"Diables Incarnez, Machiavelistes, Heretiques": The Villains of Pierre Matthieu's *La Guisiade* Reconsidered

The life of Pierre Matthieu (1563–1621) was punctuated by wars and high-profile assassinations. Amid these crises, Matthieu forged a remarkable career. During France's eighth and final religious war (1587–98), the young Matthieu became an *avocat* in the présidial de Lyon (1587). At that time his political allegiance lay with the uncompromising Catholic Ligue that sought to destroy all who resisted hard-line Catholicism. When the Ligue's fortunes declined, he swore allegiance to the new, conciliatory monarch, Henri IV. Matthieu found favour in the nascent Bourbon dynasty, and was appointed royal historiographer in 1594 – a position he held till his death. Matthieu was not only a historian: in his youth he had received an excellent education in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, which fed into a considerable literary output of poems, historical fictions, funeral oratory, and, most notably, five tragedies.

This article studies Matthieu's final tragedy, *La Guisiade* (1589) – a wrathful outpouring in response to the assassination of the onetime charismatic leader of the Ligue, Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, on 23 December 1588. The following year, an incensed Matthieu added his voice to a growing number of Ligueurs blaming King Henri III for Guise's gory demise. Deeply embedded in the politics of its time, *La Guisiade* enjoyed an ephemeral success, with three editions in 1589.[1] Yet thereafter it has been largely forgotten, barely a footnote in the history of French neoclassical tragedy that would reach its apogee the following century in the masterpieces of Corneille and Racine. Recently, however, scholarly interest in *La Guisiade* has been revived. The play is now considered an important landmark in the polemical literature that arose out of the French Wars of Religion, not only in France, but also across the Channel in Protestant England.[2] *La Guisiade* is an intriguingly hybrid work. It combines elements of a classical tragedy (a five-act structure; formal versification, mostly in Alexandrines; intervening choruses; murder committed off-stage) with pamphlet-style prose 'arguments', steering reader sympathy at all times towards a seething hatred of the

[1] I have consulted Louis Lobbes's critical edition of *La Guisiade* (Geneva: Droz, 1990), established from the third version published towards the end of 1589 (the first two editions appearing during the summer of that year). On the different early versions, see also Gilles Ernst, 'Des Deux *Guisiade* de Pierre Matthieu', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 47 (1985), 367–78.

[2] Much credit is due to Richard Hillman. See particularly his *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); and *French Origins of English Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

villains deemed responsible for the assassination of Guise. This hybridity has proved enticing to modern scholars of *La Guisiade*. With classical and biblical overtones, Matthieu's final tragedy can be read as a gateway to the ferocious world of Ligueur invective in which Matthieu was simultaneously engaged as a pamphleteer.[3] Much work has been done on the historical context of Ligueur *libelles*,[4] yet we currently lack sustained reflection on the place of *La Guisiade* within this broader context. This article will show how the villainy that pervades *La Guisiade* has much in common – more so than previously assumed – with that depicted across a range of inflammatory pamphlets emanating from Ligueur presses (mostly Parisian) during the late 1580s and early 1590s.[5] This calls for a reconsideration of the chief villains in *La Guisiade*. Modern scholars have tended to relate Matthieu's characterisation of these villains to an underlying archetype, typically Machiavelli. Such an approach seems to me at odds with the textual evidence of *La Guisiade*. Close reading, one the other hand, suggests that Matthieu speaks with multiple 'vocabularies' of villainy against an open-ended spectrum of foes.

Matthieu allows his readers no delusions as to who is the central villain of his play. His prefatory 'Discours sur le sujet de ceste Tragedie' opens with a direct offensive against 'L'envieuse jalousie qu'Henry troisieme Roy de France et de Pologne, portoit aux genereuses entreprises, et heureuses proüesses d'Henry de Lorraine, Duc de Guise' (p. 65). The plot of *La Guisiade* revolves around a monarch deeply resentful of the popular and pious head of the Ligue. The king soon manifests himself as a jealous tyrant in his avowed refusal to share power at any level: 'Je veux seul estre Roy' (I.ii.181). But does Matthieu imply that Henri III's tyranny is of a specific bent? The critics certainly think so. Heather Ingman wastes no time in classifying him as a 'Machiavel surrounded by Machiavellian advice on how to

[3] In June 1589, Matthieu delivered then published a pamphlet-style funeral oration for Guise entitled *Pompe funebre des penitens de Lyon, en deploration du massacre faict à Bloys*. Matthieu is also thought to be the author of two other anti-monarchical pamphlets, entitled *Advis aux Catholiques François, sur l'importance de ce qui se traicte auiourd'huy, sur l'irresolution de quelques scrupuleux: ensemble et principalement sur les ruzes des Politiques, Athéistes, forgeurs de nouuelle, etc.*; and *Discours veritable, et sans passion sur la prinse des armes, et changemens advenus en la ville de Lyon le 18 de septembre 1593.*

[4] Principally Denis Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie à Paris pendant la Ligue, 1585-1594* (Geneva: Droz, 1975); Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, 2 vol. (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990); Tatiana Baranova, *À coup de libelles: une culture politique au temps des guerres de religion (1562-1598)* (Geneva: Droz, 2012).

[5] We cannot know precisely how many of these pamphlets were known to Matthieu. He was probably familiar with a number of them: copies of major Parisian *libelles* were reprinted in provincial cities such as Lyon or Reims. Within urban areas single pamphlets circulated rapidly, as they were passed on or sold on to reach as many as possible. Many *libelles* in verse became street songs. See Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*, II, pp. 187-8.

rule'.[6] This is not unjustifiable given the political context: as Ingman points out, accusations of Machiavellianism against Henri III proliferated during his reign since it was widely believed that the king was reading Machiavelli's works with Florentine exiles at court.[7] Louis Lobbes goes further, arguing for a political reading of *La Guisiade* as a 'manuel antimachiavélique' denouncing the pernicious influence of Machiavelli amid the king's council.[8] Gilles Bertheau is more explicit still, venturing that in *La Guisiade*, accusations of atheism, perjury and tyranny concentrated upon the figure of Henri III collectively amount to a 'machiavellisme aggravé'.[9] Given the enormous diffusion of Machiavelli's *Il principe* in the Renaissance, not least through hostile reactions to it (most notably the *Anti-Machiavel* of the Huguenot Innocent Gentillet),[10] it is understandable that scholars have gravitated towards the Machiavellian elements characterizing the king and his court in *La Guisiade*. **But to foreground these elements over others is, arguably, to misrepresent the tenor of Matthieu's pamphleteering rhetoric against the king and his fellow villains. Let us consider how and why.**

