je ne t'ai commandé rien qui fusse sevère Que ne m'obéis-tu?
EUSTACHE	O monarque puissant,

⁸⁰ '[Cellot] poursuit l'inspiration nouvelle et l'usage de Baronius pour des tragédies du Bas-Empire', André Stegmann, 'Le théâtre jésuite à La Flèche: analyse et mise en perspective', *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, 169 (1981), 95-106 (p. 102).

⁸¹ The existence of Bello's play was entirely unknown until the sale of the collection of M. de Soleinne which contained a copy, Frédéric Faber, *Histoire du théâtre français en Belgique depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours d'après des documents inédits reposants aux archives générales du royaume*, 5 vols (Brussels: Olivier; Paris: Tresse, 1878-1880), I, 27.

⁸² Gordon Hall Gerould, *Saints' Legends* (Boston and New York: Riverside Press, 1916; repr. Norwood Editions, 1977), p. 308.

⁸³ Pierre Bello, *Tragédie sur la vie de S. Eustache*, ed. by H. Helbig, Société de Bibliophiles Liégeois, 3 (Liège: Grandmont-Donders, 1865), p. xi.

Je donnerois pour vous, et ma vie et mon sang,
Je m'offrirois pour vous, à la mort et en victime. (V, 3)

In this pre-execution interview, the martyr clearly holds sentiments of loyalty to authority and still treats the Emperor as a lawful superior.

An anonymous play of 1634 demonstrates that, while the martyr theme was being taken up with some sophistication by authors such as Caussin, there were still more primitive tragedies appearing in the provinces. *L'Histoire de sainte Susanne, exemplaire de toutes sages femmes et de tous bons juges*, published at Troyes, lacks both pagination and act or scene division.⁸⁴ The play deals with the Old Testament story of Susanna, who refuses the advances of two elders, Naman and Azachar.⁸⁵ Susanna and the Elders was a popular subject for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists.⁸⁶ The older pair accuse her of adultery and she is condemned to death. Finally, after their deceit is uncovered they both receive the penalty due to be given to her. While not a martyr-play in the strict sense, Susanne is condemned to death for her virtue, and this voluntary acceptance of suffering to die to keep virtue intact, constitutes martyrdom.⁸⁷ At the end of the tragedy, the righteous woman triumphantly proclaims to the judges who wrongly condemned her:

SUSANNE

Vous me ferez mourir en deshonneur:
Mais j'ayme mieux mourir en innocence
Que d'offencer par peché le Seigneur.

Despite such instances of plays with an antiquated flavour, the geographical spread of martyr-plays and diversity of legends chosen, meant that, in many respects, they acted as dramatic forerunners to the appearance of the theme in the capital in the 1640s.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Corrad de Breban places this play at 1634 since it is undated, but the archaic orthography and tone lead me to suspect it belongs to the last decade of the sixteenth century or the first one of the seventeenth, *Recherches sur l'établissement et l'exercice de l'imprimerie de Troyes*, 3rd edn (Paris: Chossonery, 1873; repr. La Roue à Livres, 1973), p. 148.

⁸⁵ A pro-feminist cleric used this biblical example to demonstrate the constancy of women, Louis Machon, *Discours ou sermon apologetique en faveur des femmes. Question nouvelle, curieuse, et non jamais soutenue* (Paris: T. Blaise, 1641), pp. 62-65. For further contemporary opinions on the inconstancy of women, see Chapter Five, p. 237.

⁸⁶ By the sixteenth century 'the frequency and vividness of visual renditions indicates a widespread fascination with the story', Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, p. 122.

⁸⁷ Saint Ambrose acclaims Susanna's purity in his *De Virginitate opuscula sanctorum doctorum*, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁸ 'In the first two or three decades of the seventeenth century the provinces exercised a greater influence on the development of French drama than did the capital', John Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 7.

2.3 Plays in the Early 1640s

One martyr-play worth special mention is Jean Puget de La Serre's *Thomas Morus ou le triomphe de la foy et de la constance* (1642).⁸⁹ La Serre, a native of Toulouse, settled in Paris around 1625. He was, by all accounts, a prolific author and 'on lui attribue jusqu'à 100 ouvrages'.⁹⁰ This play is the only one by the dramatist that Chappuzeau judges worthy of merit.⁹¹ It is not written in verse and while La Serre cannot be accredited with pioneering this form, he seems to have been the first to write for the tragic genre in prose.⁹² He held the position of *garde de la Bibliothèque* and *historiographe* of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIII.⁹³ What is particularly striking about the play is that it concerns an episode from recent history, and not from the annals of the Church's first three centuries.⁹⁴ Brad S. Gregory argues that while saints from Antiquity were predominant in hagiographical collections, 'the new martyr-saints were not competing with the old'.⁹⁵ La Serre is not the first author to choose a modern subject: there is, for example, La Calprenède's *Le Comte d'Essex* (1632) and *Jeanne, Reyne d'Angleterre* (1637); also Regnault's *Marie Stuart, reine d'Ecosse* (1638). His originality lies in the fact that he is the earliest major dramatist to opt for a modern martyr.⁹⁶ The story was already known in the collèges: 'dans le théâtre scolaire Thomas More et Henri VIII figurent assez souvent au programme jusqu'au delà de 1700'.⁹⁷ La Serre seems to have been influenced by one of these, *Henricus*

⁸⁹ The earliest edition of this tragedy dates from 1642, yet the frères Parfaict place the first published version at 1641, possibly because the *privilège* is listed as 21 October 1641.

⁹⁰ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 1018. The frères Parfaict note that 'M. de la Serre n'a jamais fait de vers' and note that his first published play was the tragedy *Pandoste ou la princesse malheureuse* (1631), *Histoire*, VI, 155 (note a).

⁹¹ Chappuzeau, *Le Theatre François*, p. 119.

⁹² Chappuzeau, *Le Theatre François*, p. 1018.

⁹³ Parfaict, *Histoire*, VI, 150.

⁹⁴ 'Un *Thomas Morus* en 1642 contribua à la vogue de la tragédie sacrée, mais c'était user d'audace que de prendre un événement si moderne', Stegmann, *L'Héroïsme cornélien*, I, 110.

⁹⁵ He continues: 'in fact, the renewal of Catholic martyrdom seems to have accentuated, not displaced, the veneration of the early martyr-saints, strengthening the case of an ancient tradition reborn', Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, p. 306.

⁹⁶ I use the word 'major' with some caution here. This does not imply that La Serre was first-rate, but that his works sold well. As Castres remarks: 'son *Secrétaire de la Cour* eut cinquante éditions et n'en méritoit pas une', *Les Trois siècles de la littérature française*, IV, 183.

⁹⁷ Jane Conroy, *Terres tragiques: L'Angleterre et l'Ecosse dans la tragédie française du XVII^e siècle*, Biblio 17: 104 (Tübingen: Narr, 1999), p. 365. There was a *Thomas More* at Courtrai (1621); *Thomas More* at Tournai (1621); *Thomas More* at Ruremonde (1622) and again at Courtrai (1625) and at Ruremonde (1629). I would add an even earlier play dating from 1612, *Thomas Morus tragædia*. This exists in manuscript at the Shakespeare Institute Library of the University of Birmingham (P/Box 195). There is no clue as to its provenance save for the dedication 'beatissimæ Deipara semper Virgini dicata Martyribus Anglicanis'. This indicates it was continental, presumably French or Belgian given the later

Octavus seu Schisma anglicanum, written by the Belgian Jesuit Vernulz (1625), though ‘he does not follow it closely’.⁹⁸ The theme followed the prevailing public taste for historical drama and it is no surprise this play was La Serre’s most successful: a famous anecdote tells of Richelieu shedding tears at the three performances he attended.⁹⁹ One probable source for the historical events, since it was published at Douai, is Thomas Stapleton’s *Tres Thomæ* (1588), reissued in 1612.¹⁰⁰ This work ranks More as the equal of Thomas the Apostle and Thomas of Canterbury, and is clearly intended to favour the third Thomas’s canonisation.¹⁰¹ This play is dedicated to the duchesse d’Esguillon: ‘c’est une Histoire où la Constance et la Foy triomphent également; et si la tyrannie la rend toute funeste, vous n’y verrez que des Martyrs’. The political agenda of the author seems quite lucid: a monarch can become tyrannical, and there is a recent example (‘Histoire’) to prove this.

The first Act opens with an interview between More and the duke of Suffolk:

SUFOC
THOMAS MORUS

Monsieur, pourquoy resistez vous aux volonte de Roy?
Je ne scaurois estre complaisant à son crime: Il veut repudier la Reyne sans sujet: Il veut changer de Religion. Pour authoriser d’un pouvoir absolu les seconds Nopces; et je donneray des loüanges à ses pernicieux desseins? Non, non, Monsieur, je n’ay pas assez de lâcheté pour un si funeste dessein. (I, 1)

plays starting from 1621. Since there was a *Thomas Becket* at Saint-Omer in 1610, it seems highly likely the play was written for performance at this college (Stegmann, *L’Héroïsme cornélien*, II, 675). Conroy does not allude to this tragedy: the first dramatisations of the More martyrdom are therefore earlier than previously imagined.

⁹⁸ C. N. Smith, ‘The *Thomas Morus* (c. 1641) of Jean Puget de La Serre’, *Moreana*, 15:58 (1978), 17-31 (p. 19).

⁹⁹ ‘On sait que Thomas Morus s’est acquis une reputation que toutes les autres Comedies du temps n’avoient jamais eüe. Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu qui m’entend a pleuré dans toutes les représentations qu’il a veuës de cette piece’, Gabriel Guéret, *Le Parnasse réformé* (Paris: Thomas Jolly, 1668), pp. 41-2. This seemingly contradicts Cynthia Skenazi’s judgement that ‘Richelieu n’est guère favorable au théâtre religieux’. Her proof for this view lies in her observation that ‘les pièces composées sous ses ordres par ses secrétaires dramatiques n’abordent pas de thèmes sacrés’, ‘La représentation du théâtre dans le véritable *Saint Genest* de Rotrou’, *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, 17 (1990), 75-84 (pp. 77-78). Jean Mesnard observes that Richelieu ‘ne manifesta aucun penchant particulier pour le théâtre religieux’, yet notes he accepted the dedication of a religious play in 1632 and also assisted at La Serre’s *Morus*, ‘Richelieu et le théâtre’, in *La Culture du XVII^e siècle: enquêtes et synthèses* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), pp. 168-181 (pp. 178-79).

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Stapleton, *Tres Thomæ seu de S. Thomæ Apostoli rebus gestis. De S. Thomæ Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi et Martyre. De Thomæ Mori Angliæ quondam Cancellarii vita* (Douai: Joannes Bogardus, 1588), reprinted with an index under a slightly modified title (Cologne: Bernard Gualterus, 1612). Stapleton (1535–98) taught at Douai, and from 1590 was professor of Scripture at Louvain. On his influence, see Martin R. O’Connell, *Thomas Stapleton and the Counter Reformation*, Yale Publications in Religion, 9 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), especially pp. 23-52. Gregory erroneously renders this title as *Tres Thomases*, in *Salvation at Stake*, pp. 255 and 271.

¹⁰¹ Stapleton insists that he is not writing the life of a scholar nor that of a virtuous father, ‘sed ut virum sanctum et gloriosum pro veritate ac justitia Martyrem literis commendarem’, *Tres Thomæ*, p. 272.

More does not hesitate to judge his sovereign's behaviour, which offends his religious principles and constitutes '[un] crime'. Suffolk is shocked by this display:

DUC	On ne raisonne jamais avec son Souverain.
MORUS	A quoy nous sert donc la Raison?
DUC	A luy obeyr, quand il commande.
MORUS	Encore que je sois né son sujet, je ne veux pas mourir son esclave. ¹⁰²
DUC	Ne sçavez vous pas que celuy qui fait les Loix, est au dessus d'elles?
MORUS	Je sçay bien que les hommes qui font les loix les peuvent violer quand il leur plaist: mais celles de notre Religion Chrestienne et Catholiques ne sont pas de leur institution. (I, 1) ¹⁰³

La Serre presents a martyr who believes in a limited and accountable monarchy, and while it is for religious reasons he is rebelling against his king, his foremost duty is to obey his inner conscience:

MORUS	Je ne suis point aveugle, pour suivre aveuglément les volontez du Roy: les maximes de ma conscience me seront toujours plus considerables que celles de l'Estat. (I, 1) ¹⁰⁴
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This can be construed as a radical statement of political ideology. The eponymous hero of the play will only follow his master's orders on condition that they conform to the requirements of his own value system. The exasperated Duke perseveres:

DUC	Estes vous innocent de desobeyr à vostre Prince?
MORUS	Ouy. Puis mon obeïssance seule me peut rendre criminel.
DUC	N'est-ce pas le devoir de vostre charge d'autoriser ce que le Roy desire?
MORUS	Mon serment ne m'oblige d'approuver que ce qui est juste et raisonnable. (I, 1) ¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² 'Car aussi les sujets ne sont pas esclaves ni serfs du Roy, comme on parle: veu que ce ne sont prisonniers de guere, ni gens achetez au marché: ains [sic] comme tous en un corps sont Seigneurs, aussi chascun d'eux en particulier doivent estre tenus comme freres et parens du Roy', Brutus, *Puissance*, p. 154.

¹⁰³ More's position is resonant of the author of the *Vindiciae*: 'il n'y a rien qui exempte les Rois de l'obeysance qu'ils doivent à la Loy, laquelle ils doivent reconoistre comme leur Dame et maistresse', Brutus, *Puissance*, p. 136. Suffolk's claims for royal prerogative being above the law is entirely consonant with the *Vindiciae*'s definition of a tyrant, 'la Loy est l'asme du bon Roy' (p. 137).

¹⁰⁴ More's dialogue bears some similarities to the recorded interrogations in Stapleton, *Tres Thomæ*, particularly pp. 284-87.

¹⁰⁵ 'Ces exemples, et la constance d'un million de Martyrs, qui ont mieux aimé mourir qu'obeir selon que les histoires, qui en sont pleines, le monstrent, pourroient servir d'une loy bien expresse', Brutus, *Puissance*, p. 42.

Once more, More justifies his resistance by appealing to his ethical beliefs. This is a stand he maintains during the action of the play. Catherine of Aragon appears firm in her faith. The King for his part, is fundamentally unhappy:

ROY *seul*

Que je suis inquieté dans mes grandeurs! Que je suis mal-heureux parmy les felicitez de ma condition souveraine! Je veux que l'esclat de ma Couronne me fasse aymer de mes sujets, craindre de mes Ennemys, et envier de tous les autres Roys de la terre; toutes ces marques de pouvoir me reprochent honteusement ma foiblesse, puis qu'un Enfant me fait la loy. (I, 3)

The motif of a ruler burdened with his task is commonplace enough in seventeenth-century theatre.¹⁰⁶ These solitary thoughts of Henry VIII, followed by a prayer, reveal him to be vulnerable and a slave to his passions.¹⁰⁷ The monarch, crippled by his obsessive dependence, is a stereotype of effeminacy.¹⁰⁸ It is also a scene of some psychological insight: La Serre resists the temptation to portray Henry as a polarised character, he does not appear completely flawed, nor totally corrupt.¹⁰⁹ The following scene provides a key to his subsequent behaviour:

ROY
ARTHENICE
ROY

N'estes-vous pas contente de Regner absolument?
Ce Regne ne peut estre absolu, n'ayant ny Sceptre, ny Couronne.
Je vous offre tous les deux. (I, 4)

Through holding his feelings prisoner to her emotional tyranny, Anne Boleyn is responsible for the ensuing tyrannical actions of Henry VIII.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Gillian Jondorf, '“What is a King?” The Figure of the King in Rotrou', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 10 (1988), 40-52 (p. 40). Bello's Trajan complains that 'celui qui tient en main le sceptre impérial/ Esprouve tous les jours moins de bien que de mal./ Tousjours mille travaux et mille inquiétudes' (*S. Eustache*, IV, 1).

¹⁰⁷ Baricave attempts to minimalise the religious question in Henry's position, thereby removing possible reasons for dissent to his authority: 'on dit aussi que Henry VIII. Roy d'Angleterre n'estoit point schismatique, pour s'estre soustraite de l'Eglise, d'autant qu'il s'en estoit point soustrait d'un cœur ennemi, mais conformement à la parole de Dieu: *Quia diligebat Annam, parce qu'il aimoit Anne Boleine*', *Defence*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁸ David M. Halperin observes that, until recent times, 'effeminacy has traditionally functioned as a marker of heterosexual excess in men', 'How to do the History of Male Homosexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 6 (2000), 87-123 (p. 94). Bello's martyr berates his hunting companions that 'je ne peux supporter ces hommes casaniers,/ Ces cœurs efféminés, ces paresseux asniers, /Qui ne prennent plaisir qu'à courtoiser les dames' (*S. Eustache*, I, 1).

¹⁰⁹ Street's evaluation of the tragedy seems fair: 'psychological drama was his goal, but the cold periods repel any sympathy', *French Sacred Drama*, pp. 177-78.

¹¹⁰ The *Nom d'Acteurs* lists 'Artenice, appellé Anne de Boulan, Maistresse du Roy', and has 'Arthenice' throughout the play.

The King's mistress is encouraged to seek a crown by her unscrupulous mother:

AMELITE La Beauté fait des Esclaves par tout; et si le Roy est de ce nombre, il vous rendra la plus heureuse du Royaume. (II, 1)

While the royal beloved confides in her mother, Henry unloads his cares onto his favourite:

POLEXANDRE Un Roy passe pour Tyran, quand il rend ses passions aussi absolues que sa Puissance.¹¹¹
 ROY Que puis-je apprehender?
 POLEXANDRE Toutes choses.
 ROY Quels sont mes Ennemis?
 POLEXANDRE Vos Subjects.
 ROY Qui tiendra leur party?
 POLEXANDRE La Raison. (II, 2)¹¹²

Here Henry is faced with a definition of tyranny that applies to himself, he is reminded that he offends his subjects —another sign of despotism— and there is a further appeal to reason consolidating More's earlier argument. The infatuated ruler commissions Polexandre to inform Anne that she is to be officially named as royal mistress. However, she claims not to desire this and refuses the honour (II, 4). The King's confidant foresees the consequences of Anne's inner ambition:

POLEXANDRE *seul* Que la conquête de cette Beauté coustera de soupirs et de larmes! Je prevoy que le feu de ses yeux reduira en cendre cet Empire; que ses traicts blesseront à mort milles cœurs innocens; et que ses charmes tous funestes, seront autant d'escueils à ceux qui ont le courage de resister à la Tyrannie. (III, 1)

¹¹¹ In one of his later works (undated but post-Fronde), La Serre praises Louis XIV for mastering his passions: 'Qui pourroit s'opposer aux Illustres projets/ D'un Prince à qui le ciel a promis tout le gloire:/ Il emporte sur luy la première victoire,/ Et met ses passions au rang de ses sujets', *Panegyrique de Louis Quartorzième, Roy de France et de Navarre* (no publishing details), verse accompanying the third engraving. The younger Louis had been criticised by Duhamel, in charge of the Parisian parish of Saint-Merry, two days after the arrest of Retz. The cleric 'en lisant les prières pour le roy, il lut sans un papier écrit à la main, et inséré dans le rituel qu'il tenoit, ces paroles: "Nous remercions Dieu des victoires qu'il donne au roy, et nous le prions qu'il verse dans sa poitrine sacrée les vertus royales et chrétiennes, qu'il luy donne principalement la victoire sur ses passions plus que sur ses ennemis", René Rapin, *Mémoires du P. René Rapin de la compagnie de Jésus sur l'Eglise et la Société, la cour, la ville et le jansenisme 1664–1669*, ed. by Léon Aubineau, 3 vols (Paris: Gaume Frères et J. Duprey, 1865), I, 518. This was an oblique attack on the monarch's actions.

¹¹² This reply is echoed by La Serre's Catherine (II, 5). See p. 95 and Chapter Five, p. 227.

- MORUS Si les Roys sont les images de Dieu, ces ombres ne peuvent exister que par leurs corps. Vostre Majesté veut effacer l'Original dont elle est le Portrait.¹¹⁵
- ROY Puis que je suis un des Dieux de la terre, j'y veux regner absolument selon mon humeur, plutost que selon vos conseils.¹¹⁶
- MORUS Si les Roys sont les Dieux d'icy bas, ils ne doivent rien faire qui leur puisse estre reproché par les Hommes. Quand la Tyrannie regne avec eux, ils perdent le tiltre de Souverains, et se rendent sujets à tout le monde, par le pouvoir qu'eux mesmes luy donnent de les blasmer justement. (IV, 1)

More's position is essentially an apologia for theories of resistance, and would not be out of place in the *Vindiciae*.¹¹⁷ His standpoint is explicit and allows no room for ambiguity: if a king errs, then he no longer has a right to be obeyed.¹¹⁸ Henry states his absolutist belief in the unquestionable authority of kingship, to be met by More's conviction that monarchs enjoy a limited power:

- ROY Celuy qui faict les Loix les peut changer quand il luy plaist. Doutez-vous de ma Puissance?
- MORUS Non, mais j'en cognoy les limites. (IV, 1)¹¹⁹

This results in a predictably irate response from the King:

- ROY Je seray assez heureux, si je me voy vangé de vostre Rebellion, en vous immolant à ma juste cholere. (IV, 1)

¹¹⁵ The commonplace of kings being in the image of God was one particularly associated with an increasingly absolutist state, and did not suddenly appear under Louis XIV. In an anti-tyrannicide treatise during the reign of Henri IV, a Dominican prefaces the work with a prayer: 'et si la grande pieté qu'avec les nobles François vous avez tousjours, avec tant de valeur, monstré à l'endroit de vostre patrie et de voz Roys, lesquels vous avez par dessus toute autre nations, levezes commes vrayes images du Dieu vivant', Seraphin Banquy, *Apologie contre les jugemens temeraires de ceux qui ont pensé conserver la Religion Catholique, faisant assassiner les Tres-Chrestiens Roys de France* (Paris: Jamet Mattayer et Pierre L'huillier, 1596), p. 3. Only three years after the assassination of Henri IV, Nicolas Chrestien offers this dedication to his son: 'Sire, l'on ne peut offrir aux Roys des presens dignes de leur grandeur. Ils sont images de Dieu', *Les Amantes ou la grande pastorale* (Rouen: Raphael du Petit Val, 1613).

¹¹⁶ 'Rejettons donc les detestables mensonges de ces jangleurs de Cour, qui appellent les Rois Dieux', Brutus, *Puissance*, p. 140.

¹¹⁷ C. N. Smith argues that 'Thomas Morus tends to remain on the periphery of this tragedy' and is a 'responsive rather than an active figure', 'The *Thomas Morus* (c. 1641)', p. 23. The psychological profiles allowed for the other characters in the play tend to leave Morus's character as having a largely metaphorical significance.

¹¹⁸ 'Les bons sujets ne se tenoient pas quittes du respect qu'ils devoient à leur roi, après même que son royaume fut renversé, et qu'il fut emmené comme un captif avec tout son peuple. Ils respectoient jusque dans les fers et après la ruine du royaume, le caractère sacrée de l'autorité royale', Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l'Écriture sainte*, in *Œuvres complètes*, 31 vols (Paris: Vives, 1862-64), XXII, 477-649 and XXIII, 1-259 (XXIII, 14).

¹¹⁹ 'Le point essentiel de la dialectique développée par La Serrre vise à établir les limites du pouvoir temporel', Conroy, *Terres tragiques*, p. 392.

est probable que l'on aura voulu éviter des allusions fâcheuses à la reine Anne d'Autriche, à Louis XIII et même à Richelieu'.¹²¹

Whether the apparently negative representation of an absolutist monarchy is unique to La Serre's history of Thomas More, or is indicative of the author's personal opinions may be clarified by examining *Sainte Catherine tragédie* (1643).¹²² Like Boissin de Gallardon's treatment of the legend, the play opens with a consideration of the Emperor's power, though, in this case, it is his wife who surveys the empire:

IMPERATRICE Que les bornes de cét Empire sont aujourd'huy de longue étendueë, puis une dernière victoire nous fait triompher de tout l'Univers. L'Empereur n'a plus d'ennemis: tous subissent ses loix en redoutant ses armes. Et il semble que les Dieux mesmes, quoy que jaloux de leur autorité, l'ayant partagé avec luy, le laissant regner sur la terre aussi absolument qu'ils regnent dans le Ciel. (I, 1)

This is moderated by her concern for the plight of Christians, and the recognition of the brutality of her husband's persecution:

IMPERATRICE Mais parmi toutes ces felicitez qui me comblent de joye, un secret de plaisir en modere l'excez. Je ne sçaurois souffrir la tyrannie de cét Edit qui condamne les Chrestiens à mort s'ils refusent de l'encens à nos Divinitez. (I, 1)

This initial scene confronts the audience with the concept of the Emperor's tyranny, in addition to presenting the Empress as sympathetic towards Christians which renders her later conversion more plausible. Her handmaid asserts that the sect's refusal constitutes disobedience to the Emperor:

LEONOR Les Chrestiens doivent estre immolez à la juste cholere de l'Empereur pour porter la peine de leur des-obeissance. Nos Autels attendent aujourd'huy ces victimes, ou leurs offrandes. (I, 1)

She calls for their extermination, a display which distresses the Empress:

¹²¹ P. L. Jacob, *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur de Soleinne*, 5 vols (Paris: Administration de l'Alliance des Arts, 1843), I, quatrième époque, 232.

¹²² The first edition contains five engravings by Jérôme David of a scene of each act of the play, and thus offers a unique insight into the staging of martyr-tragedies. For a commentary on the illustrations, see Jacques Heuzey, 'Le martyre de sainte-Catherine tragédie en prose par M. de la Serre: étude des cinq gravures de l'Édition de 1643', *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, 19 (1967), 383-386, and Catherine Guillot, 'Les illustrations du *Martyre de Sainte Catherine* de Puget de La Serre: des images à référence scénique', *XVII^e Siècle*, 211 (2001), 307-322. See Figs. 7, 8 and 9.

IMPERATRICE Quel avantage luy sera-ce de mener en triomphe des ennemis qui n'ont que des soupirs et des larmes pour resister à sa violence. La foiblesse et la soumission ne demandent jamais grace inutilement qu'à la Tyrannie. (I, 1)

She stands in judgement on the Emperor, and offers a view of ideal sovereignty that seems to favour contractual kingship:

IMPERATRICE En effet, si les Roys ne tiennent leurs sujets enchainez par l'amour, aussi bien que par la crainte, ils ne songent jamais qu'à recouvrer leur liberté, ne pouvant supporter le joug de leur servitude. (I, 1)

When told of the imperial edict, Catherine remarks that it is 'doux et cruel à la fois' (II, 1), for while it will remove her to the next life, it also brands her as a criminal. She displays her resolve to die:

CATHERINE Ma conscience et mon devoir me reprochent déjà ma paresse. Je veux desarmer la colere du Tyran, ou l'animer à ma propre ruine.
 EMILIE Qui Peut resister à une puissance absoluë?
 CATHERINE Un esprit comme le mien.
 EMILIE La tyrannie de l'Empereur est à craindre.
 CATHERINE Et la gloire du martyr à desirer. (II, 2)

The concept of tyranny is linked with 'puissance absoluë', as if they are interchangeable. The portrayal of an unchecked monarchy seems as negative as in *Thomas Morus*, and the supremacy of individual conscience is, once again, an integral component of the make-up of La Serre's martyr. Corvin, *gentilhomme de l'Empereur*, tries to persuade Catherine to reconsider, pointing out that her death will not prevent Christians from the same fate, an argument she counters by saying her death will be exemplary. Corvin leaves her with the thought: 'la colere des Roys ne se peut adoucir que par la soumission' (II, 2). When Catherine finally speaks with the Emperor, she infuriates him with her vigorous defence of a forbidden religion:

EMPEREUR Doutez vous de mon autorité dans la condition où je me treuve?
 CATHERINE Non, mais j'en mesprise la puissance dans la resolution où je me suis. (II, 5)

She recognises his sovereignty, but this is conditional.

CATHERINE A quoy vous servent toutes ces marques de souveraineté, si vostre raison est au nombre de vos esclaves. Vostre Sceptre est de mesme

matiere que la main qui le porte: son autorité absolue ne fait peur qu'aux meschans, les ames innocentes en méprisant la tyrannie, ayant assez de confiance pour la souffrir, quand le pouvoir leur manque d'éviter. (II, 5)

She reminds him that her co-religionists have obeyed and venerated him until that point. This implies that their deference had always been dependent on the fulfilment of his part of a contract between sovereign and people:

CATHERINE Les Chrestiens ont tousjours eu du respect et de la sousmission pour vos commandemens, que s'ils preferent maintenant la mort à l'obeissance de vostre nouvel Edict; L'envie de la gloire d'un si beau trespas à ceux qui m'ont déjà devancée! on doit subir les decrets du Ciel, plustost que les ordonnances des hommes. (II, 5)

The Emperor reminds her of the ultimate source of all power, a line of argumentation furthering the absolutist case yet again.

EMPEREUR Le Ciel estably les fondamens de mon empire ici bas.
CATHERINE Mais luy-mesme détruira bien tost ceux de vos Temples. (II, 5)

Like More, Catherine justifies her position not only by reference to her conscience, but also to the intellectual process that has led her to truth:

EMPEREUR Qui vous anime à me tenir ce langage.
CATHERINE La raison. (II, 5)¹²³

He grants her leave in order to reconsider, a step taken out of consideration for her royal status, and also influenced by the romantic attachment he feels towards her. When she leaves him, he reiterates his vindication of autocracy:

EMPEREUR Il faut regner absolument si l'on veut porter la qualité de Souverain, les Sceptres et les coronnes ne relevent que d'eux mesmes. (II, 6)

¹²³ 'The association of *raison* with rightness and truth tends to blur the definition of the faculty of reason by confusing the faculty with a standard', Jeanne Haight, *The Concept of Reason in French Classical Literature 1635-1690*, University of Toronto Romance Series, 45 (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 12. There is obviously a word-play on *raison* as used by Catherine to indicate both truth and reason. Polyucte declares himself ready to die as 'La raison me l'ordonne, et la loy des chrestiens' (V, 2).

However, he is in a state of emotional turmoil due to 'la blessure dont je suis atteint', that is to say the stirring of his heart and loins.¹²⁴

As in his other martyr-play, La Serre equates tyranny with uncontrolled passions:

EMPEREUR Ha Porphire, que ma sort est deplorable! J'ay fait prisonniere dans mon Palais celle-là mesme qui me tient esclave sous son Empire; ma tyrannie a commandé qu'on la mist aux fers. (III, 1)

Unlike Henry VIII, the object of this ruler's affection does not desire, and indeed refuses, overtures of marriage. When Catherine rejects his offer of a crown, he discovers that absolute power is no compensation for the devastation wrought by extreme emotions:

EMPEREUR En quel état me voy-je réduit, à quoy me sert cette puissance Absoluë que le destin, la fortune, et mes armes victorieuses m'ont fait acquerir sur toute la terre, si une fille aujourd'huy borne mon autorité de ses desirs, assujetit mon Sceptre sous ses loix, et porte sur ses levres, l'Empire de ma Couronne. (IV, 1)

He orders Lucius, the most learned of all philosophers, to come to court in order to persuade her of the truth of his religion (IV, 1). They duly debate and, eventually, he ends up conceding 'le Dieu de Verité m'a convaincu' (IV, 4). His conversion is swiftly followed by that of the Empress.¹²⁵ Improbably, and this detail is exclusive to La Serre, the Emperor is converted at the end of the play, following a vision of 'la Musique des Anges qui paroissent sur la montagne de sinay' (V, 1).¹²⁶

What do the representations of two differing martyrdoms, one from recent history and one from fourth-century legend, imply about the political views of La Serre? It is evident that both dramatisations concentrate on monarchs who fall into

¹²⁴ 'For the Greeks and Romans, a man who indulged his taste for sexual pleasure with women did not necessarily enhance his virility but often undermined it', Halperin, 'How to do the History', p. 93.

¹²⁵ Her admission of faith is imitated by Pauline in Corneille's *Polyeucte*. The Empress exclaims: 'Je confesse hautement que je suis Chrestienne' (IV, 4), Pauline in her turn: 'Je suis Chrestienne enfin, n'est-ce point assez dit?' (V, 5). This irrevocable rupture of silence usually equates certain death in the martyr-play (see p. 125 n. 28 and Chapter Five, p. 216).

¹²⁶ See Fig. 9. This refers to a miracle associated with the body of St Catherine: 'Au mont Sina fut transporté par miracle le corps de sainte Catherine vierge et martyre, laquelle ayant long temps tenu prison en Alexandrie pour la Foy de nostre Sauveur, et puis ayant esté tres-cruellement battuë avec certains bastons, à pointes de scorpions eut la test tranchée', *Martyrologe Romain, distribué pour tous les jours de l'année suivant la nouvelle reformation du Kalendrier* (Lyon: Claude Rigaud & Philippe Borde, 1635), pp. 444-45.

behaviour deemed tyrannical due to their lack of self-control.¹²⁷ While one cannot draw definitive conclusions about La Serre's personal views on government, it is easily observed that he portrays strong rulers who enjoy the obedience of their Christian subjects, but only until a crucial point, after which they are liable to the latter's judgement. The choice of a modern martyr could be interpreted as a reminder that tyranny can potentially touch all rulers, not only imperial leaders. The fact that the anachronistic 'roys' is used of kingship in *Sainte Catherine* could also be read in this light. The only comment that can be made with any degree of certainty is that the author appears to have had deeply held religious convictions. A collection of sixteen of his pious works was published in 1647 under the title *Les Œuvres chrestiennes de Monsieur de la Serre, conseiller du roy en ses conseils et historiographe de France*. This volume contains *Thomas Morus* but surprisingly omits *Sainte Catherine*.¹²⁸ He does speak of the legend of St Catherine in *Les Delices de la Mort* (pp. 157-215), in which he writes of the example given by martyrs.¹²⁹

2.4 The Martyr-Play Comes of Age

The first edition of *Polyeucte* appeared in 1643, though it may have been performed at any time in the two preceding years.¹³⁰ Lancaster remarks that 'there is nothing in Corneille's previous career that would have led the public to expect from him a martyr-play'.¹³¹ As is clear from other plays referred to in this chapter, there is a significant tradition of martyr-plays before Corneille, and some noteworthy examples in the capital:

¹²⁷ 'Le tyran ne soucie que de son particulier', Brutus, *Puissance*, p. 206.

¹²⁸ The collection is paginated as a volume, *Les Œuvres chrestiennes de Monsieur de la Serre, conseiller du roy en ses conseils et historiographe de France* (Paris: Antoine de la Perriere, 1647), with *Thomas Morus* in pp. 801-844.

¹²⁹ The account he gives of St Catherine in *Les Delices* differs in several respects from that in his tragedy. The Emperor wants to see her for 'le bruit de tant de perfections donnent la curiosité à l'Empereur Maxence de luy parler' (p. 186). The Emperor does not convert (p. 187). Maxence is named in *Les Delices* but is known only by his title in *Sainte Catherine*.

¹³⁰ 'We can only say that the play was first acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne between the autumn of 1641 and the spring of 1642', Sayce, *Polyeucte*, p. vi.

¹³¹ Lancaster, *History*, II, 320. He offers Corneille's education at a Jesuit school and the prevailing air of religious reform within Catholicism before the play as possible influences on Corneille. There was also the possible influence of Troterel's *Saincte Agnes* (1615), published when Corneille was a boy.

Au moment où Corneille écrivait *Polyeucte*, la tragédie sacrée était déjà un fait depuis plus de quatre-vingts ans, et elle avait été précédée par le drame sacré qui pendant quelques années coexistera avec elle malgré les ordonnances des Parlements.¹³²

It is with *Polyeucte* that the theme is canonised as worthy of theatrical attention, and can be definitively detached from the *mystères*.¹³³ This is ‘une nouvelle ère’ for religious tragedy in which ‘les sujets sacrés vont prendre leur place à côté des sujets profanes’.¹³⁴ André Stegmann terms the 1640s, ‘la brève période de triomphe de la tragédie hagiographique’.¹³⁵ Marc Fumaroli dates ‘[cette] “vogue” de la “comédie de dévotion,” back to 1636.’¹³⁶ In considering how individual authors approach the martyr-figure’s sedition, it is interesting to note the choice of Corneille’s martyr. He selects an obscure martyr, one whose details would not be readily known to spectators, and a saint not mentioned in the *Legenda Aurea*.¹³⁷ The other factor that distinguishes the tragedy from other martyr-plays is that there is no direct clash between the martyr and an Emperor. The play is set in the far-flung province of Armenia, and this distancing can be read as an overall strategy to neutralise any transgressive collision between subject and ruler.

The diluting of seditious elements to the martyr’s stand is consistent throughout the tragedy. Polyeucte’s journey towards martyrdom is motivated by a desire to reject paganism, and his wish to die: ‘Je les veux renverser,/ Et mourir dans

¹³² Charles Dédéyan, *Polyeucte ou le cœur de la grâce* (Paris: Nizet, 1992), p. 52. Georges Couton judges that ‘ce serait une erreur grave de voir en *Polyeucte* une œuvre isolée, apparue à la suite d’on ne sait quel miracle littéraire. En fait un climat extraordinairement favorable a permis son apparition’, Corneille, *Œuvres complètes*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), I, 1623. Despite this recognition, some commentators ignore the previous track-record of the martyr-play: ‘lorsque Corneille compose *Polyeucte*, il y a deux ou trois ans seulement déjà que la tragédie religieuse s’efforce de renaître’, Jacques Maurens, *La Tragédie sans tragique: le néo-stoïcisme dans l’œuvre de Pierre Corneille* (Paris: Colin, 1966), p. 284. Maurens’s chronology is rather confused: he mentions Baro’s play, even though it came six years after the publication of *Polyeucte*, and talks of ‘les diverses *Sainte Catherine*’ (p. 285), even though two of these preceded Corneille by decades.

¹³³ ‘Though the vogue of martyr-plays does not begin with *Polyeucte*, it was doubtless greatly aided by Corneille’s tragedy, which probably exerted a direct influence on the *Saint Genest* of Rotrou, the *Saint Genest* of Desfontaines, Mlle Cosnard’s *Chastes Martirs*, as well as upon less pious dramas’, Lancaster, *History*, II, 330.

¹³⁴ Pascoe, *Les Drame religieux*, p. 26.

¹³⁵ Stegmann, *L’Héroïsme cornélien*, I, 114-15.

¹³⁶ Marc Fumaroli, *Héros et orateurs: rhétorique et dramaturgie cornéliens*, *Histoire des Idées et Critique Littéraire*, 227 (Geneva: Droz, 1990), p. 251. He alludes to the queen commissioning Baro to write *Saint Eustache*, though gives no source for this detail.

¹³⁷ As Corneille observes: ‘Saint Polyeucte est un Martyr, dont, s’il m’est permis de parler ainsi, beaucoup ont plutôt appris le nom à la Comédie qu’à l’Eglise’ (‘Abregé du martyre de S. Polyeucte’). Louis Réau comments that Polyeucte ‘serait totalement oublié sans la tragédie de Corneille’, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, III, 1115.

leur Temple' (II, 6). Pauline's *confidente* accuses Polyeucte of being a rebel in no uncertain terms:

STRATONICE

Ce n'est plus cét époux si charmant à vos yeux,
C'est l'ennemy commun de l'Estat et des Dieux,
Un meschant, un infâme, un rebelle, un perfide,
Un traistre, un scelerat, un lâche, un parricide,
Une peste execrable à tous les gens de bien,
Un sacrilege impie, en un mot, un Chrestien. (III, 2)

This rebellion is not present in the person of Polyeucte: he may be labelled 'l'image du révolutionnaire', but in comparison with some other martyrs on stage this radicalism is entirely religious in nature.¹³⁸ Even André Gide judges that Polyeucte 'se comporte en révolutionnaire bien plutôt qu'en chrétien', and considers that in his defilement of a pagan ceremony, 'c'est contre Décie qu'il se dresse bien plutôt que contre Jupiter'.¹³⁹ Yet this extreme reading of Polyeucte is not substantiated by the text. When the martyr's wife receives the visit of her detained spouse, she reminds him of his duty:

PAULINE

Vous n'avez pas la vie ainsi qu'un heritage,
Le jour qui vous la donne en mesme temps l'engage,
Vous la devez au prince, au public, à l'Estat. (IV, 3)

Her husband counters that he respects the authority of the state, but in this exceptional case, must obey God first:

POLYEUCTE

Je la voudrois pour eux perdre dans un combat,
Je sçay quel en est l'heur, et quelle en est la gloire.
Des ayeux de Decie on vante la memoire,
Et ce nom, précieux encor à vos Romains,
Au bout de six cens ans luy met l'Empire aux mains.
Je dois ma vie au peuple, au Prince, à sa Couronne,
Mais je la dois bien plus au Dieu qui me la donne.
Si mourir pour son prince est un illustre sort,
Quand on meurt pour son Dieu, quelle sera la mort? (IV, 2)

He recognises his debt to the Emperor: this is not a case of a martyr criticising a ruler, nor of a martyr who negates and judges his master.

¹³⁸ Dédéyan, *Polyeucte ou le cœur de la grâce*, p. 63. Lancaster observes that 'if [Polyeucte] disobeys the emperor, it is not because he is politically rebellious', *History*, II, 323.

¹³⁹ André Gide, *Journal 1939-1949. Souvenirs*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 104 (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 92 (journal entry of 12 August, 1941).

The service of God and that of the spectators' king are intimately linked and thus rendered synonymous and indivisible.¹⁴³ *Polyeucte*'s pre-eminence is not only due to the reputation of the author, but also because 'no other European martyr drama is at once so controlled and orderly in outward appearance and yet so fraught with far-reaching, perhaps ultimately insoluble problems'.¹⁴⁴ The lack of a tyrant is a subtle yet substantial deviation from the norm of the 'classical Christian martyr [who] is an innocent victim who dies at the hand of a tyrant'.¹⁴⁵ Serge Doubrovsky is of the opinion that Corneille has his own agenda:

Pour sauver le Monarque des vicissitudes du Temps et de l'Histoire, il va falloir fouiller encore une fois dans l'arsenal, chercher de nouvelles armes. Il va falloir regarder encore plus haut, au-delà d'Auguste: vers Dieu. Après *Cinna* viendra donc tout naturellement le tour du *Polyeucte*.¹⁴⁶

If Corneille's previous tragedy could lend itself to a not altogether sympathetic portrait of the person of Augustus, then his martyr-play would serve as an apologia for obeying the lawful hierarchy. Placed within the tradition of the martyr-play, Corneille's contribution differs in several ways. The action takes place in the last few hours of the martyr's life, obeying the strictures of the unity of time. More originally, he omits any prison scene, torments on stage and the smashing of idols, for 'such was the ordinary stuff of saint-plays at the time'.¹⁴⁷ Inspired by the success of this martyr-play, Corneille undertook another martyr, this time a female one. *Theodore vierge et martyre, tragedie chrestienne* was published in 1646 following an unenthusiastic run on stage: 'sa représentation n'a pas eu grand éclat'.¹⁴⁸ Corneille distances the action from Rome once again, setting the action at Antioch 'dans le palais du Gouverneur'. It is probable that Corneille was inspired in his choice by an Italian playwright, Bartolommei, whose 1632 play was dedicated to Pope Urban VIII. Corneille could

¹⁴³ This encapsulates the absolutist theory of kingship, later echoed by Bossuet: 'le service de Dieu et le respect pour les rois sont choses unies', *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, XXII, 536.

¹⁴⁴ Skrine, *The Baroque*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁵ Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines who becomes a Saint, who doesn't, and why* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 129.

¹⁴⁶ Serge Doubrovsky, *Corneille et la dialectique du héros* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 321.

¹⁴⁷ Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 189.

¹⁴⁸ From the dedication 'à Monsieur L.P.C.B.' Corneille resigns himself to the verdict of theatre-goers: 'j'aurais tort de m'opposer au jugement du public'.



well have obtained knowledge of this dramatist's *Teodora* from Italian actors in Paris.¹⁴⁹

In the same year that *Polyeucte* was possibly having its first performances, La Calprenède takes up the legend of a martyr first dramatised by Caussin two decades earlier with his *Hermenigilde tragedie*.¹⁵⁰ La Calprenède writes in prose, like Caussin, and the chief source of the events dramatised in the play is Gregory of Tours.¹⁵¹ The portrayal of the king, Levigildus, is far removed from the brutal tyrant of source accounts.¹⁵² From the opening scene La Calprenède circumvents any potentially subversive interpretation of his martyr:

HERMENIGILDE

Je me serois soubmis aux plus dures conditions qu'un Roy peut imposer au moindre de ses sujets avant que de prendre les armes contre mon pere.¹⁵³ Tu sçais mesme que j'ay estouffé mes justes ressentimens dans le respect que je luy dois, et qu'au lieu de me vanger des inhumains qui m'avoient outragé par la plus sensible partie de mon ame, je me suis seulement tenu sur la défensive, et ne me suis opposé que derriere des murailles à leurs dernieres cruautez. (I, 1)

Finding himself exiled from the court by the machinations of a calumnious faction, Hermenigilde is rumoured to be preparing to take up arms against his father. At the bidding of his wife, Indegonde, he agrees to see his brother. After a positive meeting the play's hero decides to be reconciled with his father. The King's second wife attempts to persuade him of the maliciousness of his son:

¹⁴⁹ 'Il ne serait pas surprenant que Corneille ait obtenu d'un Italien de la cour de France, ou d'un Français ayant séjourné à Rome, soit un récit circonstancié de *Teodora*, soit un exemplaire du "programme" de la pièce, soit même communication d'une copie manuscrite du livret', Fumaroli, *Héros et orateurs*, pp. 246-47. Bartolommei had already published a *Polietto*, Lancaster, *History*, II, 321.

¹⁵⁰ Castres writes that while his novels were popular over the Channel ('les Anglois les regardent comme des sources abondantes', I, 428), 'il est étonnant que l'auteur qui a fourni matiere à tant d'Ouvrages dramatiques, ait fait des Pieces si detestables', *Les Trois siècles de la littérature française*, I, 429.

¹⁵¹ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae Francorum* (Paris: Nicolas du Fossé, 1610), pp. 222-25 (book V, chapters 38-39). Baronius quotes this account almost in entirety, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 22 vols (Rome: Typographica Vaticana, 1607), VII, 607-610.

¹⁵² Despite the debt La Calprenède owed to Caussin (see Lancaster, *History*, II, pp. 354-55 and Hocking, *A Study of the Tragœdiæ Sacræ*, p. 60-63), he has a softer, less fierce tyrant: 'Caussin's Levigildus is less human than La Calprenède's', Caussin's king 'conducts himself less like a father towards a son, more like an impetuous monarch towards a rebellious subject', Hocking, p. 61.

¹⁵³ This directly contradicts Gregory of Tours: 'Herminichilde aiant appelé les Grecs à son aide se mit en campagne contre son pere, laissant sa femme dans la fin', *L'Histoire française de S. Gregoire de Tours contenue en dix livres* (Paris: Claude de la Tour, 1610), p. 211a. ('Herminichildus vero vocatis Græcis, contra patrem egreditur', *Historiae Francorum*, p. 223.)

GOSINTE

Hermenigilde n'a pas seulement armé contre vous, mais il a conspiré contre vous, et c'est directement contre votre vie qu'il tend des pièges, qu'on ne peut éviter qu'en le prevenant, et faisant tomber sur sa teste l'orage qu'il avoit eslevé contre la vostre. (II, 2)

However, Levigilde recognises that Hermenigilde may have conspired against him, but not to the extent she claims: 'Hermenigilde n'a point conspiré contre ma vie, et le plus grand de ses mal-heurs, c'est celuy qu'il a d'estre hay de vous' (II, 2). This portrays Levigilde as a man of reason, willing to give his son a second chance. It is an audience with Indegonde that convinces him to receive his son (II, 4).

Hermenigilde has reservations about his meeting, but nevertheless submits himself out of obedience:

HERMENIGILDE

En posant les armes j'ay obey à mon Roy, quelques pretextes que j'eusse dans ma rebellion, j'etois toujours criminel.

[...]

Je croy avoir rendu au Roy tout ce qu'il pouvoit demander de plus humble et du plus soumis de ses sujets. (III, 1)

He stresses that he will not go back to 'les erreurs de l'Arrianisme que j'ay abandonnés'. Atalaric, one of the King's ministers, is sent to interrogate Hermenigilde 'sur quelques accusations' (III, 3). The prince accuses the minister of furthering his stepmother's cruel ends:

ATALARIC

Je ne sçay pourquoy j'ay merité ce tiltre, mais dans tous mes actions je n'ay pour but que le service de mon Roy.

HERMENIGILDE

Si le Roy n'estoit servy par de plus gens de bien que vous, ses affaires seroient en mauvais estat. (III, 3)

Hermenigilde blames his situation on the King's bad counsel, refraining from making a personal judgement. He acknowledges the King's jurisdiction: 'Je ne rendray conte de mes actions qu'au Roy seul, je ne recognois que luy seul comme superieur'. With impeccable timing and allowing for the unity of time to be observed, another minister, Godomar, arrives to summon Hermenigilde to appear before the King. This he does, and denies the falsities spread about him. This pleases his father, until he asks his son whether the rumour is true that 'vous avez fait profession d'une foy contraire à celle de vos peres' (IV, 1). When Hermenigilde proclaims he will never abandon his

religion, the sovereign orders his execution. On hearing this news, Hermenigilde's brother seeks out his father to inform him:

RECAREDE

Pour moy j'abandonne ceste cour pour jamais, et si vostre Majesté a des sceptres à donner apres la mort d'Hermenigilde, qu'elle en laisse la disposition à Gosinte et à Atalaric, je renonce à des grandeurs achetées par un sang si precieux. (IV, 3)

He still acknowledges his father's supremacy, but his response to injustice is to withdraw himself, in no way does he judge or resist.

As in every martyr-play, Hermenigilde is offered the chance to recant, which he rejects outright. In this, he obeys God, and in submitting to execution without complaint submits to the temporal authority of Levigilde.¹⁵⁴ Upon hearing the news of Hermenigilde's death, Indegonde dies on stage to take up the place that her spouse promised her. The play ends short of her last breath, thus conforming to the *bienséances*. One of the King's counsellors, a witness to the martyr's execution, provides the last lines of the play:

GODOMAR

Je crois qu'elle rend veritablement l'ame, ô merveille d'amour et de vertu, faut-il que ta destinée soit si cruelle, et qu'une si belle vie ait une fin si tragique et déplorable?

Another martyr-play appearing in the same year as the publication of *Polyeucte* is *Le Martyre de St Eustache tragedie*, which, although published anonymously, is generally believed to be the work of Nicolas-Marc Desfontaines.¹⁵⁵ This author was originally from Normandy, and was associated with the Illustre Théâtre from its opening in the first month of 1644.¹⁵⁶ Little is known of this

¹⁵⁴ 'Hermenigilde de La Calprenède, en effet, avait montré comment on pouvait pénétrer de stoïcisme l'acte d'un martyr et instituer un conflit généreux entre l'amour conjugal et l'amour divin', Maurens, *La Tragédie sans tragique*, p. 285.

