

**GAUTIER DE COSTES DE
LA CALPRENEDE**

LA MORT DE MITRIDATE

Critical edition

by

Guy Snaith

**Liverpool Online Series
Critical Editions of French Texts**

Liverpool Online Series
Critical Editions of French Texts

Series Editors

Timothy Unwin
Glyn S. Burgess

Editorial Board

Pollie Bromilow
Kay Chadwick
Charles Forsdick
Alan Howe
Richard Waller

Advisory Board

Peter Ainsworth
David Bellos
Rosemary Lloyd
Henry Phillips
Gerald Prince
Deirdre Reynolds
Jean-Marie Volet
Jane Winston

Published by
The University of Liverpool
School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies

© Guy Snaith

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Printed by
Alphagraphics®
Tel: 0151 236 0559

First published 2007

ISBN 0 954406-1-1

**Gautier de Costes de
La Calprenède**

La Mort de Mitridate

Liverpool Online Series
Critical Editions of French Texts

The aim of this series is to establish a resource bank of critical editions and translations of French texts. These are to be made available in electronic form, with parallel paper publication of a small number of copies of each item. Online versions of items in the series are designed to be viewed as an exact replica of the printed copies, with identical pagination and formatting. They are stored on the University of Liverpool server at the following URL:

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/soclas/los/index.htm>

The texts are available in PDF (Portable Document Format) form, requiring the use of Adobe Acrobat Reader. Instructions for downloading this free and widely-used software application are available at the Liverpool Online Series web site. The format combines maximum security with maximum flexibility of usage. Texts may either be viewed on screen, downloaded for personal study, or printed as camera-ready copy by the end-user. They cannot be interfered with or otherwise recycled by unauthorised users.

Items in the series are being selected to cover a range of areas throughout the field of French and Francophone studies. They may be single texts or anthologies, are of short to medium length, and contain critical introduction, notes and bibliography as appropriate. Each item will contain either unedited or otherwise unobtainable material, or material which for scholarly reasons requires an up-to-date edition. The series accommodates editions in the original or in translation, or with parallel translation into English. It aims primarily at the scholar and specialist, but the format makes it accessible to the interested general reader or student.

Timothy Unwin
Glyn S. Burgess
Series Editors

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Creation and Reception.....	8
Dramatizing History.....	12
The New Dramaturgy.....	19
Characters.....	26
‘Le temps veut que l’on cede’: Political Tragedy.....	35
‘Ce devoir du sang’: Family Tragedy.....	38
‘Ces sacrez sermens et donnez et receus’: Love Tragedy.....	42
A Machine for Entertaining.....	48
Text of the Present Edition.....	60
Select Bibliography.....	67
<i>La Mort de Mitridate</i>	73
Act I.....	83
Act II.....	95
Act III.....	108
Act IV.....	122
Act V.....	135

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the Committee of the Liverpool Online Series for accepting my proposal to publish an edition of this play. I would like to thank particularly my longstanding colleagues Glyn Burgess, Alan Howe and Richard Waller for their years of support and encouragement. Help and advice have been solicited, graciously given and gratefully received from far and wide. I owe thanks to colleagues in the Arts Faculty of the University of Liverpool: Harold Braun, Alan Greaves and Bruce Gibson, who allowed me to plunder their expertise. To colleagues at other universities in Britain: Bill Brooks, Russell Goulbourne and Roger Mettam for so helpfully answering queries. To my French colleague, Alain Riffaud, for his invaluable help with questions about the printing of seventeenth-century French plays. To Henry Phillips for his patience in reading and rereading the manuscript and his insightful advice. To Dennis Hartley and Lynn Farthman for their technical support. To Rob Dolan for his forbearance over the years.

Liverpool, December 2007

Guy Snaith

Introduction

LA CALPRENÈDE'S LITERARY CAREER BEGAN AUSPICIOUSLY IN 1636 with the success of his first play *La Mort de Mitridate*. The waspish Tallemant des Réaux had begrudgingly to concede: 'elle fut estimée', before adding: 'il n'y en avoit pas tant de bonnes alors qu'il y en a eu depuis'.¹ In the following year, Guérin de Bouscal included it in a list of contemporary tragedies favoured by Richelieu which, as Lancaster commented, must have been 'among the most highly esteemed plays of the day'.² Eclipsed by Racine's version of essentially the same subject matter in 1673, *La Mort de Mitridate* was, by the end of the nineteenth century, at least being read again, if only as background to the first critical editions of Racine's tragedy. Bernardin, although still comparing it unfavourably with Racine's *Mithridate*, could nevertheless describe it as a 'tragédie, qui ne manque pas de beautés' and Lanson could find 'quelques beaux morceaux et [...] quelques situations pathétiques'.³ During the twentieth century, *La Mort de Mitridate* continued its climb back to occupy a place in critical esteem. Lancaster wrote that 'with the exception of *Sophonisbe* and *Mariane*, there is no better classical play than this before the *Cid*'.⁴ Antoine Adam cites it with Du Ryer's *Lucrèce* and Tristan's *Mariane* as three plays 'que leur qualité et leur succès mirent hors de pair'.⁵ In the 1980s Jacques Scherer and Jacques Truchet brought it to the attention of a wider audience by including it as one of the two plays representing La Calprenède's theatre in the second volume of their *Théâtre du*

¹ Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. by Antoine Adam, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-61), II, 584.

² Henry Carrington Lancaster, 'Leading French Tragedies Just Before the *Cid*', *Modern Philology*, 22 (1924-25), 357-78 (p. 377).

³ Jean Racine, *Mithridate*, ed. by N.M. Bernardin (Paris: Delagrave, 1882), p. 6; another edition, by Gustave Lanson (Paris: Hachette, 1888), p. 20.

⁴ *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, 5 parts in 9 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1929-42; repr. New York: Gordian Press, 1966), Part II: *The Period of Corneille 1635-1651*, vol. 1 (p. 64). Happily, Lancaster's judgement was favourable, because for much of the century it found itself repeated. In the 1960s Pierre Sage wrote, for example: 'On peut dire qu'après la *Sophonisbe* de Mairet et la *Marianne* de Tristan, la pièce de La Calprenède est la meilleure tragédie de celles qui ont précédé le *Cid*', in *Le Préclassicisme* (Paris: Del Duca, 1962), p. 263.

⁵ *Histoire de la littérature française au XVII^e siècle*, 5 vols (Paris: Domat-Montchrestien, 1948-56), I, 545.

La Mort de Mitridate

XVII^e siècle.⁶ More recently Georges Forestier has used the expression ‘cette belle pièce’ to describe it.⁷ Similarly, André Blanc has called it ‘une fort belle pièce’.⁸

Creation and Reception

For much of his life, La Calprenède was both a serving soldier and an active playwright and then novelist.⁹ Born around 1610 at the château de Toulgou, near Sarlat, in Périgord, Gautier de Costes de la Calprenède was the eldest son of a family of provincial gentry. With lawyers, magistrates and civil servants in his family, tradition has it that he studied law at Toulouse. Nevertheless, Tallemant writes: ‘il vint jeune à Paris’ (p.584), and at some point in the early 1630s La Calprenède made his way to the capital in order to become a cadet in the élite *Régiment des gardes françaises*, the most prestigious of all the infantry regiments, being a kind of military academy for young noblemen.¹⁰ Throughout his playwrighting career the liminary pieces to his plays bear witness to the dual role he fulfils of dramatist and soldier. In *La Mort de Mitridate* he twice refers to himself as a ‘soldat ignorant’.¹¹ La Calprenède did see active service. The difficulties encountered in the printing of *La Mort de Mitridate* are undoubtedly due to prolonged absences from Paris on military duties during the difficult years of 1635-36. In his second tragedy, *Jeanne, reine d’Angleterre*, published in 1638, his publisher even thinks him dead. And in later life La Calprenède, now a successful novelist, tells his readers that he will model the fall of Babylon in his novel *Cassandre* on his experience of the siege of Gravelines, for which he is preparing as he writes.¹² Antoine Adam went so far as to suggest that La Calprenède perhaps wrote his plays at the front and sent them back to Paris (II, 124).

These early years in Paris probably resemble that picture of the seventeenth-century equivalent of *la vie de bohème* as lived by the aspiring young playwrights

⁶ *Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1975-92), II (1986), 143-203.

⁷ Forestier first called it this in the notes to his edition of Racine’s *Mithridate* for the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (*Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), p. 1531). Even more recently he has reiterated this judgment, calling it ‘belle pièce’ in his *Passions tragiques et règles classiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005), p. 205.

⁸ André Blanc, *Racine: trois siècles de théâtre* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2003), p. [195].

⁹ Chroniclers and encyclopedists like Nicéron and the frères Parfaict, Hoefler and Lérès have been the traditional sources of information as regards La Calprenède’s biography and his plays. For full references, see the bibliography, p. 68.

¹⁰ From the Frères Parfaict to Antoine Adam, the traditional date of his arrival is around 1632.

¹¹ See the dedication (p. 76) and the *Au Lecteur* (p. 79).

¹² Épître to Part Three. Gravelines was besieged from 1 June to 28 July 1644. The *achevé* of the third part of *Cassandre* is the very day that Gravelines fell.

of the 1630s on La Pinelière's Parnassus. Dividing their time between the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Marais, they importune actors and hope that a famous dramatist will notice them. Seeing the latest plays, exchanging the latest gossip, they vie with each other to mention the names of Corneille, Du Ryer, Mairet and Rotrou, and boast of what secrets they have overheard concerning new plays.¹³ To this, in La Calprenède's case, must be added his military duties and meetings at Théophraste Renaudot's *bureau d'adresses*, of which Tallemant calls La Calprenède 'un des arcs-boutans' (p. 584).

By 1635 La Calprenède had already been in Paris for two or three years. During this time he had undoubtedly witnessed the triple success of Rotrou's *Hercule mourant* (1634), Mairet's *Sophonisbe* (1634) and Corneille's *Médée* (1635), and been encouraged by that success and by the excitement of the revived tragic theatre to write a tragedy of his own. Mairet's *Sophonisbe* was followed by his *Marc-Antoine; ou, La Cléopâtre*, with Benserade's *Cléopâtre* hard upon its heels.¹⁴ Seen by La Calprenède, in the *Au Lecteur* to *La Mort de Mitridate* he mentions both of these recent tragedies as precedents for the denouement of his first play, which was probably composed, as Lancaster thinks, during the spring and summer of 1635 and performed during the latter half of the year.¹⁵

In 1635 Charles IV of Lorraine made an attempt to reconquer his estates, and in counter-attack Richelieu formed the Armée de la Sarre, composed amongst other troops, of twelve companies of *Gardes françaises*.¹⁶ From Mainz they marched towards Frankfurt in September. Outmanœuvred by the Spanish and 'en grande disette de vivres',¹⁷ the French and their allies retreated to Saverne, the rearguard harassed all the way by the enemy, losing cannon, baggage, and, as Bassompierre writes: 'ainsi que ceux qui ne purent suivre pendant les trente-six heures que dura la retraite, sans loger ni *repâître*, avec mille peines et incommodités'.¹⁸ Winter quarters were found in the north-east of France, bringing the year's campaigns to an end. This could well have been a campaign in which La Calprenède saw service, for in the dedication of *Le Comte d'Essex* La Calprenède thanks the princesse de Guéméné for her support when he was 'un jeune Cadet sortant des Gardes encore chancelant et foible de sa famine

¹³ Guérin de la Pinelière, *Le Parnasse; ou, Le Critique des Poetes* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1635), pp. 55-63.

¹⁴ Both of them had been performed at about the same time in 1635, Benserade's version being published in 1636 and Mairet's in 1637. A printed copy of either play would thus not have been available to La Calprenède during the composition of his play.

¹⁵ *History*, II, 60. It was certainly performed before 4 January 1636, the date of Mairet's *Épître* to his *Galanteries du duc d'Ossonne*, in which *La Mort de Mitridate* is referred to.

¹⁶ [Marie Joseph] Hardy de Périni, *Batailles françaises*, 6 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1894-1906), III (1897), 192.

¹⁷ Hardy de Périni, III, 195.

¹⁸ Quoted by Hardy de Périni, III, 195.

La Mort de Mitridate

d'Allemagne'.¹⁹ Leaving the winter quarters for Paris, he could then have seen his first play performed at the end of the year. An anecdote is responsible for the tradition that it was performed on Twelfth Night, *le jour des Rois*. At the moment in the last act when Mitridate drinks the poison saying: 'Mais, c'est trop differer' (V.1.1461), a wag in the parterre began shouting: 'Le Roi boit, le Roi boit'.²⁰ However, since the play is mentioned in the *Épître* to Mairet's *Galanteries du duc d'Ossonne*, the publication of which precedes Twelfth Night, this could not have been its first performance as some of the encyclopedists believed.²¹

Unfortunately, as with all but one of La Calprenède's plays, we do not know at which theatre *La Mort de Mitridate* was performed. What evidence we do possess would seem to point to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the frères Parfaict, for example, saying that the plays were given 'au Théâtre François'.²² Certainly *Le Comte d'Essex* was in the repertory of the Hôtel de Bourgogne between 1642 and 1647,²³ and *Bellissaire* was performed there in 1659.²⁴ It is also likely that La Calprenède's sequel to Tristan's *Mariane*, *La Mort des enfans d'Hérode*, was written to allow this theatre to take advantage of *La Mariane*'s success at the Marais. Deierkauf-Holsboer also proposes an association with the Hôtel de Bourgogne (II, 20), a view which is strengthened by the fact that a contemporary panegyric of La Calprenède by Grenaille also contains fulsome praise of the *troupe royale*.²⁵ Although Mahelot does not include a design of the set for the play, only two tragedies are included amongst his designs for the Hôtel de Bourgogne.²⁶

La Mort de Mitridate met with considerable success. Tallemant relates how during the run of the play La Calprenède was seen dressed in an extravagant fashion. On being asked the colour of this costume, the marquis de Gesvres quipped: 'C'est du Mitridate' (p. 585). In the *Épître* to *Les Galanteries du duc d'Ossonne*, Mairet singles out Benserade for his *Cléopâtre* along with La

¹⁹ *Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, II, 206.

²⁰ Hoefler, Lérès (p. 227), Michaud, Nicéron (p. 241), Parfaict (*Histoire*, V, 160).

²¹ Hoefler, Lérès, Michaud, Nicéron.

²² *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 7 vols (Paris: Lambert, 1756), s.v. Calprenède.

²³ S. Wilma Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, 2 vols (Paris: Nizet, 1968-70), II, 51. See also [Laurent] Mahelot, *Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et d'autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, ed. by Henry Carrington Lancaster (Paris: Champion, 1920), pp. 26-28, 54.

²⁴ *Bellissaire* is the one play for which we know the theatre where it was performed: see Jean Loret, *La Muze historique*, new edn, rev. by Ch.-L. Livet and others, 4 vols (Paris: Jannet, 1857-78), III (1878), 78 (12 July 1659). The play itself appears never to have been printed and has been lost.

²⁵ [François Chatounières de] Grenaille, 'Ouverture générale à toute la pièce avec un discours sur les Poèmes Dramatiques de ce temps', prefacing his *Innocent malheureux; ou, La Mort de Crispe* (Paris: Paslé, 1639), sig. ã4^r.

²⁶ *Le Mémoire de Mahelot: Mémoire pour la décoration des pièces qui se représentent par les Comédiens du Roi*, ed. by Pierre Pasquier (Paris: Champion, 2005), p. 103.

Calprenède for his *Mort de Mitridate* as being two young authors ‘de qui l’apprentissage est un demi-chef-d’œuvre, qui donne de merveilleuses espérances des belles choses qu’ils pourront faire à l’avenir’.²⁷ In a later pamphlet criticizing Mairet for the vanity of this preface and his patronizing attitude to the two playwrights, the anonymous author commented: ‘Vous ne sauriez nier que cette *Cléopâtre* a enseveli la vôtre, que le *Mithridate* a paru sur le théâtre autant qu’aucune de vos pièces, et que l’une et l’autre à la lecture l’emportent bien haut sur tout ce que vous avez fait’.²⁸ It must be taken into account, however, that these comments were penned during the quarrel over *Le Cid* with the aim of diminishing Mairet’s achievement. Nevertheless, Guérin de Bouscal did include *La Mort de Mitridate* in his ‘Prologue de la Renommée’, his list of contemporary tragedies favoured by Richelieu.²⁹ And as late as 1662 it could still have been making the rounds of the provinces in the repertory of a touring company, for the actors in Raymond Poisson’s *Baron de la Crasse* are prepared to perform it.³⁰

This first play also appears to have constituted La Calprenède’s passport into the highest court circles. Not only did the princesse de Guéméné probably come to La Calprenède’s aid at about this time, but two sentences in the dedication of *La Mort de Mitridate* imply that it was after the play’s performance that the author gained the favour of Anne d’Autriche. There he writes that the characters Bérénice and Hysicratée are but pale imitations of the French Queen and then adds:

Pleust à Dieu, MADAME, qu’avant le dessein de les faire paroistre, j’eusse eu l’honneur que j’ay eu du depuis. J’aurois depeint l’une & l’autre bien plus parfaite, selon l’idée que j’en ay conceuë, en considerant avec admiration toutes les actions de la plus belle vie qui fut jamais. (p. 75)

The interplay of literary and military activity seems to have had repercussions on the printing of the play. Tapié entitles his chapter on the years 1636 to 1638 ‘La Grande Épreuve’,³¹ and during these two years La Calprenède’s life would continue to be characterized by long absences from Paris. On 29 April 1636 he sold the rights to *La Mort de Mitridate* to Sommaville for 200 *livres tournois* with the proviso that it was not to be published before the feast of Saint Martin d’Hiver

²⁷ *Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, I, 596.

²⁸ ‘Avertissement au besançonnois Mairet’, in *Œuvres de Pierre Corneille*, ed. by C. Marty-Laveaux, Les Grands Écrivains de la France, 12 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1862-68), III (1872), 67-76 (p. 75).

²⁹ See n. 2.

³⁰ *Le Baron de la Crasse* (Paris: De Luyne, 1662), p. 21.

³¹ Victor-Lucien Tapié, *La France de Louis XIII et de Richelieu* ([Paris]: Flammarion, 1952).

La Mort de Mitridate

(11 November).³² Alan Howe sees further signs of the play's success in these details, 200 *livres* being the same amount that the dramatist would later receive for his very successful *Comte d'Essex*, so a good sum for a first-time playwright to be earning.³³ Not only that, but the money was to be paid immediately, *somme comptant*, at a time when most authors were kept waiting for their payment. The fact that the date of publication was set for the autumn probably also indicates that the actors wanted to keep performances of the play exclusively to themselves for as long as possible. On 15 August 1636 Corbie fell to the Spanish, and for four months the enemy was only eighty miles from the capital. One of the largest armies since Henri IV was levied and put under the command of Gaston d'Orléans with the mission of raising the siege. Sommaville obtained the *privilège* for *La Mort de Mitridate* on 30 September, and the *achevé* is dated 16 November,³⁴ two days after Corbie had been retaken, the Gardes françaises, as was their right, having been the first to march into the city.³⁵ At such a time of national crisis, military duties must undoubtedly have occupied La Calprenède's energies, which is why he finds himself apologizing for the misprints, explaining that he was absent for most of the printing and therefore only had time to correct the end of the fifth act. Although La Calprenède protests that he is more soldier than dramatist, nothing we know of him gives us any sense of him wanting to hide his light under a bushel, but the play was published without his name on the title page. Given his commercial acumen, Sommaville undoubtedly decided to put 1637 on the title page of a play published in late 1636 in order to extend its life as a *nouveauté* into the new year.

Despite whatever military duties La Calprenède had, this was a very prolific time for him. On 7 February 1637 his publisher obtained the *privilège* for three further plays which had undoubtedly already been performed: his first two tragi-comedies, *Bradamante* and *Clarionte*, and his second tragedy *Jeanne, reine d'Angleterre*. He would go on to write five more plays before turning to fiction writing in the early 1640s.

Dramatizing History

As Georges Forestier has written: 'dans la perspective du travail de mise en intrigue, la tragédie classique se révèle être un genre fondé sur le principe de la cause finale'.³⁶ The title of La Calprenède's first play announces the fact that by

³² Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central, LVII, 52 (29 April 1636); transcribed in Alan Howe, *Écrivains de théâtre, 1600-1649* (Paris: Centre historique des Archives nationales, 2005), p. 256.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 105. As a successful play, it is curious that there appear not to have been any pirated editions.

³⁴ See p. 151.

³⁵ Hardy de Périni, III, 34.

³⁶ *Essai de génétique théâtrale: Corneille à l'œuvre* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), p. 14.

the end its principal character will have died, but it is not the only play of the time to do so. Scudéry's *La Mort de César* (1636), Benserade's *La Mort d'Achille* (1636), Guérin de Bouscal's *La Mort de Brute et de Porcie* (1637), Chaulmer's *La Mort de Pompée* (1638) as well as, in the next decade, Corneille's own *La Mort de Pompée* (1644) and Tristan L'Hermite's *La Mort de Sénèque* (1645) all have titles which trumpet who will be dead by the end of the play. One can imagine La Calprenède, therefore, wanting to be part of this brave new world of tragedy-writing, casting around for a subject by considering famous deaths in antiquity ripe for dramatization. Mairet had already put the deaths of Sophonisba, Mark Antony and Cleopatra on stage (indeed, given Benserade's version, 1635 had seen competing Cleopatras), Scudery killed off Caesar too in early 1635, and famous Greek deaths such as those of Hercules, Medea and Achilles had been tackled by Rotrou, Corneille and Benserade respectively. But as Racine will write in the opening sentence of the preface to his own *Mithridate*: 'Il n'y a guère de nom plus connu que celui de Mithridate'. The name of the King of Pontus was itself still in common parlance in the seventeenth century, La Calprenède defending himself in his *Au Lecteur* by saying: 'Je n'ay pas entrepris de descrire la mort de Mitridate, sur ce que j'ay ouy dire de luy à ceux qui vendent son baume sur le Pont-neuf' (p. 78) Because of the poisons he inoculated himself with and which prevented poison working when he wanted it to kill him, the associations of Mithradates in the seventeenth century and even today are with his demise.

If La Calprenède had started to think that the death of Mithradates might be a suitable subject to dramatize, how could he proceed? There were certainly ancient histories that he could go to for information, both in the original Greek or Latin or in French translations. In the *Au Lecteur* to his play, Plutarch and Florus and Appian are all paraded to show that La Calprenède has indeed done his research.³⁷ He is right too that none of the historians go into a great deal of detail about Mithradates' death itself. Plutarch, who is writing about Pompey, who was at Petra at the time, writes in a single sentence: 'Pompée [...] leur déclara, comme Mithridate estoit mort, s'estant luy-mesme fait mourir, pourautant que son fils Pharnaces s'estoit souslevé & avoit pris les armes contre luy, & s'estoit emparé de tout ce que possedoit son pere, luy escrivant qu'il le tenoit & gardoit pour soy & pour les Romains'.³⁸ Of a similar sentence mentioning Surena in Plutarch's life of Crassus, Forestier sees Corneille as finding there 'le squelette de la tragédie. Une

³⁷ In Plutarch's *Lives*, the account of Mithradates' death is in his life of Pompey, but La Calprenède also found other details in the chapters on Sylla and Lucullus. In Florus's *Roman History*, Book 3, chapter 5 deals with Mithradates' wars against the Romans. In Appian's *Roman History*, Book 12 is 'The Mithradatic Wars' and chapters 15 and 16 treat the death of the Pontic king.

³⁸ *Les Vies des hommes illustres grecs et romains*, trans. by Jacques Amyot, new rev. and corrected edn, 2 vols (Paris: Morel, 1619), II, 419. Forestier comments on the attraction of this subject matter for Racine: 'Ainsi cette histoire d'un père acculé à la mort par la trahison de son fils représentait du point de vue de la poétique aristotélicienne, donc cornélienne et racinienne, un parfait sujet tragique', in *Jean Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), p. 452.

La Mort de Mitridate

simple matrice tragique'.³⁹ With Plutarch's sentence before him, La Calprenède will have found himself in a similar position as regards Mithradates. Florus does not describe the death either: referring to Mithradates' one final plan to invade Italy from the north, he writes: 'Mais son dessein ne peust pas reussir, d'autant qu'il fut prevenu par la révolte de ses subjects, & par la meschanceté de son fils Pharnaces, qui le mit à un tel desespoir qu'il chassa avec le fer, l'ame que le poison n'avoit peu arracher de son corps'.⁴⁰ La Calprenède concedes that Appian does provide more detail, the historian describing how Mithradates had poison hidden in the pommel of his sword, how two of his daughters, Mithradatis and Nyssa, begged him to let them be the first to drink the poison and how they promptly collapsed, while nothing happens to Mithradates because of how he has inoculated himself out of fear of assassination. Appian even comments that such antidotes are still called 'Mithridat'.⁴¹ In direct speech the king asks one of his captains, a Gaul named Bituitos, to kill him: 'Et là où j'ay evité (dit-il) tant d'autres dangers, maintenant ne me suis sceu garder de la trahison & infidélité de mes enfans, de mes amis & de mes gendarmes'.⁴² In tears, Bituitos runs him through with a sword. But La Calprenède felt that there was still not enough here 'pour en pouvoir tirer le subject entier d'une Tragedie' (p. 79).

Nevertheless, La Calprenède has an ending to work back from, and as Forestier commented as regards Corneille and the one sentence mentioning Surena in Plutarch: 'Tout restait à inventer'.⁴³ Given the material at his disposal, La Calprenède thinks likewise. What he did have was the adversarial relationship of Mithradates and Pharnaces and the linking of son with father's death. In Appian the situation is that Mithradates, who has been circling the Black Sea in order to strike at the Romans from the European side of the Bosphorus, has reached Panticapaeum in the Crimea, the present Ukrainian city of Kerch. His own soldiers, augmented by Roman deserters, are camped outside the city. Pharnaces turns them against his father who has hatched a daring but unpopular plan to invade Italy from the north. Mithradates does leave the city to try to reason with the soldiers but is forced back inside. Through a series of messengers to Pharnaces, Mithradates tries to negotiate safe passage out of the city, but seeing that this is impossible he commits suicide rather than being taken captive and handed over to the Romans. Thus La Calprenède had found a situation resembling that of several successful plays already performed: that of Republican Rome

³⁹ *Essai de génétique théâtrale*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Florus, *Histoire romaine*, trans. by F. N. Coeffeteau (Paris, 1632), pp. 72-73.

⁴¹ Appian, *Des Guerres des Romains*, trans. by Claude de Seyssel (Paris: Julian, 1580), fol. 164^v.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Essai de génétique théâtrale*, p. 40. With *Mithridate*, Forestier states that Racine had no intention of just rewriting *La Mort de Mitridate*. Having found in 'la mort du héros trahi par son fils Pharnace allié aux Romains' his 'matrice tragique', 'tout le reste était à réinventer' (*Jean Racine*, p. 454).

carving out its empire at the expense of reigning monarchs of well established Mediterranean kingdoms. In *Sophonisbe* it was Rome versus Numidia; in the Cleopatra plays it was Rome versus Egypt, and, for his play, by turning the forces outside the city walls more clearly into Romans, La Calprenède makes his situation more explicitly Rome versus Pontus. He even introduces Romans into the play in the shape of Pompée and Émile, allowing him to emphasize Pharnace's subservience to them.⁴⁴ The setting of a besieged city is too a situation which Mairet had already exploited in *Sophonisbe*, wherein the Numidians are holed up in Cirta, which the Romans penetrate during the course of the play, ultimately forcing themselves into the royal palace itself.⁴⁵ Such a situation allows for last desperate sorties out from the city (military ones rather than just *pourparlers* and only reported, admittedly)⁴⁶ as well as last interviews between family members and Pharnace (albeit from the walls of the city).⁴⁷ Sinope being associated with Mithradates as the place where Pompey sends his body for burial, La Calprenède moves the setting of the play there, perhaps finding the two-syllable name easier to use in alexandrine verse than the rather cumbersome four-syllable Panticapée.⁴⁸ Although La Calprenède laments the 'sterilité du sujet' (p. 78), he nevertheless pares down his subject matter still further by deleting all of Pharnaces' machinations in turning Mithradates' soldiers against him, as well as Mithradates' last plan to invade Italy.⁴⁹ To compensate, he says that he has added 'quelques incidens'. Given the great simplicity of the plot, one can only think that what he means are the sorties and the interviews. For example, although in no historian is

⁴⁴ Two Romans have similar roles in *Sophonisbe*: the consul Scipion and his lieutenant Philippe. Massinisse finds himself in a similar relationship to them as Pharnace does in this play. No Romans appear in Racine's *Mithridate*.

⁴⁵ The topos of the besieged city was in fact a reality with which the French were all too familiar. La Rochelle had been besieged less than 10 years before, and Philippe de Champaigne's painting *Louis XIII couronné par la Victoire*, which depicts the siege of La Rochelle in the background, was only completed in 1635. In the following year Corbie, 80 miles from Paris, would fall to the Spanish and be besieged for three months. La Calprenède would himself participate in the siege of Gravelines in 1644. Two of his later plays will be set in besieged cities: *Jeanne reine d'Angleterre* and *Herménigilde*. Other plays of the time similarly set include Hardy's *Phraate*, Mairet's *Virginie* and Du Ryer's *Cléomédon*.

⁴⁶ In *Sophonisbe* Syphax, King of Numidia, makes a similar sortie out of Cirta and dies in battle, the details reported by a messenger (II. 2).

⁴⁷ In Appian, Mithradates looks out from a high portico in the city and sees Pharnaces crowned by the rebel soldiers.

⁴⁸ Racine avoids Panticapée too, setting his *Mithridate* in Nymphée (Nymphaeum), another Crimean city. Forestier notes in his Pléiade edition: 'Il suffit de comparer les noms de Panticapée et de Nymphée pour comprendre pour quelles raisons (euphonie et puissance évocatoire) Racine a ainsi tordu le cou à la vérité historique' (Racine, *Œuvres complètes*, I, p. 1543, n. 5).

⁴⁹ The reference in the text to 'soldats subornés' (l. 860) is a vestige of the historical scenario found in Appian. Racine will make use of the plan to invade Italy in his play.

La Mort de Mitridate

there any meeting between father and son, La Calprenède knows that drama is conflict and is therefore not going to deny his audience such a confrontation by just having messengers sent out to Pharnace.

In all of the new tragedies of the 1630s love is woven into the fabric of the play. Writing of Tristan L’Hermite’s contemporaries, one of which was La Calprenède, Sandrine Berregard remarks: ‘Ces tragédies accordent à la peinture de l’amour un rôle prépondérant’.⁵⁰ In the second line of *Sophonisbe*, as Syphax says to his wife, the eponymous heroine: ‘Est-ce là cet amour que tu m’avais promis?’, the audience realizes that they are going to see not just love but conflicted love at that. Fortunately women are an integral part of the Mithradates story. Berenice, Hypsicratea, Laodice, Mithridatia, Monime, Nyssa, Roxana, Stateira, Stratonice are the names with which Mithradates is historically associated, either as wives or concubines or daughters. But just how can La Calprenède introduce one or more of these women and love as a theme into his plot? Throughout his dramatic career he will always prefer to simplify his sources rather than complicate them, so all ideas of inventing romantic entanglements are eschewed.⁵¹ Moreover, the whole point of putting the story of Mithradates on stage is ‘la cause finale’. Appian has already related that two daughters were present at the end; it is then easy to conjecture and justify the presence of a wife. Indeed, the ultimate horror, which is the whole point of dramatizing this story, will be much greater the greater the number of characters who commit suicide. Although the historical Mithradates was polygamous, La Calprenède’s Mitridate can only have a single wife. Of the women named in the sources, the most suitable candidate for Mitridate’s last faithful and loving helpmate must have seemed Hypsicratea, who, although not mentioned in Appian, is described thus in Plutarch’s life of Pompey:

Hypsicratia l’une de ses concubines, laquelle avoit bien tousjours esté hardie & avoit un cœur d’homme, tellement que Mitridate pour l’amour de cela l’appelloit Hypsicrates: mais lors étant vestuë en homme d’armes Persien, & ayant le cheval de mesmes, elle ne se trouva jamais lasse ny recreuë pour quelques longues courses que fist le Roy, ny jamais ne se lassa de servir sa personne, ny de penser son cheval. (II, 416^v)

She had, of course, already figured in a similar capacity in Behourt’s play *Hypsicratée*, which had dramatized the same subject matter in 1604. Conjugal love will thus be the kind of chaste love interest that Mitridate will have and, with two of his daughters present as well, La Calprenède will be able to portray

⁵⁰ *Tristan L’Hermite: héritier et précurseur* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2006), p. 263.

⁵¹ It is Racine who goes down this road, inventing a romantic quadrangle centred on Monime.

Mitridate as a family man, even enlarging the family circle to include a daughter-in-law.⁵²

But happy conjugal life is not tragic subject matter. So, if Pharnace is the pivotal character to be moved in the course of the play, requiring a scene in which he locks horns with his father, how much more difficult for Pharnace if the emotional tension is ratcheted up by giving him a love interest as well, but one which, although conjugal, will nevertheless pitch husband against wife.⁵³ Conflict between spouses can thus be doubled by internal conflict. If Pharnace's wife is inside the besieged city because she supports his father, Pharnace will find himself at odds with the woman he loves. How satisfying for an audience then to see Pharnace torn not just by filial duty but by a great love of a woman as well. Saying that 'il est certain qu'il a esté marié' (p. 79), La Calprenède finds the name Bérénice in Plutarch's life of Lucullus where one of Mithradates' wives of this name is commanded to take poison rather than be captured by the Romans.⁵⁴ Another *scène à faire*, this time of husband and wife, is thus added to the mix, the effectiveness of the scene legitimating such an addition: La Calprenède writes: 'cet incident est assez beau, pour meriter qu'on luy pardonne' (p. 79). Of Bérénice La Calprenède continues:

Et je ne mentiray point, quand je diray que les actions de ceste femme ont donné à ma Tragedie une grande partie du peu de reputation qu'elle a, & que celle qui les a representées dans les meilleures compagnies de l'Europe, a tiré assez de larmes des plus beaux yeux de la terre pour laver ceste faute.

The primacy of affect thus vindicates La Calprenède's decision to modify historical fact.

And what to do with all the detail accumulated while reading through the ancient historians? Although La Calprenède presents only a few hours of crisis, his characters need to be given a 'backstory'. All those years of fighting Rome through three wars, an integral part of Mithradates' narrative, have to be evoked. Likewise, if La Calprenède is choosing not to depict a cruel Mithradates, then references still need to be provided to past cruelties in order to show an awareness of the historical figure. Such detail is thus fitted into the dialogue: from the first

⁵² Reading between the lines, however, the dysfunctional nature of the family is still obvious. It is mentioned in the play that Hypsicratée is not his mother (l. 186) and, at one point, Hypsicratée doubts that Mitridate is even his father (l. 1330). In fact, nor is Hypsicratée the mother of Mitridate and Nise, who call her by her name.

⁵³ That second line of *Sophonisbe* indicated that conjugal contentment was not going to be the subject of that play.

⁵⁴ This is also one of the places where the name Monime appears, another wife who has her throat cut after unsuccessfully attempting to hang herself. Already the subject of Pageau's *Monime* of 1600, where she is forced into suicide, she will go on to find greater fame as the heroine of Racine's version of the tale.

La Mort de Mitridate

scene Pompée, speaking to Pharnace, evokes the years of war and refers to Mitridate's cruelty; from his first scene, Mitridate, surrounded by his family, refers to his past tussles with Pompée (I.2) and later provides further impressions of the past (IV.3). There is no need to distinguish between First, Second or Third Mithradatic Wars; it is sufficient to create an atmosphere of years, indeed decades, of war between Rome and Pontus in order to justify the war-weariness of someone like Pharnace. Detail can be multi-functional. As well as providing characters with a pre-dramatic past, references to past battles on land and at sea contrast with the present sequestered state of Mitridate and his family and their ever-diminishing room for manoeuvre over the course of the play. 'Flacce, Cotta, Fimbrie, & Triaire, vaincus' (IV.3.1203), Mitridate throws at Pharnace as proof of what he has been capable of in the past. And a few lines later he is countering his son's argument with other names: 'Tu peux encore mieux confirmer ta pensée, / En m'alléguant Siphax, ou Jugurte, ou Persée.' (IV.3.1214). It would not be *vraisemblable* to have any explanation of who these names refer to because Pharnace, who has fought beside his father for years, knows exactly who they are. But the texture of the play is made denser, the contours of this world richer, by the use of such strings of proper names, all of which La Calprenède will have readily found in Appian, Plutarch or Florus.⁵⁵ It does not matter if the audience does not know who each individual figure is or what role they played in Mithradates' life, for the aesthetic value of such names rises above the mere factual. Strung together as enumerations, they also offer the aural pleasure of euphony.

In 1907, comparing La Calprenède and Racine, Médan felt that *La Mort de Mitridate* had been marred by its author's 'souci de faire œuvre d'historien'.⁵⁶ A century later, Charles Mazouer can still write: 'Comme dans ses romans, La Calprenède se veut historien dans ses tragédies'.⁵⁷ As proof, Médan cited the *Au Lecteur* as showing 'le plus grand respect pour la vérité historique' (p. 48), but, as Forestier has pointed out: 'On n'invoque la vérité historique que pour expliquer que l'on avait les meilleures raisons de prendre des libertés avec elle'.⁵⁸ More interesting than such conventional protestations on La Calprenède's part is rather the freedom that he demonstrates in his attitude to the historical sources.

⁵⁵ In *Mithridate* Racine will tend to use place names, giving a geographical expansiveness to the play.

⁵⁶ Pierre Médan, 'Un Gascon précurseur de Racine: *La Mort de Mithridate* de La Calprenède et le *Mithridate* de Racine', *Revue des Pyrénées*, 19 (1907), 44-63 (p. 58). Twenty-five years earlier Bernardin, in his edition of *Mithridate*, also commented that the earlier play was 'bien plus fidèle à l'histoire que celle de Racine' (p. 6).

⁵⁷ *Le Théâtre français de l'âge classique, I: Le Premier XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2006), p. 366.

⁵⁸ 'Théorie et pratique de l'histoire dans la tragédie classique', *Littératures classiques*, 11 (1989), 95-107 (p. 101). In his edition of Mairet's *Marc-Antoine*, for example, Alain Riffaud quotes from La Calprenède's *Au Lecteur* in order to prove his point that 'la liberté que Mairet prend avec l'Histoire était partagée par la majorité de ses contemporains', in *Théâtre complet, I* (Paris: Champion, 2004), p. 223.