Act II.i gives key insights into the antipathy Matthieu shared with many other Ligue polemicists towards Henri III by 1589. Set in July 1588 at the Château de Blois, the scene stages a confrontation between the king and the queen mother, Catherine de' Medici. The scene imitates classical models in that it presents in stychomythia the royal tyrant deliberating how to punish his enemies, whilst an advisor urges clemency. In this case, Catherine de' Medici is made assume the latter role. Her son is sorely bruised by his ignominious expulsion from Paris following the Journée des barricades (12 May 1588). Two months later, Guise and his Ligue now control Paris, and the king is seeking to reassert his authority in his capital and over all his subjects. Fearing violence, Catherine remonstrates with Henri and thus becomes the mouthpiece of Ligueur resistance to the crown. Her arguments have a smattering of political ratiocination: Henri needs the support of the Guises if he is to retain the monarchy, and reassert Catholicism against all forms of Protestant heresy (II.i.305-22). However,

[6] Ingman, 'A Study in Ambivalence: Pierre Matthieu's Reading of Machiavelli', *French Studies*, 39 (1985), 129–42 (129). A view shared by Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe*, p. 92.
[7] See Ingman, 'A Study in Ambivalence', 129; Keith Cameron, 'Henry III - The Antichristian King', *Journal of European Studies*, 4 (1974), 152-63.
[8] See Lobbes's thorough 'Introduction' to *La Guisiade*, p.40. Lobbes also suggests other interpretative frameworks, notably that of 'tragédie épique', given the titular resonances with Pierre de Ronsard's *La Franciade* (1572) and Robert Garnier's *La Troade* (1579).
[9] Bertheau, 'Les Figures du Duc de Guise et d'Henri III chez George Chapman (*The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*), Christopher Marlowe (*The Massacre at Paris*) et Pierre Matthieu (*La Guisiade*)', in *Formes littéraires du théologico-politique de la Renaissance au XVIIIe siècle: Angleterre et Europe*, ed. by Jean Pironon and Jacques Wagner (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2003), pp. 131–48.
[10] See Antonio D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 23 (1970), 397–411.

Catherine's main objective is to harangue her son on his reputation as a 'Tyran' and 'Athee',[11] failing in his kingly duties as he falls under the wicked whisperings of his court favourites. Contemporary reports suggest that Henri had very quickly acquired a reputation as a profligate, owing to his lavish court festivals and his propensity to reward his favourites with extravagant gifts.[12] The queen mother berates her son for his pleasure-seeking, godless lifestyle (II.i.338-9) – but this is a monarch who goes to great length to display his piety.[13] Henri demands further explanation for such harsh words against him:

> LE ROI
> Et pourquoy suis-je Athee ?
>
> LA ROINE MERE
> En vous on ne voit rien
> Qui responde au devoir d'un Prince Treschrestien.
> Si vous aviez de Dieu la cognoissance saincte,
> Si l'alme Foy estoit en vostre cueur emprainte,
> Le Turc, ny l'Alcoran, ny l'Epicurien,
> Ni le Calvinien, ny le Lutherien,
> Le Machiaveliste, et l'homme de fortune,
> Ne trouveroit en vous tant de grace opportune. (II.i.373-80)

In Catherine's estimation, Henri is an outstanding religious hypocrite, superficially pious but manifesting so-called 'atheism' in his failure to protect France from that which would sabotage Catholicism. Indeed Henri, we are told, is so lax at fulfilling the duties of a 'Prince Treschrestien' that he has welcomed all manner of evils with open arms. Metaphorically, Henri is a house of villains – almost an aggregation of evil types à la Iago. In the queen mother's hyperbolic tirade, his name becomes a byword for the religious, philosophical and

[11] Tyranny had for some years been the *bête noire* of Huguenot monarchomach theorists, notably François Hotman in his *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579). Tyranny and the associated charge of atheism now came to the fore in the virulent pamphlets outpouring from Catholic anti-monarchical presses in 1589: see for instance *L'Athéisme de Henry de Valoys* (Paris: pour P. Des Hayes); *Declaration par laquelle Henry de Valois confesse estre tyran et enemy de l'église catholique, apostolique, et romaine* (Paris: pour D. Binet); *Les Meurs, humeurs et comportemens de Henry de Valois* (Paris: pour A. Le Riche); *La Vie et faits notables de Henry de Valois* (Paris: pour Didier Millot; modern critical edition by Keith Cameron, Paris, Champion, 2003). All subsequent references to these *libelles* are to the above editions.

[12] For a recent assessment of Henri's reputation, see Robert Knecht, *Hero or Tyrant? Henry III, King of France, 1574-89* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

[13] This is well documented. Henri III founded new religious orders and favoured old ones (above all the Capucins). He participated in more religious processions than any king in living memory. For an overview, see Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 125.

political other, dressed up in its most menacing guises for a Ligueur readership of the late 1580s.

The apparent interchangeability of terms such as 'Turc', 'Alcoran', 'Epicurien', 'Calvinien', 'Lutherien', and – not least – 'Machiaveliste' to designate these non-Catholic infidels is strikingly manifested across Ligueur texts of the period. Throughout 1589, as Ligueur wrath fell increasingly on Henri and his court, pamphlets such as *L'Athéisme de Henry de Valoys* targeted the king for embracing 'l'evangile de Machiavel', or else secretly enjoining his courtiers to 'suivre tel nouveau Alcoran qu'il luy plaira leur prescrire' (pp. 14-15).[14] But the list of enemies did not end with the royal court. On the contrary, it readily comprised a range of religious opponents throughout the kingdom. The peace-seeking *politiques*,[15] who spanned the Protestant-Catholic divide, were variously condemned as 'heretiques', 'Epicuriens', 'où bien des libertins s'ils ne sont du tout Athées'.[16] Huguenots were perhaps the most tangible and widespread threat to the Ligue, but their heretical ways were still subject to exotic amplification. A *libelle* from 1587, addressed to Guise himself, had warned of the limitless dangers of all Protestant sects, denouncing 'leur estrange et plus que barbare vie' and their 'plusbeau tiltre, qui est Lutherian ou Calviniste', which, apparently, even the Turks abhor.[17] Under Henri III, France had commercial and diplomatic relations with the Ottomans. [18] In Ligueur mentalities, the figure of the Turk – a longstanding symbol of oriental religious infidelity, barbarism and sensual excess – could be swiftly mobilized as an indicator that urgent action was needed by the Catholic faithful against heretics and enemies closer to home. When *La Guisiade* appeared, the figurehead foes were the Huguenot leader, Henri de Navarre, supported by the 'grande putain' (II.i.383), Elizabeth