¹⁵⁵ See Parfaict, *Histoire*, VI, 363. Alex Barbier names 'Des Fontaines' as the author, *Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes*, 3rd edn, rev. by O. Barbier and P. Billard, 4 vols (Paris: Daffis, 1872-79), III, 78. Claude Bourqui, who is currently working on producing critical editions of the three saint-plays attributed to Desfontaines (under the direction of Simone de Reyff at the Université de Fribourg), supports the traditional allocated authorship, 'Molière interprète de tragédies hagiographiques', *RHLF*, 101 (2001), 21-35 (pp. 22-23). Stegmann implausibly proposes Desfontaines's name 'masque peut-être le nom d'un père de la Compagnie, le P. de Cerisiers', 'Le théâtre jésuite à La Flèche', p. 102. René de Ceriziers was the author of a mediocre tragedy, *L'Innocence reconnue* (Paris: L. Boulanger, 1634). The Bibliothèque nationale does possess a copy of *L'Illustre Amalazonte par le Sr Des Fontaines* (Paris, 1645), which is miscatalogued under Cerizier's name (Y2-26731).

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, minutes of meetings of the Illustre Théâtre that testify to the regular attendance of Desfontaines, Eudore Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille* (Paris: Hachette, 1863), pp. 175-185. Hugh Gaston Hall mentions that Desfontaines was the pseudonym of Nicolas Mary, an *avocat au*

‘mystérieux personnage, Desfontaines’, and he is sometimes identified with an actor called Deffontaines.¹⁵⁷ This literary figure was one of the first theatrical friends of Molière.¹⁵⁸ The subject of Eustache follows on from Bello’s version published a decade earlier. The details of the legend were widespread, so playwrights had the advantage of assuming audience familiarity with at least some aspects of his life.¹⁵⁹ Eustache and Catherine are two of the most preferred martyrs for seventeenth-century dramatists and it is no coincidence that these two figures were familiar on the Jesuit stage, a fact which illustrates the long-term legacy of the colleges.¹⁶⁰ It is not difficult to see why this hagiographic account enjoyed the attention of several authors: not only is its hero an outstanding general, but he is also a Job-like figure who endures the loss of his home, reputation, country, wife and children.¹⁶¹ In other words he experiences a living martyrdom before his physical one.¹⁶² The unity of place is not respected, there is simply the instruction at the beginning of the play: ‘la scene est en l’Empire Romain’, and the first scene takes place in a wood, when Placide is converted (he later takes on the christianised name of Eustache).¹⁶³ Desfontaines wrote this particular tragedy ‘probably in order to compete with Baro’s play on the

parlement. Unfortunately, Hall does not provide any justification for this claim. See ‘Le répertoire de l’Illustre Théâtre des Béjart et de Molière’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 30 (1993), 276-291 (p. 284). Using records of the Minutier Central des Notaires de Paris, Alan Howe has recently confirmed this hypothesis in *Le Théâtre professionnel à Paris, 1600–1649* (Paris: Centre Historique des Archives Nationales, 2000), pp. 184-5.

¹⁵⁷ Stegmann, *L’Héroïsme cornélien*, I, 113.

¹⁵⁸ Henry Lyonnet, *Dictionnaire des comédiens français (ceux d’hier)*, 2 vols (Paris and Geneva, 1902-1908; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), I, 519. Soulié mentions: ‘un nouvel associé, Nicolas Desfontaines. [...] Plus fécond que Beys et cependant moins connu encore (on n’a même pas pris la peine de lui fabriquer un faux prénom)’, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille*, p. 38.

¹⁵⁹ A life of Eustache possibly alludes to staged versions of the martyr’s life by lauding its dramatic suitability: ‘Après un Arrest si cruel, on conduisit ces innocens sur le Theatre, auquel ils s’acheminèrent avec une foy vraiment digne de paroistre sur un Theatre’, Giovanni Battista Manzini, *La vie de S. Eustache martyr, traduite de l’italien du Mansiny, Auteur des plus Renommés de ce temps*, trans. by Saint-Michel (Paris: Christophe Lambin, 1647), p. 263.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Two favourite Jesuit martyrs, St Eustachius and St Catherine of Alexandria, for example —whose popularity lasted well into the eighteenth century— were appreciated equally for their courage and their relevancy to the sixteenth-century intellectual scene’, Parente, *Religious Drama*, p. 188

¹⁶¹ On this analogy, see René Lebreton, *Le Job chrestien, ou S. Eustache martyr* (Rennes: P. Coupard, 1659).

¹⁶² The saint is converted while out hunting by a vision of stag with a luminous crucifix between its antlers, a detail to be found in the lives of other saints, especially St Hubert. Attwater writes: ‘Eustace is not listed among the Roman martyrs, and there is no evidence for an early cultus for him in either West or East. [...] It is probable that St Eustace is a wholly fictitious character’, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 124. Hippolyte Delehaye remarks that ‘pour achever le rôle d’Eustache ou de Placidas, l’hagiographe s’est inspiré de souvenirs bibliques familiers’, *La Légende de saint Eustache*, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, 4 (Brussels: Hayez, 1919), p. 8.

¹⁶³ Unlike other authors of the Eustache legend, Desfontaines maintains the use of Placide throughout the play.

same subject'.¹⁶⁴ In comparison, the latter play has more modern elements: a modernised vocabulary, no stage presence of Beelzebub or a sorceress, and a different conclusion. Desfontaines must be seen in the shadow of Corneille's great martyr success of the same year, yet the depiction of the martyr's attitude to his ruler has an altogether different emphasis. In the second scene, Placide announces to his wife that he has embraced Christianity:

TRAJANE	Que ce dessein Placide, entre nous soit secret, Vous sçavez de Trajan la cruelle ordonnance.
PLACIDE	Ouy je sçay ses Edicts, je connois sa puissance, Et je ne doute pas que ce nom d'Empereur Dans un timide sein ne mist quelque terreur; Mais ce noble projet que le Ciel nous inspire, Veut que nous mesprisons ses Loix et son Empire. [...] Ouy, ouy, quittons enfin une mort pour un Dieu, Ne nous attachons pas à la grandeur d'un homme. (I, 2)

Compared to *Polyeucte*, there seems to be an apparent lack of regard towards the personal authority of the emperor. In stating his intention to disregard both 'ses Loix et son Empire', he dismisses both the oppressive law against the Christians and also the person of the Emperor. He displays no attachment to the respect that he is duty-bound to pay. It is soon after this that Placide's house is burnt down and he suggests that the family go to sea in order to seek their destiny.

The second act opens with the Emperor Trajan and his suite:

TRAJAN	Acace, il est certain que la reconnoissance A le plus ferme appuy d'une auguste puissance; Que ce sont les bien-faits qui maintiennent les Rois Plus que la violence, ou la rigueur des Loix. (II, 1)
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This is not a preliminary glimpse of an irrational tyrant. The same principle of dispensing patronage was also the mainstay of the French monarch. Trajan makes known his desire to pass the imperial succession to Placide. When informed of his departure from the empire, the ruler despatches a courtier, Acace, to seek him out, 'courez la Terre et l'Onde' (II, 2). In the next scene, which takes place in a boat, Placide sees his wife abducted by pirates (II, 3), and when the vessel lands on an

¹⁶⁴ Lancaster, *History*, II, 364.

island he witnesses his child being carried off by a wolf.¹⁶⁵ He resigns himself to these misfortunes and resorts to prayer. In the third act, Procule and Acace, commissioned by the Emperor to find Placide, land on the island and recognise him. They inform him:

PROCULE L'Empereur en un mot touché de vos mal-heurs,
 Veut restablir vos biens, accroistre vos honneurs.
PLACIDE Un prince le commande, il faut que j'obeisse;
 Mais croyez, chers amis, qu'on m'entraîne au supplice. (III, 3)

He willingly consents to an order that suits him well, for this is the means of obtaining his desire: death and union with God. He says farewell to Anthenor, an old man who inhabits the island and has kept him company for an indeterminate period of time:

PLACIDE Et ne pas escouter son Prince et son pays,
 Quand ils en ont besoin, c'est les avoir trahis. (III, 4)

This attitude later absolves him from being viewed as a rebel. He thinks of the interests of the nation as well as his sovereign, and obeys because in this instance it is a justifiable course of action.¹⁶⁶ Reading between the lines, there is the implication that monarchs can be legitimately disobeyed in the case of iniquitous dictates. The impersonal third person use of 'son Prince et son pays' are general enough to apply to the spectator.

Placide is enthusiastically greeted by Trajan upon his return to the capital. In his turn, the officer replies with equal fervour:

PLACIDE Je recois toutefois ces honnourables marques,
 Que remet en mes mains le plus grand des Monarques,
 Et je proteste icy qu'en cet illustre employ,
 Vous aurez un sujet qui cherit plus que soy
 Son Prince, son pais, et qui brûle d'envie
 De leur sacrifier, et son sang et sa vie. (IV, 1)

This is said just before he leads troops out to battle. The language is respectful, though he mentions 'son pais' again, creating a sense of parity between the people of

¹⁶⁵ Desfontaines had previously written a tragedy on the theme of piracy, *Eurimedon ou l'Illustre pirate, tragi-comédie* (Paris: Anthoine de Sommerville, 1637).

¹⁶⁶ Bossuet did not view the two as distinct: 'tout l'Etat est en la personne du prince. En lui est la puissance. En lui est la volonté du peuple', *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, XXIII, 1.

the nation and the ruler. It also highlights that Placide is fighting for his fatherland's security, as well as the Emperor's. Events move rapidly after this. Placide's children, Agapie and Theopiste are reunited with each other (IV, 5). When informed of the Emperor's death through a letter from his successor, Hadrian, the soldier immediately expresses doubts:

PLACIDE Et ce jeune Empereur luy fera bien tost voir,
 Que l'Empire est passé sous un autre pouvoir,¹⁶⁷
 N'importe obeissons, et faisons reconnoitre,
 Qu'un grand cœur change peu, bien qu'il change de Maistre.
 (IV, 6)

The fifth act opens with news of Placide's victory. In the following two scenes he is reunited first with his children then his wife. His fortunes are restored to exactly as they were at the beginning of the tragedy. It is at this point that he has an audience with the new emperor. Hadrian orders a sacrifice to give thanksgiving for the victory. His display of joy is abruptly ended when he finds himself cut short by his general:

PLACIDE Vos Mars, vos Apollons, vos Jupins, vos Hercules,
 Des esprits aveugles, fantosmes ridicules.
 ADRIAN Ah Placide! C'est trop, sors de cette fureur.
 Quel Demon t'as seduit? d'où vient cette erreur?
 Rentre, rentre en toy-mesme, et par ta repentance
 Obtiens de leur bonté pardon de ton offence. (V, 5)

The Emperor offers Placide the opportunity to go home and ponder on his opinions, a rather lenient reaction to blasphemy.¹⁶⁸ Placide, of course, is having none of this:

PLACIDE Mais vous mesme, Seigneur, sortez de cette erreur
 Où vous tient dés long-temps une aveugle faveur;
 Et par une celebre et juste repentance
 Obtenez de là haut pardon de vostre offense.

¹⁶⁷ A late sixteenth-century martyrology, devoting six folio pages to the legend of Eustache, Theopiste and their children Agapie and Theopiste, mentions that after Trajan dies, he is succeeded by Adrian, 'prince fort addonné à l'idolatrie et cruel et barbare', P. Viel, Jacques Tigeon, Clement Marchant, and others, *Histoire de la vie, mort et passion et miracles des saints desquels principalement l'Eglise Catholique faict feste et memoire par toute la Chrestienté* (Paris: Michel Sonnius, 1596), p. 1798. The authors are all theologians, Viel a doctor of theology at the Sorbonne and Tigeon at Reims.

¹⁶⁸ This detail conforms to the one source, where the Emperor tries with 'douces paroles et promesses les détourner de la religion Chrestienne', Viel and others, *Histoire de la vie, mort et miracles des saints*, p. 1798. Theorists generally excluded soldiers from torture: 'milites et veterani non debent

Item à Rome S. Genese martyr basteleur entre les Gentils. Et ayant enterpris de se mocquer en plein theatre des mysteres de nostre sainte Foy, en presence de l'Empereur Diocletian, fut tout à coup tellement touché de Dieu, qu'il prit à se louer et confesser hautement, ce qu'il avoit auparavant mesprisé, fit profession de la Foy Chrestienne, fut baptizé, puis cruellement battu par commandement de l'Empereur, pendu sur le chevalet, deschiré tres-inhumainement avec des ongles de fer, bruslé par les costez avec des lampes: durant tous les tourmens, il disoit hardiment; il n'y a point d'autre Roy que Jesus Christ, que mille morts mesme sçauroient oster du cœur, ny de la bouche. Il eut enfin la teste tranchée.¹⁷⁷

It was less than two years before the martyr dramatised by Desfontaines was again the subject of a play, this time by the better-known Jean Rotrou with *Le Véritable St Genest, tragedie* (1647).¹⁷⁸ Since these two plays are variations on a theme, possess identical sources, appear within a few months of each other and are both written by former actors living in Paris, an analysis of their differing interpretations of the same power struggle seems particularly informative. The precise reason for the addition of 'véritable' by Rotrou is the subject of speculation.¹⁷⁹ Léonce Person alludes to a custom of assigning the prefix to works that already existed.¹⁸⁰ In the opinion of Elfrieda Dubois, 'l'éditeur garda *le véritable* à côté de *Saint Genest*, sans doute pour distinguer la pièce de celle de Desfontaines'.¹⁸¹ Given the fact there is only a matter of months between the plays' performances, this seems a credible explanation, and, as has been suggested by Simone de Reyff, the prefix could well designate Rotrou's version as a conscious 'riposte de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne'.¹⁸² I tentatively suggest that the *véritable* may have been intended to distinguish Genesius of Rome from Genesius of Arles, whose legend had progressively become confused with the former.¹⁸³

Apart from taking up a similar theme, Rotrou pays other forms of homage to Corneille, making this influence apparent from the first lines:

¹⁷⁷ *Le Martyrologe Romain, distribué pour tous les jours de l'année suivant la nouvelle reformation du Calendrier*, pp. 319-20.

¹⁷⁸ '[Rotrou] est pendant cette période, le plus important de nos auteurs dramatiques après Corneille', Adam, *Histoire de la littérature française*, II, 334.

¹⁷⁹ A. Howe and J. Trethewey have proposed that *Le Véritable* may have been another name for Corneille's *Suite du menteur* while it was being performed in 1645, 'Pierre Corneille's *Le Véritable* and Some Problems of Literary History', *French Studies*, 25 (1972), 266-275.

¹⁸⁰ Léonce Person, *Histoire du Véritable saint-Genest de Rotrou* (Paris: Cerf, 1882), p. 79.

¹⁸¹ Rotrou, *Le Véritable saint Genest*, ed. by E. T. Dubois, *Textes Littéraires Français*, 196 (Geneva: Droz, 1972), p. 11.

¹⁸² Simone de Reyff, *L'Église et le théâtre: l'exemple de la France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1998), p. 57. This assumption is shared by a recent editor who sees 'le titre retenu, *Le Véritable Saint Genest*, se poser en rival de la pièce de Desfontaines', *Le Véritable saint Genest*, ed. by José Sanchez (Mont-de-Marsan: Feijóo, 1991), p. xc.

subject. Desfontaines's martyr confronts the Emperor with a distinct lack of outward courtesy:

DIOCLETIAN	Ha! Ne m'irrite pas, insolent, c'est assez. Ou l'on te traittera comme les insensez.
GENEST	Ce traitement n'est pas celuy que je souhaite, Car on me traitteroit ainsi que l'on te traite.
DIOCLETIAN	On me traite en Cesar, en Empereur Romain.
GENEST	On te traite en esclave, et non en souverain, Puis que loing d'escouter cette bonté suprême. (III, 2)

Genest judges his Emperor, and treats his sovereign as his inferior. The use of the 'tu' form and the avoidance of Diocletian's title reinforce the martyr's audacity. This is an extreme, unambiguous instance of *lèse-majesté*. Genest refuses secular jurisdiction:

GENEST	Ouy, ton pouvoir n'est pas un effect que j'ignore, Je sçay que l'on te craint, et que Rome t'adore, Mais je sçay bien aussi ce qu'un Dieu me prescrit: Tu peux tout sur mon corps, et rien sur mon esprit. (III, 2)
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If this post-conversion debate is compared to Rotrou, it is readily observed that the tone, language and emphasis of each author differs substantially:

GENEST	Excusez-les, Seigneurs, la faute en est à moy, ¹⁸⁶ Mais mon salut dépend de cet illustre crime; Ce n'est plus Adrian, c'est Genest qui s'exprime; Ce jeu n'est plus un jeu, mais une verité. (IV, 7)
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The martyr in Rotrou's play lacks the open defiance of Desfontaines's. The main wish of Rotrou's hero is to die and be united with the Deity:

GENEST	Aujourd'huy je veux plaire à l'Empereur des Cieux; Je vous ay divertis, j'ay chanté vos loüanges, Il est temps maintenant de réjouir les Anges; Il est temps de pretendre à des prix immortels, Il est temps de passer du Theatre aux Autels; Si j'ay meritè, qu'on me mene au Martyre; Mon roole est achevé, je n'ay plus rien à dire. (IV, 7)
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¹⁸⁶ There are two emperors in Rotrou's version, as Diocletian names Maximin as his co-ruler and successor.

He has paid his due obeisance to his emperors; there is no element of judgement here. Genest's crime is foremost against the person of the emperor in Desfontaines: 'Tu me braves, mutin, [...] de ta trahison. The martyr's stand in Rotrou is against the religion of Rome: 'Quoy, tu renonces, traistre, au culte de nos Dieux!' (IV, 7).

The last speech of a martyr in Desfontaines is that of Genest's mistress who is converted by the example of her lover. She is not distracted nor dissuaded by the presence of two emperors, as she decides to lecture them:

PAMPHILIE	Vous qu'il a faits à son image, Roys qui luy ravissez l'hommage Qu'on rend à ses Autels par un juste devoir, Pour un petit bandeau qui couronne vos testes Osez-vous, orgueilleux, oublier son pouvoir, Et sans connoistre qui vous estes Faire comparaison de vostre qualité Avec sa Majesté? (IV, 5)
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She judges and highlights error. Diocletian reminds her: 'Je suis malgré lui ton Seigneur et ton Maistre' (IV, 5). This point of view is in accordance with absolutist principles: he may not acknowledge the source of his power, yet he still commands obedience.¹⁸⁷ It is a position that Pamphilie openly rejects. This contrasts with Rotrou's last scene involving Genest:

GENEST	La faveur d'avoir eu des Cesars pour témoins, M'a trop acquis de gloire, et trop payé mes soins; Nos vœux, nos passions, nos veilles et nos peines, Et tout le sang enfin qui coule de nos veines, Sont pour eux des tributs de devoir et d'amour, Où le Ciel nous oblige, en nous donnant le jour, Comme aussi j'ay toûjours, depuis que je respire, Fait des vœux pour leur gloire et pour l'heur de l'Empire. (V, 1)
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Genest esteems his ruler and acknowledges the favour of having had an imperial witness to his last performance. Here, Genest is about to be martyred yet mentions that he owes life and death to his sovereign, including the blood he is about to shed for Christ. This speech is highlighted by the fact it is found so close to the actual martyrdom, the central action of the play. It seems that Rotrou prevents any politically

¹⁸⁷ Desfontaine's Diocletian holds identical views to Bossuet: 'il n'y a que Dieu qui puisse juger de leurs jugemens, et de leurs personnes', and 'le prince se peut redresser lui-même, quand il connoît qu'il a mal fait; mais contre son autorité, il ne peut y avoir de remède que dans son autorité', *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, XXII, 559 and 560.

subversive interpretation being drawn from the example of the martyr, and the plural 'nous' invites the spectator to make a personal application. Referring to rulers in the plural, 'eux', again invites comparisons with all monarchs, not merely this particular one. Genest's comments come in response to his lover's attempts to persuade him to abjure his new faith. She reminds him of his duty to the Emperor; he reassures her of his obedience. Rotrou's interpretation of sovereignty, 'n'est-ce pas aussi la conception de Mazarin, à qui la pièce est dédiée?'¹⁸⁸

Two different playwrights reflect two differing political agendas while dramatising the same saint. It is hardly surprising that Rotrou, a member of circles close to government, should wish to avoid any ambivalent representations of a subject's defiance.¹⁸⁹ Desfontaines's two plays, on the other hand, seem supportive of views tolerating limited kingship. Rotrou portrays a martyr who believes his ruler to be free of terrestrial accountability, even his execution is subverted into an act of obedience. Rotrou may have been familiar with Desfontaines's work and must have used identical sources: yet it is the latter who is most faithful to the spirit of the original account. The reported speech of Genesius is one of the rare occasions when the actual words of a martyr are transcribed in the *Martyrologium Romanum*, the actor defies Diocletian: 'non est Rex præter Christum'.¹⁹⁰ Bossuet esteemed that 'le titre de *christ* est donné aux rois; et on les voit partout appelés les *christs*', and Rotrou seems closer to this sentiment than to sources.¹⁹¹ Desfontaines's Genest explains why he rejects the earthly kingship of Diocletian:

GENEST

Ha! que la trahison est innocente et belle!
Et la fidélité blamable et criminelle,
Quand leur effect regarde un Tyran, et des Dieux,
Qui n'ont rien que d'horrible et de pernicieux,
Qu'il est doux de sortir d'un joug si detestable,
Pour entrer sous les loix d'un Monarque adorable. (IV, 3)

¹⁸⁸ Micheline Besnard-Coursodon, 'De Circé à Pandore: lecture politique du *Véritable Saint Genest*', *Poétique*, 35 (1978), 336-351 (p. 342). Gillian Jondorf finds that in Rotrou's dramaturgy, 'considerable emphasis [is] placed on the absolute authority of kings, on the subject's consequent duty of absolute obedience, and on the force of the *raison d'état*', '“What is a King?”', p. 40.

¹⁸⁹ It can be argued that Rotrou envisages the stage as the tool of established authority, for 'le théâtre dans la pièce de Rotrou apparaît comme un instrument de l'idéologie, art au service du Pouvoir dont il offre le reflet fidèle', Besnard-Coursodon, 'De Circé à Pandore', p. 342.

¹⁹⁰ *Martyrologium Romanum ad novam kalendarii rationem et ecclesiasticae historiae veritatem restitutum* (Antwerp: Monet, 1613), p. 359. Genesius's feast day is on 25 August. Théodore Ruinart renders this as 'non est Rex præter eum quem vidi; et adoro, et colo eum', *Acta primorum martyrum sincera et selecta*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: n. pub., 1713), pp. 270-71.

The two plays are a product of the political context leading up to the Frondes, ‘pour le spectateur de 1645, la représentation donnée par Genest se rapporte en effet à l’actualité’.¹⁹² A spectator attending both plays, curious to see a different interpretation of the same legend, would surely remark the contrast between the two. If Rotrou deliberately appropriates Desfontaines’s subject matter, a likely hypothesis, it is also possible that he does so in order to mellow the anti-absolutist elements present in his rival’s rendition. While Desfontaines’s Genest transgresses the social order, the rebellion of Rotrou’s hero does not question the nature of society: he simply presents its flaws. Since Rotrou treats the potential of the theatre to sway the audience, it is this mere presentation that constitutes ‘[un] moyen de transformer le monde’.¹⁹³ Micheline Besnard-Coursodon, while recognising Rotrou as ‘défenseur de l’idéologie catholique’, also takes care to contextualise the tragedy within the increasingly volatile political climate, for ‘*le Véritable Saint Genest* correspond aussi au début des mazarinades, véritables remises en question du Pouvoir’.¹⁹⁴ Both playwrights deal with a situation in which the spectators at court are deprived of their tragedy and then proceed to create their own ‘real’ version.¹⁹⁵ During this tense political climate, Desfontaines and La Serre are two authors whose martyr-plays have a non-conformist, or radical, subtext.¹⁹⁶ These two writers have one thing in common: both enjoyed the patronage of Gaston d’Orléans, a man who raised troops against

¹⁹¹ Bossuet, *Politique tirée de l’Écriture sainte*, XXII, 534.

¹⁹² Skenazi, Cynthia, ‘Création artistique et mise en cause politique dans *Le Véritable Saint Genest* de Rotrou’, in *Esthétique baroque et imagination créatrice: Actes d’une colloque de Cérisy-la-Salle*, ed. by Marlies Kronegger, Biblio 17: 110 (Tübingen: Narr, 1998), pp. 219-227 (p. 223). Skenazi sees the play ‘au lieu être une sacralisation monarchique comme le voyait la cour romaine, la pièce de Rotrou est donc, pour le public chrétien de 1645, une sacralisation de l’individu’ (p. 226). While the martyr does stand alone, and there is an absence of anyone converted by Genest in Rotrou, the play *does* glorify monarchy (see, for example, Jean-Claude Vuillemin, *Baroquisme et théâtralité: le théâtre de Jean Rotrou*, Biblio 17: 81 (Tübingen: Narr, 1994), p. 314). Skenazi considers the play in isolation: a comparison to the portrayal of power by one of Rotrou’s contemporaries, as well as reference to a source legend, reveal what Rotrou did *not* include. As I have demonstrated, this approach yields relevant insights into Rotrou’s methodology.

¹⁹³ Morel, ‘Ordre humain et ordre divin’, p. 91.

¹⁹⁴ Besnard-Coursodon, ‘De Circé à Pandore’, p. 349 n. 19.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Privé par l’acteur de la fin de la tragédie d’Adrien, [les spectateurs] “se donnent” la tragédie de Genest. Car Dioclétien châtie Genest, pour son impiété certes, et son insolence, mais aussi parce qu’il a interrompu et détruit la pièce’, Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, ‘Les Trois Grâces du comédien: théâtre, politique et théologie dans *Le Véritable Saint Genest*’, *French Review*, 61 (1988), 703-714 (p. 710).

¹⁹⁶ Romain Jobez argues that Andreas Gryphius subverts the martyr’s subversion, ‘Droit et tragédie en Allemagne: Gryphius et le droit monarchique’, *Littératures Classiques*, 40 (2000), 175-194. Gryphius accepts the liberty of conscience of the martyr, ‘victime de la tyrannie, quitte l’ordre du droit séculier, au nom duquel il est condamné pour l’avoir troublé, en faisant jouer la cause de conscience’ (p. 186), an analogous situation to the martyrs of La Serre and Desfontaines. However, any action against the person of the monarch, no matter if he is tyrannical, results in a situation in which ‘le souverain n’est

those of his brother Louis XIII on several occasions, and who was obliged to spend a large part of his life in exile.¹⁹⁷ This connection with the marginal prince may be entirely coincidental.¹⁹⁸ It is likely that the prince attended a performance of Desfontaines's *Illustre comédien*, which may even have been written for him.¹⁹⁹ It was only a few years later that Gaston's daughter would command the Bastille's cannon to fire on the troops of Louis XIV, her first cousin and her king.

légitimé qu'en dernier recours dans le martyre' (p. 189). The martyr's only option is to die, not to judge, nor to harm his king.

¹⁹⁷ In the preface to Desfontaines's *Illustre comédien*, the author excuses himself for not being able to oversee the tragedy's publication, 'ayant été commandé par son Altesse Royale de le suivre en son Voyage de Bourbon' ('avis au Lecteur').

¹⁹⁸ Christian Bouyer speaks of 'cette littérature libertine développée sous la protection du prince', *Gaston d'Orléans (1608-1660): séducteur, frondeur et mécène* (Paris: Michel, 1999), p. 297.

¹⁹⁹ '[Gaston] avait quitté Paris le 8 avril pour prendre les eaux à Bourbon et, plus probablement avait emmené avec lui sa troupe qui lui promettait une tragédie nouvelle de l'acteur-auteur des Fontaines: *L'illustre comédien*', Madeleine Jurgens, 'l'Aventure de l'illustre Théâtre', *RHLF*, 72 (1972), 961-1006 (p. 1000). Claude Abraham sees the timing of *Thomas Morus* as significant, coming as it did 'au moment où les relations entre Gaston et son frère recommencent à se gâter', 'Tristan et Puget de La Serre, ou Théâtre et Politique', in *Du Baroque aux Lumières: pages à la mémoire de Jeanne Carriat* (Mézières-sur-Issoire: Rougerie, 1986), pp. 48-53 (p. 51).

CHAPTER THREE

The Martyr at a Time of Crisis

Les premiers Chrétiens nous ont fait voir qu'ils
estoint fideles à leur Patrie quoy qu'ingrate,
et aux Empereurs quoy qu'impies et persécuteurs.

—Bossuet¹

3.1 Government in Crisis

The issue of the appropriate reaction to an authority that a subject can no longer obey is a key component of the martyr-play. The sub-genre caught the attention of respectable playwrights and Parisian audiences in the 1640s.² It is around this period that the capital endured its first sustained civil turmoil since the end of the Wars of Religion over half a century previously. Criticism of government policies, largely muted since the death of Henri IV, began to resurface. Christian Jouhaud traces the political currents of the Frondes as far back as 1610:

À la mort d'Henri IV, s'affrontent deux grands courants d'opinion qui sont aussi deux puissants groupes de pression. D'un côté, il y avait les anciens ligueurs, plus ou moins recyclés à l'Oratoire de Bérulle et dans les compagnies de dévotion, de l'autre, les ex-"politiques" appelés dorénavant les "bons Français". Pendant la régence de Marie de Médicis, les camps s'étaient pérennisés: les premiers restent fidèles à leur hispanophilie, d'ailleurs partagée par la régente, et prônent un absolutisme conquérant. Les seconds, anti-espagnols et anti-jésuites, se passionnent pour les libertés gallicanes et les prérogatives des parlements, tout en exaltant la grandeur de l'État.³

The revolts of the Frondes followed on the heels of two decades of popular uprisings throughout France, a phenomenon that sometimes affected as much as a third of the nation.⁴ The appeal of these disturbances increasingly spread across geographical and

¹ Bossuet, *Premier avertissement*, p. 301.

² The successful installation of the two competing theatres of the Marais and the Hôtel de Bourgogne attracted '[the] appearance on the scene of a whole group of young writers of whom Corneille only gradually proved himself the most illustrious', Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences*, p. 45.

³ Christian Jouhaud, *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Aubier, 1985), pp. 24-5.

⁴ 'Sous les ministères de Richelieu et Mazarin, la Fronde fut précédée, pendant environ vingt-cinq ans, d'une période de révoltes populaires presque ininterrompues, mouvements payasans dans les campagnes, soulèvements des artisans et des mendiants dans les villes. Il n'est pas d'année où l'on ne compte de ces révoltes, au moins dans une province, au moins dans quelques villes, parfois dans presque un tiers du royaume', Roland Mousnier 'Recherches sur les soulèvements populaires en France avant la Fronde', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 5 (1958), 81-113 (p. 81).

social divisions; in most instances opposition to taxes and the king's representatives.⁵ In 1639 and 1642, for example, the insurrections of Pardiac were orchestrated and led by noblemen.⁶ However, before the outbreak of the Frondes, 'rares ont été les gentilhommes qui, engagés au début aux côtés des paysans, sont allés jusqu'au bout de la révolte'.⁷ After the death of Louis XIII, the regency government was unstable: the prince de Condé attempted to oust Mazarin and discontent was fermenting. At the same time, the martyr-play was enjoying a period of success on the Parisian stage, with two acclaimed masterpieces and a renewed interest in martyrs' lives. Since this literary work has authority as its central issue, its evident success is due to its appeal to audiences disenchanted with contemporary modes of authority.⁸ As already detailed, certain authors stress obedience (Corneille and Rotrou), whereas others emphasise the right to rebel against oppressive government (La Serre and Desfontaines).⁹ For the author of the *Vindiciæ*, the situation of the early martyrs was an occasion when some subjects could legitimately take up arms against their sovereign.¹⁰ Louise Clubb points out that the only English martyr-play of the seventeenth century, Phillip Messenger and Thomas Dekker's *The Virgin Martir, a Tragedie* (1622), represents an adapted version of the Continental trend for *tragedia sacra*. She notes that the authors 'must have realised that in England the central conflict of *The Virgin Martyr* would be apt for broad allegorical interpretation, as it could not be in Italy', an observation equally valid for France, particularly during a time of internal disorder.¹¹

⁵ 'Dans beaucoup de cas, ce fut des solidarités matérielles qui unirent nobles et paysans contre le roi', Arlette Jouanna, *Le Devoir de révolte: la noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne (1559-1661)* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), p. 252.

⁶ Yves-Marie Bercé, *L'Histoire des Croquants: Étude des soulèvements populaires du XVII^e siècle dans le Sud-Ouest de la France*, 2 vols (Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1974), I, 145.

⁷ Jouanna, *Le Devoir de la révolte*, p. 255.

⁸ It is worth remarking that at the very time that the martyr-play peaked in the capital, during the Frondes, dramatic production stood at two-thirds the pre-conflict total, Lancaster, *History*, II, 675. It was not simply drama that was affected, since 'pendant la Fronde, la production romanesque cesse pratiquement', Günter Berger, *Pour et contre le roman: anthologie du discours théorique de la fiction narrative en prose du XVII^e siècle*, Biblio 17: 92 (Tübingen: Narr, 1996), p. 9.

⁹ Cynthia Skenazi rightly points out the parallels between the play and society: 'de manière analogue, dans la pièce donnée par Genest, le martyre d'Adrien affirme à la fois la violence de l'autorité en place et son impuissance', yet she implies that Rotrou is criticising royal government, which I argue is not the case, 'Création artistique et mise en cause politique' (p. 224). She concludes that the play is fundamentally a sacred piece.

¹⁰ He asks the question: 'que feront donc les particuliers, si le Roy les veut contraindre de servir aux idoles?', Brutus, *Puissance*, p. 84, and envisages the case of individuals 'extraordinairement appelez, et que Dieu luy mesme leur a (s'il faut ainsi parler) mis son espee en la main' (p. 86), in other words, tyrannicide.

¹¹ Clubb, 'The Virgin Martyr and the Tragedia Sacra', p. 120.

3.2 Pre-Frondes Tension

Pierre Mouffle wrote a martyr-play published in 1647, *Le Fils exilé ou le martyre de saint Clair tragi-comédie*. As the title page states, Mouffle was '[un] Conseiller du Roy, Lieutenant Particulier de Magny, et Bailly de Saint Clair'. He wrote only this one work, undoubtedly to honour the patron of his native town.¹² The dramatist admits: 'ce que je vous presente est un travail de quinze jours à mes heures de loisir' ('au lecteur'). There are five separate prefatory pieces to the play. These consist of a dedicatory ode to the archbishop of Rouen and epigrams to 'Monsieur de Saveuse, Conseiller en la Cour et Prieur de S. Clair', and to 'Monsieur le Curé de Gisors, sur son Livre de Saint Clair'.¹³ Finally there is an 'epitome, ou abregé de la vie, martire et gloire de S. Clair'. These documents take up fourteen pages and lend the work an air of erudition, or, at the least, conformity to the saint's *vita*. Unusually for the mid-seventeenth century, the tragedy contains angels who intervene in the action, more a feature of the century's first two decades. A host of heavenly creatures appears to Clair, and also an angelic choir arrives at the end of the play. There are only four acts and Clair is decapitated on stage for refusing to submit to the advances of 'la Dame impudique'.¹⁴ Immediately after accomplishing their task to kill the Christian, the two servants exclaim:

LES SATELLITES

Qu'avons-nous fait meschans, quelle crime, quelle
offence,
D'avoir tué un S. Dieu en prendra vengeance:
Foyons et nous sauvons, nostre enorme peché
Ne peut estre jamais aux yeux de Dieu caché. (IV, 4)

This is the typical standard of dialogue in this play. The question of authority is not addressed, there is no clash of power, and the tragedy is obviously an expression of the author's personal piety.¹⁵ The work seems to have been intended to be read, though it

¹² Mouffle lived from 1595? to 1655, *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 911.

¹³ It is striking that, despite the success of martyr-plays on the capital's stages, Mouffle excuses himself to his archbishop for writing on a religious theme and not being an ecclesiastic. This demonstrates the author's religious motivation, and also may be read as critical of the production of such plays for commercial success.

¹⁴ The stage directions specify: 'ils le décapitent' and 'ils lavent la teste dans la Fontaine et la porte jusqu'à l'Eglise' (IV, 4).

¹⁵ There is a revealing mention in the abregé: 'ces Valereux Mornays Zelateurs de la Foy,/ Qui fidelles sans cesse ont bien servy leur Roy'.

is possible that it was performed locally for Clair's feastday.¹⁶ One area of interest is the fact that the martyr is English, and also this is the only instance of a male martyr dying to prevent his virginity from being taken on stage.

Balthasar Baro was the next dramatist to embark on the theme of St Eustache in 1649 with *Sainct Eustache martyr. Poëme dramatique*.¹⁷ He was born at Valence in Dauphiné, was a member of the Académie française (as such, was one of the judges of *Le Cid*) and died in 1649, the same year as his tragedy's publication.¹⁸ The tragedy was dedicated to the wife of Charles I, Henriette-Marie, who had recently arrived in France prior to the trial and execution of her husband. Baro draws a parallel between the martyr and the Queen's misfortunes:

Vostre Majesté peut dire avoir veu la moitié de soy-mesme, ou plutost son tout entre les mains des bourreaux, dont la rage criminelle a triomphé de son honneur et de sa vie. (Epistre)

Far from associating monarchy with erroneous emperors, Baro proposes Charles I as a martyr for, and because of, his kingship. This concept of king as martyr links Charles fully to Christ: he shares in his kingship and in his martyrdom.¹⁹ It is also a strategy of the *Eikon Basilike*, published in the aftermath of the English monarch's execution.²⁰ The tragedy is a curious case of an author deliberately creating a link between a monarch and a martyr, instead of an emperor, and as such is unique among martyr-plays. Baro forewarns the reader in an *advertissement*: 'je ne te donne pas ce Poëme

¹⁶ Clair's feast occurs on 18 August, André Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, 2 vols (Paris: Etienne Richer, 1637), II, 1147.

¹⁷ D'Aubignac (or perhaps his printers) provides an idiosyncratic spelling of the author's name, 'Barreau', when he mentions having seen this play at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, *La Pratique du Theatre*, p. 326. The usual orthography is used elsewhere (p. 327). The mistake may be a simple lapse in concentration, as in the sentence before 'Barreau', the author has used the noun 'le barreau' (p. 325).

¹⁸ Castres, *Les Trois siècles de la littérature française*, I, 206.

¹⁹ 'The point is that Jesus was not just a martyr but the martyr', J. Downing, 'Jesus and Martyrdom', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 14 (1963), 279-293 (p. 293).

²⁰ 'The "King's Book" portrays Charles as suffering and dying for the church as well as for the more strictly political cause of monarchy' and 'associations with Christ's sufferings, passion and death resonate throughout the "King's Book", elevating Charles's cause and stigmatising his political enemies as traitors', Laura Lunger Knoppers, 'Paradise Regained and the Politics of Martyrdom', *Modern Philology*, 90 (1992), 200-219 (pp. 205 and 206). This was really a revival of a more ancient cult of the martyr-king, dating from at least the tenth century. See Norman W. Ingham, 'The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 17 (1973), 1-17.

comme une piece de Theatre où toutes les regles seroient observées'.²¹ He goes on to acknowledge his inspiration, and the reason for which he stalled the publication of the play for ten years:

j'ay creu enfin que je devois cette justice au sieur des Fontaines qui a fait imprimer le sien sans se nommer, de ne souffrir point que son nom et le mien fussent confondu dans un mesme ouvrage. Il est juste qu'on ne m'attribue point ses graces, et qu'on ne le charge pas de mes defauts.²²

This reveals that Desfontaines's play may have enjoyed a certain stage success. It must be noted here that some critics —notably Stegmann and Fumaroli— persistently confuse the date of the publication, probably due to the fact that 'though Baro's *Saint Eustache* was not published until 1649, he tells us that he had completed it ten years earlier'.²³ There is no evidence that this or any of his other tragedies were performed, though the pointed reference to his rival's staged versions may indicate Baro intended this play to be produced.²⁴ Despite this, Baro was a prominent man of letters, and there are some indications that he exerted an influence on Pierre Corneille's work.²⁵ From the outset, Baro confirms he is writing within a tradition, while indicating that his drama is respectful of monarchical authority.

The author does not start his tragedy with Eustache's conversion, rather with Trajan addressing Placide, acknowledging 'sous tes lauriers on void croistre nos palmes'.²⁶ He sets out the healthy state of the empire, yet gives credit to Placide for his assistance, according him 'deux leuriers'. It is only after this imperial audience, in the

²¹ In this connection Georges Couton remarks: 'c'est une œuvre curieuse que ce *Saint Eustache* de Baro. Sa construction même engage à la dater d'avant les unités ne se soient imposées', Corneille, *Œuvres complètes*, I, 1626.

²² This is the earliest proof of Desfontaines's authorship of *le martyre de sainte Eustache*.

²³ Lancaster, *History*, II, 174. Stegmann has three erroneous dates, all in the same work, *L'Héroïsme cornélien*. He mentions 'le *Saint Eustache* de 1639' (I, 57), then dates it as 1638 in the second volume (II, 35), and subsequently as having appeared 'à la fin de l'année 1637' (II, 71). Fumaroli remarks that 'en 1636, c'est à l'instigation de la reine que fut créée la tragédie de *Saint Eustache* de Baro', *Héros et orateurs*, p. 225 n. 30.

²⁴ 'Poète tragique, dont on ignore si les Pièces ont été jamais représentées. Ce qu'on peut assurer, c'est qu'elles ne sont pas lues, et qu'elles ne méritent pas de l'être', Castres, *Les Trois siècles de la littérature française*, I, 206.

²⁵ 'Il existe du reste de sérieuses raisons de s'attacher aux rapports de Baro et Corneille', François Lasserre, 'Influence de Balthasar Baro sur le jeune Pierre Corneille (*Célinde* et *Clitandre*)', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, 17 (1990), 399-424 (p. 399).

²⁶ Other original details in Baro include the presence of the Empress Plotine and a character called Tyrsis, 'amoureux de Trajane'. Baro has the Empress participating in affairs of state, and thus enjoying a close relationship with her husband (III, 3). This is undoubtedly an indirect allusion to the role of Henriette-Marie in Charles I's life.

third scene, that Placide informs his wife of his conversion. This scene is the occasion for a light-hearted exchange, a register normally absent from martyr-plays. Placide talks of his vision:

PLACIDE	Ah! quel Monstre, ou plustost quel prodige d'amour Dont les yeux plus brillants et plus beaux que le jour Lancent des traits de feu qui reduiroient en cendre Les cœurs les plus glacez.
TRAJANE	Je ne puis vous entendre, Quelque beauté sans doute a vos sens enchantez.
PLACIDE	Oüy, mais une beauté, la source des beautez.
TRAJANE	Vous l'aymez?
PLACIDE	Je l'adore.
TRAJANE	Ah! Placide, une Espouse Pour de moindres sujets peut devenir jalouse, Pensez-y.

Then he tells of his vision of the stag, and she realises that he is not talking of an earthly lover. He follows this by offering a prayer for Trajan's intentions:

PLACIDE	O bonté souveraine! Dieu puissant, permettez qu'un Monarque si doux Brusle pour votre amour du mesme feu que nous. (I, 3)
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His new religion only augments his affection for the Emperor: the only difference is that he now prays to God not to the gods of Rome.²⁷ Unlike Desfontaines, the characters' post-conversion names helpfully change to Eustache and Teopiste. It is well into the play that Teopiste is captured by a pirate, and the couple's children carried off by wild beasts (II, 3). It is at this point, as in Desfontaines, that Eustache finds sanctuary with a shepherd. When found by imperial messengers, the prospective martyr is resigned to his fate:

EUSTACHE	Le Ciel qui montre bien par l'ardeur qui m'inspire Qu'il y va de sa gloire et du bien de l'Empire. Il faut qu'un Citoyen meure pour son païs. Allez donc, Arbilan, dire que j'obeïs. (III, 6)
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²⁷ 'Il faut écouter ici les premiers Chrétiens, et Tertullien qui parle ainsi au nom d'eux tous: "Nous jurons, non par les génies des Césars; mais par leur vie et leur salut. [...] Nous respectons en eux ce que Dieu y a mis, et nous tenons cela à grand serment"', Bossuet, *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, XXII, 536.

The soldier embraces death for the good of his country, rather than defying a tyrant, a possible allusion to the circumstances of Charles I's execution.

When the final act opens, Eustache has gained an impressive victory, and he has been reunited with his estranged family. He declares his Christianity to Ormond, a *preteur*.²⁸ Despite the Emperor's earlier stage presence, there is no direct interview: Ormond is the official who condemns them and ensures that they are tossed into a 'Taureau enflamé' (see Fig. 10).²⁹ In this way, the problem of representing subjects directly disrespecting their legitimate ruler is sidestepped.³⁰ Ormond is converted after witnessing their deaths, providing a happy ending for all concerned. The tragedy's dedication and the absence of direct revolt have much to do with the date of the appearance, and it seems likely that events in England inspired Baro finally to publish his play with a dedication to the recently widowed Henriette-Marie. The English situation seemed to have a particular resonance when France was in the midst of a civil war.³¹ Barely a month separated the withdrawal of the Queen Regent from Paris (6 January, 1649) and the execution of Charles I (9 February).

Another play of 1649 was published anonymously at both Lyon and Caen, *Le Martyre de Ste Catherine tragedie*, with a Parisian edition in the following year 'sur la copie Imprimée à Caën'.³² This play has been attributed to Desfontaines, the Abbé

²⁸ A stage direction for the moment he enunciates his new state, illustrates the visual impact: 'Ne craint point de s'offrir à son persecuteur/ Enfin je suis Chrestien.* *Dés qu'il a prononcé ce mot ceux qui le suivoient l'abandonnent*' (V, 1). This is the equivalent of a speech act bringing about the sentence of death, and as Barthes remarks of Phèdre, 'dénouer ce silence, c'est mourir, mais aussi mourir ne peut être qu'avoir parlé', *Sur Racine*, p. 111. See Chapter Five, p. 216.

²⁹ This method of execution is taken from the *Martyrologium Romanum* in the entry for 20 September: 'A Rome, S. Eustache, avec Theopiste sa femme, et leurs deux enfans Agapie et Theopiste, furent condamnez à estre exposez aux bestes sauvages, n'en ayans esté aucunement endommagez, ils furent enclos dans un bœuf fait de cuiure, qu'on avoit tellement eschauffé, qu'il estoit tout rouge: et là dedans finirent leur vie', *Le Martyrologe Romain, distribué pour tous les jours de l'année suivant la nouvelle reformation du Kalendrier*, pp. 358. Baronius relates how the Emperor was furious that the family was not eaten by lions (he specifies the animal): 'excandescens ira tunc Princeps', *Annales*, II, 62.

³⁰ 'La doctrine de Baro est celle du peuple chrétien: [...] soumission et dévouement aux puissances établies juqu'au sacrifice de la vie', Loukovitch, *L'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse*, p. 130.

³¹ 'The course of the civil war in France confirmed more strongly for Mazarin, for the Queen Regent, and for others at court the validity of an English parallel whose dreadful import was sharpened by Charles's death in February', Philip A. Knachel, *England and the Fronde: the Impact of the English Civil War and Revolution on France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 41.

³² The unattributed work was published by P. Compagnon at Lyon (1649), there was a Caen version printed with E. Mangeant; Loyson published it at Paris in 1666, and it appeared at Rouen in 1700 with J. B. Besogne. See Loukovitch, *L'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse*, p. 395.

d'Aubignac, Saint-Germain and Marthe Cosnard.³³ Unlike other plays about Catherine, this version opens somewhat strikingly in the middle of the philosophical debate with almost the entire cast on stage. The Emperor impatiently demands that the scholars change the young woman's views:

MAXIMIN On ne peut resister à cette Egyptienne,
Alors qu'elle soutient la Doctrine Chrestienne;
Et sa prompte victoire a fait voir en ce jour,
Que rien n'est impossible aux charmes d'amour. (I, 1)

Catherine encourages the doctors who are being led away to be killed:

CATHERINE Le Tyran contre vous n'a que de foibles armes,
Donnez luy vostre sang, mais retenez vos larmes (I, 1)

Disobedience is the form of resistance advocated by Catherine, but a rebellion that consists of a *non serviam* to the status quo rather than direct action to undermine it. In the next scene she finds herself alone with Maximin. The princess is adamant that he will never crush her will:

CATHERINE Mon espoir se releve et je cesse de craindre,
Mon courage s'anime, et banit mon effroy:
Grand Prince je triomphe et de vous, et de moy. (II, 2)

The effects of her valiant spirit are exposed in the next scene, when the Emperor reveals his feelings about the princess to his confidant:

MAXIMIN Maxime, je sçay bien qu'elle trahit l'Estat,
Et qu'elle veut commettre un horrible attentat.
Je sçay que ma foiblesse en ce danger extrême,
Menace de ruine et l'Empire, et moy-mesme,
[...]

³³ For the Cosnard attribution, see *The Feminist Encyclopedia of French Literature*, ed. by Eva Martin Sartori (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 128. D'Aubignac has been generally considered to be the likely author (C. Arnaud, *Les Théories dramatiques au dix-septième siècle: étude sur la vie et les œuvres de l'abbé d'Aubignac* (Paris: Picard, 1888), p. 274). Modern scholarship has undermined this attribution, though extant copies of the tragedy are still catalogued under D'Aubignac's name in both the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Bodleian (Lancaster, *History*, II, 668). The British Library lists a 1650 Parisian copy of the work under Saint Germain (BL: 163.d.7). See also D'Aubignac, *Dissertations contre Corneille*, ed. by N. Hammond and M. Hawcroft, *Textes Littéraires*, 95 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), p. ix.

Mais aussi j'ay des yeux, je suis homme, elle est belle.
 Je perds le souvenir des hommes et des Dieux,
 Je le perds de moy-mesme, en voyant ses beaux yeux. (I, 3)

This is not dissimilar to the portrayal of Henry VIII in La Serre's *Thomas Morus*, offering lust as the root of the ruler's harsh conduct, though there is a greater degree of introspection here.