Invention, adaptation and rearrangement strike one as the keynotes rather than historical fidelity.⁵⁹ To continue Forestier's point, dramatists of the time would feel that 'on a été supérieurement fidèle à l'histoire, puisqu'on y a ajouté des "ornements" pour mieux la servir auprès du public' (p. 101). What the subject of Mithradates provided La Calprenède with was a story with a well-known ending that offered the possibility of spectacular treatment. Such a situation is exceedingly dramatic. Getting the characters to that denouement allowed opportunities for conflict, confrontation and rhetorical display. History is viewed as the purveyor of immediate, powerful situations that promise to take the audience on an emotional rollercoaster ride. For La Calprenède the historical will always cede to the dramatic. As such he honorably falls in line with most other dramatists and theorists of the time in viewing history as just the "lieu" de l'action', the distinction being for Forestier that for Corneille 'l'histoire est le *sujet* de l'action'.⁶⁰

The New Dramaturgy

La Calprenède is writing his plays during one of the most exciting decades of the seventeenth century for theatre. When he begins writing in the mid 1630s, the battle between the *Irréguliers* and the *Réguliers* is virtually over, the former defending a theatre that wants to be free-ranging and unregulated and the latter perceiving themselves to be rational and modern in their championing of the value of the dramatic rules of the ancient classical dramatists. As Alain Viala writes: '*Sophonisbe* de Mairet instaure en 1634 les règles dans la tragédie'.⁶¹ Writing in its wake, it is doubtful that the young dramatist thought twice about which route to follow. Mairet had shown the way, and La Calprenède opts to be modern. Dramatic theory would follow,⁶² but La Calprenède already has examples on the Parisian stage of what is involved, indeed what is required, in writing thoroughly modern plays.

In keeping with the new dramaturgy as exemplified by *Sophonisbe*, La Calprenède constructs a play which depicts the last stages of a crisis and where everything proceeds logically and determinedly towards the catastrophe and denouement. His attitude to his sources falls into the respectable contemporary tradition of choosing an historical subject, of which he honours the essential facts,

⁵⁹ Later plays such as *La Mort des enfants d'Hérodes*, *Edouard* and *Phalante* will mark a drift away from history to dramatizations and novelizations as source material.

⁶⁰ 'Théorie et pratique', p. 100.

⁶¹ *Le Théâtre en France des origines à nos jours*, ed. by Alain Viala (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), p. 183.

⁶² As well as the documents produced in reaction to *Le Cid*, La Mesnardière's *Poétique* is of 1639, while d'Aubignac's *Pratique du théâtre*, although written in 1640, will not be published until 1659.

La Mort de Mitridate

while altering detail for the greatest effect.⁶³ Although La Calprenède remarks on the ‘stérilité du sujet’, he does not create any secondary plotlines, so that the play is totally unified. Aside from the cup of poison being passed around and the family members dying, there is no action to speak of on stage, all news of military action being related by messenger.

In his enthusiasm to be modern, La Calprenède also makes sure that his play adheres to the conventions of the early 1630s as regards timespan, place and action. Although attention is not drawn to the duration of the action, it is not stretching the imagination to conceive of all of the events taking place between morning and evening of the same day.⁶⁴ Situating the play in and outside a single city like Sinope falls in line with the practice of other dramatists,⁶⁵ and the décor which must have involved the walls of the city on one side of the stage and the tents of the Romans on the other, with the façade of the palace along the back above a curtained space, was perfectly acceptable for the time.⁶⁶ Likewise, although there is an inbuilt difficulty in linking all scenes when you are dealing with two opposing camps, nevertheless, La Calprenède manages within each camp to link scenes with *liaisons de présence*.⁶⁷ The popularity of *stances* in the 1630s means that La Calprenède has *Mitridate* open Act V with a set.⁶⁸ The number of characters is limited. There are no *sentences* and the few sententious statements are incorporated into speeches in a less obvious way than by the marking with an asterisk of an earlier dramaturgy.⁶⁹ And there are no dreams. In fact, in his *Dramaturgie classique*, Scherer calls *La Mort de Mitridate* ‘une

⁶³ In the *Au Lecteur* to *Sophonisbe*, Mairet defends the choices and decisions he had to make. Racine is still doing so in the preface to *Mithridate*.

⁶⁴ Marianne Bethery goes so far as to conjecture that the action of the play need only take ‘quelques heures’, in *Dictionnaire analytique des œuvres théâtrales françaises du XVII^e siècle*, ed. by Marc Vuillermoz (Paris: Champion, 1998), p. 556. In the following year, one of the criticisms of *Le Cid* would be that it was hard to imagine so much happening within the space of twenty-four hours.

⁶⁵ Circa is the setting of *Sophonisbe*, Alexandria of *Marc-Antoine*, Seville of *Le Cid*, Jerusalem of *Mariane*, etc.

⁶⁶ Examples of sets in Mahelot which resemble what might have worked for this play are the one for Hardy’s *La Belle Egyptienne* (fols 30^v, 31^f) (Pasquier ed., p. 264) or for d’Auvray’s *Dorinde* (fols 41^v, 43^f) (Pasquier, p. 287). See also Act I, note 15 of our text.

⁶⁷ Bethery remarks: ‘C’est à chaque fois le changement de lieu qui interrompt la liaison des scènes: au dernier acte où les deux lieux coïncident, les scènes restent liées’ (p. 556).

⁶⁸ Popularized by Rotrou in *Hercule mourant* and by Corneille in *Médée*, Cleopatra speaks in *stances* as she dies in *Marc-Antoine* and they would go on to appear in Tristan’s *Mariane* and most famously in Corneille’s *Le Cid*. The last time Corneille would use them would be in *Polyeucte* (1642). Despite their popularity, La Calprenède resorts to them only once more, in his next play *Bradamante*.

⁶⁹ Act II, scene 1, ll. 349-50, for example. In *Sophonisbe*, Mairet still sets a *sentence* off by *guillemets*: II.2.535-36.

tragédie qui respecte presque toutes les règles classiques'.⁷⁰ John Lyons has pointed out, however, the paradox of such 'regularity' being lavished on tragic subject matter which by its very nature is transgressive: 'These rules aim at perfecting a structure for the representation of an *irregularity*'.⁷¹

Nevertheless, despite all these efforts to be modern, La Calprenède's dramatic method has often been judged to be reminiscent of an earlier period. Forestier states of the play: 'Elle relève d'un autre système dramaturgique, issu de la tragédie de la Renaissance'.⁷² The nub of the criticism is that in working backwards from the desired ending, the dramatist has not invented any original way of getting his characters to the denouement. The sense that little changes between the opening of the play and the end, since characters fearing death in the opening scenes are dead by the last scene, leads Forestier to class the play as 'une tragédie à dénouement étendu', typical of sixteenth-century tragedy (p. 206). With the best of intentions, however, La Calprenède shows at least that he is aware of what is required in writing modern plays by his reference to his attempts at enriching with 'incidens' the 'stérilité' of the initial subject matter. He would certainly not have thought of himself as having a Renaissance mindset.⁷³ On another front, while conceding that the love/politics nexus in *La Mort de Mitridate* is modern, Berregard remarks: 'Cette pièce, encore marquée par la tragédie lyrique de la Renaissance, est empreinte d'une atmosphère de déploration' (p. 277, n. 144). Long laments over dead bodies are seen as echoes of an archaic dramaturgy. Hérode's *plaintes* at the end of *Mariane* fall into this category: 'un souvenir de la tragédie lyrique de la Renaissance' (p. 280). Massinisse, confronted with the dead body of Sophonisbe, delivers a speech of 93 lines, but Pharnace, on discovering his family dead because of him, needs just 50 lines to express his horror, and that horror goes beyond mere lamentation. La Calprenède is of his time but he does more than offer 'l'immobilité lyrique', his drama being more animated than 'la tragédie oratoire', phrases that Viala uses to characterize the earlier dramaturgy (p. 177). Lamentation is passive and La Calprenède offers active discourse in the company of suspense and spectacle.

In this first play La Calprenède lets us see in far greater detail than for any of his other plays the creative effort of a dramatist in the 1630s: the considerations that a playwright has, the decisions that he has to make and the need he feels to justify those choices. *Nécessité* and *bienséance* are used as reasons for changes and additions. The denouement is obviously the *raison d'être* for dramatising this subject and, by the end, five characters will lie dead on the stage. But, mindful of

⁷⁰ *La Dramaturgie classique en France* (Paris: Nizet, 1976), p. 168.

⁷¹ *Kingdom of Disorder: The Theory of Tragedy in Classical France* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), p. 24.

⁷² *Passions tragiques et règles classiques: essai sur la tragédie française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), p. 205.

⁷³ La Calprenède will never develop a more complex dramatic method, although it would not have seemed beyond the capabilities of an author whose novels are full of the most elaborate plot developments.

La Mort de Mitridate

the *bienséances*, the female characters will all have committed suicide by taking poison and, although in Appian Mithradates is killed by a faithful soldier, La Calprenède has him commit suicide too, defending this decision as being ‘plus convenable à la générosité qu’on a remarquée dans toutes les actions de sa vie’, i.e. more in keeping with the ideas of *générosité* and tragic heroism of France in the 1630s.⁷⁴ He then cites the precedent of the two Cleopatras of the previous year, where three characters commit suicide during the last act.⁷⁵ The results of the quintuple suicide are finally glimpsed in all stateliness as the curtain is drawn back to reveal the family arranged around Mitridate and Hypsicratée on their thrones. Although not mentioned in the preface, *bienséance* was also obviously the reason behind making Mitridate a family man, polygamy and incest not being to the taste of the French public and critics in the 1630s, however historically accurate such a portrait might have been.⁷⁶ *Bienséance* is used again to explain his treatment of Pharnace, whom La Calprenède has tried to make ‘plus honneste homme qu’il n’estoit’ and of whose emotional life we learn nothing in the historical sources. La Calprenède makes sure that we know that he has done his research by mentioning that Plutarch reports that Pharnaces had Mithradates’ body sent to Pompey, La Calprenède adding: ‘Et qu’il soit tres veritable qu’il n’en eut aucune sorte de regret’. That not being the way one would expect a son to behave towards his dead father in the France of the 1630s, Pharnace is made remorseful. In writing: ‘Je donne à ce mesme Pharnace les deplaisirs & les remords qu’il devoit avoir de la mort de son père’, La Calprenède is also being modern in providing a moral ending in which the audience sees, through the action on stage, vice being punished. A few lines later he writes: ‘La bienséance m’obligeoit du moins à changer des choses si peu importantes’.

So, *choses peu importantes* can be changed. La Calprenède declares that Hypsicratea is not mentioned as being with Mithradates at the end in Appian, but uses plausibility as his defence for having her there: it is highly likely that she would have been with him at the end and he has not seen her name mentioned anywhere after the King’s death. Two further examples are provided: Sinope being made the setting of the play and Pompée’s presence at the beginning of the play. Although La Calprenède does not use the word, *vraisemblance* is the

⁷⁴ Scherer states: ‘Le meurtre est interdit; le suicide ne l’est pas’. Ancient historical precedents endow suicide with a sense of courage and dignity, making it ‘le seul acte sanglant qui soit permis à un héros classique’ (*Dramaturgie classique*, p. 418). Berregard comments that suicide is considered a ‘meurtre généreux’ (p. 262, n. 39).

⁷⁵ In *Sophonisbe* the heroine drinks poison and Massinisse ends the play by stabbing himself with a dagger. Although La Calprenède’s characters all die by suicide, the references to ‘habits sanglans’ and ‘trespas violans’ (ll. 1689-90) seem to indicate the dramatist striving for a measure of baroque horror, although La Calprenède gives no hint of such an aim in the *Au Lecteur*.

⁷⁶ It is mentioned that Hypsicratée is not Pharnace’s mother (l. 186) but not that his mother was Laodice, who was also one of Mitridate’s daughters. The issue is not skirted in Pageau’s *Monime*.

defence in both cases, Sinope being mentioned in Plutarch as the city where Mithradates was buried, and Pompey being the Roman general credited with his death.⁷⁷ As regards the latter, nevertheless, the defensive note is still there as he assures the reader that he knows that Pompey was far away at the time of Mithradates' death. To rebut again the arguments that La Calprenède is more historian than dramatist, such changes and additions all have as their aim the aesthetic rearrangement of history in favour of the dramatic.

Undoubtedly the most important sign of La Calprenède striving to be modern is the psychological dimension to his tragedy. In listing the legacy of Mairet's *Sophonisbe* to French tragedy of the 1630s, Scherer mentions of the characters: 'L'activité essentielle est psychologique plus que matérielle, action constituée par des conflits entre ces personnages aussi bien qu'au sein de l'esprit d'un ou de plusieurs d'entre eux'.⁷⁸ From the moment that critics started looking at *La Mort de Mitridate*, even someone like Médan, who is generally not favourable to the dramatist, could write of the characters Pharnace and Bérénice: 'Ces germes de psychologie sont précieux; en se développant, ils rendront nécessaire une nouvelle conception tragique' (p. 63). In its depiction of a family in turmoil, its members torn by contradictory emotions of filial, paternal and conjugal love as they grapple desperately with a life-and-death crisis, the psychology has as its source another legacy of *Sophonisbe*: the conflict between the personal and the political. We know from the *Au Lecteur* that La Calprenède was pleased that Bérénice moved audiences to tears and that he intended Pharnace to evoke horror. Ultimately La Calprenède's conception of tragedy, therefore, is of its time, running along Aristotelian lines of inspiring pity and fear. Modern too is its dramatic sense of concentration, urgency and suspense.

As a young dramatist presenting his first published play to the public, La Calprenède strikes a defensive note in the *Au Lecteur*: 'J'ay voulu prevenir la mauvaise opinion que vous auriez justement conceüe d'un Soldat ignorant...' (p. 79). As conventional as such a protestation might be, what La Calprenède's explanations reveal is that he knows that dramatists now run the risk of being criticized on the score of fidelity to history and *bienséance* and *vraisemblance* (even if he does not use the last word). The fact that he takes such things into consideration in composing his play in 1635 and then in defending his dramatic method in the preface in late 1636 shows that all the rules regarding how to write a good tragedy are already in place. This is why Christian Delmas can talk of the furore over *Le Cid*, which will explode upon the Parisian theatrical scene a few months after the publication of *La Mort de Mitridate*, as actually being 'l'épilogue de ce débat'.⁷⁹ La Calprenède provides his audience with enjoyment according to

⁷⁷ La Calprenède uses *apparence* in its seventeenth-century sense of *vraisemblance* when he writes of Hypsicratée's presence at the end: 'Mais il y a beaucoup d'apparence...' (p. 79).

⁷⁸ *Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, I, 1287.

⁷⁹ *La Tragédie de l'âge classique (1553-1770)* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), p. 15.

La Mort de Mitridate

the rules, but an important point to note in the *Au Lecteur*, and which further places La Calprenède honourably amongst his contemporaries, is his reference to the public's reaction to Bérénice and which was enough not only to excuse any invention but also a vindication of the decision the author had taken, and so the vindication of the power of audience enjoyment. A few months after writing his liminary pieces, La Calprenède no doubt watched, along with the rest of Paris, Rodrigue appearing before Chimène, bloody sword in hand, on the very day he had killed her father. Despite the infringement of all sorts of 'rules', Corneille would later remark on that 'certain frémissement dans l'assemblée' he noticed as Act III, scene 4 of *Le Cid* began, just as he would later write that 'la poésie dramatique a pour but le seul plaisir des spectateurs'.⁸⁰ What we have in both cases are examples of what Lyons has stated: 'Tragedy is shaped according to the needs, prejudices, and feelings of the audience' (xi).

Jacques Truchet writes of tragedy post-*Sophonisbe*: 'Cette production reste à bien des égards baroque'.⁸¹ *La Mort de Mitridate* bears witness to its author being on the cusp of changing mentalities. La Calprenède writes a tragedy which through its regularity and discipline shows him striving to be modern and consequently contributing to the development of what would, only centuries later, be called 'classical' dramaturgy. At the same time, his dramatic method has been seen to hark back to an earlier age of tragedy-writing. Then again, the spirit of the work, the way the characters think and feel, calls to mind that other epithet 'baroque'. Jean Rousset listed as baroque preoccupations: 'Le changement, l'inconstance, le trompe-l'œil et la parure, le spectacle funèbre, la vie fugitive et le monde en instabilité'.⁸² All are products of a *zeitgeist* of uncertainty, instability, and impermanence which had been felt as early as Montaigne's 'rien de certain', and which, by the 1630s, only seemed to be intensifying, and all are preoccupations which one finds the characters of *La Mort de Mithridate* wrestling with. Although, by all accounts, La Calprenède revelled in the excitement of the Parisian theatre world of the 1630s and, as we have seen, threw himself into the new dramaturgical precepts in composing his first play, underneath the surface also seems to have lurked the young man born into a pre-Cartesian world and who is not immune from that other spirit of the age which is disturbed by the changes happening so quickly in every sphere. La Calprenède was aged about 6 when Copernicus appeared before the Inquisition (1616), 14 when Richelieu came to

⁸⁰ 'Examen du *Cid*' and 'Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique' in *Writings on the Theatre*, ed. by H.T. Barnwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 104, 3.

⁸¹ *La Tragédie classique en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), p. 133. Truchet adds: '*Hercule mourant* ou *Médée* apparaissent comme moins "classiques" que *Sophonisbe* ou *Mort de Mitridate*, tragédies romaines; il s'agissait néanmoins d'une transformation profonde et décisive'.

⁸² *La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le paon* (Paris: Corti, 1953), p. 8. The dates of the baroque period are often taken as being as large a timespan as 1580 to 1660. The 'plein-baroque' in France is seen by Rousset as extending from 1625 to 1665, into which series of years La Calprenède's entire literary career falls.

power (1624) and 18 when Harvey published his findings on the circulation of the blood (1628). He came to Paris in the same year as Galileo appeared before the Inquisition (1632), and *La Mort de Mitridate* was published in the same year as Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode* (1637). Jean-Claude Vuillemin states that such developments left *homo barrochus* characterized by 'une frénésie du feindre cachant souvent mal une tentation compréhensible du geindre':

Le concept de "baroque" peut ainsi s'appliquer à la prise de conscience de cette faillite irrémédiable des certitudes chez un être qui est en train de faire l'expérience que le monde qu'il habite relève de l'incertain et du chimérique.⁸³

By the mid 1630s, as an active soldier, La Calprenède knew first hand the rigours of campaigning and the battlefield, as a member of the country gentry he will have had his own opinions on the administrative reorganization involving greater authority for the state, on the new institutions, on the resulting conspiracies of noblemen and the executions of some of the greatest in the country. Jean Rohou views the new dramaturgy as another aspect of the general campaign for discipline and order in all areas of life.⁸⁴ He writes: 'La discipline qui s'impose vers 1630 est à la fois technique, pour une meilleure efficacité de l'action des personnes sur le monde, et morale, pour un assujettissement des hommes à l'ordre social et au pouvoir politique' (p. 105). As a dramatist, La Calprenède adopts the aesthetic disciplines which coincide with this new regular, rational world. He even dedicates his fourth tragedy to Richelieu, but this is not to say that he necessarily escaped from that 'general malaise'⁸⁵ being experienced by all sections of the population.

Philip Yarrow discussed the contradictions of 'The Age of Corneille' under three headings: 'Order and Disorder...', 'Reason and Faith', 'Baroque and Classicism'.⁸⁶ And Didier Souiller explains:

Sans doute la présence d'antithèses, vécues dans le déchirement et dont les deux termes s'opposent de manière spectaculaire, doit-elle chercher son origine dans la crise de la pensée à l'âge baroque, puisque, dans la confusion, l'ancien et le nouveau s'affrontent et les concepts contraires, que la logique exclut, coexistent.⁸⁷

⁸³ 'Baroque: pertinence ou obsolescence', in *Racine et/ou le classicisme*, ed. by Ronald W. Tobin (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2001), 479-96 (pp. 492-93). His preface to *Édouard* (1640) will show La Calprenède at his most bilious.

⁸⁴ *La Tragédie classique* (Paris: SEDES, 1996), p. 103.

⁸⁵ The expression is that of Robin Briggs, in his *Early Modern France: 1560-1715* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 115.

⁸⁶ *Corneille* (London: Macmillan, 1963).

⁸⁷ *La Littérature baroque en Europe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), 64.

La Mort de Mitridate

As regards the last of Yarrow's 'contradictions', Marlies Kronegger sums up the essential difference:

L'esthétique classique de la mesure, de l'ordre, de la clarté et de l'harmonie s'oppose à la réalité baroque, caractérisée par le hasard (la « fortune » selon l'expression de Souiller), les contradictions, le désordre et l'instabilité, l'irrationnel, la thématique de l'être et du paraître, et du monde à l'envers.⁸⁸

With such *mots-clé* in mind, La Calprenède's characters can be said to live in a baroque world. Things and people are no longer what they once were; the world seeming to have gone mad, the vagaries of time and fortune preoccupy characters experiencing disillusionment and uncertainty. While his plays distill the anxieties of the period, the world of the stage and playwriting in the 1630s is also exciting. Fully committed to the new dramaturgy, La Calprenède imposes a classical harness of regularity and discipline on his subject matter, but, as the contradictions of the age filter through, he also registers the disquiet of the collective French imaginary of his time. Nor is he prevented from offering his audiences those other signs of a baroque sensibility: the pleasures of variety, conflict, spectacle, theatricality and shock. As Vuillemin has pointed out: 'la pensée baroque est la prise de conscience tragique, certes, mais aussi, et dans le même temps, ludique du nouvel état du monde et de l'homme' (p. 493). In looking backwards and forwards, *La Mort de Mitridate* bears witness to the consciousness of an age of shifting mentalities. It is also exemplary of the difficulty of categorizing seventeenth-century French theatre in the 1630s. La Calprenède did not think of himself as pre-classical, classical or baroque, or as having any kind of label. He just thought that he was writing a modern regular tragedy.⁸⁹

Characters

La Calprenède's dramatic method proceeds by antithesis, *La Mort de Mitridate* functioning via the symbiotic relationship between two antithetical poles, the protagonist Mitridate and the antagonist Pharnace. But each of these characters harbours further dualities as neither father nor son is now what he once was. The historical sources provided detailed treatment of the events but only rudimentary comments on the characters or conflicts of the participants. In Appian and

⁸⁸ 'Introduction au Baroque' in 'Le Baroque en question(s)', *Littératures classiques*, 36 (1999), 17-22 (p. 19).

⁸⁹ As John Lyons has written: 'the seventeenth century did not know that it was classical', in 'What Do We Mean When We Say "classique"?', in *Racine et/ou le classicisme* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2001), 497-505 (p. 505).

Plutarch, Mithradates is essentially characterized by his cruelty or courage. In Appian, on his death he may decry ‘la trahison et infidélité de mes enfans’ (fol. 164^v), but there have been no confrontations with Pharnace, who has only been briefly introduced near the end of the tale. In chronicling the facts, the historian provides the skeleton to be fleshed out by the dramatist through the personalities of his characters.

Mitridate

La Calprenède is dramatising the last day in the life of Mithradates VI Eupator, Mithradates the Great, but La Calprenède chooses not to dramatize the most obvious aspects of the Pontic king’s life: his cruelty and sensuality. Critics have found fault with this choice, preferring to see a vigorous and dynamic king such as Racine provides at least in the first half of his play. Mazouer, for example, cannot help exclaiming: ‘Quand on pense à l’énergie du Mithridate de Racine!’ (p.369), and Forestier sees in La Calprenède’s Mitridate ‘une pure victime [...] en contradiction avec toutes les données historiques’.⁹⁰ Jane Conroy can state of the author: ‘la transformation qu’il opère sur le personnage a de quoi étonner, car il en fait un grand héros, à peine coupable de quelques crimes presque oubliés’.⁹¹

Having taken up details from Appian and decided that Mithradates will be with his family when he dies, the Mithradates La Calprenède presents us with is a Mithradates sequestered with his loved ones in his palace. All of his victories and all of the shocking incidents associated with him are in the past and have to be related to us. This leads to a discrepancy between what we hear about Mitridate from his adversaries and what we see of Mitridate in the course of the play itself. The first two scenes of the play are a prime example of this.

Our first impression of Mitridate is provided in the first scene as Pompey and Pharnace talk of ‘l’horreur de ses crimes’ (l. 37), describing him as ‘ce cruel’ (l. 53) and ‘un tyran’ (l. 68) given to violence (l. 101). Such is the historical Mithradates. Having spilt his subjects’ blood, he is now deserted by them, by his army and by his children. With even Fortune and the gods manœuvring against him, he emerges as a lonely, isolated figure. By the end of the scene, however, one may well sympathize with him standing alone against a Rome represented by Pompée and Pharnace.

But La Calprenède has created expectations only to subvert them, for when we see Mitridate in the very next scene he is not at all like the figure just pictured. A sympathetic image is created of a family man, who is very human, loving his wife

⁹⁰ *Jean Racine*, p. 454.

⁹¹ ‘Figures de Mithridate, 1580-1680: L’Orient Redoutable’, *Travaux de littérature*, 17 (2004), 59-68 (p. 64). The two earlier plays, Pageau’s *Monime* and Behourt’s *Hypsicratée*, both emphasize the cruel, bloodthirsty aspects of the historical Mithradates and both are pro-Roman. By the 1630s most of the plays dramatising Roman imperialism are anti-Roman. Conroy also discusses why such a change of orientation should have happened (pp. 64-65).

La Mort de Mitridate

and daughters and with great concern for their welfare, regretting the situation they are in and blaming himself, wanting to bear the burden alone. The risk that La Calprenède runs in choosing to show Mitridate in what amounts to a domestic environment is to sanitize him. The danger of having him surrounded by women is that of softening him. His earlier victories are evoked but in a regretful, nostalgic way, and it is despair which mostly characterizes him: despair that a son of his should have allied himself with his father's great enemy coupled with self-recriminations over the fact that he is dragging down his wife and family with him. Mitridate is human enough to sink into self pity, from which he must be roused by his wife.

Throughout the course of the play, the pre-dramatic Mitridate is consistently evoked by himself and by others. Mitridate remembers his years of fighting against Rome, his victories as well as his defeats (ll. 121f., 639f., 668f., 1198f.), admitting to the hardship he has put his people through and the number of people who have died fighting with him or because of him: the Asiatic Vespers, in which he ordered the massacre of 80,000 Roman citizens, are, for example, alluded to (IV.3.1201). Meanwhile his enemies keep up a chorus of disapproval which suits their ends: 'son mauvais naturel' (l. 459), 'sa malice' (l. 561), 'sa hayne' (ll. 566, 578, 898), 'ce cruel' (l. 561, 900). Nevertheless, we do not see the real cruelty associated with Mitridate in the sources, commanding wives and concubines to take their own lives; on the contrary, his wife, daughters and daughter-in-law beg him to share the poison with them.⁹² Likewise his sensuality is implied only by the fact that Hypsocratée is not the mother of the children of Mitridate who appear in the play. If one finds it difficult to reconcile the Mitridate we are told about with the Mitridate that we see, one also has to remember that it is in Rome's and Pharnace's interest that Mitridate should be depicted in a bad light. Pharnace fears that Mitridate may have avenged himself on his son by killing his son's wife, but Bérénice can only extol the praises of 'ton pere genereux' (III.3.901), 'Mitridate indulgent' (III.3.913). Nevertheless, by consistently keeping the pre-dramatic persona before us, La Calprenède keeps his audience aware of what the king was like in the past, if only to contrast that figure with the one we see on the stage. With a personage as well known as Mithradates, La Calprenède perhaps also relies on his audience's own knowledge, however fragmentary, to supplement the generalities mentioned about the king's former self. It is important that Mitridate's past not be forgotten, because what La Calprenède wants above all is to contrast his glorious active past with his ignominious inactive present.

A traditional theme in La Calprenède's drama is that of the past versus the present. Mitridate is the first of La Calprenède's characters who is no longer what

⁹² Racine's Mithridate does send poison in order for Monime to take her own life. Nor is La Calprenède's monarch as much the Asian potentate as Racine's protagonist. Asia is mentioned only three times (ll. 642, 1153, 1199) and *l'Orient* not at all. Whereas Racine's tragedy is crowded with lists of Asian placenames, it is lists of Roman generals with whom Mitridate has engaged in battle over the years or conquered kings that one finds in La Calprenède's play (IV.3.1203; 1214).

he once was.⁹³ Although general detail regarding his past is there in the background, foregrounded is a war-weary Mitridate: his victories over Rome now in the past, his spirits low, he appears to be a broken man. Mazouer finds that La Calprenède's male characters are generally 'peu doués pour l'héroïsme' (p. 369), but this Old Soldier can nevertheless rise to the occasion when heartened by his family's devotion to his values of honour and courage. In his first scene, inspired by Hypsiratée, Mitridate rallies:

Non, sçache que le Ciel, ny la Fortune ingrate,
N'ont jamais abaissé le cœur de Mitridate,
Il est tousjours le mesme, & grand & genereux,
Et n'est point abbatu pour estre malheureux. (I.2.189-92)

Alain Riffaud comments on these lines: 'Dans la pièce de La Calprenède, la fatalité est intégrée à l'intrigue comme un élément dynamique. Elle met en valeur le courage et propose une force d'opposition justifiant l'action valeureuse du personnage'.⁹⁴ The rigours of Fortune may be a baroque topos, but Mitridate makes a more robust response to it than sixteenth-century characters or than, as Riffaud points out, the characters of Mairet's *Marc-Antoine*. At the end of Act I, man of action once more, Mitridate agrees to make one last sortie out of Sinope: to die with his boots on. *Gloire* is his watchword and 'mourir glorieux' (III.1.667) his major preoccupation.⁹⁵ This is also why his greatest fear is that of him and his family being paraded through Rome in Pompey's triumph. His age and experience have made him a wise, politically astute leader, with no illusions about Pharnace's fate at Rome's hands. Pessimistic about ever getting Pharnace back into the fold, he is cynical about the ways of the world and of men and about just how much influence Bérénice will have over her wayward husband.

Mitridate opens the fifth act with *stances* in which he muses on what it is to be king. Despite the 'Gloire, grandeurs, Sceptres, victoire' (V.1.1363) he has known, he confides:

Mais si tous avoient comme moy,
Senty le poids d'une couronne,
Un berger craindroit d'estre Roy. (l. 1360-62)

⁹³ Other examples in La Calprenède's drama are Elisabeth in *Le Comte d'Essex* and Hérodes in *La Mort des enfans d'Hérodes*.

⁹⁴ In the introduction to his edition of Mairet's *Marc-Antoine*, in *Théâtre complet*, I, p. 249. He also cites lines 625-26 as another example.

⁹⁵ *Gloire* and death are linked four times by Mitridate during the course of the play: II. 309, 669, 1281, 1663, and once by Hypsiratée (l. 1509) and by Bérénice (l. 1554). His father's watchword is used only once by Pharnace at the very end of the play when he realizes that 'il n'est plus en toy de recouvrer ta gloire' (l. 1724).

La Mort de Mitridate

Disillusionment is encapsulated in the juxtaposition of noun and adjective. ‘Bonheur’ is ‘instable & mouvant’, ‘appas’ becomes ‘un appas decevant’ (ll. 1354-55), the noun representing the lure and ideal of monarchy, while the adjective conveys the disenchantment, the reality. When Mitridate reaches the point of his *stances*, he becomes a member of a chorus of royals whose threnody reverberates from one tragedy to the next, from Garnier’s Créon: ‘Que ce bandeau royal est un heur déceptif!’ (*Antigone*, V, 2663) to Corneille’s Auguste, for whom weariness marks his state of mind, as he talks of the crown:

Dans sa possession, j’ai trouvé pour tous charmes
D’effroyables soucis, d’éternelles alarmes,
Mille ennemis secrets, la mort à tout propos,
Point de plaisir sans trouble, et jamais de repos. (*Cinna*, II.1.373)

The topos of ‘le poids d’une couronne’ is thus a theme which La Calprenède’s audiences would have seen as synonymous with the plight of the ruler in tragedy. In the histories Mithradates does not find himself pushed by the exigencies of the situation to decry the burden of kingship, but already in Pageau’s *Monime* one finds that the same situation has led to laments on the crown. In looking at Corneille’s Auguste, Peter Skrine finds the theme of royal disillusionment to be typically baroque.⁹⁶ Such may be a baroque topos, but it is also a commonplace stretching from the Agamemnon of Euripides to the American cinema’s cliché of the star who discovers the emptiness of stardom. It is a natural way of dramatizing life at the top, as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dramatists realized.⁹⁷

But the play’s *raison d’être* is Mitridate’s death and here La Calprenède has him scale the heights one last time. Having declared: ‘J’ay vescu glorieux, je mourray dans ma gloire’ (IV.3.1281), dignity is what characterizes him during the last act, as he looks back on his life and muses dispassionately on the ephemeral nature of the world and the whimsicality of Fortune. At the end, he is not deprived of all that he values: family, courage, the importance of honour and freedom, and the possibility of ensuring a legitimate succession. Mitridate is again presented very humanly, emotion welling up as he witnesses the deaths around him. As he realizes the poison is not working, he remains true to character in his last speech, still thinking of how he can cheat the Romans, retain his *gloire*, and take care of Pharnace. He dies commanding, conscious to the end of his ‘dignité première’ (V.3.1675). Mazouer does not think that La Calprenède aims for admiration as regards his male characters (p. 369). Nevertheless, we know what Mitridate has

⁹⁶ Peter N. Skrine, *The Baroque: Literature and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (London: Methuen, 1978), p.79.

⁹⁷ For an exploration of the theme throughout all of La Calprenède’s plays, see my article “‘Le Poids d’une couronne’: The Dilemma of Monarchy in La Calprenède’s Tragedies”, in *Ethics and Politics in Seventeenth-Century France*, ed. by Keith Cameron and Elizabeth Woodrugh (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1996), pp. 185-99.

done in the past and admiration even for the Mitridate before us is still possible. Cornered as he is, he refuses to let others control his life. Instead, he continues to take his final few moments into his own hands, and, having vowed that ‘Mitridate mourant mourra tousjours en Roy’ (III.1.671), he orchestrates a spectacular finale in which he cheats Rome out of its victory. In doing so, he is less to be pitied than Pharnace and, not having had any dilemma or inner conflict, less tragic.

Pharnace

In the struggle between protagonist and antagonist that constitutes the backbone of a La Calprenède tragedy, it is always the antagonist who is the more truly tragic. The fate of the protagonist ultimately depending upon the antagonist’s decision, it is also the antagonist who is left to live with the consequences.

Now, in the creation of Pharnace, La Calprenède had essentially a blank canvas. The sources provide the link with the Romans, and the rebellion he led against his father, but La Calprenède has free rein in the creation of a character for the rebel son. He creates a picture of weakness and a tragedy that bears witness to the power of self-deception. Pharnace has sided with Rome against his father and his reward is the crown of Pontus, which would have come to him in the normal run of events on his father’s death. Pharnace is a character of mixed motives. For much of the play he rationalizes to himself that his father’s rule has been so harsh that it is for the best of the people of Pontus that he take the crown. An opportunist, he figured his chances were better with a winning rather than a losing side, and, having cast in his lot with Rome, there is now no way out. In ten out of his eleven scenes Pharnace is in the company of a Roman.⁹⁸ From the first mention of his name, he is shown to be subservient to Rome: Rome has forgiven; Rome has forgotten (I.1.4). Pompée gives him his instructions (I.1.41-48; 71-76; II.3.442-46) and leaves Émile to keep an eye on him as Rome’s useful tool. Before seeing his father he even says: ‘Que dois-je faire Émile?’ (IV.2.1084).

Pompée is a good judge of character for no sooner has he gone than Pharnace’s conscience starts to prick on the score both of his father and of his wife (II.4). Like his father, he has a past persona and a present persona. Brought up to hate Rome, for years in campaign after campaign he courageously fought alongside his father, who urges him: ‘Ah! Pharnace revien dans ton premier devoir’ (IV.3.1147). Likewise, in order to inspire love in the morally upright Berenice, he must have shared the values of the rest of the family. But now, sickened by the futility of waging war against Rome, he has come to the conclusion that the future is Roman and has cast in his lot with the enemy. He still does not lack physical courage, as shown by his alacrity on hearing of his father’s sortie, but it is his moral courage which is now found wanting. Bérénice finds his actions reprehensible and neatly sums up her husband’s past and present personae: ‘Il estoit vertueux, maintenant il est traistre’ (III.3.813). A Protean character, he is a ‘fils dénaturé’ (IV.1.1007), who has metamorphosed into a *monstre* in everyone’s eyes

⁹⁸ He is alone with Bérénice during their interview.

including, ultimately, his own (ll. 155, 1031, 1277, 1340, 1546, 1720). The theme of *méconnaissance* runs throughout the play, as characters no longer recognize people they have known and loved. The interview between Pharnace and Bérénice begins with husband and wife tossing the term backward and forward between them. The baroque topos of appearance *versus* reality comes into play as well as Bérénice points out the difference between Pharnace's physical appearance: 'le mesme' (III.3.810) and the reality of the 'honteux changement' (l. 808) to his character. The shock for Pharnace is his wife's changed behaviour, which contrasts with Pharnace's use of the vocabulary of immutability earlier in the play to describe Bérénice's love for him: 'une amour semblable' (II.4.538), 'mesme feu' (l. 539), 'elle souffroit de mesme' (l. 541), 'reciproquement' (l. 542), 'une immuable foy' (l. 547). There is irony when at the end of the scene together the protean Pharnace declares his unchangeability: '...il n'est rien d'assez fort pour me faire changer' (III.3.984). He thus incarnates other aspects of the baroque to those of his father.

Pharnace is also more interesting as a character because he is torn by psychological conflicts which provide him with a dilemma. Although he is able for the most part to suppress his conflicting emotions with a little help from the Romans, it is important for the development of the play that the possibility exist that he may be won back over to the side of his wife and father and family. For the audience to believe that such a turn of events is possible, Pharnace needs to be a conflicted soul. Otherwise, the two central interviews with his wife (III.3) and father (IV.3) will never have the power to persuade an audience that the direction of the play may change, and any attempts at suspense on the dramatist's part will be undermined as a consequence. In Act II, scene 4, therefore, he is humanized. Pompée having left and not yet bullied by Émile, Pharnace starts to reveal cracks in his façade of unflinching loyalty to Rome. The fate of his father moves him to declarations such as: 'Mais dieux de quels remords je me sens agiter! / Quel tardif repentir me vient persecuter!' (ll. 479-80); 'J'ay pour plus grand fleau ma seule conscience' (l. 489). His love for his wife is an even greater source of disquiet and doubt as he confesses to Émile: 'Sçache que ma douleur ne vient plus que d'amour' (l. 523), 'Que cette passion engendre tous mes soins' (l. 528). La Calprenède also precedes Pharnace's interview with his father with a scene in which the son reveals residual filial feelings: 'Mais que mon cœur pressé de divers mouvemens, / Garde, avec regret, ses premiers sentimens' (IV.2.1095-96). Indeed, the play only works if we believe Pharnace can be moved sufficiently, and since that is reliant on the conquest of weakness and persuading him to seek self-preservation with Mitridate's side, we, like Christopher Gossip, might not believe he can be moved sufficiently, even if such conflicting emotions are meant to provide a dilemma for Pharnace, a situation which the Romans fear enough for them to keep him under constant surveillance.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Gossip writes: 'This unattractive personality is not explored in any depth: passing expressions of guilt and regret are forgotten in an overriding concern for self-preservation which leaves no room for any lasting doubt in him or any true pity in us',

As it is, Pharnace's tragedy is one of weakness. As he trots out argument after argument to defend his actions, Bérénice manages to force the truth from him: having cast his lot with the Romans, he is now paralysed by fear of what would happen if he turned against them: 'Et que pourray-je faire ayant Rome ennemie?' (III.3.970). When he then says: 'Mais invente un moyen pour éviter l'orage' (l. 973), it sounds as if Pharnace would like to find a way out of the stranglehold of Rome. He is not, however, willing to take the plunge offered by Bérénice: 'Tu n'en dois rechercher qu'en ton propre courage' (l. 974). Preferring to settle for the relative security of the moment, to Pharnace the Romans look like a better bet than gambling on a future with Mitridate. At the end of the scene, lines like 'Ma resolution se maintient invincible' (l. 982) strike us as hollow, for it is nothing to do with resolution, it is plain, naked fear. In the presence of his father he resorts to casuistry ('Je n'ay point vostre mal, mais mon bien pour objet', IV.3.1124) and to abdicating responsibility, arguing that his hands are tied. Unable to counter Mitridate's picture of Rome as a ruthless taskmaster, Pharnace prefers to blinker himself to such realities, to see Rome through rose-tinted glasses. Although occasionally forthright about his motives, he is also a case study in the power of self-deception, believing issues can be compartmentalized, not following his thinking through because of fears of the consequences of what such joined-up thinking would be. Having withstood his father's curse on him, the last thing he says to him is low-key, as if half believing what Mitridate has said: 'Les Dieux comme ils voudront feront mes destinées' (l. 1305), a final abdication of responsibility.