[14] A development of an allusion popularised by Gentillet idea that Machiavelli's books were venerated at court just as the Turks venerate 'l'Alcoran de leur grand prophete Mahumet': *Anti-Machiavel* (1576), ed. by C. Edward Rathé (Geneva: Droz, 1968), p.32. All references are to this edition.

[15] On the *politiques*, see generally Thierry Wanegffelen (ed.), *De Michel de L'Hospital à l'édit de Nantes: politique et religion face aux églises* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2002); more specifically, Emma Claussen, 'A Study of the Term *Politique* and its Uses During the French Wars of Religion, c.1562-98' (DPhil. Dissertation: University of Oxford, in preparation).

[16] Jean de La Mothe, [Pierre Magistri], *Le Reveil Matin et mot du guet des bons Catholiques* (Douai: J. Bourchier, 1591), p. 14. These collocations repeatedly occur throughout this pamphlet. Such patterns of verbal substitution around the (negative) concepts of atheism, Epicureanism, and *libertinage* are typical of sixteenth-century polemicists, Protestant and Catholic, and are analysed at length by Louise Godard de Donville, *Le Libertin Des Origines à 1665: un produit des apologètes* (Paris: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1989).

[17] Jean de Caumont, *De l'Union des Catholiques avec Dieu et entre eux mesmes* (Paris: N. Nivelle, 1587), p. 6. In response to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572), some had argued that the Ottoman Empire presented a viable model of political and religious absolutism, which, if Christianized, would end France's violence. See *La France-Turquie* (1576), analysed by Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*, II, pp. 156-7.

[18] Henri received Turkish ambassadors lavishly but was not always successful in diplomacy: see De Lamar Jensen, 'The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 16 (1985), 451–70.

I of England – and of course King Henri III of France, who had named Navarre his heir.[19] Guise and the leading Ligueurs of Paris ('the Sixteen') led the campaign to force Henri III to disavow Navarre. Although they had recently trounced the king, and appeared increasingly capable of bending him to do their will, their demands had not yet all been met. In Act I.ii of *La Guisiade*, Matthieu replays how relations between Guise and Henri III stood on a knife-edge in the latter half of 1588.

Acts II and III end optimistically. The queen mother's harangue persuades the king to include Guise in forthcoming negotiations towards peace at the États Généraux at Blois (II.i.446). After a tense exchange, Henri and Guise appear to be reconciled: Guise repeatedly insists upon his loyalty to crown, and the king, moreover, swears to support the Ligue against its multifarious enemies in France and abroad (II.ii.699-722). Act III stages the États Géneraux convened at Blois on 16 October 1588, based around the *cahiers de doléance* that each Estate brought before the king.[20] Henri dutifully and solemnly promises to meet the various demands of his clergy, nobility, and populace (pp. 136-7). But the unfolding drama of Acts IV and V focus on the shattering of those promises, mirroring the tragic course of events that would subsequently unfold in December 1588. In Act IV, Henri has second thoughts about Guise's loyalty, charmed by the 'malheureses persuasions' (p. 140) of his court advisors. In a scene redolent of Matthieu's earlier biblical tragedies,[21] Henri finds himself on the horns of a dilemma: he is torn between fear of Guise-led coup and the moral imperative to uphold his oaths to the Ligue and to France. Eventually yielding to his fears, he breaks his promise to stand by the Ligue, and then justifies a plot to murder Guise by 'ceste mauvaise doctrine de Machiavel' (p. 157) that allegedly permits monarchs to renege on their promises when their position is threatened (see *Il principe*, ch. 18). This is Henri's most demonstrably 'Machiavellian' moment in *La Guisiade*. Perfidy for political advantage was widely associated with Machiavelli in the Renaissance,[22] and Matthieu attacks Henri further along these lines in two of his 1589 pamphlets: [23]

[19] On foreign aid received by the Huguenots from Elizabeth and Protestant German Princes in 1587, see Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, p. 126.
[20] See Ernst, 'Des Deux *Guisiade*', 367-8.
[21] See Lobbes, 'Introduction', pp. 47-8.
[22] See for instance Gentillet's XVIIIth Maxime: 'Le prince ne doit craindre de se perjurer, tromper, et dissimuler: car le trompeur trouve tousjours qui se laisse tromper' (*Anti-Machiavel*, pp. 433-7).
[23] For further discussion of these works, see Ingman, 'A Study in Ambivalence', 130-2

> Ah! trompeuse foy, foy dissimulée, foy de paille, foy hypocrite, foy meutriere [...]. Quelque race de Machiavel, vray esclave de la tyrannie [...][24]

> […] la depravation de ce siecle, et les propositions de cest athee Machiavel […] vous ont elles peu faire oublier les commandemens du Dieu vivant, lesquels doivent estre engravez et burrinez au plus profond d'un coeur vrayment Chrestien […]?[25]

However, when reading *La Guisiade*, one should not reduce Henri's perfidy to pure Machiavellianism. Tyrants who give false assurance with misleading promises were a hallmark of the Senecan tragedy that was in vogue in Renaissance France: one thinks notably of Robert Garnier's cunning Nabuchodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar) in his biblical masterpiece, *Les Juifves* (1583).[26] The catastrophe of Guise's assassination, and the final ensuing attack on Henri which follows it (Act V), resonate, moreover, with a number of traditions. The religious significance of this tragic failure is unmistakable: Henri, we are told, must bear the responsibility for Guise's death 'comme un second Cain' (V.i.2145).[27] In *La Guisiade*, Henri and Guise are readily typecast in the respective roles of Scripture's first villain–hero pair (Genesis 4). The blood of Guise, 'ce genereux martyr' (p. 161), an Abel-like victim of true faith, cries out for justice. One might thus situate *La Guisiade* as symptomatic of an emergent theatrical vogue for martyrdom at the climax of the Wars of Religion on the eve of the seventeenth century.[28]