Maximin's departure leaves Maxime alone to muse:

MAXIME Infame usurpateur du Sceptre que tu tiens,
 Est-ce qu'ainsi que tu veux detruire les Chrestiens? (I, 4)

Here, there is no question that Maxime doubts the Emperor exercises legitimate superiority, but his master's actions and indecision lead him to conclude that Maximin is acting ignobly. This play was printed during the Frondes and the sentiments of this character can be read as sympathetic to the concept of accountable government. This does not necessarily indicate that the author was also sympathetic to these views, but it does appear that a contemporary audience would find this a topical characterisation:

MAXIME Je te [Rome] veux delivrer du Tyran qui t'opprime,
 Il monta sur le Trône à la faveur du crime,
 Il faut pour ta vengeance essayer justement,
 Que sa fin soit égalle à son commencement. (I, 4)

Maxime later proposes the disposal of the Emperor to Porphire, who is horrified:

PORPHIRE Le Sceptre est (je 'advoüe) en de cruelles mains,
 Mais qui peut l'empescher? c'est le sort de Romains;
 Il est irrevocable, et je croy qu'il est juste
 Rome s'estant soûmise aux successeurs d'Auguste. (II, 4)

This response is striking, for the notion that God allows a tyrant to prosper in order to punish a people was common currency with anti-tyrannicide commentators. Porphire, like them, leaves judgement of the Emperor's behaviour to a higher power:

PORPHIRE Mais plaise à celui-là qui tient les Diadèmes,
 A disposer tout seul des puissances suprêmes:
 Sa main quand elle veut en abaisse orgueil,

her husband's affections. Catherine sums up her position, sentiments which also speak for the Empress:

CATHERINE

Les Trônes sont trop bas pour mon ambition,
Les Rois valent trop peu pour mon affection. (IV, 2)

This is not so much dissatisfaction with Maximin, than disenchantment with what the world can offer them, compared to the delights of paradise. When Maximin's soldiers arrive to lead Catherine away to her torments, the Empress insists on joining her. Maximin tries to dissuade her, but she publicly proclaims her faith (IV, 5). In an unusual addition, Maximin prays to the gods in the next scene, imploring them to not judge too harshly his attempts to protect them (IV, 6). This emphasises his piety and desire to safeguard traditional religion, rather than heartlessly execute those who stand in his way.³⁷

However, any sympathy created for Maximin in this closing scene of the penultimate act is soon undermined. The final act opens with Maximin disclosing that Vallerie is dead. Catherine is given a letter from the Emperor offering her the choice of a scaffold or a throne.³⁸ The author has added some props to this scene: 'les soldats portent deux bassins, dans l'un est le Sceptre et la Couronne Imperiale, dans l'autre un Coutelas'. After she has read the letter, she takes the sceptre, throws it onto the ground and grasps hold of the sword, adding a visually climactic air to this scene. It is reported by a centurion that Christians have refused to make sacrifices and have risen up *en masse* with the battle-cry: 'meure l'Idolatrie, meure l'Empereur' (V, 3). This contrasts unfavourably with the passive attitude of Vallerie and Catherine. The martyrdom of Catherine is not the only highlight of the last act, for Maxime inevitably commits the revolt against his master that has been building up throughout the entire tragedy:

³⁷ 'L'Empereur n'est pas un simple tyran amoureux: c'est un païen convaincu, un Romain autoritaire, et presque un galant homme', Loukovitch, *L'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse*, p. 399.

³⁸ The letter was, of course, common enough in seventeenth-century theatre, occurring in a number of martyr-plays, notably those treating the legend of Hermenigilde. Even when read silently 'insérée dans le dialogue théâtral, la lettre provoque une rupture', Marie-Gabrielle Lallemand, 'La Lettre dans le théâtre au XVII^e siècle', in *Les Genres insérés dans le théâtre*, ed. by Anne Sancier and Pierre Servet, Centre d'Étude des Interactions Culturelles, 14 (Lyon: Aprime, 1998), pp. 67-78 (p. 67). The pause caused by Catherine reading the letter underlines the gravity of the life and death choice she is about to make.

Roy'.⁴⁰ The author/publisher dedicates his play to 'Madame l'Intendante de Breteuil', as a tribute owed to her, since 'vous avez tousjours esté la Protectrice des innocens' (epistre). In this dedication there is a possible allusion to the events in Paris that were in the process of unfolding:

Les Anciens donnoient des recompenses à ceux qui gaignoient le prix par la force de leur corps, mais nostre siecle plus doux, et qui sçait mieux estimer les choses, reconnoit ceux qui par la force de l'esprit font des exploits fameux, et des actions heroiques, faisant mouvoir toutes choses par leur prudence, qui est la regle, et le compas de nostre jugement, qui donne l'ordre au temps, et aux accidens, et qui par un ministere Saint, et une Politique tres-Chrestienne, forment des colonnes pour appuyer un Estat qu'elles tiennent inesbranable.

To remove any doubt as to the exact nature of the 'Politique' of which he speaks, Buisson sets out his opinions more explicitly:

Un heureux retour en la compagnie de M l'Intendant, dont la prudence, et la sage conduite a si bien manié les ordres qu'il a recües de sa Majesté, qu'il a conservé son autorité par la Justice Chrestienne qu'il a renduë à un Peuple plein d'obeissance, qui n'a jamais esté distrait du service de son Prince, et qui fait journellement des vœux pour la conservation et prosperité de sa Sacrée Personne. (epistre)

Buisson, and his dedicatee, are clearly die-hard royalists. It is notable that the personal presence of the Emperor is missing from this drama. This may be in imitation of *Polyeucte*, but it also eliminates the possibility of direct acts of disobedience from any of the characters. The play is set in Antioch and, like *Polyeucte*, Jullien is prince of the province. Celse holds a similar position to Pauline, in that he is the son of Marcien, 'lieutenant de Diocletian'. The tragedy begins with Jullien complaining that his recent marriage will force him to break his celibacy: 'mes vœux dont le Ciel est témoin'. His friend, Theopiste, reminds him that it his duty, given his status and his age. Moreover, his intended bride, Bazilice, 'est fort belle'. Jullien concedes he must, though adds: 'je mépriserois le titre d'un époux' (I, 1).

Jullien falls asleep as Bazilice arrives, and awakens a little later. This has been no ordinary sleep, 'qui diroit les douceurs que mon ame goustoit/ Qui pourroit exprimer de si parfaicts delices' (I, 5). This experience has given him the strength to safeguard his chastity. He tells Bazilice that though he finds her beautiful, 'Madame, je

occurs immediately after Catherine's execution and, moreover, the ending is not extremely joyous, nor the ruler thoroughly evil.

⁴⁰ A copy of this play in the British Library appears to be the only extant version of this tragedy.

an open window (IV, 3). His curiosity leads him to venture outside where he undergoes a sudden conversion. Jullien invites him to follow them in their journey towards martyrdom.⁴¹ Marcien enters and is shocked to learn his son has joined the troublesome party. Father and son engage in theological polemics (IV, 6). Celse's mother, Marcie, later arrives to plead with her son to change his mind (V, 4). He ends up changing hers, and Marcien learns in the following scene that not only has she not been able to dissuade their son, but also 'loin de le flechir j'ay moy mesme cedé' (V, 5). Mother, son, Jullien and Theopiste go off to their deaths. The stage is emptied save for the solitary figure of Marcien delivering a long monologue outlining his misery and finally glimpsing a vision of Hell (V, 6).

In the following year, 1650, there appeared the first of four martyr-plays written by female authors. This is a significant fact, for out of seventeen female dramatists during the seventeenth century, almost a quarter chose the established form of the martyr-play.⁴² Religious drama was one medium in which women found their voice during the age, since it was seen as a legitimate topos of female concern. Marthe Cosnard was born in the Norman town of Sées in 1614 and seems to have died there in 1659.⁴³ Through her family's literary connections she came into contact with Pierre Corneille and unusually for a woman 'her intellectual accomplishments were acknowledged during her lifetime'.⁴⁴ *Les Chastes Martirs, tragedie chrestienne* appears to have been her only tragedy, probably unperformed. Cosnard acknowledges her inspiration in the 'au lecteur', admitting 'c'est dans ce beau Livre intitulé Agathonphile', referring to the novel of Jean-Pierre Camus, *Agathonphile, ou les martyrs siciliens, Agathon, Philargirypppe, Triphyne, et leurs Associez* (Paris: Claude Chappellet, 1621). This gives us some indication of the novel's enduring appeal, also

⁴¹ The pairing of Julian and Celsus seems to be the author's invention, as Baronius does not link the two martyrs. In fact, Julian was usually paired with his fiancée, Basilissa, see Surius, *Acta Primorum Martyrum*, p. 541. He is listed alone on 3 February (Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, II, 1086).

⁴² In the decade 1640 to 1650, five women tackled the dramatic genre: Françoise Pascal, Madame de Saint-Balmon, Mademoiselle Cosnard, Madame Deshoulières, Mademoiselle Desjardin, three of whom opted for the martyr-play. These five dramatists are all mentioned by Jean de La Forge. Of Cosnard, he merely notes: 'c'est elle qui a fait la Tragedie des chastes Martyrs', *Le Cercle des femmes sçavantes* (Paris: Jean Baptisté Loyson, 1663), p. 18.

⁴³ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 337.

⁴⁴ Sartori, *Feminist Encyclopedia of French Literature*, p. 128.

demonstrated by the fact that it was translated into Italian.⁴⁵ It takes up the story of a shipwrecked group of Christians who were escaping persecution in Rome, 'la Scene est en Siracuse, Ville capitale de Sicile'. This geographical distancing from Rome, like Corneille's choice of Armenia, may be a similar attempt to abstain from portraying active resistance to royalty. The unusual case of Christians fleeing from the prized crown of martyrdom is explained by the priest:

PHILARGIRIPPE	Ils crieroient de Cesar l'injuste cruauté: Qu'il faut estre parfait pour souffrir le martire: Helas j'ay de l'horreur de ce que je vais dire! Il s'en est rencontré qui parmy les tourmens, Ont renoncé la Foy. (I, 1)
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This is the sole occurrence in a martyr-play where there is the explicit recognition that Christians could be anything than completely submissive to torture, or steadfast to their religious beliefs. The plot is rapidly unfolds. Pompone, governor of Syracuse, arrives in the second scene with his confidant Acante. The administrator finds himself strongly attracted to one of the Christian party, Tryphine, who is betrothed to Agathon, but who maintains the pretence of being his sister:

POMPONE	Aux Amans affligez la mort est le remede, Elle pourra guerir le mal qui me possede. Mais ne nous rendons pas à ce premier effort, Voyons su l'Estranger adoucira mon sort.
ACANTE	Pourquoi vous plaingez vous, si par vostre puissance, Vous la pouvez ranger sous vostre obeissance. (I, 3)

Pompone's wife, Elize, appears on stage at this point with the news that the *prefect de la Mer* has arrived and 'Il tempeste, il enrage, et c'est contre vous qu'il accuse,/ D'avoir trop entrepris sur son autorité' (I, 4). She explains that the prefect had been tracking the recently shipwrecked vessel for a month in the hope of confiscating its bounty, and has now the opportunity to claim it. Elize's explanation familiarises the

⁴⁵ 'Preuve de notoriété: deux dramaturges au moins puisèrent dans *Agathonphile* le sujet d'une pièce', Jean-Pierre Camus, *Agathonphile, récit de Philargyrippe*, ed. by Pierre Sage, Textes Littéraires Français, 31 (Geneva: Droz, 1951), p. lvi. There was a fourth edition of the novel published by François Vaultier at Rouen in 1641. M. Magendie argues the case that the novel may also have influenced Corneille: 'il me semble incontestable que Corneille a lu et mis à profit un roman, dont le sujet était du même ordre que celui qu'il traitait dans *Polyeucte*', 'Des Sources inédits de *Polyeucte*', *RHLF*, 39 (1932), 383-390 (p. 385).

audience with the background of the Christian party's journey to Sicily. In a further plot complication, Elize reveals in the subsequent scene that 'Agathon est l'objet qui m'enflamme' (I, 5). Her *suivante* does not approve of this behaviour and warns her mistress of the consequences, only to be ordered into silence.

In the second act, Acante is despatched to notify Tryphine of what she terms 'des desseins trop hardis' towards her (II, 1). After she asks him to leave, she implores God's help in a ten-line soliloquy, pleading: 'enfin retirez moy de cette Babilone' (II, 1). Such a wish, rather than implausibly embracing death, typifies Cosnard's sophisticated treatment of the martyr-play. Following this, Pompone and Tryphine meet and the heroine refuses his attentions, arguing that 'Dieu deteste le crime' (II, 3). The governor is persistent:

POMPONE	Croyez que mon amour, ayd� de mon pouvoir, Vous apprendra bien tost que c'est vostre devoir. (II, 3)
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The essential motivation behind the governor's persecution of Christians is not related to their refusal to comply with secular authority. The provincial ruler is enslaved to his over-riding lusts, in the same manner as La Serre's Henry VIII or Poytevin's Maximin.⁴⁶ Like these figures, his libidinous designs prompt him to abuse the power entrusted to him. The appearance of Agathon precipitates his departure. Agathon is angered, but the lovers agree that Heaven will not abandon its own (II, 4). Their pastor encourages them not to shy away from the prospect of martyrdom:

PHILARGIRIPPE	Ne d�guisons donc plus, et sans craindre les hommes, Parlons ingenu�ment, et disons qui nous sommes. [...]
TRYPHINE	S'il ne faut que du sang, n'espargnez pas le mien.
PHILARGIRIPPE	Allons, c'est assez dit, je ne craindray plus rien. (II, 5)

Tryphine resigns herself to her destiny.

By the third act, Pompone has begun to enact his threats, and Tryphine has been imprisoned. Acante counters these actions with the observation:

changes Pompone's outlook: he promises to absolve them of all charges, on condition that they renounce their faith. Speaking for them all, Philargirippe replies they are 'tout prest à souffrir le Martyre'.

In the fourth act, Pompone visits the imprisoned Christians, in order to persuade them to recant. They spurn these futile attempts and an exasperated Pompone decrees their extermination (IV, 3). In the following scene, Tryphine's mother shows up, and Pompone recognises her: 'Madame à vostre rang je sçay ce que je doy' (IV, 4). He has to reject her request for her daughter's liberty, on the grounds of her Christianity, a revelation that shocks Pamphilie. She visits her child in prison, pleading that she obey the Emperor (IV, 5). This fails to persuade Tryphine, who successfully subverts her brother to her cause. He boldly declares he will imitate her stand (IV, 6). The polarisation of Christians and pagans is reinforced in the fifth act, when the prefect discloses he has a letter from the Emperor obliging him to persecute Christians (V, 1). This precipitates Pompone to carry out the executions of his prisoners. Porphire claims to be acting under the constraint of a higher authority:

AGATHON	Depeschez de nous mettre au rang de bien-heureux.
PORPHIRE	J'ay regret de respandre un sang si genereux. Mais enfin il le faut, leur offence est trop grande, La justice le veut, et Cesar le commande. (V, 3)

Pompone condemns Tryphine's brother, Euple, out of fear of imperial retribution if he does not act. While the Emperor's authority is invoked in this final act, he still remains remote, and those who exercise power in his name —namely the prefect and the governor— are feeble and self-serving.

Even though they fled the Roman persecutions, the refugees are now disposed to endure martyrdom. There is an extraordinary scene in the final act, in which the Christian party squabble over the order of being slain:

AGATHON	Je finis le premier, tenez, voila ma teste.
PHILARGIRIPPE	Genereux Agathon, la mienne est toute preste.
AGATHON	Vous me verrez mourir, faites ce digne effort.
TRYPHINE	Sans estre mon Bourreau, vous me donnez la mort. [...] Helas permettez moy de mourir la premiere.
AGATHON	Que vous estes ingratte!
TRYPHINE	Et vous sourd à ma voix. (V, 5)

This dispute is resolved by Philargirippe who reasons that, as a priest, he should be the first victim. Elize's decision to join her children in martyrdom troubles Pompone:

POMPONE

Seray-je encor cruel pour contenter Auguste?
Certes nostre Empereur en ce point est injuste;
J'execute à regret ses decrets souverains. (V, 6)

The tragedy appeared in 1650, probably having been composed in the previous year. The play underwent two editions with different Parisian printers in one year, so appears to have been received favourably with the capital's readership. One reason for this may be the central place given to the question of how those delegated with power can readily abuse it, a standard criticism of Mazarin's ministry during the same period. Cosnard seems more interested in the varying aspects of ministerial behaviour than of imperial misconduct. Despite their regrets and cowardice, ultimately they are loyal to their ruler, and the Christians are proud of their Roman citizenship. Philargirippe reserves his final prayers for Rome (V, 8). Notwithstanding the flaws in leadership, the injustice of his death, the despotism of men in authority, Philargirippe does not resist nor deny his persecutors' jurisdiction. He submits without questioning their actions: his death demonstrates acceptance of the social hierarchy.

Another woman dramatist produced a martyr-play in 1650, also printed by the same Parisian publisher, Courbé. This takes up the legend of the martyrdom of twin brothers, Marc and Marcellin.⁴⁷ While Saint-Balmon's contemporary rival, Marthe Cosnard, may have profited from her association with Pierre Corneille, Saint-Balmon's colourful life would certainly have encouraged the public to obtain a copy of *Les Jumeaux Martirs tragedie*. Alberte Barbe d'Ernecourt, comtesse de Saint-Balmon (1607–1660), was a native of Lorraine and '[elle] eut la singularité de se distinguer dans la carrière des armes'.⁴⁸ Instead of the authoress, it is the printer who addresses the reader in an unusual 'imprimeur au lecteur':

Cette piece ne peut estre mieux louée que par le Nom de celle qui l'a faite: et il suffit de dire, qu'elle est Madame de Saint-Balmon, pour luy gagner l'approbation publique. [...] Mais une Femme qui est

⁴⁷ Baronius names the Roman brothers as notable examples ('inter alios Christianos') of those who suffered under Diocletian during the year 284, *Annales*, II, 662.

⁴⁸ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 1125.

tousjours à cheval pour la deffense de ses Sujets, et a tous les jours des Croates ou des Allemans à combattre, n'a pas de loisir de mesurer des rimes et contenter des syllabes.⁴⁹

It is no shock to discover that 'dix ans après sa mort en 1670, son nom était légendaire'.⁵⁰ She was the subject of Jean-Marie du Cernot de Vernon's *L'Amazone chrestienne ou les aventures de Mme de S.-Balmon* (Paris: Gaspar Meturas, 1678). Unlike Cosnard's tragedy, Saint-Balmon's play may have been performed in a convent in 1650.⁵¹

The tragedy deals with the fate of the twin sons of a Roman knight, who find themselves in danger because of their new faith. Although set at Rome, Diocletian is absent from the play: it is his representatives who carry out the punishment of dissenters. A congenial Roman judge, Cromace, is replaced by Fabian, 'un homme sans pitié, cruel, inexorable' (Marcie, II, 2). Cromace's concern for the noble family leads him to attempt to save the twin brothers who counter that they are willing to die for their beliefs. In fact, Marc reminds Cromace of his duty to put them to death: 'vous y serez forcé, le Prince vous l'ordonne' (II, 5). The pair do not resist their ruler: their struggle is against life itself.

MARCELLIN

La vie agréée à ceux qui ne connoissent pas,
Que la meilleure vie est apres le trespas.
Le monde n'est remply que de maux et d'allarmes. (II, 5)

Exasperated, the judge summons their mother to reason with them. The brothers encourage each other, and are shown to have the requisite closeness of behaviour

⁴⁹ Lancaster considers that the mention of Croatian and German soldiers could either refer to incursions into Lorraine during the Thirty Years' War, or to the presence of mercenaries during the Frondes (*History*, II, 671). The editors of the only modern edition of the tragedy comment: 'les exploits héroïques d'Alberte-Barbe, dame de Saint-Balmon (1607–1660), pour protéger ses gens et ses terres pendant la Guerre de Trente Ans étaient célèbres non seulement en Lorraine mais à la cour de France', *Les Jumeaux Martyrs*, ed. by Carmeta Abbott and Hannah Fournier, Textes Littéraires Français, 452 (Geneva: Droz, 1995), p. 9.

⁵⁰ P.-A. Changer, 'Une Amazone française au XVII^e siècle, Madame de Saint-Balmon', *La Revue*, 42 (1902), 644-652 (p. 645). La Forge observes of Saint-Balmon: 'Je me souviens d'avoir leu autrefois une Piece de Theatre de sa façon, et d'avoir oüy parler fort avantageusement de son courage et de son esprit', *Le Cercle des femmes sçavantes*, p. 20.

⁵¹ Claude Gével, 'Une héroïne du dix-septième siècle: Madame de Saint-Balmon', *Revue de Paris*, 1 September 1930, 168-180 (p. 179).

associated with twins (II, 6).⁵² In the third act, the arrival of the harsher Fabian forces the situation to come to a head. Melian and Cephas, friends of the twin brothers, meet Fabian and assure him that they will sacrifice to the gods, even if the twins do not (III, 2). In the next scene the friends encounter Sebastian, a minor figure in this play, who delivers a speech justifying Christianity (III, 3).

The brothers' father, Tranquillin, tries to persuade his sons to abandon their religion. When he sees how eager they are to die, he resorts to emotional blackmail, arguing that their death will cause his own: 'souhaitez-vous ma mort? elle est entre vos mains' (III, 5). The siblings do not succumb to his entreaties, despite their father's best attempts to foment filial guilt: 'vous desirez ma mort, me traitant de la sorte' (III, 5). His next strategy is to visit Fabian to beg for mercy. Despite his dark reputation, Fabian takes pity on this knight, and grants the brothers more time to reject their new creed (IV, 1). However, Fabian's apparent benevolence is dissipated in the next scene when Marcie, the twins' mother, argues that Fabian's attitude is a ruse to crush Cromace, his rival (IV, 2). The confrontation between martyr and authority takes place at the beginning of the fifth act, and is neutralised by the absence of the actual sovereign. Moreover, in Cromace, Fabian is seen to have a compassionate colleague. The martyrs listen to what he has to tell them, which initially is to exhort them to consider their eternal destiny (V, 1). His next tactic is to bring out their parents and wives to plead with them, and Marcelin does appear to weaken at this point (V, 2). This is countered by the cameo appearance of St Sebastian, 'capitaine de la premiere Cohorte Romaine, et un des premiers de la Cour de Diocletian'. He fervently encourages them, and publicly comes out of the Christian closet (V, 3).⁵³ The contagious desire for martyrdom spreads rapidly as Cromace discloses he wants to become a Christian, followed by the twins' parents and Silenie, Marcellin's wife (V, 4).⁵⁴

Sebastian is blamed for having polluted everyone's mind. In his defence he proclaims that: 'je ne crains point la mort ny Diocletian' (V, 5). This is an interesting

⁵² Hippolyte Delehaye mentions, but rejects, suggestions that some paired saints are 'Castor et Pollux, sous un déguisement chrétien', *Les Légendes hagiographiques*, Subsidia Hagiographica, 18, 3rd edn (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1927), pp. 172-73.

⁵³ 'Alors que les jumeaux ont plutôt un statut d'objet du discours dramatique, Sébastien joue un rôle actif qui peut faire de lui le personnage principal', Abbott and Fournier, *Les Jumeaux Martyrs*, p. 32.

⁵⁴ The contagious example of martyrdom in this tragedy corresponds to Durkheim's observations on a similar phenomenon with suicides. See Chapter Five, p. 220-22 (particularly n. 27).

mention of the Emperor's name, noteworthy for the lack of adjectives qualifying him as tyrannical and unjust. While he does not fear what punishments Diocletian will mete out, there is no suggestion that Sebastian denies his authority to chastise. When his subordinates come forward to fight for Sebastian's life, with Thrason (the cohort's *enseigne*) declaring the soldiers will kill whomsoever Sebastian instructs them to, this sedition is firmly extinguished by the saint:

SEBASTIAN	Arrestez-vous, Thrason; reconnoissez la voix, Qui vous mesme avez obey tant de fois. Laissez-là Fabian, puisque je le commande: Je suis assez puissan, sans que l'on me deffende, L'Empereur est celuy qui nous doit accorder. (V, 6)
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Thrason promises to strangle the Emperor if harm comes to Sebastian, but the martyr criticises him for having 'trop d'ardeur'. His men will loyally fight for their commanding officer, but Sebastian firmly quashes any notion of defying imperial authority, no matter how appealing the prospect may be. Could this be an allusion to the contemporary troubles of the Frondes, where taking up arms seemed a tempting response to the perceived abuses of royal ministers? If it can be read as such, then Saint-Balmon unequivocally refuses to countenance such views. In the final scene, the twins' martyrdom is reported, the guard adding that the city considers Fabian to be inhuman for having executed them. Fabian argues that he had to avenge the sullied honour of the gods and orders Sebastian to be incarcerated, stressing that he will inform Diocletian why this has happened. The final words of the play belong to Sebastian:

FABIAN	Tu dépens de ton Prince, il faut qu'il en ordonne.
SEBASTIAN	L'arrest de mon trespas vaut mieux que sa Couronne. (V, 7)

Sebastian does not refute the argument that the emperor is his superior, instead he argues that dying a Christian death is worth more than what this world can offer. It is not Diocletian that he resists; it is life itself.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Baronius reports that Sebastian defended himself when the Emperor accused him of disloyalty: 'pro salute tua semper Christum colui, et pro statu Orbis Romani illum', *Annales*, II, 673.

Another martyr-play of 1650 was published not in Paris, but at Auxerre. Gaspard Olivier's *Hermenigilde, tragedie*, was dedicated to Sébastien Zamet, bishop of Langres, 'duc et pair de France'.⁵⁶ Little is known of the author, and this tragedy seems to have been his only published work.⁵⁷ He possessed a doctorate in theology: this, together with the dedication, indicates that he was probably an ecclesiastic. The play is in prose, and in the 'au lecteur' Caussin is acknowledged as the work's inspiration, though the royal hero had continued to be a school favourite.⁵⁸ Olivier's version of Hermenigildus's legend differs from this source in several respects, notably in that the martyr's wife and stepmother feature prominently in the action. As Caussin designed his play for college performance, female roles were necessarily minimal. As may be expected from a cleric, 'la pièce d'Olivier se distingue surtout de celle de La Calprenède par un caractère plus nettement religieux'.⁵⁹ In terms of dramatic worth, Lancaster judges the play somewhere between La Calprenède and Caussin.⁶⁰ Leaving to one side the question of this work's relative artistic value, I think there are two arguments to suggest that the work has been unduly neglected. Firstly, the publication of the play is an indication of the lingering influence of Caussin's work, published thirty years earlier, and Olivier's version may have inspired the two other dramatists who embark on the Hermenigildus legend in the following decade. Secondly, the political subtext of the play is striking, particularly when viewed in the context of the date of publication.

Olivier's play opens with the King considering what punishment he will inflict on his wayward son.⁶¹ The monarch states that: 'les commandemens des Roys ne rendent jamais coupable l'obeïssance des sujets' (I, 1). From the very first scene, there

⁵⁶ Sébastien Zamet (d. 1665) was the son of the famous Italian financier of the same name who had been one of Henri IV's favourites (1549-1614). He was a chaplain to Marie de Médicis and was consecrated bishop of Langres in 1615. See Joseph Bergin, *The Making of the French Episcopate, 1589-1661* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 719.

⁵⁷ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 947.

⁵⁸ A college play performed a little before Olivier's is *Le Martyre de Saint Hermenegilde Tragedie*, staged at Beauvais in 1647. There was the usual printed synopsis, see Louis Desgraves, *Répertoire des programmes des pièces de théâtre jouées dans les Collèges de France (1601-1700)*, Histoire et Civilisation du Livre, 17 (Geneva: Droz, 1986), p. 29.

⁵⁹ Loukovitch, *L'Évolution de la tragédie religieuse*, p. 403.

⁶⁰ 'The work is distinctly inferior to La Calprenède's tragedy and has little superiority over that of Caussin', Lancaster, *History*, II, 667.

⁶¹ A noteworthy variation on this opening occurs in a college play on the legend, which begins with Hermenigilde waiting for an enemy officer with whom he is going to engage in a duel, Pierre Boucher, *Hermenigilde tragedie qui doit estre représentée au College de la compagnie de Jesus pour la distribution des prix* (Paris: n.pub., 1664), p. 3.

is an agenda favouring absolutist kingship. Levigilde commits the safekeeping and interrogation of Hermenigilde into the hands of Recarede, his other son. Our first glimpse of the play's hero convinces us of his fidelity to duty:

HERMENIGILDE J'ayme mieux tendre le col en ce sanglant Sacrifice, mourir pur, et faire passer cette pureté jusques à mes cendres, que d'asseurer mon repos sur ce qui luy coûteroit une seule larme. (I, 2)

Hermenigilde takes advice from his confidant, Erasistre, who suggests 'il faut combattre pour vostre teste' (I, 2). The prince decides to go to his father in an attempt to distance him from evil influences, a possible contemporary allusion to Louis XIV's situation. His brother arrives in the next scene.

RECAREDE Est-ce le devoir d'un sujet de se revolter contre son Roy?
HERMENIGILDE Est-ce la protection d'un Roy d'opprimer son sujet?
RECAREDE Il vous a donné la vie.
HERMENIGILDE Il la conserve aussi. (I, 3)

Hermenigilde replies that he is disposed to explain himself to their father, adding:

HERMENIGILDE Je prends Dieu à témoing si mon esprit à jamais esté ny aliéné, de vôtre affection, ny éloigné du respect du Roy. (I, 3)⁶²

Levigilde's injustice and Hermenigilde's loyalty to him are both highlighted in this first act.⁶³ The first act closes with Erasistrate expressing his sense of foreboding:

ERASISTRATE O quelle credulité! Vous allés, Hermenigilde, monter sur un Theatre, ou vous faites la cathastrophe d'une sanglante Tragedie, vous allés, vous acourés à ce sacrifice ou vous devés estre la Victime: Dieu veuille que mes presages soient faux. (I, 5)

This speech reminds the spectator that the tragedy's subject is taken from history: they are witnessing a re-enactment. The manner in which this address closes the first act, and its allusion to the nature of theatrical spectacle, imply that the tragedy was intended to be performed.

⁶² 'Lors qu'on les accuse de manquer de fidélité envers le Prince, ils s'en défendent non-seulement comme d'un crime, mais encore comme d'un sacrilège où la majesté de Dieu est violée en la personne de son lieutenant', Bossuet, *Premier avertissement*, p. 302.

Olivier endows Gosvinthe, Hermenigilde's stepmother, with both a voice and a degree of character development. She opens the second act with a vitriolic tirade (covering two pages of the printed quarto version), forwarding her opinion that 'Recarede travaille à la paix de son Frere et à mon entiere desolation' (II, 1). Her two confidantes, Hermenifride and Duriace, propose a plan to solve the Queen's worries. Once we are informed of these intrigues, the next scene involves the King with his confidants, setting out his fears that Hermenigilde may have secret designs. He even believes that Hermenigilde may kill his brother. Leonidas expresses his absolute obedience: 'c'est à vôtre Majesté (Sire) de commander et à nous d'executer aveuglement ses Ordres' (II, 2). It is at this moment in the play that the Recarede's return is announced. Recarede assures the King that his brother would rather die than lack paying homage to him (II, 3). Hermenigilde arrives and is received joyfully by his father. The apparent peace of the event is marred by Erasistrate discreetly warning Hermenigilde about his stepmother: this concludes the second act.

Following on from this, the third act opens with the Queen declaring:

LA REYNE

Il faut en un dernier mal-heur une extrême resolution.
Qu'attendons nous d'avantage: il est Chrestien, il est Papiste, ce
qu'il niera jamais; c'est par la qu'il le faut prendre. (III, 1).

It transpires that Duriace has written two letters in this connection purporting to be from Hermenigilde: these are to be rendered to the King. When the Queen leaves her two companions, Hermenifride expresses some misgivings about the scheme, Duriace reassures her that such a course of action is necessary (III, 2). In the next scene Duriace warns the King that Hermenigilde is of the same religious faith as his enemies. She continues to explain that he is in league with the enemy and his return is nothing more than a ruse. She offers the forged letters as proof, and the Queen adds that he should be pardoned on condition that he abjures his faith, all the while realising this is the very thing he will never do (III, 3). Meanwhile, Erasistrate warns Recarede of what the future holds, because of 'l'humeur de la Reyne' (III, 4). Recarede initially disbelieves this, since, as he states, the Queen has always displayed open affection

⁶³ Levigilde's apparent harshness is due, in Erasistrate's opinion, to the fact that 'l'esprit du Roy est tellement possédé de ces Demons', indicating bad counsellors (I, 2).

towards both brothers. Erasistrate argues that this is simply feigned, and they both decide to notify the King of the danger.

However, it is too late, as the King aggressively confronts his son. The prince replies:

HERMENIGILDE Si j'avois appris a diviner je sçaurois ce de quoy vôtre Majesté m'accuse: mais comme je ne voy rien qui reproche ma conscience, je me tairay, et s'il est besoin je mourray puisqu'on m'impose avec des crimes, le loy de ny contredire, j'obeys donc, et me tais. (III, 5)

Before the irrational behaviour of his King, Hermenigilde does not lack any outward deference for his monarch, and is quite prepared to suffer an unjust death without undermining regal authority. Levigilde reads from the fraudulent letters, one addressed from 'les Chrestiens au Prince Hermenigilde', the other purporting to be his reply. The prince denies he has been disobedient, but admits he is 'Chrestien et Romain', adding prophetically 'la gloire de ce nom m'accompagnera jusques au tombeau'. Levigilde orders his son to be taken away under guard. Recarede arrives immediately after Hermenigilde has been led away. When he stands up for his brother, suggesting that letters can be easily forged, the King instructs his guards to arrest him as well (III, 6).

In the fourth act, the King appoints two ministers of state, Geragathe and Sophronisque, to judge his son. After setting out the circumstances leading up to his son's arrest, Geragathe remarks *obiter dicta* that an admission of guilt 'amoindra l'aigreur des resentimens de vostre Majesté' (IV, 1). When Hermenigilde is brought before the hastily appointed court, his father peremptorily notifies him that he can defend himself before the tribunal. Hermenigilde blames his enemies for his predicament, and accredits his mother, the King's first wife, with passing on the true faith. He goes on to name the present Queen, accusing her of having persecuted Indegonde, beating her when she would not embrace Arianism.⁶⁴ The King refuses to believe this and once more asks his son if he holds the Roman faith. Hermenigilde replies he is innocent, and the King dismisses him (IV, 2). After hearing the judges' split verdict (one of whom thinks the accused should die, the other thinks he should be given a second chance), Levigilde calls for Leonidas, *capitaine des gardes*, and directs

him to decapitate Hermenigilde, under pain of his own death. The soldier accepts the order with some regret.

As preparations are made for Hermenigilde's execution, his wife begs her father-in-law for clemency, only to be turned down (V, 2). He further refuses to allow Indegonde a last chance to see her husband (V, 3). In a soliloquy, Leonidas ponders:

LEONIDAS Dure et severe Loy qui attache nos soûmission servile à une obeyssance aveugle des commandemens des Roys qui n'ont souvent point d'autre raison que celle de leur Authorité. (V, 4)

The soldier recognises the capacity of monarchs to further their own interests, yet also identifies a 'loy' that commands compliance. His unwavering obedience seems to reinforce Olivier's belief that the monarch commands unquestioning submission. This viewpoint is strengthened in the next scene, when the would-be executioner is with his victim:

LEONIDAS Mais pusique la volonté du Roy est irrevocable, et celle que j'aurois de vous donner la vie seroit inutile, j'obeis à la nécessité lors que je suis forcé de faire ce que le Roy desire. (V, 5)

It is here that Leonidas reveals to Hermenigilde the nature of what he has been ordered to accomplish. The prisoner counters that his only regret is that his death will be swift.

If Olivier's pro-absolutist tendencies are implicit throughout the play, they become patently transparent in an extraordinary speech Hermenigilde imparts to Erasistrate, highlighted by its position immediately before the martyrdom. The prince thanks his companion for his friendship, then, speaking of himself in the third person (a device stressing his detachment from the world), adds:

HERMENIGILDE Il meurt avec ce seul regret de n'avoit rien pû pour vous que vous payer par son amitié de celle que vous luy avés porté: mais quelque grande qu'elle soit, elle ne doit pas faire perdre le respect que chacun doit aux Roys, nous devons regler celle la dans les termes d'un attachement raisonné, et conserver celui-ci jusques au dernier soûpir. Le nom des Roys est sacré comme leur personne; on ne doit parler ny de l'un ny de l'autre qu'avec veneration; leur volonté est souvent comme eux une Reine aveugle, préoccupée par

⁶⁴ This is faithful to Gregory of Tours: 'hæc illa audiens, iracundiæ furore fucensa, adprehensam per comam capitis puellam in terram condolit, et diu calcibus verberatum, ac sanguine cruentatum, jussit spoliari et piscinæ immergi', *Historiæ Francorum*, p. 222.

les infidèles rapports que les Ministres intéressés qui leur font prononcer des jugemens iniques; cependant ce n'est pas aux personnes privées d'en faire la censure, moins encore de toucher à leur vie comme aux choses Stes. (V, 6)⁶⁵

The fact that the martyr speaks generally of 'les Roys', reinforces, were proof needed, that this is a universal doctrine. A monarch's potential faults are clearly accepted. For all this, criticism of an erroneous monarch is equated with tyrannicide in the last part of the speech. Perhaps the most striking thing of all, is the application of Hermenigilde's situation to an audience of the year 1650. I believe that it is highly likely that a contemporary spectator or reader would see Anne of Austria lurking behind the mention of 'une Reine aveugle', and recognise Mazarin and his assistants as 'les Ministres intéressés'.⁶⁶ The indiscretions of the dramatic characters, and by analogy the political figures alluded to, are candidly recognised. However, the reaction of those taking arms to resolve the situation is denounced in no uncertain terms.⁶⁷ This is a far cry from the historical saint who proclaimed himself king in Seville and even minted coins in his own name.⁶⁸ Through the mouth of a canonised saint, at the climax of the course of the play, that is to say the martyr's pre-execution discourse, the audience is presented with a criticism of the actions of the *frondeurs*. Olivier stresses his loyalty to the King, who issued an edict on 23 January 1649 from his exile at Saint-Germain-en-Laye:

Les actes de Rebellion et de desobeissance ouverte, commis en dernier lieu par le Gens se disant tenir nostre Cour de Parelement de Paris, sont assez connoistre aujourd'huy la verité de motifs portez par nostre Declaration du sixiesme de ce mois, qui nous ont obligé à nous retirer de ladite Ville pour mettre nostre personne en seureté, et ne demeurer pas exposez à l'insulte qu'ils meditoient de faire,

⁶⁵ These sentiments agree with those of Baricave: '[les Roys] sont les vives images de Dieu: et qui les resiste, resiste à l'ordonnance de Dieu, tellement que le respect et l'obeissance qui leur est renduë, Dieu la tient pour renduë à soi-même', *Defence*, p. 502.

⁶⁶ This uses a similar tone of language as opponents of the minority government. One author observes 'les peuples se sont contentés d'ébranler seulement l'Estat par une apparence de revolte, pour precipiter de son gouvernail cét insolent Ministre', *La Tragédie de la royauté jouée sur le theatre de France par le cardinal Mazarin. Où les bons François verront que si cét insolent Minsitre n'a point entierement ruiné le Royauté, il a du moins pratiqué toutes les intrigues qu'on peut inventer pour la perdre* (n.p.: n.pub., 1651), pp. 4-5.

⁶⁷ This contradicts the original legend: 'Catholic Spanish authorities regard Hermenegild with disfavour: they do not speak of him as championing the oppressed Catholics against an Arian tyrant, but as a subject who revolted against his king and as a son who rebelled against his father', E. A. Thompson, 'The Conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 4 (1960), 4-35 (p. 12).

⁶⁸ George C. Miles, *The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain: Leovigild to Achilla II*, Hispanic Numismatic Series, 2 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1952), p. 199.

pour s'en saisir; il n'est pas besoin de chercher d'autres preuves pour convaincre de manifeste Rebellion ceux qui nous avons declarez criminels de leze-Majesté, que leurs actions mesme, puis qu'on ne peut en douter sans estre en quelque façon complice de leur crime.⁶⁹

This play's lucid exposition of Olivier's political views demonstrates his agreement with this royal judgement. It also establishes that the dramatist was aware that the martyr's stand was capable of an anti-absolutist reading, and this hints at familiarity with the approaches of La Serre and Desfontaines. The direct allusion to events of the Frondes gives this tragedy a particular value, though Olivier's vigorous defence of the institutions he saw in peril remains entirely ignored by commentators of seventeenth-century theatre.

Indegonde does get the chance to say farewell to her husband. Hermenigilde consoles her with the thought that while a husband is being taken from her, a martyr will be given back in return (V, 7). Sophronisque, the judge who called for Hermenigilde's death, is shown in the next scene consoling the Queen. He assures her 'ce qui étoit autrefois le Prince des Goths, n'est plus qu'un tronc mutilé d'un horrible cadavre', a description that only adds to the perception of her callousness (V, 8). One of the guards, Igerde, rushes to inform the King of the discovery of the true conspiracy, but Leonidas sadly reveals: 's'en est fait, il est mort' (V, 9).⁷⁰ Upon discovering the truth and hearing of his son's death in the final scene, the King is desolate, even attempting to shed his own blood (Igerde steps in to prevent him from harming himself). Erastrate and Igerde propose that the late prince should be honoured, a prospect that restores some degree of reason to Levigilde, who after praising the merits of his son, ends the play on the promise: 'j'edifieray un Temple somptueux' in which to house Hermenigilde's relics (V, 10). There is half a page of errata following the text of the tragedy with the mention: 'j'en ay mis icy que qui changent le sens; celui du lecteur sera charitable, s'il excuse les autres'.

Stegmann comments that during these years in the middle of the century, 'la tragédie religieuse est aux mains de provinciaux maladroits, Bouvot, Chevillard,

⁶⁹ *Declaration du Roy portant suppression de toutes les Charges et Offices dont se sont pourvues les Gens cy-devant tenans la Cour de Parlement de Paris. Pour les causes y contenuës* (St Germain en Laye: n.pub., 1649), p. 3.

⁷⁰ Erastrate's response to this: 'Roy cruel! Tygre épouvantable, qui manges ta propre chair et bois ton sang' (V, 9), is a metaphor that echoes *Polyeucte*: 'Tigre affamé de sang, Decie impitoyable' (*Polyeucte*: IV, 2), and is to be found in Rotrou's *veritable Sainct Genest*: 'ce Lyon alteré du sacré sang des tiens' (Marcele: II, 3).

Olivier, Madame de Saint-Balmon ou cette demoiselle Cosnard de Séez'.⁷¹ This comment is certainly applicable to an undated tragedy on the decapitation of John the Baptist published at Rouen by Laurens Machuel, Jean Bisson's *Le Martyre ou la Decolation de Saint Jean tragedie*. While this work bears no date, it almost certainly belongs to the mid-seventeenth century, though cannot be dated earlier than 1653 with any certainty.⁷² The play owes more to the *mystère* than to contemporary martyr-tragedies, and the question of authority is not touched on.⁷³ Nevertheless, the martyr is represented as being a loyal subject to secular authority, for when summoned to appear at the palace, he replies: 'Je ne resiste pas; Messieurs, commandez-moy; / Je souscris volontiers aux ordres de mon Roy' (V, 5). This does show that there is some truth in Stegmann's observation, though outside of the examples he gives.

3.3 Post-Frondes Martyr-Plays

The legend first dramatised by Marthe Cosnard was the subject of 1654 play published at Lyon, *Agathonphile Martyr, tragicomedie*, also written by a female dramatist. Françoise Pascal, a native of Lyon, wrote six plays and 'vint habiter Paris en 1667 et acquit une notoriété suffisante pour La Forge la placer parmi les femmes célèbres de

⁷¹ Stegmann, *L'Héroïsme cornélien*, I, 126. This is a sweeping judgement and leaves aside many issues, such as the importance of the two female writers, as well as unfairly dismissing Cosnard as being of negligible talent. Louis de la Sicotière observes of this authoress in his edition of her martyr-play: 'Les Chastes Martyrs offrent par endroits plus de facilité de style, de correction et parfois même d'élévation qu'on ne l'aurait entendu d'une provinciale à son début littéraire', *La Tragédie des Chastes Martyrs*, p. vii. Moreover, while categorising these authors as provincial, Stegmann undermines the fact that several of the playwrights' works were published in Paris.

⁷² The work contains a dedication to 'Monseigneur Le Guerchois, procureur general du Roy en son parlement de Normandie'. The earliest official note referring to Pierre le Guerchois exercising this office is from 1653 (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Fr. 32.318 n. 4). See Henri and Odette de Frondeville, *Les Conseillers du parlement de Normandie de 1641 à 1715, recueil généalogique établi sur la base du Manuscrit Bigot, de la Bibliothèque de Rouen*, 4 vols (Rouen: Lestringant, 1970), I, 517.

⁷³ Jacob remarks of this tragedy: 'voilà encore un mystère, peu d'années avant les premières pièces de Voltaire. L'auteur a traité ce sujet édifiant avec un mélange de burlesque, qui offre toute la naïveté du 15^e siècle', *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur de Soleinne*, I, vi, 54. Jacob is referring to editions of this play published at Caen in 1703 and 1704. As I have argued elsewhere, these are piracies appearing under the invented authorship of Jeanne Bisson de la Coudraye, see P. Scott, 'An Eighteenth-Century Fabrication: a Female Playwright Exposed', *French Studies Bulletin*, 75 (2000), pp. 8-11 and 'Une femme dramaturge dévoilée: The Case of Jean/ne Bisson/de la Coudraye', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 22 (2000), 194-205.

France'.⁷⁴ Lancaster notes that she was 'the first woman dramatist in the seventeenth century who wrote more than a single play'.⁷⁵ The tragedy is dedicated 'à Messieurs les Prevosts des Marchands et Eschevins de la ville de Lyon'. Like Cosnard, Pascal has a dedicatory poem addressed to her by a male author, P. Fayol, 'sur son Agathonphile Martyr' in which he praises her virtues in a way that resembles Madame de Saint-Balmon:

Vous pouvez la nommer Française,
Puis qu'elle n'est jamais à l'aise,
Que parmy les feux et les dards:
Et luy voyant en main les Armes et la Vetue,
Vous direz que son Pere est Mars,
Et qu'elle est fille de Minerve.

Pascal admits in the 'avis au lecteur' that this tragedy is her 'premier essay'. Unlike Cosnard who set her play in Sicily, in this version 'la Scene est à Rome, et à ses environs'.

The play opens in a distinctly different manner than Cosnard. Irenée, the wife of Sabin (Agathon's father), declares an incestuous passion for her stepson:

IRENEE

Que ma flamme est contrainte, et qu'il est mal-aisé
De cacher les ardeurs de mon cœur embrasé
Ce divin Agathon qui cause mon martyre.
Mais apres tant d'ennuis, apres tant de soupirs,
Il faudra qu'Agathon se range à mes desirs. (I, 1)

Celiane, her confidante, advises her to abandon this love, reminding her mistress that a thousand Roman women are besotted with Agathon. Nevertheless, Irenée commissions her to seek out Agathon to tell him of her misplaced passion. This is circumvented by the arrival of Agathon immediately following Celiane's departure. She reveals all:

AGATHON
IRENEE

Madame, s'il vous plaist, que ce discours finisse.
Quoy, tu rougis, mon fils?
[...]
Je ne puis plus taire,
Je languis, je me meurs. (I, 2)

⁷⁴ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: le XVII^e siècle*, p. 971.

⁷⁵ Lancaster, *History*, III, 157.

She then attempts to kiss her horrified stepson, but 'il s'enfuit'. Spurned, she resolves:

IRENEE

Mais mal-traité ainsi de ce bel inhumain,
Je veux estre vangée, ô Dieux, voicy son Pere. (I, 2)

Seizing the opportunity presented to her, Irenée claims that Agathon has tried to violate her. Sabin promises to punish him: 'il n'aura jamais point d'autre bourreau que moy' (I, 3). The similarities between this tragedy's plot and the figure of Phaedra in Euripides and Sophocles, are striking; it is not impossible that *Agathonphile* was a remote influence on Racine. The next scene, the last of the first act, opens with Agathon praying to God for help, thus informing us of his Christianity. His friend Albin appears, and Agathon asks if he can lodge with him (I, 4).

The second act opens with our first glimpse of the play's heroine. Triphine hopes that she overhears Agathon's arrival, but it turns out to be her brother, Euple, who tells her about her beloved's predicament, adding that Celiane knows of his innocence. They both decide to send a page to Albin's house to see if he has taken refuge there (II, 1). Meanwhile, the plot is further complicated by the appearance of a new character, Polydore, who ponders his love for Triphine in a soliloquy and resolves to speak to her (II, 2). Triphine has a double revelation in the second act: she wishes to convert to Christianity and she loves Agathon, though believes this is not reciprocated (II, 4). This is demolished in the following scene, when Agathon refers to her in a monologue, judging that 'un seul de ses regards enchaîne les cœurs' (II, 5). The complexity of these sub-plots in the tragedy is further compounded in the next scene. Triphine's father, Triphon, a Roman senator, is conversing with Cevere 'Senauteur Romain, Favory de l'Empereur Decie, et amoureux de Triphine'. It becomes apparent that they are concluding a contract:

TRIPHON

Je ne merite pas un semblable bon-heur,
Et seray glorieux qu'un si puissant Seigneur
Soit mon Gendre. (II, 6)

The senator assures Cevere that his daughter 'se soumettra tousjours', though Cevere requests that he desists from any temptation 'user la violence'. Cevere also counters that Triphine is young, but Triphon insists '[elle] est à vous, puis que je vous le jure'.

Cevere appears as a noble character, not unlike an older version of his namesake, Corneille's Sévère. By the second act, it is clear that Pascal is not following Camus's narrative, nor borrowing from Cosnard, save for the singular exception of character's names. The issue of authority is subjugated to the author's stress on an intricate love-story.

When Triphine hears of this marriage from her brother, her reaction is predictable: 'non, j'auray jamais qu'Agathon pour Espoux' (III, 1). Agathon overhears this, and after a momentary hesitation, decides to speak up:

AGATHON	Songez ce que vous estes, et moy ce que je suis; Songez que je ne suis qu'un simple Gentil-homme, Et que vous estes née d'un Senateur de Rome. (III, 1)
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They declare their mutual love, and Triphine gives him a ring as a token of her attachment. Then she learns that her father wishes to speak with her, and he arrives on scene. He informs her of the marital arrangements:

TRIPHON	Ce puissant Senateur, que l'Empire revere, Comme un autre Empereur, en fin le favory De l'Empereur Decie, il sera ton Mary. (III, 2)
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Triphine can barely speak, though manages to utter some interjections. At this, everyone leaves and Agathon is left alone on stage. He prays for help (III, 3). When we next see Triphine, she is in a state of distress, expressing a wish to die. She tells her brother that she will submit, but needs a few days. When Euple leaves to ask paternal permission for this delay, Triphine is alone and divulges that she is playing for time. However, her brother returns with the bad news that Triphon refuses to grant her a few days' grace (this all occurs in III, 4). The young lovers' next meeting is at the end of the third act. Agathon suggests they flee in a boat on the Tiber, and sets off to find someone willing to risk taking them (III, 6).

The fourth act continues from this point, and opens with Triphine alone, wondering whether Agathon has deceived her, but he returns to accompany her to a waiting boat, so they promptly leave together (IV, 1). Their flight is discovered in the next scene, though a letter left by Triphine throws her family off the scent. The letter is read aloud by Alphonse, 'maistre d'hostel de Triphon':

ALPHONSE

Le Tybre m'a receu au milieu de son onde,
 Pour finir mes langueurs, et pour me separer
 Du plus grand enemy que j'aye dans le monde. (IV, 2)

While not a direct lie, this is misleading behaviour on the part of a potential Christian. Triphon appears as ignoble as Corneille's Félix, for his first instinct is to wonder how Cevere will react to the news of her disappearance. He calls his daughter 'la rebelle', yet her rebellion is against a marriage she does not wish to enter, not against temporal authority.⁷⁶ Pascal's play was published a year following the end of the Frondes, and she successfully steers the tragedy away from the question of resistance. The family discovers that the couple has left together. Triphon says he will alert the Emperor, and at this moment Cevere arrives. Triphon blames Agathon, and for the first time his religion becomes an issue, as he is branded '[un] infame Chrestien'. Cevere comments that he does not know Agathon, and Euple adds: 'Triphine est toute belle, Agathon tout parfait' (IV, 4). Cevere promises to help seek out 'cét insolent':

CEVERE

Je le veux immoler aux yeux de son Amante,
 Puis que cette inhumaine a voulu mespriver
 Mon amour. (IV, 4)

He adds menacingly that Decius 'me cherit plus que sa propre vie'.