Mitridate dies, but death does not confer upon him the greater tragic status. Pharnace is next seen as the swaggering victor barking out orders on discovering his family arranged around the throne, until the realization that they are all dead triggers a complete disintegration of his personality. Restrained by the Romans, Pharnace must feel Mitridate's curse is coming true. Mitridate may provide the tragedy with a 'dénouement dramatique' but Pharnace, as a Calprenedian antagonist, is more psychologically complex and provides the play with a 'dénouement psychologique' whereby the audience is left pondering his post-dramatic future.¹⁰⁰

in 'Agreeable Suspension, or What To Think of La Calprenède', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 11 (1989), 62-71 (p. 70).

¹⁰⁰ The terminology is Berregard's where it is applied to the denouement of Tristan's *Mariane* (p. 271).

Bérénice

Since the play hinges on attempts to persuade Pharnace to change his mind, La Calprenède obviously decided that a single scene with his father would not be powerful enough for that. With love also being such a powerful drawing card, he chose to provide Pharnace with a wife, thus doubling the appeals to Pharnace. With only a name borrowed from one of Mithradates' concubines, La Calprenède created from nothing the most successful character in the play, the one who, he tells us, had audiences weeping, and who has fared best critically over the centuries. Comparisons with Corneille and Racine have been made, Bernardin seeing in her 'une noble et pure création digne de figurer à côté de celles de Corneille' (p.8), while Médan could declare: 'ses incertitudes et ses douloureuses hésitations nous offre comme l'ébauche inexpérimentée des âmes tourmentées et endolories dont Racine dévoilera sur la scène des angoisses' (p. 63). Unlike the protagonist and antagonist, Bérénice is what she always was. Change is not in her nature.

No character is thought of more highly than Bérénice. From Mitridate's enthusiasm for her 'glorieux exemple' (I.3.269) to his tribute to her in death: 'Princesse vertueuse' (V.2.1551), her *vertu* is universally acknowledged (II. 266, 690, 1505). Although married to Pharnace, her values are those of Mitridate and his wife and daughters, as proclaimed in any number of utterances: 'J'estimois sa vertu, mais non pas sa couronne' (I.3.250), chiastically echoing Hypsicratée's earlier question to Mitridate: 'Aimay-je vos grandeurs, ou bien vostre merite?' (I.2.213). An ideal of womanhood: beautiful physically, morally and spiritually, she is a French version of Goethe's *Ewig-weibliche*, capable of inspiring man, drawing Mitridate out of despair, for example, and renewing his spirit. Were it not for the fact that she is also very human, her *sévérité* would class her alongside the heroines of La Calprenède's novels. But Bérénice is humanized by the fact that, despite her principles, she still loves her husband. As firmly as she may proclaim: 'J'ay sur mes passions un absolu pouvoir' (I.3.247), she can still confess to what she calls her 'foiblesse' (II.2.406), that of still loving Pharnace, 'un mary qui [lui] estoit si cher' (I.3.223). Her renunciation of him is thus all the greater.

In the play's central act, La Calprenède treats his audience to the first of the *scènes à faire*. Plunging in without any preliminaries, Bérénice lets Pharnace know how disappointed she is with him. Amazingly blunt, she sweeps aside all of his attempts at excuses. Cold, indignant and angry, she ruthlessly cuts through his casuistry. Frank, sarcastic, dismissive and accusatory, she has Pharnace consistently on the defensive. And yet, she touchingly does still care for him and about his future and halfway through the scene changes tack. Worried about 'le mal qui le menace' (III.3.922) and fearing that he has set a course that will lead to his 'prochaine ruine' (I. 925), she says: 'J'apprehende pour toy la vengeance divine: / Ceste peur, plus que tout, me fait venir icy' (III.3.926-27). On her knees, in tears, she assures him: 'Ton honneur seulement fait naistre tous mes vœux' (I. 940). But, unable ultimately to move him, she turns her back on Pharnace and, walking back into the palace, she opts for death rather than a love

without honour. She dies a ‘trespas glorieux’ (V.2.1554), reaching out for Mitridate’s hand (l. 1621), a last action as noble and pure as the principles she has lived by.

‘Le temps veut que l’on cede...’: Political Tragedy

Truchet asked himself ‘si la tragédie est politique par nature’.¹⁰¹ His answer was unequivocally affirmative. War, peace, sedition, power: the political issues which the characters of *La Mort de Mitridate* face constitute examples of the ‘grand intérêt d’Etat’ recommended by Corneille as the fitting subject of tragedy.¹⁰² *La Mort de Mitridate* falls in line with those plays of the early 1630s which dramatize the human cost of Roman expansion during the creation of its empire. In considering why Racine chose Mithradates as a subject for his seventh tragedy, Forestier writes that ‘les sujets “anti-romains” étaient un passage obligé pour tout poète de théâtre digne de ce nom, dans la mesure où ils apparaissent consubstantiels à la forme même de la tragédie moderne depuis la Renaissance’ and mentions that in *Nicomède* even Corneille dramatized ‘l’envers de cette grandeur en valorisant une figure de prince barbare décidé à résister à l’impérialisme de Rome’.¹⁰³ Edmond Soufflet and Maryvonne Loiseau, as editors of the Corneille play, wrote in terms of resistance and collaboration¹⁰⁴ and, in considering La Calprenède’s Mitridate and Pharnace, faced by situations of imperialism and colonialism, it is possible to think in the same terms. ‘Le fils révolté’ and ‘le père humilié’ are also topoi of the baroque¹⁰⁵ as is *le monde à l’envers*, all of which have to be taken into consideration in looking at *La Mort de Mitridate* as political tragedy.

We are at the end of an era. The protracted war Mitridate has waged against Rome in order to ensure the independence of his throne and the succession for his son is at its end. Pontus is a last bastion holding out against Rome, ‘cette Reine du monde’ (IV.3.1185) which ‘contraint l’univers de vivre sous ses lois’ (I.1.16). Pompée says, for example: ‘Nous peuvent-ils forcer si le monde a cédé?’ (I.1.96), and Pharnace, on entering Sinope, will address the citizenry thus: ‘Vous recevez son joug, comme toute la terre’ (III.2.762). The enumerations of Roman generals Mitridate has fought, and kings who have fallen to Rome, all bear witness to how long the process of forging an empire has taken and the losses involved on both sides (IV.3.1203, 1214). We are reminded that war is bloody with both Pompée and Mitridate evoking blood-drenched memories of past clashes (I.1-2), memories which reach their climax in Pharnace’s damning picture of ‘les fureurs d’une

¹⁰¹ *La Tragédie classique en France*, p. 89.

¹⁰² ‘Discours de l’utilité’, in *Writings*, p. 8.

¹⁰³ *Jean Racine*, p. 451.

¹⁰⁴ *Nicomède* (Paris: Bordas, 1964), p. 110.

¹⁰⁵ Souiller, pp. 65, 85.

La Mort de Mitridate

sanglante guerre' (IV.3.1169). War is thus far more terrible than glorious in the play.¹⁰⁶

For forty years Mitridate has been 'l'appuy d'Asie, & la terreur de Rome' (III.1.642), and, as the Romans finally incorporate Mitridate's kingdom into their empire under his son Pharnace, we witness the last day in the life of the King of Pontus. In *La Mort de Mitridate* it is Rome which represents the instrument of fortune, a presence to contradict all thoughts of kings as all-sacred, all-powerful beings. No longer the stuff of choruses, Fortune the leveller still finds itself denounced or brazened out (III.1.646-54). La Calprenède paints an unflattering picture of an empire on the rise. If the takeover cannot be by fair means, then it will be by foul. Unable to win a decisive victory over Mitridate, Rome has found a chink in his armour, a weak link in the shape of his son Pharnace, an ideal candidate as the legitimate heir to the throne, and who, by a combination of threats and promises, is manoeuvred into betraying his father. Divide and rule is Rome's tactic. Son thus opposes father, the one in the Roman camp surrounding the walls of Sinope, the other inside his last stronghold. What Pharnace wants can only be obtained at the expense of his father's life. 'Il veut porter un Sceptre en me privant de vie' (I.2.157), says Mitridate, who has no illusions as to what is happening. In a vain attempt to open Pharnace's eyes to the reality of his position, Mitridate tries to convince him that Rome cannot be trusted, that her promises are 'de faux esclats qui te doivent tromper' (IV.3.1140), that she will use traitors for her purpose, but only for as long as it suits her: 'Rome pour son profit aime la trahison, / Mais elle hait le traistre avec trop de raison' (II. 1127-28), and he predicts: 'Et tu seras payé du salaire attendu, / Lorsqu'elle te perdra, comme tu m'as perdu' (II. 1131-32). But Mitridate's opposition to Pharnace is not just that of father versus rebellious son. The clash of Mitridate and Rome represents the clash of two worlds, of an old order versus a new one. For Souiller, the baroque father has the 'fonction d'incarnation de l'ordre traditionnel: le Père, gardien des valeurs, est celui qui interdit' (p. 88) while for the son 'la fonction du révolté [...] est d'incarner toutes les audaces rendues possibles par l'écroulement de l'ancien système de valeurs' (p. 66).

Pontus is poised between its Mithradatic past and its Roman future. We are told that the time is ripe for a new order, that it is ridiculous to fight something thus sanctioned, as Émile points out: 'Il faut considerer le temps & la raison, / Le temps veut que l'on cede au vainqueur qui dispose...' (II.4.492-93), a thought which the desperate Pharnace later clings to: 'Et le temps nous apprend de ceder au vainqueur' (III.3.868). Through its juxtaposition of past and present, *La Mort*

¹⁰⁶ La Calprenède does not skirt around military realities, his personal experiences as a soldier serving to inform his references to war. The risks run by civilian populations during wartime are mentioned, for example, albeit within the terms of the *bienséances*: the fall of Sinope leaves 'la ville à la mercy du soldat insolent' (III.1.631), for at such a time it is difficult to restrain 'la fureur des soldats' (III.2.766).

de Mitridate depicts a world in transition.¹⁰⁷ Mitridate symbolizes values and a way of life which are incompatible with the new order being established by Rome. He represents a way of life based on the individual, on being one's own master. He is therefore horrified at the thought of his son subservient to a power which is diametrically opposed to all he himself believes in. Like Pontus he is a last bastion of outmoded ideals, for the world is now hostile to such values. For him 'la qualité de Roy' (IV.3.1219) is still important, as are family ties, conjugal love, honour, glory, independence, liberty and freedom of action.

Rome uses such words too. Its representatives offer 'une amitié d'éternelle durée' (I.1.74) and use words like 'vertu' and 'genereux' (II. 48, 1344) but traditional virtues and vocabulary have lost their meaning. Often personified in the play, Rome is presented as hard and cruel. It topples kings, and having gorged itself on their 'despouilles Roiales' (IV.3.1142), puts them in chains, throws them into dungeons, and parades them humiliatingly in Roman triumphs, while oppressing the population just conquered. Through its representatives in the play, the professional soldiers Pompée and Émile, doing their duty unquestioningly, cold and detached, Rome becomes the incarnation of inverted values, of the baroque topos of *le monde à l'envers*. When Pharnace refuses to be moved by his father's and sisters' appeal, Émile for the first time displays enthusiasm, talking of 'cet illustre victoire', and assuring him that 'Rome ne vit jamais rien de si genereux' (IV.5.1344-45). When Pharnace shows signs of love for Bérénice, Émile criticizes, and Pharnace snaps: 'Pour aimer mon espouse ai-je trahi l'Empire?' (IV.2.1078). Rome represents feelings that are anti-family, anti-love, and anti-individual, all in the name of the glorification of the state. Rome's offer of friendship becomes an offer one dare not refuse, accompanied by not so veiled threats of what happens if one does. Once accepted, it is exclusive; Pompée reminds Pharnace: 'Et toute autre amitié vous doit estre importune' (II.3.450). Rather than being two equal partners, such a friendship means submission to Rome's desires, and a relationship in which one is trapped. Pharnace avows his fidelity to such a friendship, saying to Émile: 'Ouy, je me souviendray que je dois tout à Rome, / Et n'estant plus à vous je ne seray plus homme.' (II.4.473-74).

The play represents a world of baroque *précarité*. The choice lies between the precariousness of friendship with Rome and the very real dangers of not being Rome's friend. In this case, the fruits of Roman friendship are a crown, protection, and the promise not only of 'les douceurs de la vie' (I.1.22), but also of rewards so tantalizing one has not yet begun to dream of them: 'Mais aussi vous sçavez qu'il n'est pas de loyer, / Que la Reine des Rois ne vous puisse octroyer' (II.3.467-68). The price exacted is a loss of individuality and liberty. Pharnace is willing to pay the price, his father is not. One can imagine Mitridate's horror on hearing his son's admission: 'Je ne suis plus à moy, je despend des Romains' (IV.3.1263). Pharnace accepts a denatured, truncated monarchy welded into a greater unity as the way of the future. His father's beliefs are the way of the

¹⁰⁷ This is a theme which La Calprenède will also exploit in later plays: *Jeanne, reine d'Angleterre*, *Le Comte d'Essex* and *Herménigilde*, for example.

La Mort de Mitridate

past. It is a precarious future, but for Pharnace it is a way of surviving for the moment. Both Bérénice and Mitridate realize that it is a friendship in name only. In her interview Bérénice calls her husband 'le serf des Romains' (III.3.820), a word which recurs at the end of the play as Émile takes command. Pharnace, on his knees before the corpses of his family, asks: 'Pompée à son départ vous a-il ordonné, / De me traiter en serf, lui qui m'a couronné ?' (V.4.1753-54). Mitridate is dead, Rome has what it wants, Pharnace can revert from an *ami d'éternelle durée* to the status of a *serf couronné*. And the first cogs in the machinery of Mitridate's prophecy: 'Tu seras ruiné par cette République' (IV.3.1298) begin to engage, for 'le châtement du révolté' is also an important aspect of the baroque imaginary.¹⁰⁸

Mitridate prefers not to survive under such a system. Indeed he knows what awaits him, should the Romans get hold of him. His exhortation to Pharnace to be his own man: 'Puis que ta liberté depend de ton vouloir' (IV.3.1148), reveals the importance of the individual will to Mitridate. His decision to die by his own hand means that he carries through to the end his philosophy of life and that he cheats Rome one last time, for they will not have the pleasure of seeing him in one of their triumphs. He declares: 'Rome à qui je ravis un superbe ornement, / Ne me verra vaincu que par moy seulement....' (V.3.1661-62). His ultimate cheat, that through his death Pharnace's claim to the throne becomes legitimate, means one last victory for the old order of things, when crowns passed through birth and inheritance rather than through appointment from Rome. True to his principles, Mitridate succeeds in turning utter defeat into victory. Like Souiller's baroque father, Mitridate is both 'humilié et triomphant' (p. 85).

Although *La Mort de Mitridate* should not be read allegorically, the conflict between a philosophy of the individual and the power of the state which La Calprenède dramatizes is one which echoes the political tensions of the 1630s. The play falls into Rohou's category of 'tragédie d'opposition': a 'tragédie anticentraliste' which is against 'la construction d'un ordre nouveau' (pp. 147-48). The irony, of course, is that to do so, its author enthusiastically adopts the dramaturgy of the new order: rational and disciplined.

'Ce devoir du sang': Family Tragedy

From his first play La Calprenède realized the dramatic value to be had from close ties of birth or affection between characters. The choice La Calprenède made to expand the number of women from the two daughters mentioned in Appian and the fact that five members of the royal family are dead by the end means that the play can inevitably be viewed as the tragedy of a family. The pleasure afforded an audience by such situations is noted by Corneille, commenting on Aristotle's recommendation:

¹⁰⁸ Souiller, p. 91.

C'est donc un grand avantage, pour exciter la commisération, que la proximité du sang et les liaisons d'amour ou d'amitié entre le persécutant et le persécuté, le poursuivant et le poursuivi, celui qui fait souffrir et celui qui souffre.¹⁰⁹

The family is very important to Mitridate. Just as Pharnace is always seen in the company of Romans, so Mitridate, never alone on stage, is surrounded by family to the extent that Mazouer can bemoan the fact that he is always 'empêtré dans ses affaires de famille, pressé par des femmes' (p.369). Very conscious of being responsible for the welfare of his family, he is preoccupied with pictures of them enslaved in a Roman triumph (III.1.677-80; IV.3.1227-32).¹¹⁰ He regrets his daughters will be cheated of a normal life, but is touched by their devotion and decision to die with him, just as earlier his spirits were raised by Bérénice's similar desire. One feels that if only Pharnace were with them, there would be none of the despair for which Hypsicratée must chastise him (I.2.159-76), that if the family could present a united front against the Romans, Mitridate could bear anything.

Although Mitridate describes his son as a 'fils dénaturé' (IV.1.1007), a 'monstre sans pitié', 'abominable', 'épouvantable' (ll. 155, 185, 1277), the cry of 'Ah! Pharnace' which punctuates three times Mitridate's interview with his son powerfully reveals the disappointment and the pain that Mitridate feels as father (IV.3.1109, 1147, 1221). Mitridate loves his son. He insists: 'Je veux tout oublier' (l. 1151). He offers alternative solutions. He urges Pharnace to come back to the fold 'et reprendre des tiens la glorieuse trace' (l. 1150). He encourages him to strike out on his own. Even if this too might mean an inevitable clash with his father, at least Pharnace would be his own man:

Arme les plus puissans & les plus inhumains,
 Pourvu que tu ne sois esclave des Romains.
 Ce nom est odieux au sang de Mitridate... (IV.3.1155-57)

Confused, Mitridate twice comes back to the question of why his son should refuse to follow in his father's footsteps, indeed why he is turning his back on his father's beliefs and betraying him to the other side, both times taking the responsibility upon himself. He first begs: 'Parle, découvre moy le mal que je t'ay fait' (l. 1119), later expanding upon this sentiment in his attempt to understand in a string of anaphoras beginning 'Ne t'ay-je pas...' or 'N'ay-je pas...' (ll. 1242-47). His son's actions are thus 'le seul deshonneur dont ses jours

¹⁰⁹ 'Discours de la tragédie...', in *Writings*, p. 38. Two later tragedies of La Calprenède, *La Mort des enfans d'Hérodes* and *Hermenigilde*, both also depict a conflict between father and son which precipitates the disintegration of a family.

¹¹⁰ Sophonisbe fears being paraded in a Roman triumph (IV.1.1123-24), and Racine's Mithridate evokes previous triumphs the Romans have had (III.1.765-68).

La Mort de Mitridate

sont tachés' (I. 1279), a dishonour which tarnishes the glorious history of the whole house.

In a futile search for explanations for Pharnace's conduct, Mitridate blames his heredity, since Pharnace is not the product of Mitridate's union with Hypsicratée (I.2.185). She resorts to insulting him by taunting that she has never even thought him to be Mitridate's son (I. 1330). Such desperation on Mitridate's part indicates the depth of shame he feels. We can likewise understand his feeling of degradation in having to appeal to his son for his life and that of his family. In *un monde à l'envers*, however, even the closest of family relationships can be turned on its end. Mitridate goes off to the interview saying: 'Le Ciel m'a veu rougir seulement aujourd'hui: / Je lui donnai la vie, & je l'attens de lui' (IV.1.1063). And Bérénice's appeal to her husband, based on the family, falls on stony ground. At its climax, she enumerates every member of the family for whom Pharnace should care, including himself:

Je parle pour tes sœurs, pour ton père & pour moy
Et bien plus que pour nous, je demande pour toy. (III.3.951-52)

In a last desperate appeal, his sisters plead: 'Nous vous en conjurons par ce doux nom de frere, / Par ce devoir du sang qu'on ne peut oublier' (IV.4.1310-11) but even the 'devoir du sang' cannot budge Pharnace in a resolution steeled by fear.

Like its head, the family is representative of the old order. Its members in good standing display all the qualities of honour, courage, and virtue, now considered old-fashioned. Early in the play Mitridatie had assured her father: 'Estant de vostre sang je sçauray bien mourir' (II.2.360), and as the hour approaches Nise reassures him: 'Vos filles comme vous ont des cœurs généreux' (V.1.1405). Return to the family for Pharnace would be a return to honour. When Bérénice asks to be allowed to stay with the family, Mitridate's pride bursts forth in a speech crowded with phrases like: 'Admirez ce grand cœur', 'Rendés à sa vertu la gloire meritée' and ending with: 'Ce glorieux exemple enseigne à Mitridate, / Que la seule vertu dans sa maison esclatte.' (I.3.265-70). Indeed, so strong and steadfast are the women in the play that Mazouer comments that Hypsicratée and Bérénice are actually more heroic than Mitridate (p. 370). In a changed world they are also stable, unchanging figures. The steadfastness of the family is seen in their vocabulary: the number of times they use *même*, or *toujours* or negatives like *ne...jamais*, *ne...point* or *ne...plus*: Mitridate gives the lead in his first scene (the italics are mine):

Non, sçache que le Ciel, ny la Fortune ingrate,
N'ont jamais abaissé le cœur de Mitridate,
Il est tousjours le mesme, & grand & genereux... (I.2.189-91)

The family follows suit. Mitridatie can reassure her father: 'Nous courons mesme sort que vous devez courir' (III.1.663); Hypsicratée can exhort: 'Mais recevons la mort avec la mesme face' (V.1.1468); Bérénice can assure her sisters-in-law of

‘cette mesme amitié’ (V.2.1533). Hypsicratée can declare sententiously: ‘Un courage invincible / Aux injures du sort n’est jamais accessible’ (II.1.349-50); Mitridatie can say of Bérénice: ‘Ce puissant esprit n’en est point diverty’ (III.1.716). In a topsy-turvy world ruled by fortune and chance, where nothing is as it once was, family remains a touchstone of solidarity and immutability. To hear the disloyal Pharnace say: ‘Ma resolution se maintient invincible’ (I. 982) is to hear familial sentiments perverted.

It has already been mentioned that *méconnaissance* is a theme of the play.¹¹¹ Characters no longer recognize each other or misjudge each other. Bérénice thought she knew her husband and no longer does. Pharnace says: ‘Et depuis trop long-temps je cognois Mitridate’ (II.4.570) and yet totally misjudges his father whom he suspects of being capable of killing Bérénice out of a desire for vengeance. Mitridate thought he knew Pharnace but now finds himself confronted by someone unrecognizable as his son. Pharnace thought he knew Bérénice but obviously underestimated the strength of her moral principles. Once again, Hypsicratée, Nise and Mitridatie are the forces of stability. Mitridate is moved to say of the women in his family, including Bérénice: ‘j’ay pour compagnons des cœurs tous genereux’ (I.3.268). Thus the last act, as wife, daughters, and daughter-in-law die around him, represents an impressive visualization of Mitridate’s agony as he has to bear their deaths, feeling responsible for them, and yet is unable himself to die. The poison not having any effect, he is left to close the eyes of each member of his family and to cry: ‘Et je voy sans mourir la mort de tous les miens’ (V.2.1630). In making a last request to be put on his throne, Mitridate does what he can to preserve the honour of his house and its glorious past by dying as gloriously as possible, accompanied by all of his family but Pharnace, and by one last victory over Rome. He will control as much of the future as possible too. Still thinking of his son, he decides:

Je dois faire à mon fils cette derniere grace,
Et laisser par ma mort un Sceptre entre ses mains,
Qu’il recevra de moy plustost que des Romains. (V.1.1388-90)

With his death the crown passes legitimately into his son’s hands.¹¹²

For Pharnace the full weight of the tragedy is only appreciated in the last scene. Pharnace had tried to escape from realities by conceiving of things in the abstract. He had refused to see, because he feared what sight might bring. Only when faced with the corpses of five members of his family dead because of him, do the scales fall fully from his eyes. The technique of enumeration which had had no effect when used by Bérénice this time carries weight, as Menandre tells how they took

¹¹¹ See page 32.

¹¹² Henry Phillips comments on the denouement of Racine’s *Mithridate*: ‘Ultimately, however, Mithridate can only regain control of the situation by bequeathing it to his son at the moment of death’, in *Racine: Mithridate* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1990), p. 36. It is, of course, a son other than Pharnace.

La Mort de Mitridate

their lives: ‘Par le poison vos sœurs, la Reine & vostre femme: / Et le Roy par le fer’ (V.4.1692-93). Totally distraught, Pharnace now laments: ‘Pour mon plus grand bourreau je ne veux que mes yeux’ (l. 1714). Such a final scene, with what Essam Safty calls ‘l’une des plus généreuses exhibitions de cadavres qu’ait jamais connues la scène tragique’,¹¹³ certainly delivers the combination of horror and tears that La Calprenède wrote about in his *Au Lecteur*. Into the mix must also go admiration. Although Mazouer does not feel that La Calprenède aims to inspire admiration for his characters (p. 369), Beauregard in his liminary poem would seem to give an indication sanctioned by the author that admiration was not unwelcome as a reaction: ‘...les sentimens que ton discours imprime, / Nous forcent d’admirer le pere & les enfans’.¹¹⁴

‘Ces sacrez sermens et donnez et receus’: Love Tragedy

Sophonisbe had introduced to tragedy the successful formula of politics and love, and La Calprenède, determined to follow this lead, will provide a double love interest in *La Mort de Mitridate*. In writing of La Calprenède’s novels, Seillière commented: ‘Nul n’a poussé plus loin que La Calprenède le respect de la foi conjugale en ses récits’,¹¹⁵ and already in his first play the love ingredient he will add to his tragedy will be conjugal. In providing both his protagonist and his antagonist with a wife, La Calprenède offers his audience dual love interests, one couple being an example of perfect love and the other of conflicted love. Audiences can thus have their emotion both ways: unadulterated exaltation through the older couple and mixed feelings of pathos and admiration through the trials of the younger pair. The result for the public should be tears in both cases.

Of the two couples, Hypsocratée and Mitridate incarnate La Calprenède’s vision of conjugal love as one of the strongest forces in the world of the play.¹¹⁶ The first words Mitridate utters are addressed to his wife:

Toy qui dans mes combats compagne inseparable,
M’accompagnes aussi dans mon sort deplorable,
Exemple infortuné de conjugale amour,
Et sans qui Mitridate est ennemy du jour... (I.2.105-08)

¹¹³ *La Mort tragique: Idéologie et mort dans la tragédie baroque en France* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), p. 131.

¹¹⁴ See p. 80.

¹¹⁵ Ernest Seillière, *Le Romancier du Grand Condé: Gautier du Coste, sieur de la Calprenède* (Paris: Émile-Paul, 1921), p. 71.

¹¹⁶ Similar examples of conjugal love are found in *Jeanne, reine d’Angleterre*, *La Mort des enfans d’Hérodes* and *Herménigilde*.

Going on to talk of ‘nos communes douleurs’ (I. 111), Mitridate introduces the vocabulary which conveys the completeness which is the major characteristic of ‘parfaite amour’, as La Calprenède calls it in the dedication (p. 75). The couple makes a whole, wanting the same things, doing the same things, feeling the same things, so much so that the natural extension of such feelings is Hypsicratée’s reassurance to Mitridate: ‘Que depuis si long temps nous ne sommes plus qu’un’ (I.2.199). And as the poison is passed around, Mitridate will reiterate such Platonic sentiments: ‘Que je perds te perdant la moitié de mon ame’ (V.2.1600). Mitridate is preoccupied with no longer being what he once was, but Hypsicratée, who has taken her marriage vows seriously, is married for better or for worse. She briskly reassures Mitridate: ‘Mon amour change-elle avec vostre bon-heur?’ (I.2.211). She chastises him: ‘Aimay-je vos grandeurs ou bien vostre merite ? / Et vous dois-je quitter, quoy qu’un sceptre vous quitte ?’ (I.2.213-14). The loss of rank exists only in the eyes of the world, for the roots of love lie in personal qualities which are more to be prized than Mitridate’s lost crown. Virtue, honour and merit are not just accompaniments to perfect love; they are its very foundation.

In the last great crisis of their lives, we see husband and wife coming together in misfortune to reaffirm their love for each other and through that love to provide mutual support. Their greatest wish is simply not to be separated. Death, as a means of achieving eternal togetherness, thus becomes the greatest of consolations, as their love transforms ultimate separation into ultimate inseparability. Hypsicratée takes the poison willingly because her love is so great that, paradoxically, life without Mitridate is death, and death with him is eternal life. She affirms:

On ne peut deslier le nœud qui nous assemble
 Mais puis qu’il faut perir, nos perirons ensemble,
 Nous devons expirer tous deux en mesme temps,
 Et nous expirerons l’un & l’autre contens (V.1.1451-54)

As Mitridate plunges the sword into himself, his thoughts are of his wife: ‘Sus doncque dans mon cœur cette lame plantée, / Rejoigne mon esprit avec Hypsicratée’ (V.5.1667).

Traditionally Mitridate has been heavily criticized on the score of his love for his wife: Bernardin found the last act marred by ‘la galanterie surannée de Mitridate [...], galant pour sa femme après vingt ans d’union, bavardant toujours’ (pp.10-11). Médan did likewise:

Quelle surprise vraiment inattendue que de découvrir dans l’âme du farouche ennemi de Rome, de l’éternel adversaire de sa domination en

La Mort de Mitridate

Asie, des sentiments conjugaux dont la galanterie empressée a survécu aux années et aux malheurs!’ (p. 53)¹¹⁷

But La Calprenède is just working within a tradition of married love as he finds it in the tragic and tragicomic theatre around him. Aside from its role in *Sophonisbe*, *Mariane*, and *Polyeucte*, in a host of plays the bonds of marriage are depicted in terms which recall La Calprenède’s celebration. From Hardy’s *Panthée* (1624), where the heroine regrets the absence of her husband as ‘compagne du malheur’ (II.1), to Chaulmer’s *Mort de Pompée* (1638), where the hero looks on his wife as ‘un si doux reconfort’ (I.1), dramatists portray marriage as offering consolation and support. As in La Calprenède, the ultimate aim of the married couples in Chevreau’s *Coriolan* (1638), Tristan’s *Panthée* (1639) and Benserade’s *Méléagre* (1641) is to die together, but Mitridate and Hysicratée are luckier than most, for whom such a wish is rarely granted. The aforementioned plays all contain laments of the wife over her husband’s dead body (V.8, V.2, V.9), her own self-inflicted death soon following in Tristan and Benserade, while Chevreau’s heroine, with the same idea in mind, goes off in search of a dagger. On seeing her husband Pompée being taken away, Chaulmer’s Cornélie cried out: ‘Voulez-vous desunir un corps d’avec son ame?’ (V.5). In the next scene she too does away with herself. In all of these dramatists the vocabulary of conjugal love emphasizes the unity of souls, the integrity of the couple, the legitimacy, purity, and holiness of this ‘sacré lien’ (*La Mort de Pompée*, I.1). La Calprenède’s way of depicting deep love between man and wife is of his time.

It is the word *galanterie* which recurs adversely in the criticism, but that too is typical and not just of the 1630s.¹¹⁸ As late as 1675 one still finds one of the interlocutors of l’abbé de Villiers musing on how refreshing it would be to see a tragedy free from love, but as he says:

Je sçay bien qu’il est difficile de l’entreprendre & encore plus d’y reüssir dans un siècle où l’on veut de l’amour & de la galanterie par tout.¹¹⁹

Therefore Mitridate loves. In his attempt to move his audience, La Calprenède strives to portray an ideal of love. In criticizing Mitridate for his ‘traits de préciosité qui eussent ravi Céladon lui-même’ (p. 53), Médan accurately pinpoints

¹¹⁷ Such a tradition has ended up being repeated: Sage, for example, comments on ‘une certaine grandiloquence, une insistance de galanterie maniérée’ (p. 264).

¹¹⁸ Gaston Bizos criticized Mairet’s Marc Antoine for being ‘cent fois plus galant qu’il n’appartient à un Romain et à un soldat’ (*Étude sur la vie et les œuvres de Jean de Mairet* (Paris: Thorin, 1877), p. 249). The same comment could equally be applied to Mairet’s Massinisse, to Chevreau’s Coriolan, to Chaulmer’s Pompée and to Corneille’s César amongst others.

¹¹⁹ [Pierre de Villiers], *Entretien sur les tragédies de ce temps* (Paris: Michallet, 1675), pp. 151-52.

the greatest influence on Mitridate in love, for it is in the novel, especially in *L'Astrée*, that the century's love-sick heroes find their means of expressing themselves. It is under the influence of *romanesque* traditions that the scourge of Asia is transformed 'en ramier qui tendrement roucoule auprès de sa colombe'.¹²⁰ Forty years later, in Racine's *Mithridate*, Xipharès does not escape criticism of his own.

The fact that we no longer appreciate the means of expression does not invalidate the depth of the love being expressed. In tragedies we are in the company of characters experiencing, as I have suggested, the last great crisis of their lives and, at such life-and-death moments, people only want to say 'I love you' to partners.¹²¹ Yes, Mitridate may be longwinded, but that was the theatrical convention and it was one that was designed to bring pleasure to the audience. Aiming to stir the emotions of his public, La Calprenède gave his audience a positive value, an ideal of perfect love, which his characters cling to against the dying of the light. Who is to say that audiences were not transported, that the love duets of Mitridate and the dying Hypsicratée were not the cause of the 'si grandes émotions dans les âmes des spectateurs' of which Grenaille writes (sig. ã2^r)?¹²² Despite his criticism, Médan did actually appreciate this. Commenting again on the dramatist's 'ton précieux', he added: 'Ce n'est point le style de La Calprenède, c'est le style Louis XIII; c'est ainsi que ses contemporains sentaient et exprimaient les choses de l'amour' (p. 61).

The ideal love of Mitridate and Hypsicratée is inspiring and pathetic: we admire and we pity. It exalts, but it is not tragic. The obstacles testing it are external. Today the conflicted love of Pharnace and Bérénice is more to our taste, but the reference in the *Au Lecteur* to the tears shed in the 1630s testifies to the power of this couple from the beginning. Bérénice and Pharnace are a more interesting couple than Hypsicratée and Mitridate because the husband's behaviour strikes at the heart of their love affair, and our pleasure is more complex.

The love of the second married couple in the play has until this crisis resembled that of the older generation, the younger wife's speeches being as peppered with references to *honneur* and *vertu* as those of her mother-in-law. As a result of the civil upheavals in *La Mort de Mitridate*, however, there develops between Bérénice and Pharnace a conflict which reaches to the very core of the

¹²⁰ Médan, p. 52. Sage makes the connection with La Calprenède's own novel-writing career: 'En tout cas, que La Calprenède ait fini dans le roman n'est pas pour nous étonner' (p. 264).

¹²¹ Almost two hundred years later, the dialogue Hugo gives to the dying Hernani and Doña Sol is very like that of Mitridate and Hypsicratée: Hernani: 'doña Sol souffrir, et moi le voir!' or doña Sol: 'Partons d'un vol égal vers un monde meilleur. / Un baiser seulement, un baiser!' (V.6).

¹²² Despite Corneille's own emphasis on 'quelque grand intérêt d'État', it must be remembered that in *Cinna* and *Polyeucte* it was the *roman d'amour* that his audiences thrilled to.

relationship. Conjugal ideals have not been forgotten. Pharnace lectures Bérénice on her duty and wifely behaviour, and she responds saying: 'Je sçay ce que je dois à la foy conjugale' (III.3.837). For Bérénice, however, the marriage contract, although indissoluble, cannot override moral principles. Love is impossible for Bérénice without esteem. And how can she respect Pharnace? Looking down from the ramparts, she addresses him: 'Pour moy ne voyant plus cette vertu que j'ayme, / Je doute si Pharnace est encore le mesme' (III.3.809-10). And it is not externals, whether worldly goods or even crowns, which are going to win Bérénice back. So highly principled is she that years of married love can seemingly be swept aside without a second thought in categorical statements like: 'Quand il perd son honneur sa femme l'abandonne' (I.3.249), defending such sentiments by saying: 'Et fondant mon amour sur la seule raison, / Je ne le puis aimer apres sa trahison' (I.3.251). Such statements firmly place Bérénice in the world of *amour héroïque* associated with Corneille. Nevertheless, Octave Nadal has shown that the 'Cornelian' vocabulary of *volonté, raison, vertu, mérite, honneur* and *gloire* was generally in use in tragedy even before 1630.¹²³ With Bérénice, La Calprenède was capable of creating in his first play a character for whom honour was as inseparable a part of love as it would be for Chimène two years later. Corneille and La Calprenède represent two writers working within the framework of a tradition which goes back through the pastoral to *L'Astrée*.¹²⁴

Of all of the characters, Bérénice fares best with the critics. Médan, for example, commented: 'Parmi tous les personnages de cette tragédie, elle souffre vraiment ; son âme est pleine de cette agitation qui crée la vie' (p. 58). In her big scene with Pharnace, La Calprenède puts her through the emotional wringer. She is cold, indignant and ruthless. Refusing to be called wife or to call Pharnace husband, she confronts him accusatorily, brushing aside formalities, dismissing his excuses, and harshly pointing out the true situation by cataloguing his crimes (III.3.821-26). Her central appeal, however, evokes the memory of their past love, and as the enumerations accumulate climaxing in Bérénice in tears, on her knees to Pharnace, we realize the depth of her love. She may claim that it is founded on 'la seule raison' (I.3.251), but its roots stretch down to something far more profound. On first seeing her, Mitridate made reference to how great her love for Pharnace had been (I.3.223-25), and she herself confesses to Nise: 'Il est vray, cest ingrat est indigne du jour, / J'ay pour luy toutesfois encore un peu d'amour' (II.2.407-08). Nadal points out that the idea of contradictions in love was 'une découverte psychologique précieuse, commune d'ailleurs à toute l'époque Louis XIII' (p. 164).

¹²³ *Le Sentiment de l'amour dans l'œuvre de Pierre Corneille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), pp. 88-94.

¹²⁴ Truchet too finds 'accents "cornéliens"' in other dramatists of the 1630s but posits that what distinguishes Corneille from his rivals is 'sa délicatesse, sa discrétion, son sens des nuances', adding: 'Il y a plus de raideur chez ses rivaux' (*Théâtre classique*, p. 136).