La Guisiade climaxes with curses and railing against the king, who is held ultimately responsible for the murders in the vilest terms: 'O Barbare, ô Tyran, ô homme abominable' (V.i. 2016). Such vituperative language reverberated around the *ligueur* propaganda circuit of 1588–9 in a rallying cry for justice and vengeance. Here, Henri is variously condemned: 'ô quel Atheiste!', 'Vilain Herodes', 'vilain monstre pelé', 'tres-pernicieux hypocrite'.[29] As we have previously seen in Catherine de' Medici's attack on the king in II.i, these kinds of

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[24] Matthieu, *Pompe funebre des penitens de Lyon* (Lyon: J. Roussin, 1589), p. 8.
[25] Matthieu, *Advis aux Catholiques François* (Paris: pour A. Le Riche, 1589), pp. 13-14.
[26] A tyrant strongly imitating the cruel and duplicitous Atreus of Seneca's *Thyestes*. As Gillian Jondorf sagely demonstrates, one should exercise caution when trying to disentangle the Machiavellian from the Senecan elements in the villains of sixteenth-century theatre. See Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 13.
[27] On the reappearance of the curse of Cain in Shakespeare's later *Richard II* (DATE), see Hillman, *French Origins of English Tragedy*, p. 23.
[28] See Lobbes, 'Introduction' , p. 28, and, more generally, Christian Biet and Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, *Tragédies et récits de martyres en France (fin XVIe-début XVIIe siècle)* (Paris: Garnier, 2009). Contemporary examples of martyr plays include *L'Histoire tragique de la Pucelle* (1581); *Le Théâtre des cruautés* (1587); *La Macchabée, Tragedie du martyre des sept freres et de Solomone leur mere* (1596); *La Céciliade* (1606).
[29] See for example *La Vie et faits notables de Henry de Valois*, *Le Faux mufle découvert du grand hypocrite de la France*, *Les Meurs, humeurs et comportemens de Henry de Valois*.

slanders freely circulate in a heterogeneous network of associations which cannot be reduced to Machiavelli. Multiple, superlative insults are the linguistic epiphenomena of a profound perturbation experienced by supporters of the Catholic Ligue in 1589. Unseated by the loss of their champion, Ligueurs readily made Henri III their scapegoat – but they were unable to find a singular explanation for him brutally doing away with Guise, his recently appointed Lieutenant Géneral in their holy war on Huguenot heresy.

La Guisiade is informed by the conviction that even if Henri III should bear ultimate responsibility for the murder of Guise, the king did not act alone. Matthieu shows us that trying to work out exactly who turned him against the Ligue leader, at what point, and through what channels, was a much trickier business. To an extent, Matthieu went with popular opinion, which held that Henri's *archimignon* – the notorious Duc d'Épernon – was the chief suspect. Jean-Louis de Nogaret de La Valette, Duc d'Épernon (1554–1642), had proved himself the most successful of Henri's court favourites: a created duke, his spectacular list of promotions latterly included the titles of Admiral of France, and Governor of Normandy, Caen, and Le Havre (from 1587).[30] Épernon's ever-increasing political might was intensely resented by Ligueurs: only Guise had stood between him and total influence over the monarch; with Guise gone, suspicion naturally fell on Guise's arch-rival. Matthieu reluctantly includes Épernon in the cast of *La Guisiade*, considering him 'un homme de si petite valeur' (p. 112) – an allusion, perhaps, to the latter's Gascon origins, and certainly to his reputation for myriad vices. However, a close examination of Matthieu's language of character motifs reveals not only the theatrical potential of D'Espernon, but multiple points of contact with much broader cultural anxieties in the late 1580s.

Matthieu restricts D'Espernon to one on-stage appearance (Act III scene i). Despite these restrictions, however, there is no denying the sinister underlying presence of D'Espernon throughout *La Guisiade*, particularly in Acts I to III. In the early stages of the play, both Guise and Catherine complain to Henri about the creeping 'Mignon' who has established his foul presence at court and taken hold of the king's affections. The vilification of Épernon along such lines was standard procedure in a large number of texts engaging with Guise's assassination, not only in Ligueur pamphlet propaganda, but also in dramatic output on both sides of the Channel in the years following *La Guisiade*. In *Le Guysien*, Simon Belyard overtly highlights the 'voix de flateur' he envisages for his Épernon when addressing

[30] For detailed studies of Henri's court favourites, see Nicolas Le Roux, *La Faveur du roi: mignons et courtisans au temps des derniers Valois* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2001); Jacqueline Boucher, *La Cour De Henri III* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 1986).

the king.[31] In due course, Christopher Marlowe would in turn ascribe his Epernoune a quietly insidious role of one who knows his monarch's mind, and, with few choice words, is able to make it for him (*Massacre at Paris*, xix.82-3). Yet for all his manipulative capabilities in these subsequent plays, the poisoned-tongued *archimignon* is depicted far more menacingly in Matthieu's earlier *La Guisiade*. Here D'Espernon is every bit the immoral Machiavel, whispering in his king's ear that monarchs are not bound by their oaths, and may feign religiosity if it suits them (III.i.847-52). Matthieu's D'Espernon operates dangerously – even diabolically – across France's foremost political and economic crises, in a character assassination that is no less heterogeneously vibrant than those of contemporary *libelles*.