The final act begins with Agathon awaiting Triphine 'dans un bois'. Like the doubts she experienced earlier, he slides into despondency until she finally appears. She explains that her delay was caused by a storm and that she recovered from the ensuing shipwreck in a peasant's home (V, 2). This is the only allusion to the shipwreck that is an integral part of the interpretations of Camus and Cosnard. They offer thanks to God for having found each other, but this joy is short-lived, as they are captured in the next scene by their parents and Cevere. Decius's favourite cannot resist a verbal assault on the couple:

CEVERE

Quoy, ce jeune Agathon estoit-il plus que moy?
 Encor qu'il soit bien fait, et que je suis fort d'âge,
 N'auriez-vous pas encor eu d'honneur d'avantage,

⁷⁶ The virgin-martyr's refusal to marry is often the focus of her rebellion in the martyr-play. A similar example is Ternet's heroine, see Chapter Five (especially pp. 234-340).

Corneille and Rotrou, this is the only other martyr-play to merit recognition by this critic. The Parfaict brothers esteem that this tragedy excels all his others, but caustically add: 'il n'a fait que mettre en vers la Tragedie d'Hermenigilde, que M. de la Calprenede avoit donné onze ans auparavant'.⁸¹ Nevertheless, there are differences: Montauban sets his tragedy at Madrid and, unlike La Calprenède or Olivier, writes in verse. This version opens with Hermenigilde proclaiming his willingness to accept whatever fate his father has in store for him. When he meets his brother, he remarks: 'si je ne vis en Prince, en Prince il faut mourir' (I, 3). Recarede asks him to cede Seville back to his father, thus ending any conflict. This detail is unique to Montauban. The prince indicates his willingness to obey, mentioning in the event of the King breaking his word:

HERMENIGILDE	Si malgré ces sermens on me manque de foy, J'obeys à la voix d'un pere et d'un Roy.
INDEGONDE	Les paroles des Rois sont toutes souveraines, Le Prince est obligé de nous garder la foy, Et quand il a parlé sa parole est sa loy. (I, 4)

Indegonde exerts greater sway over her husband in Montauban's version, perhaps because the dramatist has characterised her as '[une] Fille de France'. The couple's pledge of loyalty, and faith in the King's word, can be viewed in the light of Louis XIV's restoration of order and his promise of amnesty made to prominent *frondeurs*.⁸²

In the second act, Hermenigilde articulates doubts about his stepmother:

HERMENIGILDE	Je crains tout d'une femme et d'une belle-mere, Je connois son Empire et ce que veut mon pere, La Reyne de l'Estat gouverne le vaisseau, Elle porte le Sceptre et le Roy le bandeau. (II, 2)
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His fears are soon confirmed in the following scene, as Cleonte, 'gentilhomme Espagnol', brings news that the Queen has intercepted a letter allegedly written by him to the Greeks. Accordingly in the third act, Hermenigilde is interrogated by four

⁸¹ Parfaict, *Histoire*, VII, 403.

⁸² As Jean Rohou points out, the theatre was a locus for the debate on authority: 'de sa resurgence en 1634 —après six ans de léthargie— jusqu'à la clôture du débat public par le triomphe de l'absolutisme sur les Frondes (1652), la tragédie française porte principalement sur des sujets politiques', 'Corneille: dramaturgie politique', in *Lectures de Corneille: Cinna, Rodogune, Nicomède*, ed. by Daniel Riou (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1997), pp. 15-36 (p. 20).

judges. Levigilde pre-empts their decision, and declares sternly that he wants both his son and his daughter-in-law put to death. Hermenigilde admits he is Catholic, and the court's verdict goes against him. Recarede pleads for his brother's life in the fourth act, but his stepmother intervenes:

GOISINTHE

Sçachez qu'à divertir un trespas arrêté
On se rend criminel de leze-Majesté,
Qu'on offense le Roy quand on deffend un frere,
Et qu'il faut apres tout obeyr et se taire. (IV, 1)

Ironically, this is an accurate reflection of Hermenigilde's attitude. Levigilde promises to spare his eldest son, on the condition that he renounces his faith, and Recarede undertakes to attempt this. He visits his brother accompanied by a commissaire 'apportant dans un bassin une espée et une Couronne', in order to offer Hermenigilde a choice (IV, 5). This curious detail seems to be borrowed from the anonymous 1649 Caen tragedy on Saint Catherine, though in this play it is a sceptre, not a crown, that is proffered (see p. 128). Hermenigilde willingly offers his death as an oblation, so that the King and Queen may come to the faith.

The final act opens with Indegonde declaring: 'enfin, le Prince est mort, et la trame est coupée' (V, 1). She does not die in Montauban's adaptation of the legend. In the next scene, it is revealed that the Queen has confessed all to her husband and she has been imprisoned. He decides to exile her: 'sors insolente Reyne,/ Et quitte mes Estats pour éviter ta peine' (V, 3). Recarede renounces his rights to the throne, and Levigilde brings the play to a close with his contrition: 'mais jamais ma douleur n'esgallera mon crime' (V, 4). As with Olivier, there is no question of Hermenigilde judging or refusing to obey his father. Even though the King errs, the characters never waver in their loyalty or submission to him. Even the possibility of resistance is not mentioned in the tragedy. As is hinted by the King's guilt, it is God to whom the monarch is accountable.

Another martyr-play that probably appeared in 1654 is *Natalie ou la Generosité chrestienne*. This is by Montgaudier, 'auteur inconnu d'une tragédie dont le sujet est emprunté à la *Légende dorée*'.⁸³ The play was reissued in 1657 by the same printers Claude Calleville, 'sur l'imprimée' (this time in duodecimo format instead of

⁸³ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 901.

quarto). The tragedy is dedicated to the 'Marquis de Montausier, gouverneur et lieutenant general pour sa Majesté es Provinces de Xainctonge, Angoulmois, haute et basse Alsace, Lieutenant General en ses armées'.⁸⁴ The action takes place in Nicodemia and opens with Natalie praying for the conversion of her husband, Adrien (I, 1).⁸⁵ In the next scene, Natalie and her cousin, Theodore, 'fournies de linge et d'Onguents, vont visiter et panser les prisonniers Chrestiens'.⁸⁶ Natalie's prayer is swiftly answered, for Adrien's manservant, Fauste, arrives to inform her that his master has been arrested because he is a Christian: 'mon Maistre ne vit plus ou respire en prison' (I, 3). Her reaction is not quite what he was expecting:

NATALIE	L'excez de ce bon-heur a mon ame ravie; Ha mon cher Adrien vous me rendez la vie!
FAUSTE	Ce transport me surprend, Madame, il va mourir. (I, 3)

This demonstrates the effectiveness of Natalie's supplications. She begs Fauste to recount exactly what happened to her husband. He narrates that Adrien declared: 'je suis Chrestien, dit-il, j'abhore les Idoles,/ J'en deteste le culte'. The Emperor, in this case Diocletian's successor Maximian, overheard this and had him taken prisoner on the spot. This dissent operates on a purely religious level, rather than as an act of refusing secular jurisdiction.

Fauste's worries for his master disappear in the next scene, for Adrien turns up. After greeting each other, Natalie expresses her joy at his conversion. At this point, Apollinaire, 'capitaine des Gardes de l'Empereur', reminds those present that Christianity is against the Emperor's authority. Adrien does not support nor elaborate on this accusation: he simply replies 'n'en parlons plus, je veux mourir Chrestien' (I, 4). This confirms the spiritual nature of his rebellion. However, there is a significant exchange following this:

APOLLINAIRE	Desobeyr au Prince est une felonie Et vous mourrez tousjours en ce point.
ADRIEN	Son edict est injuste et ne m'oblige point.
APOLLINAIRE	Est-ce à nous d'en juger?

⁸⁴ Jacob remarks that this tragedy 'd'autant plus rare qu'elle est détestable; la dédicace au marquis de Montausier ne l'a pas rendue meilleure', *Bibliothèque dramatique*, I, 287.

⁸⁵ The martyrdom of a Nicodemian martyr, Adrian, is mentioned in the Calendar on 8 September, see Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, I, 601.

⁸⁶ A misprint in the 1654 edition reads 'Natalie et Treodore'.

ADRIEN

Ouy, dans cette occurrence,
 Ou Dieu prend interest tout se met en balance,
 Mais nous perdons du temps et n'avançons rien;
 Monsieur n'en parlons plus, je veux mourir Chrestien. (I, 4)

While Adrien accepts that his ruler can be judged, he stresses it is only in this particular area. His attitude represents a cautious acceptance of limited kingship, but only insofar as matters of faith are concerned. In the post-Fronde context, Adrien's stance can be read as supportive to the idea that a King can err and be legitimately disobeyed, but only in extreme circumstances.

The second act opens with a love-interest, when Martian, *maistre de Camp*, reveals in a soliloquy that he has been obsessed with Natalie for thirteen months. Crucially for the plot, he confesses that he is pinning his hopes on her becoming a widow (II, 1). In the next scene, the Emperor asks Apollinaire and Martian whether Adrien persists in his error. He adds that he judges it better to lose a good captain than tolerate a Christian. His intolerance towards the sect is based on respect for traditional values: 'j'ai juré leur defaict et je le dois aux dieux' (II, 2). Adrien is summoned to appear before his sovereign, and, once he duly arrives, is given the stark choice: 'qu'il meure ou sacrifice' (II, 4). The Emperor continues:

MAXIMIAN

Il suffit que j'ordonne, et que mes volonte
 Doivent servir de regle a tout ce qui respire
 Dans le vaste circuit qu'embrace mon Empire,
 Obeis donc Chrestien, et n'obstine plus.

ADRIEN

Seigneur pour m'esbranler vos soins sont superflus
 Il faut qu'avec la foy je conserve la vie
 Ou que dans les tourmens elle me soit ravie.
 Commandez donc l'un ou l'autre et j'obeis. (II, 4)

The martyr exhibits unfailing courtesy and respect towards his prince, but reiterates he cannot comply in this matter.⁸⁷ When Maximian orders Adrien to suffer various gruesome torments, the martyr replies: 'je vous suis obligé favorable Empereur,/du soin que vous prenez pour ma gloire'. Adrien proves himself to be a loyal soldier in

⁸⁷ 'Dans ce démêlé célèbre où les intérêts de l'Eglise ont engagé saint Thomas contre un grand monarque, je me sens obligé de vous avertir qu'il ne lui a pas résisté en rebelle et dans un esprit de faction: il a joint la fermeté avec le respect', Bossuet, *Panegyrique de saint Thomas de Cantorbéry* (1668), in *Œuvres complètes*, XII, 37-57 (49).

submitting to the judicial penalties meted out by his lawful commander-in-chief. Placide leads him away to face his fate.

Martian divulges his passion for Natalie to the Emperor. He explains that she was formerly disposed towards him, but she then suddenly veered towards Adrien, culminating in marriage thirteen months earlier. He tries to provoke Maximian into action by stating that 'la maison d'Adrien de Chrestiens [est] tousjours pleine' (III, 2), though says nothing about Natalie's religious convictions. Maximian agrees to make her a widow, freeing her for Martian. The next scene sees Natalie and Adrien united on stage again, before Maximian and Martian. The Emperor offers Natalie an honoured place in his wife's household, but the couple remains intractable. After the menace of various tortures, the Emperor formally orders Adrien's death (III, 3). The lovers say their last farewells (III, 4). In the fourth act, Natalie and Theodore, 'pour avoir entrée dans la pirson [*sic*] s'estoient déguisées en hommes'. Natalie is happy their cross-dressing ruse has been a success, and as '*elles passent changer d'habits dans une autre chambre*', the audience hears Natalie asking for help with her corset, before attempting to convert Theodore (IV, 2). Fauste reveals that Adrien is close to death (IV, 2). At first she believes that her husband has given in to imperial pressure and regrets not gaining 'le tiltre glorieux de veufve de Martyr' (IV, 3). However, her husband is soon at hand to reassure her that he is persisting to the end, and wants her to watch his final agony. The martyrdom of Adrien is accomplished soon after, and is narrated by Natalie to Fauste and Theodore (IV, 5).

The play could well have finished at the end of the fourth act, as Natalie holds up Adrien's severed hand on stage, pledging to build chapels in her husband's honour while her entourage plan devoting their lives to God.⁸⁸ There is unfinished business to resolve, when Natalie firmly rejects Martian, since she will not impinge on the honour of being a martyr's widow, even if a prince wished to wed her (V, 1). The Emperor is displeased at this state of affairs and criticises her position:

MAXIMIAN	Cette vanité le remplit d'insolence. Elle fait éclatter sa desobeysance Et le porte au mespris des Princes et des Lois.
NATALIE	On tient pas pour loy tous les desirs des Rois Souvent leur passion s'y trouve contraire. (V, 2)

⁸⁸ A stage direction notes that Natalie speaks '*découvrant la main de son mary*'.

He gives her an ultimatum: to marry Martian or sacrifice to the gods. Natalie sees her husband in a dream and he tells her she will soon join him in gaining the crown of martyrdom (V, 4). The play ends with Natalie praying for a Christian emperor (V, 6). This tragedy has an ambivalent portrayal of the exercise of power, and Natalie speaks of Maximian in terms of a 'tyran' in the final act. Nonetheless, like her husband's stance, her quarrel is not so much against the person of the Emperor, as against submitting to a marriage against her wishes. The play's ambiguous content may be partly explained from its dedication to Charles de Montausier. While he had recently supported the monarchy, 'la plupart de ses amis avaient pris parti pour la Fronde; lui-même avait de trop justes griefs contre le cardinal de Mazarin'.⁸⁹ Montgaudier presents his patron with a tragedy featuring characters who suffer due to injustice, nevertheless who remain fundamentally faithful to authority.

A martyr-play treating Susanne, a martyr under Diocletian, was penned by an author named Vallée, *La Forte romaine en vers françois*. This first appeared without publishing details between February 1654 and May 1655.⁹⁰ The work was reissued by a Parisian publisher, Rocolet, in 1656, though bore the new title of *Sainte Suzanne martyre*. The only information we possess about the author is what he tells us, and in the dedication (to Mademoiselle Laura Martinozzi) he alludes to his 'rude séjour' away from the court. Vallée links the martyr to the dedicatee of the tragedy:

Puis que m'estant occupé à peindre sainte Susanne, je m'apperceus, MADAMOISELLE, que j'avois ebauché vostre Portrait, veritablement je trouve un si grand rapport, et des conformitez si particulieres entr'elle et vous, que je ne considère rien en l'une (quant aux avantages temporels) que j'admire en l'autre. (pp. v-vi)

This remarkable admission sets the tone for the tragedy, which is divided into five 'parties' with 'entretiens', not into acts and scenes.⁹¹ In the first scene of the play, it only takes a few moments for Susanne to convert Claude, a Roman senator who is her 'parent' and also appears to be in love with her. When he asks what he needs to do in order to subscribe to her faith, she directs him to the Pope, 'puis que pour lieutenant

⁸⁹ Hoefler, *Nouvelle biographie générale*, XXXVI, 118.

⁹⁰ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 1241.

⁹¹ Lancaster remarks that 'completely lacking in unity, the tragedy is little more than a series of homilies in verse', *History*, III, 409.

en terre Dieu l'élut' (I, 1). In the second *entretien*, Diocletian advises his co-ruler, Maximian, to channel his love towards Susanne.

In the second *partie*, one of the Emperor's favourites sets out his vision of the sovereign power before his imperial patron:

ARTISTE	Ce sacré Caractere, auquel les Dieux ont mis Le pouvoir de tenir tous les peuples soûmis; Ce qui dans nos esprits secrettement imprime, Le respect que l'on doit au Seigneur legitime; Cette puissance, enfin, ou cette autorité, Qui triomphe aisément de nostre liberté. (II, 2)
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Maxime, the other favourite, reveals to Claude his master's intentions of marrying Susanne off to Maximian. The senator is adamant she will refuse (II, 2). Susanne succeeds in converting Maxime in the next *partie*. In the *quatriesme partie*, the Christians are brought in to be judged by the Emperor, prevost and officials. While recognising Diocletian's jurisdiction, Claude offers the Emperor a lesson in leadership:

CLAUDE	Qu'un Monarque a sur nous un pouvoir admirable Quand nous le conoissons courtois, benin, affable! Ces rares qualitéz ont des charmes vainqueurs, Qui par un doux effort conquestent rous [<i>sic</i>] les cœurs. C'est l'art de regner la plus haute prudence: L'on sert mieux par amour que par obeissance. (IV)
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Faced with this affront, Diocletian responds by telling Claude that such sentiments are not those of a true Roman. Claude refuses to accept this:

CLAUDE	Mon corps, mes biens, dépend de vostre Etat: Mais mon ame, Seigneur, qui du Ciel tient son estre, A vostre autorité ne se doit pas soûmettre.
DIOCLETIAN	Mon pouvoir n'est-il pas à celui des Dieux joint?
MAXIME	C'est, en disant des Dieux, dire n'en avoir point. (IV)

The Christians' arguments centre on the source of imperial authority, not his right to rule. In fact, they happily welcome his command to have them roasted alive followed by the scattering of their ashes in the river. Their deaths, together with that of Susanne, are reported in the final act, and Macedone recounts that 'les Spectateurs ont peine à retenir leurs larmes' (V, 3). Diocletian provides the last words of the play:

DIOCLETIAN

Telles punitions dans le sein de l'Histoire,
 Servent des monumens à conserver la gloire,
 Et laissent pour Maxime à la posterité,
 Qu'on ne peut estre Impie avec impunité.

The ruler is concerned about making his mark on history. The martyrs are eager to die, but do not actively negate their sovereign's authority, they simply have a different view on its origins. Through highlighting the religious, the author avoids dwelling on the political facets of the martyrdoms.

An author called Yvernaud dedicates his 1655 tragedy to the Ursulines, a religious order having St Ursula as their celestial patron.⁹² *Le martyre de ste. Ursule Princesse des onze milles vierges tragedie* was published at Poitiers and contains an abregé of the life of the martyr.⁹³ This curious tale is mentioned in the *Légende dorée* (see Fig. 11).⁹⁴ Ignoring the historical veracity of such an immense number of martyrs, the author of a devotional work published in French translation in 1638 observes:

Les Auteurs qui descrivent ceste histoire s'accordent bien tous au nombre d'onze mille filles, et du lieu où elles furent martyrisées; mais ils sont de fort differente opinion du sujet d'une si grande assemblée de personnes de ce sexe, et de l'occasion qui les conduit de la grande Bretagne, autrement dite Angleterre, jusques en Allemagne.⁹⁵

The play opens following a shipwreck and 'la Scene [est] au Siege de Coloigne'. Ursule, 'princesse de Bretagne', verbally lists all the different tribulations that she and her handmaid have endured for the sake of Christ. She was forced to leave her homeland as Conan, 'roy de l'Amorique, à present la petite Bretagne', had fallen in love with her. Her father duly despatched her to Conan, though with eleven thousand

⁹² This congregation exercised an influential educational role in France, see Chapter Five, p. 231.

⁹³ Attwater comments: 'it seems that some young women were martyred at Cologne at an early date, but nothing else remotely resembling historical fact can be said about them', *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 334. Louis Réau plausibly suggests that the number of eleven thousand originates in some confusion over the inscription on the martyrs' tomb. Thus 'Xl.M.V.' is an abbreviation for XI Martyres et Virgines and not XI Mille Virgines, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, I, 365.

⁹⁴ 'Il y avoit en Bretagne ung roy tres chretien nomme Nothus ou maurus qui engendra une fille nommee Ursule, laquelle resplendissoit de sagesse a beau parler par merveilleuse honnestete et de beaute de bonnes meurs', Voragine, *La Légende doree et vie de saints et saintes*, p. 188.

⁹⁵ *Les Vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames, vierges et martyres de l'Eglise*, p. 813. The author attempts to give some historical perspective to the legend: 'or, les onze mille Vierges souffrirent le Martyre l'an 382' (p. 817). The Roman Martyrology mentions that the virgins 'furent martyrisées par les Huns ou Hongres, environ l'an trois cents quatre vingts et trois', *Martyrologe Romain pur tous les jours de l'année*, p. 239 (see also Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, II, 762).

virgins ‘afin de m’obliger d’habiter avec joye un País estrange’ (I, 1). Ursula is a typical martyr in that she wishes to leave this life: ‘mourir pour son Nom est mon ambition’ (I, 1). There is an additional love complication in the play. Caune, ‘roy des Huns’ falls in love with the princess: ‘enfin je suis vaincu, je m’en puis dédire,/ Amour a de mon cœur possédé tout l’empire’ (IV, 4). Inevitably, due to her rebuffal of his advances, the tenacious woman is executed, but not before she has seen and encouraged her virginal entourage to face death bravely for Christ’s sake. The issue of authority is only touched on briefly in the audience between Ursule and the pagan king.

CAUNE	Attendant que mon Cœur en donne quelque marque, Madame, esperez tout d’un genereux Monarque.
URSULE	Seigneur, ce changement, qu’on reconnoît en toy, Choque un peu la Vertu d’un veritable Roy: Toùjour le Cœur d’un Roy doit estre inèbranable, Ferme dans les desseins, doux, prudent, équitable.
CAUNE	Fais-tu si peu de cas de ma noble Personne? Estime-tu si peu mon Sceptre et ma Couronne? (V, 2)

In this scene, Ursula is letting Caune know that she has seen through his transparent ploy to win her over by feigning pleasantness. She enumerates a list of qualities that are obviously lacking in her pursuer: for example, he refrains from having her killed due to his emotional attachment to her. He mistakes her personal criticisms with a judgement on him as a monarch. While the martyr details how a king should behave, there is no implication that failing to meet these criteria entails the loss of the right to be obeyed.

He orders her to be struck down after a final, futile attempt on her chastity:

URSULE	Amant, ou furieux, tu ne me touches point. C’est mon divin Espoux qui possède mon Ame; Il m’ayme, je le crains, je l’adore, il m’enflamme; Je n’apprehende point de courroux que le sien. (V, 2)
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Yvernaud extracts the maximum impact from this scene. There is never any question of the princess giving way to his demands, but there is the possibility of her being tortured, or of the king being converted. It is he who delivers a mortal blow to her (‘Caune luy donne le coup de Flèche’), crying out ‘impie, meurs plutôt, et par ce coup fatal/ Connois les Dieux vengez’ (V, 2). He similarly strikes down another of Ursula’s

companions, Cordule, when she arrives and begs: ‘inhumains donnez-moy le trêpas que j’attends’ (V, 4). The occurrence of a celestial vision does not inspire Caune to conversion, but rather to flee (V, 5). Conan ends the play with his opinion that, although the Rhine has been filled with the blood of 11,000 innocent virgins, ‘ce naufrage est un Port, ce Massacre un Bon-heur’ (V, 5). There is a 1658 version on this legend by Nicolas de Le Ville, published at Louvain, and Lancaster considers that Yvernaud’s tragedy may have influenced this Belgian author.⁹⁶

Following the middle of the 1650s until 1661, the beginning of Louis XIV’s personal rule, the appeal of the martyr-play declines, with the result that fewer plays are produced in the capital. The handful that were printed are of a devotional character, such as Charles de Lignière’s *Cécilia virgo et martyr*, which appeared in Latin verse in 1657. Three martyr-plays of note were published as a collection without date, place nor full authorial details, though 1661 is generally held to be around the time of publication, and the identity of Jesu Maria is believed to be Ignace Joseph de Jésus-Marie (1596–1665).⁹⁷ He was a Carmelite friar, whose name in the world had been Jacques Sanson, and was a nephew of the geographer Nicolas Sanson. His major attributed work is *l’Histoire ecclesiastique de la ville d’Abbeville et de l’archidiaconé de Pontieu* (Paris: F. Pelican, 1646), and the three religious tragedies were probably performed at the Collège de Jésuites in Paris, a theory strengthened by the absence of any female roles (the Carmelites were not a teaching order).⁹⁸ Jacob conjectures that ‘les caractères employés dans cette édition ressemblent beaucoup à ceux qui servirent pour la *Biblioth. Patrum cisterciensium*, par Tissier, imprimée au couvent de Bonnefontaine (1661–69, 8 vol. in-fol.)’.⁹⁹ This provides some evidence to the work’s provenance. The three plays in the volume each have separate pagination.¹⁰⁰ The first play, *Sur le Martyre des SS. Innocens, tragedie*, is about the first martyrs of the New Testament, a rare theme for authors embarking on theatrical martyrdom, though a

⁹⁶ Lancaster, *History*, III, 416. Conan is not present in Le Ville’s play.

⁹⁷ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 631. Some bibliographical information is provided in his religious record, see Archives Nationales: LL1498

⁹⁸ Desgraves, *Répertoire*, p. 98.

⁹⁹ Jacob, *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur de Soleinne*, I, 314.

¹⁰⁰ While the collection of three plays exists as one volume in the British Library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, the Arsenal also possesses a copy of one of the plays, *Sur le Martire de S. Sebastien, tragedie*, as a single volume (Rf.6271). However, the copy is not bound, and appears to have come from an original three-play volume, as the pagination and format are identical.

notable example was Daniel Heinsuis's *Herodes Infanticida* (Leiden, 1632). The tragedy consists of four acts, and Jésus-Marie portrays Herod as recognising his errors: the play ends just prior to his suicide:

HERODE

Au dernier desespoir aujourd'hui je me livre,
 Accablé de malheurs je ne sçauois plus vivre;
 Mais si pas un de vous ne me veut secourir.
 Qu'on me donne un poignard, je me ferai mourir.
Alors étant prêt d'espérer, on l'importe

This version of events is absent from the Gospel narratives.

Jésus-Marie's *Saint Hermenegilde tragedie* does not have a role assigned for Indegonde, and is a five-act play composed in verse.¹⁰¹ The plot and the tone of the tragedy are not dissimilar to the other previous versions of the legend, with a fabricated letter being the means of incriminating the martyr. The prince accepts his fate without complaint, and when he is put into chains, he exclaims: 'je les embrasseray, j'en souffray les peines' (III, 5). Hermenegilde clearly stresses his revolt is not against the person of the monarch:

HERMENEGILDE

Non, Seigneur, j'ay pour vous le respect que je dois,
 Et je vous ay toujours honoré comme Roy,
 Quoique vous me soyés de plus en plus severe,
 Je vous ay reveré comme un enfant son Pere,
 Comme mon maître aussi toujours je vous ay craint. (IV, 2)

The royal attributes of duty, fear and paternity are stressed by their positioning at the end of the alexandrines. As Erasistrate remarks later to Hermenegilde, 'vous vous êtes rendu sans nulle resistance' (V, 3). Some details are reminiscent of Gaspard Olivier's tragedy. In the final act, Leonide, a tribune, informs the prince that he has to execute him (V, 2). The martyr submits to this unjust punishment, and finally when the truth is revealed at the close of the tragedy, Levigilde orders 'qu'on porte le saint Corps au Temple magnifique' (V, 9).¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Indegonde's martyrdom is recounted by Hermenegilde to his father in IV, 2.

¹⁰² The detail of venerating the martyr's relics is common to most of the seventeenth-century representations. In the 1664 Jesuit play produced at Paris, Recarede is touched by the grace of conversion after contact with the corpse of his brother, and 'ce spectacle sanglant n'est point capable de l'empescher de suivre la religion de son frere', Boucher, *Hermenigilde tragedie*, p. 7.

The third and final play in Jésus-Marie's trilogy, *Sur le Martire de Sebastien tragedie*, takes place 'au Palais de l'Empereur', and is the only one of the set of three tragedies to use the more archaic orthography of *martire*. Sebastian was a favourite subject for mystery-plays, usually staged during regional outbreaks of the plague.¹⁰³ The origins of this patronage are somewhat obscure, though it appears he was allocated care of sufferers of the disease since, as the *Martyrologium Romanum* relates, he had the appearance of a hedgehog when he was pierced with arrows.¹⁰⁴ There is a preface providing information and dates about the life of Diocletian, adding that he poisoned himself at the age of 68, out of fear of being put to death by Constantine. About his cruelty, Jésus-Marie remarks:

Il en faisoit mourir Martyrs plus de sept mille par jour, par differens supplices; de quoi les autres Princes Barbares et Idolâtres comme lui étoient extrêmement étonnés, et le blâmoient fort de sa cruauté qui alloit à des excès inouïs, jusqu'à faire mourir ses freres, et ses parens les plus proches, et même sa femme sainte Irenne.¹⁰⁵

The playwright then mentions Sebastian, and the twin martyrs Marc and Marcellien, and the tragedy opens with these three characters knelt in prayer, asking God for the grace of martyrdom. In the next scene, Torquat arrives (billed as a 'faux Chrétien') with the news that Diocletian has issued an edict against Christians, 'il veut en ses Etats l'entiere extinction' (I, 2).¹⁰⁶ Sebastian declares he is ready to die for the faith, and Torquat reveals he is a Christian as well, though in a soliloquy following the departure of the three saints, he says of his pledges to die: 'tu peux bien violer la

¹⁰³ As late as 1598 the inhabitants of Saint-Jean-de-Mauienne vowed to perform *S. Sébastien* because of a localised plague. In the neighbouring village of Sollières, the locals resurrected performances of *Saint Étienne*, patron of the village, presumably in thanksgiving at having been spared the disease. Lebègue, *La Tragédie religieuse*, p. 4

¹⁰⁴ 'In stipite quasi hericius aculeis undequaque coopertus relinquitur', Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, I, 56. The homoerotic reading of the imagery of Sebastian is well-known, and Richard A. Kaye suggests that 'Sebastian's historical role as a "plague saint" throughout the Middle Ages contributed to his transformation into a "homosexual martyr," given the medicalizing tendencies in the late-Victorian sexology of Richard Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis', ' "A Splendid Readiness for Death": T. S. Eliot, the Homosexual Cult of St Sebastian and World War I', *Modernism/Modernity*, 6 (1999), 107-134 (p. 113).

¹⁰⁵ This opinion is confirmed in a later seventeenth-century history of monarchs, Diocletian '[eut] une haute suffisance pour la guerre; mais il vint à un tel excez de folie qu'il voulut qu'on l'adorât comme un Dieu', Claude-Bernard de Chasan, *Histoire chronologique des papes et des empereurs et des rois qui ont régné en Europe depuis la naissance de Jesus-Christ jusqu'à present* (Paris: Jean de la Caille, 1684), pp. 83-84.

Il faut l'exterminer par tout incessement,
Je veux que cela soit, je veux qu'on m'obéisse.

The last line reveals the true intentions of the sovereign, and he orders Fabien to see that Christians burn incense at pagan altars 'autrement ma colere éclatera sur vous'.

Following this imperial threat, Fabien visits Sebastian to notify him that his religious convictions have become known. The Christian officer replies that he thought he could get away with concealment, but is now inspired to brave martyrdom. Fabien initiates a theological debate centring on the Incarnation. He asks Sebastian if he cannot at least hide his religious beliefs 'pour éviter la mort de vous sauver la vie' (II, 2). Marc, Marcellin and Victor arrive after Sebastian leaves the stage, and in their turn remain steadfast in their faith. This is followed by Sebastian encouraging the twins, as in Saint-Balmon's *Jumeaux Martirs* (V, 3): 'courage genereux et braves Chevaliers,/ Vôte exemple fera des Martirs à milliers' (II, 4).¹⁰⁷ In the third act, Sebastian urges Torquat to endure martyrdom. Echoing Néarque's reprimand to Polyeucte practically word for word, Torquat replies: 'Dieu ne commande pas que l'on se précipite' (III, 1).¹⁰⁸ Sebastian appeals to Fabien for some more time before the Emperor has to find out about his Christianity.

The situation comes to a head in the next scene. Diocletian inquires whether the twins have offered incense or are willing to do so. It is at this point that Fabien feels it his duty to inform Diocletian that Sebastian inspired the brothers. The Emperor is visibly shocked, though Fabien stresses that the officer has always been a loyal servant. Diocletian summons Sebastian to be brought before him, firmly insisting that if he does not deny his faith, he will die (III, 2). Sebastian arrives in the following scene and Diocletian immediately asks if he is a Christian, receiving an affirmative reply. Reminding the soldier that he is the 'Lieutenant des Dieux', a formula identical to the absolutist conception of the monarch's role, he commands his subject to worship the gods.¹⁰⁹ Sebastian underlines the fact that he has been, moreover, is, a faithful subject: 'à vos graces, Seigneur, je me sens obligé,/ Pour remplir mes devoirs je n'ai rien negligé' (III, 3). He goes on to explain that he has offered prayers for the Emperor to

¹⁰⁷ Unlike Saint-Balmon, Jésus-Marie assigns the principal role to Sebastian and the twins appear as subordinate characters.

¹⁰⁸ 'Il ne commande point que l'on s'y précipite' (*Polyeucte*, II, 6).

God, not to the gods. This admission is contradicted by Diocletian: 'quoi! ta bouche insolent dans ton erreur extrême,/ Ose contre les Dieux proferer ce blasphême'. Sebastian's error is interpreted as being religious not political, and in this way Jésus-Marie avoids an ambiguous anti-absolutist reading.

Diocletian's next tactic is bribery: he offers titles of prince, governorships of cities, leaders of provinces to the Christians if they will venerate the gods. Marc and Marcellien confess that 'nous étions sur le point de nous rendre soûmis', were it not for Sebastian's intervention. The Emperor reacts:

DIOCLETIAN	Vous allés acquerir par tout le beau renom, Et mourir s'il le faut pour confesser son nom, D'avoir trahi les Dieux, vôtre Empereur, vos femmes, Et l'honneur d'être morts par des tourmens infâmes.
MARCELLIEN	Seigneur, nous n'avons point trahi nôtre devoir, Dans mille occasions vous aurés pû le voir. (III, 4)

Of all the Emperor's accusations, Marcellien is at pains to deny that he has ever been unfaithful to lawful authority. He adds that he distinguishes what is owed to God from that which is owed to men, again highlighting the religious dimension to his apparent mutiny. Diocletian even gives Sebastian the opportunity to explain why he will not sacrifice: 'parle, mais prouve-moi le tout bien clairement'. After declaring that the Roman religion 'n'est qu'une illusion, qu'une horrible imposture', he finishes by reassuring his master that 'c'est mon amour pour vous qui me porte à le dire,/ Je veux vôtre salut et celui de l'empire'.¹¹⁰ After this speech, Diocletian orders the deaths of the twin brothers. Sebastian begs to be allowed to die with them: 'Seigneur, ordonnés donc que je meure avec eux'. This is not permitted, Diocletian preferring to make the soldier watch them die. However, such deferential language demonstrates the characters' civility towards imperial power.

The deaths of the Christian twins is reported by Fabien, who relates that their last moments were astounding and they expired while singing hymns. Though they died

¹⁰⁹ 'Dieu a fait les rois et les princes ses lieutenans sur la terre, afin de rendre leur autorité sacrée et inviolable', Bossuet, *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, XXIII, 8.

¹¹⁰ This was a common argument during the persecutions. 'As diverse personalities as Tertullian and Origen could argue that the Christians respected the emperor and empire and that Christian prayers were more help than soldiers to the welfare of the empire. By putting the emperor in his proper place, under God and over the gods, Christians commended him to divine favour', Everett Ferguson, 'Early

at the Emperor's orders, they were nevertheless faithful to him: 'et loin d'avoir l'esprit de vengeance entêté,/ Prier pour le salut de vôtre Majesté' (IV, 3).¹¹¹ Fabien pleads that Sebastian's life be spared, a request Diocletian agrees to, though on the sole condition that he abandon his faith. He then commands arrows to be brought to serve as the instruments of Sebastian's death. The martyr and the sovereign enter into a theological debate, with Sebastian refusing to worship gods of wood and metal. The Emperor believes Christians to be responsible for the Empire's 'étranges malheurs'. Diocletian tires of polemics, and orders each soldier in turn of Sebastian's regiment to discharge an arrow into their captain. Fabien attempts one last and futile time to dissuade the martyr. Sebastian says farewell to him, and encourages him to embrace the true faith, thus avoiding Hell (IV, 5).

The fifth and final act opens with Diocletian enquiring about Sebastian's execution: 'apprends-moi de quel air il a perdu la vie' (V, 1). Fabien narrates that in his last moments, Sebastian 'de vôtre Majesté desiroit le salut'. Not only this, but the martyr 'sembloit dans sa mort n'avoir point d'autre but,/ Que la prospérité de vôtre vaste empire'. The deceased officer seems to have offered himself as a sacrifice for imperial prosperity, rather than acted as a rebel or traitor. To the surprise of all, Sebastian appears in the following scene, asking the Emperor not to be afraid, and relaying the message that Christians are 'Serviteurs fidèles' (V, 2). Diocletian is naturally alarmed: 'seroit-ce Sebastien ou quelque vain phantôme?' The martyr asks him once more to recognise the one true God, at which point the ruler orders him to be clubbed to death. Finally, Fabien reports that Sebastian has died for real:

FABIEN

Il demandoit, Seigneur, pour vôtre Majesté,
Son salut, et celui de son grand Empire,
A peine a-t'il prié que voilà qu'il expire. (V, 4)

On two occasions Sebastian vocally demonstrates his loyalty to Rome, and the Emperor finally recognises: 'il étoit de l'Empire un Serviteur fidèle', and that 'la mort de Sebastien me donnent de l'honneur'. He prays to the gods to help him defend their name, yet at the same time recognises the fidelity of the Christian martyr Sebastian. In

Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1 (1993), 73-83 (p. 80).

plays during the 1660s, a period in which royal power was consolidated after the failure of the Frondes, the religious nature of the martyr's death takes an increasingly prominent and central place. Often the interview between ruler and martyr is lacking. When it is present, as in Jésus-Marie's *Sebastien*, it is purged, neutralised of ambivalent elements, and the martyr displays loyalty to the monarch. In fact, Jésus-Marie's Sebastian seems to die for his emperor and the imperial system as much as for his Christian principles. The author may have had particular experience of the civil war. The Carmelite convent at Charenton was directly affected by the strife of the Frondes, as 'le monastère servait dans ces temps troublés de refuge pour les femmes et les enfants de Charenton et de Conflans'.¹¹² The local notable, the marquis de Chanleu, was killed in 1649 trying to defend the town's bridge. Jésus-Marie's defence of royal prerogative could well be based on first-hand knowledge of the consequences of conflict, which gave him cause to agree with Bossuet: 's'il y a dans un Etat quelque autorité capable d'arrêter le cours de la puissance publique, et de l'embarrasser dans son exercice, personne n'est en sûreté'.¹¹³

¹¹¹ 'A fairly frequent theme in the exhortations to martyrdom and in the apologies is that Christians do not take revenge', Ferguson, 'Early Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience', p. 81.

¹¹² Sophie de Vomécourt, 'Les Carmes déchaussés de Paris et de Charenton aux XVIIème et XVIIIème siècles' (unpublished doctoral thesis, l'École Nationale des Chartes, 2000); pp. 271-72.

¹¹³ Bossuet, *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte*, XXII, 567.

CHAPTER FOUR

Decline of the Martyr-Play

Il n'est loisible à personne de juger,
si le Prince outrepassé les bornes de
justice, ou s'il tyrannise le peuple.

—Baricave¹

4.1 The Decade of the Personal Rule, 1661–1669

The fate of the martyr-play is reflected in the five plays about Sainte Reine, patroness of Burgundy, which primarily focus on local and devotional aspects.² The Burgundian Reine is the best known of several saints bearing the same name, amongst whom figure two of St Ursula's 11,000 companions.³ By the time of the first play in 1661, Alise-Sainte-Reine, the site of the saint's demise (and of Vercingetorix's final battle against Caesar), was one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in France. The highlight for pilgrims was to visit the spring of sainte Reine.⁴ The waters reputedly started to flow at the moment of the martyr's death and the site was believed to possess miracle-working properties:

D'un lieu aupres où tresbucha ton chef,
Il en sorty une belle fontaine:
Bonne, claire, douce, nette et tressaine,
Où arriverent [*sic*] gens en toute saison,
Qui en boivent, la chose est certaine,
Que de leurs maux y trouvent guerison.⁵

¹ Baricave, *Defence*, p. 975.

² 'Malgré le titre 'tragédie' et les alexandrins, la facture de toutes ces pièces (sauf celle de Bossu) reste fortement marquée par le genre médiéval des Mystères', André Godin, 'La dramaturgie de sainte Reine', in *Reine au Mont Auxois: le culte et le pèlerinage de sainte Reine des origines à nos jours*, ed. by Philippe Boutry and Dominique Julia (Dijon: Cerf, 1997), pp. 217-242 (p. 228). *Le Martyre de Sainte Reine* by Gilles de Bossu was published at Brussels in 1709.

³ Paul Guérin, *Vies des saints*, 6th edn, 11 vols (Paris: Palmé, 1867-69), IX, 108.

⁴ It is fitting that a spring became associated with a virgin martyr, since 'la source est liée à la chasteté, la référence scripturaire étant la fontaine scellée (dont il est question dans le *Cantique des Cantiques* (IV, 12)' and 'la source est féminité même', François Roudaut, 'L'Œil et la source sur quelques passages de poésie encyclopédique française du XVI^e siècle', in *Sources et fontaines du moyen âge à l'âge baroque*, ed. by Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, Colloques, Congrès et Conférences sur la Renaissance, 12 (Paris: Champion, 1998), pp. 303-322 (pp. 307 and 309).

⁵ Jean Piquelin, *La Vie et legende de Madame Sainte Reyne vierge et martyre, où sont adjoustez plusieurs Oraisons* (Lyon: Jean Poyet, 1603), p. 22. This does not scan well, but is as the original. C. Nodot argues that the reason the town existed on the hill was due to the presence of water, and

The source was singularly famed for its power to cure syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases.⁶ Taking the waters was also said to have assisted Anne of Austria to give birth to the future Louis XIV, an anecdote demonstrating the extent of the place's growing reputation.⁷ To understand why the tragedies started being performed in the town, it is essential to resume some aspects of Alise's history. In 1644, the Cordeliers established a base in the locality, in order to accommodate the increasing traffic of visitors, annexing the chapel of Sainte Reine.⁸ This caused a dispute with the parish priest, Jean-Baptiste Cadiou. The local populace had lost confidence in this pastor due to years of clerical authoritarianism, so the bishop, together with a commissioner of the Dijon Parlement, confirmed the friars' possession of the chapel.⁹ The Parlement of Dijon condemned the cleric to be hanged in his absence on 6 August 1649, but this was subsequently annulled and Cadiou was forced to resign in 1650.¹⁰ He was pacified with the elevation to a canonry of Autun cathedral in the following year. The bishop obtained permission from Pope Alexander VII to abolish the position of parish priest, with care of the parish going into the hands of the Cordeliers.¹¹

This did not prevent a squabble developing between the new ecclesiastical masters of Alise and the Benedictine monastery at Flavigny, situated five kilometres away (due to their positions on opposing sides of a valley, each town has a clear view of the other). The body of sainte Reine had been in the hands of the Flavigny Benedictines since the solemn translation of her relics in the ninth century. The Cordeliers acquired an arm-bone of the martyr in 1648, an inflammatory move to the abbey: it had long claimed to possess the body in its entirety. This relic was donated

therefore the spring predates the historical Reine, *Notice sur la fontaine de S^e Reine à Alise* (Semur: Bussy, 1841), p. 5.

⁶ 'Chacun y vient comme à une escolle,/ Et mesmement ceux qui sont entachez,/ De la grosse et mauvaise verolle', Piquelin, *La Vie et legende de Madame Sainte Reyne*, p. 22.

⁷ Marcel Bolotte, *Alise-Sainte-Reine aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles: les pèlerinages, la station thermale, histoire de l'hôpital* (Dijon: Meur, 1970), p. 32. Maurice Lever notes that the royal conception was probably the result of a sudden storm separating Louis XIII from his male favourite and leading the royal couple to engage in unaccustomed intimacy, *Les Bûchers de Sodome: histoire des «infames»* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), p. 133.

⁸ Jean de La Fontaine wrote a *conte licentieux* about the establishment of a new convent of the order, indicating that the friars were not always well received by townspeople. 'Les Cordeliers de Catalogne' was first published in 1666, see *Œuvres de J. de La Fontaine*, ed. by Henri Regnier, 11 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1884-1925), IV, 174-201 (174).

⁹ Bolotte, *Alise-Sainte-Reine*, p. 47.

¹⁰ Bolotte, *Alise-Sainte-Reine*, p. 49.

¹¹ Edmond Masson, *Pour l'histoire du culte de saint Reine d'Alise* (Dijon: Jobard, 1933), p. 47.

by Henri d'Orléans, duc de Longueville, who obtained it from the bishop of Osnabruck while acting as the French plenipotentiary at the negotiations of the peace settlement of Westphalia. The duke had been intrigued to discover that a Burgundian saint was venerated in Germany, and he entrusted the relic to his confessor, François Marmesse, a Cordelier who held an honorary position at Alise. Marmesse solemnly brought his acquisition to Alise on 1 May 1648. It seems remarkable that during the course of the centuries, neither Osnabruck nor Flavigny had realised that there was a rival claim.¹² The possession of the martyr's body had drawn a substantial number of the pilgrims who visited Alise to visit the neighbouring town, but now this extra journey was rendered superfluous. In 1649, a Flavigny monk, Georges Viole, published an impassioned defence of his monastery's claim to house the real relics. Among other accusations, the monk claimed that the bone the Franciscans were displaying was suspiciously larger than the relic given to them by the bishop of Osnabruck.¹³ The duc de Longueville is graciously excused 'puisque son intention n'a jamais esté de rien faire au prejudice de la France, et de la verité' (p. 46). This attack met with a printed reply from the Alise friars in 1651. The friars claimed in their turn that the Flavigny community had refused to participate in a combined examination of the relics as suggested by Dony d'Attichy, bishop of Autun, probably as an exasperated attempt to resolve the local dispute.¹⁴ As well as alluding to the archives of Osnabruck, one of the friars' weapons against the monks is the fact that they clearly enjoyed episcopal support (pp. 17-20). On 1 February 1659, the bishop of Autun undertook another effort at resolving the divisiveness by granting a partial indulgence of forty days to anyone who visited either Flavigny or Sainte Alise on 7 September.¹⁵ A hospital was opened later that year, constructed by the fund-raising efforts of two Parisian donors, Jean Desnoyers and Pierre Blondel, who were

¹² 'L'Ancienne tradition porte aussi que le corps de saint Théophile, nourricier de sainte Reine, fut transféré en même tems avec celui de cette illustre Vierge et Martyre, en l'abbaye de Flavigny', André-Joseph Ansart, *Histoire de Sainte Reine d'Alise* (Paris: Herissant et Barrois, 1783), p. 244.

¹³ Georges Viole, *Apologie pour la véritable presence du corps de sainte Reine d'Alise dans l'Abbaye de Flavigny en Bourgogne, contre une prétendue Translation du mesme corps, que quelqu'uns prétendent esté faite en Allemagne dans l'Eglise Cathedral d'Osnabrug sous l'Empire de Charlemagne*, (Paris: C. Huot, 1649), pp. 62-63. This had further editions in 1653 and 1669.

¹⁴ Pierre Goujon, *Esclaircissement sur la véritable relique de Ste Reyne d'Alyse, donnée à Monseigneur de Lonueville par l'Evesque et Chapitre d'Osnabrug* (Paris: Edme Martin, 1651), p. 5.

¹⁵ Françoise Le Hénand, 'L'épanouissement du pèlerinage à Alise-Sainte-Reine au XVII^e siècle', in *Reine au Mont Auxois: le culte et le pèlerinage de sainte Reine des origines à nos jours*, ed. by Philippe Boutry and Dominique Julia (Dijon: Cerf, 1997), pp. 113-146 (p.115). Also mentioned by Ansart, *Histoire de Sainte Reine d'Alise*, p. 98.

encouraged in this project by St Vincent de Paul.¹⁶ This increased the volume of visitors to Alise, and the appearance of the first tragedy is evidently related to this new traffic of pilgrims.

Hugh Millotet's *Chariot de Triomphe tiré par deux aigles, de la glorieuse, noble et illustre bergere, Ste Reine d'Alise, vierge et martyre, Tragedie*, appeared in 1661 and was printed at Autun. The title page informs us that Millotet was a canon in the church of the neighbouring village of Flavigny, and probably the son of the Burgundian poet Marc-Antoine Millotet who died in 1636, in addition to being the nephew of the *avocat général* of the Dijon parlement who died in 1687.¹⁷ This appears to have been his only work, or at the least his sole play, and is the first tragedy written on the subject of sainte Reine's legend: it seems to have started a trend. The Alise community had started an annual procession of their newly installed relics, creating a new liturgical custom that provoked Flavigny.¹⁸ A note at the end of the play informs the reader: 'la presente Tragedie representée par Messieurs les Habitans d'Alise, le 16 et 16 May 1661, au lieu de son Martyre audit Alise, dans le Cloistre des Reverends Peres Cordeliers de l'estroite Observance de Saint Bonaventure estably audit lieu' (p. 147). Another indication of local participation in the play is the quantity of roles, thirty in total, enough to allow a maximum level of contributors.¹⁹ Each scene of the tragedy starts with a letter to spell out in acrostics the intercession 'SAINCTE REINE PRIEZ POUR NOUS' (I, 1 beginning with 'S'; 1, 2 with 'A' ad so on). Furthermore, the names of the principal actors appear in acrostics in various scenes, with the title role performed by Jeanne Bertrand.²⁰ The tragedy is dedicated to the comtesse de Marigny, and a prologue provides details of the martyr's life.

The action begins with Reine refusing to sacrifice to the gods with her uncle. Her rebellious attitude continues when she rejects the idea of marrying Paulias, a Senenois lord who is in love with her. The proposal is suggested by Protine, her aunt, but Reine is adamant that her spouse is Jesus, 'l'espoux de la pureté, le seul

¹⁶ The two benefactors had been on pilgrimage and 'furent touchés du triste état des Pélerins malades, et résolus d'employer leurs biens à bâtir un Hôpital', Philippe Gagnarre, *Histoire de l'Eglise d'Autun* (Autun: Dejuissieu, 1774), pp. 609-610.

¹⁷ *Dictionnaire de lettres françaises*, p. 857.

¹⁸ Ansart, *Histoire de Sainte Reine d'Alise*, p. 89.

¹⁹ 'A number of characters have no importance except to give rôles to citizens of Alise', Lancaster, *History*, III, 397.