Moreover, perfect love does not mean disembodied love. Pharnace aches from the absence of his wife, and, aware of her physical attractiveness to him, once she has decided that she will meet him, a physical transformation takes place that gives back to her eyes 'leurs premiers charmes' (III.1.726). In a no-holds-barred confrontation, she goes forth armed with 'des attraites qui l'ont fait soupirer', 'des regards qui se font adorer' (ll. 727-28). Prepared to use all of her attractions in her appeal to Pharnace, Bérénice trusts in the continuing power of 'cette passion, que mes yeux firent naître' (ll. 933), as she conjures up pictures of 'ces feux innocens dans nos ames conceus', 'ces sacrez sermens & donnez et receus' (ll. 935-36), and pleads: 'Si du bonheur passé le souvenir t'est doux' (l. 947). As she does so, one feels that it is not just Pharnace who fondly remembers their past love, and that that love remains a reality for both of them.

Nadal comments on the shift in the early 1630s from the depiction of the sheer vicissitudes of love to that of a more internal conflict, that of 'l'âme divisée' (p.150). Torn between the two irreconcilable poles of husband and father-in-law, Bérénice suffers acutely. It is this struggle which has consistently been singled out for praise, Médan, writing for example:

Chez cette sœur aînée des héroïnes de Corneille, le sentiment de l'honneur et du devoir moral lutte victorieusement contre une passion d'autant plus séduisante qu'elle est légitime. (p.59)

It is this struggle which generates the emotional pull of the scene: the agony of two people who love each other but who no longer seem to know each other, who are separated by moral principles, with different views of their future. The tears shed on the stage are designed to generate tears in the audience.

Ideally, like Mitridate and Hypsicratée, the married couple die together. Pharnace is left alone to a living death. During the play he suffers enormously from the separation, to the point of his 'ardeur aveuglée' (IV.2.1065) being criticized by Émile. When he does see Bérénice, he invites her: 'Jette toy dans les bras d'un mary qui t'adore, / Accorde le remede au feu qui le dévore' (III.3.893-94). The most crushing remark addressed to Pharnace must thus be that which deprives him of Bérénice, as she says: 'Desormais mon destin se separe du tien' (III.3.987). Pharnace ushers in the long line of La Calprenède's antagonists who know at first hand the agonies both of frustration and of isolation.

Of those two poles of protagonist and antagonist, it is Mitridate who can draw consolation from personal relationships. Not only does Pharnace find himself alone at the end, but, excluded from love throughout the play, his solitude has been consistently greater than that of Mitridate and his family. It is the antagonist who remains, and love or the lack of it thus plays an integral part in underlining dual themes of isolation and solidarity.

A Machine for Entertaining

La Calprenède sets out to entertain. *La Mort de Mitridate* is a theatrical machine, the component parts of which are all designed to produce pleasure. By the choices the dramatist makes of subject matter, of how to organize that initial material, of what characters to retain or invent and what to do with them during the course of the play, what conflicts to give them and what words to express themselves with, how to get them from the beginning to the inevitable end announced by the title, La Calprenède is making decisions that will affect the kind of entertainment an audience will find in his play. Nonetheless, the pleasures will be disciplined ones, according to the rules of the victorious new regular dramaturgy.

Formal Pleasures

In *La Mort de Mitridate* the symbiotic relationship between the two antithetical poles of protagonist and antagonist established a structural formula, upon which La Calprenède was still continuing to produce variations in his last extant play.¹²⁵ Since, to the family, Pharnace appears to have the fate of Mitridate in his hands, appeals are made to the son on the father's behalf. Attempts are made to bring the two together in the hope that communication will provide a solution, and when Mitridate is himself obstinate, appeals must be made to him for his own good. The result of the appeal mechanism is a rhythm dependent upon alternations of hope and despair: hope that a concession will be granted, despair if it is refused, revived by a further hope that perhaps at least a reprieve might be possible.

Each act of *La Mort de Mitridate* appears self-contained, a decision being taken in the first scene and the result of that decision being seen in the last, a result which pushes another character into a further decision. Each of the three central acts deals with an attempt to save the family. Such acts begin on a note of resolution and hope that the new attempt will be successful and end in despair at the failure of that attempt, spurring another character on to suggest hopefully another possibility. Ends of acts thus achieve that dynamism which Scherer sees as indispensable.¹²⁶ In Act II the hope is that Mitridate's *sortie* will provide a military solution to the dire situation the family finds itself in. In Act III, the *sortie* having failed, the hope is that Bérénice will succeed in changing her husband's mind. In Act IV, Bérénice not having succeeded in moving Pharnace, will Mitridate be able to be more persuasive with his wayward son? First scenes and last scenes of acts are thus loci of both results and decisions, oriented both to the past and to the future.

The play has, however, been criticized for the slimness of its action. Médan remarked on 'le vide de l'action et sa froideur' (p. 48) and Pierre Barrière on its

¹²⁵ His fidelity to this structure makes it possible for Lancaster to detail the elements of La Calprenède's 'ideal tragedy', in 'La Calprenède Dramatist', *Modern Philology*, 18 (1920-21), 121-41, 345-60 (p. 358).

¹²⁶ *Dramaturgie classique*, p. 206.

‘action insuffisante’.¹²⁷ Mazouer can criticize the play on the grounds that ‘l’action [...] manque de dynamisme’. It is true that the structure is spare and linear. Refusing to indulge in *péripéties*, *La Calprenède* shows a taste for simplicity, for what Corneille would call ‘pièces simples’ as opposed to ‘implexes’.¹²⁸ From the beginning there is little doubt as to the end result. Problems set in the opening scene have been logically, inexorably worked out by the last. The Romans outside the city thirsting for Mitridate’s blood have reached the throne room and the dead king by the last scene. Indeed the title of the play announces the denouement, but this is a recurrent situation with seventeenth-century French tragedies. Realizing that titles often give away the ending, d’Aubignac nevertheless advises:

Il faut conduire de telle sorte toutes les affaires du Theatre, que les Spectateurs soient tou̇jours persuadez interieurement, que ce Personnage, dont la fortune et la vie sont menacées, ne devrait point mourir, attendu que cette adresse les entretient en des présentimens de commiseration qui deviennent tres-grands et tres-agreables au dernier point de son malheur: et plus on trouve de motifs pour croire qu’il ne doit point mourir, plus on a de douleur de sçavoir qu’il doit mourir: On regarde l’injustice de ses Ennemis avec une plus forte aversion, et on plaint sa disgrâce avec beaucoup plus de tendresse.¹²⁹

For Corneille, audiences must be kept in an ‘agréable suspension’.¹³⁰ For Bray, ‘suspendre et préparer, voilà tout le secret’¹³¹ and for Yarrow suspense marks an important difference between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama.¹³² Suspense and surprise represented a great source of theatrical pleasure for a seventeenth-century audience. *La Calprenède* does not indulge in surprise in this play, but the alternations of hope and despair do seem to represent genuine attempts at creating suspense. This is not convincing for some.¹³³ Certainly there are built-in deterrents to the success of suspense in the play. Apart from the title, death is an omnipresent factor: it is what the family are trying to keep at bay by their appeals, and with each failure thoughts of death reappear. As well as the

¹²⁷ *La Vie intellectuelle en Périgord, 1550-1800* (Bordeaux: Delmas, 1936), p. 218.

¹²⁸ ‘Examen de *Cinna*’, in *Writings*, p. 116.

¹²⁹ *La Pratique du théâtre*, ed. by Pierre Martino (Paris: Champion, 1927), p. 138.

¹³⁰ ‘Discours des trois unités’, in *Writings*, p. 63.

¹³¹ René Bray, *La Formation de la doctrine classique en France* (Paris: Nizet, 1927; repr. 1974), p. 322.

¹³² Philip J. Yarrow, ‘Montchrestien: a Sixteenth- or Seventeenth-Century Dramatist?’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 4 (1967), 140-48 (p. 142).

¹³³ Gossip, for example, comments: ‘Amid these re-affirmations of largely fixed attitudes, it is indeed difficult to detect the presence of much surprise, let alone suspense’ (p. 66).

La Mort de Mitridate

return to hope at the beginning of each of the central acts, there is also a return to the alternative of death. The rhythms of the play lead cyclically, inevitably, to death. If it is to be avoided, Pharnace must be the family's salvation. Psychological conflicts within Pharnace are thus essential to the creation of suspense, but do we ever believe that Pharnace can be moved far enough to come back over to his father's side? Indeed, is he not as immovable as his father and wife, his declaration: 'Ma resolution se maintient invincible' (l. 982), echoed by Bérénice: 'Tu me cognoistras de mesme resoluë' (l. 986), and by Mitridate: 'Si tu cognois ton père il est trop resolu' (l. 1192)? Do such statements of principle not condemn the tragedy to stasis? As Henry Phillips points out while discussing Racine's *Mithridate*, when a scene has ended, there should have been a progression in the action, 'each confrontation [...] must be more meaningful than the last and itself contribute to the forward movement of the action' (p. 20). In the case of the two *scenes à faire* with Bérénice and Mitridate, one has to say that there is no forward progression, the situation remaining the same once the interview is over as it was at the start. Although the offer of hope at the beginning of an act holds out the promise of change, and scenes of confrontation can be vigorous in their own right, after each confrontation one reverts to the status quo rather than moving to a new order. Phillips also remarks that expectation 'contains within itself the notion of suspense' (p. 13), but the cyclical rhythms of *La Mort de Mitridate*, in gradually undermining our expectations of anything changing, could be said to subvert the prospect of suspense. This is not what La Calprenède intended. Committed to the entertainment of his audience, the dramatist, through the appeal mechanism, is trying to create suspenseful drama. Certainly suspense remains important in his later plays, even if, in this first one, the feeling of inevitability may loom larger.¹³⁴

There is also pleasure to be had from the structural patterning to be found in *La Mort de Mitridate*. Acts I and V, outside the appeal mechanism, nevertheless have a structural chiasmus to them. Mirroring each other, Act I began in the Roman camp and was followed by three scenes with Mitridate and his family; Act V begins with three scenes with Mitridate and his family and ends with a scene with Pharnace and the Romans. In each case the sequence of family scenes follows the same pattern: Mitridate with wife and daughters (I.2; V.1), arrival of Bérénice (I.3; V.2), arrival of Menandre (I.4; V.3). The first scene of Act I set the Roman agenda for Pharnace and the last scene of Act V shows him reaching his goal in the company of the Romans, before it all falls apart for him and satisfyingly so for the audience.

There are internal symmetries to be enjoyed as well: Act II presents a perfect mirror image, hinging on scene 3. In scene 1 Mitridate and Hysicratée prepare

¹³⁴ For a discussion of suspense throughout all of La Calprenède's plays, see my article 'Suspense as a Source of Theatrical Pleasure in the Plays of La Calprenède', in *En marge du classicisme: Essays on the French Theatre from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. by Alan Howe and Richard Waller (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1987), pp. 95-121.

for their *sortie*, scene 2 reintroduces Bérénice and shows her still to be in love with Pharnace. Scene 3, the central scene of the act, is Rome in the shape of Pompée, the great divider, separating the two early scenes set in the family from the two later scenes set amongst the Romans, separating Pharnace from his wife and family. Scene 4, the pendant to scene 2, shows Pharnace's feelings for Bérénice and in scene 5 we hear about Mitridate's *sortie*, which has been happening offstage. There are parallelisms in the play as well. Acts I and II proceed along parallel lines, Pharnace and Mitridate making decisions in the first scene, the result of which we hear in the last scene, and which spurs the other on to a new decision, the results of which we will see in the next act. Act III and Act IV not only share the same rhythm of thoughts of death → hope → despair → thoughts of death, but each proceeds in parallel fashion: in each case, scene 1 is set in the palace and informs us that Bérénice/Mitridate will meet with Pharnace; scene 2 is in the Roman camp with Pharnace and Émile receiving the news that wife/husband will speak to Pharnace; scene 3 is the interview. Unfortunately, the aesthetic pleasure to be had from such formal patterning might constitute another factor militating against the creation of suspense: the audience lulled into thinking cyclically, the seed is planted that there is not going to be any surprise, any miracle, to save the day.

Despite the surface calm that such formal pleasures may inspire in us, a great deal of action has often been going on behind the scenes. La Calprenède creates a feeling of simultaneous action, reminding us that while we are watching events unfolding in palace or camp, at the same time other equally momentous events are happening not so very far away.¹³⁵ Thus, during the conversations of Act I, the Romans have been making preparations to attack Mitridate, those preparations being reported by Menandre in the last scene; from Act II, scene 2 Mitridate's forces have been making their *sortie* out of the city, news of which is relayed to us by the soldier at the end of the act; Pharnace and the Romans rush off to bolster their forces and one must imagine the battle continuing and ending during the interval between Acts II and III. At the beginning of Act III we also learn that Pharnace had found time to send a note to his wife requesting to see her and that she has gone to talk to him. During the course of the communal suicides of Act V one must imagine (and, in performance, indeed hear) the Romans making their way into the palace and ultimately into the throne room. Such simultaneity of action imparts a sense of depth to the play: it is not exclusively about what we see before us on the stage: events are happening in the world outside the spaces we see that will influence the lives of the characters before us.

Such events also contribute to an atmosphere of urgency and claustrophobia. Although there is no action on stage to speak of, an atmosphere of action nevertheless permeates the play because of what we are told is happening off stage. When, at the end of Act I, Menandre tells the family of the preparations which have been going on outside the city walls while we have been watching

¹³⁵ Phillips explores Racine's similar use in *Mithridate* of 'contiguous space' and 'simultaneous occurrence of events' (pp. 60-61).

La Mort de Mitridate

intimate family scenes, a sense of urgency is created as well as a feeling of claustrophobia. Throughout the play there is the feeling of this small group of people sequestered initially in a city, then in the royal palace, and finally in the throne room as their space for manoeuvre shrinks around them. Although Lancaster feels that the order of the interviews is anticlimactic, the last two scenes of Act IV contribute to the sense of urgency and time running out.¹³⁶ It is naive for Mitridate and Nise to think that they are going to change Pharnace's mind and their last ditch attempt at this is proof of the desperation the family feels. The pace seems to accelerate with the failure of two appeals in the space of two scenes. Initially Act V begins calmly but by the penultimate scene Menandre is urging Mitridate to hurry: 'Pharnace s'est fait jour dans la premiere porte, / Les Romains l'ont suivy dans la prochaine cour' (V.5.1644-45). Therefore I am more in the camp of Lancaster's 'swiftly moving action' than of Médan's 'tant de froideur et de stérilité'.¹³⁷

Tension between dualities, characteristic of a baroque sensibility, is characteristic of *La Mort de Mitridate*. Inevitability and suspense constitute one such tension. There are two camps, two antithetical poles of attraction, two couples, two interview scenes; scenes with just a couple of characters on stage contrast with scenes when the Sinopians are on stage or the last scene when the whole company must be on stage. The conflict of opposites is productive of contrast and variety; La Calprenède's characters clash in their scenes together (Pharnace/Bérénice, Pharnace/Mitridate, Pharnace/Émile, etc.) Because the dramatist is not yet required always to observe the liaison of scenes, scenes between opposing groups of characters can be juxtaposed for the utmost contrast, the juxtaposition emphasized by having the character or events presented in the second scene substantially different from the expectations created in the previous scene (I.1/2). Much pleasure can thus be derived from the aesthetic order of scenes. Within individual scenes too, alternations between tension and rest can be found. Médan may have railed against Mitridate's behaviour towards Hypsiratée in Act V, but, while conjugal love provides a kind of haven for Mitridate and Hypsiratée, it also serves the dramaturgical function of contrast with the surrounding storm. Mitridate's *stances* perform a similar function, providing a moment of quiet, lyrical meditation in contrast to the horrors which are to follow. D'Aubignac points to variety as one of the reasons for the success of *stances* in French classical theatre:

Nous avons souvent observé que les Stances insérées dans le milieu d'un Poëme Dramatique, ont assez bien reüssi sur nostre Theatre, en partie par l'humeur des François qui s'ennuyent des plus belles choses quand elles ne sont point variées, et qui ne désirent que les nouvelles,

¹³⁶ Lancaster thought that the interviews should lead up to what he considered to be the strongest, the one with Bérénice, last ('La Calprenède Dramatist', p. 128).

¹³⁷ *History*, II, 1, 64; Médan, p. 50.

et les bizarreries portant quelque apparence de nouveauté; en partie aussi par la nature de cette Poésie qui enferme toujours dans chaque Stance quelque pointe d'esprit, ou quelque agrément particulier. (p. 262)

Although he will not resort to external events and certainly not to 'bizarreries', La Calprenède keeps the temperament of his audience in mind, providing variety through conflict, contrast, contrary emotions and tensions.

Emotional and Rhetorical Pleasures

La Calprenède wants his audience to experience strong emotions. His comments in the *Au Lecteur* are proof of his satisfaction that Bérénice moved people to tears and that those same people held Pharnace in horror. Corneille recognized the power of 'cette pitié qui fait de si beaux effets sur nos théâtres'¹³⁸ and, like him, La Calprenède believed that you could put undeserved misfortune on stage. Mitridatie and Nise have done nothing wrong but are victims of circumstances, Hypsicratée is simply a loyal and loving wife, Mitridate just wants to be his own man at a time when adaptation to a new order is required. For all of these characters the obstacles are external, and we are meant to be moved by the plight of helpless victims striving to stave off disaster. Pharnace and Bérénice, each with an inner conflict, may be the most interesting characters, but La Calprenède puts all his characters through their paces as, their emotions stretched to the limit as the minutes tick by in these last hours, they reassure, console, express their love for each other, and clash, desperate to persuade in order to attempt to halt the inevitable. Encounters and confrontations can be violent, but it is that 'aymable violence' that Beauregard writes of in his liminary poem, because, as Scherer comments on the seventeenth-century audience: 'On aime aussi avoir peur, trembler avec le héros ou l'héroïne, et s'attendrir sur leur sort'.¹³⁹ La Calprenède multiplies our tragic interest by which the family members carry to the grave our pity and admiration, while the ostracized Pharnace is left alone at the end with our pity and our fear. On considering all of La Calprenède's plays, Mazouer can declare: 'La cause est entendue: la tragédie de La Calprenède recherche avant toute chose et en tout l'émotion, la pitié, les larmes' (p. 369). As I have already shown, admiration should be added to this list.

Throughout the century *passions* and *discours* are two of the greatest sources of theatrical pleasure.¹⁴⁰ La Calprenède purveys strong emotions through the medium of speech. Cornered, in a life-and-death situation, family members are desperate to talk. Once the *sortie* has failed, speech is the only salvation left to them. A great importance is thus attached to persuasion: Bérénice must try to

¹³⁸ 'Discours de la tragédie', in *Writings*, p. 37.

¹³⁹ *Dramaturgie classique*, p. 169.

¹⁴⁰ Bray, pp. 313-14.

persuade Pharnace to come back to the family, while he tries to persuade her to come over to his side (III.3); the family have to persuade Mitridate to rise above the ignominy of having to appeal to his traitorous son and go out and talk to him (IV.1); Mitridate tries to persuade Pharnace to return to the family, while Pharnace tries to persuade his father to give himself up to the Romans (IV.3). Desperate to persuade, characters resort to all the techniques of *l'art de persuader* in their appeals; argument and counter-argument, proofs and refutation, appeals to personal interest, threats and promises, reproaches and exhortations are all the stuff of these 'verbal battles'.¹⁴¹ In one such speech (III.3.921-52), Bérénice moves from refutation into arguments based on Pharnace's personal interest, into exhortation marked by the use of the imperative: 'Escoute' (l. 932), as she appeals to his love, with amplification and gradation brought into play again and all emphasized by the anaphora of the preposition 'par', which figures in six consecutive lines, five times as the first word and a sixth time as the second word of the alexandrine. This sequence ends with a further exhortation: 'Ne me refuse point la grace que je veux' (l. 939). But Bérénice has not finished, and now launches into a moral argument ('Ton honneur') before a final plea calculated to appeal to his emotions again (their love) but this time directed even more prominently to Pharnace with cognates of *tu* featuring eight times in the course of nine lines. Amplification, gradation and anaphora again have their part to play, this time with the repetition of 'si' as the initial or second word of the alexandrine in six consecutive lines. This sequence ends in exhortation again: 'Eslève un peu tes yeux,... / Considere les pleurs...' (ll. 948-49). Bérénice finishes powerfully with a couplet which appeals to the emotions again (family feelings) but also ends with another nod to his personal interest: 'je demande pour toy' (l. 952). To the techniques mentioned here, in the scene between father and son, can be added visual evocation, as both sides conjure up pictures in defence of their arguments. Pharnace is the first to enter the pictorial fray with his evocation of the years of war against the Romans that he has shared with his father (ll. 1173-82), which is part self-defence and partly intended to persuade the father to follow the son's example. Mitridate underlines his counter-argument by using historical precedent, citing the treatment meted out to 'Flacce, Cotta, Fimbrie, & Triaire, vaincus' (l. 1203). Pharnace counters with the example of Tigrane, who has been spared by the Romans, only to have this ostensible proof refuted by his father who offers the precedent of the fates of 'Siphax, ou Jugurte, ou Persée' (l. 1214), whose treatment at the hands of the Romans Mitridate pictures, before his rhetorical question: 'Ceux-là n'eurent-ils point la qualité de Roy' (l. 1219). After a statement of general principles, he continues with the image of himself, Hypsicratée and Pharnace's sisters paraded in chains as part of a Roman triumph, all the time accusing Pharnace of complicity through the use of *tu*: 'Tu m'attaches au char... / Triomphes de ton pere... / Charges de fers pesans...' (l. 1228f.), before climaxing in scornful irony. In this battle of verbal pictures, detail contributes to the

¹⁴¹ The expression is that of Peter France, in *Racine's Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, repr. 1970), p. 206.

forcefulness of the evocations. But there is nothing simply decorative about the use of rhetoric here. It is vigorous and energetic and seems ‘right’, springing plausibly from the characters and befitting their situation. It is active discourse.

Speech is of the utmost importance to the characters of *La Mort de Mitridate*, constituting as it does their only way forward. It is ironic therefore that by the end of the two interviews just mentioned, as dynamic as they may have seemed on stage, the action is no further forward. Speech never accomplishes the goals the characters invest it with in *La Mort de Mitridate*, the only consequence of each scene being a reversion to the situation at the beginning of the act. The problem lies again with Pharnace. He knows what he is doing, agreeing quite readily with Bérénice’s view of the situation, so that he is not pushed to the kind of revelation or self-betrayal, which might set the action on a different course. Speech proves ineffective in the play, even if used to conjure up pictures of the future. Where words fail, it is sight which ultimately proves more effective. Pharnace’s moment of self-discovery comes on seeing the corpses of his family. There is finally movement as he sinks from having control over the situation at the beginning of the last scene to having no control over the situation by the end.

With his famous dictum ‘Parler c’est agir’, d’Aubignac reminds us that theatre is action not oration and that *discours* are only ‘les accessoires de l’Action’ (pp. 282-83). In *La Mort de Mitridate* there are no ‘discours inutiles’.¹⁴² Even if the expressions of love between Mitridate and Hypsicratée are not to our taste, the speeches themselves spring plausibly from the characters’ feelings, are integrated into the action and are not undramatic or self-indulgent. In their first scene together the affirmations of love are not purely decorative in the sense that the audience is meant to admire the writing for itself, but, as well as characterizing Mitridate, such speeches also contribute exposition about Mitridate’s past and present state and background about Pharnace (I.2). Admittedly the audiences of the 1630s liked long speeches and highly patterned rhetoric, so that La Calprenède does provide tirades and *stances*, but what he offers is rhetoric that is functional rather than decorative. In intensely dramatic scenes he demands a gamut of emotional reactions from his actors. The number of times that I have had to supply suspension marks to a speech which seems to have finished abruptly indicates La Calprenède using interruption as a means of creating the *beau désordre* of tragedy. Such interruptions imitate the language of passion by communicating an emotional intensity on the part of the character who is interrupting, provoked by impatience or by anger. Speech is put at the service of passions, and so at the service of drama. Given that the public would not have flocked to *La Mort de Mitridate* on the strength of its plot, perhaps d’Aubignac has the key to that success, when he writes: ‘une Pièce qui n’aura presque point d’Incidents, mais qui sera soutenue par d’excellens discours, ne manquera jamais de réussir’ (p. 285).

¹⁴² This is the phrase used by d’Aubignac to criticize the last scene of La Calprenède’s *La Mort des enfans d’Hérodes*, which d’Aubignac sees as needlessly prolonging the denouement (p. 140).

Spectacular Pleasures

Scherer emphasizes ‘le caractère littéraire plus que scénique de la pièce de théâtre dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle’, commenting that ‘le texte est beaucoup plus raconté que joué’.¹⁴³ *La Mort de Mitridate* is not written to be recited rather than acted, and with its set of ramparts and tents, the epic feel of its battle *récit*, and its two-level staging, even before the last act one cannot say that the stage has not been taken into consideration. The trumpets and massed legions heralding Mitridate’s appearance for his confrontation with his son take Pharnace’s breath away:

Mais du haut du Palais j’oy le bruit des trompettes,
Et voy les legions à l’assaut toutes prestes.
Dieux ! je voy Mitridate au haut de ces rampars. (IV.2.1081-83)

Scherer comments on ‘le goût du public pour les éléments spectaculaires de la représentation théâtrale; ce goût est poussé si loin qu’il constitue une véritable passion’.¹⁴⁴ *La Mort de Mitridate* is end-focussed. The greatest *scène à faire* the audience has been waiting for is the death of Mitridate himself, as announced in the title and the *raison d’être* of the dramatisation. This is the ending that has dictated the course of the play, and La Calprenède pulled out all the stops, giving his public what Lancaster called ‘a climax in a scene of tragic horror that is unequalled in the period studied’.¹⁴⁵ Scherer opines that, for this period, ‘les cadavres sont également d’un effet scénique certain’ (p. 168).¹⁴⁶

The whole of Act V is devoted to dying: as it opens, the cup is on the table and, during the full length of the act, it is passed from character to character and the physical symptoms of dying are related to us, as four women stagger and fall as the poison takes hold. Although suicide by poison may be thought decorous enough not to offend the *bienséances*, La Calprenède nevertheless provides a full catalogue of symptoms from ‘froideur’ and ‘sueur de mort’ to ‘foiblesse extrême’ to ‘étrange douleur’ and ‘bras languissans’, from ‘paupière abbatuë’ to ‘levre deteinte’, as daughters and wife collapse about Mitridate. But the deaths themselves, as detailed as the depiction is, are not the end of the play. The catastrophe may be Mitridate’s, but the denouement belongs to Pharnace. Mitridate has asked Menandre to place his dead body on his throne. As Pharnace

¹⁴³ *Dramaturgie classique*, pp. 160, 159.

¹⁴⁴ *Dramaturgie classique*, p. 160.

¹⁴⁵ *History*, II, 1, 64.

¹⁴⁶ Although Racine’s dying Mithridate is brought on stage, Racine would not have chosen to depict five suicides. As Scherer comments: ‘Ces exhibitions de cadavres, qui sont du goût de Hardy ou de La Calprenède, ne plaisent point aux contemporains de Racine’ (*Dramaturgie classique*, p. 421).

enters, apparently in command, the curtain is drawn back to reveal Mitridate and Hypsicratée on their thrones, daughters and daughter-in-law at their feet. There is a built-in theatricality to kings and queens. There is a theatricality in Mitridate's wish to be put on his throne and a theatricality in La Calprenède's imagining of the scene, since nowhere in the sources are such details of this final episode in Mithradates' life recorded.¹⁴⁷ With the chamber centre stage,¹⁴⁸ hidden by the curtain, one imagines Menandre helping Mitridate and Hypsicratée put on robes and crowns, flickering candles in the chamber enhancing the spectacle of their dreadful majesty. As Forestier has written, the baroque aesthetic is 'une esthétique de l'éblouissement'¹⁴⁹ and, as the curtain was drawn back, La Calprenède's set piece could well have drawn gasps from the audience, especially if the royal robes are of gold and silver to reflect candlelight.¹⁵⁰ Pharnace is initially taken in by the illusion that his family are brazenly flaunting their status but then gasps in horror as he realizes that the family only appear to be alive but are in fact dead.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ In Mairet's *Marc-Antoine* the dead Cleopâtre is not seen, since she and her ladies-in-waiting pass 'dans la chambre voisine'. Nevertheless, Philip Tomlinson imagines the possibility of a tantalising glimpse of 'les ornements royaux, le lit d'or et les riches bijoux' and of the dead queen on her couch, splendidly arrayed, Iris at her feet and Charmion putting a crown on her head: 'Sur ce tableau vivant, image d'un prestige doré retrouvé, juste avant le moment même de la mort, la tapisserie se refermerait.' (*Le Marc-Antoine ou La Cléopâtre, tragédie* (Durham: University of Durham, 1997), p. 192, n. 24). In Benserade's play one reads: 'On tire un rideau & Cléopâtre parée, est sur un beau lit, Eras à ses pieds' (V.7).

¹⁴⁸ Pasquier comments on the importance of the central chamber at the Hôtel de Bourgogne: 'Il semble, en particulier, d'usage de terminer la pièce et de dénouer l'intrigue devant la chambre centrale et en présence de la plupart des personnages, selon une tradition instituée par la dramaturgie du siècle précédent [...]. Une telle prééminence fonctionnelle peut s'expliquer par des raisons optiques. [...] la chambre centrale est en effet la seule à offrir à l'ensemble des spectateurs des conditions optimales de visibilité' (p. 109).

¹⁴⁹ *Introduction à l'analyse des textes classiques* (Paris: Nathan, 1993), p. 13.

¹⁵⁰ Anne Verdier comments that actors did wear gold and silver costumes in order to catch the light, in her *Histoire et poétique de l'habit de théâtre en France au XVII^e siècle: 1606-1680* (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2006), p. 213. It is thus disappointing that this scene would appear to take place in daylight, unless the references to the sun are meant to be taken metaphorically. Ideally one imagines it chiaroscuro. Pasquier mentions how at the Hôtel de Bourgogne such 'chambres ouvrantes' could be lit by 'chandelières, flambeaux d'argent et autres pyramides ardentes', as detailed by Mahelot. He also discusses the techniques possibly used to create 'une lumière nocturne' (pp. 78-79).

¹⁵¹ Safty sees the discovery of dead bodies as typically baroque: 'L'aspect spectaculaire ou théâtral de la découverte de l'objet macabre est d'ailleurs d'autant plus accentué que nous trouvons des indications du genre: "on tire un rideau", "on soulève une tapisserie": c'est là une variante des plus dramatiques du procédé du *théâtre dans le théâtre*' (p. 130).

La Mort de Mitridate

What Mitridate has done is to engineer a posthumous metadramatic scene, a performance-within-a-play.¹⁵² The spectacle is not just spectacle for its own sake, but goes beyond mere spectacle to fulfil dramatic purposes. The dead Mitridate on his throne will influence Pharnace's behaviour, triggering his disintegration once he discovers the reality and his eyes are opened to what he has been responsible for. The tableau is thus functional in that the 'performance' is instrumental in the denouement of the tragedy.

When Mitridate asks Menandre to put him on his throne: 'Fais que ces ennemis & ce fils desloyal, / Treuvent ce pasle corps dans le throsne Royal' (V.3.1673-74), he is establishing the 'preconditions of the performance' in a preparatory scene essential to such performances-in-a-play.¹⁵³ In so doing, the king states his intention to engage in theatricality for a double audience, both on-stage spectators (Pharnace and the Romans) and off (the theatrical public), the fictional scene (the dead characters sitting as if alive) intruding into the real world of the framing play. Theatricality will thereby influence the resolution of events in that 'real' world. By his request Mitridate establishes the purpose of the performance, that in being found on his throne he will have preserved his regal dignity. Little does he realize that his 'performance' will have more far-reaching effects in the framing play.

By his instructions, Mitridate transforms the throne room into a theatrical space by creating two distinct areas: a performance space and a viewing space. Designated as the recipient of the performance, Pharnace is thus relegated to the spectators' space, therefore separated from the action, the same polarization between performers and spectators established as in any traditional proscenium theatre.¹⁵⁴ The spatial split is even demarcated by the curtain which serves the same purpose as in any theatre of keeping the actors' space private and unseen 'until it is ready for viewing by those in the spectators' space'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² The following discussion has been informed by Kimberley Cashman's analysis of Act IV, scene 5 of *Tartuffe* in her *Staging Subversions: The Performance-within-a-play in French Classical Theatre*, *Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures*, 134 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), ch. 2.

¹⁵³ Cashman, p. 6. For Forestier, what La Calprenède offers would be seen as a 'scène d'intrigue' rather than a 'spectacle détaché' which a true play-within-a-play would be (*Le Théâtre dans le théâtre sur la scène française du XVII^e siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1981), p. 12).

¹⁵⁴ The irony in this play is that there is an inversion of traditional theatricality which stipulates that the stage is the area of activity and the auditorium the area of passivity. Here, however, the performers, being dead, are the passive agents and it is the spectator who is active to the extent that he breaks the theatrical illusion by trespassing into the space of the performer at line 1698.

¹⁵⁵ Cashman, p. 9. Scherer notes the difference in use of the curtain in the earlier scenes and in this last one: 'La même tapisserie qui n'avait au début de la pièce que la fonction conventionnelle de séparer deux décors distincts est devenue ici une vraie tapisserie, qu'il suffit de soulever pour pénétrer dans la chambre voisine' (*Dramaturgie classique*, p. 180).

A minimum number of characters is used to realize the performance: Mitridate, Menandre and Pharnace, with the family as supporting players. Mitridate has the role of actor/director since it is he who ‘conceives of the performance as a means of accomplishing a specific goal, organizes the space, and prepares the spectator’s gaze’.¹⁵⁶ Given the situation that the play had reached, Mitridate was powerless, but in creating a space of his own, he dominates that space as the subject of the action.

Menandre has the role of stage manager, organising the performance according to the instructions he has been given, in charge of making sure that the performance moves technically without a hitch, and, acting as a narrator, is the only character to speak on behalf of the performers. He is perhaps even in charge of ensuring the full theatricality of proper impressive costuming and the guardian of the privacy of the theatrical space. Although it is not mentioned that it is he who pulls back the curtain, the stage direction just being ‘la tapisserie tirée’, he probably controls this aspect of the performance too.

As the character-spectator for whom the performance is destined, Pharnace, like any theatrical audience, is equally powerless; it is the performers who have the power. During the performance Pharnace ‘provides the necessary gaze which creates the spatial split’ (p. 11).¹⁵⁷ Thinking his family alive and brazenly flaunting their defiance by having taken these positions around the thrones, Pharnace, who does not realize he is participating in a performance, misunderstands the situation: to him this is just the throne room, his ultimate goal, so that he does not realize a new significance has been given to the space. Expecting to find his family alive, he does not realize that they are now performers in a theatrical spectacle specifically meant for him. So the theatricality of the performance is partially hidden from its intended audience because, unaware of what is going on, Pharnace does not share in the usual contract which exists between performers and their audience. His disbelief does not have to be willingly suspended. The result is that Pharnace is unable initially to distinguish between performance and reality. The crown within his reach, so palpably near his goal, Pharnace, commanding and disdainful on his entry into the throne room, is particularly susceptible to the illusion/performance. As Cashman writes: ‘Desire is an essential part of duping as well as of the theatrical illusion, as it renders the desirer susceptible to the performance-within-a-play’ (p. 14). Pharnace is deceived by the performance but with consequences undreamt of by Mitridate.

As spectator, Pharnace has been excluded from the action. Crossing into the performing space in order to touch his wife, he transgresses one of the most sacred laws of theatre: the separation of spaces, thereby destroying the spatial split essential to the theatricality and ending the performance. The theatrical space reverts to the real world of the framing play, but that world, thanks to the ‘performance’, is no longer the same for Pharnace. Although trapped, Mitridate

¹⁵⁶ Cashman, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

La Mort de Mitridate

has, through his self-inflicted death, passed on his crown in the traditional way. Powerless, all that he ostensibly wanted was to present a dignified picture to Pharnace and the Romans as they entered the throne room. By engaging in theatricality, however, he is able to create a space where he is still in control. As both the subject and the main performer of the action, Mitridate controls the performance posthumously. And that performance, albeit a tableau, a *nature morte*, has consequences beyond the intentions of the King. Through theatricality, right is restored: Mitridate although *vaincu* also becomes *vainqueur*, Pharnace ostensibly *vainqueur* is now *vaincu*. The baroque inversion of father and son relations is righted, the patriarchal order re-established. Pharnace's life is irredeemably altered, as is the reality of the play world. By means of theatricality Mitridate turns his powerlessness into power. Death has empowered him in a way denied to him by life itself.

Looking at the uncertainty of the unity of place, Scherer concludes that many 'pre-classical' dramatists composed their plays without visualising the stage. He cites Act IV, scene 7 of La Calprenède's *Comte d'Essex* as an example.¹⁵⁸ However, an act such as Act V of *La Mort de Mitridate* would seem to bear witness to the fact that La Calprenède was indeed working with the stage and certainly with the actors in mind. Safty declares of the play: 'L'ensemble même du dernier acte peut se lire à la faveur des seules indications scéniques' (p. 129, n. 20). Such an act, which shows La Calprenède specifically using the visual for dramatic effect, testifies to his ability to be both dramatist and *metteur en scène*. Scherer also wrote: 'L'auteur dramatique est souvent, en France, un écrivain avant d'être un homme de théâtre'.¹⁵⁹ Although La Calprenède's career as a dramatist would last a scant eight years, from his first play, *La Mort de Mitridate*, he proved that he was not just an *écrivain*, he was also an *homme de théâtre*.

Text of the Present Edition

There exists no manuscript of *La Mort de Mitridate* and only one seventeenth-century edition, that published in Paris in 1637 by Anthoine de Sommaville:

LA / MORT / DE / MITRIDATE / [Printer's emblem: a chain of office] / A
PARIS, / Chez ANTHOINE DE SOMMAVILLE, au Palais, / dans la petite
Sale, à l'Escu de France. / M.DC.XXXVII. / AVEC PRIVILEGE DU ROY.

In-4, vi-87pp.-i

Content: ã1^r: title; ã1^v: blank; ã2^r-ã3^v: A LA REYNE; ã4^r- ã1^v: AU
LECTEUR; ã1^v: A MONSIEUR DE LA CALPRENEDE, sur la mort de

¹⁵⁸ *Dramaturgie classique*, pp. 158-59.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

Mitridate, par l'Abbé de Beauregard; ẽ2^r: LE LIBRAIRE AU LECTEUR ; ẽ2^v: *LES ACTEURS*; A1-L4^r, pp. 1-87: *La Mort de Mitridate*; L4^v, [p. 88]: *Extraict du Privilege*.

The copies of the play in the following collections have been consulted. All are in *recueils factices* with other plays of La Calprenède, except for one of the Dublin texts which is a separately bound copy (OLS L-5-966 (8)):

Bibliothèque nationale de France: Rés.YF-394 (reproduced as microfilm M-7152 and NUMM-72745); Rés. YF-471 (reproduced as microfilm M-1575 (4)); 8-RF-6277 (1) (Richelieu, Arts du spectacle); 4-BL-3476 (1) (Arsenal); 4-BL-3477 (1) (Arsenal)

Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne: RRA 95 in-8

British Library: 86.a.5; 839.e.2 (2)

Cambridge University Library: F163.c.4.5

Trinity College Library, Dublin: OLS L-5-966 (8); OLS L-5-968 (1).