In *La Guisiade*, D'Espernon is much more than a political allegory of a biblical archetype, Haman (whom Matthieu had previously dramatized). D'Espernon exemplifies 'tout ce qui abonde / De meschant, d'imparfaict, en tous les coings du monde' (III.i.830). Nevertheless, certain vices and shortcomings are particularly targeted. The first is sexual perversion in multiple forms, said to have had an 'effect prodigieux aux cabinets du Louvre' (III.i.838). Here Matthieu taps into one of the foremost scandals of Henri III's reign: his alleged homosexual liaisons with various *mignons*, of which Épernon was again chief suspect. Modern historians have mulled over the veracity of such allegations, the chief evidence for which being letters exchanged between Henri and his mignons,[32] and the king's social appearances. Not yet the judicious historian he would later become, the young Matthieu, could not resist the opportunity to substantiate the rumours. In Act II, Henri is made to make appear them plausible: 'D'Espernon sur tout autre a gaigné mon amour,/ Je ne vis qu'à regret sans luy en ceste Cour' (II.i.349-50). Nonetheless, the king does stop short of affirming impropriety, claiming that those who would accuse his favourite have nothing more to go on than the patent fact that the latter shows himself to be 'tresloyal' (358). This tension in Henri's response points to the infamous smear campaign against Épernon orchestrated by the Ligue during the spring and summer of 1588. The most notorious in this spate of *libelles* was *L'Histoire tragique et memorable de Gaverston*, published according to Pierre L'Estoile in July 1588.[33] Under a thin layer of political allegory, this insidious pamphlet slanders the

[31] Belyard, *Le Guysien, ou Perfidie tyrannique commise par Henry de Valois* (Troyes: I. Moreau, 1592), p. 30.
[32] Modern historians have highlighted Épernon's fawning tone in his habitual epistolary address to Henri: 'Votre tres-humble, tres-hobeissant sujet et serviteur et plus hobligée creature' instead of the conventional formula, 'Votre tres-humble et tres-obeissant sujet et serviteur'. The term *creature* was much more at home in Christian theology; its use here borders on idolatry since it suggests the notion of absolute dependence on God. Yet homosexual overtones are questionable. See Le Roux, *La Faveur du roi*, pp. 463-4.
[33] On this *libelle*, see Véronique Larcade, 'Le Duc D'Épernon et les Guises', in *Le Mécénat et l'influence des Guises*, ed. by Yvonne Bellenger (Paris: Champion, 1997), pp. 547-55.

French king and his *archimignon*, who is denounced for his corrupting influence.[34] We find telling hints of a homosexual parallel between Épernon's relations with Henri III, and those of one Pierre de Gaverston with the English king Edward II (1307–1327). An insolent, vile profiteer, likewise of Gascon extraction, Gaverston, we are told, 'effemine et infatue le coeur du Roy' (p. 19) before suffering a violent downfall. Through a nifty anagram, 'Periure de Nogarets' (Épernon) becomes a reincarnation of 'Pierre de Gauerston'. Épernon and his supporters found the slurs of the *Gaverston* intolerable, and responded with *libelles* of their own.[35]

From amorous infatuation it was but a short step to bewitchment – 'sorcellerie'. This link is explicitly made in the dedicatory epistle of the *Gaverston*, and it is paraded over the pages of *La Guisiade*. The D'Espernon in Matthieu's tragedy, it would appear, has two principal functions: that of the king's *amoureux*, and that of 'un sorcier' who enacts 'avec toute sa daemonomanie' a demonic curse upon the Guise clan (p. 112). This second role situates Matthieu's D'Espernon at the junction of multiple Renaissance discourses of suspicion and fear regarding witchcraft and demons. The word 'daemonomanie' evokes the title of a contemporary best-selling treatise: *De la demonomanie des sorciers* (1580), by the leading jurist and political theorist, Jean Bodin (1529–1596).[36] Bodin was an adamant opponent of witchcraft, which he feared would lead to the idolatrous worship of created beings.[37] Bodin reluctantly remarks that Princes who abandoned God 'se laissent captiver miserablement à Satan par le moyen des Sorciers'.[38] Although this is probably not a direct allusion to Henri III, Bodin's text ran parallel to rumours of sorcery at the royal court (notably from 1585), in which both the king and his courtiers were accused of dabbling in the black arts.

[34] Matthieu seems to be aware of the villainous reputation of Edward II, alluding to it in his introductory 'Discours' to *La Guisiade* (p. 70). It seems likely therefore that he knew of the *Gaverston* controversy, even if he does not explicitly thematise the homosexual couple as would Marlowe in his *Edward II*: see Hillman, *French Origins of English Tragedy*, p. 20.

[35] Principally *L'Anti-Gaverston* (now untraceable) which itself triggered a Ligueur reply, *Replique à L'Anti-Gaverston*.

[36] Thirteen French editions were published between 1580 and 1616, not counting Latin, German, and Italian translations. For a fuller discussion of the context in which Bodin was writing, see the 'Introduction' to the forthcoming critical edition of *De la demonomanie des sorciers*, ed. by Virginia Krause and Christian Martin (Droz).

[37] See Daniel Walker's classic analysis, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2000, 1st ed. 1958), pp. 171-7.

[38] Bodin, *De la Demonomanie des sorciers* (Paris: J. du Puys, 1580), fol. 120. Thirteen French editions were published between 1580 and 1616, not counting Latin, German, and Italian translations.

Nicolas Le Roux argues that the theme of Épernon as instrument of diabolical possession took off in Ligueur propaganda towards the end of May 1588,[39] in *libelles* such as *La Complainte de la France sur les demerites de Jean Louis de Nogaret, de la Valette, Duc d'Espernon présentée au Roy*. This defamatory pamphlet portrays Épernon using witchcraft to make the king fall in love with him, before they both exhort in satanic ritual – a motif developed in the *Remonstrances très-humbles au Roy de France,* which levels accusations of sorcery only indirectly at the king. Another placard, *Les Propos tenus à Loches entre Jean d'Espernon et son diable familier [...]*, included a woodcut showing Épernon holding Satan's hand before the jaws of Hell. The culmination of Épernon's 'diabolisation' in pamphlet literature occurs in two short *libelles* from 1589, implicating him unambiguously in Guise's murder: *Le Dialogue de Henry le Tyran, et du grand sorcier D'Espernon, pour faire mourir Monseigneur de Guyse*, and the ensuing *Invocation des diables pour le secours de Henry le tyran, faicte par le grand sorcier d'Espernon.*[40] Here D'Espernon summons 'cent mil de tes gendarmes noirs, / Que renge Lucifer soubs sa noire cornette' to assist Henri in assassinating the unsuspecting sacrificial lamb, Guise.