²⁰ 'Tous les Acteurs et Actrices qui ont représenté ladite tragedie, ont leur Acrostiche en leurs discours, par chaque lettres [*sic*] de leurs noms et surnoms', preface, p. 20.

independent,/ Soustenant l'Univers et tout son dépendant' (I, 4). Paulias himself tries to coax her to accept his matrimonial offer, confessing how he is struck by 'ce visage parfait, qui me touche et m'enflamme' (I, 6). She informs him firmly that: 'j'ay voué ma chasteté à Dieu'. She then runs off in haste and in a state of despair: '*Clement se frappe le flanc du plumbeau de son espée et tombe pasmé*'. Her family and Paulias chase after her and she hides in a young elm tree (I, 7). They return armed with 'des haches et des brandons de feu pour brusler l'Ormeau', but she has made good her escape ('Il voit l'Orme ouvert et vuide', I, 8). This curious detail is not reported in the original legend, nor in the 1603 Lyon version of her life. One can only surmise that there was possibly an elm tree in the cloister where the tragedy was performed, and Millotet adapted the narrative slightly to take advantage of this natural prop.²¹

Like so many post-Fronde stage martyrs, Reine makes it clear that she is not neglecting her duty of obedience to legitimate authority, firstly to that of her family:

REINE

Agissons, commandez, et le pouvoir n'est vain,
Faites-vous bien servir sans attendre à demain.
Sçachez qu'un noble estat ne m'a point mis de chaisne
Je veux donc obéir, et me rendre à la peine,
Tant de rudes fardeaux ne m'affollèrent pas,
Quand vous commanderez je doubleray le pas,
Avec les respects que je dois à vostre aage,
Vous servant au logis, et dans vos heritages. (II, 3)

Olibrius, 'Lieutenant et grand provost de Marseille sous Diocletian', is taken aback when he first sees Reine: 'Quelle sainte beauté, icy à la traverse,/ Captive mes esprits, quelle sainte Déese?' (V, 3).²² He approaches her and openly expresses his desire:

OLIBRIUS

Dis-moy les geniteurs qui t'ont fait voir le jour,
Ayant peint sur ton front tant de marques d'amour,
Permettront un baiser sur ta bouche enfantine,²³

²¹ Godin observes 'dix ans plus tard, Le Grand d'Argycour reprend fidèlement au chanoine Millotet l'épisode des trois ormeaux' (II, 1-3), without drawing any conclusions, apart from the obvious fact that Le Grand had used Millotet's version, 'La dramaturgie de sainte Reine', p. 219. Lancaster adds that this anecdote is 'probably not due to Millotet's imagination, but to oral tradition or to some written version other than those given in the *Acta Sanctorum*', *History*, III, 397.

²² An official of the same name appears in the legend of St Margaret of Antioch in the *Legenda Aurea*, suggesting that he was a stereotypical persecutor familiar to informed readership and audiences, see Maud Burnett McNerney, 'Rhetoric, Power, and Integrity in the Passion of the Virgin Martyr', in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), pp. 50-70 (p. 50-51).

²³ The prologue informs us that the martyr is aged 14.

Me découvrant les rais de ta flamme divine. (IV, 3)

After which he becomes the second man to offer to wed her. The young girl reveals she is a Christian: 'je ne quitte mon Dieu advance tes tourments'. He orders his soldiers to take her in charge, and she eagerly welcomes '[ces] agreables tourmens'. Once taken away, the guards attempt to persuade her to worship the gods, as they do not want her to die, presumably because of her youth, beauty and gender (IV, 4). In the final act Reine is brought from her prison and suffers various torments on stage. First of all she is whipped, then '*les Soldats l'échorchent avec des pignes de fer*', yet the princess remains steadfast (V, 3). The *Martyrologium Romanum* reports that the young martyr was crucified prior to her execution, making Reine a member of the select band of female martyrs suffering the pains of Christ's Passion.²⁴ This event is not dramatised in any of the five plays, though whether this is due to staging difficulties, or even the perceived unseemliness of a crucified woman, is entirely open to speculation. All is not entirely torturous for the martyr, as an angel appears to encourage her. Olibrius orders all Christians to be punished, but displaces the blame 'il n'est de moy tout seul, mais c'est l'Arrest d'Auguste'. In the final scene, Millotet's title is explained, as there is a vision of Reine 'sur un Chariot de Triomphe, tiré par deux Aigles'. Reine insists she is dying 'pour une vraye Eglise' (V, 4), and Dalazan, Olibrius's *conseiller*, commands that she be decapitated. A little later he reports that water was seen to flow from her bloodstream, a variation on the milk that poured from St Catherine's neck, and this wonder is enough to convert her persecutor.

In the following year, the same Autun printer, Blaise Simmonot, published another martyr-play on a female saint not dramatised in French since 1606.²⁵ *La Tragedie de Ste Cecile coronée en sa vie et en sa mort comme vierge et martyre* was written by Jean-François de Nismes, a preacher at the Récollet convent (St Andoche) at Autun, and the tragedy is dedicated to its abbess, Madame Maguerite de la Baume.

²⁴ 'Carcere et facibus horribilem in modum cruciata, demum pro Christi gloria capite plexa', Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, I, 600. Pedro de Bivero fails to include Reine in his account and engravings of crucified female martyrs in *Sacrum Sanctuarium Crucis et patientiae crucifixorum et cruciferorum, emblematicis imaginibus laborantium et ægrotantium ornatum* (Antwerp: Plantin-Balthasar Moretus, 1634).

²⁵ There was the Latin tragedy by Charles de Lignières, *Cecilia virgo et martyr, tragoedia christiana* (Paris: Thiboust, 1657) which is a complete version of a play acted at the Collège des Grassins at Paris, *Cecile, Vierge et Martyre, tragedie chrestienne qui sera représentée sur le theatre du College des Grassins par les troisiemes. Mercredi 24. De janvier 1657. A midy et demy, afin de finir avant la nuit* (Paris: n.pub., 1657). The same author went on to write *Agatha, Virgo et Martyr, tragoedia christiana* (Paris: Coignard, 1666). See Desgraves, *Répertoire*, pp. 90-91.

This is the priest's sole work.²⁶ Lancaster comments that this play is 'chiefly remarkable for placing a pope on the stage and for the author's ignorance of dramatic usage and of prosody'.²⁷ The work begins with a prologue delivered by an angel:

ANGE
 Je suis un des Esprits qui logent dans les Cieux,
 Envoyé du Seigneur vers vous en ces bas lieux:
 Pour vous manifester un sublime mistere,
 Qu'il faut avec respect et aveuglement croire,
 Puisque vostre interest et la Religion,
 Vous doivent inspirer cette devotion:
 De tirer un grand fruit d'une admirable Histoire,
 Où le Sexe à l'honneur de rélever la gloire. (I, prologue)

This angelic introduction, not to mention the speech's pious tone, is typical of the devotional stress of many of the martyr-plays of the 1660s. The tragedy begins with Cecile in an attitude of prayer:

CECILE
 O Dieu qui cognoissez et mon cœur et ma foy,
 Et qui me commandez dans vostre sainte Loy,
 D'honorer mes Parents, d'obeyr à mon Pere,
 De suivre son conseil, et de croire ma Mere,
 Lors que leurs volonte et leurs sinceres voix,
 S'accordent aux douceurs de vos divines Loix. (I, 1)

At first glance, the devout woman appears submissive to those in authority over her, though there is the proviso that they must be in agreement with divine law. She then ponders whether she should obey her parents and enter into a marriage, for she deems celibacy to be a more precious state. At this point her guardian angel suddenly appears to console her, assuring her she will remain chaste. After this vision her parents arrive, her father armed with reasons to convince his daughter to accept the wedding proposal, listing the virtues of her prospective spouse: 'Il est riche et puissant, il est Noble et Seigneur' (I, 2). Her mother resolves to reason with her in private, but Cecile declares: 'Que je meure plutôt que de franchir ce pas' (II, 1).

The next paternal strategy is to ask his two brothers to help change their niece's mind: 'meslez ensemblement et vos pleurs et vos charmes' (II, 3). At first they are reluctant, esteeming 'Ce n'est plus un Enfant, enfin elle est dans l'âge'. Their brother convinces them by alluding to the honour that such a union would bring the

²⁶ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 624.

²⁷ Lancaster, *History*, III, 407.

[...]
 Son approche me plaist, son absence me tüe,
 Voila ma passion et sa peinture nüe. (IV, 2)

Valerian asks to be baptised, and Cecile encourages him to find Pope Urban to perform the ceremony.²⁸ In the next scene Valerian duly sets off to find the pontiff, equipped with a letter of introduction from his wife (IV, 3). Shortly thereafter, Urban reads out the letter, written in prose, in which Cecile promises to keep her virginity intact despite being married. Valerian is then baptised (IV, 4). Following the ceremony, the neophyte encounters his brother, Tiburce, who has also been converted by the efforts of Cecile (IV, 5). When they next see Cecile, she asks her angel that they may be allowed to see him (IV, 8). The group resolves to gain the crown of martyrdom (V, 1). There is no questioning of authority; the prefect Almaque simply puts the group to death beginning with Valerian. His concern is to safeguard the Roman religion: 'il faut exterminer les ennemis des Dieux' (V, 7). Urban finishes the play praising the merits of Cecile, 'invincible amazone, adorable innocente', and expresses his own aspiration to die for the faith (V, 8). Even though this tragedy comes several decades later, it could well have appeared at the same time as Nicolas Soret's. Details such as the angel, Urban's moral at the end, the naïve style and the lack of strict scene breaks in the written text (scenes do not begin with the departure and presence of new characters, so IV, 8 carries on to V, 1 for example), contribute in creating an archaic feel. Needless to say there is no dramatic audience with the prefect, and the question of the nature of authority is barely alluded to. In the hands of Jean de Nismes, the martyr-play has lost its bite.

It seems that there was a local industry of martyr-plays at Autun in the 1660s, with Blaise Simmonot specialising in such works, for in 1663 he published *L'illustre philosophe ou l'histoire de sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie. Tragedie*. This tragedy was written by an unknown nun who dedicates it to her brother 'Monsieur le prieur de la Chappelle'.²⁹ There were three houses of female religious at Autun at the time of the play's publication.³⁰ Among the five male communities, there was only one with the title of priory, St-Jean l'Évangéliste, though her brother may have held the post of

²⁸ Baronius relates that Valerian sees the angel after he has been baptised by Urban, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, II, 377.

²⁹ Her brother's name is spelled out as 'Chappelle' yet her own is rendered as 'Chapelle' at the end of the dedication.

³⁰ Cottineau, *Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbayes et prieurés*, I, 214.

second in command at the Benedictine abbey, St-Jean-le-Grand (ibid.) This play is significant for several reasons: not only is it the last rendering of the Saint Catherine legend of the seventeenth century, but it also one of four martyr-plays written by women. Compared to Saint-Balmon and Marthe Cosnard and to a lesser extent Françoise Pascal, the relatively unknown de la Chapelle has been somewhat neglected: the other three tragedies have modern critical editions. This is due to the fact that no copy of the tragedy was thought to have survived: there has not even been a summary of the principal events in the tragedy, so Lancaster does not even provide his usual plot synopsis.³¹ More recently, the work of Cecilia Beach refers to La Chapelle in her checklist of female dramatists (using Lancaster as a source), yet does not list the shelf-mark of an extant copy.³² I have the good fortune to have located a copy of the play in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. It appears likely that the play became 'lost' at an imprecise time due to a cataloguing error, and an entry referring to the play's shelf-mark only occurs in the concordance replacing old shelf-marks with updated codes.³³ I deal with the representation of gender in this tragedy in Chapter Five.

The tragedy opens with a discussion on the merits of Porphire between Catherine and Emilie 'parente de Catherine' who exclaims: 'Porphire n'est-il pas aujourd'huy dans l'Empire,/ L'homme le plus parfaict que nous puissions eslire'. In this version Catherine understands the sacrifice she is making:

CATHERINE

Je t'advouëray-bien souz les loix du secret,
Que dedans ce dessein mon cœur eut du regret,
Et contre ma raison ma passion sans cesse
Me faisoit voir Porphire avec tant d'adresse,
Que sans l'ayde du Ciel, elle auroit obtenu
Un Empire en mon cœur contraire à ma vertu. (I, 1)

³¹ He simply states: 'it is called a tragedy and was published at Autun by Blaise Simmonet, 1663, 8°. I have been unable to find a copy of it', Lancaster, *History*, III, 415. The authoress is not listed in Alexandre Cioranescu's *Bibliographie de la littérature française du dix-septième siècle*, 3 vols (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1965), though the play is inexplicably attributed to Jean-François de Nismes (II, 1075), presumably because he wrote a religious tragedy the previous year about a virgin martyr. Such a mistaken attribution is probably due to the lack of a consultable copy.

³² Cecilia Beach, *French Women Playwrights before the Twentieth Century: a Checklist* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 8.

³³ I have been informed by Mme Martine Lefèvre, librarian at the Arsenal, that the precise date of the update is not known, but according to Arsenal legend occurred 'vers 1920'. The twelfth and last volume of J. Baudrier, *Bibliographie lyonnaise: recherches sur les imprimeurs, libraires, relieurs et fondateurs de lettres de Lyon au XVII^e*, 12 vols (Lyon: Brossier; Paris: Picard, 1895-1921), was published in 1921 and still used the former Arsenal shelfmarks: this indicates that the new codes were probably not in operation during 1920.

She acknowledges the material benefits that an alliance with Porphire could bring her, yet, for her, this does not match God and she remains unyielding to Emilie's efforts. The princess provides background details about her past, and she mentions that her parents are deceased thus explaining the tutelage role of her companion. She has received the advantages of a classical education, having been assigned a tutor. It is at this stage of her life that 'Porphire dans ce lieu apprenoit avec moy,/ Tous deux sans le Baptesme et dans une autre Loy'. Porphire was required to go into battle, but promised her that one day they would be united: in fact, he was going to fight in order to become more worthy of her affection. She had begged him to stay alive for her sake, but adds that all this happened when she was young, and before her conversion. Now Porphire is putting pressure on her by having persuaded her 'paren' to try to convince her to come to court where he hopes to impress her with his position as the Emperor's favourite. The presence of some sort of love element in a martyr-play is usual, even a past love as in the case of Pauline and Sévère. However, this particular Catherine is far from being a naïve virgin, inexperienced in matters of the heart: consequently, this is an extraordinary portrayal of a female saint.

While this first scene lauds the merits of Porphire, the Emperor is praised by his wife in the following scene (who remains nameless throughout the play):

IMPERATRICE

Aymé de ses sujets qui luy servent d'appuy,
Redouté des meschant [*sic*], et admiré des Sages,
Et de tous les mortels il reçoit des hommages:
Il a sur leurs esprits un pouvoir absolu. (I, 2)

Despite the security of her husband's power, something keeps troubling the calm that should reign in her spirit. This is revealed to be the brutal treatment meted out to Christians: 'leur funeste sort fait souspirer mon ame'. Her spouse arrives, a sight that moves her to exclaim 'Je voy mon Empereur en gloire merveilleuse' (I, 3). He proudly brings news of his military victories: he has taken twelve kings prisoner in one day, and that these imprisoned rulers should, on pain of death, render homage to her 'divin appas'. Porphire remarks that the Senate has already offered thanksgiving to Mars, and that the Emperor's image has received votive offerings. Lepide, 'capitaine des Gardes', comes on stage to announce that the high priest is vested and waiting for the Emperor, who replies that he wishes to allocate Christians as sacrificial offerings. The Empress is shocked at this: 'souvenez-vous Seigneur que ce

peuple est fidelle' (I, 4). Despite the affection he has just displayed towards his wife, he is firm in his decision: 'non, j'extermineray cette maudite race'. With this chilling promise, he leaves for the temple.

The second act opens with another minor love complication: Emilie reveals to Rosilée that she is in love with Porphire. She is hoping that Catherine's definitive rejection may have liberated him for her attentions. She mentions how 'Autrefois [Catherine] avoit beaucoup aymé Porphire' (II, 1). The inevitable road to martyrdom commences when Corvin, a senator, tells Catherine that he has just witnessed a massacre of Christians. He advises her, 'Cachez pour quelque temps l'ardeur de vostre foy'. He also discloses that Porphire has sworn that she is not a Christian, perjuring himself to protect her. In the subsequent scene Catherine tells Porphire that she is only going to be united with a different sort of suitor: 'J'ay formé un hymen avec le Roy des Cieux,/ Et mon sang espendu accomplira la Nopce' (II, 4). He can only helplessly declare his love for her, she can only reply that Jesus loves her more. It is at this moment that the first signs of conversion are detected, for he states: 'Je veux suivre vos Loix, mais je me desespere,/ De ce qu'à mon devoir, mon devoir est contraire'. She then departs to confront the Emperor in person. Porphire deliberates on his future in a soliloquy (II, 6). With perfect timing, Lepide arrives to convoke the lone figure before the Emperor (II, 7).

The third act opens with Maximin telling Porphire and Corvin the details of a startling dream he had the previous night, which involved smokeless flames consuming books and wise men (a case of no smoke with fire). After this 'songe le plus obscur' he awoke with a start in a disturbed state: 'je suis encore esmeu' (III, 1). Porphire's interpretation relates it to the Emperor's past combats, but Maximin disagrees and sees this medium as a directive from the gods:

MAXIMIN

Ils commandent ainsi de donner le trépas,
Aux infames Chrestiens qui par outre-cuidance
Enseignent hautement une fausse science.

Porphire interjects that the edict was too ruthless:

PORPHIRE

Les femmes et enfans doivent bien estre exempts
De respondre si-tost à vos commandemens:
Car leur élection n'a jamais d'habitude,
Que le temps à la fin ne détruise l'estude.

MAXIMIN

Non je veux estouffer cette race au berceau,
Et dresser des Autels à Mars sur leur tombeau.

Maximin's religious enthusiasm has been augmented by the divine sign he believes he has received. Lepide heralds the arrival of Catherine, as she wants to salute the sovereign. The Emperor willingly agrees to receive '[cette] grande Princesse'. He notices that the mention of Catherine's name affects Porphire: 'quelque chagrin te presse' (III, 2). The young woman enters, and after some initial pleasantries, comes straight to the point. She directly criticises his edict:

CATHERINE

En cela vous montrez avoir peu de lumiere,
De vos meilleurs sùjets faisant un cimiterie,
De qui la mort sera fatale à vostre estat,
Car le Ciel punira ce cruel attentat.

MAXIME

Madame vous parlez avec trop de licence,
Mais je pardonne au sexe et à votre naissance. (III, 3)

She invites him to worship the true God. Porphire tells them that he thinks she can still be converted from her faith. The young woman replies that being of the blood of Ptolemy gives her 'un tres-ferme sòutien'. This revelation explains her royal rank, a status that other dramatists do not satisfactorily clarify.³⁴ The Emperor orders Catherine to be taken prisoner by Lepide, but defers to her rank: 'Allez dans mon Palais ce lieu est de saison,/ Qu'on la traitte en Princesse'. After she has been led away, the Emperor declares to Porphire and Corvin that 'Malgré ma raison ma passion l'adore' (III, 4). Porphire jealously answers: 'L'aymer en son erreur, c'est chocquer vostre gloire'. When Maximin replies that he may change her beliefs, Porphire retorts: 'Sans doute vous verrez son corps reduit en cendre,/ Plustost que son esprit change de sentiment'. After this Porphire is left alone on stage, and although he despairs that Maximin is his sovereign, he is glad at the same time to have done nothing criminal. This monologue proves that, despite his personal misgivings about Maximin, he still accepts the fact that there is a duty of obedience to the imperial office. He expresses his feelings for Catherine: 'Ma peine est sans exemple et s'il en faut mourir,/ Sauvons au moins l'objet qui vous fera perir' (III, 5).

The fourth act begins with the Empress asking Corvin if her husband's passion for the Egyptian is reciprocated. When he replies in the negative, she asks to see the

³⁴ According to the author of *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames*, Catherine was the daughter of a pagan king named Costus (p. 883).

Christian, but not simply to be reassured about her husband: 'j'ay dessein des long-temps d'entendre sa doctrine' (IV, 1). When Catherine appears, the Empress asks her: 'Ne sçelez point, je sçay que l'Empereur/ Vient de vous presenter sa couronne et son cœur' (IV, 2). Catherine assures her that she belongs to God alone. The next scene has Maximin, Porphire and Catherine on stage, together with Lucius who has been brought to reason with the rebellious princess, reducing the traditional fifty philosophers to a more feasible dramatic number. Before the debate, the young woman prays for divine assistance. She turns the tables on Lucius by attacking his religion, highlighting how Jupiter was guilty of parricide, and recounting the Sybil of Cumæ's prediction of the Incarnation.³⁵ Lucius admits defeat, converts and acknowledges God. The Emperor asks if he has lost his mind, but the philosopher replies that he has merely lost his faith and fled idolatry. The Empress announces she also believes in the Christian God, and Porphire follows suit. A stunned Maximin commands that they all be taken captive (IV, 3).

The last act opens with the Emperor in audience with the three senators, Claudian, Terrassine and Corvin, explaining how he is in the unenviable position of having to judge his own spouse:

MAXIMIN

Car loing de s'excuser cette meschante femme
De ce soulevement m'a donné tout le blâme,
A traicté ma personne avec indignité,
Sans crainte n'y respect de mon autorité. (V, 1)

Despite the Emperor's eloquent outline of his wife's transgressions, Terracine reminds him that 'La Loy veut qu'on l'entende avant que la juger'. As a result of this intervention, the Empress is brought in. She is initially reluctant to speak, and it is from her that we learn of Catherine and Porphire's death. *La Chapelle* does not focus on Catherine's martyrdom as the climax of the tragedy, and the fate of the Empress constitutes the central element of the last act. The Empress refers to the effects of the princess's death:

IMPERATRICE

Le sang de Catherine a crié dans la Ville,
Qu'on fit à l'Empereur une guerre civile,
Et Magnus Centenier qui estoit de son sang,

³⁵ This detail of Catherine using the Sybil is found in some sources, for example, *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames*, p. 895. The authority of the Sybil is given liturgical foundation in the *Dies iræ* sequence of the Mass for the Dead.

Avecque ses Soldats tenoit le premier rang,
Tous les autres picquez de ce cruel Martyre,
Jurent qu'ils vangoient Catherine et Porphire. (V, 2)

These are all developments unique to La Chapelle. The Empress stresses that she has no part in these uprisings, emphasizing her obedience to her ruler. The Senators deem that the Empress has not committed a crime of state and therefore cannot be condemned. The Empress interrupts them at this point, reminding them that the death of Christians is prescribed by Roman law, notwithstanding the blood royal, noting that otherwise Catherine would have been exempted from execution. The Emperor dismisses the Empress and resolves to judge her himself as 'ma volonté fait des Loix dans mon Empire'. Yet to this, Claudian comments that 'Seigneur souvenez-vous que dedans ce mépris,/ La Justice bien-tost verra vostre débris'. The others agree that they were called in vain and they exit. Maximin calls after them menacingly: 'Allez audacieux, hommes sans jugement,/ Vous payerez bien-tost ces mots tres cherement' (V, 3).

Lepide arrives and tells the Emperor that he has heard a choir of angels, and that milk flowed from Catherine's severed neck instead of blood. Furthermore, angels have carried off the martyr's corpse at sunset (informing us that we are now in the evening). Maximin asks what has happened to his wife, Lepide tells him that she is already dead. At this point Corvin brings the Empress's ring to Maximin with the message that 'elle meurt sans tristesse'. The play does end on an ominous note: Corvin mentions that Magnus is receiving the acclamation of the people. This does not insinuate that La Chapelle presents a vision of power that allows for a monarch to be usurped in circumstances of tyranny: Catherine, the Empress and Porphire do not display the least sympathy for Magnus and are all, in their own ways, loyal to the Emperor. However, the implied threat of Magnus's army can be read as a reminder that God punishes wrongdoers, even a legitimate ruler.

The last seventeenth-century dramatist to tackle the theme of Hermenigilde was Les Isles le Bas whose tragedy *Le Royal Martyr* appeared at Saint-Lô (published by Jean Pie) in 1664. There was a second edition at Caen in 1673 with a slightly modified title, *Saint Hermenigilde, royal martyr*. The work was republished at Caen in 1700.³⁶ He claimed to be a *gentilhomme*, 'mais tout ce qu'on sait de lui c'est

³⁶ Given the fact that the 1700 edition was published by Jean-Jacques Godes who was knowingly or perhaps unwittingly involved in the fraudulent pirate play of 1703 and 1704, it may well be that there

qu'après une vie misérable, il mourut de privations dans un taudis de la rue Harpe à Paris, le 30 décembre 1682'.³⁷ The tragedy does not open with Hermenigilde's audience with his brother, but rather before the misunderstanding that leads to the Prince's death. In the first scene, Hermenigilde gains his father's permission to marry Indegonde, another variation from the other plays on the legend. The first few scenes concentrate on the proposed marriage, though Gosvinthe begins to sow the seeds of doubt as to the wisdom of the union:

GOSVINTHE Le Ciel et Beliar unir leurs cœurs ensemble
Sont contrairietez que nature n'assemble,
Indegonde est Papiste, Hermenigilde non,
Dans leur [*sic*] diverses Loys gist la desunion. (I, 2)

Despite this unfavourable prediction, the princess declares her absolute submission to Levigilde's authority:

INDEGONDE Sire, en vous regardant nous voyons notre Roy.
Et voulons desormais vivre sous vostre Loy,
Tandis que vous vivrez gardez vostre Couronne
Le Sceptre vous convie encor mieux qu'a personne
Vostre bras glorieux de ses exploits passez
N'a pas encore conquis des victoires assez,
Hermenigilde et moy vivons sous vostre Empire
Et gardons vos respects à ne vous point dedire.
HERMENIGILDE Sire en vous desormais nos vouloirs sont bornez. (I, 4)

Les Isles le Bas assigns a prominent role to the Princess: hardly has she arrived than she is speaking on her fiancé's behalf. The reason for this becomes apparent. The King, greatly struck by Indegonde's eloquence, offers her a sceptre and title: 'Prenez-lé je le veux, soyez Reine d'Espagne'.³⁸ This is a strategy to end the hostilities between France and Spain. Levigilde's evident affection for Indegonde is a tangible cause for Gosvinde's desire to cause the couple's downfall. Where the other playwrights present the stepmother as having a natural antipathy towards the young prince, here she has matter over which to be jealous.

was a loyal local readership of martyr-plays or religious works, for Godes also published an edition of Claude Ternet's *Le Martire de Sainte Reine* in 1700. See Chapter Three, pp. 147-48.

³⁷ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, pp. 752-753.

³⁸ The implications of Indegonde's independent character in this tragedy are discussed in Chapter Five, pp. 232-33.

Another peculiarity of *Les Isles*, is to present Hermenigilde as an Arian who is converted on stage by Indegonde (II, 2). The plot develops when Gosvinde reveals her true colours to her daughter, saying the marriage and arrival of Indegonde ‘me fasche beaucoup’ (II, 2). Brunehault informs her that as a result of Indegonde’s ‘beaux discours’, Hermenigilde has been baptised as a Catholic. This is pleasing news to Gosvinde and she sees this development as a means of ruining her rival: ‘je luy ferais sentir qu’obèir à sa Reine’. Indegonde arrives at this juncture, and Gosvinde reproaches her for having subverted her stepson. The princess is firm in her faith, and states defiantly: ‘Je trouveray ma gloire au moment de ma mort’ (II, 3). Gosvinde spurs on her daughters to take her at her word: ‘Prenez la je vous dis, ah filles, qu’on la traine/ Au plus profond de l’eau pour commencer sa peine’. The action then cuts to Hermenigilde arriving (Gosvinde and her daughters have left) and he is visibly shocked when he spots bruises on his fiancée’s face. Indegonde asks him not to be angry at his stepmother: ‘Car la pauvre Princesse ignore son meffect/ Et ne reconnoist pas le mal qu’elle m’a fait’ (II, 4). He vows to avenge this wrong. In the next scene, before the King, Hermenigilde demands that his stepmother make amends for the wrong she has committed and explain her actions. She staunchly defends herself: ‘Prince, l’impertinence à [*sic*] mes fureurs’ (II, 5). Gosvinde then manages to convince her husband that Hermenigilde has also lacked respect towards her. Hermenigilde displays the same degree of deference as Gaspard Olivier’s hero:

HERMENIGILDE	J’aime Dieu, j’aime un Pere et le Roy va connoistre Que je sçais respecter celuy de qui j’ay l’estre: Sire, pour vous servir je porte un coutelas Mais pour vous resister certes je n’en ay pas. (II, 5) ³⁹
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Any suggestion of *lèse-majesté* is firmly suppressed. The King seems to be moved by this display of loyalty, saying encouragingly: ‘Expliquez-vous mon Fils, parlant plus clairement’. However, Gosvinde manages to sway Levigilde away from mercy, saying she has uncovered a Christian plot in Seville intent on taking away his throne. Despite his son’s assurances, the King judges: ‘Je te dis Criminel hors de nostre croyance,/ Je te dis Criminel de Leze-Majesté’. He orders the execution of Indegonde as an accomplice.

³⁹ ‘Les sujets se comportent en qualité de bons enfans, tandis qu’ils honorent, reverent, aiment, craignent et servent leurs Rois, comme leurs peres’, Baricave, *Defence*, p. 556.

Hermenigilde takes refuge in Seville, and the King orders the general of his army, Dom Fernand, to take the city and its prince. Hermenigilde's brother, Recarede, is killed in the attempt (III, 4). Then there is a sword-fight on stage between Levigilde's general and Dom Sanches, commander of Hermenigilde's forces. Fernand is slain, then Levigilde arrives, and converses with Sanches.

LEVIGILDE	Dom Sanches, derechef, descends contre le Roy.
SANCHES	Sire, en me retenant je tempere à la Loy, Si j'allois contre vous je croirois faire un crime De répandre le sang d'un Prince legitime.

With this low-key acquiescence, Sanches departs, but not before Levigilde has promised to avenge his general. Indegonde pushes Hermenigilde to sue for peace: 'Vivez couvert en Foy par même obeïssance,/ Tâchez joindre aux respects une sainte croyance' (III, 6). In other words, serving God and the King can be one and the same.⁴⁰ Gosvinde is predictably furious when she learns from her daughter that not only is Indegonde still alive, but that peace has also been made with the King (IV, 2). Ricarede enters his brother's camp, and asks his brother whether he is to be regarded as friend or foe (IV, 3). It is at this point that other dramatists begin their version of Hermenigilde's martyrdom. The prince is led into his father's presence, and kneels before his monarch:

HERMENIGILDE	Je mets, Sire, à vos pieds ou ma mort ou ma vie Qui consent de souffrir une innocente envie, Je mets, Sire, à vos pieds et ma vie et ma mort Sous vostre bon palisir [<i>sic</i>] je destine mon sort. (IV, 5)
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At the end of this scene there is the direction: '*icy l'on chante la Paix avec feux de joye dans Madrid et Seville*', and there is a '*chanson de la paix. Sur l'air de la Duchesse*'. The last stanza expresses the wish:

*Que le Roy Levigilde
Avec Hermenigilde
Puissent vivre à jamais
En concorde et en paix.*

⁴⁰ Les Isles le Bas's version of events is closer to the source legend. He raises an army against his father (commissioning Tancarede to enlist the help of 'les Romains', III, 2).

After this scene of joy, the final act opens with Gosvinde cursing the peace. She effortlessly raises doubts in her husband's mind about his security, persuading him that his soldiers are busy 'tous les jours les moyens de vous mettre au trépas', so a Catholic can wear the Spanish crown. These fears are consolidated after an audience with Dom Guedo, an Arian bishop (V, 3). A hesitant Levigilde asks the prelate whether he should have his errant son executed, to which Guedo replies: 'Sire, vous le devez, ou l'on verra bien-tost/ Au Tombeau Levigilde et son Fils en répos'. Hermenigilde refuses to recant, while at the same time refutes any suggestion of wanting to usurp the crown. Hermengilde is shown 'à genoux près le fatal Echaffault', and he is actually executed on stage, uttering two last words: 'Jesus! Jesus!' Levigilde commits suicide on stage when his son's innocence is proved, uttering the last final words: 'je meritte les feux d'un éternel supplice' (V, 4). When the page informs Indegonde and her companion, Blanche, about the deaths, the reaction is unexpected: '*Indegonde et Blanche tombent mortes au recit de cette parole*' (V, 5). The page is left alone on stage and concludes the play: 'Ouy, ouy le Ciel le veut la mort me laisse en vie/ Pour estre un des témoins de cette Tragedie'. Most of Les Isles le Bas's play is a 'prequel' to the familiar story, filling in gaps about the origins of Indegonde and the dispute between father and son. The staged deaths of several characters is typical of the increasingly relaxed, non-classical style of the martyr-play of the 1660s, straying away from the strictures of the *bienséances*.⁴¹

Another female martyr was the subject of a 1668 tragedy by François d'Avre. A doctor of theology, d'Avre was parish priest of Minières (Eure) and the author of two religious tragedies in verse.⁴² With *Dipne, Infante d'Irlande tragedie*, published at Montargis, d'Avre selects an Irish virgin-martyr, though one who had not previously been the subject of a tragedy. Dipne's feast occurs on 15 May, and the traditional narrative concerns an Irish princess who asks for forty days' grace when her father tries to marry her off, not to a prince but to himself: an unusual twist on the assault against the martyr's chastity.⁴³ Gerebert, confessor to the late queen, is now

⁴¹ '[D]ans la deuxième moitié du XVII^e siècle, les flots de sang et des détails horribles sont bannis du dialogue aussi bien que de la représentation, et les morts des personnages, rapportées en termes généreux, sont aussi incolores que possible, Jacques Scherer, *La Dramaturgie classique en France* (Paris: Nizet, 1966), p. 417.

⁴² *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 90. The other tragedy is *Geneviève, ou l'innocence reconnue* (1669).

⁴³ Ann Loades views this story as a symbol of deep-seated worries about sexual abuse: '[Dympna] represents the real experiences of countless women and girls who have resisted threats even at the cost of life itself', 'Dympna Revisited: Thinking about Sexual Abuse of Children', in *Bodies, Lives, Voices*:

Dipne's priestly confidant. He has known her all her life, since he baptised her, and flees with Dipne to Flanders. They are betrayed by an innkeeper, who easily identifies the couple when they pay him with Irish money. The King finds them and kills Gerebert for having condemned incest, and beheads Dipne for having spurned him. Their bodies are left in the forest but divine intervention spares the corpses from being consumed by wild beast. The faithful gather up the relics and give them the veneration due to those who have died for the faith.⁴⁴ The *Martyrologium Romanum* is more circumspect:

En Brabant Sainte Dympne Vierge et Martyre, fille du Roy d'Hibernie, qui fut décollée par le commandement pour ne vouloir quitter le propos qu'elle avoit de garder sa virginité, environ l'an six cents.⁴⁵

Such are the basic details of the source legends. The tale seems to date from the discovery of the remains of an unknown man and woman near Antwerp in the early thirteenth century, and an elaborate legend was subsequently constructed around this.⁴⁶

The tragedy is dedicated to Madame Eleonor de Rohan, abbess of the royal abbey of Malnoue: 'je viens vous convier, MADAME, au spectacle sacré d'un Theatre Chrétien où vous pouvez donner une assistance religieuse sans sortir de vostre cellule'.⁴⁷ This implies that convent performances were rare or non-existent, at least in the Benedictine order. D'Avre sees a link between the martyr and the abbess, though, presumably, the similarity is limited to consecration to a religious life. After the dedication d'Avre expresses his disapproval of the profane stage with a *Censure chrestienne du Theatre moderne*. Lancaster remarks that d'Avre 'sinned also in his prosody, his grammar, and his geography' (in IV, 1 the King refers to the mountains of Flanders). He adds that 'in his praiseworthy effort to avoid pompous language and

Gender in Theology, ed. by Kathleen O'Grady, Ann L. Gilroy and Janette Gray (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 40-58 (pp. 41-42).

⁴⁴ *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames*, p. 400-404.

⁴⁵ *Martyrologe Romain pour tous les jours de l'année, suivant la Reformation du Calendrier*, p. 239.

⁴⁶ 'The legend that grew up about them is a classic example of a folk-tale adapted as the life-story of a saint', Attwater, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 108.

⁴⁷ Of the Rohan family: 'cette famille, une des plus anciennes et des plus illustres en France, descend en ligne directe des anciens rois et ducs de Bretagne', Hoeffler, *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, XXXXII, 512. Marie-Éléonore de Rohan (1628-1681) became abbess of Malnoue in 1664, after having been abbess of the Trinité in Caen from 1651. She published *Morale du sage et Paraphrase des psaumes de la pénitence* (Paris, 1667) a year before d'Avre's dedication. (ibid., 523).

reproduce the speech of the ordinary people, he employed expressions that would have startled an audience'.⁴⁸

The play opens in a forest, 'la Scene est à Ghelé en Flandrés' and we hear Trophime, 'Irlandois naturel habitué à Ghelé en Flandrés', crying out for Argante.⁴⁹ He is soon joined by his companion as well as Armide, 'cabaretier de Ghelé'. It becomes apparent that these voyagers had lost each other on their journey. Armide recounts that the previous day he encountered, and eventually dined with, two men 'd'un port presque divin et d'un maintien celeste', whose foreign language he could understand 'd'un prodige inouï'. After this strange meeting and having been imbued with the gift of tongues, he was later robbed, though providentially escaped with his life. Argante continues the story, narrating how he was going to sleep when something made him open his eyes. He caught sight of two men and decided to follow them, but they moved so rapidly that he became lost, which explains the state of confusion with which the play opened. He also had a vision of a mysterious woman, and an elderly man he later met said that these events must be signs of divine favour (I, 3). This same man turns up in the next scene, and it turns out to be Geberne. Curiously, at least for a virgin-martyr's tale, Geberne informs Armide that after seeing him for two days and two nights, Dipne wishes to marry him (I, 4). Following this reunion there is the arrival of 'deux larrons les mains liées, avec chacun une Corbeille suspenduë aux bras'. Armide recognises them as 'les auteurs de ma triste aventure'. He draws his sword, but the unfortunate pair tells him that after the robbery a celestial light appeared and placed them in the chains they still bear. Armide releases them and Geberne counsels them to change their ways. He then takes some baskets and departs, but just before he leaves he tells the startled friends that it is the God of Christians who has performed all the miraculous events (I, 5).

Ambrokole, Dipne's *nourrice*, relates a powerful dream that she, like the King, has experienced. Dipne seems ill-instructed in scripture, for she confidently retorts that a Christian must not believe in such prophecy, only to be corrected by Ambrokole who signals the fact that the Bible contains several dream interpretation passages (II, 1).⁵⁰ They both agree that Geberne will be able to provide an

⁴⁸ Lancaster, *History*, III, 425 and 426.

⁴⁹ Argante does not figure in the list of characters.

⁵⁰ As well as this tragedy, Poyetevin's *Sainte Catherine*, Corneille's *Polyeucte*, Rotrou's *Veritable St Genest*, Montgaudier's *Natalie* and La Chapelle's *Illustre philosophe* all contain dreams as plot devices. Paul Pelckmans has proposed that the presence of dreams 'prend la relève des Confrères de la

interpretation, submitting to the authority of the clergy. Left alone, Dipne pines for '[les] attraites de Dublin', but implores God for perseverance (II, 2). Ambrokole comes back after having sought out Geberne for his opinion, and remarks how the priest was accompanied by an angel when she found him. The angel intervened, commenting that 'cette vierge n'est pas du rang des Vierges folles' (perhaps d'Avre has some sections of the religious in mind). The angel promises that Dipne will be assisted and then suddenly departs (II, 5). Geberne interprets 'ce Songe duquel Dieu mesme est l'Autheur', deciding an eagle signifies Dipne's father and the Princess appears under the guise of a dove (II, 6).

The third act opens with Trophime and Nearque, 'patron du vaisseau du Roy', discussing the fact that the King's advisors prefer their ruler to remarry as soon as possible. The precise reason for this wish is not given, though implicitly, they probably want their ruler distracted so they can scheme. In the following scene Trophime asks Antelme, an Irish courtier, why the King has spent two days travelling to Flanders. Antelme swears him to secrecy, and tells him that the monarch received a thousand portraits of prospective royal brides, but declared that compared to his first wife they appeared to be like the stars next to the sun (III, 2). At this point Indulphe, another courtier, arrives and continues the story. The King is resolved to marry his own daughter in order to minimise the risk of a civil war, or from the kingdom going into the hands of a foreign power (III, 3). Yet another courtier arrives, Lugtace, and this new arrival thinks Dipne will refuse because of the constraints of her religious beliefs (III, 4). The King finally appears in the fourth act, deep in counsel with Mogale, 'ministre d'Etat du Royaume d'Irlande'. This character seems the archetypal evil minister, encouraging his master to wreak revenge on the fugitives. He adds that he has enlisted the help of Trophime (IV, 1). Indulphe announces that he has localised the renegade Irish party (IV, 3). After the King leaves, Mogale reveals himself to be less harsh than he may have initially appeared. He expresses sorrow for Geberne's downfall. He also conveys his philosophy on matters of state: 'Le Roy porte la paix, je porte le scandale;/ S'il va bien c'est le Roy, s'il va mal, c'est Mogale' (IV, 4).

The final act opens with 'Dipne seule, le Crucifix en main', and the stage directions seem to indicate that the stage is in relative darkness. She offers herself to

God in prayer, and her supplications cover three octavo pages. Towards the end of her devotions 'icy paroist un feu en l'air: et elle poursuit' (V, 1). This is followed by the arrival of her father. He asks her: 'ta loy t'apprend-elle à resister aux Rois?' He demands her to become his bride,⁵¹ but she argues that her hand belongs to God. Again there is a curious detail regarding her virginity: 'pour vous tirer d'erreur,/ J'épouserai plustost le moindre Labreur'. She safeguards her chastity, but is not exclusively committed to celibacy. The subject of obedience is naturally raised:

ROY	Mais qui doit de nous deux faire observer sa loy? La fille estant Sujette, ou le Pere estant Roy.
DIPNE	Ce Dieu nôtre vray Roy doit estre sans reserve Reconnu le premier en ses loix que j'observe. (V, 2)

Royal authority is not negated: she simply recognises a higher order. He offers her a crown and proposes to place her God alongside his gods. She unequivocally turns down both suggestions, noting that the two religions cannot be mixed. There is a visual climax when 'on luy presente des habits royaux'.⁵¹ It is at this moment that Geberne arrives, and he immediately explains to the King that his late wife charged him with the moral welfare of the princess. The monarch orders him to be escorted away (V, 3), and in the next scene Mogale declares: 'Sire, Geberne est mort'. He explains that 'on a veu des prodiges en l'air', namely two crowns above the scaffold. This fails to alter the King's mood:

ROY	Tu me dois obeïr, perfide, et ta naissance Ne te dispense point de mon obeïssance: Tu me dois obeïr, et n'avoir point de loy Ny de religion que celle de ton Roy.
DIPNE	Je suis Chrétienne.
	Le Roy <i>la tête</i>
DIPNE <i>tombant morte</i>	Jesus. (V, 4)

He murders her with a dagger.⁵² The moment she falls dead, he feels contrition and asks for the blade so he can finish himself off. Ambrokole and Gelase both announce their conversion and, as the minister earlier predicted, the King blames Mogale for everything. Mogale dejectedly leaves the stage, and the King embraces Gelase. In the

⁵¹ There are similar incidents in the anonymous 1649 Caen play and in Montauban's tragedy (see pp. 128 and 154 of this thesis).

last scene, there is a vision of 'Dipne en une nuée de gloire'. He now addresses her as 'ma Dipne' and his daughter tells him that he can be reunited with his dead wife and daughter, at which point he converts. The tragedy ends with the King ordering Gelase: 'conduy, guide et gouverne/ Mes Estats au chemin de Dipne et de Geberne' (V, 6). The King's behaviour has been so extreme that it is clear that obedience could not be rendered, as doing so would contradict the precepts of natural law. The sovereign's conversion indicates a special grace rather than constituting divine displeasure.

At Limoges in the following year appeared *Le Martyre de Sainte Valerie, tragedie*. The sole surviving copy of this play at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal lists the work among 'auteurs anonymes'. However, while there is no author listed on the title page, the dedication is clearly attributed to 'YVERNAUD', the author of the 1655 tragedy on Ursula and her companions (see p. 160). This is almost certainly the same person, even though he is considered to have written only a single work.⁵³ Yvernaud evidently moved from Poitiers to Limoges in the intervening fourteen years, and the work is dedicated to the bishop of Limoges, F. de Lafayette.⁵⁴ The tragedy is set in Limoges and may be a literary recognition of the playwright's acceptance into the local community. The play opens with Syllan, 'gouverneur des Gaules ou Duc d'Acquitaine', listing the glories of conquered Gaul, in particular 'Ces Trophées suivis d'allegresse publique,/ Nous rendent à ce point Limoges magnifique' (I, 1). He commissions his confidant, Jule, to perform a task during the sacrifice:

SYLLAN

Mais pendant que le Prestre immolera l'Hostie
Cher Jule de ma part va trouver VALERIE
Dis luy qu'en son absence et depuis mon retour,
Je songe à ses beautez, je songe à mon amour. (I, 1)

Directly after this, there is a scene involving Valerie's aunt, Anne, and her cousin, Tullie. Anne hopes that the marriage between Valerie and Syllan will soon take place, and begins preparing to go to the temple, but her daughter shatters her positive frame

⁵² 'Il coupa luy-mesme la teste à sa fille (parce qu'il eut aucun de ses serviteurs, tant fut-il cruel et barbare, qui osast souïller ses mains dans le sang d'une si chaste Vierge, et se rendre ministre d'une telle impieté)', *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames*, p. 402.

⁵³ 'Yvernaud, auteur d'une tragédie religieuse: le martyre de sainte Ursule, princesse des onze milles vierges', *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 1273. Lancaster does not refer to *Sainte Valerie's* existence. Similarly, Cioranescu only lists Yvernaud as having written the single work of 1655, *Bibliographie de la littérature française du dix-septième siècle*, III, 1998.

⁵⁴ François Moitier de La Fayette (1590–1676) was bishop of Limoges from 1628 until his death, Bergin, *The Making of the French Episcopate*, pp. 646–47.

of mind by refusing to accompany her, thus revealing her Christianity. There is further heartache for Anne when Tullie explains: 'j'imite VALERIE,/ C'est d'elle que mon ame a recue ces clartez' (I, 2).

When Jule tracks down Valerie and tells her what his master feels: 'il est mort mille fois pour vous en vostre absence', she answers that she already is betrothed to 'cet Monarque eternal pour qui j'ay tant d'amour' (I, 3). Austriclinian, 'compaignon de S. Martial', arrives and Valerie invites him to tell his story to Jule. This he does, relating how St Peter gave his 'baston pastoral' to Martial, and it is with this relic that Martial raised Austriclinian from the dead: 'Il crût, il vient, il prie, il ranime mon corps,/ Son baston me touchant m'oste d'entre les morts'.⁵⁵ Valerie urges Jule to believe after hearing this testimony, but the latter does not know which direction to take: 'Je ne sçait que resoudre, et mon esprit confus,/ N'est capable encor de choix ny de refus' (I, 4). Just at this point another of Martial's companions turns up, Alpinian, and prophesies that as a sign from God to show Jule the truth, the idols in the temple will be reduced to powder (I, 5). The effects of this premonition are soon seen, when Volsque, the other confidant of Syllan, informs his governor that the temple images have been transformed into ashes, blaming the Jewish community for this event. Syllan is not so ready to apportion responsibility, considering that the temple degradation is due to 'l'injure du temps et non pas des humains'. André, 'prestre des faux Dieux', interrupts him to denounce Valerie and others of her sect. However, the official is not disposed to punish the woman he loves (*il dit bas*: 'puisque ma Valerie en cecy s'interesse,/ Feignons, sans irriter cette belle Maistresse'). Another pagan priest, Aurelian, pushes the governor to act as 'l'interest des Dieux merite qu'on y pense' (II, 2). Syllan promises he will remedy the situation. When he leaves, Aurelian remarks that the governor's interests lie more with his mistress than with the gods. Hylbert, another pagan, suggests a radical plan:

HYLBERT

Quoy que l'amour du Duc s'oppose à mon envie,
Je les sçauray venger et punir une impie:
Je prends sans son congé ce genereux dessein,
Malgré luy nous irons luy poignarder le sein. (II, 3)

⁵⁵ Despite the fact that Martial was reputed to be one of six bishops sent with St Denis from Rome in the middle of the third century to evangelise Gaul, 'during the middle ages there grew an extravagant legend to the effect that St Martial had been a personal disciple of Jesus Christ and should be numbered among the apostles', Attwater, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 233.

The two priests readily consent to this course of action.

After this plot has been formulated, Valerie appears in the following scene along with Alpinian and Tullie, giving her reaction to the proposed marriage:

VALERIE	J'obeis sans contrainte aux ordres de ton Maistre.
ALPINIAN	Vous nous tesmoignez par ce prompt changement, Que vostre volonté s'y forme aisement.
VALERIE	Ouy j'adore ses loix, et puisque il me l'ordonne, Je quitte sans regret Throsne, Sceptre, Couronne Grandeur, et Majesté, Tresors, et Voluptez, Ce sont des biens trompeurs que j'ay desja quittez: Maintenant cet habit ou tu me vois paroistre, Me vaut plus que la pourpre ou le Ciel m'a fait naistre. (II, 4)

She adds that Syllan will be surprised when he sees her, and he arrives on cue:

SYLLAN	Quoy tu ne respons pas quel est ce changement, Pourquoy t'es tu parée ainsi negligement Veux tu par ce moyen détourner ma pensée Du veritable amour dont mon ame est blessée.
VALERIE	Ne vous attachez plus à mon sort miserable: Et laissez-moy finir le reste de mes jours Dans un lieu solitaire. (II, 5)

Syllan does not take the hint, and imagines that the woman mistakenly believes he has been unfaithful to her and is enacting revenge. When she talks of her divine spouse, he asks her: 'ay je donc pour rival quelqu'un des immortels', despite having been earlier informed of her religious opinions. A soldier arrives with the news that Emperor Claudius is dead, to which Valerie philosophically comments: 'La Majesté des Roys s'eclipse en un moment' (II, 7). The characters leave the stage and Hylbert arrives in his quest to find Valerie. He asks a local, Vernel, if he has ever encountered her, providing a detailed description: predictably, she is strikingly beautiful. Vernel replies that he has, but cautions that she is well respected in the locality and is reputed to be a miracle-worker. Some supernatural force moves Hylbert: 'Dieu tu m'es inconnu, je ressens bien ton ire,/ Mais il faut obeyr au Demon qui m'inspire' (II, 9).

The third act opens with Valerie stating that the new young Emperor, Nero, intends persecuting Christians. She asks Volsque to stop protecting her and to look after Martial instead. André tells his colleague, Aurelian, that Hylbert has drowned himself. The priests are both shocked, yet Aurelian considers this tragic death, far from being a tragic happening, may provide them with a 'favorable cours' (III, 3). In

promises Valerie: ‘vous serez desormais l’objet de ma colere,/ Indigne d’estre aymée incapable de plaire’, showing a swift conversion from deep love to explicit hatred (V, 2). Eventually, when his former love will not change her opinions, he declares it is all too much to bear: ‘qu’elle meure soldats, exercez ma justice (*on la retire*)’. Jule demands to know what has happened, and Syllan can only reply that he was being faithful to Nero: ‘je tuë mon amante, affin de l’obliger’ (V, 3). Ortarius enters and tells how he witnessed Valerie’s death: ‘Cét adorable object que j’ay persecuté,/ Je declare en mourant, une divinité’.⁵⁶ After her decapitation an angel appeared and the headless corpse of Valerie walked around, a phenomenon that naturally astounded the crowd (this resembles St Denis’s post-execution behaviour). After the narration of this fantastical martyrdom, Ortarius declares ‘Je n’en puis plus, je sens mille douleurs/ Seigneur je perds la voix’, and with this, promptly dies on stage (V, 4).