In 1986 two plays by La Calprenède, *La Mort de Mithridate* and *Le Comte d'Essex*, were included by Jacques Scherer and Jacques Truchet in the second volume of their *Théâtre du XVII^e siècle* for La Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.¹⁶⁰ Jacques Scherer was responsible for the two La Calprenède plays and, although he does not state for either which copy of the plays he used, in the case of *La Mort de Mithridate* it would appear to have been the Sorbonne copy.¹⁶¹

Plays were quickly printed during the 1630s. Alain Riffaud states that, if a single press was used, it would take a couple of weeks to print a play; if the printing had to alternate with other jobs, the play could still be ready for sale in a month.¹⁶² The quality of the finished product, however, was often sacrificed to the speed with which the piece had to be produced. There is no perfect copy of *La Mort de Mitridate*. Indeed, its printing appears to have been problematic. In the *Au Lecteur*, La Calprenède complains of the number of errors, saying that the play was printed in his absence but that he returned in time to correct the end of Act V.¹⁶³ The publisher corroborates that the author was absent during the printing and even includes a list of *Fautes survenuës en l'impression* which covers some but not all of the mistakes.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ *La Mort de Mithridate*, ed. by Jacques Scherer, in *Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, 3 vols (1975-92), II (1986), 143-203.

¹⁶¹ Scherer saw an edition which had missing lines. The Sorbonne copy is the only one in the Paris collections which has no corrections.

¹⁶² *Le Théâtre imprimé 1630-1650*, CDROM (Le Mans: Matière à dire, 2006), 'Livret', Commentaire, p. 30.

¹⁶³ See page 78.

¹⁶⁴ See page 81.

La Mort de Mitridate

A hypothetical reconstruction of the printing of the text might run along the following lines. La Calprenède leaves his manuscript with Sommaville while he goes off on military duties. Sommaville consigns the printing to Jean Bessin.¹⁶⁵ On his return to Paris, La Calprenède checks on the progress of his first published play. Gatherings A to G (pp. 1-56) have already been printed. Reading through them, he starts to realize the number of serious mistakes: a line is missing on page 28; another, on page 35, is transposed to the top of page 36; yet another is missing on page 49. Gatherings H to L (pp. 57-88), not having yet been printed, he himself is able to correct the proofs, but what to do with the bulk of the play that has already been printed? He insists on a list of errata being included at the end of the *Au Lecteur*. The liminary pages always being the last to be printed, it is no great inconvenience to Sommaville to add an errata note.¹⁶⁶ As for the missing line on page 49, given that it is in a self-contained speech of only five lines, and that there is enough space on the page, the easiest solution is to reprint the speech, cut it out and paste the slip of paper over the faulty speech as a *papillon*. More problematic is how to handle the missing line on page 28 and the muddled pages 35 and 36. For them, new leaves, recto and verso, have to be set. The simplest way of handling this is to recompose the four pages in a single forme and choose imposition by half-sheet. Once the recto and verso have been printed, the sheet can be cut in two to obtain two identical leaves. These cancel leaves can be inserted as *cartons* into the introductory pages just before the errata, or the book buyer can ask his binder to substitute the *cartons* for the faulty pages. This would certainly have been the case with copies destined for important personages like the dedicatee, the Queen. In one of the British Library copies (86.a.5), the person who bought the play has excised the corrupt pages and pasted in the corrected ones, while, in the case of one of the Trinity College texts (OLS L-5-966 (8)), pages 27 and 28 are bound *in situ* but there is evidence of the original pages 35 and 36 having been torn out and the corrected pages inserted, with ‘CARTON?’ penciled in above the page number by a later owner. Nevertheless, some texts either lose the corrected pages or are sold or bound with the original faulty pages (Trinity College: OLS L-5-968 (1); 8-RF-6277); in the case of the rogue Sorbonne copy, even page 49 escaped being corrected with a *papillon*.

The following list gives an idea of the varied states of the eleven seventeenth-century copies of the play I have seen:

- Texts with *cartons* replacing the original pages + *papillon*: both British Library copies

¹⁶⁵ Riffaud, *Le Théâtre imprimé*, ‘Auteurs’, s.v. La Calprenède.

¹⁶⁶ There is no great shame involved either: Mairet’s *Sophonisbe*, for example, as well as being published with an errata, also has a slip of paper pasted over a duplication of two lines of the heroine on page 40. In the case of *La Mort de Mitridate* the last error listed is on page 56 at line 1120 in Act IV, scene 3. The play goes on for another 30 pages.

- Text with *cartons* inserted into liminary pages after $\tilde{e}1^f$ + *papillon*: Arsenal 4-BL-3476 (1)
- Text with *cartons* replacing original pages but no *papillon*: Trinity College: OLS L-5-966 (8); Arsenal 4-BL-3477(1), where page 49 has been damaged but the missing words and line 987 have been written in, but not the stage direction
- Texts with *papillon* but no *cartons*: Rés. YF-394; Rés. YF-471, although the *papillon* has been torn off and the lines thereby mutilated; 8-RF-6277 (1); Cambridge; Trinity College: OLS L-5-968 (1)
- Text without *cartons* or *papillon*: Sorbonne.

Pages 27-28 and 35-36 are prime examples of the kind of problems that arose during the printing, of how one copy of the play can differ from another, and why it was felt necessary to reset and reprint these leaves. More detail is provided in the notes to those pages, but suffice it to say here that:

- As originally printed, in line 532 on page 27, the word *grands* was spelled out in its entirety requiring that it take up the following line. Page 27 thus finished a line earlier at line 547. Page 28, however, still finished at line 567 because line 566 was missed out entirely. In the resetting, by using a *tilde* to produce *grāds*, it was possible to fit line 532 into a single line thus providing extra space for line 548 as the last line on the page and enough space therefore on page 28 to fit in the missing line 566.
- Line 680 was also transposed from the top of page 35 to the top of page 36, where it found itself inserted between lines 700 and 701 of our text. The moving of the line to its rightful place during the resetting thus caused no problem as regards fitting the requisite number of lines into the same amount of space on the two pages.

During the resetting of the pages the opportunity was taken to tidy up a few other points: tenses of verbs, the occasional phrase, the modernization of spelling. Unfortunately, during the resetting, yet new errors crept in to the ostensibly corrected pages. For example, as originally printed, line 699, which begins ‘S’il a peu conserver’, was perfectly correct, while in the ‘corrected’ *carton*, the line begins thus: ‘Peu con S’il a server’, a phenomenon called pie, or muddled type.

Since paper was the biggest expense of the printing process, resetting and reprinting cancel leaves was kept to the minimum. Small errors were to be covered by the errata, but there are still mistakes common to all texts which are not mentioned in that list. For example, in Act III, scene 3 of all copies, *Mitridate* is given rather than *Pharnace* as the name of the character who speaks at line 965. Furthermore, the pagination is wrong between pages 75 and 80. In all but two of the copies I have seen, page 82 is printed 28; one of the Arsenal texts (4-BL-3477 (1)) and the Sorbonne copy have the correct page number, showing that

corrections were ongoing and that some of the copies benefited from stop-press corrections.

Orthography

Since a modern version of the text already exists thanks to the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, I have generally left the orthography of the present edition as close to the original as possible in order to give the flavour of the seventeenth-century text. According to seventeenth-century conventions, the printers used an italic font for the play text itself and roman for the stage directions. I have followed standard modern practice in using roman for the text and italic for the stage directions. I have also made the modern distinctions between *i* and *j*, *u* and *v*. Accents have been added to distinguish *où* from *ou* and *à* from *a*, the *tréma* has been supplied to *hair*, and abbreviations using the *tilde* have been resolved throughout. The cedilla has been kept where found even if the *c* is followed by *e*, as in *conçeu* (l. 1200). Ampersands have been retained. I have corrected obvious misprints such as *la ruiné* (l. 28), *peu conS'il a* (l. 699), *leur* rather than *leurs* (l. 726), the *t* having dropped off *appast* (l. 1135), *encores* (l. 1151), *charge* (l. 1231), *Je'mprunte* (l. 629), an inverted *e* in *seulement* (l. 1662), *Ee* (l. 1693), *paroissent* (Act V, sc. 1, stage direction).

Some inconsistencies must also be due to a change of typesetter, the manuscript itself being faulty, or the typesetter misreading the manuscript or mishearing what the corrector is reading to him or confusing what he heard with another word or construction which sounds the same, or indeed just opting for an alternative spelling: *Et bien* is found for *Eh bien* in line 103 and elsewhere; *væux* is spelt thus in lines 940 and 1029, but is spelt *veux* in line 1153; in lines 520 and 1252 *à venir* appears as *avenir*; in line 927 *peur* is spelt *pæur* by analogy with *cœur* or *sœur*. In line 1547 an unusual union is formed in *differez-donc* by contamination with the attachment of personal pronouns to the imperative, an example of which follows in the same line. Such cases have been standardized with modern usage.

Modern conjunctions are left in their component parts: *dores-en avant* (l. 3), *en fin* (ll. 274, 971), *lors que* (l. 323), *quoy que* (l. 374), *par tout* (ll. 685, 875), *ce pendant* (l. 802), *puis que* (l. 979). The orthographic instability of the period is shown by the fact that the word *longtemps* can be written *long temps* (ll. 59, 199) or *long-temps* (ll. 552, 570), or *fuions* can be spelt thus in line 1480 and *fuyons* two lines later, just as *moien* (l. 1008) is found in its modern form *moyen* both earlier (l. 13) and later (l. 1183), while the modern *traiter* can be conjugated with a double *t* as *traittes* (l. 815) and a few lines later spelt *traicter* (l. 828). *Abbatre*, always with a single *t*, can have a single *b* (l. 98) or a double *b* (ll. 306, 351); *allier* can have a double *l* as in *allié* in the third line of the play or a single one as in *alier* (l. 1152). *Acquerir* appears both with (l. 342) and without the *c* (l. 13), as one finds both *effets* (l.1404) and *effect* (ll. 521, 1456). *Savoir* can appear as *je sçai* (l. 1073) or *sçay* (l. 1094) or *sçais* (l. 1225), just as *voir* can as *vois* (l. 301), *voy* (l. 1082) or *voi* (l. 1569). It is interesting that the compositor of the *cartons*

preferred to modernize a couple of older spellings, *soings* becoming *soins* (l. 689; cf. l. 470) and *desseings* becoming *dessein* (l. 691). The only harmonization of variations I have made is in the case of the modern preposition *dès* which is spelt *dés* at line 687 but sometimes appears as the confusingly accentless *des* (ll. 1050, 1237); for the sake of conformity I have decided to harmonize to *dés*. Otherwise, I have left such inconsistencies in spelling for readers who are interested in the development of modern French orthography.

Interrogatives

Natalie Fournier writes: ‘Au total la syntaxe moderne de l’interrogation se met en place pendant cette période, à ceci près que les structures classiques sont plus souples et offrent à ce titre une variation d’interprétation beaucoup plus sensible’.¹⁶⁷ There are many examples of such flexibility in *La Mort de Mitridate*. Some of the forms one finds in the play, such as *change-elle* (l. 211), *a elle, triomphe-il, verra on* (ll. 276-79), were common enough for Vaugelas to comment on the phenomenon: ‘il faut prononcer et écrire un *t* [...] pour oster la cacophonie, et quand il ne seroit pas marquée, il ne faut pas laisser de le prononcer, ny lire comme lisent une infinité de gens, *alla-on, alla-il, pour alla-t-on, alla-t-il*’.¹⁶⁸ This is important for the metre of the alexandrine, for without the *t* in the interrogative verb form, the line will appear to be only eleven syllables long. Vaugelas goes on to comment on the form *sera-t’il* (l. 628): ‘C’est que tous impriment et écrivent *alla-t’on*, ainsi, mettant une apostrophe après le *t*, qui est très-mal employée, parce que l’apostrophe ne se met jamais qu’en la place d’une voyelle qu’elle supprime, et chacun sçait qu’il n’y en a point icy à supprimer après le *t*’ (p. 65). I have left such forms as I found them except for *m’a-telle* (l. 721), which I have corrected because it appears to be more a misprint than an alternative form. Although there are many examples of standard inversions being made, inconsistency in the use of the hyphen is common. In line 1746, for example, the hyphen is dropped with *faut il* but used in the next lines: *voulez-vous, aimez-vous* (ll. 1747-48).

Punctuation

Apart from obvious misprints having been corrected, such as a full stop at the caesura in line 348 and an inverted question mark at the end of line 1446, I have respected the original punctuation, making, however, the following changes for the sake of clarity: full stop into comma: l. 1230; full stop deleted: l. 1699; comma added: 495, 783 (at the caesura); comma into full stop: l. 1638; comma into question mark: l. 1483; comma deleted: l. 783 (at end of line), l. 1735 (at the

¹⁶⁷ Fournier, Nathalie, *Grammaire du français classique* (Paris: Belin, 1998), §186.

¹⁶⁸ *Remarques sur la langue française*, new edn. by A. Chassang, 2 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1880), I, 65.

La Mort de Mitridate

caesura); comma moved: l. 1743 (to after *plus* from after *puis*); question mark into exclamation mark: l. 1443; suspension marks have been added at lines 415, 659, 1077, 1191, 1443 and 1655.

Select Bibliography

La Calprenède

- Conroy, Jane, 'D'un Mithridate à l'autre', in *L'Histoire littéraire: ses méthodes et ses résultats. Mélanges offerts à Madeleine Bertaud*, ed. by Luc Fraisse (Geneva: Droz, 2001), pp. 627-41
- , 'Figures de Mithridate, 1580-1680: L'Orient Redoutable', *Travaux de littérature*, 17 (2004), 59-68
- Gossip, Christopher, 'Agreeable Suspension, or What to Think of La Calprenède', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 11 (1989), 62-71
- Grenaille, [François Chatounières de], 'Ouverture générale à toute la pièce avec un discours sur les Poèmes Dramatiques de ce temps', prefacing his *Innocent malheureux; ou, La Mort de Crispe* (Paris: Paslé, 1639), sig. ã4-ẽ3^v.
- Hoefler, Jean C.F., *Nouvelle Biographie générale*, 46 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1852-66)
- Lancaster, Henry Carrington, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, 5 parts in 9 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1929-42; repr. New York: Gordian Press, 1966), Part II: *The Period of Corneille 1635-1651*, vol. 1
- , 'La Calprenède Dramatist', *Modern Philology*, 18 (1920-21), 121-41, 345-60
- , 'Leading French Tragedies Just Before the *Cid*', *Modern Philology*, 22 (1924-25), 357-78
- Léris, Antoine de, *Dictionnaire portatif des théâtres*, 2 vols (Paris: Jombert, 1754)
- Loret, Jean, *La Muze historique*, new edn, rev. by Ch.-L. Livet and others, 4 vols (Paris: Jannet, 1857-78), III (1878)
- Médan, Pierre, 'Un Gascon précurseur de Racine: *La Mort de Mithridate* de La Calprenède et le *Mithridate* de Racine', *Revue des Pyrénées*, 19 (1907), 44-63
- Michaud, Joseph F., and L.G. Michaud, *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, new edn, 45 vols (Paris: Desplaces, 1850-69)
- Nicéron, Jean Pierre, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la république des lettres*, 43 vols (Paris: n. pub., 1729-41)
- Parfaict, Claude and François, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 7 vols (Paris: Lambert, 1756)
- , *Histoire du théâtre françois depuis son origine jusqu'à présent*, 15 vols (Paris: Le Mercier & Saillant, 1735-49)
- Poisson, Raymond, *Le Baron de la Crasse* (Paris: De Luyne, 1662)
- Seillière, Ernest, *Le Romancier du Grand Condé: Gautier du Coste, sieur de la Calprenède* (Paris: Émile-Paul, 1921)

La Mort de Mitridate

- Snaith, Guy, 'Plaisir à La Calprenède', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 9 (1987), 55-73
- , "'Le Poids d'une couronne": The Dilemma of Monarchy in La Calprenède's Tragedies', in *Ethics and Politics in Seventeenth-Century France*, ed. by Keith Cameron and Elizabeth Woodrough (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 185-99
- , 'Rebel Hearts: La Calprenède's Transformation of Political Conflict into Drama', in *Culture and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century France and Ireland*, ed. by Sarah Alyn Stacey and Véronique Desnain (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 210-26
- , 'Suspense as a Source of Theatrical Pleasure in the Plays of La Calprenède', in *En marge du classicisme: Essays on the French Theatre from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. by Alan Howe and Richard Waller (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1987), pp. 95-121
- Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, ed. by Jacques Scherer and Jacques Truchet, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1975-92), II (1986)

Seventeenth-Century History, Culture, Theatre

- Adam, Antoine, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVII^e siècle*, 5 vols (Paris: Domat-Montchrestien, 1948-56)
- Barnwell, H.T., ed., *Pierre Corneille: Writings on the Theatre*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965)
- Barrière, Pierre, *La Vie intellectuelle en Périgord, 1550-1800* (Bordeaux: Delmas, 1936)
- Berregard, Sandrine, *Tristan L'Hermite, héritier et précurseur* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2006)
- Bizos, Gaston, *Étude sur la vie et les œuvres de Jean de Mairet* (Paris: Thorin, 1877)
- Blanc, André, *Racine: Trois siècles de théâtre* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2003)
- Brasillach, Robert, *Pierre Corneille* (Paris: Fayard, 1938)
- Bray, René, *La Formation de la doctrine classique en France* (Paris: Nizet, 1927; repr. 1974)
- Briggs, Robin, *Early Modern France: 1560-1715* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- Cashman, Kimberley, *Staging Subversions: The Performance-within-a-play in French Classical Theatre*, *Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures*, 134 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005)
- D'Aubignac, Abbé, *La Pratique du théâtre*, ed. by Pierre Martino (Paris: Champion, 1927)
- Deierkauf-Holsboer, S.Wilma, *Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, 2 vols (Paris: Nizet, 1968-70)
- Delmas, Christian, *La Tragédie de l'âge classique (1553-1770)* (Paris: Seuil, 1994)

Select Bibliography

- Dictionnaire analytique des œuvres théâtrales françaises du XVII^e siècle*, ed. by Marc Vuillermoz (Paris: Champion, 1998)
- Forestier, Georges, *Essai de génétique théâtrale: Corneille à l'œuvre* (Genève: Droz, 2004)
- , *Introduction à l'analyse des textes classiques* (Paris: Nathan, 1993)
- , *Jean Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)
- , *Passions tragiques et règles classiques: essai sur la tragédie française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005)
- , *Le Théâtre dans le théâtre sur la scène française du XVII^e siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1981)
- , 'Théorie et pratique de l'histoire dans la tragédie classique', *Littératures classiques*, 11 (1989), 95-107
- France, Peter, *Racine's Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965; repr. 1970)
- Howe, Alan, *Écrivains de théâtre, 1600-1649* (Paris: Centre historique des Archives nationales, 2005)
- , *Le Théâtre professionnel à Paris 1600-1649* (Paris: Centre historique des Archives nationales, 2000)
- Kronegger, Marlies, 'Introduction au Baroque', in 'Le Baroque en question(s)', *Littératures classiques*, 36 (1999), 17-22 (p. 19).
- La Pinelière, Guérin de, *Le Parnasse; ou, Le Critique des Poetes* (Paris: Toussaint Quinet, 1635)
- Lyons, John, *Kingdom of Disorder: The Theory of Tragedy in Classical France* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999)
- , 'What Do We Mean When We Say "classique"?', in *Racine et/ou le classicisme*, ed. by Ronald W. Tobin (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2001), pp. 497-505.
- [Mahelot, Laurent], *Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et d'autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et de la Comédie française au XVII^e siècle*, ed. by H.C. Lancaster (Paris: Champion, 1920)
- , *Le Mémoire de Mahelot: Mémoire pour la décoration des pièces qui se représentent par les Comédiens du Roi*, ed. by Pierre Pasquier (Paris: Champion, 2005)
- Mazouer, Charles, *Le Théâtre français de l'âge classique, I: Le Premier XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2006)
- Nadal, Octave, *Le Sentiment de l'amour dans l'œuvre de Pierre Corneille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948)
- O'Regan, Michael, *The Mannerist Aesthetic: A Study of Racine's Mithridate* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1980)
- Phillips, Henry, *Racine: Mithridate* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1990)
- Riffaud, Alain, *Le Théâtre imprimé 1630-1650*, CDRom (Le Mans: Matière à dire, 2006)
- Rohou, Jean, *La Tragédie classique* (Paris: SEDES, 1996)
- Rousset, Jean, *La Littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le paon* (Paris: Corti, 1953)

La Mort de Mitridate

- Safty, Essam, *La Mort tragique: idéologie et mort dans la tragédie baroque en France* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005)
- Sage, Pierre, *Le Préclassicisme*, after Raoul Morçay (Paris: Del Duca, 1962)
- Scherer, Jacques, *La Dramaturgie classique en France* (Paris: Nizet, 1976)
- Skrine, Peter N., *The Baroque: Literature and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (London: Methuen, 1978)
- Souiller, Didier, *La Littérature baroque en Europe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988)
- Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. by Antoine Adam, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-61)
- Tapié, Victor-Lucien, *La France de Louis XIII et de Richelieu* ([Paris], Flammarion, 1952)
- Truchet, Jacques, *La Tragédie classique en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975)
- Le Théâtre en France des origines à nos jours*, ed. by Alain Viala (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997)
- Verdier, Anne, *Histoire et poétique de l'habit de théâtre en France au XVII^e siècle: 1606-1680* (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2006)
- [Villiers, Pierre de], *Entretien sur les tragédies de ce temps* (Paris: Michallet, 1675)
- Vuillemin, Jean-Claude, 'Baroque: pertinence ou obsolescence', in *Racine et/ou le classicisme*, ed. by Ronald W. Tobin (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2001), pp. 479-96
- Yarrow, Philip J., *Corneille* (London: Macmillan, 1963)
- , 'Montchrestien: a Sixteenth- or Seventeenth-Century Dramatist?', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 4 (1967), 140-48

Specific Editions of Major Dramatists Consulted

- Corneille, Pierre, *Nicomède*, ed. by Edmond Soufflet and Maryvonne Loiseau (Paris: Bordas, 1964)
- Mairet, Jean, *Le Marc-Antoine ou La Cléopâtre, tragédie*, ed. by Philip Tomlinson (Durham: University of Durham, 1997)
- , *Le Marc-Antoine ou La Cléopâtre*, ed. by Alain Riffaud, in Mairet, *Théâtre complet*, I (Paris, Champion, 2004-), pp. 199-384
- Racine, Jean, *Mithridate*, ed. by N.M. Bernardin (Paris: Delagrave, 1882)
- , *Mithridate*, ed. by Gustave Lanson (Paris: Hachette, 1888)
- , *Racine: Mithridate*, ed. by Gustave Rudler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1943)
- , *Mithridate*, ed. by Georges Forestier, in *Œuvres complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1999)
- , *Mithridate*, ed. by Georges Forestier, Folio (Paris: Gallimard, 1999)

Language

- Dictionnaire du français classique*, ed. by Jean Dubois, René Lagane and Alain Lerond (Paris: Larousse, 1971) [DFC]¹
- Le Dictionnaire universel d'Antoine Furetière*, ed. by Alain Rey, 3 vols (Paris: SNL-Le Robert, 1978) [F]
- Fournier, Nathalie, *Grammaire du français classique* (Paris: Belin, 1998)
- Le Grand Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, dédié au Roy*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Paris: Coignard, 1695) [AF]
- Remarques sur la langue française par Vaugelas*, ed. by A. Chassang, new edn (Paris: Cerf, [1880])
- Richelet, Pierre, *Dictionnaire français contenant les mots et les choses*, 2 vols (Geneva: Jean Herman Widerhold, 1680; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1970) [R]

¹ The initials in square brackets are used in subsequent footnotes to indicate the source of the reference.

LA
MORT
DE
MITRIDATE.

TRAGEDIE.



A PARIS,

Chez ANTHOINE DE SOMMAVILLE, au Palais,
Dans la petite Sale, à l'Escu de France.

M. DC. XXXVII.
AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY.

A LA REYNE.

MADAME,

Ce miserable Roy n'auroit jamais eu la hardiesse de chercher aux pieds de vostre Majesté,¹ un azyle contre la persecution des Romains, si elle n'avoit tesmoigné une bonté particuliere pour luy : & si je ne luy eusse fait esperer, que non seulement une ame si Royale & si genereuse, ne luy refuseroit point sa protection : mais que mesme apres une infinité de malheurs, sa fortune seroit enviée de ses ennemis. Et que ces tiltres insolens de maistres de toute la terre, qu'ils ont si iniquement usurpez, seroient moins glorieux que les siens : quand il voudroit publier l'honneur qu'il aura d'estre à vostre Majesté. Ma vanité n'est peut-estre pas excusable dans la creance que j'ay, que ceste Tragedie n'a point dépleu à vostre Majesté. Mais outre l'honneur que j'ay eu de l'entendre assez souvent de sa bouche, je puis dire sans mentir, que le peu de reputation qu'elle a euë, ne peut naistre que de l'estime qu'elle en a faite, & qu'elle ne pouvoit passer pour absolument mauvaise, apres l'approbation du meilleur jugement du monde. Et veritablement, MADAME, quand j'ay consideré les raisons qui ont peu obliger la plus grande Reyne de la terre, à faire quelque cas d'une chose qui le meritoit si peu, je n'en ai pu treuver d'autres, que ceste forte inclination qu'elle a pour une vertu dont elle a veu des exemples assez rares & assez memorables dans cet ouvrage. Vostre Majesté a veu les courageuses resolutions de Berenice, comme un miroir tres-imparfait de sa generosité admirable, & de l'horreur qu'elle a pour toute sorte de vices, & la fidelité d'Hypsicratée, comme une image de ceste parfaite amour qu'elle a tousjours euë pour le plus grand de tous les Roys. Pleust à Dieu, MADAME, qu'avant le dessein de les faire paroistre, j'eusse eu l'honneur que j'ay eu du depuis.² J'aurois depeint l'une & l'autre bien plus parfaicte, selon l'idée que j'en ay conceuë, en considerant avec admiration toutes les actions de la plus belle vie qui fut jamais. Je ferois une faute, qui ne me seroit jamais

¹ The play is dedicated to Anne d'Autriche, wife of Louis XIII, and Queen of France.

² This reference puts paid to the anecdote that La Calprenède came to the Queen's attention entertaining her ladies-in-waiting while on guard duty. So impressed was she with his wit that she is meant to have given him a pension (Hoefler, L'éris, Nicéron, Parfait, *Histoire*, V, 148-9; full references for these works can be found in the Bibliography, p. 67)

pardonnée, si (soldat ignorant comme je suis)³ j'en voulois parler selon mon ressentiment, qui m'est commun avec toute la France. Et je diray seulement, que toutes les loüanges qu'on a données jusqu'icy, par interest ou par flatterie, aux plus grandes & plus parfaites personnes de la terre, non seulement se peuvent donner à vostre Majesté, avec beaucoup de justice : mais ne peuvent se taire sans ingratitude. Et veritablement ce Royaume seroit bien indigne d'une des plus rares faveurs qu'il ayt jamais receuës du Ciel, s'il ne la recognoissoit comme une grace qu'il n'accorda jamais qu'à luy, & qui l'oblige à des vœux & des remerciemens eternels. Parmy tant de vertus si royales, & si eminentes, ceste pieté & cette bonté, qui apres celle de Dieu, n'en eust jamais d'egale, attirent nos cœurs avec des puissances merveilleuses. Et je ne me puis figurer, que comme un songe, que celle à qui les tiltres de femme, sœur, fille, & niepce des premiers Monarques de la terre,⁴ donnent avec trop de justice, le rang de la plus grande Princesse qui fut jamais, se puisse abaisser tous les jours à l'entretien de ses moindres sujets, & voir avec un visage plein de douceur & de charmes, ceux qui n'auroient aucune raison de se plaindre, quand elle ne les auroit jamais regardés. Je sçay bien MADAME, que tous ceux, qui jusqu'icy ont parlé des grands, en ont parlé encore plus avantageusement que je ne fais de vostre Majesté, & leur ont donné pour des considerations particulieres, des qualitez qu'ils n'eurent jamais. Mais je n'apprehende point que vostre Majesté face ce jugement de moy, & que ceste profonde humilité qu'on remarque dans toutes ses actions, luy face soupçonner de flatterie des sentimens si justes. Pleust à Dieu que j'eusse reçu du Ciel ceste eloquence que tant d'autres en ont receuë. Et pour m'obliger toute la France, je luy donnerois le portrait de la plus parfaicte Reyne qu'elle eut jamais. Mais puis que je ne dois point esperer ceste grace de luy, du moins le dois-je remercier le reste de mes jours de celle qu'il m'a accordée, en me faisant naistre, & me permettant de vivre,

MADAME,

DE VOSTRE MAJESTE

Le tres humble, tres obeissant, & tres-fidelle serviteur & sujet,

LA CALPRENEDE.

³ La Calprenède had come to Paris to join the Gardes françaises early in the 1630s.

⁴ Anne d'Autriche was a Habsburg princess, daughter of Philip III of Spain and sister of Philip IV. She had married Louis XIII at the age of 14 on the same day that Louis's sister Elisabeth had married Anne's brother Philip. Through her Habsburg lineage she was also the niece of Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria, who would die in 1637, to be succeeded by his son, and her cousin, Ferdinand III. La Calprenède could have added *belle-fille* to his list as well, since Ferdinand III married Anne's sister.

AU
LECTEUR.

En toutes façons, Lecteur, vous m'estes peu obligé. Je vous donne un assez mauvais ouvrage, & je ne vous le donne qu'à regret. Outre que je ne le creus jamais digne de voir le jour, apres tant de belles choses qui ont paru aux yeux de toute la France avec un si juste applaudissement, la profession que je fay, ne me peut permettre, sans quelque espece de honte, de me faire cognoistre par des vers, & tirer de quelque meschante rime une reputation, que je dois seulement esperer d'une espée que j'ay l'honneur de porter.⁵ Non veritablement, ce ne fut jamais mon dessein de faire imprimer des œuvres, que jusqu'icy je n'avois avoüees qu'à mes particuliers amis. Mais ayant assex imprudemment presté mon manuscrit à des personnes, à qui je ne le pouvois refuser sans incivilité, quinze jours apres j'en vis trente copies, & j'apprehenday avec quelque raison, qu'un valet de chambre plus soigneux de quelque petit gain que de vostre satisfaction, ne vous fit voir avec deux mille fautes des siennes, ce qu'à peine souffrirez-vous avec les miennes. Ceste raison m'y a obligé sans doute, & la creance que j'ay euë que vous ne traiteriez pas avec rigueur le coup d'essay d'un jeune Soldat, & que vous jugeriez avec bonté que des cadets du Regiment des Gardes, comme j'avois l'honneur d'estre pour lors,⁶ ont quelquefois d'aussi mauvaises occupations. Ces considérations ont obligé beaucoup de personnes à pardonner les defauts que vous y treuverez, & ont peut estre donné quelque estime à une chose qui n'auroit pas esté supportable, d'un homme sçavant & du mestier. Aussi comme je n'en esperay jamais aucune sorte de gloire, je ne treuveray point mauvais qu'on desappreuve publiquement une œuvre qui ne passe pas pour bonne dans le jugement mesme de son Autheur. Vous vous plaindrez avec justice du peu de crainte que j'ay eu de vous desplaire, & du dessein qu'il semble que j'ay de vous ennuyer dans la lecture d'une chose que je n'appreuve pas moy mesme. Mais outre les raisons que je vous ay desja dites, je vous avoüeray que les flatteries de mes amis l'ont emporté par-dessus la mauvaise opinion que j'en avois, & m'ont à la fin persuadé qu'il s'estoit

⁵ Such protestations are traditional at the time and recur throughout the liminary pieces to La Calprenède's plays, acquiring a particularly bitter tone by the time of the publication of *Edouard* (1640). For his military career at this time, see the Introduction.

⁶ This would appear to be an indication that La Calprenède, although still a soldier, is no longer a cadet in the Guards.

imprimé & s'imprimoit encore tous les jours de pires chansons. Vous condamnerez peut-estre ce divertissement, & je ne le veux pas entierement excuser. Mais je le blasmerois encore davantage s'il détournoit ceux qui s'y occupent, de la profession qu'ils font & du service qu'ils doivent à leur Prince. A Dieu ne plaise que je me donne la vanité de m'estre passablement acquité de l'un ou de l'autre. Mais je puis dire avec verité, qu'on ne doit point accuser ma poésie des fautes que j'y ai faites, & que j'ay des excuses plus legitimes, ou que je n'en ay point du tout. C'est tout ce que je diray pour ma justification, & j'allegueray peu de chose pour la defense de ce miserable ouvrage. Je ne doute point qu'on n'y treuve un bon nombre de fautes contre la langue. Mais on considerera ce qu'on pouvoit en ce temps là esperer d'un Gascon, sorty de son pays depuis quinze jours, & qui ne sçavoit de François que ce qu'il en avoit leu en Perigord, dans les Amadis de Gaule.⁷ Et je vous advertiray en passant, que vous y verrez encore les mesmes fautes que vous y avez peu remarquer dès qu'elle a commencé de paroistre sur le Theatre, & que les quatre premiers Actes ayans esté imprimés en mon absence, je n'ay peu rien corriger du tout, que la fin du cinquiesme.⁸ Quelqu'un s'estonnera peut estre que j'aye changé & adjousté quelque chose à l'histoire. Mais je le prieray de croire, que je l'ay leuë, & que je n'ay pas entrepris de descrire la mort de Mitridate, sur ce que j'ay ouy dire de luy à ceux qui vendent son baume sur le Pont-neuf.⁹ Si j'y ay changé quelque chose la necessité & la bienséance le demandoient : & si j'y ay adjousté quelques incidens, la sterilité du subject m'y a obligé. Tous les Autheurs qui ont parlé assez au long des actions de sa vie, ont traité sa mort assez succinctement. Plutarque n'en dit que deux mots dans la vie de Pompée.¹⁰ Florus dans son Epitome la rapporte en deux lignes. Et Appian Alexandrin, qui l'a descrite un peu plus amplement, n'en dit veritablement pas assez, pour en pouvoir tirer le subject entier d'une Tragedie. Je sçay bien qu'il mourut de la main d'un Celte, nommé Bitochus. Mais outre qu'à la representation de deux Cleopâtres,¹¹ nous avons desja veu la mesme chose : j'ay jugé plus

⁷ La Calprenède was obviously better educated than this reference implies. He may have studied law at Toulouse, which was a traditional route for his family.

⁸ The text is faulty. The publisher will include a list of errata. For La Calprenède's possible movements at this time, see the Introduction, p. 12.

⁹ The reference is to the health preparations that were sold on the Pont-Neuf using the name of Mithradates because of his association with poisons and counterpoisons. In Furetière's dictionary one finds s.v. MITHRIDATE: 'Antidote ou composition qui sert de remede ou de preservatif contre les poisons [...] Ce nom vient de *Mithridate* Roy de Pont [...]: On en trouva la recette dans les coffres de Mithridate, escrite de sa main, & elle fut portée à Rome par Pompée [...]. On appelle des vendeurs de *mithridate*, des charlatans & saltimbanques qui vendent des drogues & des remedes sur des theatres'. *Mithridatiser*, *mithridatisme*, *mithridatisation*, which are all current French words, were only coined in the late nineteenth century.

¹⁰ For discussion of these sources, see the Introduction, p. 13 f.

¹¹ Benserade's *Cléopâtre*, published in 1636, was probably performed in 1635 or 1636. Mairet's *Marc-Antoine ou la Cléopâtre*, staged in 1635, was published in 1637.

convenable à la generosité qu'on a remarquée dans toutes les actions de sa vie, de le faire mourir de la sienne. A sa mort il ne fait point mention d'Hypsicratée.¹² Mais il y a beaucoup d'apparence, que celle qui ne l'abandonna jamais dans les combats, & de qui la fidélité a acquis une si grande reputation, ne l'abandonna point aux derniers momens de sa vie. Outre que je n'ay point veu encore d'autheur qui parle d'elle apres la mort de Mitridate. J'ay donné une femme à Pharnace plus genereuse qu'il n'estoit lasche. Mais outre qu'il est certain qu'il a esté marié, cet incident est assez beau, pour meriter qu'on luy pardonne. Et je ne mentiray point, quand je diray que les actions de ceste femme ont donné à ma Tragedie une grande partie du peu de reputation qu'elle a, & que celle qui les a representées dans les meilleures compagnies de l'Europe, a tiré assez de larmes des plus beaux yeux de la terre pour laver ceste faute.¹³ Je donne à ce mesme Pharnace les deplaisirs & les remords qu'il devoit avoir de la mort de son pere, bien que Plutarque rapporte qu'il envoya son corps à Pompée. Et qu'il soit tres veritable qu'il n'en eut aucune sorte de regret. Mais je vous prie de considerer, que quelque soin que j'aye pris à le rendre plus excusable & plus honneste homme qu'il n'estoit, je n'ay peu empescher que ses deportemens ne donnassent de l'horreur à tout le monde, & que la bienséance m'obligeoit du moins à changer des choses si peu importantes. Bien que l'histoire ne nomme point le lieu de la mort de Mitridate, je fay ma Scene à Sinope, comme une des meilleures villes de ses Royaumes, & où il est assuré qu'on luy fit des honneurs funebres. Et j'y fais au commencement paroistre Pompée, bien que je n'ignore pas qu'il en estoit pour lors assez esloigné. Vous eussiez bien fait toutes ces remarques sans moy. Mais j'ay voulu prevenir la mauvaise opinion que vous auriez justement conceuë d'un Soldat ignorant, & vous supplier en suite de vous souvenir de ce que je vous ay desja dit de mon absence pendant l'impression, où il s'est coulé une infinité de fautes, que vous ne me pardonneriez jamais, si vous n'avez une bonté merveilleuse.

¹² The name is mentioned in Plutarch, but little else.

¹³ Actresses at the Hôtel de Bourgogne at the time included Mlle Bellerose, Mlle Le Noir, Mlle Valliot and Mlle Beaupré. See W. S. Deierkauf-Holsboer, *Le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne*, II, 25, and Alan Howe, *Le Théâtre professionnel à Paris 1600-1649* (Paris: Centre historique des Archives nationales, 2000), p. 145.

A MONSIEUR DE LA CALPRENEDE,
sur la mort de Mitridate, par l'Abbé
de Beauregard.