Matthieu's treatment of sorcery through D'Espernon is conducted with a comparably lurid verve. Moreover, it was not without ancient or recent theatrical precedent. Greco-Roman tragedy provided eminent models for imprecation, notably Medea. The invocation of demons was often the Renaissance tragedian's stock-in-trade: one thinks especially of a forerunner of Matthieu, François de Chantelouve, whose virulently anti-Protestant *Tragedie de Feu Gaspard de Colligny* features the eponymous Admiral Coligny dabbling in powerful sorcery, as well as establishing Épernon as a source of moral corruption.[41] Chantelouve opens his tragedy with the Admiral inciting 'mânes noircissants ès Enfers impiteux' to possess his soul.[42] Matthieu's D'Espernon acts in similar fashion. Sensing the movement of 'mille daemons' within him, he unleashes Hell's fury upon Guise:

> Je vous invoque tous, ô pallisantes Ombres,

[39] See Le Roux, *La Faveur du roi*, p. 664.
[40] These texts may be found in Édouard Fourrier (ed.),*Variétés historiques et littéraires*, 10 vols. (Paris: P. Jannet, 1855-63), VI, pp. 206-7.
[41] On this play and its connections to *La Guisiade*, see Richard Hillman's recent translation with scholarly introduction, *François de Chantelouve*, The Tragedy of the Late Gaspard de Coligny, *and Pierre Matthieu*, The Guisiade (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005), pp. 9-95; see also Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France*, p. 89.
[42] Chantelouve, *Tragedie de Feu Gaspard de Colligny* (1575), ed. by Lisa Wolfe and Marian Meijer, in *La Tragédie à l'époque d'Henri III: II.1 (1574-1579)* (Florence: Olschki; Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1999), p. 107.

Qui de Styx habitez les caverns plus sombre:
Bruyez, courez, craquez, et portez en vos mains
Le fer, le feu, l'effroy, pour troubler les humains:
Guidez, executez mon horrible entreprise (*La Guisiade*, III.i.785-9)

These lines, as Louis Lobbes reminds us, are reminiscent of Matthieu's other tragedies, particularly *Clytemnestre* (1589) in which the shade of Thyestes summons demonic aid for vengeance:[43]

[…] O pallisantes ombres,
O vous affreux brigands des demeures plus sombres […],
Cuisiniers de Pluton, et toy dont le tonnere
Fait escrouler les gons du ciel, et de la terre,
Foudroyez l'Atrean, et vous portiers mastins,
Deschirez charogniers leurs cueurs diamantins. (*Clytemnestre*, I.87-94)

Nevertheless, the D'Espernon of *La Guisiade* proves to be the most crazed of all of Matthieu's *sorciers*, with an imprecation to rival any previously found in French Renaissance tragedy:

O peste de ce Tout, execrable Megere,
Par mon ame qui t'est fidelle messagere
Par Cocyte et Tantal, par l'ardent Phlegeton,
Par ces deux autres seurs Thesiphone, Alecton,
Par le cruel Minos, par le grand Rhadamante,
Par le poison qui sort de ta bouche beante,
Par le Luxe, et l'Orgueil, qui sont mes chers esbas,
Par l'Erreur insensé, par l'infidelle Schisme,
Par l'infecte Heresie, et le sale Atheisme,
Par tant et tant de maux qui couvent dans mes os,
Par tant d'extorsions, de tailles, et d'impos,
D'une façon cruelle, horrible, et inhumaine
Suffoque, tue, perds tout le sang de Lorraine (*La Guisiade*, III.i.867-880)

In his characterization of D'Espernon, Matthieu turns an *archimignon* into an arch-villain: one so possessed by demonic powers that he is able to condense evils that disparately ravage

[43] See Lobbes, 'Introduction', pp. 192-3. The following textual excerpt from Matthieu's *Clytemnestre* is conveniently presented here, with a similar text from Matthieu's *Esther*.

an entire nation into a direct onslaught on a rival clan. In so doing, Matthieu combines classical allusions with echoes of contemporary crises. The three Furies of Greco-Roman mythology ('Megere', 'Thesiphone', and 'Alecton') are invoked, together with the judges of the Underworld ('Minos' and 'Rhadamante'); these ancient powers seamlessly merge with a coalition of personified topical vices ('Luxe', 'Orgueil', 'Erreur', 'Heresie', 'Atheisme'), and with current practice of extortion,[44] 'rapt' (842), and the odd 'cruel Edit' (1406),[45] to bring down the Guises. The immediate objective of D'Espernon's sorcery, however, is to create the impression at the forthcoming États Généraux that all is well between the King and the leader of the Ligue. Only once all three Estates have been wholly deceived can D'Espernon's death curse become a fateful reality in Acts IV and V.

Curiously, however, D'Espernon is not the direct instigator of the assassination plot. This role is instead assigned to a mysterious 'N.N.' introduced in Act IV to sway the vacillating king decisively towards murder. Following his apparent reconciliation with Guise and the Estates of France in Act III, Henri seems to have repented of all his evil ways (IV.i.1533-72). A purge of all his *mignons*, beginning with D'Espernon, seems imminent. But the crafty N.N. carefully dissuades the king from such a course, slowly rekindling his fear of Guise. N.N. clearly occupies a pivotal position in the tragic *dénouement*; yet initially, it is far from clear why Matthieu should introduce another evil counsellor after the flamboyant, diabolical D'Espernon. The *archimignon* would seem the natural choice to advise murder, as indeed he does in Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*. Instead, Matthieu chooses a villain whose identity has become the subject of scholarly debate. My contention is that N.N. is a plural entity – one whose anonymous plurality is another important pointer to the mounting wrath of Ligueurs towards their opponents exhibited in the flood of pamphlets that followed the Guise assassination.