Syllan sees the sky darken, and bolts of thunder kill André and Aurelian. It is this last event, not the miraculous martyrdom of Valerie, that eventually converts Syllan. He orders soldiers to take away the bodies of Ortarius and the two priests’ (V, 5). The last scene involves the two pagan clergy, Ortarius and Volsque, who have been resurrected and who now, unsurprisingly, believe in the Christian God. Syllan ends the play with a pious wish: ‘Allons donner nos cœurs, à l’Apostre de Dieu,/ Et banissons l’erreur, desormais de ce lieu’ (V, 7). The succession of improbable miracles at the end of the play designates this work as typical of the martyr-plays of the 1660s. It has a characteristically pious flavour, and is evidently designed to appeal to local audiences, much in the same way as the *Sainte Reine* plays of the same decade. The variation on the virgin-martyr theme, in that Valerie was engaged to be married, but converts while her beloved is away waging war, is strikingly similar to this original plot detail in La Chapelle’s *L’Illustre Philosophe*, though the resemblance may well be coincidental.

4.2 The Remnants: Martyr-Plays after 1670

A work by François de Cheffault appeared in Paris in 1670, *Le Martyre de saint Gervais, poeme dramatique*. The martyr-play had been largely confined to the

⁵⁶ In one source, Ortarius is the centurion who arrests the martyr, and he is subsequently converted after the martyr’s death by Martial, Du Saussay, *Martyrologium Gallicanum*, II, 990.

provinces for the previous decade. Cheffault took his subject from the dedication of his own church: he was *curé* of Saint Gervais in Paris and this is his only work.⁵⁷ A second edition followed in 1685 with another publisher, A. Rafflé, which omits the dedication (to the King of Poland) and the preface. Cheffault cites Baronius as a source in the preface and the legend concerns two Christian brothers, Gervais and Prothais who were executed during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (in 171 according to Baronius).⁵⁸ The play is set ‘prés de Milan dans le Camp d’Astase’. This official holds the rank of ‘Comte et Prefet de l’Empereur’, and he has set up a military camp to counter the threat of invasion by Frigitile’s troops. This aggressor is ‘Reyne des Marcomans, fille d’un Roy de Mauravie’. Astase’s captain, Thrasée, arrives back in camp with the news that hostilities have ended (I, 3). It is against this tense background that Tyridate, Astase’s confidant, appears with news of two men who have desecrated idols in the temple (I, 4). Thrasée has witnessed this as well: ‘j’ay veu l’impieté de deux freres Chrestiens’. Tyridate explains that the brothers managed to get into the temple dressed as Romans ‘de superbes habits déguisez leurs desseins’. Thrasée urges the prefect to judge them severely, whereas Tyridate cautions a more gentle approach. Astase orders the two men to be brought before him for questioning.

The second act opens with the two Christians thanking God for what they have been able to achieve, though Prothais regrets the lack of opportunity to preach. They both express their longing for martyrdom. The usual love complication surfaces in a soliloquy, when Astase reveals he is in love with the enemy Queen Frigitile (II, 3). In the same speech he expresses his fear of reprisals by Christians, so decides to act decisively. The captured Queen, cross-dressed ‘en jeune Romain’, is brought before Astase. The prefect believes “he” is one of the two Christian brothers, and assumes the prisoner-of-war must be of princely rank:

ASTASE	Venez Prince du Sang vous estes donc si brave, Que mesme en nos prisons vous n’estes pas Esclave.
FRIGITILE	Non je ne le suis pas, mon rang, ma Dignité, Sont exempts d’esclavage et de captivité. (II, 5)

It is only when Frigitile denies being a Christian that Astase realises “he” must hail from the Marcoman camp. When Frigitile mentions the monarch, Astase recognises

⁵⁷ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 16.

⁵⁸ Baronius, *Annales*, II, 172. Baronius names Ambrose as his source.

‘quels respects on doit rendre aux Monarques,/ Lors que de leur grandeur on voit les moindres marques’. Frigitile then tells him how she has been sent on a mission to arrange a truce. Astase willingly agrees to this, then asks whether there is a possibility of him marrying the Queen, and openly declares his love, little knowing the object of his desire is standing in front of his very eyes. A little later, when she reveals her identity and gender, Astase excuses his lack of deference to her status and announces her liberty.

Astase finally has an audience with Gervais and Prothais in the third act. He is reluctant to punish them, but they are keen to be martyred, and, at length, he concedes: ‘puisque vous m’y forcez je feray mon devoir’ (III, 4). Frigitile takes pity on the plight of the Christian brothers and tells Doritille, Astase’s sister, that she intends visiting the brothers to try and talk them out of their beliefs (III, 5). Once she has left, Doritille tells Thrasée that she is unhappy about her brother’s liaison with the enemy. She commissions Thrasée to inform her brother that Frigitile is in league with the brothers and has gone to see them for the purpose of ‘de secrets entretiens’ (IV, 1). In the next scene, Tyridate reports that the Queen has been converted. After this, Gervais is brought before Astase to hear his condemnation. Gervais has a respectful attitude towards his judge, gently reminding him (not reprimanding):

GERVAIS

Si vostre ambition demande une Couronne
Le vray Dieu que j’adore est celui qui les donne,
C’est luy qui les conserve et qui les peut oster,
C’est luy qui tient la foudre et non pas Jupiter. (IV, 4)

There is no element of personal rebellion here, and Gervais expresses the view that only God can remove kings from office, not humans.⁵⁹ While Gervais is being taken away, Prothais is led in and Frigitile arrives at the same moment. Prothais receives the same sentence as his brother. After he has gone, Frigitile tries to talk Astase into changing his verdict (IV, 6). The prefect’s sister attempts to persuade the Queen to watch the martyrs die (IV, 7).

The fifth act opens with a monologue delivered by Frigitile in which she acknowledges the Christian God and abandons her paganism. Tyridate reveals that one of the martyrdoms has already taken place. She asks him to relate exactly what

happened in the temple when the idols were smashed, as he is an eyewitness. Eventually, she makes known her new faith, and Tyridate is told to alert his master to the fact that she, too, is a criminal (V, 2). This she does in person after which she leaves the stage (V, 4). Doritille succeeds in convincing her brother that the Queen is planning an uprising, and he is devastated (V, 6). Thrasée brings news of the martyr's executions and reports how, after various tortures, Gervais was decapitated. He also divulges that the Queen has left by sea, in order to seek out the means of being baptised. Astase does not want to occupy her vacant throne: 'je ne pretendois reigner que sur son cœur' (V, 7). The tragedy ends with the prefect deciding to find her, but not for the sake of love:

ASTASE

Puis qu'aussi-bien je voy mon esperance vaine,
Allons convertissons tout nostre amour en hayne,
Et ne permettons plus ce funeste retour,
De jamais convertir nostre hayne en amour. (V, 7)

He is filled with hatred, and the martyr's death has not brought the grace of conversion, nor the gift of inner peace.

Another play in the Sainte Reine sequence, *Le Triomphe de l'amour divin de sainte Reine, vierge et martyre. Tragedie en machines*, was published in 1671, though this appeared in Paris not Autun. The author, Alexandre Le Grand (whether this is a real or literary name is open to speculation), is known only for this play. The only biographical information on the author is provided by himself, giving the title of 'sieur d'Argycour, Druyde' on the title-page and at the end of the dedication.⁶⁰ Copies of the play were 'imprimées aux depens de l'Autheur, et se vendent pour luy', indicating that the tragedy represented a personal work of devotion, perhaps as a result of a favour obtained on pilgrimage to Sainte Reine d'Alise. Lancaster judges that Le Grand's play is derived from Millotet's, or at least used a common source.⁶¹ While this type of tragedy had virtually disappeared from the capital's stages, Le Grand dedicates his tragedy to the Queen, thereby neutralising any potential misinterpretation of Reine's stand against the authority of her ruler. The entire first act

⁵⁹ 'Qu'on remette le chastiment et la punition du souverain au souverain des souverains Createur et modérateur unique du ciel et de la terre et de tout l'univers', Baricave, *Defence*, p. 987. The author is discussing the case of unjust or tyrannical rulers.

⁶⁰ This is not an admission of mystical skills: 'on donne ce nom à un vieux Docteur, à un homme qui ayant beaucoup d'âge, a beaucoup d'experience et de finesse dans les affaires du monde', *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, I, 352.

is given to Reine's family unsuccessfully attempting to persuade her to marry Paulias. The second act opens with Reine being pursued by her father and uncle:

REINE	Hastes toy donc Seigneur, et me viens secourir Faisant quelque mirale [sic] ou je m'en vay mourir, Car j'aperçois mon pere, et mon oncle en furie, Qui l'épee à la main viennent m'oster la vie. (II, 1)
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This is followed by the heroine seeking refuge in an elm tree. This detail, first reported in Millotet, is transformed into a miraculous happening by Le Grand: 'mais Dieu quelle merveille,/ Cét Orme souvre hélas! afin de me cacher' (II, 1). The incongruous addition of 'hélas' in order to complete the alexandrine is testimony to the level of Le Grand's dramaturgy. They return to discover that the tree has become 'plus dure que marbre' (II, 2).

The tragedy continues in this uncomplicated vein. When defending her faith before her *nourrice* and *nourricier*, Reine condemns atheism as well as paganism: 'L'athéisme en un mot est chose abominable,/ Et l'idolatrie est encor aussi damnable' (III, 1). In relation to resisting authority, Reine countenances the most passive of resistances: 'combattons nos tyrans avec la patience,/ En souffrant les tourmens qui nous sont ordonnés' (III, 1). Olibre interviews Reine alone, after having dismissed his guards. He is greatly taken with her beauty; she with his vanity. He attempts to touch her, but '*elle repousse genereusement Olibre qui la veut approcher*' (III, 2). Reine is shown not to have an anti-authoritarian outlook, simply a religious perspective of duty:

OLIBRE	Reine adore nos Dieux,
REINE	Adore un Dieu supreme.
OLIBRE	Donne leur de l'encens.
REINE	Ne fais plus de blaspheme.
OLIBRE	Obeys à ton pere.
REINE	Obeys au vray Dieu.

Despairing of her unyielding attitude, after a heated stichomythic exchange, Olibre finally decides to condemn her, conforming to the terms of a recent imperial edict. Reine submits herself:

⁶¹ Lancaster, *History*, III, 398.

REINE Si tu me crois coupable, et que j'aye aucune tort,
 Faits ta charge Prefet, et me donne la mort,
 Car pour moy loins de croire avoir commis un crime,
 Je sçay n'avoir rien fait qui ne soit plein d'estime,
 J'ai mesprisé tes Dieux, et transgressé tes Loix,
 Pour ce Dieu que les Juifs ont fait mourir en croix,
 J'abhore tes demons et les deteste encore.

OLIBRE Il faut executer l'Edit de l'Empereur.
 REINE Il me faut obeïr à Dieu mon Createur.
 OLIBRE Tu luy dois comme moy pourtant obeissance.
 REINE Il la doit comme nous à sa toute puissance. (IV, 3)

Reine does not refuse the Emperor's authority: she must, however, obey the precepts of her religion as well. In achieving this, she pointedly refrains from judging him to be a tyrant. When he visits her in prison, Olibre makes another futile attempt at conversion, though his interest in the young girl's fate is principally due to his craving for her: 'Ah! Reine, ayez pitié d'un Amant miserable' (V, 4). Her execution is reported by Asthere, Reine's aunt, and she narrates the miraculous occurrences that accompanied Reine's death. A dove appeared accompanied by a celestial voice encouraging Reine. After this:

ASTHERE Elle preste son col pour recevoir le coup
 Qui met sa teste à bas nous étonnant beaucoup;
 Car on voit à l'instant y naistre une fontaine,
 Que l'on nomme aussi tost la fontaine de Reine.
 Les malades y sont gueris de tous leurs maux. (V, 7)

Quite how all of this happened in such a short time is not related. It does provide an account of the origins of some of the features familiar to pilgrims. The play concludes with a vision of '*Sainte Reine dans son char de triomphe*' surrounded by angels. The author's personal piety is perhaps reflected in Sainte Reine's discourse:

REINE Mortels qui voulez estre heureux
 Menez une vie Angelique,
 Et craignez rien de tragique
 Lors que vous souffririez pour acquerir les Cieux. (V, 9)

Protine, Alichryste, Paulias and Theophyle are all converted, despite the poor quality of Reine's versification (V, 10).

Another play devoted to Sainte Reine appeared in the same year as Le Grand's, though this time published by Blaise Simmonot at Autun (see Fig. 12). The author, Claude Ternet, was not a cleric, but 'professeur és Mathematiques, et

Arpenteur juré pour le Roy au Châlonnois'. There is a dedication to the bishop of Autun, and in the same year of this tragedy's publication the rival communities of Alise Franciscans and Flavigny Benedictines had, in the interests of local concord, decided that annual procession in honour of Sainte Reine from Flavigny to Alise, was henceforward to be limited to Flavigny. *Le Martyre de la Glorieuse Sainte Reine d'Alise. Tragedie* was republished at Châtillon-sur-Seine (Pierre Laymeré) in 1680; at Autun (also by Pierre Laymeré) in 1682; at Rouen (Jean-Baptiste Besongne) in 1699 and in 1700 (Jean Jacques Godes) at Caen. Ternet's tragedy is the most commercially successful and enduring of those concerning the local legend.⁶² Reine is present in the first scene, declaring her desire to become a martyr. This is followed by the arrival of her father and aunt and, straight away, they attempt to talk her out of Christianity (I, 2). Her aunt, Leonice, fails to win Reine over, and Clement blames Reine's *nourrice* for the way her charge has turned out (I, 5).

Olibre catches sight of Reine, and orders his confidant, Lucie, to bring her into his presence (II, 1). She vigorously upholds her beliefs and refuses his offer of wedlock.⁶³ That Ternet's play was intended for performance at the annual Sainte Reine festivities may be inferred by a reference made by Olibre's confidant:

LUCIE

Je m'en vais commander de faire le Theatre,
Où le gay Comédien doit aujourd'huy s'ébattre,
Et le Char de triomphe, où seront à milliers,
Par le col attachez les captifs prisonniers. (III, 2)

Lucie is alluding to public celebrations that Olibre has ordered to mark his recent military victories in Germany, but this is evidently a veiled comment on the public performance at Alise.⁶⁴ There are further efforts to convert Reine, by Olibre and her father. When she is led to her death, the executioner —surprisingly given a name, Evandre (he may have been called this in unofficial oral accounts)— declares lasciviously: 'Mettons la toute nûe afin de voir sa chair,/ Dépoüillez-vous, ma mie, il ne faut rien cacher' (III, 5). She implores divine assistance to ensure the executioners

⁶² The tragedy 'eut un vif succès et connut seize éditions en moins d'un siècle', *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 1216.

⁶³ The stand of Ternet's Reine is examined in Chapter Five, pp. 234-35.

⁶⁴ 'Olibre la fit serrer en prison, et s'en alla en Allemagne, d'où estant revenu, et apres avoir fait ses sacrifices abominables fit amener devant luy la Sainte', *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames*, p. 686.

do not succeed, possibly to the chagrin of some male elements in the audience.⁶⁵ Olibre threatens her with tortures, and he urges the executioners to do their worst, until one of their number remarks defeatedly: 'Je ne sçay plus que faire, elle saigne par tout,/ Son corps est écorché de l'un et l'autre bout' (III, 6). In the fourth act an angel materialises to console her (IV, 1). Shortly thereafter, she is brought out to face further punishment, and in this way Ternet prolongs the martyrdom scenes of Reine. The saint prays 'qu'un miracle soit fait pour délivrer d'erreurs/ Ces pauvres abusez qui se baignent de pleurs' (V, 1). This soon happens: her chains are loosened, and the boiling water into which she has been plunged, has mysteriously turned ice-cold. Once this has happened, she can hardly contain herself: 'Vous m'avés beau plonger, execrables bourreaux,/ Vous perdez vôtre tems, regardez vos cordeaux'. An angel appears once more 'en forme de colombe presentant la Couronne à sainte Reyne'. The *chœur du peuple* cries out acclaiming these miracles and unanimously accepting God. Olibre resolves to have her beheaded outside the city. The following scene involves Reine and Evandre, and the young victim offers up some prayers before her death, first of all for the executioner (V, 4). We do not witness the decapitation, but we do see 'les Anges qui emportent son ame au Ciel' (V, 5).⁶⁶ After these celestial creatures have spoken, the last words of the play belong to the people who promise to venerate Reine. It seems that with angels and a group of townsfolk, Ternet has provided ample opportunity for local involvement in the play's performance.

Yet another play on the legend of Sainte Reine, by Paul Alexis Blessebois, was published by Pierre Laymeré, who was responsible for the second edition of Claude Ternet's tragedy. Laymeré replaced his father-in-law, Blaise Simmonot, as Autun's printer in 1680.⁶⁷ Blessebois was born around 1646 and later changed his Christian names to Pierre Corneille. Little is known of the author, and the few details we possess certainly inspire us to know more of his life: he was condemned to the galleys and finally exiled to Guadeloupe in 1686.⁶⁸ This latter date possibly explains

⁶⁵ This recalls an incident in the martyrdom of Saint Agnes, used by Troterel in his *Tragedie de Sainte Agnes* where she is stripped before being taken to a brothel, but there is a miracle to preserve her honour: 'mais, ô mon Createur! Inclinant à mes vœux,/ vous avez allongé mes blondissans cheveux,/ D'une telle façon que toutes mes parties,/ Des profanes regards, ores sont garanties' (IV).

⁶⁶ 'Son ame à la veuë d'un chacun fust honorablement portée au Ciel par les Anges', *Les vies des tres-illustres saintes Dames*, p. 688.

⁶⁷ Frédéric Lachèvre, *Pierre-Corneille Blessebois, Norman (1646?–1700?)* (Paris: Champion, 1927), p. 48.

⁶⁸ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 156. Blessebois was '[un] personnage énigmatique, dont les œuvres sont en grande réputation chez les bibliophiles', Hoeffler, *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, VI, 230. Charles Nodier conjectured that Blessebois was a fictive name (*ibid.*).

the appearance in 1686, though it is a matter of speculation whether the play's appearance represents an attempt to ensure sales due to Blessebois's notoriety, or perhaps as a publicised sign of the author's contrition and dedication to a religious life.⁶⁹ The title of the play, *La Victoire spirituelle de la glorieuse sainte Reine remportée sur le tiran Olibre, tragedie nouvellement composée par Monsieur de CORNEILLE BLESSEBOIS* indicates that it was perhaps the latter, reinforced by the printer's dedication 'aux vertueuses et chastes Filles de ce Siecle'. The play is set 'à Alize en la Chapelle de la glorieuse Sainte Reine', which seems to indicate the play was intended to be performed in the town, though given the dramatist's reputation it is unlikely that his wish was ever accomplished. A sonnet 'sur la miraculeuse Sainte Reine Vierge et Martire, l'honneur et la gloire de l'ancienne et fameuse Cité d'Alise, au Diocese d'Autun', renders homage to the town and its protector:

Vénés de toutes parts, Peuple devotieux,
 Monarques qui avés puissance souveraine,
 Dans Alise pour voir le Corps de SAINTE REINE,
 Des Saintes et des Saints le plus miraculeux.

Le Sourd et le Muet, l'Aveugle et le Boiteux,
 Aussi-tôt qu'ils ont bû des eaux de sa Fontaine
 Recouvrent la santé, et guerissent sans peine,
 Les Demons sont chassés, guerissent les Lepreux.

Depuis près de mille ans sur la Terre et sur l'Onde,
 Des lieux plus retiré qui soient dedans le Monde,
 Les Princes et les Rois s'estiment trop heureux

A la Sainte d'offrir leur Sceptre et leur Couronne,
 De baisser ses liens, de lui faire des vœux,
 Mille et mille presens leur Roiale main donne.

There is no mention of the saint's remains ever having been venerated at Flavigny, so this is a somewhat revisionist account of Alise's history. Reine's *nourrice*, Filomene, is given a prominent verbal role in the first act. Olibre is greatly taken with 'cette admirable blonde'. The play is unremarkable and is relatively short, being comprised of only three acts. Olibre is reluctant to punish Reine: 'Tes merveilleux apas et ta jeunesse extrême/ M'empêchent de punir ton énorme blasphème' (II, 3). However, faced with her constancy, he orders two soldiers to take her to be tortured. This has no

⁶⁹ Frédéric Lachèvre believes that the success of Ternet's play, a relatively unknown author, boded well for a work on the same theme by a notorious figure. Moreover, Laymeré had published an earlier religious play by Blessebois, *Les Soupîrs de Siffroi* (1673), and this had sold well. *Pierre-Corneille Blessebois*, p. 48.

effect on her, and Olibre meets her again. Family pressure comes from her father and uncle, but she finds solace in contemplating her crucifix (III, 3–4). Alone again, an angel in the form of a dove visits her in her cell (III, 5).⁷⁰ After this, she is led off to execution (the executioner is named Evandre as in Ternet's tragedy). The soldiers are converted by the angel under the guise of a talking dove, as is Olibre (III, 6). A soldier narrates the circumstances of her death, which includes the legendary origins of the spring:

FULCE

Mais le sang répandu de la jeune Crétienne
 A fait naître aussi-tôt une claire Fontaine
 Dont le cristal liquide à ces éfets puissans
 Qu'il rend fort vigoureux les hommes languissans;
 Il fait guerir la lepre, et la paralisie,
 La fièvre, le haut-mal, le sort, l'hidropisie,
 Il fait ouïr les sourds, et les aveugles voir,
 Bref guerit tous les maux que l'on peut concevoir. (III, 8).

Blessebois highlights the efficacy of the waters; perhaps drawing pilgrims was a secondary desire in distributing published texts. At the end of the tragedy there is a prayer to the martyr based on the *Ave*: 'Je vous salue, Reine, prevenue de la grace du Saint-Esprit dés vos plus tendres années; benîte soiez vous entre les femmes'.

In 1687 'un religieux de l'Abbaie de Flavigny, où repose le Corps de Sainte Reine' composed *Le Martyre de Sainte Reyne d'Alise* which was published at Châtillon-sur-Seine. The play follows the 1649 *Vie de Sainte Reine* by Dom Georges Viole.⁷¹ The play was re-edited in 1691 with some minor differences. The second edition has a preface and the word 'martyre' is rendered 'martire' in the later edition. This seems a little surprising given that 'martire' is the more archaic orthography and both volumes were published with Claude Bourut. The author discloses that the tragedy was intended for, and was indeed used in, the annual festivities in honour of the martyr:

Comme il a été convenable d'en rendre la représentation agréable au peuple, j'y ai inseré quelques fictions selon l'Art de la Poésie pour l'ornement du Théâtre, à l'imitation de Corneille en son Polieucte, et autres Tragedies. Telle est la dignité d'Olibre, lequel paroît comme Souverain dans les Gaules, et les hommages lui sont rendus par les Rois; sa victoire sur les Saxons; le Sacrifice présenté à Jupiter; l'assemblée du Conseil, pour publier la persecution contre les Chrétiens; la visite de Saint Reverien, Evêque d'Autun, qui vivoit du temps de Sainte Reine; la pompe funebre de la même Sainte; la

⁷⁰ There is a small woodcut at the beginning of this scene, one of three, depicting Reine in her cell, kneeling at the presence of the dove, in much the same way as a representation of the Annunciation.

⁷¹ *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises*, p. 816.

conversion des Gardes Prétorienne. Les sçavants jugeront si ces additions qui ont quelque fondement dans l'Histoire, sont selon l'Art ou non. Mon intention n'est autre que de faire éclater les vertus de la Sainte Vierge, et d'exciter le peuple à son amour et imitation. (preface)

These additions are the fruit of the experience of performances, and it is fascinating that a monk makes so many adaptations to the legend of a canonised saint, with the dubious justification that these novel elements have 'quelque fondement dans l'Histoire'. He also claims to write in the tradition of Corneille in accordance with the rules of Poetry, after which he stresses his primary intention is to incite devotion, not to entertain.

The tragedy is set at Alise, and the play opens with three saints all declaring their desire to be martyred: Reine, Theophile and Blonde. When they are brought before Olibre, it is Reine who assumes centre stage:

REINE Seigneur, tous mes respects, et mon obeissance,
 Dépendent moins de moi que d'une autre puissance.
 Je dois un grand amour à mon Pere Clement,
 Je n'ai d'autre désir que son commandement,
 A vôtre bon plaisir je ne suis refractaire,
 Si la Foi du vrai Dieu m'ordonne le contraire. (II, 3)

He requires only one thing from her: marriage. She has only one response: she belongs to Christ. In the following scene her father chides her for having spoken in such a disrespectful way to Olibre. He talks of the benefits of such a union and threatens to kill them all if they do not renounce Jesus (II, 4). When the others leave, his paternal pressure becomes excessive: 'Et toi cruel enfant, il faut que tu périsses,/ Sans tarder plus long-temps, ou que tu m'obeisses' (II, 5). Given the author's intentions to emulate Corneille and follow dramatic conventions, there is an extremely bizarre scene in the third act involving Belzebub, Asmodée and Megere. In a scene with uninspiring dialogue that would not be out of place in a sixteenth-century *mystère*, Belzebub encourages the demons: 'Au meurtre, au meurtre, au meurtre, au supplice, au carnage,/ Je n'aspire qu'au sang, aux tourmens, à la rage'. Asmodée adds that there is only one girl left on earth who resists him and he vows to make her die.⁷²

An assembly of senators and soldiers, one of the additions signalled in the preface, hears Olibre declare that Christians cannot be tolerated, a proposition which

⁷² Asmodée seems ignorant of the resistance of Sainte Blonde, a character in this play, to say nothing of presumed efforts of the Church's consecrated virgins.

gains unanimous consent (IV, 4). This scene is followed by an interval, and there are instructions in the text about a change of scenery:

Theopsite et Kilie font changer la face du Théâtre, tout est couvert de noir parsemé de Croix et de larmes, avec des Inscriptions, proscriptions des Chrétiens, et on plante des gibets, on porte sur le Théâtre tous les instrumens du Suplice, les Diables y travaillent, et battent Kilie.

This last detail, the demons assaulting Kilie, could be lifted directly from a *mystère*. This simplicity is also present in some of the versification: for example, Olibre remarks ‘Je chers ses appas et sa perfection,/ Je déteste l’erreur de sa Religion’ (V, 1). Olibre offers her the choice between life and death, she chooses the latter, which he puts down to ‘ton sexe et ton âge’ (V, 2). In the next scene, Félix, one of the guards, announces that her example has converted him (V, 3). She is led off to her martyrdom (V, 6) and the last scene has Christian characters singing the martyr’s praises (V, 7). The second edition adds an extra scene, ‘*ici on fait la Pompe funèbre de Sainte Reine*’ during which two angels walk before the coffin with lighted candles, and the body of the martyr is carried on the shoulders of kings and generals. The instructions specify: ‘*on fait deux tours sur le Théâtre, et tout disparoit*’. Both editions have an identical ‘dessein de la tragedie’ at the back with a plan for ‘*abreger la presente tragedie, on peut en retrancher les Scenes qui sont les plus détachées, dans lesquelles Sainte Reine ne paroît pas, et un bon nombre de personnages*’. Further evidence of the author’s desire to facilitate theatrical representations is a ‘*disposition du theatre*’ with a precise plan of the scenery. The play was performed at Flavigny, and is evidently an attempt to usurp the Alise performance which by now had a twenty-six year history. The 1687 tragedy demonstrates is that the martyr-play has, by this time, become virtually extinct. Where it does exist, it has been pruned of subversive elements, and could well have appeared before *Polyeucte*. These are the remnants of a once flourishing sub-genre, now reduced to the provincial and devotional efforts of amateurs. The specific example of the plays written for the local saint’s feast, probably directed by ecclesiastics and performed within the confines of religious establishments, can be interpreted as a successful attempt of the local clergy to appropriate religious drama.

Lancaster remarks that ‘the great majority of religious plays that were published in 1652–72 are those that have not been shown to have been acted’.⁷³ The exception to this is the annual Sainte Reine performance. The martyr-play wanes

steadily and markedly after the end of the Frondes, and this accelerates after the beginning of the personal rule of Louis XIV. If we consider the tumultuous ten years from 1645 to 1654 (see Appendix), there are a total of 21 martyr-plays, with 13 of these appearing in Paris (and one of the others had a Parisian edition in the same period: see Chapter Three, p. 125). Now in the following ten years, 1655 to 1664, there are 14 plays, but only two of these are published in Paris, and three of the other plays were intended for the Sainte Reine performances. From 1665 to 1687 there are seven plays, three of which were composed for Alise-Sainte-Reine. As I have argued, a fundamental reason for the waning of this type of tragedy is the possible ambiguities of the martyr-figure with respect to royal authority.⁷⁴ There are undoubtedly other factors, such as the increasing dominance (in terms of the number of productions) of comedy during the 1660s.⁷⁵ Other social considerations such as ‘squeamishness about the public enactment of violence against the female body’ may provide some explanation for the failure of Corneille’s *Théodore*.⁷⁶ Although 1675 is the termination point for tragedies considered in this thesis, I have examined two plays after this date dealing with Sainte Reine, as they belong within a defined local tradition. Apart from these two tragedies, the only other martyr-play that is worth remarking is *Gabinie*, by David Augustin de Brueys (1640–1723), published at the end of the century. This play stands in dramatic isolation, as it does not indicate any resurgence of the theme, and certainly did not result in one.⁷⁷ The author admits in the preface to having been heavily influenced by a play published over forty years’ earlier, Jordan’s *Susanna* (1654). These two works are about a martyr who suffered under Diocletian and whose feast is celebrated on 11 August, not the Old-Testament figure of the same name. One notable modification is the change of the martyr’s name from Susanna to Gabinie: the dramatist gave her a version of her father’s name since ‘il m’a semblé que celuy de Susanne, que l’Histoire de nos Saints Martyrs luy donne,

⁷³ Lancaster, *History*, III, 399.

⁷⁴ ‘Le drame de martyr se plaît à opposer les deux types de royauté, terrestre et céleste, afin de mieux faire éclater celle du Roi des rois’, Jean-Louis Raffy, *Le “Papinianus” d’Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664): drame des martyrs et sécularisation du théâtre en Allemagne au XVII^e siècle*, *Theatrica*, 11 (Bern: Lang, 1992), p. 94.

⁷⁵ Scherer, *La Dramaturgie classique*, p. 456-7.

⁷⁶ Frances E. Dolan, ‘“Gentlemen I have one more thing to say”: Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563–1680’, *Modern Philology*, 92 (1994), 157-178 (p. 166).

⁷⁷ One can note some later international versions: it was translated into German and published together with a translation of *Polyeucte* (Franckfurt and Leipzig: n. pub., 1734). It was also printed and performed in the original in London during the mid-seventeenth century, *Gabinie. Tragédie Chrétienne*

n'avoit pas assez de Noblesse pour le Theatre' (preface). Brueys was a convert from Protestantism and I suspect, like Blessebois, the choice of martyrological topic may have represented an unambiguous public exhibition of Catholic zeal.⁷⁸ The diminution of the popularity of the martyr-figure is tangible, and even the *Confrérie de la Passion*, which had survived into the seventeenth century performing mystery-plays, reached its term in 1676 when it was officially abolished by Louis XIV. This is a history of a sub-genre that after an initial success in the 1640s is provincialised, then marginalised. Just as the martyr-play evolved from the *mystère*, so it returned to the community of Alise-Sainte-Reine, which, in gathering to perform its devotional festivities, was effectively reclaiming religious drama to its roots. Lack of respect for the *bienséances*, violence on stage, the additions of *chœur* and angels, have often led to these plays being dismissed as examples of dismal provincialism. Rather than signifying literary naivety, these inclusions could well be a deliberate strategy to give the enactment the air of a traditional *mystère* destined to edify the populace rather than as a vehicle of entertainment. Thus, they were intended to sound old-fashioned in their language and dramaturgy. These plays compare unfavourably to *Polyeucte*, for they were destined for a stage comprised entirely of amateurs.

Michel Foucault sees '[l']individu à corriger' as the most widespread of the three manifestations of the abnormal in human society, as well as being 'un individu très spécifique du XVII^e et du XVIII^e siècles'.⁷⁹ The martyr displays a determined individualism that places him or her outside the parameters of normative behaviour: The various persecutors are not simply punishing the martyr, they are also striving to bring the dissenting person back into communion with the society they represent. The martyr's stance can be interpreted as transgressing political normality. As I will examine in Chapter Five, in the hands of some dramatists, the martyr can challenge traditional notions of gender identity.

qui doit être représentée à l'école de Pension d'Hoxton, par les jeunes Messieurs de ladite école (London: n. pub., 1751).

⁷⁸ Lancaster remarks, citing the views of Du Noyer in 1713, suggests that there may be parallels to be drawn with the manner in which Diocletian mercilessly treats Christians in the play and Louis XIV's persecution of Huguenots, *History*, IV, 336-37.

⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *Les Anormaux: cours au Collège de France (1974-1975)*, ed. by François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Seuil et Gallimard, 1999), pp. 51 and 57.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sociological Considerations: Suicide, Suffering and Sex

O vierges, ô démons, ô monstres, ô martyres,
De la réalité grands esprits contempteurs,
Chercheuses d'infini dévotes et satyres,
Tantôt pleines de cris, tantôt pleines de pleurs.

—Baudelaire, *Femmes damnées*¹

5.1 Voluntary Death

In examining the martyr-tragedies that have survived from the seventeenth century, I have paid particular attention to the fundamental issue of the representation of power. Since the early Christian martyrs were labelled as deviants, it is useful to examine the theatrical martyrs' attitudes towards power structures. Authority figures in the plays invariably view martyrs as dangerous to the community. Their solutions are generally the same: they marginalise the individual, followed by confinement and a final emphasis on removal rather than reintegration.² In this final chapter, however, I would like to consider some other issues raised by representations of the sub-genre. The martyr can apparently transgress other notions of orthodoxy than the political, namely sociological. Since this thesis is the first project detailing the martyr-play, it has been necessary to have some limits in scope. A study of the portrayal of gender in the plays, or a discussion of violence and suicide, would merit an entire study in their own right.

Instances of martyrdom have often proved problematic for the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The essential dilemma is that seeking one's own death is tantamount to suicide. As early as 303, canon 60 of the Council of Illiberis refused the status of martyrdom to those who were punished as a result of breaking idols.³ A modern definition is that 'for an act of suicide, the agent must wish to be dead, intend to

¹ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed. by Antoine Adam (Paris: Garnier, 1961), p. 132 (poem CXI).

² This pattern of behaviour complies with the observations of Robert A. Scott on the consequences of non-conformity within a society, 'A Proposed Framework for Analysing Deviance as a Property of Social Order', in *Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance*, ed. by Robert A. Scott and Jack D. Douglas (New York and London: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 9-32 (pp. 15-16).

³ A. Georges, 'L'appel de Polyeucte et de Néarque au martyre', *RHLF*, 96 (1996), 192-211 (p. 194).

achieve his death, and whether directly or through the agency of another, he must act so as to achieve it'.⁴ Is this applicable to some, most, or even all appearances of the martyr-figure in seventeenth-century theatre? Martyrs do not resist going to their deaths, they explicitly wish to die. Speaking of early Church martyrs, Arthur Droge comments:

The martyrs are portrayed as going to their death in one of three ways: as a result of being sought out, by deliberately volunteering to die, or by actually taking their own lives. On the basis of the evidence that has survived, it would appear that the majority of Christian martyrs chose death by the second means.⁵

This observation seems accurate for the type of martyr appearing in the French tragedies, from the earliest martyr-plays. One of the earliest examples is to be found in Virey's *La Machabee*, with Acham encouraging his siblings to self-immolate: 'mes freres bien aimez, allons joyusement/ Pour recevoir la gloire et l'honneur du tourment' (p. 29). In Gallardon's *Le martyre de sainte Catherine*, Porphirio expresses his longing to embrace martyrdom from the moment he first believes:

PORPHIRIO	Je ne le feray pas, car cela ne convient A la religion qu'un Chrestien maintient. ⁶ De me faire endurer tu seras volontaire, Et donner à mon corps une estrange martyre: Je ne crains point cela, je ne fremis en rien, Car je veux partager à ce souverain bien. (III)
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In the same play, Catherine encourages the Empress to persevere until the end: 'il faut mourir Faustine et souffrir le supplice' (III). Yet this is immediately prior to her conversion: therefore adopting and dying for the faith are synonymous concepts. The Emperor offers the princess the choice between life and death, and cannot understand why she opts for the latter: 'miserable veux tu ainsi perdre ta vie?' (IV). When the same monarch asks Porphirio if he is ready to die, the response is: 'c'est ce que je demande' (V). Likewise in Gallardon's other martyr-play, *Le Martyre de Saint Vincent*, the martyr is asked by Dacian: 'Desires tu mourir enfin en ta malice?' to

⁴ Gavin J. Fairbairn, *Contemplating Suicide: the Language and Ethics of Self Harm* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 79.

⁵ Arthur D. Droge, 'The Crown of Immortality: Toward a Redescription of Christian Martyrdom', in *Death, Ecstasy and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. by John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 155-169 (p. 165).

⁶ Porphire is referring to the act of paying reverence to idols.

which comes the unequivocal reply: 'C'est cela que mon cœur a tousjours désiré' (II). Vincent discloses that he has long dreamt of martyrdom, even before being placed in the position of having to defend his faith. It is a standpoint that Dacian finds impossible to comprehend:

DACIAN Quand il est question de conserver sa vie,
Il faut subir à tout, l'aise nous y convie:
Ce qui est animé crient le mortel desir. (III)

This quest of the martyr to extinguish his or her existence is one that is difficult to appreciate, not only by other characters within the tragedies, but also undoubtedly on the part of the spectator or reader.

From the instant the Empress becomes a Christian in La Serre's *Sainte Catherine*, her strongest desire is to leave this world: 'Allons, allons donc au devant de la mort' (III, 5). Catherine also yearns for the same thing: 'Madame, mourons fidelles aujourd'huy, pour vivre eternellement heureuses' (III, 5). After the defeat of Lucius and the philosophers, the Empress reveals her true beliefs:

IMPERATRICE Je cherche la mort, pour treuver la vie. Allons, allons au martyre,
où sont les bourreaux?
PORPHIRE Je veux mourir pour sa gloire en confessant son nom.
EMPEREUR Que Lucius soit brûlé tout vif, et Porphire devoré de Lyons: Qu'on
tranche la teste à l'Imperatrice, et qu'on mette en pieces cette
enchantresse. (IV, 4)

This martyr is unflinching in her determination. Desfontaines's *Le Martyre de St Eustache* opens with the officer who has been participating in a hunt:

S. Eustache sous le nom de PLACIDE à genoux dans un bois
Je reconnois tes loix, tu regnes dans mon cœur;
Pour toy seul je suis prest de mourir, ou de vivre,
J'ay veu ton Estandart, tu me le verras suivre. (I, 1)

As soon as he experiences this vision, Eustache is thinking about dying. Revealingly he mentions that he is ready to die first of all, with the mention of living coming almost as an afterthought. It is broken both by the punctuation and by the presence of 'ou', both of which highlight his morbid desire. When he is obliged to favour either

life or death, his decision is unwavering: 'he bien me voila prest, Tyran, allons mourir' (V, 5). His wife goads her children into martyrdom:

TRAJANE

Allons, allons enfans, ne craignons pas ces choses,
Nous serons dans les feux comme en un lict de roses,
Me voyant endurer, apprenez à souffrir à mourir. (V, 7)

In Cosnard's tragedy, Euple considers that 'il est temps de mourir quand on ne peut plus vivre' (V, 5). Another character, Elize, is similarly unambiguous: 'et moy, je veux mourir' (V, 6), which prompts Pompone to comment, not without understatement, 'ils mesprisent la vie'.⁷ The proclamation of Christianity in the martyr-play usually results in death, yet silence would ensure spiritual death for the characters. In this way, the declaration of faith is a speech act that makes martyrdom inevitable and it is the martyr who effectively enacts his or her own condemnation.⁸ As well as gaining the crown of martyrdom, the Christian figures also set an example in the art of dying nobly.

Some martyrs are portrayed as wanting to die not only to enter the next world, but also since they are so disillusioned with this one. Néarque warns Polyeucte of the consequences of disrupting the sacrifice: 'vous voulez donc mourir!' to which Polyeucte answers: 'vous aymez donc à vivre!' (II, 6). Rather than endure the tribulations of this life, Polyeucte prefers to negate it, a position resembling a potential suicide.⁹ In Montgaudier's *Natalie*, Apollinaire meets Adrian's refusal to recant with the question: 'haissez vous la vie?' (I, 4). Adrian replies: 'J'attends avec plaisir qu'elle me soit ravie', and concludes the conversation with: 'Monsieur, n'en parlons plus je veux mourir Chrestien'. When interrogated by the Emperor, his impatience to be put to death is apparent to all: 'Je hay vostre pitié qui retarde ma mort' (II, 4). His wife shares the same sentiments: 'Je ne craigns point la mort, tant s'en faut que je l'espere,/ C'est l'objet glorieux de mon ardent desir' (III, 3).¹⁰ Saint-

⁷ 'The desire for death on the part of martyrs and would-be martyrs was attentively observed by the pagans and must have been a constant source of wonder to them', G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 60-61.

⁸ For examples of characters revealing their faith, see Chapter Two, p. 96 (n.125), Chapter Three, p. 125 (n. 28), p. 154 and p. 157.

⁹ 'Puisque la vie est le lieu des périls et de la durée vitale, il ne s'agira plus de *surmonter* la vie, mais simplement de la *supprimer*', Doubrovsky, *Corneille et la dialectique du héros*, p. 251 (original emphasis).

¹⁰ Like Pauline in *Polyeucte*, Natalie is frustrated in her desire to become a martyr, though she does find some consolation in having her husband's hand as a relic (V, 5).

This does not prevent Valerie from trying to lead others to die with her: 'Comme il est mort pour nous, allons mourir pour luy' (IV, 2). When brought before the governor, Syllan, she demands: 'Tyran, me voila preste, allons, allons, mourir' (V, 2). Lancaster remarks of this play: 'Ursule and some of her attendants are typical martyrs, so eager to die that they win little sympathy'.¹¹

Polyeucte resolves to attend and commit an act of sacrilege at a pagan ceremony he could have avoided.¹² Even Néarque has to reprimand the eagerness of his friend's plan, 'Ce zele est trop ardent, souffrez qu'il se modere' (II, 6).¹³ The pair debate the ethics of voluntarily seeking martyrdom:

NEARQUE	[Dieu] ne commande point que l'on s'y precipite.
POLYEUCTE	Plus qu'elle est volontaire, et plus elle merite.
NEARQUE	Il suffit, sans chercher, d'attendre et de souffrir.
POLYEUCTE	On souffre avec regret quand on n'ose souffrir. (II, 6)

Polyeucte's new faith overwhelms him, and he has to consummate his new love by literally consuming himself. The way he achieves this is by destroying his lover's rivals: the pagan gods. In effect, Polyeucte's act of desecration is also his engagement ceremony.¹⁴ With the advent of belief, Polyeucte encounters the intensity of divine passion. There has been a progression, beginning with his experience of fraternal affection with Néarque.¹⁵ As soon as Polyeucte experiences divine love, he realises he

¹¹ Lancaster, *History*, III, 416.

¹² St Cyprian's view of martyrdom seemingly condemns Polyeucte, for he held that 'martyrdom is not of such a nature that it is left to the free choice of man. Martyrdom is rather an exceptional favour of God and requires a special call. He who offers himself voluntarily for martyrdom has no place and can in no way be certain that God will give him the grace to persevere', Edilhard L. Hummel, *The Concept of Martyrdom according to St Cyprian of Carthage* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1946), p. 49.

¹³ Voltaire's parody of *Polyeucte* is pertinent: 'que diriez-vous d'un gendre de Mr. Le Gouverneur de Paris, qui serait Huguenot, et qui accompagnant son beau-père le jour de Paque à Nôtre-Dame, irait mettre en pièces le ciboire et le calice, et donner des coups de pied à Mr. L'Archevêque et aux Chanoines? Serait-il bien justifié en nous disant que nous sommes des idolâtres?' *Pot-pourri* (1765) published in *Mélanges de poésie, de littérature, d'histoire, et de philosophie*, 19 vols (Geneva: n.pub, 1770), III, 33-54 (44).

¹⁴ 'La loi fondamentale de la nouvelle religion de Polyeucte, créera la nécessité de faire l'offrande de l'amour temporel pour gagner une récompense éternelle', Ronald W. Tobin, 'Le Sacrifice et *Polyeucte*', *XVII^e siècle*, 38 (1973), 587-598 (p. 591).

¹⁵ On this point, John Boswell raises the ambiguity of paired saints, detailing how the language used to describe the Armenian pair's passionate friendship in Metaphrastes's account is identical to that used of marriage, see *The Marriage of Likeness: Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 142 (n.148). Corneille's modifications do tend to heterosexualise the play, and he splits the pairing, giving Néarque a subsidiary position.

The behaviour of these stage martyrs matches Durkheim's criteria in his classification of martyrdom as suicide.²⁰ This issue is of particular contemporary interest:

La question de la légitimité de la mort volontaire, soulevée lors de la crise des années 1580–1620, reste un objet de débat au XVII^e siècle dans les élites cultivées. Si le nombre de suicides réels ne semble pas avoir évolué de façon significative, les mentalités changent lentement. Derrière l'attitude globalement négative et répressive des autorités, il est visible que des cercles de plus en plus vastes se sentent concernés par le problème.²¹

A play in which the hero decides to end his own life conforms to a natural fascination with suicide. While seventeenth-century tragedies 'sometimes depicted suicide as a noble sacrifice, philosophers and theologians continued to condemn it'.²² The martyr, however, is a legitimate model:

For all its similarity to suicide, complicit martyrdom is sometimes forgiven, to say nothing of being honoured, as a noble and courageous form of fatal acquiescence, and is a reflection of yet another important aspect of suicide.²³

Despite the fact that the *bienséances* generally forbade characters expiring on stage, theorists did admit suicide (though only in the last scene, as in *Phèdre*), and also allowed martyrdom.²⁴ This exemption evidently conforms to an audience interest in the ambivalent theme of self-termination, for 'deep affinities link the literary genre of tragedy and the human problem of suicide'.²⁵

In some instances the martyr is a direct agent in his or her own execution. Bello, Desfontaines and Baro all depict Eustache's wife throwing herself into the bronze bull, without any external constraint to do so. Corneille's Théodore proposes safeguarding her virginity through suicide, believing herself dispensed from the usual

²⁰ 'For many, if not most, martyrs and would-be martyrs, their enthusiasm for death comes very close to a desire to commit suicide – a suicide to be arranged by an external agent but with the clear complicity of the victim', Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, p. 61.

²¹ Georges Minois, *Histoire du suicide: la société occidentale face à la mort volontaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 207.

²² Gary B. Ferngren, 'The Ethics of Suicide in the Renaissance and Reformation', in *Suicide and Euthanasia*, ed. by B. A. Brody (Kluwer: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 155-181 (p. 176).

²³ John Woods, *Engineered Death: Abortion, Suicide and Senecide* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977), p. 98.

²⁴ P. J. Yarrow, *A Literary History of France*, ed. by P. E. Charvet, 5 vols (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), II, 94.

²⁵ John D. Barbour, 'Suicide, Tragedy and Theology in *Sophie's Choice* and Gustafson's Theocentric Ethics', *Literature and Theology*, 8 (1994), 80-93 (p. 80).

prohibition: 'ma loi me le deffend, mais mon Dieu me l'inspire' (III, 3).²⁶ In Cheffault's *Le Martyre de saint Gervais*, Gervais and Prothais vandalise idols, like Polyeucte, with only one objective in mind. When Astase hesitates in meting out their punishment, Gervais insists that he must follow the letter of the law:

GERVAIS	Non, non, selon vos Loix, Seigneur, j'ay merit� Qu'avec toute rigeur on me traite en coupable, Soyez pour me punir un Juge inexorable; Si la molle piti� vous parle en ma faveur, Envisagez Cesar, vos Loix, et leur vigueur; Craignez si vos faux Dieux veulent qu'on nous punisse, Qu'en souffrant nos m�pris vous n'en soyez complice. (III, 3)
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Astase offers them clemency if they repent. The other brother replies for them both:

PROTHAIS	Et bien, obligez nous, Seigneur, d'y consentir, Qu'un prompt Arrest de mort fasse �clater la foudre, Que la fl�me ou le fer mette nos corps en poudre, Nous sommes disposez l'un et l'autre � la mort, Pourveu qu'un long supplice ascheve nostre sort.
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The twins' wish is contagious: when Frigitile visits them in prison, it is reported that before long 'Elle r pond, qu'il faut qu'elle meure avec eux' (IV, 2). It is not only in Cheffault's play that a pathological desire spreads across the characters. In Baro's *S  Eustache*, the persecuting governor, Ormond, brings the play to its conclusion with the word death: 'Leur exemple puissant mon ame a convertie/ Allons publiquement et le dire et mourir' (V, 6). He has received the grace of conversion, yet the act of witnessing martyrdom has passed on the aspiration to self-destruct. Diocletian ends Desfontaines's *Le Martyre de S. Eustache* with the words: 'Je regne et je fremis; je triomphe et je meurs' (V, 7). Likewise in his *Illustre Comedien*, the Emperor Trajan begs his gods: 'Achevez vos rigueurs et hatez mon supplice' (V, 5). Indegonde prays for her husband in *Les Isles le Bas*'s tragedy, and he shortly exclaims: 'Je veux vivant pour vous y mourir desormais' (III, 6). Polyeucte's last words are addressed to his wife and her former suitor: 'Vivez heureux ensemble, et mourez comme moy' (IV, 4).

²⁶ This seems suspiciously pagan in tone: Plato approved of suicide if it was performed as a form of *anagke* or divine compulsion, see Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 20.

The phenomenon of martyrdom spreads to other characters in the tragedies like a virus.²⁷

Another universal feature in all tragedies of the sub-genre is the martyrs' complete lack of sensibility. They experience a state of analgesia, so that every martyr shares the sentiments of Ternet's heroine: 'Je me sens plus heureuse au milieu des tourmens' (III, 6). All martyrs are completely anaesthetized to the sensation of pain. It is no surprise that fear of dying is also absent from martyrs. Troterel's pre-pubescent martyr confidently asserts:

AGNES

Car je ne crains la mort, et Dieu m'est bon tesmoin,
Que de tous mes soucis c'est bien le moindre soin,
Au contraire plustost je me tiendrois heureuse,
D'endurer pour Jesus une mort rigoureuse,
Luy qui pour nos pechez et pour nous rachetter,
Cloüe sur une croix, la voulut bien gouster. (III)

Polyeucte's indifference to his death prompts Néarque to remind him 'Dieu mesme a craint la mort' (II, 6). The death of the Christian martyr, both in the earliest sources and on the seventeenth-century stage, is an unusual one. The tragedies make an indirect contribution to the genre of *Ars Morendi*. In early modern society 'la mort est omniprésente, en ville comme à la campagne', and martyr entertainment is another aspect of this 'omniprésence de la mort'.²⁸

5.2 Differences of Gender

It is instructive to examine the different versions of the most popular female martyr on the stage, namely Catherine of Alexandria, who according to tradition was martyred during the last wave of persecutions in the Roman Empire around 305. The cult of this martyr has its origins as late as the ninth century at Mount Sinai, and was brought to

²⁷ Durkheim devotes a chapter of his treatise to the recognition of cases where a suicide provokes others to imitate the same act: 'il y a imitation quand un acte a pour antécédent immédiat la représentation d'un acte semblable, antérieurement accompli par autrui, sans que, entre cette représentation et l'exécution s'intercale aucune aucune opération intellectuelle, explicite ou implicite, portant sur les caractères intrinsèques de l'acte reproduit', *Le Suicide*, p. 115 (author's emphasis). This definition seems eminently applicable to those characters who convert and die following a martyrdom of the protagonist. Droge and Tabor point out that 'sometimes Christians would go to their deaths to provoke others to do the same', *A Noble Death*, p. 153.

the west by crusaders. A detailed legend was subsequently constructed and her popularity soared from the fifteenth century onwards, despite the fact that her name is about the only fact that can be verified with any certainty.²⁹ In a letter written shortly before his death, John Hus shows that he was inspired by her example.³⁰ Hers was one of the heavenly voices of Joan of Arc, and the esteem given to the martyr is reflected in the widespread popularity of the name Catherine across the social hierarchy. The number of paintings commissioned on aspects of her life and death testify to the extent of devotion to the saint.³¹ It is clear that Catherine's appeal transcended social and ecclesiastical divisions.