*Prodigieux effets d'une rare eloquence
Merveilleuse vertu de charmes si puissans,
Doux effort de sçavoir, aymable violence,¹⁴
Où traînez-vous ainsi la Reine de mes sens ?*

*Si tost que ma raison se veut mettre en defense,
Et se veut opposer à ce que je consens,
Cette mesme raison m'impose le silence,
Et je me sens vaincu par des tesmoins presens.*

*Quoy que tout l'Univers reproche à cet ingrat,
Pharnace est innocent par maxime d'Estat,
Ses raisons & ses pleurs ont réparé son crime :*

*Icy tous les objets paroissent triomphans,
Puisque les sentimens que ton discours imprime,
Nous forcent d'admirer le pere & les enfans.*

BEAUREGARD.¹⁵

¹⁴ Terry Eagleton's recent book on tragedy is entitled *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

¹⁵ No biographical encyclopedias or dictionaries of the nobility provide an exact match to this *abbé de Beauregard*. The term *abbé* could, of course, belong to a lay personage who simply took a share of the revenues of an abbey. The Beauregard whose name recurs most often at this time is Honorat-Benjamin de Beauregard, sieur du Fresne, and captain of the guards of the comte de Soissons, who was involved in several of the conspiracies against Richelieu in the 1630s (Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. by Antoine Adam, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), I, pp. 92, 535, 783, n. 4; Cardinal de Retz, *Œuvres*, ed. by Marie-Thérèse Hipp and Michel Pernot, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 143). He seems also to go by the name of René de Beauregard and was involved in the Picardy campaigns and the siege of Saint-Mihiel in the autumn of 1635 (*Dictionnaire de biographie française*, ed. by M. Prévost and Roman d'Amat (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1951), s.v. Beauregard, René de). Such military activities could have brought the young La Calprenède into his circle.

LE LIBRAIRE AU LECTEUR.

Cher Lecteur, Je t'advertis que j'ay fait imprimer cette Tragedie l'Autheur estant absent.¹⁶ Et dautant qu'il n'en a pas veu les espreuves, il s'y est coulé quelques fautes qu'indubitablement il n'eust pas laissé passer. C'est pourquoy je te prie de ne luy en point attribuer aucunes. J'ay fait une petite recherche de celles que j'y ay recognuës, que tu pourras corriger suivant l'errata.

*Fautes survenües en l'impression.*¹⁷

Fol.3. l.24 *Et* lisés *Mais* : fol.5. l.1. *pretendrois* l. *pretendois* : fol.5. l.3. *absolu* l. *absolus* : fol.7. l.13. *temoigna* l. *temoignast* : fol.8. l.3. *ne* l. *n'en* : fol.8. l.20. *toutes choses* l. *toute chose* : fol.8. l.24. *jusques* l. *jusque* : fol.9. l.12. *d'un* l. *d'une, un* l. *ce* : fol.12. l.1. *puis* l. *puisse* : fol.16. l.12. *mon costé* l. *mes costés* : fol.18. l.9. *en* l. *ou* : fol.20. l.7. *trahy* l. *trahis* : fol.20. l.12.13. *absoluë vouluë*. l. *absoluës vouluës* : fol.26. l.14. *un* l. *mon* : fol.29. l.13. *le* l. *la* : fol.33. l.7. *peuples* l. *peuple* : fol.33. l.13. *chery* l. *cheris* : fol.33. l.15. *on* l. *l'on* : fol.38. l.18. *punie* l. *punis* : fol.44. l.3. *l'aprend* l. *aprend* : fol.44. l.19. *aurois*. l. *avois* : fol.45. l.5. *me* l. *le* : fol.47. l.15. *la* l. *ma* : fol.56. l.3. *vi siens* l. *veux* : fol.56. l.8. *j'en* l. *je*. & en quelques endroits *avec*. l. *avecque*.¹⁸

¹⁶ Sommaville corroborates what La Calprenède himself says in the *Au Lecteur*. In the case of his next tragedy, *Jeanne, reyne d'Angleterre*, Sommaville will again print the play in La Calprenède's absence, even referring to him as 'feu Monsieur de la Calprenède'.

¹⁷ All of these errors have been corrected in the text and the original given in a note signalled with the word 'Errata'. Above, for *fol.*, read *page*, and for *ligne (l), vers*; the original page numbers are provided in the right-hand margin of our text. The last correction is to Act IV, scene 3; this would indicate that gatherings H-L (from p. 57 of the original text) appear to have been seen by La Calprenède who in the *Au Lecteur* mentions having managed to see the proofs of the last act and to correct some of the last pages (see p. 78).

¹⁸ Vaugelas approves of both forms of the word: '*Avec*, et *avecque*, sont tous deux bons, et ne sont pas seulement commodes aux Poëtes pour allonger ou accourcir leurs vers d'une syllable selon la nécessité qu'ils en ont, mais encore à ceux qui escrivent en prose avec quelque soin de satisfaire l'oreille...' (I, 424).

LES ACTEURS.

POMPEE.

PHARNACE, Roy du Pont.¹⁹

MITRIDATE.

MENANDRE, Chef de la cavalerie de Mitridate.

EMILE, Capitaine Romain.

HYPSICRATEE, Femme de Mitridate.

BERENICE, Femme de Pharnace.

MITRIDATIE. } Filles de Mitridate.

NISE.

Un Soldat.²⁰

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, Pharnace only becomes King of Pontus on Mitridate's death at the end of the play. In Appian, however, Mithradates has seen him proclaimed king by the army outside the city walls.

²⁰ This is the soldier who delivers the *récit* of the battle in Act II, scene 5, but there are also non-speaking roles in the play: the citizens of Sinope in Act II, scene 2, and perhaps soldiers on the battlements (see line 1082).

LA MORT DE MITRIDATE. TRAGEDIE.

ACTE I.

SCENE PREMIERE.

POMPEE. PHARNACE.

POMPEE.¹

Puisque vos repentirs ont fait mourir sa haine,²
Que vous estes certain de l'amitié Romaine,
Vivez dores-en avant comme notre allié,
Ouy Pharnace, il suffit, Rome a tout oublié,
5 Le sang qui vous lioit aux interests d'un pere, [p.2]
Merite le pardon d'un crime necessaire ;
Mais ce que Mitridate³ appelle trahison,
Je l'appelle pour vous un acte de raison,
Puisque vous retirant d'un party si funeste,
10 Vous vous établissez un repos manifeste,
Recouvrez sans danger un Royaume perdu,
Et montez sans effort au throsne pretendu :
C'estoit le seul moyen d'aquerir la couronne,⁴

¹ Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, Pompey the Great (106-48 BC). He was sent by the Senate to eliminate pirates in Asia and, taking over from Lucullus, concluded the Third Mithradatic War, which ended with Mithradates' death.

² In classical fashion, the play begins *in medias res*, 'sa haine' referring to *la haine de Rome*, which has obviously been the topic of conversation before the play begins.

³ Mithradates VI Eupator, called the Great, King of Pontus 120 to 63 BC. His name means 'gift of Mithra'.

⁴ Mitridate twice mentions that Pharnace was his heir apparent: ll. 1111 and 1243. It was thus only a matter of time before Pharnace would have become king.

La Mort de Mitridate

Et vous la recevrez de celle qui les donne,
15 Qui dispose à son gré de la pourpre des Rois,
Et contraint l'univers de vivre sous ses lois,
Avec un tel appuy qui vous fait redoutable,
Votre condition vous rend mesconnaissable,
Vous verrez dans le port le naufrage d'autrui,
20 Et direz j'ay vescu seulement aujourd'huy ;
Et de faict dans les maux dont elle estoit suivie,
Vous n'avez point gousté les douceurs de la vie,
Vous avez respiré seulement à demy,
Et c'est bien n'estre plus, qu'estre nostre ennemy :
25 Est-il chez les mortels un cœur qui ne s'abbate
Sous le faix des malheurs qui suivent Mitridate ?
La Fortune a trahy ses desseins descouvers,
Le ciel l'a ruiné par mille coup divers,
Et s'il s'est maintenu sans ceder à l'orage,
30 C'est un effet de haine & non pas de courage,⁵
S'il a mal reüssi dans ses meilleurs projets,
S'il a tant respandu du sang de ses sujets,
Si tous les elemens ont trahy sa conduite, [p.3]
Et s'il s'est vainement garanti par la fuite,
35 Si ses meilleurs soldats sont armez contre luy,⁶
Si parmy ses enfans il ne treuve un appuy,
La cause de ses maux est l'horreur de ses crimes,⁷
Et les devoirs des siens ne sont plus legitimes,
Puis que tout contribuë à son malheur present,
40 On se rendroit coupable en le favorisant,
Vous qu'un plus noble cœur rend ennemy du vice,
Qui vous estes armé⁸ pour la seule justice,
Et qui vous despouillez de tous vos sentimens,

⁵ Mithradates spent most of his life at war expanding his kingdom at the expense of his neighbours or resisting Rome's hegemonic expansion into the region. The latter aim involved him, over the course of forty years, in three wars with Rome, by which he was finally defeated in 63 BC.

⁶ Mithradates had a last extravagant plan to invade Italy from the north. So unpopular did this prove among the king's own soldiers that Pharnaces was able to turn the bulk of Mithradates' army against him.

⁷ Mithradates was famously cruel. He imprisoned his mother and killed many of his brothers in order to gain the throne of Pontus. He would later order wives and concubines to kill themselves, a fact which Racine makes use of in *Mithridate* when the king sends poison so that Monime may commit suicide.

⁸ The *vous* of line 41 remains the subject of lines 42 and 43. The sense is: 'Vous... qui vous estes armé et vous qui vous despouillez'.

45 Si le seul interest ne fist vos changemens,
 Si pour ses actions vostre haine est conceuë,
 Vostre amitié, Pharnace, en sera mieux receuë,
 Et Rome qui mesprise un courage abbatu,
 Sçait estimer les Roys pour leur propre vertu.

PHARNACE.

50 Je ne me flatte point d'une loüange vaine,
 Que la seule vertu soit cause de ma haine,
 Evitant le malheur dont j'estois menacé,
 Dans ce devoir rendu je suis interessé,
 Jugeant chez ce cruel mon salut difficile
 Sur la force des miens j'ay basty mon azile,
 55 J'ay cherché ma retraite entre ses ennemis,
 Mais⁹ si mes sentimens me sont icy permis,
 Je diray sans flatter l'invincible Pompée,¹⁰
 Que sa rare valeur attira mon espée,ⁱ
 Le bruit de ses vertus m'a dés long temps charmé, [p.4]
 60 Et Pharnace ennemy l'a tousjours estimé,
 J'ay creu que je gaignois dans l'amitié d'un homme
 Celle de l'univers, avec l'appuy de Rome,
 Le suivant au renom de ses gestes guerriers,
 J'ai trouvé mon refuge à l'ombre des lauriers,
 65 Que si dans ce dessein mon ame est trop ingrante,
 Si le devoir du sang m'oblige à Mitridate,
 Si je passe chez luy pour fils desnaturé,
 Le regne d'un tyran a desja trop duré,
 Le sang qu'il a versé desire qu'on le vange,
 70 Et ses sujets foulez autorisent ce change.

POMPEE.

75 Si vous perseverez dans cette volonté,
 Vous conservez un bien qu'on vous auroit osté,
 La couronne du Pont vous demeure assurée
 Avec une amitié d'eternelle durée,
 Notre protection imposera des loix
 Pour imprimer la crainte à tous les autres Rois.

⁹ Errata: correction of *Et* in original text.

¹⁰ At this point in his career Pompey may well have appeared invincible, but 15 years later he would be defeated by Julius Caesar at the battle of Pharsalus and flee to Egypt where he would be killed in 48 BC. His end would provide the subject matter for two plays entitled *La Mort de Pompée*, that of Chaulmer in 1638 and that of Corneille in 1644.

PHARNACE.

Pour de telles faveurs dont je suis redevable,
Je sçay bien que ma foy doit estre inviolable,
Ouy, Pompée, il est vray, je serois criminel
80 Si je ne vous rendois un hommage eternel,
Et si je recevois une grandeur royalle,
Que comme le present d'une main liberalle,
Que sans vostre bonté je pretendois¹¹ en vain,
Je tiendray tout de vous & du peuple Romain,
85 Vous serez absolu¹² sur vostre creature,¹³
Je forceray pour vous les loix de la nature,
Je poursuivray celuy de qui je tiens le jour,
Je perdray mon respect, j'oublieray mon amour,
Et si je suis sans fruit au pied de ses murailles,
90 Sinope¹⁴ en peu de jours verra mes funerailles,
Notre ennemy commun ne reposera point.

*On tire la tapisserie & Mitridate paroist avec Hysicratée & ses deux filles.*¹⁵

POMPEE.

Puis que voste secours à nos forces se joint,
Que nous avons en main deux puissantes armées,
Que peuvent contre nous ses troupes enfermées ?
95 Les debiles efforts d'un peuple intimidé
Nous peuvent-ils forcer si le monde a cédé ?

¹¹ Errata: correction of tense: *pretendrais* as originally printed.

¹² Errata: correction of agreement of past participle, which was originally printed *absolu*.

¹³ F: 'CREATURE, signifie figurément, celuy qui est attaché estroitement à un supérieur, à celuy qui a fait sa fortune, à qui il doit son élévation'. The abbreviations used for the various dictionaries consulted can be found after their entry in the 'Language' section of the bibliography, p. 71.

¹⁴ Sinope was the capital of Pontus under Mithradates. A port on the southern shore of the Black Sea, it was the birthplace of Diogenes and called Felix Colonia Julia in Roman times; it is the current Sinop, capital of the province of the same name in modern Turkey.

¹⁵ The set was probably the city walls on one side of the stage, with a tent or tents representing the Roman camp on the other side and the façade of the palace in the centre with a central chamber at stage level, hidden by means of a curtain, and which allowed a glimpse of the palace interior, or indeed became the throne room, as required in the last scene. Because of its importance at the end of the play the curtained room is undoubtedly centre stage. As Pasquier has written: 'Compte tenu de la structure rectangulaire de la salle de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, avant comme après restauration, seule la chambre centrale offrait des conditions optimales de visibilité à tous les spectateurs, qu'ils fussent placés au parterre, dans les loges ou à l'amphithéâtre.' (p. 71). The stage direction runs down the right-hand margin from line 92.

C'est en vain qu'il s'obstine, & cet opiniastre¹⁶
 Enfin sera contraint de rompre ou de s'abatre,
 Il ne veut point flechir sous l'Empire Romain,
 100 Ny recevoir des loix que le pouvoir en main,
 Tous ses meilleurs desseins vont dans la violence,
 L'offre que je luy fais l'importune & l'offence,
 Eh bien s'il est reduit à quelque extremité,
 Qu'il face une vertu d'une necessité.

[p.6]

*SCENE II.*MITRIDATE. HYPsicRATEE.¹⁷

MITRIDATE.

105 Toy qui dans mes combats compagne inseparable,
 M'accompagnes aussi dans mon sort deplorable,
 Exemple infortuné de conjugale amour,
 Et sans qui Mitridate est ennemy du jour,
 Prodige d'amitié fidelle Hypsicratée,
 110 Regarde à quels malheurs je t'ay precipitée,
 Regrette avecque moy nos communes douleurs,
 Et croy que sans rougir tu peux verser des pleurs,
 Ce pitoyable estat doit forcer ta constance,
 Et tes larmes auront une juste dispense,
 115 Ce cœur que la Fortune en vain a combatu,
 Que tous les accidens n'avoient point abbatu,
 Succombe maintenant sous le mal qui le presse,
 Et c'est mon propre sang qui cause ma foiblesse,
 Et la terre & le ciel me furent ennemis,
 120 Et leurs plus grands efforts ne m'ont jamais soumis,
 J'ay bravé mille fois la puissance Romaine,
 J'ay de leurs corps mourans couvert cent fois la plaine,
 Et la mer recevant nostre sang & le leur,
 Sous nos vaisseaux brisez a changé de couleur :¹⁸

[p.7]

¹⁶ DFC: 'Une personne têtue, obstinée'.

¹⁷ The earlier stage direction indicated that the daughters Nise and Mitridatie enter with Mitridate and Hypsicratée and are thus present throughout this scene. La Calprenède only provides the names of characters who speak during a scene.

¹⁸ There were three wars between Pontus and the Roman Republic over a twenty-five year period, the First Mithradatic War taking place between 90 and 85 BC, the Second between 83 and 82 BC and the Third between 75 and 65 BC. The wars were fought both on land and on sea. In 86 BC Lucullus defeated Mithradates' fleet off the island of Tenedos, while in 73 BC, during the first phase of the Third Mithradatic War, the Pontic fleet several times suffered heavy losses and near shipwreck.

La Mort de Mitridate

125 J'ay soutenu l'effort de toutes leurs armées,
J'ay veu des plus grands chefs leurs troupes animées,
Et tous les plus vaillans que Rome ait jamais eu,¹⁹
Me seront obligez de tout ce qu'ils ont sçeu :
Ils ont tous contre moy faict leur apprentissage,
130 Et tu sçais si jamais j'ay manqué de courage,
Mesme s'il t'en souvient cette fatale nuit
Que je fus par Pompée à l'extreme reduit ;²⁰
Dans l'estrange malheur d'une telle disgrace,
Ainsi que la Fortune ay-je changé de face ?
135 Vis-tu que ce visage eust perdu sa couleur,
Et que jamais ce front tesmoignast²¹ ma douleur ;
Non, parmy ces assauts je fus inesbranlable,
Tu vis de ma confiance un trait inimitable,
Et quoy que tout tendist à me desobliger,
140 Jamais mon propre mal ne me peut affliger.
Malgré cette infortune où je t'avois conduite,
Tu voulus sans regret accompagner ma fuite,
Et je te jure icy la conjugale foy,
Que si je m'atristois ce ne fut que pour toy :
145 Je n'ay receu du sort qu'une atteinte legere,
Et je n'ay jamais craint une force estrangere,
Mais ceux que la naissance & le droit m'ont soumis
Se liguier lâchement avec mes ennemis,
Voir que mon propre fils conspire ma ruine,
150 Embrasse contre moy l'alliance Latine, [p.8]
Et dans mes derniers jours me retient assiégré,
O dieux quel est l'esprit qui n'en²² fust affligé !
J'ay perdu tout salut sur la terre & sur l'onde,
Par celuy seulement que j'avois mis au monde,
155 Ce monstre sans pitié creuse mon monument,
Et je suis des Romains traité plus doucement,
Il veut porter un Sceptre en me privant de vie,

¹⁹ Mithradates fought Sulla, Lucullus, Flaccus and Fimbria during the First Mithradatic War, Murena during the Second, and he was finally defeated by Pompey during the Third. The past participle in this line lacks an agreement and has not been corrected in the errata, unlike lines 393-94.

²⁰ In 66 BC, at what is known as the battle of Nicopolis, Pompey attacked during the night, throwing Mithradates' forces into confusion. This was one of Mithradates' greatest defeats, forcing him into exile from his own kingdom. This is the battle Racine's Mithridate evokes in more detail beginning with 'Je suis vaincu. Pompée a saisi l'avantage / D'une nuit qui laissait peu de place au courage' (II.3.439).

²¹ Errata: correction of mood: originally printed *temoigna*.

²² Errata: originally printed *ne*.

Et ce qu'il tient de moy le traistre me l'envie.
O dieux!

HYPSICRATEE.

S'il est permis à ma fidelité
160 D'accuser vos transports d'un peu de lâcheté,
Et si par le regret dont vostre ame est atteinte
Cette premiere amour n'est pas encore esteinte,
Souffrez que me servant de mon premier pouvoir,
Je veuille à Mitridate enseigner son devoir,
165 Puis que dans la tristesse où son malheur l'engage,
Il ne conserve rien de son premier courage :
Il est vray que le sort nous a reduits au point
De craindre toute chose²³, & de n'esperer point :
Pharnace & les Romains s'arment pour nous destruire,
170 Nos sujets avec eux se liguent pour nous nuire ;
Mais quand mesme le Ciel s'uniroit avec eux,
Gardez jusque²⁴ à la fin ce cœur victorieux,
Ne faites pas rougir une illustre memoire,
Et ne ternissez point vostre premiere gloire, [p.9]
175 Monstrez que la Fortune est au dessous de vous,
Ce qu'elle fait pour eux, elle l'a fait pour vous.

MITRIDATE.

O merveille de foy, d'amour, & de courage !
Ta consolation m'afflige d'avantage,
Quand le salut des miens consiste à me trahir,
180 Il ne reste que toy qui me devrois haïr ;
Ouy mon ame, hay moy, ta haine est legitime,
Tiens moy pour ennemy, tu le pourras sans crime.
Tout autre est innocent, le mal vient tout de moy,
Et moy seul ay causé l'estat où je te voy.
185 J'ay d'une²⁵ autre produit ce monstre abominable,²⁶
C'est l'œuvre d'un peché, dont tu n'es point coupable,
Ainsi que sa naissance il est defectueux,
Et s'il estoit ton fils, il seroit vertueux.

²³ Errata: originally printed in the plural: *toutes choses*.

²⁴ Errata: originally printed *jusques*, which added an extra syllable to the line.

²⁵ Errata: originally printed in the masculine: *un*; the *ce* later in the line is a correction of an *un*, as originally printed.

²⁶ Pharnaces was the child of Mithradates and Mithradates' own sister Laodice. By Christian laws of consanguinity this makes him 'l'œuvre d'un peché' and his birth defective.

La Mort de Mitridate

190 Non, sçache que le Ciel, ny la Fortune ingrante,
N'ont jamais abaissé le cœur de Mitridate,
Il est tousjours le mesme, & grand & genereux,
Et n'est point abbatu pour estre malheureux,
Il s'est bien conservé parmy mes infortunes,
Mais je meurs de regret qu'elles te soient communes,
195 Je voudrois que mon mal n'eust plus que des tesmoins,
Et si je souffrois seul, je souffrirois bien moins.

[p.10]

HYPsicRATEE.

Puis que nostre dessein²⁷ doit estre inseparable,
Qu'il faut qu'un mesme coup nous leve, ou nous accable,
Que depuis si long temps nous ne sommes plus qu'un,
200 M'enviez-vous un sort, qui doit estre commun ?
Je vous accompagnay dans la bonne Fortune,
Et ce peu de malheur desja vous importune.

MITRIDATE.

Ouy, chere Hypsicratée, il est vray, ton amour
Me donne de l'horreur pour la clarté du jour.
205 Je t'ay dans mes malheurs innocemment traisnée,
Et ta seule amitié te rend infortunée.

HYPsicRATEE.

Nommez-vous infortune un sort qui m'est si doux ?
Croyez-vous que je souffre en souffrant avec vous ?
Et depuis le long temps que vous m'avez cogneuë,
210 Avez-vous remarqué que mon feu diminuë ?
Mon amour change-elle avec vostre bon-heur ?²⁸
Puis-je imiter sans honte un peuple sans honneur ?
Aymay-je vos grandeurs, ou bien vostre merite ?
Et vous dois-je quitter, quoy qu'un sceptre vous quitte ?
215 Non, j'ay chery vos biens, mais seulement pour vous,
Et si je ne vous perds, je les mesprise tous.

²⁷ Was *destin* meant here? Scherer comments that, although there are certainly examples of *destin* meaning *dessein* in the seventeenth century (he mentions line 1703 of *Cinna*), it is rare to find *dessein* for *destin* (p. 1299). It could well be that the typesetter read *dessein* instead of *destin*, or the manuscript itself was faulty. The references to *fortune* and *sort* (ll. 200-01) would seem a fitting context for the use of *destin*.

²⁸ Without the *t* in the interrogative verb form, the line appears to be only eleven syllables long, but Vaugelas mentions that the *t* was always pronounced even if not printed (see Introduction, p. 65). Therefore, although such a line is visually eleven syllables, it is aurally twelve.

[p.11]

MITRIDATE.

Ah ! c'est cette amitié qui me rend miserable !
 Et si tu m'aimois moins, je serois moins coupable :
 Tant de fidelité me rend plus odieux.
 220 Mais quel objet nouveau se presente à mes yeux ?
 C'est l'espouse du traistre.

SCENE III.

MITRIDATE. BERENICE.²⁹

MITRIDATE.

Approchez vous madame.

Je lis sur vostre front les troubles de vostre ame.
 L'absence d'un mary qui vous estoit si cher,
 Est le seul desplaisir qui vous a peu toucher.
 225 Vous regrettez Pharnace, & non pas Mitridate,
 Et puis qu'il est ingrat, vous devez estre ingrate.
 D'une telle douleur le remede est en vous.
 Je ne vous retiens point, revoiez vostre espoux,
 Si contre ce cruël ma cholere est extrême ;
 230 En me vengeant de luy, j'espargne ce qu'il aime,
 Le Ciel le doit punir par mon ressentiment,
 Mais s'il doit esclater, c'est sur luy seulement.
 Qu'il sçache que j'abhorre une telle³⁰ vengeance,
 Que je veux par luy seul reparer son offence,
 235 Quoy qu'en vous affligeant je le puisse³¹ affliger,
 Je vous estime trop pour vous desobliger,³²
 Mon indignation veut une autre victime,
 Et je vous crois, madame, incapable d'un crime.

[p.12]

BERENICE.

Si je ne suis coupable ainsi que mon espoux,
 240 Et si je puis encor embrasser vos genoux,
 Seigneur accordez moy cette derniere grace,

²⁹ Again, only the speakers are mentioned, but the stage direction after line 264 and line 265 itself indicates that the daughters have entered with Bérénice and that Hypsicratée has remained from the previous scene. They all remain present until the end of the act.

³⁰ The Sorbonne edition has *telle*, but an apparent misreading has led to *vile* being substituted for this word in the Pléiade edition.

³¹ Errata: correction to the subjunctive from the indicative as originally printed: *puis*.

³² F: 'DES Obliger. v. act. Faire quelque desplaisir à quelqu'un, quelque incivilité, luy rendre de mauvais offices'.

De ne m'accuser point du peché de Pharnace :
Il est vrai qu'en l'estat où je suis aujourd'huy,
Si je verse des pleurs, je les verse pour luy.
245 Un si juste regret esbranle ma constance,
Mais je pleure son crime, & non pas son absence.
J'ai sur mes passions un absolu pouvoir,
Et mon plus grand souci n'est pas de le revoir.
Quand il perd son honneur sa femme l'abandonne.³³
250 J'estimois sa vertu, mais non pas sa couronne,
Et fondant mon amour sur la seule raison,
Je ne le puis aimer apres sa trahison :
Je quitte un desloyal, puis qu'il quitte son pere,
Et mourant avec vous je fais ce qu'il deust faire.
255 Ne me refusez pas un charitable appuy,
Permettez que je vive ailleurs qu'aupres de luy.
Je ne me puis resoudre à revoir un perfide,
Ni suivre son parti, puis qu'un traistre y preside.
Souffrez qu'aupres de vous je tiene un mesme rang,
260 Que ses aimables sœurs l'honneur de vostre sang.
Vous perdrez tout soupçon que je sois infidelle, [p.13]
Si le crime d'autrui ne me rend criminelle.

MITRIDATE.

Levez vous, Berenice, & croiez desormais,
Que je vous aime mieux que je ne fis jamais,
*Il parle à ses filles.*³⁴
265 Admirez ce grand cœur ma chere Hypsicratée,
Rendés à sa vertu la gloire meritée.
Au moins ce bien me reste en mon sort malheureux,
Que j'ay pour compagnons des cœurs tous genereux :
Ce glorieux exemple enseigne à Mitridate,
270 Que la seule vertu dans sa maison esclatte.
C'est l'unique fanal que les miens ont suivy :
Le seul qui n'en eut point Rome me l'a ravy,
Mais voicy de retour le fidelle Menandre.³⁵

³³ It is sentiments such as these (ll. 245-54) which have led Bérénice to be praised as 'cette sœur aînée des heroïnes de Corneille' (Médan, p. 59).

³⁴ This stage direction is placed in the right-hand margin at lines 263-64.

³⁵ Menandre is an invented character but in Plutarch's life of Lucullus one of Mithradates' captains is called Menander. Scherer corrects to *Ménandre*.

SCENE III.

MITRIDATE. MENANDRE.

MITRIDATE.

275 Eh bien, Menandre, en fin, que devons nous attendre ?
 Ay-je encore la terre & les Dieux contre moy ?
 Rome a elle le Ciel & Pharnace pour soy ?
 L'un peut-il approuver la trahison de l'autre,
 Et le demon³⁶ latin triomphe-il du nostre ?³⁷
 Verra-on reüssir ce qu'un traistre voulut, [p.14]
 280 Et son pere chez luy n'aura point de salut ?

MENANDRE.

Vous avez à vos murs la puissance Romaine :³⁸
 Mille estendars volans font ombrage à la plaine.
 Mesme vos fugitifs³⁹ ensemble ramassez,
 Bravent insolemment au bord de nos fossez :
 285 J'ay fait oster des murs une troupe inutile,
 J'ay des meilleurs soldats bordé toute la ville,
 Qui ne pouvans souffrir ces escadrons si pres,
 Sur les plus courageux ont lancé quelques traits.⁴⁰
 Desja les legions à l'assaut toutes prestes,
 290 Font retentir bien loin le son de leurs trompettes,
 Les chevaux animez de tous les instrumens,
 Augmentent la frayeur par leurs hennissemens.
 Les Armes des soldats esbloüissent la veuë,
 Et leurs cris esclancez vont jusque dans la nuë.
 295 Les beliers⁴¹ apprestez⁴² donnent de la terreur,

³⁶ AF: 'Quelquefois il se prend dans le sens des anciens, pour Genie, esprit, soit bon, soit mauvais'.

³⁷ This is another line which is twelve syllables when the missing *t* in the inversion is pronounced. See line 211.

³⁸ Thus begins an atmospheric *récit* which provides a flavour of warfare, catering to both the senses of sight and sound. The sense of claustrophobia, with the Romans initially just outside the walls, will increase as the family's space is reduced from city to palace and finally to throne room.

³⁹ F: 'On le dit aussi des soldats deserteurs, ou qui s'enfuyent dans le combat'. Mithradates' forces had been augmented by Roman deserters.

⁴⁰ AF: 'Fleche, dard, qui se tire avec un arc ou une arbaleste'.

⁴¹ F: 'BELIER, est aussi une grosse poutre de bois ferrée par le bout, & qui a quelquefois des pointes en forme de cornes de *belier*. Les Anciens s'en servoient auparavant l'invention du canon pour battre les murailles d'une ville'.

La Mort de Mitridate

Et la ville fremit de tristesse & d'horreur.
Une branche d'olive en la main de Pharnace,
Au pasle citoyen fait esperer sa grace :
La dextre qu'il luy tend l'asseur de sa foy,
300 Mesmes les plus mutins l'appellent desja Roy.

MITRIDATE.

O Ciel & tu le vois, & tu retiens ta foudre !
Eslance-la sur nous, reduis Sinope en poudre,
N'en donne pas l'honneur aux escadrons Romains, [p.15]
Et puis qu'il faut perir, perissons par tes mains.
305 Les hommes ont en vain attaqué Mitridate,
Et si la terre est foible, il faut qu'un Dieu l'abbate.
Toutesfois disposons ces cœurs intimidez,
A sortir de ces murs si longuement gardez.
Si nous devons mourir, ne mourons point sans gloire,
310 Et forçons l'ennemy de pleurer sa victoire.
J'ayme bien mieux me perdre en la perte des siens,
Que d'en laisser l'honneur au plus lâche des miens.

⁴² F: 'APPRESTER.verb.act. Preparer les choses necessaires pour ce qu'on a dessein de faire bientost'.

ACTE II.

SCENE PREMIERE.

MITRIDATE. HYPsicRATEE.

*Mitridate, Hypsicratée sortent armez, & Mitridatie, Nise & Berenice avec eux.*¹

MITRIDATE.

Je veux que du combat vous soyez exemptée,
 La ville pour appuy demande Hypsicratée,
 315 Et le peuple insolent prest à se mutiner,
 A pour vous un respect qui l'en peut destourner.

HYPsicRATEE.

Avez-vous resolu de me rendre ennemie,
 Ou si vous avez creu ma valeur endormie ?²
 Ce cœur que les dangers n'ont jamais rebuté,
 320 Se peut-il bien noircir de quelque lâcheté?
 Portay-je à mes costés³ une inutile épée,⁴
 Ne l'ayant jamais craint, puis-je craindre Pompée ?
 Et lors que les perils ne seront que pour vous,
 Du haut de nos ramparts jugeray-je des coups ?
 325 Sçachez que les malheurs augmentent mon courage,
 Et que dans un combat, où mon amour m'engage, [p.17]
 Contre tous les efforts de l'Empire Romain,
 Vostre meilleur secours est celuy de ma main.

MITRIDATE.

Je ne sçauerois douter d'une valeur cogue,

¹ In the original text, this stage direction runs down the left-hand margin from line 313. The characters probably enter from behind the central curtain. Once again, only those speaking are listed at the top of the scene.

² Fournier calls this construction with *si* an 'interrogation alternative' (§ 170) whereby 'le verbe recteur est ellipsé'. One must understand: 'Ou [dites-moi] si ...'.

³ Errata: correction from the singular: *mon costé* to the plural, although the singular would seem perfectly appropriate.

⁴ In Plutarch, Hypsicratée is a warrior who fought bravely beside Mithradates. In line 341, Mitridate will refer to her Amazonian qualities. Such women occur throughout Renaissance and early seventeenth-century literature. In La Calprenède's next play, *Bradamante*, the heroine will don armour to fight her lover, Roger, in disguise.

330 Sois seulement mon ame, un peu plus retenuë,
Ne t'expose aux dangers qu'un peu plus rarement ;
Puis que si je te perds, je me perds doublement.

HYPsicRATEE.

Chassez de vostre esprit cette inutile crainte,
Mon ame de frayeur ne fut jamais atteinte :
335 Si j'en ay resseny, c'est seulement pour vous :
Mais n'apprehendons rien, les Dieux seront pour nous.
Ils nous font esperer un succez legitime,
Et sont desja lassez de soustenir un crime.

MITRIDATE.

Puis qu'aucune raison ne t'en peut divertir,
340 Je veux à ton dessein malgré moy consentir
Mille fois je t'ay veuë, invincible Amazonne,
Acquerir des lauriers que la valeur nous donne,
J'ay veu les escadrons de ta voix animez,
Fendre pour t'imiter des bataillons armez.
345 Ton visage & ton fer font d'egales conquestes.

[p.18]

HYPsicRATEE.

Dites mieux à propos, que les troupes sont prestes,
Que l'ennemy joyeux des forces qui l'ont joint,
Se repose sans crainte & ne vous attend point.
Allons luy tesmoigner qu'un courage invincible
350 Aux injures du sort n'est jamais accessible,
Que toutes ses rigueurs ne l'ont pas abbatu :
Et qu'un nombre confus⁵ vaut moins que la vertu.

MITRIDATE

Un cœur si genereux me fait rougir de honte.
Allons, & que Pompée ou⁶ trebuche, ou surmonte.
355 Que Mitridate meure, ou qu'il ne meure pas,
Je tiens indifferens la vie ou le trespas.

⁵ F: 'CONFUS, USE. adj. Meslé, brouillé ensemble [...] CONFUS, signifie aussi, Qui est en desordre, qui n'est pas en son rang'.

⁶ Errata: correction of the misprint: *en* for *ou*.

SCENE II.

MITRIDATIE. NISE. BERENICE.

MITRIDATIE.

Allez où la fureur aveuglement vous porte :
 Je ne vous verray plus, mon esperance est morte :
 Mais si ma foible main ne vous peut secourir,
 360 Estant de vostre sang je sçauray bien mourir.

[p.19]

NISE.

O par dessus le sexe heureuse Hypsicratée ;
 Ayant receu du Ciel une force indomptée,
 Qui te faict mespriser les perils evidens,
 Et t'endurcit le cœur contre les accidens !
 365 O que mesme faveur ne me fut-elle offerte !
 Du sang des ennemis je vängerois ma perte,
 Et je croirois mon sort beaucoup moins rigoureux,
 Si la moitié du mal pouvoit tomber sur eux.

BERENICE.

Si vous avez dans l'ame une si juste haine,
 370 L'espouse de Pharnace en doit porter la peine.
 Il est nay de celuy par qui vous respirez,
 Mais punissez sa femme, & vous le punirez.⁷
 Je sçay bien que pour moy son amour est extrême,
 Et quoy qu'il soit perfide, assurément il m'aime.
 375 Embrassez ce moyen pour vous vänger de luy,
 On peut estre cruel à l'exemple d'autruy.
 Apres sa trahison le traictement plus rude
 Est encore trop doux à son ingratitude ;
 On ne sçauroit faillir en le desobligeant,
 380 Et le plus inhumain, c'est le plus indulgent.

MITRIDATIE.

Ha ! ma sœur, que ce mot sensiblement nous touche !
 Et que ceste requeste est mal en vostre bouche !
 Perdez l'opinion que vous avez de nous,
 Ou bien nos ennemis nous traitent mieux que vous.
 385 Helas vostre vertu nous est trop bien cognüe,

[p.20]

⁷ In his edition of Racine's *Mithridate*, Bernardin calls this and the next three lines 'un discours ridicule, qu'aura le tort de développer dans *Horace* la Sabine de Corneille' (p. 7).

Nous voyons mieux que vous vostre ame toute nuë.
Plust aux Dieux que Pharnace eust mesme sentiment,
Mais s'il nous a trahis⁸ aimez-nous seulement,
Le mal qui nous afflige en sera moins funeste,
390 Si parmy nos malheurs vostre amitié nous reste.

BERENICE.

Ouy mes sœurs, je vous ayme autant que je le hay,
Que si vostre soupçon en vouloit un essay,
Sondez vostre pouvoir, commandez absoluës :⁹
Et je suivray les lois que vous aurez vouluës.

NISE.

395 Ce qu'à vos volontés nostre pouvoir enjoint :
C'est en vous conjurant de ne nous quitter point ;
Pharnace est vostre espoux, comme il est nostre frere :
Mais la nuit & le jour n'ont rien de si contraire,
Le Soleil n'a rien veu de si mal assorty ?¹⁰
400 Et vous vous feriez tort d'embrasser son party.

BERENICE.

Moteur de l'univers, Souveraine puissance,
Qui lis dans mon esprit, & vois mon innocence, [p.21]
Si mon intention balance seulement,
Fay que ce dernier mot soit mon dernier moment.
405 Quoy qu'une telle crainte extremement me blesse,
Je vous veux, chere Nise, avoüer ma foiblesse.
Il est vray, cest ingrat est indigne du jour,
J'ay pour luy toutesfois encore un peu d'amour.
L'hymen joint deux esprits d'une si forte estreinte,
410 Que l'ardeur qu'il allume est rarement esteinte.
Je ne puis oublier qu'il estoit mon espoux,
Mais que son interest m'oste d'aupres de vous,
Que cette passion que le Ciel a fait naistre,
Me face consentir aux actions d'un traistre,
415 Plustost...¹¹

⁸ Errata: correction of the agreement, which was originally printed in the singular: *trahy*.

⁹ Errata: the past participles in this line and the next were originally printed in the singular.

¹⁰ F: 'ASSORTIR, se dit figurément en Morale. Ce mariage est mal *assorti*, c'est à dire, le mari & la femme sont de condition inégale, d'humeur toute differente'. Such references to the sun are typically baroque; see also ll. 482, 1709, 1712.

MITRIDATIE.

Jamais ma sœur, nous n'en avons douté,
 Nous craignons seulement pour vostre seureté,
 Puis que nostre party dans nos maux vous entraisne,
 Et que vous encourez l'inimitié Romaine,
 Vous fuiez le salut & l'espoir d'un bien-faict.