Matthieu struggles to account for what he considered to be an imperceptible *volte-face* on the part of Henri III in his disposition towards Guise (p. 152). At some point between October and December 1588, Henri resolved to have his Lieutenant Général massacred – and

[44] An allusion not only to taxation but also to 'L'usure italienne', devouring 'en un jour du peuple la substance' (III.iid.1399-1400). Such imagery was commonplace in the late sixteenth century, particularly in Matthieu's home city, Lyon, the seat of well-established Italian banking families. Their leverage over local commerce and national financial markets was a constant source of resentment, and was robustly denounced in Jesuit preaching in 1589. See Henry Heller, *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

[45] After 1586, Épernon had established a measure of control of the privy purse, the *comptants à la main du roi*. But he could not prevent abuses of the entire fiscal system. The Italian financier Scipio Sardini even published an edict in 1587 on his own authority increasing a tax on certain products, for which he was imprisoned by the *Cour des aides* before the king ordered his release. see Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV: The Struggle for Stability* (London: Longman, 1984, 2nd ed.1995), pp. 29-30.

for, Matthieu, it was not 'vray-sembable' (p. 67) that he could have reached such an extraordinary decision without first caving into exterior pressure. Épernon, moreover, had been banished from the court in the summer of 1588, and would not be recalled until the following spring; it was also implausible, therefore, that he was directly and entirely responsible for the king's change of mind. In *La Guisiade*, Matthieu proposes an alternative explanation. The playwright introduces a dialogue scene between Henri and the villainous N.N. in the build-up to Guise's death (IV.i). Matthieu describes this scene as a theatrical 'conjecture' (p. 139) upon an indeterminate reality: the steady stream of 'oblique conseil' (p. 67) from various advisors welling up in the king's ears. Who, then, are these counsellors collectively represented as 'Le N.N.'? Matthieu's introductory commentary provides the best clues: 'un anonyme ou plusieurs […] tels qu'on peut presumer diables incarnez, Machiavelistes, Heretiques, conjurez ennemis de la Religion Catholique' (p. 67).[46] A standard collocation list is given here to cover an open-ended spectrum of enemies surrounding Henri III with pernicious counsel. Similar versions of such lists circulated in Ligueur pamphlets that followed the death of Guise, yearning for the extermination of Henri and his entourage of enemies of the Catholic Faith:

> tous les Idolatres et meschans […] ceux qui sont à sa fuitte frappez à son coing, et moulez à son caractere: comme larrons, financiers et tresoriers, mignons, ambitieux, faux iusticiers, traistres à la France, Officiers de sa Courone, Politiques à leur profit, Machiavelistes sans loy, et pour dire en deux mots sorciers et Atheistes. Voila la belle armee et compagnie digne de Henry de Valois […].
> (*Les Meurs, humeurs et comportemens de Henry de Valois*, p. 37)

The embattled tone of this *libelle* shows how Ligueur hatred of Henri and his *mignons*, and indeed, of all support for the crown, was reaching boiling point in the early months of 1589 (Henri was assassinated on 1 August). Similar sentiments underlie the 'Argument' preceding Act IV scene i of La *Guisiade*, which quickly descends into a shrill justification of the Ligue's intolerance of 'impietez et blasphemes des Huguenots', not to mention 'conjurations et entreprises des Politiques', and 'dissolutions et irregulieres despences des Mignons' (p. 139). Set in the wider context of Ligueur propaganda, the siglum 'N.N.' would appear to designate a semi-occluded, expansive set of villains, whose actual names need not be spoken. Matthieu only indicates the *sorts* of evil persons he has in mind; the Ligueur reader must 'fill

[46] See also the *Pompe funebre des penitens de Lyon*, p.18, where Matthieu insists that Henri must have learned his extreme wickedness from devils and 'Necromantiens'.

in the blanks', as Richard Hillman puts it.[47] As such, 'N.N.' would ultimately stand for any and every opponent of the (Ligueur) Catholic Faith.

Some scholars, however, have argued that the key to understanding N.N. lies in the allusions to 'diables incarnez' and 'Machiavelistes' made by Matthieu in his introductory commentary. These claims must be carefully nuanced, since opinions differ as to how Matthieu's initial remarks correspond to what is conveyed when N.N. eventually appears on stage in Act IV.i. Gilles Bertheau and Louis Lobbes interpret 'N.N.' as 'nomen nominandum': a latinate euphemism for the devil.[48] Accordingly, this would make the N.N. we encounter in IV.i an incarnation of Satan, as summoned by D'Espernon in III.i: a devil whose inclusion in the *dramatis personae* reminds us of the medieval *mystères*, and of the *personnages diaboliques* that continued to maraud the provincial stage in the late sixteenth century.[49] Others (Jacques Chocheyras, Jean-Claude Terneaux) view this as an overly medievalizing approach, seeing N.N. instead as 'diabolical' in the broader sense of a demon-possessed human agent – not a stage-devil *per se*, but an acolyte (or several) at Henri's court, akin to those who devilishly corrupt the king in Belyard's *Le Guysien*.[50] Of the two camps, Chocheyras and Terneaux come closest to reconciling the evidence in both the text and commentary of *La Guisiade*. Their views, moreover, are compatible with the argument I am advancing based on internal evidence, together with external material from Ligueur pamphlets and from other sources. Collectively, these sources suggest that Matthieu's N.N. is best understood in the wider context of a cultural metamorphosis by which the devil's form and active sphere of influence were believed to be expanding considerably. Traditional representations of the devil in early modern French theatre coincided, as studies by Marianne Closson and Timothy Chesters have ably shown, with an explosion of discourses on Satan, demons, ghosts, and witchcraft in the late sixteenth century.[51] These were endlessly charted,

[47] Hillman, *François de Chantelouve*, p. 292 n.177.
[48] Bertheau, 'Les Figures du duc de Guise et d'Henri III', p. 139; Lobbes, 'Introduction' to *La Guisiade*, pp. 23-4. See also Hillman, *François de Chantelouve*, p. 292 n.177, for whom N.N. is close to the morality figure of Bad Angel, as staged in Marlowe's *Faustus*: a diabolical function exteriorizing the inner voice of temptation to evil.
[49] Although uncommon in humanist theatre, stage devils were an essential element of the medieval *mystère*, a genre still performed in schools and theatres outside of Paris: see Raymond Lebègue, 'Le Diable dans l'ancien théâtre religieux', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des Études françaises*, 3-5 (1953) 97-105.
[50] Chocheyras, 'La Tragédie politique d'actualité sous les règnes de Henri III et de Henri IV', in *Études sur Étienne Dolet: le théâtre au XVIe siècle*, ed. by Gabriel-André Pérouse (Geneva: Droz, 1993), pp. 167-73 (167); Terneaux, 'La Diabolisation dans *La Guisiade* (1589) de Pierre Matthieu et *Le Guysien* (1592) de Simon Bélyard, *Études Epistémè*, 14 (2008), 1-17 (11-13).
[51] See Closson, *L'Imaginaire démoniaque en France, (1550-1650): genèse de la littérature fantastique* (Geneva: Droz, 2000); Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

not only by 'experts',[52] but also in the popular and literary imagination. The protean, plural N.N. of *La Guisiade* captures something of this heterogeneous outpouring of motifs, personages and narratives of demonic possession – coinciding (as frequently was the case) with political and religious invective. In other words, N.N. is not an onstage incarnation of Satan as one might encounter in traditional *mystères*. Nevertheless, Satan is still undeniably imminent in *La Guisiade*. The Father of All Lies is ever present, operating through his legion of deceitful human agents.