Unlike those of their male counterparts, narratives of women martyrs almost always involve an assault on their chastity: in this way they do not so much seek out martyrdom, as defend their bodies from being defiled. Catherine was one of a select band of female virgin martyrs that included Agnes, Cecilia and Felicity, but there is no doubt that she enjoyed a pre-eminent position, despite her absence from the Canon of the Mass. The lives of these female virgin martyrs were, in the words of one commentator, 'the staple of monastic *and* lay reading, and spectatorship in plays and sermons and iconography'.³² Catherine's feast-day on 25 November was a holyday of obligation in most French dioceses, and the many components of her passion were invaluable to serve as a ready-made homily. The fantastical account of the martyr's death was so familiar to the laity, through vernacular lives, the pulpit and local customs, that any deviation from the customary details would have been readily noticed. In fact, it was only her immense popular appeal that saved Catherine from

²⁸ Arlette Farge, *La Vie fragile: violence, pouvoirs et solidarités à Paris au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1986), p. 215.

²⁹ Pierre Deloos argues that Catherine of Alexandria 'never was a *real* person. In her case, everything has been *constructed*. Again, the construction has been enormous, and has spanned the centuries, ultimately making her the patron saint of philosophers and spinsters', 'Towards a Sociological Study of Canonized Sainthood in the Catholic Church', in *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. by Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 189-216 (p. 196).

³⁰ 'O St Catherine, a young maiden, should have retreated from the truth and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because fifty masters stood up against her! Nevertheless, that dear maiden remained steadfast until death and brought the masters to the Lord God, whom I, a sinner, am unable to bring!', *The Letters of John Hus*, p. 197 (letter 91 written on 26 June 1415).

³¹ David Freeberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 305. A notable example is Caravaggio's *Catherine of Alexandria* (c. 1599).

³² Miri Rubin, 'Choosing Death? Experiences of Martyrdom in Late Medieval Europe', in Diana Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, *Studies in Church History*, 30 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 153-183 (p. 156).

being removed from the Calendar in the reforms of Gregory XIII in 1582.³³ One explanation for the extent of her cultus is the fact that the teenager's patronage was a wide one, covering a number of causes. Since she had died at the age of 18, she was patron of young girls, of spinsters, and of females in distress (a woman could theoretically find herself belonging to all three categories). She looked after the dying and was also patron of nurses, presumably since milk had flowed from her severed veins. Craftsmen placed themselves under her protection, undoubtedly connected to the instruments of her torture, and this patronage therefore covered wheelwrights, spinners and millers (see Fig. 14). She was also entrusted with students and the clergy. Her highest vocation was as patron of philosophers, and it is under this title that Louis IX placed the University of Paris under the auspices of St Catherine.³⁴

Despite an outline that is universal to the majority of martyr-plays, that is to say details such as the confrontation with authority and a love motif, Catherine's tale is unique, and not only because 'the legend of this saint is one of the most famous and most preposterous of its kind'.³⁵ This virgin-martyr defies the secular authorities of the day.³⁶ She flatly refuses to obey her Emperor. She turns down a marriage to the advantage of her dynasty. She defeats the intellectual elite using her reason. Moreover, in her vigorous efforts to convert the court, the young girl transgresses the role assigned to women in society —both Roman and French— by appropriating a male, ecclesiastical preserve. She goes beyond teaching: she preaches. Furetière defines the verb *enseigner* as 'montrer quelque science qu'on sçait', using as examples, clergy teaching the catechism, and professors teaching philosophy.³⁷ Catherine performs both, and these two tasks were generally outside the female

³³ René Coursault, *Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie: le mythe et la tradition* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984), p. 90. Her feast day was removed from the Calendar in 1969, and another saint of the same name, Katherine Labouré, took her place, though as Karen A. Winstead remarks, the fact 'that many saints are considered fictive even by the Catholic Church should not lead us to conclude that the early medieval Church was perpetuating a fraud on a gullible population', *Chaste Passions: Medieval English Virgin Martyr Legends* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 2.

³⁴ See David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 88.

³⁵ Attwater, *Dictionary of Saints*, p. 209.

³⁶ 'The fact that she was so popular seems to be linked to the fact that her legend contained some unique elements which set her apart from other virgin martyrs and which lent her a special status', Katherine J. Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), p. 96.

³⁷ Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, I, sig. [4v4]^r. He defines *predication* as 'annonce de l'Évangile', citing the example: 'plusieurs saints ont souffert le martyre en faisant la *predication* de l'Évangile', *ibid.*, *Dictionnaire universel*, III, sig. [x4]^r. Richelet gives a definition for the verb *prêcher* (absent in Furetière): 'annoncer la parole de Dieu au peuple', *Dictionnaire françois* (Geneva: Jean Herman Widerhold, 1680), p. 204.

domain, at least in the eyes of anti-feminists. It is for this reason that when La Barre makes a strong case for women's full participation in secular and ecclesiastical society, he argues that women should be allowed to preach, teach and receive a university education.³⁸ The pro-feminist author is targeting his society's major zones of feminine exclusion.

There are five seventeenth-century tragedies concerning Catherine. These have already been examined in previous chapters and will now be considered from the perspective of gender. Catherine was a favourite subject for Jesuit college plays: probably because the female role could be reduced to one, and there was the opportunity to have up to fifty boys acting as philosophers, not to mention as guardians or executioners. The first play that was written for the professional stage was in 1618, by Boissin de Gallardon. In his dedication, the author sets out his dramatic agenda, citing Catherine's example, 'dedans lequel vous contemplerez la profondeur des sciences, qu'elle avoit humectees à l'escole spirituelle de la divinité' (p. 273). The use of the verb *humecter* implicitly suggests that Catherine absorbs male knowledge without the process of reasoning.³⁹ It places her in a subordinate position. When Catherine reveals she is of the blood royal, attempting to be exempted from the imperial decree, she implicitly recognises the value of a male dynastic system: presumably the line has died out with her birth. It is for this reason that she received an unusual education:

CATHERINE

Comme fille premier d'un heros invincible:
Les bonne mœurs de luy j'ay receu au possible,
Par veilles j'ay compris en moy profondément
Des beaux arts liberaux l'asseuré fondement
De la Geometrie, et de la Rhetorique,
Et du plus relevé c'est la Philosophique. (I)

³⁸ François Poulain de La Barre makes a strong case for women's full participation in secular and ecclesiastical society. He sees no reason why they cannot give sermons: 'quiconque peut prêcher par ses exemples, le peut encore à plus forte raison par ses paroles: Et une femme qui joindroit l'éloquence naturelle à la morale de JESUS-CHRIST, seroit aussi capable qu'un autre', *De l'Egalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral, où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des Préjugés* (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1673), p. 164. The author also considers they should be allowed to teach and have access to university education (pp. 162-63). He goes far in his views, for he accepts the concept of female ordination ('on ne peut montrer qu'il y ait autre chose que la Coûtume qui en éloigne les femmes', pp. 163-64).

³⁹ Richelet defines *humecter* as 'mouiller et rafraichir', *Dictionnaire françois*, p. 409. Furetière defines the verb as 'rendre humide quelque chose', *Dictionnaire universel*, II, sig. 2f^r. There is the sense of this verb providing something (moisture) that is lacking in the receiver.

However, she goes on to mention how she rejects all aspects of this upbringing 'et tout humain sçavoir', to become chaste for Christ. When she becomes a practising Christian, such knowledge is superfluous and unseemly for a woman. The group of fifty philosophers is reduced to a token three, yet the martyr only debates with them briefly, the essential part of her message being delivered in a long speech. As a result, there is no real exchange of ideas and their mass conversion seems to be the result of the divine outpouring of grace than due to the direct influence of Catherine. Her success does not represent a challenge to the status quo. It is what Gallardon omits which is most telling: the Emperor does not fall for the princess's physical charms, therefore the martyr's stand is rendered entirely religious. This, together with an absence of any confrontation with authority means that the tragedy has been neutralised of any potentially pro-feminist reading. This is not to say that Gallardon's play is anti-feminist, certainly not compared with some antecedents. In John Capgrave's eight-thousand verse life of Catherine, written around 1445, the martyr is shown to flout tradition as a result of her education, and her unconventional actions harms her subjects. In this version the martyr is deposed and executed more for her bad behaviour than for her faith.⁴⁰ Gallardon writes a pious tragedy, pruned of any disturbing portrayals of traditional gender roles. At the close of the play, the *chœur de femmes* praises Catherine's example, yet adds decisively 'L'on ne verra jamais un courage pareil' (IV). In other words, a woman who takes on her male contemporaries should be regarded as an unrepeatable case.

In the following year, Poytevin does not shrink from reinserting the love-interest back into the legend. In this play the Emperor already knows Catherine, and is in love with her when the action begins. In the opening speech Maximin talks of the effect she has on him:

MAXIMIN

Tu me ravis les sens, et mon ame affligée
 Ne peut en te voyant estre en rien allegée,
 Tant tu m'as captivé par ta grande beauté,
 Et par tes yeux charmeurs dont tu m'as enchanté. (I)

This seems to present women as a dangerous snare in a man's world. The Emperor's hatred of Christianity is related to her rejection of his advances. He even helpfully

⁴⁰ Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval Women* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 15.

offers to execute the Empress Faustine in order to create an uxorial vacancy. The calling of the philosophers appears as an attempt to win Catherine's heart rather than her soul. The debate is not staged, instead the fourth act opens with the Emperor declaring his disbelief at the fact the philosophers have failed to sway her. Poytevin's play ends abruptly, with an angel encouraging Catherine to persevere, not with any account of her protracted death. The omission of the actual martyrdom lays stress on the love dimension of the tragedy. Where Gallardon's play was primarily religious, Poytevin's stresses the nature of the Emperor's love for the martyr. What both plays have in common is that they play down Catherine's confrontation with the philosophers.

The very fact that there is not another theatrical version of Saint Catherine until 1643 with La Serre's version, may, in itself, indicate a reluctance to embark on a potentially troublesome patroness. La Serre gives a prominent part to the Empress, who is shown as sympathetic to the plight of the persecuted Christians. He also allocates a special place to the face-to-face debate of the Emperor and the martyr. They discuss the nature of power. To the Emperor's demands that he be obeyed, Catherine argues that her conscience prompts her to act otherwise, and she admits that she can brave him thanks to 'la raison' (II, 5). An education has empowered this young woman. According to a long tradition, and an argument often resurrected by detractors of feminism, a woman was naturally prone to a loose tongue.⁴¹ Contrary to this view, this woman's speech is rational.⁴² She leaves him in despair, so he appeals to Lucius, the most learned man of the Empire. Reducing the fifty philosophers to one, and highlighting the interview between the Emperor and Catherine, gives the air of a combat of wits between the martyr and her male opponents. The passing of twenty years had made a difference, as this tragedy places important emphasis on the two women of the legend, and both are shown adequately able to take care of themselves when victimised by male tyranny.⁴³ They seem to be movers of the action, rather than finding themselves caught up in events beyond their control.

⁴¹ 'Les sages tiennent aussi pour maxime veritable, qu'un homme babillard tient du feminin, et merite qu'on luy face porter des habits de femme', Jacques Olivier, *Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice des Femmes* (Paris: Jean Petit-Pas, 1617), p. 94.

⁴² In seventeenth-century France 'the catechising function was most emphatically forbidden to women. [...] Women were not to teach the faith publicly and formally', Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France*, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion, 4 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 117.

⁴³ Blessebois's *Sainte Reine* is as equally defiant: 'Je méprise ton rang et ta gloire indiscrete,/ Et prefere à ton or le fer de ma houlette' (II, 3).

The development of female participation in the legend is continued in the anonymous 1649 tragedy first published at Caen. It is her courage and skill in debating that kindle the flames of love in Maxentius's heart, rather than the sight of her physical traits. This is noteworthy, for it was a commonplace belief that beauty was an equivalent value in women, as intelligence in men.⁴⁴ In other words, an alluring physique was Nature's compensation for a defective mind, though a somewhat poor one, since feminine beauty and its resultant vanity were often the focus of anti-feminist moralists as the principal causes of male vice.⁴⁵ One commentator writing in 1619 summed up womankind: 'leur apparence trompeuse est l'origine de nos malheurs et le masque de leur dissimulation nous cache finement la cause de nos calamitez'.⁴⁶ However, the author of this play emphasises the fact that it is foremost Catherine's mind that attracts the Emperor.

This brings us to the only Catherine play that we know for certain to be written by a woman dramatist, La Chapelle's tragedy of 1663. Much background information is given: in the first act, Catherine alludes to her upbringing in Rome, and of her education in the arts and philosophy.⁴⁷ She has ventured to Rome, the seat of orthodoxy, rather than passively absorbing the teachings of the Alexandrian sophists, as with Gallardon's characterisation. While this explains her later rhetorical skills, it can also easily be interpreted as a favourable comment towards female education.⁴⁸ This virgin martyr has previously been engaged, but broke this off to devote herself entirely to God. This extraordinary detail is La Chapelle's invention and serves to consolidate a portrait of a female martyr who is far from being a naïve virgin with no

⁴⁴ 'The intellectual traditions of Western Europe had for centuries associated the masculine with the mind and the spiritual, considered to be superior, and the feminine with all that was bodily or material and therefore inferior', Donna Spivey Ellington, 'Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon: the Virgin's Role in Late Medieval and Early Modern Passion Sermons', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 48 (1995), 227-261 (p. 230).

⁴⁵ For example, Olibre in Blessebois is rendered captive: 'mon ame se prend/ Aux charmans hameçons que sa beauté me tend' (II, 3).

⁴⁶ *La Mechanceté des femmes par le Sieur D.F.D.L.* (Paris: Joseph Guereau, 1619), p. 92. Jacques Du Bosc turns this argument on its head: 'si les femmes sont belles, ceux qui les loüent les veulent tromper', *L'Honneste femme* (Paris: Pierre Billaine, 1632), p. 274.

⁴⁷ 'Since even upper-class women in the late seventeenth-century were rarely trained in classical rhetoric and ancient languages, their ability to enter learned discussions was limited. But Descartes in *Discourse on Method* insisted that classical training was not an indispensable foundation for eloquence', Ekaterina V. Haskins, 'A Woman's Response to the Seventeenth-Century *Querelle des Femmes*', in *Listening to their Voices: the Rhetorical Activities of Women*, ed. by Molly M. Wertheimer (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 288-301 (p.).

⁴⁸ 'The vast majority of literate women were denied direct access to formal education —especially to the classical learning vaunted by the Ancients— and women writers excelled in genres, such as the novel and the letter, that lacked recognized classical models.' Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 91.

understanding of the ways of the world; nor of the flesh.⁴⁹ The physical beauty of Catherine is hardly mentioned, and this is not accidental, as the whole tragedy can be easily read as a pro-feminist apologia. Revealingly, when she comes to debate with the philosophers, she pointedly quotes from Aristotle, not from Plato, as is mentioned in some sources. Ian MacLean points out that the Aristotelian ‘imperfect male’ theory was still an issue in the late 1650s, and this could then represent a pointed effort by La Chapelle to appropriate an author normally used by anti-feminist commentators.⁵⁰ Catherine also quotes from the Sybil of Cumae, referring to a female authority, and reminding her audience—and the potential audience of the tragedy—that there were female authoresses in antiquity.⁵¹ In effect, Catherine is painted as a real person rather than a mere allegory. La Chapelle’s virginal martyr refuses to be consigned to being defined by her fecundity or sexuality: she does not bewitch men with her body and is a heroine in a real sense.⁵² The fact that she has twice refused the marriage proposals of Porphyre and the Emperor highlights her refusal to submit to the norms of marriage and child rearing: the same choice undertaken by La Chapelle herself through the religious state.⁵³ While we may have the image of Manon Lescaut desperately persuading Des Grieux to save her from the convent, young women often had to overcome tremendous family opposition to enter religion.⁵⁴ The taking of solemn

⁴⁹ Explaining to Emilie why she broke off the engagement, Catherine mentions ‘mais ma raison deslors de mon cœur séparée’ and that ‘la Logique jamais ne montra mieux au net’ (I, 1).

⁵⁰ Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610–1652* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 46. MacLean is referring to Jean Chapelain’s *La Pucelle*. Gerda Lerner sums up Aristotle’s views of woman as set out in *Politics*, and he views her as ‘passionate and unable to control her appetites, weak, providing only low matter for the process of procreation, devoid of soul and designed to be ruled’, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 209. The author of *La Mechanceté des femmes* relates the anecdote ‘Aristote advertit Alexandre le grand de se garder des femmes comme d’une chose pernicieuse’ (p. 90). It seems the philosopher was taken at his word.

⁵¹ ‘Les Sibilles ont eu de si grandes lumieres d’esprit, et de si profondes sciences, qu’on les a tenuës inspirées de Dieu mesme. [...] Et lors parmy [les Romains] l’on disoit, c’est la parole de Sibille, c’estoit autant comme qui diroit parmy les Chrestiens, c’est l’Evangile’, François de Soucy, *Le Triomphe des dames* (Paris: Jean Bessin, 1646), pp. 108–109.

⁵² Michel Foucault sees women being defined in relation to their bodies and child-rearing functions in pre-Revolutionary French society, *Histoire de la Sexualité*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1976–84), I (*la Volonté de savoir*), 137.

⁵³ Catherine’s double refusal can be placed in the context of local customs in parts of France on 25 November. It was celebrated as a feast of young unmarried women, or *midinettes*, enjoying their freedom before marriage, a tradition that continues to this day in some regions. See Anne Monjaret, *La Sainte Catherine: culture festive dans l’entreprise*, *Le Regard de l’Ethnologue*, 8 (Paris: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 1997). Montjaret sees this tradition as a female one rivalling that of the nearby feast of St Nicholas, patron of youths and children (p. 19).

⁵⁴ Marshall B. Jones and Elizabeth Rapley, ‘Behavioral Contagion and the Rise of Convent Education in France’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31 (2000), 489–521 (pp. 518–19). Jocelyn Wogan-Browne remarks of late-medieval English virgin martyrs that ‘violence as a response to a girl’s choice of virginity thus seems less the stuff of sensationalist legend than of the everyday lives of

vows, as well as representing a spiritual marriage between the religious and Christ, also signified the individual's death to the world.⁵⁵ La Chapelle had forsaken an earthly spouse for a celestial one, like Catherine, and had experienced a spiritual rite of passage from one life to another.⁵⁶

The play's very title, *Illustre Philosophe*, indicates where the playwright's priorities lie, for it emphasises Catherine's intellectual qualities rather than her martyrdom.⁵⁷ It is a reminder that Catherine is the patron of philosophers, not Aristotle, Plato or even Aquinas.⁵⁸ The 1650s, and especially the 1660s, was an active period for feminist publishing, and in some of these works Catherine is cited as an example. Jacqueline Guillaume names the virgin saint as one of many female scholars to prove women's capacity to use rational thought:

Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie estoit si sçavante, qu'elle confondit cinquante Philosophes, en la presence de l'Empereur Maximin. Ils s'estimoient les maistres de tout l'Univers, et ils se trouverent trop heureux de se dire les disciples d'une fille. Ils apprirent dans son entretien, ce qu'ils n'avoient jamais appris dans les plus celebres Universitez. Elle leur fit changer de Religion, apres leur avoit fait changer de raisonnement. Ils croyaient la convaincre, et elle les convainquit.⁵⁹

Guillaume is keen to stress that Catherine changes the way the philosophers think before they are converted, thus pre-empting any suggestion that her arguments are an extraordinary grace for the occasion. As one character comments in an anti-misogynist work that appeared in the same year as La Chapelle's play:

Huntingdonshire people', 'Saints' Lives and the Female Reader', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 27 (1991), 314-332 (p. 317).

⁵⁵ 'Si la vêtire représentait le mariage spirituel de l'âme avec Dieu, la profession symbolise davantage la mort à la chair et au monde', Geneviève Reynes, *Couvents de femmes: la vie des religieuses cloîtrées dans la France des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1987), p. 71. Reynes details some of the ceremonial of various orders symbolising death to the world (pp. 59-75).

⁵⁶ 'By rejecting the socially mandated roles of wifehood and motherhood, these [early Christian] women are patterning themselves after models of power and autonomy available in their world and in its literature: the male apostles, who in turn are patterned on the model of Christ', Gail Paterson Corrington, *Her Image of Salvation: Female Saviors and Formative Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p. 23.

⁵⁷ As Marina Warner succinctly phrases it, St Catherine 'becomes one of the few women saints to be revered for her brains'. Moreover, 'Saint Catherine of Alexandria stood chiefly for independent thinking, courage, autonomy and culture', *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), p. 134.

⁵⁸ 'The newly awakened cult of Catherine of Alexandria may have promoted respect for educated women, drawing together the twin qualities of purity and female inspiration and preaching', Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard: University Press, 1996), pp. 329-330.

⁵⁹ Jacqueline Guillaume, *Les Dames illustres ou par bonnes et fortes raisons, il se prouve, que le Sexe Feminin surpasse en toute sorte de genres le Sexe Masculin* (Paris: Thomas Jolly, 1656), pp. 241-242. Soucy also uses Catherine as an example of female erudition: 'Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie estoit si sçavante, qu'elle surmonta en dispute cinquante Philosophes', *Le Triomphe des dames*, p. 114.

ARISTIDE ne consent pas à cette communauté de science, il y veut établir des traités et des conditions, il permet que les Dames parlent, mais il ne permet pas qu'elles philosophent; mais nous en oster l'usage, n'est-ce pas destourner de nous les écoulemens de l'esprit de Dieu? les sciences ne sont-elles pas une lumière?⁶⁰

As early as 1632, Du Bosc argued for female education: 'quelle science si malaisée ou si divine peut-on s'imaginer où les femmes n'ayent excellé pour le moins autant que les hommes?'.⁶¹ He lists the necessary areas in which women can be taught: 'la musique, l'histoire, les instrumens, la Philosophie, et d'autres pareils exercices sont plus convenables à nôtre dessein que ceux d'une bonne ménagere' (p. 177).

As discussed in Chapter Four, there was a localised tradition in Autun of plays devoted to the local patron, Sainte Reine, yet La Chapelle chooses a different martyr, one until that point only used as the subject of male authors. Her subject matter did not correspond to any vogue: the martyr-play was on the wane during the 1660s, and the virgin martyr had become effectively undesirable after the relative failure of Corneille's *Théodore*. I suggest that the dramatist was a member of the Ursuline community at Autun, which by 1663 was almost a century old.⁶² This rendering of the legend is possibly a defence of the teaching and catechising functions of this active congregation.⁶³ This order of female religious, founded in 1533, took a prominent part in teaching religious instruction, and Charles Borromeo had relied on their assistance to teach the catechism through the archbishopric of Milan.⁶⁴ It is striking that the cities in which the Catherine plays appeared, namely Lyon, Paris and Autun, were each home to Ursuline communities.⁶⁵ La Chapelle's tragedy seems destined for

⁶⁰ *Apologie de la science des dames par Cleante* (Lyon: Benoist Coral, 1662), p. 78.

⁶¹ Du Bosc, *L'Honneste femme*, p. 181.

⁶² Marie de Chantal Gueudré, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Ursulines en France*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Saint-Paul, 1958-60), I, 328.

⁶³ 'By the sheer weight of their numbers, the Ursulines did more than anybody else to introduce seventeenth-century Frenchmen to the concept of feminine schooling', Rapley, *The Dévotes*, p. 60. Members of the order took a fourth vow of teaching, see Philippe Annaert, *Les Collèges au féminin: les Ursulines, enseignement et vie consacrée aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, *Vie Consacrée*, 3 (Brussels: Baugnée, 1992), pp. 74-79.

⁶⁴ It is easy to forget that the growth of orders of teaching sisters was a radical development: 'jusqu'à alors [the founding of the Ursulines and similar orders] on ne pouvait imaginer que des femmes puissent se consacrer à Dieu en dehors d'un cloître, et que les femmes vouées à Dieu soient capables de vivre au milieu du monde', Jean de Viguier, 'Une forme nouvelle de vie consacrée: enseignantes et hospitalières en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles', in *Femmes et pouvoirs sous l'Ancien Régime*, ed. by Danielle Haase-Dubosc and Eliane Viennot (Paris et Marseille: Rivage, 1991), pp. 175-195 (p. 175).

⁶⁵ Gueudré, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Ursulines*, I, 327-329. There was a notorious case in 1616, when Mère Perrette de Bermond, one of founding mothers of French Ursulines, was sent from Lyon to found a convent of Ursulines at Moulin. So successful were their public sessions of Christian instruction, that more people were going to the convent chapel than to hear the preaching of the town's priests. As a

school performance, thus having the female lead acted by a girl enjoying the benefits of a well-rounded education.⁶⁶ This is supported by the fact that male roles are cut to a minimum, and the play is printed, possibly hinting at a successful run on a college stage. La Chapelle's martyr may have been intended to inspire students to aspire to believe in parity as well as piety.⁶⁷ Unlike the other Catherine plays, the intended if not actual, audience of this play was female. The very fact La Chapelle embarks on tragedy at all, traditionally a male preserve, is in itself an indication of women's progress in the sphere of letters. It is at this period that women playwrights, such as Madame de Villedieu, are seeing their works performed on the capital's stages.

It is striking to compare the 1663 representation of Catherine to a homily preached in the saint's honour by Bossuet in 1661 and 1663, therefore at the same period as de La Chapelle.⁶⁸ The bishop sees Catherine's defence as extraordinary:

C'est ici le miracle de la main de Dieu dans la Sainte que nous honorons; et quoique ce soit un grand prodige de voir Catherine savante, c'est encore quelque chose de plus surprenant de voir Catherine modeste, et ne se servir pas de cette science que pour faire régner Jésus-Christ.⁶⁹

After labelling a woman preacher as miraculous, he goes on to conclude: 'on les [les femmes] exclut des sciences, parce que quand elles pourroient les acquérir, elles auroient trop de peine à les porter' (p. 419). It is because of this feminine vanity that 'l'Église leur propose sainte Catherine au milieu d'une assemblée de philosophes' (ibid.). Bossuet firmly excludes any feminist reading of the legend and such an insistence suggests he was conscious of the martyr being used to defend feminine

result, the sisters were forbidden from teaching in church in 1623. Linda Lierheimer, 'Preaching or Teaching: Defining the Ursuline Mission in Seventeenth-Century France', in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 212-226. (p. 212).

⁶⁶ This existence of this play, together with the hypothesis that it may have been staged, contradicts Perry Gethner's observation: 'dans d'autres pays européens il y eut des pièces composées et jouées dans des couvents. Mais nous n'avons aucune trace d'une telle activité en France, à part un seul manuscrit écrit vers la fin du treizième siècle ou le début du quatorzième', *Femmes dramaturges en France (1650-1750): pièces choisies*, Biblio 17: 79, 2nd edn (Paris and Tübingen: Narr, 1997), p. 16.

⁶⁷ Christian Biet remarks that after the mid-1640s, 'le théâtre religieux se cantonne aux collèges: il est pédagogique avec des élèves-comédiens sous le regard d'un ministre-enseignant-auteur', 'La sainte, la prostituée, l'actrice: l'impossible modèle religieux dans *Théodore vierge et martyre* de Corneille', *Littératures Classiques*, 39 (2000); 81-103 (p. 102). La Chapelle is one possible feminine pedagogical example, as 'the twin demands of education and participation in intellectual life are repeated again and again in the feminist utterances of the 1660s', Siep Stuurman, 'Social Cartesianism: François Poulain de la Barre and the Origins of the Enlightenment', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1997), 617-640 (p. 628).

⁶⁸ The sermon was delivered in 1663 at the séminaire de Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet.

⁶⁹ Bossuet, *Panegyrique de Sainte Catherine*, in *Œuvres complètes*, XII, 406-431 (418).

emancipation. The choice of Catherine contrasts with the model of the Virgin Mary who was increasingly presented during the seventeenth century as 'quiet, reserved, submissive, and careful to avoid drawing any attention to herself in public'.⁷⁰

A similar portrayal of a female martyr can be found in the character of Princess Indegonde in *Les Isles le Bas* (1664). Levigilde is initially struck by her physical appearance, but does not comment on her beauty after he is impressed by her rhetoric: 'Regnez avec moy, regnez y je le veux,/ Souffrons les Espagnols se soubmettre à nos deux' (I, 4). She is treated as his equal, not simply as the potential spouse of his son. She does not gain a courtesy title of Queen through marriage, but is to reign with, and not beneath, Levigilde.⁷¹ He hands her the sceptre as a sign that she is powerful in her own right. Indegonde is not afraid to criticise the prince's intellectual, and spiritual, blindness:

INDEGONDE

En tels aveuglements la vie est dereglée,
Mais si c'est vous ou moy fondons en la raison.
Avant que de sortir hors de cette maison,
Escoutez s'il vous plaist, Sire, la difference
D'entre un aveuglement et la feinte croyance,
Aveugle est celui-la qui croit sans fondement
Appuyant ses raisons sur son seul jugement:
Pour dire que JESUS n'est pas tant que son Pere
Vous n'avez Ariens qu'une raison legere. (II, 1)

It is Indegonde's arguments that persuade Hermenigilde to abandon Arianism, as he can find no defence against her mind:

HERMENIGILDE

Parmy vos beaux discours je rencontre des charmes
Qui sont assez puissants pour m'arracher les armes,
J'y reconnois enfin des mots de verité

⁷⁰ Ellington, 'Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon', p. 259. Ellington believes that 'from the standpoint of either political or religious authorities who may have desired to exercise greater control over women's lives, and over the lives of the laity in general, the Virgin has finally become the perfect role model' (p. 259).

⁷¹ This was not, of course, the case in France where the Salic Law was applied to prevent a woman from reigning. The queen of France received her *sacre* at Saint-Denis, was not anointed with chrism from the *sainte ampoule*, had a smaller crown and throne than the king's. This symbolised her dependency on her husband, 'à l'épouse du roi est implicitement, mais immédiatement, signifiée sa différence de statut, sa dépendance vis-à-vis du souverain, son retrait par rapport au roi dans l'agencement du cérémonial', Fanny Cosandey, *La Reine de France: symbole et pouvoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 131. One pro-feminist writer uses the fact the long tradition of French female regents to argue for greater positions of power for women generally: 'dès la première naissance de la Monarchie des lys, le gouvernement des femmes n'y a t'il pas été reçu par les peuples en la personne de beaucoup de Regentes?', *Apologie de la science des dames par Cleante*, pp. 71-72.

Et dois chercher en eux quelque félicité.⁷²

The two central characters of *Les Isles le Bas*'s play are female, forming a polarised couple of evil stepmother and good, but wronged, foreign princess. Indegonde prompts her husband to cease fighting his father, a speech of which Tancrede, 'prince confident d'Herminigilde', remarks: 'Sire, ce bon conseil a tant de probité' (III, 6).

Ternet depicts a Sainte Reine who, rather than fleeing from her father's pressing demands that she abandon her Christianity, actually provides an eloquent verbal defence of her faith, giving a résumé of the significance of Christ: 'Il est vray qu'il est mort pour nôtre iniquité:/ Mais le troisième jour il est ressuscité' (I, 2). When he demands her obedience, she answers:

REYNE

Il est tres veritable, et dieu le veut ainsi,
Qu'un enfant bien appris doit avoir du soucy
D'honorer ses parens, leur porter reverence,
Les aymer, les cherir avec obeïssance,
Selon droit et raison, mais il [*sic*] ne doivent pas
Tellement s'écarter, et en faire du cas,
Qu'abandonnant leur Dieu au peril de leurs ames,
Ils encourent l'Enfer les supplices infames,
Je mourray bien plutôt, que pour respect humain
Je transgresse les Loix de mon Dieu souverain. (I, 2)

Reine refuses the jurisdiction of paternal authority, choosing to obey a higher power. This she does alone, of her own volition, without a male protector or confessor to place words in her mouth. In her outlining of Christian doctrine, Reine has the double objective of defending her personal faith and also of trying to convert her father. In this she infringes on another male preserve, for she performs the role of preaching.⁷³ She stubbornly rejects male constraints, for 'Les Princes de la terre avec tout leur pouvoir,/ Ne pourront ny ma foy, ny mon cœur émouvoir' (II, 20).⁷⁴ Reine enters into a polemical debate with Olibre about Christianity, and he is shocked at her audacity: 'De vray, je ne sçaurois assez mémerveiller,/ Comme vous oseriez seulement me parler' (II, 4). He promises her a successful future if she abandons her errors — in other words, the religion that guides her to lecture men— and submits herself to

⁷² 'L'Eloquence est un talent qui leur est naturel et si particulier, qu'on ne peut le disputer. Elles persuadent tout ce qu'elle veulent', La Barre, *De l'Egalité des deux sexes*, pp. 49-50.

⁷³ In a similar way, Blessebois's Reine speaks her mind: 'SAINTE REINE, voiant qu'Olibre ouvre la bouche pour lui parler, elle le previent' (II, 3). She resists following his 'sages conseils'.

⁷⁴ This is erroneously rendered as II, 4 in the 1682 edition.

recognition of man's dominance over woman in the rite of marriage.⁷⁵ When Reine is at her place of execution, her father makes a last futile attempt to bring his errant daughter back into patriarchal society:

CLEMENT Reyne, ma fille, hélas! que vous estes peu sage,
 Voulez vous faire honte à vôtre parentage?
 Faut-il que vous perdriez pour une opinion
 L'honneur que vous donnoit vôtre perfection,
 Olibre desiroit de vous faire sa femme,
 Les attraits de vos yeux avoient charmé son ame. (III, 5)

She refuses to become 'sa femme', the attachment of Olibre who only appreciates her external beauty. The male executioner unsuccessfully attempts to strip her naked, in order to display the female body, source of shame.⁷⁶ Her aunt makes a final, futile effort to convince her niece to reconsider her stand:

LEONICE Niepce, croyez donc à l'avis de vôtre Pere,
 Il est avantageux, benin, et salutaire:
 Vous vivrez tres heureuse, et nous serons joyeux
 De vous voir posséder un état glorieux.
 REYNE Mais, quoy? que gagnez-vous à me rompre la tête
 De discours superflus, je ne suis pas si bête. (III, 5)

The two women occupy two different poles, the Martha and Mary of women in society, with Leonice content to assent to male authority. Reine judges this position to be simply 'bête'. She will not so much possess 'un état glorieux' as be possessed by her husband. Olibre considers that torture may calm her: 'Les fouëts ne peuvent-ils adoucir son courage:/ Ne change-t'elle pas maintenant de langage?' In the same speech he talks of 'son insolence'. It is clear that her verbal refusal contravenes his sense of dignity, and how a woman is expected to behave. As she later tells her persecutor: 'Tu peux bien tourmenter ce frêle et foible corps,/ Mais jamais mon esprit ne craindra tes efforts' (IV, 4). The governor is astonished at her resistance to pain: 'Qui auroit pensé qu'une simple pucelle,/ Eusse pû supporter cette douleur cruelle' (IV, 5). Such sympathetic characterisations of female martyrs demonstrate an

⁷⁵ Marriage was a focus of some feminist concern. Speaking of Catherine des Roches (1542–87), Tilde A. Sankovitch observes that 'for Catherine, marriage was a servitude and must therefore be rejected in favor of its opposite, chastity', *French Women Writers and the Book: Myths of Access and Desire* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), p. 57.

⁷⁶ 'Son corps lui-même la désigne comme une créature du diable puisqu'il est le point du départ et le point d'aboutissement du désir charnel, spirale infernale qui happe l'homme et le livrerait sans merci au démon sans l'aide de Dieu', Reynes, *Couvents de femmes*, p. 122.

evolution in outlook regarding the position of women in society during the course of the seventeenth century. They also coincide with an increasing feminine composition of all sections of the audience from around 1630.⁷⁷

Martyrs always raise more questions than they answer, and female martyrs are particularly problematic. Roman society was based on the concept of *patria potestas*, the headship of the male, and it would not be unfair to observe that early-modern France had a similar ethos at its heart.⁷⁸ Male martyrs were often soldiers and in refusing to sacrifice or offer incense, did not actively disobey; they simply did not consent to one command. In submitting passively to judicial execution they were conforming to, if not confirming patriarchal society. Female martyrs on the other hand stubbornly refused to marry, often rebelling against family and society.⁷⁹ They refused to assent to the very act that defined their status.⁸⁰ This undermines the whole hierarchical structure.⁸¹ Christa Grössinger notes the frequency of paintings of holy women, and ‘although women were supposed to be obedient to their fathers and husbands, many of these female saints resisted parental marriage plans’.⁸² Brent Shaw remarks how in St Jerome’s account of a woman unjustly brought forward for execution, her bravery and the resistance of her body to the attacks of men ‘question not only the authority of the delating husband, but also that of the governor, and,

⁷⁷ Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences*, p. 112.

⁷⁸ In Ambrose’s account of Thecla, ‘her near martyrdom is caused entirely by her resistance to the dominant Roman cultural norm of marriage and procreation’, Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 86. La Chapelle portrays a martyr whose death is caused by her speaking up, and thus is directly related to her education in philosophy and rhetoric.

⁷⁹ This is certainly the case in Roman society, as ‘if a group was already under suspicion for illicit activities, the presence of celibate women in their circle could be used as further evidence for classifying Christianity as a social irritant. The Roman state made firm efforts to ensure that inclinations to remain unmarried and/or childless were thwarted by a legal system of rewards and penalties’, Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: the Power of Hysterical Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 167.

⁸⁰ ‘The first gender-defined social role for women was to be those who were exchanged in marriage transactions’, Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, p. 214. Furetière’s definition of *femme* is quite revealing, for he opines that ‘il y’a point de fille qui n’ait une grande passion pour avoir le nom de femme’. He also reminds his reader that ‘les femmes en France sont en la tutelle perpetuelle de leurs maris’, *Dictionnaire universel*, II, sig. [c4]v. This contrasts with Richelet’s definition of *femme*: ‘créature raisonnable faite de la main de Dieu pour tenir compagnie à l’homme’, *Dictionnaire françois*, p. 328.

⁸¹ ‘In the post-Constantinian period then, a girl wishing to dedicate herself to a religious life would need to have escaped the more peremptory manifestations of *patria potestas* and struggle against a social expectation tantamount to coercion into marriage’, Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 49.

⁸² Christa Grössinger, *Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 30.

finally, of the whole authority structure of the empire'.⁸³ Just as women could not hold citizenship in Rome, so they could not participate in government in seventeenth-century France. If, as Michel Foucault has observed, the powers of *patria potestas* devolved to the sovereign over his subjects, then La Chapelle's Catherine is not resisting her family, but rather the structure of society that condemns her to subordination.⁸⁴

One —perhaps the only— way in which women could achieve equality was through enduring the same death as their male counterparts. Through shedding their blood, women proved their courage.⁸⁵ Susanna Elm points out that 'since [women's] nature was by definition seen as 'weaker' and softer, their ascetic achievements in comparison to men were in effect greater'.⁸⁶ They suffer an identical death as male martyrs with no concessions to their gender. Blessebois has Sainte Reine's father assuring the prefect that his daughter's resistance will not last, as 'La constance enfin est bien rare à la femme' (III, 3).⁸⁷ Martyrdom was the great leveller, an act through which women could equal men in every way, and undermine a traditional argument against gender equality that 'elles n'ont pas le corps, si libre, si robuste, ny si vigoureux que les hommes'.⁸⁸ Bivero's 1634 treatise detailing crucified martyrs *Sacrum Sanctuarium crucis*, devotes a special section to crucified women and contains engravings of women emulating the sacrificial role of Christ.⁸⁹ However, since the majority of women in these illustrations are semi-naked or barely clothed,

⁸³ Brent D. Shaw, 'Body/Power/Identity: Passions of Martyrs', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4 (1996), 269-312 (p. 274).

⁸⁴ Foucault, *Histoire de la Sexualité*, I, 177.

⁸⁵ 'Ce qui est valorisé alors par l'homme, du côté de l'homme, est sans doute qu'il peut couler son sang, risquer sa vie, prendre celle des autres, par décision de son libre arbitre', Françoise Héritier, *Masculin/Féminin: la pensée de la différence* (Paris: Jacob, 1996), p. 234. 'The body of a female martyr might bleed to death under torture, and that torture might be described in consciously erotic language, but the body was not described as bleeding because of a sexual assault which forced her into corruption', Gillian Clark, 'Bodies and Blood: Late Antique Debate on Martyrdom, Virginity and Resurrection', in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity*, ed. by Dominic Montserrat (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 99-115 (p. 107).

⁸⁶ Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Makings of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 269.

⁸⁷ It was a common anti-feminist opinion that 'la femme est la mere de l'inconstance', Olivier, *Alphabet de l'imperfection*, p. 89. Another critic comments: 'elle est inconstante, volage, mobile, desloyalle, perfide, instable[,] legere et variable comme une giroüette', *La Mechanceté des femmes*, p. 64. Du Bosc prefers 'la Magdelaine constante' as a counter-argument, *L'Honneste femme*, p. 217.

⁸⁸ François Poulain de La Barre, *De l'excellence des hommes contre l'égalité des sexes* (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1675), p. 135.

⁸⁹ The body of Christ was sometimes depicted as female and Christ given female characteristics in medieval devotional texts. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 205-218.

this work is also an example of how religious literature could have an undercurrent of human sexuality verging on the pornographic (see Fig. 15).⁹⁰

The Church's official attitude towards virgin martyrs is best exemplified in its liturgy; in the collect for Masses of virgin martyrs (used until the *Novus Ordo Missæ* of 1970) we have: 'Deus, qui inter cetera potentia tuæ miracula, etiam in sexu fragili victoriam martyrii contulisti; concede propitius; ut qui beatæ N. Virginis et Martyris tuæ natalia colimus, per ejus ad te exempla gradiamur'.⁹¹ 'Sexus fragilis' indicates feebleness of mind as well as fragility of body.⁹² In other words, the weakness of women:

En définitive, la femme est conforme à l'idéal des Pères de l'Église et des premiers théologiens du christianisme lorsque ses yeux se parent de modestie et sa bouche de silence, lorsque ses oreilles ne laissent filtrer que des paroles de Dieu.⁹³

This is an ecclesiastical interpretation of the contribution of female martyrs, yet it is one that is consciously subverted by some seventeenth-century tragedians. The female martyr overcomes all of the criticisms levelled against women by seventeenth-century anti-feminist authors: she is constant, faithful, and above all, chaste. She undoes the damage performed by Eve and uses her tongue not for careless gossip or to persuade man to sin, but rather to lead others into truth and virtue.⁹⁴ She refuses to be silent, not only a sign of, but also the means of, maintaining feminine subordination.⁹⁵ Above all

⁹⁰ 'Devotional texts [...] graphically describe women martyrs, and such texts are often accompanied by pictures of their torture, dismemberment, and executions. Indeed, religious pornography featuring at least partially naked women increased throughout the Renaissance and Reformation periods', Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, p. 156. The frontispiece of the first edition of *Polyeucte* depicts the martyr hacking away at a voluptuous female idol (see Fig. 16).

⁹¹ *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum* (Antwerp: Plantin-Balthasar Moretus, 1682), pp. xxxvii-viii.

⁹² 'La femelle est ordinairement plus foible que le masle', Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, II, sig. [c4]^r. Furetière defines *foiblesse* not only as '[une] manque de forces', but also 'foiblesse d'esprit, signifie aussi Inconstance', imbecilité', *Dictionnaire*, II, sig. [h2]^v.

⁹³ Pierre Darmon, *Mythologie de la femme dans l'Ancienne France, XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 40.

⁹⁴ Soucy uses the example of Eve to argue for the parity of the two sexes: 'il ne falut qu'une parole de la femme pour tenter l'homme. Mais pour tenter la femme, il falut toute la ruzé, toute la malice, et toute l'industrie du demon', *Le Triomphe des dames*, p. 205. R. Howard Bloch observes that 'Adam is said to be the first to speak, the namer of things; woman—or the necessity of woman, her cause—seems to emanate, in turn from the imposition of names', 'Medieval Misogyny', *Representations*, 20 (1987), 1-24 (pp. 10-11).

⁹⁵ 'The virtue of silence was also a measure of women's subordination to their husbands, but more importantly it was a social value by which women could be discouraged from participation in the social sphere where speech was the primary instrument of power', Karen Jo Torjesen, 'Martyrs, Ascetics, and Gnostics: Gender-Crossing in Early Christianity', in *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures*:

she overcomes physical weakness and displays courage, often comparing favourably to male characters.⁹⁶ This effect is achieved by overcoming feminine disabilities, in other words by acquiring qualities associated with maleness.⁹⁷ It is not so much the element of torture in saints' passions that elevates the female victim to the rank of heroine, but rather the display of steadfast tenacity in the face of perils against purity and fidelity.⁹⁸ Elizabeth Castelli warns against relying too much on interpreting virgin-martyr narratives with psychoanalytical or feminine liberation approaches in mind, but views the female to male transition of virgin martyrs as a 'destabilisation of gender identity in the history of a tradition usually seen to cast gender in fairly fixed and dualistic terms'.⁹⁹ It is remarkable that some representations of Catherine feature her in the pose of St Michael, except she is crushing Maxentius instead of Satan, beneath her feet.¹⁰⁰ She allegorically overcomes the limitations imposed on her sex, as does the representation of Catherine in La Chapelle's tragedy.¹⁰¹

The example of the virgin martyr is an extremely two-edged one, as in her display of bravery and endurance she behaves in a characteristically masculine fashion, thereby proving herself to be untypical of her gender. Perhaps the supreme example of this is Joan of Arc, who invaded the vocation entirely denied to women,

Anthropological Cultures, ed. by Sabrina Petra Ramet (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 79-91 (p. 80).

⁹⁶ In embarking on martyrdom, women accomplish a 'spiritual manliness through the denial of female embodiment', Corrington, *Her Image of Salvation*, p. 23.

⁹⁷ J. L. Welch, commenting on the apocryphal Acts of Thecla, observes how the heroine 'invested with divine power, she suddenly gains the moral and physical strength to resist her intended husband, escape from her family home, beat up a male attacker, and endure a variety of public tortures. She exhibits, in other words, the courage and fortitude "of a man"', 'Cross-Dressing and Cross Purposes: Gender Possibilities in the Acts of Thecla', in *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological Cultures*, ed. by Sabrina Petra Ramet (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 66-78 (p. 69). This surely holds good for the staged *personæ* of Catherine, Reine, Dipne and Cecilia.

⁹⁸ 'This ability to choose suffering required a freedom of choice that women were not seen to possess. Women had been cursed with pain at the burden they must bear for the fault of Eve. Pain was their lot. It could not be chosen as it was already ordained', Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth, and the Body in Early Modern France* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2001), p. 128.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Castelli, '“I Will Make Mary Male”: Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity', in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. by Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 29-49 (p. 47).

¹⁰⁰ 'Catherine [stands] on the dwarfish body of the emperor, whose large crowned and bearded head peeps out from under the point of her sword, a markedly, and intendedly brutal image compared to the Gothic delicacy and wistfulness of the saint's own features. The Emperor is almost always present in Catherine's votive images, especially those originating in France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), pp. 159-160

¹⁰¹ 'The story of female resistance and liberation is inevitably encoded in the savagely violent terms of the virgin martyr's tale', Virginia Burrus, 'Reading Agnes: the Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3 (1995), 25-46 (p. 43).

that of a warrior.¹⁰² In casting off her femininity, Joan also laid aside her female dress and wore a male costume with short hair.¹⁰³ The spiritual marriage of Catherine with Jesus was a common motif in paintings of the saint. The subjugation of this young woman to Christ's domination may explain the martyr's acceptance with those playwrights and clergy wary of her example, for she still needs the bonds of a form of wedlock.¹⁰⁴ In this particular legend there is a final reminder that the martyr still suffers from the perceived disadvantages of her sex. For all her triumphs and endurance, the gushing milk symbolises female imperfection. Decapitation deprives the insubordinate princess of her discourse; she quite literally loses her mind, tongue and alluring appearance. Due to the subsequent revisions of male hagiographers, the virgin also loses her sting, for her blood does not spill, so the martyr will only have shed the imperfect blood of menses.¹⁰⁵ The fantastical presence of milk sanitises the heroine's rebellion, thus toning down the legend's ambivalent edge.¹⁰⁶

In Troterel's *Tragedie de sainte Agnes* there is a role reversal in typical gender attributes: Agnes appears to have strength and tenacity.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Martian

¹⁰² 'Wanting to be a French soldier, a leader of men into combat, took her from her simple life in Domrémy to the king in Chinon and Reims, [and] to the battlefields', Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Thrupp: Sutton, 1999), p. 7.

¹⁰³ 'Joan's transvestism was taken seriously by the assessors of Rouen, who condemned her for it, and also by herself', Warner, *Joan of Arc*, p. 140. George Bernard Shaw has his Joan exclaim 'I was no beauty: I was always a rough one. I might almost as well have been a man. Pity I wasn't', *Saint Joan* (London: Constable and Company, 1926), p. 102 (epilogue). There are other unusual examples of saintly gender-crossing; in the legend of St Wilgefortis (or Uncumber), the Portuguese Princess refused to marry the King of Sicily. After praying she grew a moustache and beard to dissuade her suitors, yet her father still had her crucified.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Castelli observes that in patristic writings such as those of Cyprian, 'the notion of virginity as liberation from the exigencies of earthly marriage leads into the theme of celestial marriage with Christ', 'Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 2:1 (1986), 61-88 (p. 71). The concept of the brideship of Christ had pre- (and post-) Christian pagan antecedents, where 'the dedication to the use of the gods of living women during their whole lifetime, or for limited periods—a practice customary among many peoples—is based on the idea of sexual relations between the dedicated women and the god to whom they are given', Elsie Clews Parsons, 'The Religious Dedication of Women', *American Journal of Sociology*, 11 (1906), 610-622 (p. 611).

¹⁰⁵ It is pertinent to note that hagiographers in medieval and early modern Europe often assumed that the sanctified female body contained only pure blood and therefore had no need to menstruate, as was the case with SS Lutgard and Columba, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 123, 138, 148 and 211.

¹⁰⁶ Marina Warner points out the milk-bearing function of women was open to negative interpretation: 'womankind had been especially punished by Eve's sin by the sufferings of childbearing in all its biological aspects, from menstruation to lactation', *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. 202.