BERENICE.

420 J'abhorre le bon-heur que je tiens d'un forfait,
 Et je ne puis souffrir l'éclat d'une Couronne :
 Puis que la perfidie est ce qui me la donne,
 Je ne veux posséder des sceptes envahis,
 Ny succeder aux miens pour les avoir trahis.
 425 Un throsne est à priser si sans crime on y monte, [p.22]
 Et j'ayme des grandeurs qu'on peut avoir sans honte.
 Cependant implorons l'assistance des Dieux :
 Vous leur demanderez, & je prieray des yeux.
 Puis que dans les malheurs, où le Ciel m'a reduite,
 430 La priere à ma bouche est mesmes interdite.¹²
 Que mes vœux d'un peché seront tousjours attains :
 Et je puis seulement en faire d'incertains.

SCENE III.

POMPEE. PHARNACE.

*Ils sortent des Tentes.*¹³

POMPEE.

Quoy que vous le jugiez d'une extrême importance,
 J'ay voulu tout fier à vostre confidence.

PHARNACE.

435 C'est m'obliger par trop à la fidelité,
 Et chez moy vos secrets seront en seureté.

POMPEE.

Il me faut obeïr à nostre Republique,
 Par des termes si clairs sa volonté s'explique ;
 Que je ne puis icy demeurer un moment.

¹¹ Cut-off lines are a typical feature of La Calprenède's dramaturgy. Although there is no punctuation here in the original text, I have supplied suspension marks. Scherer felt similarly.

¹² Only by using the longer version *mesmes* does this line attain twelve syllables.

¹³ The stage direction is in the left-hand margin at line 433.

La Mort de Mitridate

440 Vous voyez du senat l'expres commandement [p.23]
Il faudra malgré moy que je vous abandonne,¹⁴
Servez-vous maintenant du pouvoir qu'on vous donne,
Gardez l'autorité que je vous mets en main,
Combatez sans regret, pour l'Empire Romain,
445 Poursuivez l'ennemy que vous avez en teste :
On vous a destiné le prix de la conqueste.
Et quoy que vos devoirs vous attachent à nous,
Sçachez qu'en nous servant vous faites tout pour vous.
Nostre appuy vous mettra par dessus la fortune.
450 Et toute autre amitié vous doit estre importune.
Celle de Mitridate est une trahison,
Et sous un bon visage evitez le poison.
Car je ne doute point qu'il ne vous sollicite,
Et qu'à l'extremité cette ville reduite,
455 Il ne tente cent fois à vous faire changer :
Mais ses meilleurs desseins tendent à se vanger.
Et si vostre raison par sa ruse est deceuë,
Il n'oubliera jamais une injure receuë.

PHARNACE.

460 Son mauvais naturel m'est bien assez connu
Mais d'un autre motif je seray retenu.
Je veux garder la foy que je vous ay jurée,
Et vous en recevrez une preuve assurée.
Mitridate vaincu, sous le joug flechira,
Ou ne le pouvant point, Pharnace perira. [p.24]

POMPEE.

465 C'est ainsi que l'on doit conserver sa fortune,
Vostre fidelité ne sera pas commune.
Mais aussi vous sçavez qu'il n'est pas de loyer,
Que la Reine des Rois ne vous puisse octroyer.
Adieu, gouvernez-vous par le conseil d'Emile,
470 Et mettez tous vos soins pour emporter la ville.
Sur tout souvenez-vous en cette affaire icy,
Que Rome faict les Roys, & les deffait aussi.

¹⁴ Plutarch mentions that Pompey was at Petra when he heard the news of Mithradates' death. La Calprenède obviously wanted the presence of Mithradates' nemesis on stage, so delays his departure, reassuring his readers in the *Au Lecteur* that he was not unaware of the historical fact (see page 79).

SCENE III.

PHARNACE. EMILE.

PHARNACE.

Ouy, je me souviendray que je dois tout à Rome,
 Et n'estant plus à vous je ne seray plus homme.
 475 Mon esprit inquiet est en vain combatu,
 J'etouffe pour mon bien ce reste de vertu.
 Son fascheux souvenir en vain me sollicite,
 Et si je fais un crime un throsne le merite.
 Mais dieux de quels remords je me sens agiter !
 480 Quel tardif repentir me vient persecuter !
 Je commets un peché qui me rend execrable.
 Et jamais le soleil n'en a veu de semblable,
 Mitridate est mon pere, & c'est mon ennemy.

[p.25]

EMILE.

Et quoy vous n'estes donc resolu qu'à demy.

PHARNACE.

485 Je suis bien resolu, mais Emile il me reste
 Un remords importun d'un crime manifeste.
 Ce bourreau de mon ame erre devant mes yeux,
 Me figurant l'horreur des hommes & des Dieux,
 J'ay pour plus grand fleau ma seule conscience.

EMILE.

490 Delivrez voste esprit d'une vaine creance,
 Tous vos raisonnemens ne sont plus de saison :
 Il faut considerer le temps & la raison,
 Le temps veut que l'on cede au vainqueur qui dispose,
 Puis qu'à ses volontés vainement on s'oppose.
 495 Qu'on tasche à conserver un Empire penchant,¹⁵
 La raison qu'on haysse & poursuive un meschant.
 Choquant nostre ennemy, vous choquez vostre pere :¹⁶
 Mais vostre propre bien vous oblige à le faire.

¹⁵ No text has any punctuation at the end of this line, but I have supplied a comma for the sake of clarity. For the main verb in line 496, one needs to have retained the *veut* from line 493, so as to read: 'La raison [veut] qu'on haysse...'.
¹⁶ *Choquer*: heurter, frapper; offenser, déplaire.

PHARNACE.

500 Je ne m'oppose point à ce que j'ay voulu,
Puis que je l'ay promis c'est un point resolu.
Je ne donne aux Romains qu'une assurance vraie : [p.26]
Mais Emile, je veux te decouvrir ma playe,
Et ne te cacher plus ce qui me faict mourir :
Peut-estre ton conseil me pourra secourir.
505 Du moins te la disant ma douleur diminuë.
Si tu cognois amour, ma peine t'est cognuë.
Quoy que mon feu soit beau, vertueux, innocent :
De tous mes ennemis il est le plus puissant.
Au milieu des combats c'est luy qui me tourmente.
510 J'ay souffert sans me plaindre une ardeur violente :
Et si dans ces acces je ne le disois point,
C'est que le desespoir à mon amour est joint.
Mon corps est parmy vous, mon¹⁷ cœur hors de l'armée,
Sinope dans ses murs tient mon ame enfermée.
515 Ce que pour moy la terre a d'aymable & de beau,
Est chez mes ennemis, & peut-estre au tombeau.

EMILE.

Souvent le desplaisir à nos esprits figure
Des objets de douleur qui ne sont qu'en peinture.
Et la crainte imprimée en nostre souvenir,
520 Nous faict apprehender des malheurs à venir :
Quoy qu'ils soient en effect hors de toute apparence,
Si ceux que vous craignez n'ont besoin de silence. [p.27]¹⁸

PHARNACE.

Sçache que ma douleur ne vient plus que d'amour :
Je vis, & toutefois je ne vois plus le jour.
525 Privé de mon soleil je suis dans les tenebres,
Et mon œil n'est ouvert qu'à des objets funebres.
Emile devant toy je prends les Dieux tesmoins,
Que cette passion engendre tous mes soins.
J'embrassay sans regret l'alliance Romaine,
530 Et de leurs ennemis je n'ayme que la haine.
Les jugemens d'autrui me sont indifferents,
Ce sont bien mes soucis, mais non pas les plus grands.
Je regrette une perte, ou du moins une absence,

¹⁷ Errata: the possessive was originally printed as *un*.

¹⁸ The corrected pages 27 and 28, originally provided as a *carton*, have been transcribed here, with indications in the notes of where the differences lie. For the Pléiade edition, Jacques Scherer did not see a copy with the corrected pages.

Qui sert à mon chagrin d'une juste dispense.
 535 Si parmy les mortels on voit un homme heureux,
 Je le fus à l'égal que je fus¹⁹ amoureux.
 J'aimay ce que la terre avoit de plus aymable,
 Et pour moy mon soleil eut une²⁰ amour semblable.
 Nos cœurs de mesme feu doucement allumez,
 540 Brusloient innocemment sans estre consommez.
 Si je souffrois pour elle, elle souffroit de mesme,
 Et reciproquement nostre ardeur fut²¹ extrême.
 Enfin je possedois l'abregé²² plus parfait
 Des ouvrages plus beaux que la nature ait faict.
 545 Le Ciel me l'envia, la terre en²³ fut jalouse,
 Et les plus froids objects adoroient mon espouse :
 Qui fut (me conservant une immuable foy)²⁴
 Pour tout autre de glace,²⁵ & de flamme pour moy. [p.28]
 Sa vertu surpassoit une vertu commune,
 550 Enfin rien ne manquoit à ma bonne fortune,
 Et jamais un mortel n'eut mieux ses vœux contens,
 Si j'eusse eu ce bonheur pour²⁶ le garder long-temps.

¹⁹ Originally this verb was in the present tense, as it is in the Pléiade text.

²⁰ The article was originally printed as masculine, but was changed to feminine as the page was reset, providing a good example of how the gender was not fixed at the time. Throughout the play *amour* is feminine.

²¹ Another example of the tense being rethought: this verb was originally in the present.

²² F: 'On dit aussi, Un *abregé* des merveilles du monde, quand on veut bien louer une chose, ou une personne qui a toutes sortes de perfections, & où on trouve tout ce qu'on peut voir de beau ailleurs'.

²³ The *en* was only added in the reprinting; the Pléiade text does not supply it. Without it the line still has 12 syllables.

²⁴ As originally set and printed, *grands* was spelt out in full, resulting in line 532 being too long to be contained in the one line. The word *grands* was therefore accommodated by being given the following line to itself. This had the repercussion that the page was one line short, ending at line 547. In the resetting the problem was solved by a *tilde* being used in order to squeeze *grāds* into line 532, thus creating the space for line 548 to be added to the bottom of the page.

²⁵ Originally printed as *grace* but corrected in the *carton*. Scherer sensed what had happened and corrected to *glace*. The comma was added in the reprinting.

²⁶ The original reading of this phrase was 'le bonheur de'; this is the reading in the Pléiade text. But the problem with the first reading was a certain obscurity in that the pronoun *le* seemed to refer to something outside the line rather than to *bonheur*. In correspondence, Alain Riffaud has commented that with the revised line 'l'attention est reportée sur "ce bonheur" et on lit mieux le pronom "le" comme un anaphorique de "bonheur". Le sens est le suivant: "Jamais un mortel n'aurait été plus satisfait que moi si j'avais pu éprouver ce bonheur non pas brièvement mais pour longtemps". Un-

EMILE.

Enfin par quel malheur vous fut elle ravie ?

PHARNACE.

Tu vois quel accident me prive de la vie :
555 Car ma condition pire que le trespas,
Ne se peut nommer vie en ne la²⁷ voyant pas.
L'amitié des Romains me desrobe sa veuë,
Ce sont leurs ennemis²⁸ qui me l'ont retenuë.
Mon peu de jugement la mit en ce danger,
560 J'offense Mitridate, il se peut bien vanger.
Et desja ce cruel exerce sa malice,
Et pour punir Pharnace, afflige Berenice.
Quoy qu'il ne la haïsse,²⁹ il cognoist mon amour.
Peut estre en ce moment elle a perdu le jour,
565 Et ce tygre insolent d'une telle deffaicte
Voit du sang innocent sa hayne satisfaicte.³⁰
O dieux !

EMILE.

Delivrez vous d'un si fascheux soucy.

[p.29]

PHARNACE.

J'aurois contre les maux un cœur trop endurecy,
Un esprit vainement dans son malheur se flatte ;
570 Et depuis trop long-temps je cognois Mitridate.
Toutefois Berenice a dequoy le toucher,
Et s'il ne flechissoit il seroit un rocher.
Il n'est point de lyonne³¹ assez pleine de rage,

aware of the reprint, Scherer changed the pronoun *le* to *la*, assuming that it referred to Bérénice.

²⁷ Originally this was a masculine pronoun but was corrected in the reprint. Scherer realized that the reference was to Bérénice and corrected likewise.

²⁸ That is, Mitridate and his supporters, *ennemis de Rome*.

²⁹ The mood of this verb, which was originally printed as *hait point*, was corrected in the reprint. The Pléiade edition retains the *hait point*. The number of syllables is twelve in both cases.

³⁰ This is the line missing in the first printing; line 565 thus ended with a full stop. Since Scherer did not see a reprinted version of these pages, 'sous toutes réserves' he suggests as a replacement line: 'A pu percer son sein tout en faisant retraite' (p. 1300).

³¹ There would not seem to be any strong reason to use *lyonne* here rather than *lion* except that this requires the adjective to be feminine, therefore supplying an extra syllable to the line.

575 Pour s'armer de fureur contre ce beau visage :
 Ses yeux amolliroient un cœur de diamant.
 Cet espoir incertain me reste seulement,
 Que si je me repais d'une esperance vaine,
 Si desja l'ennemy faict esclatter sa haine,
 Si pour m'avoir aymé Berenice n'est plus,
 580 Et si pour la³² revoir mes soings sont superflus,
 Je combleray d'horreur ma derniere conquete,
 Je rendray par le fer son ombre satisfaite :
 Et le devoir du sang ne me peut empescher,
 De faire à son tombeau ses meurtriers trebucher.

EMILE.

585 Si l'injure du Ciel à ce point vous outrage,
 Resistez à ses traits par un masle courage,
 Et vous ressouvenez³³ qu'un homme genereux,
 S'il ne succombe au mal, n'est jamais malheureux.
 De quelques accidens que le sort le traverse,
 590 Il n'esprouve³⁴ jamais la fortune diverse.
 Il rit sans s'esbranler de ses evenemens :
 Et d'un visage egal void tous ses changemens.³⁵ [p.30]
 Mais d'où vient ce soldat effrayé de la sorte ?

SCENE V.

UN SOLDAT. PHARNACE.

SOLDAT.

595 Sans ce dernier secours nostre esperance est morte,
 Nos meilleurs escadrons sont à demy rompus.

PHARNACE.

Parle & demesle toy de ce discours confus,
 Respire un seul moment de cette folle crainte.

SOLDAT.

Ce n'est pas de frayeur que mon ame est atteinte :

³² Errata: originally printed as *le*.

³³ The imperative is here inverted, unlike in line 596.

³⁴ For all of the verbs where a choice could be made between spelling with *ou* or *eu*, Vaugelas writes: '*Trouver*, et *treuver*, sont tous deux bons, mais *trouver* avec *o*, est sans comparaison meilleur, que *treuver* avec *e*' (I, 229). See also lines 1427, 1674.

³⁵ Émile gives lessons in the stoicism always associated with the Romans. He is sententious without using a *sentence*.

La Mort de Mitridate

600 Mais poussé d'un courage & fidele & prudent,
Je vous viens advertir du peril evident.
Mitridate suivy de sa troupe enfermée,
Est sorty des rampars pour attaquer l'armée :
Comme c'est un esclat qu'on n'avoit point preveu
Les premiers bataillons sont pris à l'impourveu,³⁶
605 Ceste bouillante ardeur ne peut estre arrestée :
Tout fuit devant le Roy, tout fuit Hypsicratée.
Ils ne sont du butin, mais du sang alterez ;
Et s'ils sont peu de gens, ils sont desesperéz.
Enfin tout a faict jour³⁷ à leurs premieres armes, [p.31]
610 Et les champs sont couverts du corps de nos gendarmes.³⁸
Cette forte Amazonne atterre³⁹ de ses mains,
Et les Bithiniens,⁴⁰ & les soldats Romains :
Tous indifferemment font rougir son espée,
Elle appelle au combat & Pharnace & Pompée :
615 Son espoux qui la couvre avecque⁴¹ son escu,
Massacre sans pitié cest escadron vaincu.
Bref tout n'est plus que sang, qu'horreur, que funerailles.⁴²

PHARNACE.

Grace aux Dieux je reçois le fruit de cent batailles,
Celuy que tant de fois Rome avoit combattu,

³⁶ Vaugelas comments as regards the choice between *à l'impourvu* and *à l'improviste*: 'Tous deux sont bons, et signifient la mesme chose, mais *à l'improviste*, quoy que pris de l'Italien, est tellement naturalisé François, qu'il est plus elegant qu'*à l'impourveu*' (I. 323).

³⁷ F: 'JOUR, en termes de guerre, se dit de l'ouverture qu'on fait dans les rangs des ennemis. Dès qu'il y a du *jour* dans un bataillon, qu'on y peut entrer, il est bientost deffait. Le canon faisoit *jour* par tout. Ce Colonel se fit *jour* à travers les ennemis, & alla secourir la place'. Cf. I. 1644.

³⁸ DFC: 'Homme de guerre à cheval, *et par extens.* soldat quelconque'.

³⁹ F: 'ATTERRER.v.act. Renverser un homme par terre'.

⁴⁰ A neighbouring kingdom to Pontus, Bithynia had been bequeathed to Rome on the death of its last monarch, Nicomedes IV, in 74 BC. Mithradates, eager to expand his sphere of influence, had twice defeated Nicomedes in 90 and 88 BC. Corneille's play *Nicomède* (1651), which also dramatizes an episode of Rome's imperial expansion, deals with Nicomedes II (149-c.127 BC).

⁴¹ Originally printed *avec*, but the alexandrine needs the extra syllable. The last thing mentioned in the errata is that 'en quelques endroits' the reader should read *avecque* for *avec*; this is the first of several occasions. Cf. I. 659.

⁴² If one finds this *récit* to be stirring stuff, one must remember that, as a serving soldier, La Calprenède had seen military action, and in his novels he is famous for descriptions of battles.

620 Aujourd'huy se soumet à ses pieds abbatu.
Allons Emile, allons vaincre sans resistance,
Rompons de l'ennemy la derniere puissance.
Après cette deffaite il n'en peut relever,
Et le plus grand honneur consiste à l'achever

ACTE III.

SCENE PREMIERE.

HYPSICRATEE. MITRIDATE.

MITRIDATIE. NISE.

*On tire la tapisserie.*¹

HYPSICRATEE.

Depuis que le destin contre luy se declare,
 Un cœur se doit munir d'une constance rare.²
 Il est vray, cher espoux, nous avons tout perdu :
 Mais pour ces vains regrets nous sera-t'il rendu ?
 Notre troupe à nos yeux entierement deffaicte,
 630 Dans ce dernier Palais nostre seule retraicte,³
 La ville à la mercy du soldat insolent,
 Pour affliger une ame est un mal violent :
 Mais par ce desespoir, dont vostre esprit s'accable,
 Pouvez-vous reparer un mal irreparable ?

MITRIDATE.

635 Non, mais juge toy-mesme en l'estat où je suis,
 Que respirer le jour c'est tout ce que je puis :
 Qu'il n'est point de regret qui ne soit legitime,
 Et qu'apres tant de maux la constance est un crime.
 Commander Souverain à cent peuples divers,
 640 Donner de l'épouvente aux Rois de l'univers,
 Voir ceder tant de peuple⁴ à la gloire d'un homme,
 Estre l'appuy d'Asie, & la terreur de Rome,⁵

¹ This stage direction is in the left-hand margin between lines 625 and 626.

² The audience's curiosity as to the result of Mitridate's *sortie*, which had ended the previous act on a note of suspense, is quickly satisfied in these opening lines. Moreover, Hypsicratée shows that stoicism is not just the preserve of the Romans, and that such sentiments are invariably expressed sententiously.

³ The feeling of claustrophobia increases, as the failure of the *sortie* means that the family's room for manoeuvre has been reduced from the city as a whole to just the palace.

⁴ Errata: in making *peuple* singular, although originally printed plural, a syllable is saved.

⁵ Through his long opposition to Rome, Mithradates could lay claim to being the great defender of the East against Western expansion into Asia Minor. Seeing himself as a successor to Alexander, he allied himself with the Greek city states in Anatolia against

Et voir par une lâche & noire trahison,
 Borner tant de grandeurs d'une seule maison,
 645 Oû mesme un fils ingrat me defend la retraicte,
 C'est de quelle façon la fortune me traicte.

HYPSICRATEE.

Tous ceux qu'elle a chervis⁶ elle les traicte ainsi,
 Si vous estes trahy, mille le sont aussi.
 De sa legereté l'on⁷ void par tout des marques,
 650 Elle a faict trebucher les plus heureux Monarques.
 La perfide qu'elle est les eleve au plus haut,
 Pour les precipiter d'un plus horrible saut.

MITRIDATE.

Je ne me plaindrois pas des traits de la fortune,
 Que comme d'une perte ou legere ou commune :
 655 Si je me voyois seul, ainsi que je me voy :⁸
 Mais si tu dois courir mesme risque que moy,
 Si les maux que je sens il faut que tu les sentes,
 Et si je perds aussi ces filles innocentes,
 Que mon propre interest attache avecque nous...⁹

[p.34]

MITRIDATIE.

660 Si nous nous affligeons c'est seulement pour vous,
 Glorieux rejettons du sang de Mitridate :
 L'injustice du Ciel n'a rien qui nous abbate :
 Nous courons mesme sort que vous devez courir,
 Et si vous perissez, nous voulons bien perir.

Rome, without ever being really considered their saviour by the Hellenic populations. For forty years, nevertheless, through sheer energy and courage and stubbornness, he remained Rome's most redoubtable adversary in the East, intent on the preservation and indeed the expansion of his own kingdom.

⁶ Errata: agreement corrected because originally printed *chery*.

⁷ Errata: the article is added to what was printed originally as simply *on*.

⁸ Vaugelas comments: 'Quelques-uns ont creu qu'il falloit oster l'*s* finale de la premiere personne, et escrire, *je croy, je fay, je dy, je crain, etc.*, changeant l'*i* en *y*, selon le genie de nostre langue, qui aime fort l'usage des *y* grecs à la fin de la plupart des mots terminez en *i*, et qu'il falloit écrire ainsi la premiere personne pour la distinguer d'avec la seconde, *tu crois, tu fais, tu dis, tu crains, etc.*' (I, 226).

⁹ This line ends with a full stop in all original copies, but, there being no main clause, the sense is that of Mitridate being cut off by his daughter. I have thus supplied suspension marks; the Pléiade edition does likewise. In all original copies one reads *avec*, but this is another example of the longer spelling being needed to provide the extra syllable; cf. l. 615.

MITRIDATE.

- 665 Quoy qu'à l'extremité le Ciel me desoblige,
Pour mon propre malheur il n'est rien qui m'afflige :
Pour mourir glorieux j'ay bien assez vescu,
Les Dieux, Rome & les miens ne m'ont jamais vaincu.
J'ai desja si long-temps travaillé pour ma gloire,
670 Que je ne craindrois point la dernière victoire.
Mitridate mourant mourra tousjours en Roy,¹⁰
Il n'a peu sur autrui que ce qu'il peut sur soy.
Je n'ay point de regret d'abandonner la vie,
Cette main me l'auroit depuis long-temps ravie,
675 Si je ne vous laissois en proye aux ennemis,
Qui vängeroient sur vous ce qu'un autre a commis.
A la suite d'un char mon espouse & ma fille,
Le triomphe honoré de toute ma famille,
Ma chere Hypsicratée esclave dans les fers,
680 Feroit mourir mon ame au milieu des enfers.¹¹ [p.35]

HYPsicRATEE.

- Rome qui dans nos murs impunément nous brave,
Ne recevra jamais Hypsicratée esclave :
La gloire de Pompée ira jusqu'à ce point :
Mais pour cette dernière il ne l'obtiendra point.¹²
685 Votre espouse par tout¹³ vous tiendra compagnie,
Et de vostre tombeau ne sera point bannie.
Elle sçait dés long-temps mespriser le trespas,
Et les plus grands perils ne l'épouventent pas.

NISE.

Esperez un peu mieux des soins¹⁴ de Berenice,

¹⁰ Truchet cites this line as an example of the 'atmosphère d'incomparable noblesse' of tragedy in the 1630s, adding: 'dans sa naïveté encore archaïque, ce vers de La Calprenède fixe un ton qui sera celui de dizaines de pièces, romaines ou autres' (*Théâtre classique*, p. 136).

¹¹ This is the line which was originally transposed to the top of page 36 and placed between lines 700 and 701 of the current text. Pages 35 and 36 were reprinted and provided to purchasers of the play as *cartons*; these pages nevertheless have their own problems: see l. 699 and Introduction, p. 63.

¹² The meaning is: 'il n'obtiendra point cette dernière gloire de voir Hypsicratée esclave'.

¹³ The original reading of this word was *partant*, which is also found in the Pléiade edition. This was most likely a typesetter's error from misreading the manuscript.

¹⁴ The spelling here was modernized in the resetting, this word having originally been printed *soings*.

690 Aujourd'huy sa vertu nous rend un bon office:
J'attends de son dessein un tres-heureux succes.

MITRIDATE.

Dans le cœur d'un brutal l'amour n'a plus d'accès,
La seule ambition dans son ame s'imprime :
Toute autre passion seroit illegitime.
695 Et quand on le verroit rentrer en son devoir,
Il n'a sur les Romains que bien peu de pouvoir,
Toutes les legions dependent de Pompée.

MITRIDATIE.

Icy vostre creance heureusement trompée :
S'il a peu conserver¹⁵ quelque reste d'amour,
700 Permet à nostre espoir encore un peu de jour. [p.36]
Pompée impatient d'une gloire nouvelle,
Obeït au vouloir du Senat qui l'appelle :
Pharnace a desormais tout le pouvoir en main.

MITRIDATE.

On ne m'abuse pas par un mensonge vain,
705 J'approuve toutefois un loüable artifice.

MITRIDATIE.

Estant sur les rampars avecque¹⁶ Berenice,
Nous avons veu tomber un javelot lancé,
Que d'un commun accord nous avons ramassé,
Pour lire le secret d'une lettre attachée,
710 Qui nous a faict douter d'une ruse cachée.
Je ne vous redis point ce que nous avons leu,
Quoy que tout ce qu'on sçait, c'est par là qu'on l'a sçeu.
C'est un billet escrit de la main de Pharnace,
Qui par un feint discours deplore sa disgrace,
715 Sollicitant sa femme à quitter ce party :
Mais ce puissant esprit n'en est point diverty.
Ces paroles, au lieu d'esbranler son courage,
Dans son premier dessein la poussent davantage.¹⁷

¹⁵ The major misprint in the corrected pages is this sequence. The type has been muddled so that the beginning of this line reads: 'peu conS'il a server'.

¹⁶ The original reading was *avec* but this left the line with just eleven syllables. Resetting the page allowed the correction to be made. Likewise, Scherer corrected to the longer form in the *Pléiade* edition.

¹⁷ In the reprint this word was wrongly 'corrected' to *d'avantage*. The incorrect form also appears later in the text, as in line 1193.

720 Elle a releu ces mots sans changer de couleur,
Et sans me tesmoigner aucun trait de douleur.
Ce jour, m'a-t-elle dit, ou me sera funeste,
Ou je me serviray du pouvoir qui me reste.
Combien que je l'abhorre il le faut supplier : [p.37]
Et pour nostre salut je dois tout oublier.
725 Ses yeux, en le disant, n'ont point versé de larmes :
Mais ils ont au besoin repris leurs premiers charmes.
Ils s'arment des attraits qui l'ont faict souspirer,
Et lancent des regards qui se font adorer :
Si Pharnace resiste aux traits qu'elle décoche,
730 Je diray que son cœur est formé d'une roche.

MITRIDATE

Dittes qu'il est formé de poussiere & de sang,
Et que s'il est né Prince, il est hors de ce rang :
Puis que la sœur rougit de la honte du frere,
Je desavouë un fils indigne d'un tel pere.
735 Mais si son repentir on tente vainement,
Au moins defendons nous jusqu'au dernier moment.
Allons ensanglanter nos dernieres murailles,
Signalons nostre fin de mille funerailles,
Faisons à nostre gloire un superbe tombeau,
740 Et mourons satisfaits pour un trespas si beau. [p.38]

SCENE II.

PHARNACE. EMILE.

*Pharnace sort avec Emile & les Citoyens de Sinope.*¹⁸

PHARNACE.

Je ne veux point destruire un bien que je possede,
Ny traicter en vainqueur un peuple qui me cede :
Puis que tous d'un accord ne demandent que moy,
Je fus leur ennemy, je veux estre leur Roy.
745 Je monte par la force au throsne hereditaire,¹⁹
Je vous seray pourtant plus bening que mon pere :
Et si vous persistez dans la fidelité,
Vous aurez le repos qu'il vous avoit osté.
Vous verrez aujourd'huy vos peines terminées,
750 Par une paix heureuse elles seront bornées :

¹⁸ This stage direction runs down the left-hand margin from line 741.

¹⁹ The change of pronoun from *leur* to *vous* (ll. 744/746) indicates that in the first four lines Pharnace is addressing Émile before turning to the people of Sinope.

Et de tant de travaux mon peuple soulagé,
 Va respirer des maux qui l'avoient affligé.
 Je veux pour vostre bien accepter la Couronne,
 Mais vous reconnoistrez Rome qui me la donne.
 755 C'est à la Republique à vous donner des loix,
 Et d'elle desormais vous recevrez des Roys.
 C'est la punition qui vous est imposée,
 Et vous n'estes punis²⁰ que d'une peine aysée.
 Vous n'avez rien à craindre avec un tel support,
 760 Vous quittez un party pour en suivre un plus fort :
 Et pour vous delivrer d'une sanglante guerre, [p.39]
 Vous recevez son joug,²¹ comme toute la terre.
 Vous ne le pouvez craindre apres ce traicement.

EMILE.

Une telle douceur s'espreuve rarement,
 765 Et quand on a de force une ville emportée :
 La fureur des soldats est à peine arrestée :
 Mais nous avons vaincu seulement à demy ;
 La ville est bien à nous, mais non pas l'ennemy.
 Nous n'avons pas encor la victoire assez grande,
 770 C'est Mitridate seul, que Rome nous demande.

PHARNACE.

Des malheurs du combat la fuite l'a sauvé,
 Mais il s'est contre nous vainement conservé.
 Ce Palais qui luy sert de derniere retraicte,
 Ne sçauroit plus d'un jour retarder sa deffaicte.
 775 Ce mur s'oppose en vain à nos braves efforts.²²
 Qu'on comble ces fossez, ou de terre, ou de corps,
 Que l'on hazarde tout, qu'on vainque ou que l'on meure,
 Et qu'un assaut donné l'emporte dans une heure.
 C'est de vous seulement que j'espere ce bien,
 780 Et si j'en suis privé, je ne possede rien.

²⁰ Errata: the past participle was originally printed in the feminine singular: *punie*.

²¹ AF: 'Il sign. fig. Servitude, sujétion'.

²² The sense of urgency is intensified with a mention that only the palace wall now separates Pharnace and his forces from their target, and a temporal reference in the previous line is made even more urgent a few lines later with 'dans une heure' (l. 778). The play thus easily fits into a 24 hour timespan. The reference to filling trenches with earth or bodies (l. 776) again shows La Calprenède not shying away from mentioning the more grisly aspects of war.

On jette une fleche des rampars, avec une lettre attachée, ²³

Mais d'où vient à mes pieds cette fleche lancée ?
O Dieux ! si Berenice avoit sçeu ma pensée ?
Il n'en faut plus douter, ce billet attaché
Esclaircit mon esprit d'un mystere caché. [p.40]
785 Ah ! qu'un si grand bon-heur me va combler de joye,
Berenice elle mesme est celle qui l'envoye :
Je recognois sa main, ces mots qu'elle a tracés,
Et cet aymable nom me l'apprennent assez.

LETTRE DE BERENICE A PHARNACE.

790 Si je dois esperer que dans vostre pensée
De vostre chere espouse il reste un souvenir :
Par les feux innocens de noste amour passée,
Accordez moy le bien de vous entretenir.

BERENICE.

Tousjours ma volonté dependra de la tienne,
Aussi bien mon amour veut que je t'entretienne.
795 Tu demandes un bien que j'attendois de toy,
Et me fais la faveur que tu pretend²⁴ de moy.
Mais ou mon œil me trompe, ou je la voy paroistre,
Telle que dans les Cieux on void le soleil naistre.²⁵
800 D'un esclat si soudain mes yeux sont esblouis,
Et tous mes desplaisirs sont presque évanouis.
Dispose toy mon ame à souffrir un reproche.
Ce pendant gardez bien que personne n'approche,
Si l'on veut m'obliger, qu'on se tienne un peu loin,
Un secret important ne veut pas de tesmoin. [p.41]

Emile & ceux qui sont avec luy rentrent & laissent Pharnace seul. ²⁶

²³ This stage direction runs down the right-hand margin from line 781. With Pharnace and the Romans inside the city, the *rampars* must now be the battlements of the palace. Such battlements are thus shown to be functional: the whole of the next scene will take place with Bérénice elevated above Pharnace.

²⁴ DFC: rechercher, convoiter.

²⁵ Bérénice appears on the battlements of the palace, the façade of which probably occupied the back wall of the stage. Mahelot has many designs involving towers or prisons of two storeys, the upper floor of which would be reached by stairs behind the flats. The stage direction to Act I, scene 4 of Scudéry's *Amour tyrannique* reads: 'Ils sont sur un bastion' and the frontispiece depicts a scene such as we are about to see, with one character on the ground and another on ramparts. See l. 805.

²⁶ This stage direction is in the right-hand margin running down from line 804.

SCENE III.

PHARNACE. BERENICE.

PHARNACE.

805 A Peine jusqu'à toy puis-je estendre ma veuë,
Si j'avois moins d'amour, je t'aurois méconnuë.²⁷

BERENICE.

Cette méconnoissance est un visible effect
Du honteux changement que tes crimes ont fait.
Pour moy ne voyant plus cette vertu que j'ayme,
810 Je doute si Pharnace est encore le mesme.
Il a son premier port, son visage, ses yeux :
Mais il n'a point ce cœur que j'ay chery le mieux.
Il estoit vertueux, maintenant il est traistre.
C'est luy doncques, c'est luy que l'on doit méconnoitre.²⁸

PHARNACE.

815 Quoy mon ame, c'est toy qui me traittes ainsi,
Delivre mon esprit d'un si fascheux soucy.
De grace, mon espouse, esclaircis cette feinte.

[p.42]

BERENICE.

Je ne reçois ce nom qu'avec de la contrainte.
Ce tiltre est trop honteux à la fille d'un Roy,²⁹
820 Et le serf des Romains est indigne de moy.
Celuy qui peut trahir l'auteur de sa naissance,
Qui s'arme contre luy d'une lâche alliance,
Qui tient des ennemis des Sceptres empruntez,
Et qui réduit les siens dans ces extremitez,
825 Ne peut estre avoué l'espoux de Berenice,
Elle aymoît son mary, mais elle hait le vice.

PHARNACE.

En quoy t'ay-je offensé, & quel crime commis

²⁷ In the course of the three opening speeches of this scene, the characters make full play of baroque topoi of change *versus* changelessness, appearance *versus* reality, past *versus* present, and deception.

²⁸ Compare this statement with Pompée in the opening scene saying to Pharnace what Rome's support has done for him: 'Vostre condition vous rend mesconnaissable' (l. 18).

²⁹ As an invented character, Bérénice is not provided with any lineage, but it goes without saying that, as Pharnace's wife, she is meant to be of royal birth.

T'oblige à me traicter comme les ennemis ?
Il est vray, je le suis, mais c'est de Mitridate,
830 Tu le dois estre aussi, si tu n'es point ingrante.
Si de sa passion ton esprit n'est guery,
Tu suivras à clos yeux l'interest d'un mary.
Nostre condition sera tousjours commune,
Tu dois aveuglement embrasser ma fortune :
835 Aymer tous mes amis, haïr ceux que je hay,
Et pour ne point faillir, faire ce que je fay.

BERENICE.

Je sçay ce que je dois à la foy conjugale,
Mais sçache que mon ame est une ame Royale :
Qui ne peut sans contrainte appreuver un forfait,
840 Ny louër un peché, quoy qu'un mary l'ayt faict. [p.43]
Conduy tes bataillons aux murs de cette ville,
Qui sert contre les tiens à toy mesme d'azyle.
Va porter la terreur aux lieux plus retirez,
Que le flambeau du jour ayt encor esclairés.
845 Rend des Cieux seulement tes conquestes bornées,
Arme toy, si tu veux, contre les destinées :
Et si tu ne me vois compagne de tes pas,
Publie hardiment que je ne t'ayme pas.
Mais servir les Romains contre ton propre pere,
850 Usurper par sa mort un throsne hereditaire,
Tenir le jour de luy, le luy vouloir oster,
Juges-tu qu'en cela je te doive imiter ?
Sçache que je croirois une honte de vivre,
Ayant eu seulement le penser de te suivre.

PHARNACE.

855 Je commets un peché que je ne peux nier,
Mais tout ce que j'ay faict se peut justifier.
Je blesse mon honneur d'une mortelle offense :
Mais les raisons d'Estat me servent de dispense.³⁰
Mes parens³¹ delaissez, Mitridate trahy,
860 Ses soldats subornés, son pays envahy,
Des ennemis mortels l'alliance embrassée,
Ses rampars assaillis, & sa ville forcée,
Me font paroistre ingrat, traistre, dénaturé :

³⁰ Beauregard says just this in his liminary poem: 'Pharnace est innocent par maxime d'Estat' (p. 80, l. 10).

³¹ AF: 'Qui est de mesme famille, qui est de mesme sang, qui touche de consanguinité à quelqu'un'. Cf. ll. 960, 1705, 1750.

865 Mais j'ay, par ce moyen, mon repos assuré.
 Si je tiens son party, je perds une Couronne,
 Et cette trahison est ce qui me la donne. [p.44]
 Vivre en homme privé, c'est n'avoir point de cœur,
 Et le temps nous apprend³² de ceder au vainqueur.
 J'ay pour tous ces malheurs un desplaisir extreme :
 870 Mais si je ne le perds, je me perdray moy mesme.
 Mon salut seulement contre luy m'a poussé,
 Et je peche biens moins, quand je peche forcé.

BERENICE.

Tu te couvres en vain d'une honteuse feinte,
 Tu ne peux t'excuser sur aucune contrainte,
 875 Ayant suivi par tout ton propre mouvement,³³
 Et ton ambition t'a perdu seulement.

PHARNACE.

Ouy, de tous ces malheurs elle est la seule cause,
 Mais c'est par une loy que l'honneur nous impose :
 Elle n'a peu souffrir de me voir abbaissé,
 880 Regretter le debris d'un throsne renversé,
 Voir mes jours & les tiens dans un honteux servage,
 Et recevoir des fers, au lieu de rendre hommage.
 Quand tu m'as creu sans cœur, ton esprit s'est deçeu,³⁴
 Et je n'en avois³⁵ point pour en avoir trop eu.
 885 J'ayme mieux estre Roy me soumettant à Rome,
 Qu'estre sans liberté pour soustenir un homme.
 Mais mon ame, quittons ce discours importun,
 Cherchons quelque remede à nostre mal commun,
 Qui de tous mes plaisirs ne permet que la veuë,
 890 Et si dans ce Palais tu n'es point retenuë, [p.45]
 Permits que tes beaux yeux m'esclairent de plus pres,
 Laisse-là Mitridate & tous ses interests.
 Jette toy dans les bras d'un mary qui t'adore,
 Accorde le remede au feu qui le³⁶ devore.