Finally, what do we make of the claim that Machiavellianism is the central trait of N.N.? Machiavelli was, for many of his detractors, the chief earthly scribe of Satan. All commentators on *La Guisiade* have noted how the wily interventions of N.N. compellingly orientate us to this notorious human end of the demonic spectrum. Again, however, certain nuances should be maintained. In line with his introduction, Matthieu sets forth his 'N.N.' with a handful of Machiavellian-sounding arguments, some of which nonetheless resonate with earlier Senecan tragic themes and, indeed, with contemporary French tragedy. Most of these are unleashed during the climax of IV.i. N.N. sententiously warns of Guise the 'ambitieux' (IV.i.1673-82): the man who fearlessly prevails over 'mille hazards', stopping at nothing to claim the crown, so that he will appear 'comme de Dieu l'image'.[53] The King must act swiftly, urges N.N.: princes who do not destroy their rivals will never adequately discourage rebellions. Oath-breaking and butchery are the price for political survival: a cynical strain of Machiavellianism that probably owes as much to Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel* as it does to *Il principe* (ch. 17 and 18).[54] Perhaps the most 'Machiavellian', of all N.N.'s counsels is the final word of advice: kill Guise and his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, before purging the remaining leaders of the Ligue (IV.i, 1740, 60). Destroying all traces of an enemy dynasty or faction is, Machiavelli remarks, grimly expedient for those who would rule unopposed (*Il principe*, ch. 4).

And yet, Matthieu's enigmatic N.N. cannot be reduced to a mouthpiece or one-dimensional caricature of Machiavelli. N.N. occasionally lapses into distinctly un-Machiavellian bouts of flattery.[55]As the vacillating Henri III inclines towards popular

[52] For instance, Johannes Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonorum et incantationibus ac veneficiis libri V* (1563); Jean Bodin, *Démonomanie des sorciers* (1580); Pierre Le Loyer, *Les IV Livres des Spectres* (1586).
[53] This portrait of Guise resonates with Nabuchodonosor in Garnier's *Les Juifves,* and with Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes*. **REFS**
[54] *Anti-Machiavel*, XIII. Maxime ('Cruauté qui tend à bonne fin n'est reprehensible'); XVIII. Maxime (**see note X);** XIX. Maxime ('Le prince doit savoir cavaller les esprits des homes pour les tromper').
[55] Machiavelli strongly dissuades his ruler from allowing free and open debate among yes-men as counsellors, conducive to all kinds of flattery (*Il principe*, ch. 23).

demand for a *mignon* purge, N.N. dissuades him with a fawning insistence on the absolute devotion of his 'creatures cheres' (IV.i.1573), who alone worship him 'Pour soleil, pour flambeau, pour Seigneur' (1590). But such moments of unalloyed flattery are restricted to a bare minimum. More profitable, N.N. demonstrates, is to mix flattery with fear, by undermining Henri's capacity to uphold feudal dominion and the divine right of kings. N.N. taps into Henri's anxiety at the prospect of losing his royal title, 'Prince Treschrestien' – an epithet routinely stripped from him in hostile pamphlets. Emphasising at all times the Ligueur threat, N.N. warns that Guise will put the king into degrading 'servage' (1634); but conversely, if Guise may be enticed into a murderous trap, the feudalistic master-slave dynamic will be reversed. Henri will be seen to act like a 'maistre' punishing a wayward 'serf' who got too big for his boots (1715). Only then will Henri rule 'tout seul' (1683), as he so ardently desires. Through an array of arguments, N.N. acts with supreme mental agility. He is at once a sounding board for Henri's expressions of monarchical pride and a probing advocate of ruthlessness. Devilishly cunning, N.N. is more than a stage Machiavel; wheedling, godless, and ruthless, the shady counsellor represents a cross-section of Ligueur opponents, 'Heretiques' and 'Politiques' alike. Anonymous, N.N. expresses the semi-focused anxiety and animosity that ran in tandem with much Ligueur invective of the late 1580s. In sum, Matthieu's N.N. embodies a complex, indeterminate villainy rarely equalled in Renaissance French tragedy or polemic.

La Guisiade is neither a 'manuel antimachiavélique', pace Lobbes, nor the site of a 'machiavellisme aggravé', pace Bertheau. Such descriptors are too shallow to account for Matthieu's unique transposition of Ligueur polemical vocabulary and themes into a recognisably neoclassical cadre. In *La Guisiade*, Henri III, D'Espernon, and N.N. are engulfed by the 'ombres pallisantes' of the Ancient underworld, and a set of endlessly reiterated symbols of Ligueur hatred – the Huguenot, the atheist, the *mignon*, the *politique* – who introduce each other, and whose villainy is thus mutually reinforcing. These in turn team up with avatars of evil operating through and between several Renaissance cultural discourses: the tyrant, the Turk, the Machiavel, and the devil. The resultant tragedy would have confronted its 1589 readers with a potent affective charge. In *La Guisiade*, Matthieu provided the vocabulary and conceptual wherewithal necessary for internally simulating the atrocious assassination of Guise. The play is thus a superlative instance of Ligueur texts catalysing disparate xenophobia and various political-religious antagonisms into a trenchant ideology; textst which, in Denis Crouzet's words, 'permettent au lecteur de glisser

imperceptiblement dans un monde parallèle dont il est l'acteur, de simuler des gestes de violence qui ont pour fin de faire triompher la Vérité'.[56]

[56] Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*, II, p. 186.