¹⁰⁷ 'Agnes and Pelagia are strangely masculine girls, in the same act asserting their wills triumphantly and offering their bodies submissively, simultaneously welcoming the sword's violence', Virginia Burrus, '“Equipped for Victory”: Ambrose and the Gendering of Orthodoxy', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4 (1996), 461-475 (p. 472)

is emasculated by love: 'C'est par trop enduré, je ne puis plus attendre,/ Je suis demy bruslé, je suis réduit en cendre' (II). He is no longer master of his own body:

MARTIAN Il n'en faut point douter, tout le corps me chancelle,
Tant je suis ravy d'aise et de contentement,
Embardis toy ma langue et parle assurément.
AGNES Malheureuse rencontre! ô puissance divine!
Ne voy-je pas celui qui poursuit ma ruine? (II)

Agnes, on the other hand, is in control of herself, of the situation and also over him. She uses imperatives to express her will: 'Vous ne me tenez pas allez retirez vous' (II). After her refusal we are told that he takes refuge: 'Martian, estant couché dans son lict, se plaint' (p. 35). Agnes refuses to be intimidated by Simphonie:

AGNES Ainsi Seigneur, ainsi reprenez Simphonie,
Convertissant en bien sa fiere tyrannie!
SIMPHRONIE Ha, ha, ha, voila bien doctement sermonné!
Voila bien discouru, voila bien raisonné,
Ces fluides discours passeroient en pratique,
Ceux du grand Cicéron, maistre en la rhétorique,
[...]
Mais respondes un peu, d'où vient cette science? (III)

It is not what she says that surprises him, as more the fact that she is an educated woman. In a similar way Buisson's Jullien takes on the quality of a female virgin-martyr against his duty to marry: 'Pureté, dans tous lieux je suivray ton honneur/ Ouy c'est toy qui me cache, et c'est toy qui m'envoye' (I, 5). Just as the female martyrs assume maleness in their path towards martyrdom, so it can be said that male martyrs do not actively fight the injustice imposed on them, and though they are often military leaders, they passively accept punishment.¹⁰⁸ Becoming female in this way was a sign of the humility of the path towards the crown of martyrdom.¹⁰⁹ In tragedies of female

¹⁰⁸ 'Male martyrs in the *Legenda Aurea* tend to be laconic during their passion; this is especially true of soldier-saints', McInerney, 'Rhetoric, Power, and Integrity', p. 56. Jacqueline Van Baelen observes of St Genest: 'le discours de Marcelle exprime une condamnation du christianisme parce que celui-ci implique selon elle une attitude passive: l'homme renonce à agir et se laisse faire, il accepte au lieu de lutter. Ce que Marcelle ne voit pas et ce qu'Adrien a compris, c'est que même la passivité peut devenir une forme d'action extrêmement dangereuse parce qu'intellectuelle et spirituelle', *Rotrou, le héros tragique*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁹ 'When male writers took femaleness as an image to describe their renunciation of the world, they sometimes said explicitly that women were too weak to be human. They sometimes implied that their own role reversal—that is, their appropriation of or choice for lowliness—was a superior "femaleness" to the femaleness of women, which was not chosen', Caroline Walker Bynum, '“And Women His Humanity”: Female Imagery in the Late Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages', in *Gender and*

martyrs, some male characters seem to be defined by their aggressive traits. There is no shortage of sexually fuelled males eager to deflower pubescent victims. When denied this, they resort to sadistic behaviour in ordering, presiding and occasionally enacting, the torture, dismemberment and decapitation of the girls who have rejected their advances.¹¹⁰ Our male martyrs in rejecting their sexuality also reject any display of aggression and become passive agents. Rather than face Pauline in a verbal confrontation, Polyeucte opts to flee her presence, thus abandoning his masculinity in both its sexual and violent inclinations.¹¹¹ Joan Scott believes that 'the principle of masculinity rests on the necessary repression of feminine aspects', which does not seem to be altogether the case with Polyeucte.¹¹²

Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols, ed. by C. W. Bynum, Stevan Harrell and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), pp. 257-289 (p. 269).

¹¹⁰ Some of the methods of torture employed on the virgin-martyrs are also associated with sadomasochistic practices, Dolf Zillmann, *Connections between Sexuality and Aggression*, 2nd edn (Mahwah and London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998), pp. 14-17. It is possible to interpret some of the tyrants' eagerness to punish their female transgressors as evidence of their latent sadism, Zillmann alludes to cases of rape where women have had their breasts burnt and bodies mutilated prior to murder, a circumstance not dissimilar to female martyrs, with the exception that the victim does not feel pain or display fear (p. 19). Marina Warner highlights the fact that the 'female martyrs of the Christian calendar are assaulted in any number of ingenious and often sexual ways', *Alone of All Her Sex*, p. 71. Wioleta Polinska contends that martyrdom scenes (and here one can understand all visual displays) have an underlying theme of 'the punishment of women's bodies for the seduction they offer to men', 'Dangerous Bodies: Women's Nakedness and Theology', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 16 (2000), 45-62 (p. 51).

¹¹¹ Brent D. Shaw notes that in the Acts of Perpetua, the martyr 'broke with the normative body language in a way that signalled an aggressiveness that was not one of conventional femininity', 'The Passion of Perpetua', *Past and Present*, 139 (1993), 3-45 (p. 4). 'Un des aspects scandaleux de la conduite de Polyeucte, c'est qu'il a renoncé à son pouvoir de prince, pour se faire faible parmi les faibles. La seule arme de Polyeucte, la provocation, est une arme de femme chez Corneille', Bem, 'Corneille à l'épreuve du désir', p. 88.

¹¹² Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 38.

CONCLUSION

Men have not always died in the same way. With some justice people have spoken of changing styles of dying. There are also even various styles of martyrdom.

—Karl Rahner¹

In this thesis, my primary consideration is to provide an overview of a dramatic sub-genre that has been almost completely ignored by commentators. While the figure of the martyr was integral to the polemic of sixteenth-century apologists, with both Protestant and Catholic writers attempting to appropriate the heroic model, the martyr on the seventeenth-century French stage was interpreted by Catholic authors.² It is possible that, in some cases, the choice of some embellished martyr's legends may have represented an implicit defence of traditional hagiographical models in the face of increasing critical scrutiny attention by organisations such as the Bollandists. The annual celebration by the town of Alise-Sainte-Reine is an obvious example. I contend that, far from being cast in a rigid mould, portrayals of the martyr-figure are extremely diverse. Dependent on the views of these authors, martyrs can appear to refuse kingly jurisdiction, or even on the other hand, offer their sacrifices as much to defending royal authority as the honour of Christ. John Lyons comments that:

While tragedy permits the people 'd'examiner toutes les actions de leurs Princes', writes d'Aubignac, the playwright is obligated to show that French kings, at least, do *not* fail. The writer must confirm this political and ethical conception for the people and 'les entretenir dans cette pieuse croyance'.³

Religious drama might have been expected to conform to these criteria, but I believe that La Serre and Desfontaines use the martyr-play as a discreet means of voicing their discontent with contemporary government.⁴ I have demonstrated that the martyr-play cannot be treated,

¹ Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, trans. by C. H. Henkey (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 117.

² '[E]arly modern controversialists writing in the martyrological tradition frequently battled over the same rhetorical ground, attempting to harness martyrology's power for discrete causes', Susannah Brietz Monta, '“Thou falls't blessed martyr”: Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and the Polemics of Conscience', *ELR*, 30 (2000), 262-283 (p. 263).

³ John D. Lyons, *Kingdom of Disorder: the Theory of Tragedy in Classical France*, *Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures*, 18 (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), p. 136.

⁴ 'The theater's dominance in periods of historical transition, in those periods of enormous social trauma and change, seems particularly acute perhaps because, more than any other form of representation, the theater most actively engages individual myths – those narratives individuals construct and are constructed by in order to explain and thus situate themselves within social and economic forces that preexist them– with collective narratives', Mitchell Greenberg, 'Racine, Oedipus, and Absolute Fantasies', *Diacritics*, 28:3 (1998), 40-61 (p. 45).

at least not in every instance, as mere pious drama, and that it is not only the plays of Corneille and Rotrou that deserve particular attention in their political outlook. I argue that these two playwrights' choice of subject matter is not as surprising as some commentators have suggested. There was over half a century of provincial martyr-plays before the 1640s, not to mention the historical antecedents of the *mystère*. The influence of the provinces has sometimes been dismissed, and even Corneille can be portrayed as a thoroughly Parisian dramatist, whereas twenty-six of his thirty-two complete plays were written in Rouen.⁵

I have attempted to demonstrate in this project that the choice of a martyr as a literary subject was characterised by an inherent ambivalence, particularly with regard to the classic martyr's political stance, gender role and voluntary death.⁶ This must surely be one of the factors accounting for the disappearance of the martyr-play at the end of the seventeenth century.⁷ This still leaves the fact that tragedies in which an absolute sovereign is openly defied, had a certain degree of commercial and dramatic success in a period of instability: the 1640s. I suggest that one reason the plays were tolerated so readily is that they depict the results of rebellion: the martyrs are executed with methods still employed in seventeenth-century Europe. Thus, the tragedies can operate on two levels. On one, there is the inspiring example of the martyr. On the other, there is the reminder that the martyr's example is rare, and there is a subtle imperative that if such revolt is emulated, then the rebel will suffer, like the martyr, the due penalty for dissension. The theatrical aspects of the martyr's death and the spectacle of the scaffold are intimately linked, since legal penalties had to be public in order to be effective.⁸ Foucault stresses how the punishment inflicted on an individual was less to do with justice, than as a definitive reminder of royal power over a dissenting individual's body.⁹ An occasion of public execution 'constitue aussi l'une des formes les plus

⁵ 'To ignore this provincial context perilously risks importing Parisian or centrist preoccupations into plays displaying a more traditionalist image of monarchy', Susan Read Baker, Review of David Clarke, *Pierre Corneille: Politics and Political Drama*, *Modern Philology*, 92 (1994), 240-243 (p. 240).

⁶ 'The martyr's death is an ambiguous event', Ekkehard Mühlenberg, 'The Martyr's Death and its Literary Presentation', ed. by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *Studia Patristica*, 29 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), pp. 85-100 (p. 87).

⁷ The plays' decline coincides with the promulgation of the 1670 *Ordonnance criminelle* which listed every suicide as major crime ranking with heresy and treason. A noble would posthumously lose his noble status *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*, A. Alvarez, 'The Background', in *Suicide: The Philosophical Issues*, ed. by M. Pabst Battin and David J. Mayo (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 7-32 (p. 9).

⁸ 'Dans les cérémonies du supplice, le personnage principal, c'est le peuple', Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 61. 'La publicité de la punition ne doit pas répandre un effet physique de terreur; elle doit ouvrir un livre de lecture', (p. 113).

⁹ Public execution enacted 'sur le corps du criminel, la présence déchaînée du souverain. Le supplice ne rétablissait pas la justice; il réactivait le pouvoir', Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p. 53.

spectaculaires de communication entre le pouvoir et les sujets'.¹⁰ In this way, both capital punishment and its representation serve as a form of 'la liturgie de la peur'.¹¹ The martyr-play focuses on rebellion though, at the same time, gives space to the judicial results of such a position, another instance of the play's contradictory nature.¹² On the other hand, crowd witnessing an execution could potentially, and occasionally did, prevent or even revolt against what they saw as an unjust, or badly performed death sentence.¹³ In a similar way, one reason for official suspicion of popular theatre was the potentially subversive nature of a public crowd, even though disturbances were usually restricted to rowdy gatecrashers.¹⁴

As discussed in Chapter One, martyrdom was a ubiquitous theme in all branches of the arts, yet the martyr has a marked presence on the French stage throughout the greater part of the seventeenth century, a phenomenon not repeated in other European countries. I have argued that the repressive climate following Henri IV's assassination, together with the political changes this heralded, is a significant factor in the stage martyr's popularity. The discourse on the sacredness of the monarch's person is not altogether removed from the sanctity of the martyr's body, as Baro highlighted in the dedication of his tragedy. The process that led to absolutism becoming the received political and religious doctrine on monarchy, often concentrated the extraordinary nature of the French sovereign after his *sacre*. Most important was the traditional use of oil taken from the *sainte ampoule*, which according to legend had been brought from heaven by an angel at Clovis's baptism.¹⁵ The French king was accordingly anointed directly from God, and was allowed to act as deacon at High Mass, and communicate under both species, privileges reserved for clerics in major orders.¹⁶ These

¹⁰ Robert Muchembled, *Le Temps des supplices: de l'obéissance sous les rois absolus, XV^e-XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Colin, 1992), p. 115.

¹¹ This is a term coined by Muchembled to describe justice in seventeenth-century France, *Le Temps des supplices*, p. 154. 'The practice of criminal justice was one of the means by which authorities, with or without success, attempted to keep the population in line. As the position of these authorities changed, the character of criminal justice changed.' Peter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression from a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 1.

¹² The martyr-play continued the tradition of the violent *mystères*. John Spalding Gattton judges that 'the saint play, as reinterpreted by Pierre Corneille, spoke with renewed power and fresh purpose, but without visible bloodshed', '“There Must Be Blood”: Mutilation and Martyrdom on the Medieval Stage', in *Violence in Drama*, ed. by James Redmond, *Themes in Drama*, 13 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 79-91 (p. 88). The absence of immediate gore does not preclude authentic violence. In any case, Gattton forgets that the arrival of Pauline, splattered with the freshly shed blood of her husband, provides at least one powerful moment of visual violence (V, 5).

¹³ Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p. 63.

¹⁴ Lough, *Paris Theatre Audiences*, pp. 75-76 and 94-97.

¹⁵ Guillaume du Peyrat, *L'Histoire ecclesiastique de la cour ou les antiquitez et recherches de la chapelle, et oratoire du Roy de France, depuis Clovis I. jusques nostre temps* (Paris: Henry Sara, 1645), p. 728.

¹⁶ Peyrat goes on to mention of communion under both species: 'neanmoins nos Roys en ont tousjours pratiqué l'usage; mesmes sous le Roy Henry III' (*L'Histoire ecclesiastique*, p. 729). This implies that even an evil king

peculiarities 'monstrent bien qu'ils ne sont pas purs laïques: mais que participans à la Prestrise, ils ont des graces particulieres de Dieu'.¹⁷ The mystical aspect of the French king was reinforced by the resurgence of the cultus of St Louis, a trend that started in 1618 and coincided with the beginning of the personal rule of Louis XIII, a little after the assassination of Concini.¹⁸ Marc Bloch judges that 'jamais époque n'a plus nettement et, peut-on dire, plus crûment que le XVII^e siècle, accentué la nature quasi-divine de l'institution et même de la personne royale'.¹⁹ It seems therefore rather apt that some authors criticise abuses of royal government through the examples of canonised saints. On the other hand, the seditious nature of some martyrs is simply reinvented according to the whims of the author. Olivier's Hermenigilde prefers to die rather than be tainted with any accusation of raising troops against his father, despite the fact that source accounts reveal that he declared himself king and conspired with the Greeks to oust his father. Corneille opened the floodgates with his modifications of the legend of Polyuctos. These were done ostensibly out of a desire to render the martyr more entertaining, but Corneille implicitly demonstrated that only conscious revisionism can shed the martyr of his political rebellion.

The martyr signified a new manifestation of the hero, so 'la figure exemplaire n'est plus, comme au Moyen Age et encore au XVI^e siècle, le guerrier refoulant les armées d'Islam, mais le martyr qui, armé de sa seule foi, triomphe de son propre corps et de ses propres effets'.²⁰ Christian Biet suggests that a new form of saintliness appeared during the seventeenth century, one that no longer portrayed the saint as a blood-drenched martyr, banishing the polarised extremes of tyranny and cruelty.²¹ This is a feasible motive behind the martyr-play's decline in the latter half of the century. Secular tragedies, such as versions of the legend of the rape of Lucretia by Chevreau and Du Ryer in the mid-1630s, whetted the

possesses special graces and accordingly should be obeyed, thus the author distances himself from theories of resistance.

¹⁷ Peyrat, *L'Histoire ecclesiastique*, p. 729.

¹⁸ On 25 August, Louis XIII and his brother assisted at the office of St Louis in the Jesuit house on the rue Saint-Antoine at Paris, an event which marked 'la restauration royale et solennelle du culte de saint Louis', Alain Boureau, 'Les enseignements absolutistes de saint Louis, 1610–1630', in *La Monarchie absolutiste et l'histoire en France: théories du pouvoir, propagandes monarchiques et mythologies nationales*, ed. by Chantal Grell and François Laplanche, Mythes, Critique et Histoire, 1 (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1986), pp. 79–97 (p. 79). 'La seule élaboration absolutiste de l'image de saint Louis entre 1618 et 1627 nous paraît dériver indirectement d'un éloge mystique de la personne même du roi' (p. 83).

¹⁹ Marc Bloch, *Les Rois thématurges: études sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale, particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Paris and Strasbourg: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 1924), p. 351.

²⁰ Raffy, *Le "Papinianus" d'Andreas Gryphius*, p. 90.

²¹ Biet, 'La sainte, la prostituée, l'actrice', p. 81.

public's appetite for violence and violation of women.²² This taste was reflected in the presence of chaste virgin martyrs, with the difference that rape is only frustrated, never achieved. It has recently been said that 'the power of the martyr lies in his or her ability to validate controversial beliefs, to sacralize a cause, to inspire group cohesion and devotion and, ultimately, to make the structure of life meanings plausible'.²³ It is precisely this aspect of the martyr that makes him or her a timeless figure, a hero with whom an audience can identify yet who also, at the same time, repulses them.

The martyr as a dramatic subject is far from being consigned to distant history. Shaw, Eliot, and Bolt have all presented twentieth-century depictions of historical martyrs in the English language. In France, Henri Ghéon has staged several martyr-saints, and Jean Anouilh is drawn to Joan of Arc, as well as to the legends of Thomas of Canterbury and Thomas More.²⁴ Anouilh's English martyr observes just before his execution:

THOMAS MORE

Beaucoup de têtes seront sans doute tombées, c'est vrai alors –pour rien aux yeux de ceux qui auront accepté de durer et de survivre– mais l'écho de tous ces refus ne sera pas tu. C'est l'essentiel.²⁵

This author also staged a version of *Antigone* for an audience living in an occupied capital city (4 February 1944 at the théâtre de l'Atelier). This Greek character is in many respects a pre-Christian archetype of a martyr.²⁶ *Antigone* declares: 'je suis là pour vous dire non et pour mourir' (p. 89). The reminder of the power of an individual's defiance, and the impossibility of any régime to crush such spirits, was as valid and relevant in 1944 as it had been in 1644. This is confirmed by an anecdote of Raymond Lebègue, who taught *Polyeucte* to *agrégation* students during the early 1940s, some of whom were involved in Resistance activities.²⁷ Robert Potter has suggested that Lars von Trier's 1996 film, *Breaking the Waves*, 'in its

²² Urbain Chevreau, *Lucrece romaine* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1638) and Du Ryer, *Lucrece* (Paris: Antoine de Sommerville, 1638). Both plays were performed during 1636. 'L'histoire de cette femme violée par Sexte Tarquin est tout à la fois tragique et spectaculaire: tragique car Lucrece st la victime innocente d'un tyran, spectaculaire car l'action principale —le viol— est une action violente', Alice Duroux, 'Lucrece, ou le renouveau de la tragédie: éléments pour une dramaturgie de la tragédie des années 1630–1640', *Littératures Classiques*, 42 (2001), 167–179 (p. 168). This is also an apt judgement of the virgin martyr tragedy.

²³ Weiner, *The Martyr's Conviction*, p. 138.

²⁴ Henri Ghéon, *Le Comédien et la grâce* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1925). Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1946); *L'Alouette* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1953); *Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1959); *Thomas More ou l'homme libre* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1987).

²⁵ Anouilh, *Thomas More*, p. 135. Blaise Pascal wrote that 'Le silence est la plus grande persécution: jamais les saints ne se sont tus', *Pensées*, ed. by Léon Brunschvig (Paris: Garnier, 1964), p. 324.

²⁶ *Antigone* is also a virgin who forsakes her betrothed to achieve a greater end. Nicole Loraux stresses how Greek female figures such as *Antigone* and *Iphigenia* were virgins, and 'du côté des jeunes filles en fleurs, c'est le sacrifice qui domine, et le sang versé', *Façons tragiques de tuer une femme* (Paris: Hachette, 1985), p. 61.

shrewd mixture of voyeuristic depravity and heroic sanctity, [...] rediscovers what seems to be an old and successful dramatic formula'.²⁸ The martyr is far from being dead, reminding every generation that 'seul une réalité absolue peut susciter l'hommage d'un sacrifice absolu. Aussi un témoin est-il plus puissant mort que vivant'.²⁹

Seventeenth-century martyr accounts, both of early and contemporary heroes, present victims going to deaths in an almost standardised format. They are asked identical questions, offered the matching chances to recant and deliver similar pre-execution speeches. Looking at contemporary narratives of martyrs in Japan and Canada during the seventeenth century, one is left with the impression that these martyrs conform to a pre-set idea of how they should behave.³⁰ A 1630 account relates how a Japanese martyr named Monique refuses to marry as she has devoted herself to Christ, like Agnes and Catherine, and when interrogated replies, like Genest, 'qu'elle perdrait plutôt mille vies, que l'intégrité de la foi et de sa Pudicité'.³¹ The professional and school stage could have had a mimetic function in informing spectators during their formative years on the characteristics of the martyr. It is conceivable that those slain on the mission-field may have been inspired and encouraged by memories of the fortitude of the Eustache, Polyeucte or Genest they had seen or read.

²⁷ 'Comme Polyeucte, ils avaient obéi non aux lois écrites, mais à un impératif supérieur', Lebègue, *Études sur le théâtre français*, II, 27.

²⁸ Unpublished conference paper, 'Pornography and the Saint's Play' (Colloquium of the *Société Internationale pour l'Étude du Théâtre Médiéval*, Odense, Denmark, August 1998), available in an online format at: http://www.sdu.dk/hum/midlab/theatre/papers/Robert_Potter.html (p. 1). This paper is somewhat disappointing. Despite detailing the resemblance between medieval female virgin tales and the contemporary film, Potter does not discuss narrative theory, nor does he mention basic plot patterns of literature.

²⁹ E. Barbotin, 'Le sens existentiel du témoignage et du martyre', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 35 (1961), 176-182 (p. 182).

³⁰ 'Thomas de Cantorbéry, se trouvant dans une situation sans issue lors de son conflit avec le pouvoir royal, avait, en quelque sorte, "mimé" un comportement archétypique', Boureau, *La Légende Dorée*, p. 113. See also Victor Turner, 'Religious Paradigms and Political Action: Thomas Beckett at the Council of Northampton', in *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, ed. by V. W. Turner (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 60-94.

³¹ Bosio, *Relation de l'admirable constance des chrétiens japonais*, p. 9. See Chapter Two, p. 116.

APPENDIX

Corpus of the French Martyr-Play, 1596-1675

This is a revised version of a corpus published in previous articles ('The Martyr-Figure as Transgressor in Seventeenth-Century French Theatre' in *Les Lieux Interdits: Transgressions in French Literature*, ed. by L. Duffy and A. Tudor (Hull: Hull University Press, 1998) pp. 63-89, and 'Resistance Theories, Orthodoxy and Subversive Drama in Early Modern France', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 21 (1999), 57-73). The chronology covers plays in French or by French authors.

The list of published plays is as complete as the present state of knowledge permits. This is a summary list, and full publishing details are given in the bibliography for those plays that I have consulted (the majority of surviving plays). I have also included a number of notable recorded performances that would presumably have been printed but are no longer extant. I include a representative selection of Jesuit college plays, choosing works whose printed versions were to prove influential: sections of Cellot's *Sanctus Adrianus*, for example, were heavily paraphrased by Rotrou for the inner-play of his martyr tragedy.

Sometimes there are difficulties in martyrological classification. Nevertheless, I have included Joan of Arc who was popularly accredited with the glory of martyrdom, though discounted other examples of populist 'canonisation' such as Mary Stuart, about whom there are several seventeenth-century tragedies, and the execution of Mary is the last engraving in Richard Verstegan's martyrology. La Calprenède's 1638 tragedy, *Jeanne, reine d'Angleterre*, about Lady Jane Grey, has similarly been precluded. Saint Alexis, the subject of a drama by Desfontaines, is also listed as this saint died as a result of mistreatment and imprisonment. The Old-Testament figure of Susanna is included as the subject of one play since she condemned to death in order to preserve her virtue, even though this sentence was subsequently revoked.

I am particularly indebted to the following authors for this list (full biographical details of their works is to be found in the bibliography and I list these sources in order of usefulness in this list's compilation): Street, Lancaster, Desgraves, Parfaict and McCabe. A useful Internet source of tragedies performed in seventeenth-century France is the 'Calendrier des spectacles sous l'Ancien Régime 1601-1774' on Barry Russell's *foires* project (<http://foires.net/cal/cal.shtml>), though no sources are provided for any of the individual plays. The site complements this chronology since it contains many of the tragedies named here, though it has not been used as a direct reference source.

Date	Title	Author	Place of Publication (or performance if not printed)
1596	<i>Machabée, tragoedie du martyre de sept frères, et de Solomone leur mere</i>	J. Virey	Rouen
	<i>S Jacques</i>	B. Bardón de Brun	Limoges
	<i>Dioclétiane</i>	Laudun d'Aigaliers	Paris
	<i>Dioclétiane</i>	J. Scybillé	Place and Date uncertain
1601	<i>Saint Paulin</i>	N.-G. Du Rivet	Pont-à-Mousson
1602	<i>Histoire de Madame sainte Catherine</i>	Collège	Lille
1604	<i>La Double victoire, ou Eustache victorieux des Daces, et Martyr</i>	Collège	Rouen
1606	<i>Jeanne d'Arques</i>	Brunet	Rouen
	<i>Tragedie de Jeanne d'Arques</i>	Anon.	Rouen
	<i>Saint Clouard Tragedie</i>	J. Heudon	Rouen
	<i>La Ceciliade ou martyre sanglant de sainte Cecile</i>	N. Soret	Paris
1607	<i>La decollation de saint Jean Baptiste</i>	Collège	Chabeuil
1609	<i>S. Blaise</i>	Anon.	Le Puy
1611	<i>Jeanne d'Arques</i>	Brunet	Rouen
1612	<i>S. Eustache</i>	Anon.	Barjols
1613	<i>S. Tarentien et son compagnons</i>	Collège	Namur
1614	<i>Vie de tres illustres vierges et martyres stes Catherine et Ursule</i>	Anon.	Liège
1615	<i>Tragedie de Sainte Agnes</i>	P. Troterel	Rouen
1616	<i>Tragedie du glorieux et illustre martyre de cinq Japonais</i>	Collège	Namur
1617	<i>S. Pierre et S. Paul</i>	Collège	Annecy
	<i>S. Valerien, martyr</i>	Anon.	Arras
1618	<i>Ste Catherine</i>	J. Boissin de Gallardon	Lyon

1618	<i>Martyre de saint Vincent</i>	J. Boissin de Gallardon	Lyon
	<i>Theatre sanglant de Sainte Catherine martyre</i>	J. Labarde	Paris
1619	<i>Sainte Catherine</i>	E. Poytevin	Paris
1620	<i>S. Jean-Baptiste</i>	Anon.	Solliès-Pont
	<i>Felicitas</i>	P. Caussin	Paris
	<i>Hermenigildus</i>	P. Caussin	Paris
	<i>Agnès</i>	J. Virey	Rouen
1621	<i>La vie de sainte Justine et de saint Cyprien</i>	D. Coppée	Liège
	<i>Thomas More</i>	Anon.	Courtrai
1622	<i>Ste Catherine</i>	(performance)	Le Beausset
	<i>S. Eustache</i>	(performance)	Barjols
1623	<i>S. Sebastien</i>	(performance)	Cotignac
1624	<i>Tragedie de saint Lambert, patron de Liège</i>	D. Coppée	Liège
1625	<i>Antioche, tragedie traitant le martyre de sept enfants machabéens</i>	J.-B. Le Francq	Paris
	<i>Saint Eustache</i>	Collège	Saint-Omer
	<i>Henricus Octavus seu Schisma anglicanum</i>	N. de Vernulz	Louvain
1626	<i>Jeanne d'Arques</i>	Anon.	Troyes
1627	<i>Tragedie de S. Norbert</i>	Anon.	Unknown
	<i>Tragedie du martyre de S. Sebastien</i>	V. Borrée	Unknown
1628	<i>Le Martyre de Saint Gervais</i>	F. Chevreau	Paris
	<i>Lambertiade</i>	Anon.	Luxembourg
	<i>La tragedie du Martyre et mort de saint Sebastien</i>	E. Grandjean	Nancy
1630	<i>S. Sebastien, martyr</i>	Collège	Pont-à-Mousson
	<i>Sanctus Adriannus Martyr</i>	L. Cellot	La Flèche
1631	<i>Martire de S. Estienne</i>	(performance)	Sollières
1632	<i>Saint Lambert</i>	N. de Vernulz	Louvain
	<i>Le martyre de Saint Eustache</i>	P. Bello	Liège

1632	<i>Herodes Infanticida</i>	D. Heinsius	Leiden
1633	<i>Histoire de sainte Catherine</i>	(performance)	Fréjus
1634	<i>Sainte Barbe</i>	Brunet	Troyes
	<i>L'Hystoire de sainte Susanne</i>	Anon.	Troyes
1635	<i>Saint Sebastien</i>	Croock	Ghent
	<i>Neanias ou Procopius Martyr</i>	P. Berthelot	Paris
1641	<i>Hermenigilde tragedie</i>	G. de La Calprenède	Paris
1642	<i>La Pucelle d'Orleans</i>	J. H. d'Aubignac	Paris
	<i>Thomas Morus ou le triomphe de la foy et de la constance</i>	J. Puget de La Serre	Paris
1643	<i>Sainte Catherine tragedie</i>	J. Puget de La Serre	Paris
1643	<i>Polyeucte martyr</i>	P. Corneille	Paris
	<i>Le Martyre de saint Eustache</i>	N.-M. Desfontaines	Paris
1645	<i>L'Illustre comedien ou le martyr de saint Genest</i>	N.-M. Desfontaines	Paris
	<i>L'Illustre Olympie ou le S. Alexis</i>	N.-M. Desfontaines	Paris
	<i>Théodore, vierge et martyr</i>	P. Corneille	Paris
1646	<i>Sainte Agnès</i>	M. Bouvier	Paris
1647	<i>Le fils exilé ou le martyr de saint Clair</i>	P. Mouffle	Paris
	<i>Le Martyre de Saint Hermenegilde</i>	Collège	Beauvais
1648	<i>Le Veritable St Genest</i>	J. Rotrou	Paris
1649	<i>Le martyr de sainte Catherine</i>	J. H. d'Aubignac?	Caen
	<i>La mort de Théandre</i>	P. Chevillard	Orléans
	<i>S. Eustache martyr, Poème dramatique</i>	B. Baro	Paris
	<i>Le Martyre de Saints Jullien et Celse</i>	P. du Buisson	Montpellier
1650	<i>Les Chastes Martirs</i>	M. Cosnard	Paris
	<i>Les Jumeaux Martyrs</i>	A. de Saint-Balmon	Paris
	<i>Hermenigilde</i>	G. Olivier	Auxerre
	<i>Sainte Euphrosyne ou la funeste rencontre</i>	Performance	Liège (Carmelite convent)

1653	<i>La Decollation de Saint Jean-Baptiste</i>	J. Bisson	Rouen
1654	<i>Indegonde tragedie</i>	J. de Montauban	Paris
	<i>Natalie ou la Generosite Chrestienne</i>	Montgaudier	Paris
	<i>La Forte Romaine</i>	M. Vallée	Paris
	<i>La Susanne chrestienne</i>	A. Jourdain	Paris
	<i>Agathonphile Martyr</i>	F. Pascal	Lyon
1655	<i>Le Martyre de sainte Ursule</i>	Yvernaud	Poitiers
1657	<i>Cécilia virgo et martyr</i>	C. de Lignièrès	Paris
1658	<i>Dorothee ou la victorieuse martire</i>	Rampale	Lyon
1658	<i>Sainte Dorothee</i>	N. de Le Ville	Louvain
	<i>Sainte Ursule</i>	N. de Le Ville	Louvain
1660	<i>Sur le Martire des Innocens tragedie</i>	I. J. de Jésus-Maria	Bonnefontaine?
	<i>Saint Hermenegilde tragedie</i>	I. J. de Jésus-Maria	Bonnefontaine?
	<i>Sur le Martire de St Sebastien tragedie</i>	I. J. de Jésus-Maria	Bonnefontaine?
	<i>Sainte Barbe, vierge et chrestienne</i>	A. Conte	Annecy
1661	<i>Sainte Reine d'Alise, vierge et martyre</i>	H. Millotet	Autun
1662	<i>Le martyre de la glorieuse Sainte Reine d'Alise</i>	C. Ternet	Autun
1663	<i>L'illustre Philosophe, ou L'histoire de ste Catherine</i>	M. de La Chapelle	Autun
1664	<i>Le Royal Martyr</i>	Les Isles le Bas	Saint-Lo
	<i>Hermenigildus</i>	P. Boucher	Paris
1668	<i>Dipne, infante d'Irlande</i>	F. d'Avre	Paris
	<i>Le Martyre de Ste Suzanne</i>	Anon.	Paris
1669	<i>Le Martyre de Sainte Valerie, tragedie</i>	Yvernaud	Limoges
1671	<i>Sainte-Reine, vierge et martyre</i>	A. Le Grand	Paris
1672	<i>Sainte Catherine</i>	J. Lucas	Collège de Clermont, Paris

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Figure 1

Antonio Gallonio, *De SS. Martyrum cruciatibus* (Cologne: Joannes Gymnium, 1602), p. 34.

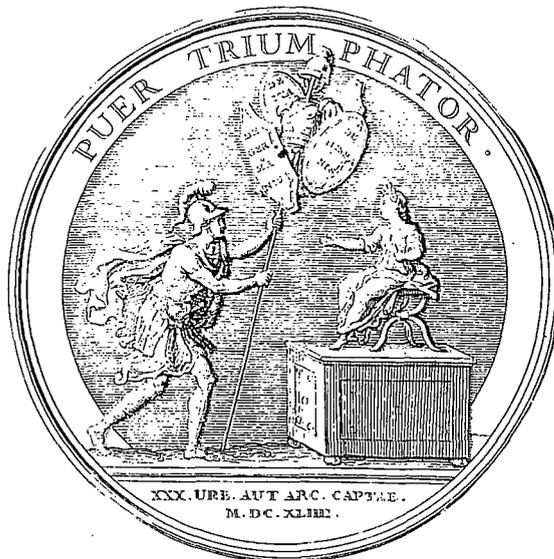
The wheel is mainly associated with the martyrdom of St Catherine of Alexandria, and while it may seem a Roman form of torture, was still used as an execution method in parts of early modern Europe.



Figure 2

Richard Verstegan, *Theatrum Crudelitatum Haereticorum nostri temporis* (Antwerp: Adrien Hubert, 1587), p. 49.

The various tortures depicted in Gallonio find their contemporary equivalent in Verstegan's polemical work against sixteenth-century Protestants. The images are intended to shock by their realism, and the details of uniform and geography highlight this element. 'Verstegan's martyrs are not so much ideals to be imitated as brutalized victims to be pitied and avenged', Highley, 'Richard Verstegan's Book of Martyrs', p. 189.



Figures 3 and 4

Claude François Menestrier, *Histoire du Roy Louis le Grand par les Medailles, Emblèmes, Devises, Jettons, Inscriptions, Armoiries, et autres Monumens Publics*, 2nd edn (Paris: J. B. Nolin, 1693), pp. 2 and 13.

The first medal celebrates the birth of the future Louis XIV; the second commemorates the taking of 30 cities in 1644. Roman imagery features prominent in both designs, demonstrating that the Roman allegory was not an invention of the mature Louis XIV.

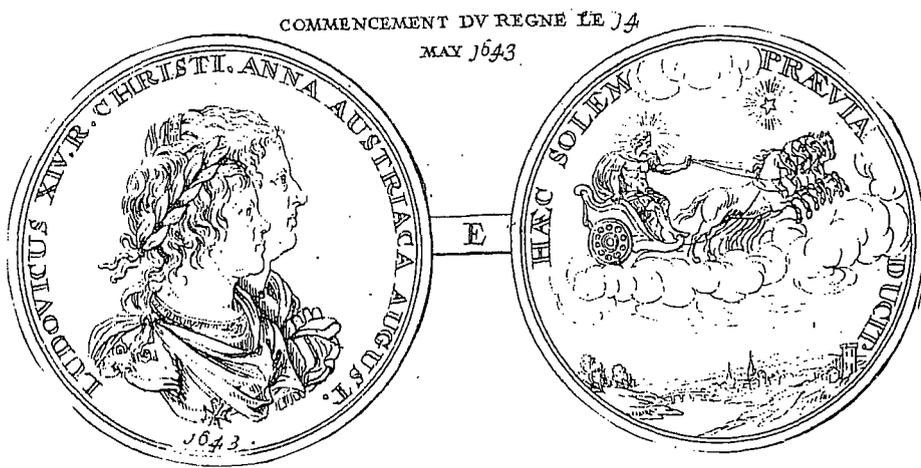


Figure 5

Menestrier, *Histoire du Roy Louis le Grand*, p. 16.

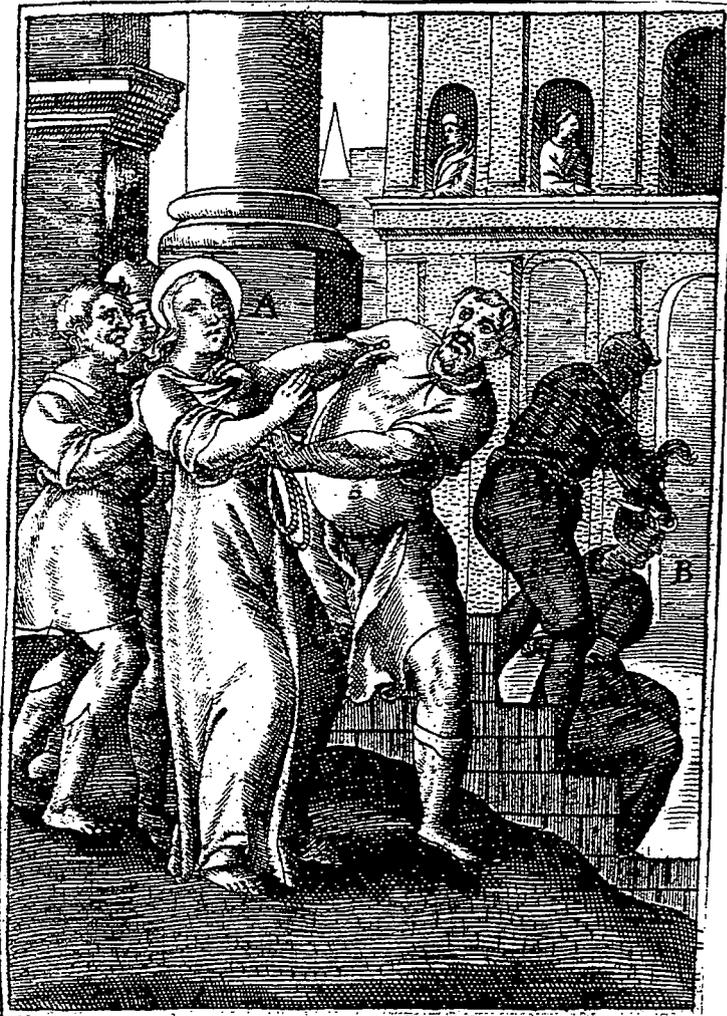


Figure 6

Gallonio, *De SS. Martyrum cruciatibus*, p. 266.

This engraving depicts Christian women being led to a brothel in order to strip away their virginity. This is accompanied by the shearing of the woman's hair (detail B), as a sign of humiliation, a practice that is turned on its head in the legend of St Agnes where the saint's hair miraculously grows long to shield her exposed body.



Figure 7

Jean Puget de La Serre, *Sainte Catherine tragédie* (Paris: Sommaville & Courbé, 1643), p. 56 (IV, 4).

This engraving by Jérôme David provides an insight into the staging of the debate between Catherine and Lucius. The philosopher is shown with academic headgear and book. The imperial thrones dominate the scene and Catherine has her hand raised in a gesture of defiance to the Emperor.

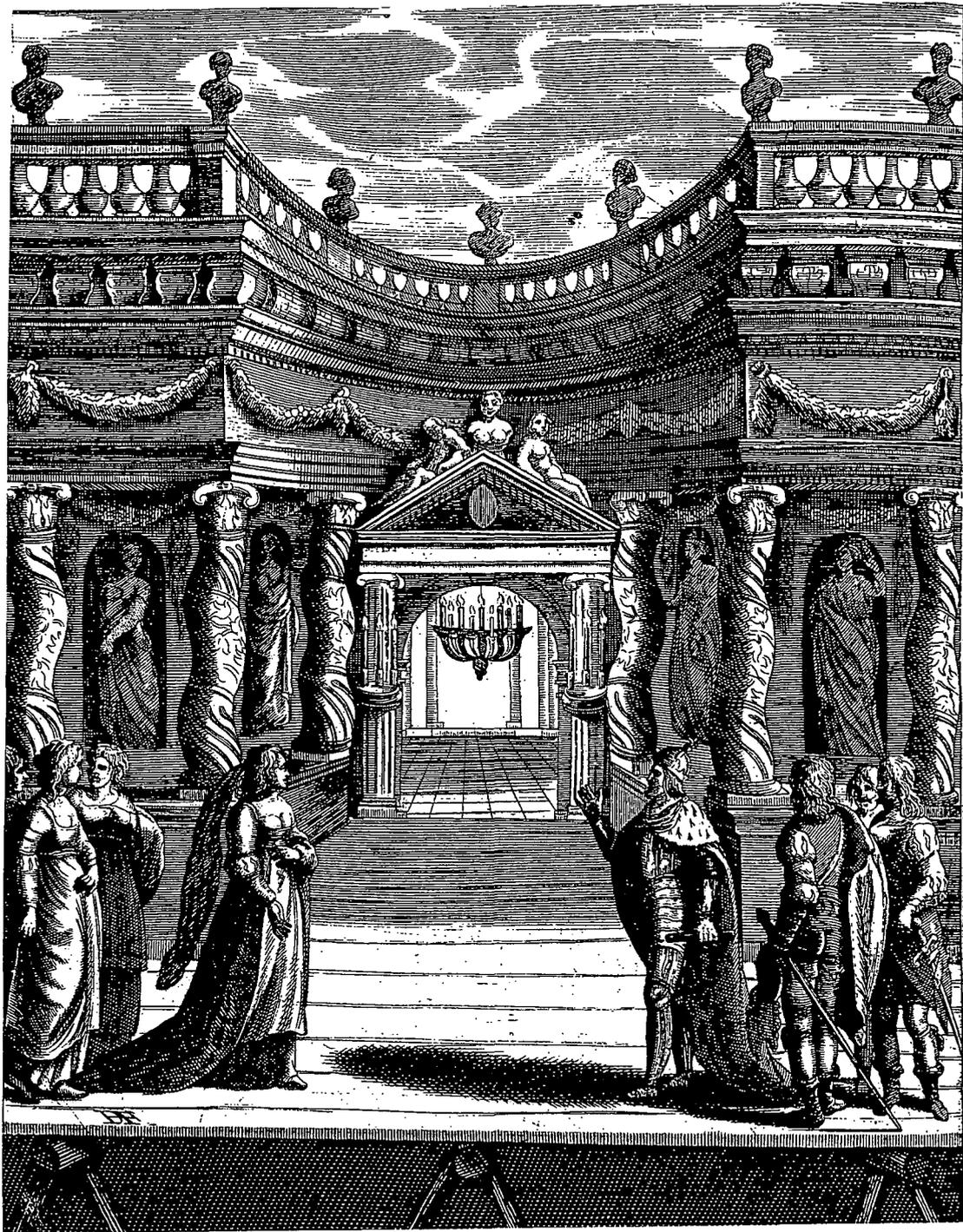


Figure 8

La Serre, *Sainte Catherine*, p. 14 (II, 3).

The actors' postures and décor in this confrontation between the Empress, on her way to embracing Christianity, and the Emperor are symmetrical, symbolising the conflict of two opposing ideologies.

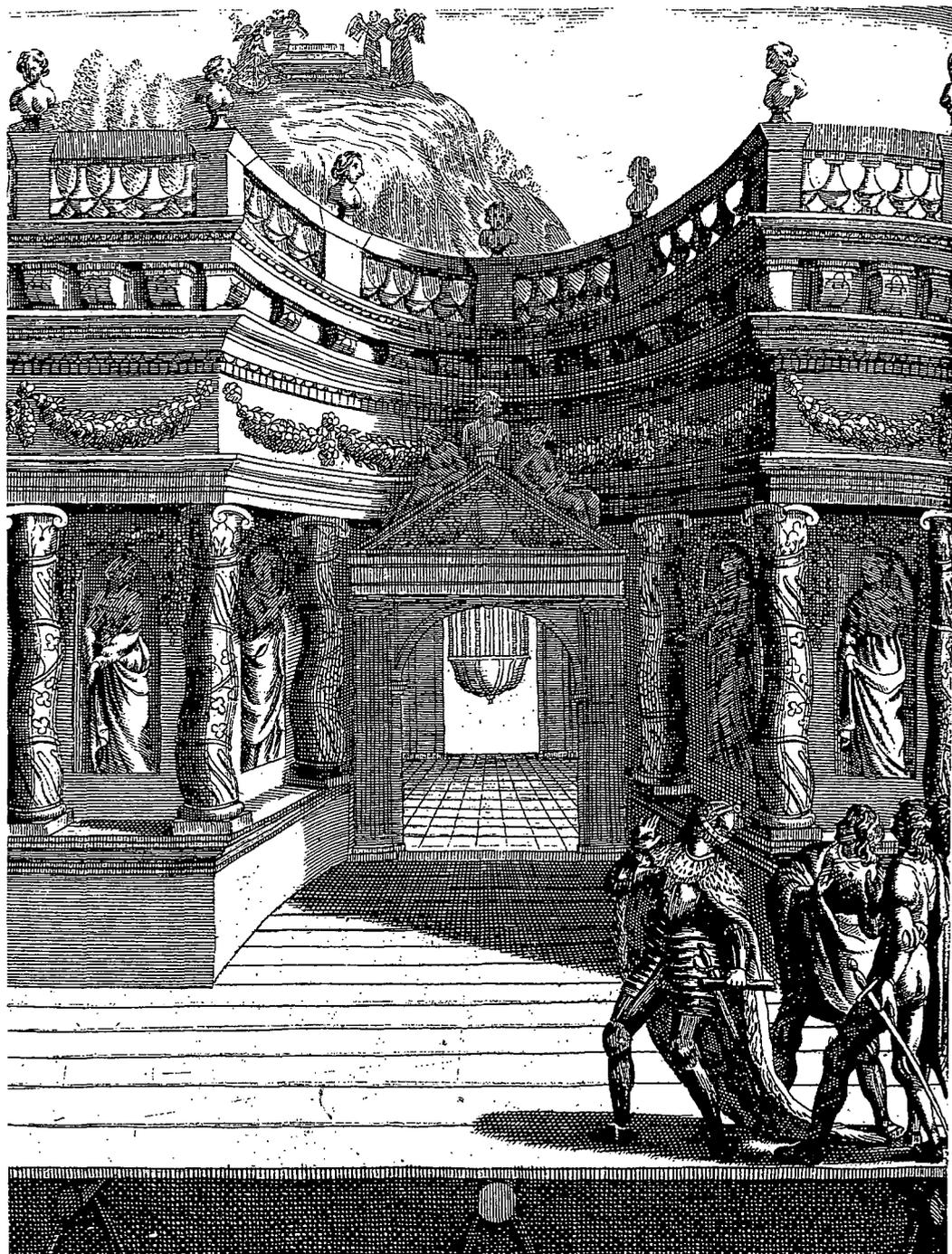


Figure 9

La Serre, *Sainte Catherine*, p. 75 (V, 1).

This engraving shows 'la Musique des Anges qui paroissent sur la montagne de sinay' (V, 1), an incident which converts the Emperor. The illustration suggests that the vision is represented on a painted backdrop, rather than being staged.



Figure 10

Gallonio, *De SS. Martyrum cruciatibus*, p. 210.

Detail E depicts a burning bull, used as the means of execution in the legend of Eustache.



Figure 11

St Ursula by Thomas de Leu from the unpaginated work, L. Beyerlinck, *Martyrologium sanctarum virginum* ([Antwerp]: Thomas de Leu, [1610]).

This engraving depicts Ursula as princess and martyr, with background details of the ships in which she and her companions arrived down the Rhine, as well as some of the 11,000 virgins being martyred, reduced here to a token number of eleven.



Figure 12

Woodcut frontispiece of *Sainte Reine* from Claude Ternet, *Le Martyre de la glorieuse Sainte Reine d'Alise. Tragedie* (Autun: Pierre Laymeré, 1682).

This woodcut, rather primitive in style, depicts the pilgrim church at Alise and several details from the legend, including the elm-tree in which the saint takes refuge, and her chains of imprisonment, a relic which the abbey at Flavigny claimed to possess.



Figure 13

The execution of St Tarbula and her companions. Taken from Bivero, *Sacrum Sanctuarium Crucis*, p. 601.

This is a striking example of the gore that was an integral part of Catholic martyrologies. As in all martyrological narratives, the victims appear utterly impervious to pain and display no outward signs of discomfort.



Figure 14

St Catherine from Laurentius Beyerlinck, *Martyrologium santarum virginum*.

The saint is featured in an idealised pose with the sword and broken wheel from her ordeal. The background scene represents the martyr being spared from the wheel, with the pagan bystanders being injured from flying splinters. It is curious to note that the young woman's feminine form is highlighted.



Figure 15

The crucifixion of St Benedicta from Bivero, *Sacrum Sanctuarium crucis*, p. 577.

The male procul stands gazing at the semi-naked female form with his staff of office positioned suggestively. Martha Easton's observations about another saint are equally valid here: 'images of St Agatha's torture constitute a visual sanctification of sexual violence with implications far more nuanced than a strictly theological and religious reading can provide', 'Saint Agatha and the Sanctification of Sexual Violence', *Studies in Iconography*, 16 (1994), 83-118 (p. 109).



Figure 16

Frontispiece from the first edition of Pierre Corneille, *Polyeucte martyr. Tragedie* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville & Augustin Courbé, 1643).

The scene in this frontispiece is unusual as it does not actually depict part of the action of the tragedy. Polyeucte is busy destroying a naked female idol, whereas Néarque is inconspicuously relegated to the background.

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Abbreviations used:

Ars: Bibliothèque nationale de l'Arsenal (B.L. indicates Belles-Lettres, H. refers to Historique, S. to Sciences, T. to Theologie classifications).

BHVP: Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris.

BL: British Library.

BN: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

CF: Clermont-Ferrand Patrimoine Collections.

CFBD: Bibliothèque diocésaine, Clermont-Ferrand.

Dunelm: Durham Palace Green Collections.

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