³² Errata: as originally printed, there had been a direct object pronoun before the verb: *l'apprend*. The fact that in the text the *p* is doubled, while in the errata there is only one, bears witness to the instability of seventeenth-century orthography.

³³ AF: *mouvement*: 'Il se dit aussi des differentes impulsions, passions, ou affections de l'ame'. Cf. l. 1095.

³⁴ DFC: 'Tromper, induire en erreur'.

³⁵ Errata: the tense as originally printed was conditional: *aurois*.

³⁶ Errata: correction of what was originally *me*.

La Mort de Mitridate

895 Et puis qu'il ne peut vivre estant privé de toy,
Donne luy maintenant des preuves de ta foy.
Ne crois point dans ce lieu ta seureté certaine,
Mitridate sur toy deschargera sa haine,
Quoy qu'il ayt jusqu'icy differé ton trespas,
900 Ce cruel à la fin ne t'espargnera pas.

BERENICE.

Ton pere genereux ne m'a jamais traitté,
Que comme ses enfans, ou comme Hypsicratée,
Je n'ay point dependu des volontez d'autruy,
Je puis t'accompagner, ou vivre aupres de luy.
905 Et cette liberté qu'il m'a tousjours donnée,
A faict joindre mon sort avec sa destinée.
Le nœud qui nous estreint ne se peut separer,
Et pour nous & pour luy je te viens conjurer,
Par cette sainte amour que tu m'avois promise,
910 De destourner l'effect d'une lâche entreprise,
Employer ta valeur contre des estrangers.
Après ce repentir tes crimes sont legers,
Mitridate indulgent en perdra la memoire,
Tu te couronneras d'une derniere gloire,
915 Et par tout cet honneur suivra tousjours tes pas,
Qu'après avoir vaincu tu n'en abuses pas.

[p.46]

PHARNACE.

O Dieux ! se peut-il bien que ma fidele espouse
De ma prosperité soit maintenant jalouse ?
Me conseille ma perte, au lieu de l'empescher,
920 Et s'oppose à mon bien, qu'elle deut rechercher.

BERENICE.

Je ne m'oppose pas au bonheur de Pharnace,
Mais je veux destourner le mal qui le menace.
Je le veux garentir de la foudre des Dieux,
Leur extrême bonté m'a desillé les yeux,
925 Elle m'a fait prévoir ta prochaine ruine,
J'apprehende pour toy la vengeance divine :
Ceste peur, plus que tout, me faict venir icy,
Pharnace, que le Ciel te favorise ainsi :
Que dans tous tes projects la fortune prospere
930 Te face surpasser la gloire de ton pere,

Que tu sois souverain sur tous les autres Roys.
 Escoute mon discours pour la dernière fois.
 Par cette passion, que mes yeux firent naistre,
 Par la fidélité, que je t'ay fait paroistre,
 935 Par ces feux innocens dans nos ames conceus,
 Par ces sacrez sermens & donnez & receus,
 Par les chastes flambeaux de l'amour conjugale,
 Et par mille tesmoins d'une amitié loyale,
 Ne me refuse point la grace que je veux,
 940 Ton honneur seulement faict naistre tous mes vœux, [p.47]
 Et que jamais le Ciel ne me soit favorable,
 Si toy seul, plus que tous, ne m'es considerable.
 Que si mes premiers droicts me sont encor permis,
 Si tu ne me tiens pas au rang des ennemis,
 945 Si je te puis nommer mon espoux & mon ame,
 Et si ton cœur retient quelque reste de flame,
 Si du bonheur passé le souvenir t'est doux,
 Esleve un peu tes yeux, voy ta femme à genoux.³⁷
 Considere les pleurs, qui coulent sur sa face,
 950 Et pour quels ennemis elle attend une grace :
 Je parle pour tes sœurs, pour ton pere & pour moy,
 Et bien plus que pour nous, je demande pour toy.

PHARNACE.

Ah ! que j'embrasserois l'occasion offerte,
 Si dans ta volonté je ne voyois ma perte.³⁸
 955 Le serment que j'ay faict, ne se peut rappeler,
 Et si tu m'aymes bien tu n'en dois plus parler.

BERENICE.

Quel scrupule bons Dieux ! tu crains d'estre parjure,
 Et non pas d'offenser le Ciel & la nature.
 Des sermens violez sont des crimes trop grands,
 960 Et tu ne rougis point de trahir tes parens,

³⁷ This is another indication that the whole of this interview takes place with Pharnace at stage level and Bérénice on the battlements of the palace, at this point on her knees.

³⁸ Errata: this is the line referred to as needing a *la* to be replaced by *ma*. In all the original copies, however, there is no *la* in this line, but there is a second *ta* before *perte*, which is what obviously needs changing. The list of errata thus contains errors of its own.

De porter le trespas dans le sein de ton pere,
Ouy, Pharnace, il le faut, ton crime est necessaire,
Ayant donné la foy qui t'engage aux Romains,
Ce pere infortuné doit perir par tes mains. [p.48]

PHARNACE.³⁹

965 Si je fausse ma foy, ma perte est sans remede,
Et ce n'est pas des Dieux que ma crainte procede,
Ce scrupule honteux est indigne d'un Roy :
Mais si je veux trahir de plus puissans que moy,
970 Qui me destournera la mort & l'infamie,
Et que pourray-je faire ayant Rome ennemie ?

BERENICE.

Et qu'a faict Mitridate ?

PHARNACE.

Il s'est en fin perdu

BERENICE.

Ouy, parce que son fils luy mesme l'a vendu.

PHARNACE.

Mais invente un moyen pour éviter l'orage.

BERENICE.

975 Tu n'en dois rechercher qu'en ton propre courage :
Tout autre expedient est blasmable & honteux.

PHARNACE.

Celuy là, plus que tous, temeraire & douteux.
Il n'est invention qui ne soit inutile, [p.49]
Et je rechercherois vainement un azyle,
Puis que tout l'univers ne me peut garentir :
980 Si de cette promesse on me voit repentir.
Ne me presse donc plus d'une chose impossible,
Ma resolution se maintient invincible :
Et je jure le Ciel qui me vit engager,
Qu'il n'est rien d'assez fort pour me faire changer.

BERENICE.

985 Et j'atteste des Dieux la puissance absoluë,
Que tu me cognoistras de mesme resoluë,
Desormais mon destin se separe du tien.

³⁹ All seventeenth-century copies have MITRIDATE as the name of the speaker here.

Adieu je ne puis plus souffrir ton entretien,⁴⁰
Croy, si tu me revois que tu me verras morte.

Berenice s'en va.

PHARNACE.

990 Tu ne peux alleguer une raison si forte:
Mais elle dispaïoist ainsi qu'un prompt esclair,
Berenice mon ame, ô Dieux ! je parle à l'air.
Ce Palais orgueilleux la derobe à ma veuë,
Mais croy que vainement tu me l'as retenuë.
995 Deussay-je de mes mains saper tes fondemens,
Me servir contre toy de tous les elemens,
Tu me rendras un bien que le Ciel te destine,
Pour instrument fatal de ta proche ruine.

⁴⁰ This is the line missing in the original printing and corrected by the pasting of a slip of paper (*un papillon*) over the entire speech, from BERENICE to PHARNACE, but not including the stage direction, which is situated in the right-hand margin at lines 988-89. In the Pléiade edition, not having seen a copy with a *papillon*, Scherer assumes that it is the first line of the rhyming couplet which is missing (l. 987) and so writes: 'J'en propose une reconstitution conjecturale, fondée sur la décision de Bérénice de faire echo à celle de son mari, reprenant – dans toute la mesure du possible – le contenu et les termes du vers 984: A ne jamais changer ni te demander rien' (pp.1301-02).

ACTE III.

SCENE PREMIERE

MITRIDATIE. NISE. MITRIDATE.
HYPSICRATEE. BERENICE.

MITRIDATIE.

1000 Nous vous en conjurons par ces sacrez genoux,
Par la clarté du jour que nous tenons de vous,
Ne courez pas si tost à ce dernier remede.¹

NISE.

De vous seul maintenant nous esperons de l'ayde.
La honte ne peut rien sur la necessité,
Et l'on doit tout tenter en telle extremité.

MITRIDATE.

1005 Quoy vostre lâcheté sera donc satisfaite,
Pourvieu qu'à cet ingrat son pere se soumette,
Implorant la merci d'un fils denaturé.
Non, quand bien ce moien² me seroit asseuré,
Quand ma submission³ me rendroit la Couronne,
1010 C'est achepter trop cher le bien qu'elle me donne.

[p.51]

HYPSICRATEE.

Si vous me reservez un reste d'amitié,
D'un espoux que j'adore aiez quelque pitié.
Conservez-le pour moi, puis que sa propre haine,
Veut obliger mourant l'inimitié Romaine :
1015 Et qu'avant le malheur qui lui peut avenir,

¹ The act begins *in medias res*, suspense being created by the reference to a last resort, which the family has discussed but which the audience has not yet heard about.

² A sudden preference for using *i* instead of *y* in certain words might indicate a change of typesetter for the G gathering, which began on p. 49 of the original text: cf. ll. 1012, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1029, 1141, 1142.

³ Vaugelas discusses the merits of *soumission* and *submission*: 'Il ya vingt ans qu'on disoit *submission* et non pas *soumission*, quoy que l'on dist *soumettre*, et *soumis*, et non pas *submettre*, ny *submis*; maintenant on dit et on escrit, *soumission*, et non pas *submission*' (I, 83). In line 1182 it is spelt *sumission*.

Par sa main meurtriere il le veut prevenir.
 Les Dieux savent assez le soin que j'ay de vivre,
 Et si j'ay de desir, que celui de vous suivre.
 Mais si vous negligez le moien de guerir,
 1020 Je mourray mille fois en vous voiant mourir.
 Et de grace, essayez de flechir son courage,
 Il ne pourra souffrir l'éclat de ce visage,
 Et se ressouvenant qu'il ne vit que par vous,
 Vous le verrez sans doute embrasser vos genoux.

MITRIDATE.

1025 Perdez chere moitié, ce reste d'esperance,
 L'amour & le devoir ont beaucoup de puissance :
 Mais à ce que l'amour tente inutilement,
 Le devoir negligé travaille vainement.
 Puis qu'il a reietté les vœux de Berenice,
 1030 Les hommes, ni les Dieux n'ont rien qui le flechisse.
 Tout est indifferent à ce monstre affamé,
 Le bonheur seulement d'un throsne l'a charmé,
 Et le desir brutal d'une grandeur legere,
 Luy fait trahir ses sœurs, son espouse, & son pere.

[p.52]

BERENICE.

1035 Pour le salut commun j'ay faict ce que j'ay peu,
 Je n'en veux pour tesmoin que le Ciel qui l'a veu :
 Que sa justice esclatte, & me face un reproche,
 Si j'ay rien espargné pour flechir cette roche.
 Mais si dans mon dessein j'ay si mal reüssi,
 1040 Peut-estre du depuis ce tigre est adouci,
 Peut-estre qu'un remords de son crime le touche,
 Et qu'il a despouillé ce sentiment farouche.⁴
 Pour moy j'ay faict aux Dieux un solennel serment,
 Qu'il ne me reverroit que morte seulement.
 1045 Je ne tascherai plus d'émouvoir ce barbare,
 Et suivrai le destin que le Ciel nous prepare.

HYPsicRATEE.

J'attens de mon espoux ce seul bien desormais,
 Et s'il me le refuse, il ne m'aima jamais.
 Ouy je vous veux prier par les preuves données,

⁴ It is necessary to have such thoughts expressed if an audience is to believe at all possible a change of heart in Pharnace. The play's suspense is dependent on the possibility of such a change being brought about by Mitridate's interview with his son in scene 3 of this act.

- 1050 De ma fidélité, dès⁵ mes tendres années,
D'abaisser ce grand cœur pour une seule fois :
Sçavoir ceder au temps, c'est la vertu des Rois.
Vous n'entreprenez rien qui tache votre gloire,
Et vous gagnez sur vous une grande victoire.
1055 Est-ce commettre un acte indigne de son rang, [p.53]
Que dans l'extrémité prier son propre sang ?

MITRIDATE.

- Ouy je veux accorder tout ce que tu demandes,
Et je me porterois à des preuves plus grandes.
Tu dois, ma chere espouse, esperer tout de moi,
1060 Puis que je meurs ingrat, si je ne meurs pour toi.
Allons rendre un combat qui m'est plus difficile,
Que de rompre les murs de la plus forte ville.
Le Ciel m'a veu rougir seulement aujourd'hui :
Je lui donnai la vie, & je l'attens de lui.

SCENE II.

EMILE. PHARNACE.

EMILE

- 1065 Je voudrais moderer cette ardeur aveuglée :⁶
Oui, vostre passion me semble desreglée.
Elle vous fait faillir & contre vos amis,
Et contre ce devoir que vous avez promis.
Souvenez-vous Pharnace, & que vous estes homme,
1070 Et que vostre pouvoir est allié de Rome :
Pour etre digne ami d'une telle cité,
Reprenés ce grand cœur que vous avez quité.
Je sçai bien que le trait dont vostre ame est blessée, [p.54]
Innocent comme il est, plaist à votre pensée.
1075 Et je n'ignore pas qu'on ne sçauroit blasmer
Les legitimes feux qu'hymen fait allumer.
Mais...⁷

⁵ In the original texts this word is printed *des*. I have opted to make it the equivalent of the modern preposition *dès*, while using an acute accent for consistency with other instances of the word elsewhere in the text (l. 687). Scherer considers it to be a misprint of the initial preposition and changes it to *de*.

⁶ The change to the Roman camp is again signalled by the scene beginning *in medias res* with Émile, who must have sensed his charge wavering, attempting to steel Pharnace in his resolve.

⁷ There is no punctuation in the original here. Scherer also supplies suspension marks.

PHARNACE.

Emile du moins permets que je soupire,
 Pour aimer mon espouse ai-je trahi l'Empire ?
 Et si je plains mon cœur que je ne puis revoir,
 1080 Me juges-tu sorti des termes du devoir ?
 Mais du haut du Palais j'oy le bruit des trompettes,
 Et voy les legions à l'assaut toutes prestes.
 Dieux ! je voy Mitridate au haut de ces rampars.
 Que dois-je faire Emile ?

EMILE.

Y lancer tous nos dars,
 1085 Perdre cet ennemy dont la vie est fatale.

PHARNACE.

J'abhorre le conseil d'une ame si brutale.
 Doit-on traiter ainsi la personne des Rois ?
 Non, je luy veux parler pour la dernière fois.
 Dans cette extrémité c'est tout ce qu'il demande,
 1090 Aussi ne puis-je faire une grace plus grande.
 Approchez, je veux bien que vous soyez tesmoin,
 Que je possède un cœur qui resiste au besoin.
 Que rien n'esbranlera la foy que j'ay promise,
 Et que je sçay par tout conserver ma franchise.
 1095 Mais que mon cœur pressé de divers mouvemens,⁸
 Garde, avec regret, ses premiers sentimens.
 N'importe, tesmoignons une constance extrême,
 Et que l'amy de Rome a sçeu vaincre soy-mesme.

[p.55]

SCENE III.

MITRIDATE. PHARNACE.

MITRIDATE.

Tu me vois incertain à qui je dois parler,
 1100 Si le pouvoir passé se pouvoit rappeler :
 Et si j'avois encor la fortune prospere,
 Je te commanderois, je parlerois en pere.
 Comme tel j'userois d'un pouvoir absolu,
 Et l'on observeroit ce que j'aurois voulu.
 1105 Mais puis qu'il faut subir ce que le Ciel ordonne,
 Et que je perds mes droicts en perdant ma Couronne :

⁸ *Émotions*; see line 875. Such emotional turmoil is necessary to make plausible a feeling of suspense in the next scene.

- Je me dois prosterner devant mon propre fils,
Et faire plus à luy que jamais je ne fis.
Ah ! Pharnace, à quel point tu t'es rendu coupable,
1110 As-tu cogneu de crime à ton crime semblable ?
Je ne demande point que tu rendes mes biens,
Possede-les, Pharnace, ils devoient estre tiens.
Mais tu les recevrois avec moins d'infamie, [p.56]
Les recevrant de moy que de mon ennemie.
1115 Pourquoi veux-tu⁹ gagner par ce honteux secours,
Ce qu'on te differoit seulement quelques jours ?
Est-ce pour te vanger d'une injure receuë ?
As-tu pour quelque offense une haine conceuë ?
Parle, descouvre moy le mal que je t'ay fait :
1120 Si j'en¹⁰ suis esclairci, je seray satisfait.

PHARNACE.

Je ne vous redis point la cause de ma haine,
J'ay suivy par raison l'alliance Romaine :
Ma femme qui l'a sçeu vous a dit le sujet.
Je n'ay point vostre mal, mais mon bien pour objet.

MITRIDATE.

- 1125 Croy que tu te repais d'une vaine esperance,
Et tu te crois heureux contre toute apparence :
Rome pour son profit aime la trahison,
Mais elle hait le traistre avec trop de raison.
Quoy que pour la servir ta haine degenere,
1130 Sçache qu'elle craindra mesme sort que ton pere.
Et tu seras payé du salaire attendu,
Lors qu'elle te perdra, comme tu m'as perdu.¹¹
Si son ambition n'estoit si fort connue,
Qu'on ne peut l'ignorer au point qu'elle est venuë :
1135 Je croirois qu'un appast¹² auroit peu t'abuser,
Et qu'ainsi ton peché se pourroit excuser.
Mais si bien informé du pouvoir tyrannique, [p.57]¹³

⁹ Errata: corrected from the original *viens-tu*.

¹⁰ Errata: both verbs were originally preceded by *j'en*. The errata states that *j'en* should be changed to *je* without stipulating which *j'en*. Scherer also opts for the second one. This is the last of the errors pointed out in the errata.

¹¹ For Pharnace's fate, see note 31 to this act.

¹² F: 'APPAST, se dit figurément en choses morales de ce qui sert à attraper les hommes, à les inviter à faire quelque chose'.

¹³ Gathering H begins on page 57 of the original text. It is from this gathering onwards that La Calprenède appears to have seen the proofs.

Que l'on voit usurper à cette Republique,
 Es-tu si jeune encor de te laisser piper,¹⁴
 1140 Dessous de faux esclats qui te doivent tromper ?
 Peux-tu voir sans fraieur ces ames desloiales,
 S'enrichir tous les jours de despouilles Roiales ?
 Fouler sensiblement tous ceux qu'ils ont soumis,
 Et tenir tous les Rois pour mortels ennemis,
 1145 Leur ravir la franchise avec le Diademe,
 Sans te représenter qu'ils te feront de mesme.
 Ah ! Pharnace revien dans ton premier devoir,
 Puis que ta liberté depend de ton vouloir,
 Que tu peux secouer le joug qui te menace,
 1150 Et reprendre des tiens la glorieuse trace.
 Il est encore temps, je veux tout oublier.
 Que si de mes haineux¹⁵ tu te dois alier,
 Si l'Asie à tes vœux ne paroist assez ample,
 Fais que tout l'univers me traite à ton exemple.
 1155 Arme les plus puissans & les plus inhumains,
 Pourveu que tu ne sois esclave des Romains,
 Ce nom est odieux au sang de Mitridate,
 Et de quelque bon-heur que ton espoir se flatte,
 Quelques remords secrets te font avec raison,
 1160 Hair les ennemis de toute ta maison.
 Ouy, quoy qu'idolatrant la puissance latine,
 Un instinct naturel te pousse à sa ruine.
 Tu voudrois t'agrandir par un double malheur,
 Puis que nostre genie¹⁶ est ennemy du leur,

[p.58]

PHARNACE.

1165 Ayant avec le laict l'inimitié conceuë,
 Je conservay long-temps l'impression receuë,
 J'eus de l'aversion pour l'Empire Romain,
 N'espargnant contre luy ny mon sang ny ma main,
 Mais pendant les fureurs d'une sanglante guerre,
 1170 Qui presque d'habitans a depeuplé la terre.
 Pamy tous nos combats se peut-on figurer,

¹⁴ DFC: tromper. The rhyme with the next line is weak, verbs ending in *er* ideally rhyming with the penultimate syllable as well; in this same speech, cf. ll. 1135-36 and 1151-52.

¹⁵ F: 'HAINEUX. s. m. Vieux mot qui signifioit autrefois, *Ennemi*, qui a conceu de la haine contre quelqu'un'.

¹⁶ AF: 'Il se dit aussi, De ces esprits ou demons qui, selon la doctrine des Anciens, president à de certains lieux, à des villes, &c. *Le genie du lieu, le genie de Rome, du Peuple Romain*'.

Un malheur que l'on doive au nostre comparer ?¹⁷
Tant de sang respandu, tant de troupes rompuës,
Mille piteux debris¹⁸ de batailles perduës,
1175 L'image de la mort cent fois devant nos yeux,
Le plus souvent vaincus, par fois victorieux,
Et dans l'extremité nos personnes reduites,
A chercher leur salut dans de honteuses fuittes,
M'ont fait juger en fin qu'il n'estoit pas permis,
1180 D'avoir sans ce malheur les Romains ennemis,
La force a fait contr'eux des efforts inutiles,
Et ma submission m'a basti des azyles.
Si vous voulez tenter un semblable moyen,
Mon exemple suivi, ne desesperés rien,¹⁹
1185 Cette Reine du monde à vaincre accoustumée,
Se vaint par la douceur mieux que par une armée,
Implorez la mercy de ce peuple clement,
Et vous n'en recevrez qu'un pareil traitement,
Si je puis envers luy vous rendre un bon office,
1190 Esperez de mes soins un fidele service, [p.59]
J'emploieray mon credit...²⁰

MITRIDATE.

Il seroit superflu.
Si tu cognois ton pere il est trop resolu,
Le plus affreux tombeau me plaira d'avantage,
Que de rendre aux Romains un si honteux homage,
1195 Implorer la clemence & recevoir des loix,
De ceux que ma valeur a vaincu tant de fois,
Outre que ce moyen me seroit inutile,
J'ay versé trop souvent le sang de cette ville,
Et celles de l'Asie en ont assez receu,
1200 Pour estouffer l'esperoir que j'en aurois conçu.
Cent mille citoyens, de qui la destinée
Se finit dans le cours d'une seule journée,²¹

¹⁷ In the following ten lines the war-weary Pharnace provides, in self-justification, the most damning picture of war in the play.

¹⁸ R: 'Ce qui reste d'une chose rompuë, ce qui reste d'une chose ruinée, défaite, batuë, sacagée'.

¹⁹ The imperative is compressed to fit the line: *ne désespérez-vous de rien*.

²⁰ In the original, this line ends with a full stop, but the sense is of the father cutting off the son. Scherer likewise supplies suspension marks.

²¹ This is probably a reference to a massacre known as the Asiatic Vespers, when in 88 BC Mithradates ordered the killing of the 80,000 Roman citizens in Asia Minor, or indeed of anyone who even had a Latin accent.

Flacce, Cotta, Fimbrie, & Triaire, vaincus,²²
 Cent trophées dressés de leurs pesans escus,
 1205 Et mille autres tesmoins d'une sanglante haine,
 Ne me peuvent laisser qu'une esperance vaine.

PHARNACE.

Tigrane ce pendant qui les avoit trahis,²³
 A par ce seul moyen recouvert son pays :
 Rome considerant son rang & sa personne,
 1210 Sur sa teste abaissée a remis la couronne,
 Et ce que son armée a tenté vainement,
 Un simple repentir l'a fait en un moment.

[p.60]

MITRIDATE.

Tu peux encore mieux confirmer ta pensée,
 En m'alléguant Siphax, ou Jugurte, ou Persée,²⁴
 1215 Qui dans le capitol²⁵ honteusement trainés,
 Aux plus sombres cachots se virent confinés :
 Où leurs Roiales mains de fers furent chargées,
 Et par la seule mort de leurs poids soulagées.
 Ceux-là n'eurent-ils point la qualité de Roy,

²² L. Valerius Flaccus, consul and governor of Asia, and G. Flavius Fimbria, who had been sent out as his legate, both fought Mithradates during the first war. Flaccus was murdered by Fimbria who later killed himself. M. Aurelius Cotta and C. Valerius Triarius were both opponents of Mithradates during the third war, the former being defeated by the Pontic king at Chalcedon in 74 BC and the latter at Zela in 67 BC.

²³ Tigranes II, King of Armenia, called the Great. He was both an ally of Mithradates and his son-in-law, being married to Cleopatra, one of Mithradates' daughters. Pharnace's point in mentioning him is that, after years of supporting Mithradates against Rome, on surrendering to Pompey in 66 BC Tigranes was allowed to keep much of his kingdom, ruling as an ally of Rome until his death in 55 BC.

²⁴ Mitridate counters Pharnace's example of Tigrane as proof of Roman generosity by naming three monarchs who fared less favourably at Rome's hands. Syphax, King of Numidia, had allied himself with Carthage during the Second Punic War and, once defeated, was taken to Italy as a prisoner and died at Tivoli in 203 BC. As the husband of Sophonisba, he appears in Mairet's tragedy *Sophonisbe* (1634), which started the fashion for tragedies on Roman subjects. A later King of Numidia, Jugurtha, after having been an ally of Rome, invariably clashed with the Republic, was defeated by Marius, captured, taken to Rome in chains, paraded in Marius's triumph and executed in 104 BC. Perseus was the last king of Macedon. Defeated by Rome during the Third Macedonian War, he surrendered, was taken to Rome, imprisoned, and died there in 165 BC, his kingdom becoming the Roman province of Macedonia.

²⁵ R: 'C'étoit dans l'ancienne Rome une forteresse bâtie sur une montagne, où il y avoit un temple dédié à Jupiter'. The *montagne* was the Capitoline Hill.

La Mort de Mitridate

- 1220 Ou s'ils avoient paru plus ennemis que moy ?²⁶
Ah ! Pharnace tu sçais à quoy Rome destine²⁷
Ceux qui se sont armez pour sa seule ruine.
La prison et la mort sont les moindres des maux,
Qu'un superbe Senat impose à mes égaux.
- 1225 Tu le sçais & poussé d'une impudence extrême,
Tu me peux sans rougir le conseiller toy-mesme.
Il reste seulement que de ta propre main,
Tu m'attaches au char de l'Empereur Romain,²⁸
Et joyeux de ma honte & de ton infamie,
- 1230 Triomphes de ton pere avec son ennemie,
Charges de fers pesans mon espouse & tes sœurs,
Et t'estimes heureux parmy tant de douceurs.²⁹
C'est la gloire d'un fils, c'est ce que la naissance
Me faisoit esperer de ta recognoissance,
- 1235 En t'aquant ainsi tu t'aquites assez,
Tous les bienfaits reçeus sont trop recompensés
Les soins que j'eus de toy dés tes jeunes années,
Rendent par ton appuy les miennes fortunées.
Ah ! mon fils si ce nom m'est encore permis, [p.61]
- 1240 En quoy t'ay-je despleu, quel crime ay-je commis,
Qui te puisse obliger à m'estre si contraire ?
Ne t'ay-je pas rendu tous les devoirs d'un pere,
Et de tous les enfans que le Ciel m'a donné,³⁰

²⁶ This is another example of an 'interrogation alternative' (cf. l. 318) where in line 1220 the sense is 'Ou [dites-moi] s'ils avaient paru...'.

²⁷ In their editions of Racine's *Mithridate*, both Lanson and Bernardin quote this speech approvingly from this line onward. Lanson cites it as an example of 'quelques beaux morceaux' and 'quelques situations pathétiques' he finds in the play (p. 20). Bernardin introduces it by noting 'des accents si énergiques que nous ne pouvons nous refuser le plaisir de citer un long morceau de cette œuvre que n'est pas assez connue' (p. 9).

²⁸ La Calprenède is being anachronistic here in that we are still in the time of the Roman Republic. Throughout the play 'empire romain' is used, and republics can have empires, but they do not have emperors.

²⁹ One of the great fears of defeated monarchs was the thought of being paraded in a Roman triumph. Mitridate here imagines the scene, but his death will spare him such a humiliation. Appian mentions that in Pompey's triumph five of Mithradates' sons and two of his daughters figured, Mithradates himself being represented by an image and scenes from his life, including his death (*Des Guerres des Romains*, ff. 166^v-67). Mairet's Sophonisbe too seeks to be spared a Roman triumph (IV.1.1123-24), and Michael O'Regan comments on the reference to the subject in Racine's *Mithridate* (III.1.766-68): 'The triumph was, no doubt, a piece of "local colour" which could scarcely be omitted from any work on a Roman or, more particularly, an anti-Roman theme', in *The Mannerist Aesthetic* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1980), p. 46.

³⁰ Here is another example of past participle agreements not yet being fixed.

Ne t'ay-je pas toy seul au trosne destiné ?
 1245 Pour te le garentir des puissances Romaines,
 N'ay-je pas espuisé tout le sang de mes veines.
 N'ay-je pas mieux aimé les malheurs arrivez,
 Que de voir mes enfans vivre en hommes privez ?
 A mes propres despens j'ay recherché ta gloire,
 1250 Et tu la veux souïller d'une tache si noire.
 Que si tu ne demords d'une telle fureur,
 Les siecles à venir en fremiront d'horreur.
 Ne viole donc plus les loix de la nature,
 Regarde pour le moins celuy qui te conjure,
 1255 Et si tu te souviens de sa condition,
 Le sang sera plus fort que ton ambition.

PHARNACE.

Je conjure les Dieux de me traiter de mesme,
 Si pour vostre malheur mon regret n'est extrême.
 Je n'ay rien oublié de ce que je vous dois,
 1260 Mais je vous rediray pour la derniere fois,
 Que ce que vous voulez n'estant en ma puissance,
 Je me croy dispensé de mon obeissance.
 Je ne suis plus à moy, je despend des Romains,
 Leur pouvoir me retient & m'attache les mains.
 1265 Non, la force du sang n'est pas encore esteinte,
 Et pechant envers vous je peche par contrainte.
 Je vous ayme, mais j'ay de l'amitié pour moy,
 Et ne veux point perir en violant ma foy.
 Ma resolution sera tousjours entiere,
 1270 Ce que je puis pour vous c'est d'user de priere.

[p.62]

MITRIDATE.

Non tigre, non cruel, je n'en espere rien,
 Et si je t'ay prié ce n'est pas pour mon bien.
 Cette sumission fait honte à ma mémoire,
 J'ay prié pour tes sœurs voila toute ta gloire.
 1275 C'est un dernier effort qu'elles ont obtenu,
 Et ton pere pour soy se seroit retenu,
 Apres avoir produit un monstre epouvantable,
 La lumiere du jour luy seroit effroyable.
 C'est le seul deshonneur dont ses jours sont tachés,
 1280 Tes crimes seulement luy seront reprochés.
 J'ay vescu glorieux, je mourray dans ma gloire,
 Et tu n'obtiendras pas une entiere victoire.
 Ne m'ayant point privé du secours de ma main,
 Tu ne me verras pas au triomphe Romain.

- 1285 Mais puis que de mes jours la course se termine,
J'appelleray mourant la vengeance divine.
J'invoqueray les Dieux en ma juste douleur,
Qui t'envelopperont dans mon dernier malheur.
Ils combleront d'horreur ta vie abominable,
1290 Ils te rendront aux tiens, à toi-mesme execrable. [p.63]
Tu ne verras par tout que des sujets d'effroy,
Tu te voudras cacher & du Ciel & de moy,
De qui l'ombre à tes pas d'une suite eternelle
Affligera par tout ton ame criminelle.
1295 Au lieu de ce repos que tu t'estois promis,
Tu seras le plus grand de tous tes ennemis.
Escoute ce pendant un esprit prophetique,
Tu seras ruiné par cette Republique,
Et ces mesmes Romains, à qui tu fais la cour,
1300 Te mettront à neant par la guerre d'un jour.
Un plus puissant guerrier que Luculle & Pompée,
Te vaincra sans effort presque d'un coup d'espée.
Et prenant l'interest des Romains & de moy,
Sa main me vangera de Pompée & de toy.³¹

PHARNACE.

- 1305 Les Dieux comme ils voudront feront mes destinées.

Mitridate rentre.

[p.64]

SCENE III.

MITRIDATIE. NISE. PHARNACE.
HYPsicRATEE.

MITRIDATIE.

He ! mon frere voyez vos sœurs infortunées,
Si toute l'amitié n'est esteinte chez vous,
Amollissez ce cœur, ayez pitié de nous,
Je demande à genoux le salut de mon pere.

³¹ The reference is to Julius Caesar, who will defeat Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC. Pompey fled to Egypt and was killed there. A year later, Pharnaces will himself be defeated by Caesar at the Battle of Zela, ironically the site of his father's victory over Triarius. The campaign against Pharnaces having only lasted five days, Caesar informed the Senate of his victory with the famous phrase: *Veni, vidi, vici*. Lucius Licinius Lucullus was the Roman commander during the Third Mithradatic War who was acrimoniously replaced by Pompey.

NISE.

1310 Nous vous en conjurons par ce doux nom de frere,
Par ce devoir du sang qu'on ne peut oublier,
Et par cette amitié qui nous souloit³² lier.

PHARNACE.

Je vous l'accorderois estant en ma puissance,
Mais de tous ces devoirs la force me dispense.
1315 Je vous l'ay desja dit,³³ ne m'importunés plus,
Puis que c'est perdre en l'air des discours superflus.

HYPSICRATEE.

On ne peut donc flechir cet esprit indocile,
Ah perfide, les tiens te servent d'un azyle.
Tu braves insolent, entre mille estandars.
1320 Que s'il m'estoit permis de quitter ces rampars,³⁴
Si nous pouvions nous deux démesler la querelle,
Et finir par nos mains une haine mortelle :
Tu ne te croirois pas en telle seureté.
Mais non, reçois des Dieux le loyer merité.
1325 Cette main rougiroit d'avoir taché sa gloire,
Par une si honteuse, & facile victoire,
On te verroit perir trop honorablement,
Et tu dois trebucher du foudre seulement.
De quelque vanité que ton esprit se flatte,
1330 Je ne te creus jamais du sang de Mitridate.
Ces prodiges d'horreur, & cette trahison,
Ne sçauroient proceder d'une telle maison.
Si ta brutalité prit naissance d'un homme,
Tu nasquis seulement d'un esclave de Rome :³⁵
1335 Mais ostons nous d'icy, plus genereuses sœurs,
Allons dans le trespas gouter plus de douceurs,
Que dans cet entretien qui merite un reproche.
Aussi nous ne sçaurions esmouvoir cette roche,

[p.65]

³² AF, s.v. *souloir*: 'Avoir de coutume. *Les Romains souloient faire*. Il ne s'est guere dit qu'à l'imparfait. Il est vieux'. Vaugelas comments: 'Ce mot est vieux mais il seroit fort à souhaitter qu'il fust encore en usage, parce que l'on a souvent besoin d'exprimer ce qu'il signifie' (I, 379). The Pléiade edition wrongly has a circumflex on the *u*.

³³ Scherer notes that this is actually the first time Pharnace has seen his sisters in the course of the play (p. 1302).

³⁴ This is yet another indication that all conversations during this act have had Pharnace at stage level and all members of his family elevated on the palace battlements.

³⁵ There is no doubt that Pharnaces was the son of Mithradates, so here Hypsicratée is resorting to casting aspersions on his birth in order to insult him.

Les pleurs que vous versez luy sont indifferents.

MITRIDATIE.

1340 Adieu monstre alteré du sang de tes parens.

NISE.

Puis que tous ces objets n'ont peu toucher ton ame,
Tu ne reverras plus, ny tes sœurs, ny ta femme.

[p.66]

SCENE V.

EMILE. PHARNACE.

EMILE.

Que vous estes sorty d'un combat dangereux,
Rome ne vit jamais rien de si genereux :
1345 Je luy rapporteray cet illustre victoire,
Elle en conservera longuement la memoire :
Et la reconnoistra par de si grands bienfaicts,
Que vous serez heureux par dessus vos souhaits.

PHARNACE.

Ah ! c'est trop achepter le bien que j'en espere,
1350 Toutefois je veux bien achever³⁶ de luy plaire.
Allons soyez tesmoin comment j'ay combatu.

EMILE.

J'iray dans le Senat louer vostre vertu.

³⁶ DFC: réussir à.

ACTE V.

SCENE PREMIERE.

MITRIDATE. HYPsicRATEE.

MITRIDATIE. NISE.

Ils paroissent dans la chambre avec une coupe sur la table.¹

MITRIDATE

1355 Ceux qui font un bien veritable,²
 D'un bon-heur instable & mouvant,
 Charmez d'un appas decevant,
 Ne sont fondez que sur le sable.³
 Par une aveugle passion,
 Ils bornent leur ambition,
 Des plaisirs qu'un Sceptre nous donne.
 1360 Mais si tous avoient comme moy,
 Senty le poids d'une couronne,
 Un berger craindroit d'estre Roy.

1365 Gloire, grandeurs, Sceptres, victoire,
 Vous fustes mes honneurs passez,
 Et de ces tiltres effacez,
 Je n'ay gardé que la memoire,
 Tout mon bon-heur s'esvanouït,
 Mais le perfide qui jouït
 Du bien que son crime luy donne :
 1370 Un jour avoura comme moy,
 Que s'il cognoissoit la couronne,
 Un berger craindroit d'estre Roy.

[p.68]

¹ This stage direction runs down the right-hand margin from line 1356.

² Scherer cites these *stances* as one of the few sets which have a refrain, at least at the end of the first two stanzas. He also comments on the identical rhyme scheme of the last four lines of each stanza. Along with Rotrou's *Célimène* (III.1) of 1636, he sees these *stances* as prefiguring those of Rodrigue in *Le Cid* (*Dramaturgie classique*, p. 289). Despite their popularity in the 1630s, La Calprenède will only include *stances* once more in his theatre, in his second play, the tragi-comedy *Bradamante*.

³ Baroque topoi of change, instability, deception, illusion, appearance and duality crowd the first two stanzas of these *stances*. La Calprenède's great baroque set piece on these themes will be found in his tragedy *Jeanne reine d'Angleterre* (1638), as Jeanne, like Mitridate, muses on the crown (I.7).

Il n'est point de haine & de rage,
Dont le sort ne m'ait poursuivy :
1375 Mais il ne m'a pas tout ravy,
Puis qu'il me laisse le courage.
Doncques ne deliberons plus,
Tous ces regrets sont superflus,
Faisons ce que le Ciel ordonne,
1380 Et nos nepveux⁴ diront de moy,
Que si je perds une couronne,
Je conserve le cœur d'un Roy.

Ah ! c'est trop consulter sur un point necessaire,
Mourons, puis que la mort est un port salutaire.⁵
1385 Rome qui craint encor un si grand ennemy,
Tandis que je vivrai, ne vivra qu'à demy.
Delivrons-la de crainte & soulageons Pharnace,
Je dois faire à mon fils cette derniere grace,
Et laisser par ma mort un Sceptre entre ses mains,
1390 Qu'il recevra de moy plustost que des Romains.
Ce que Sylla n'a peu, Luculle, ni Pompée,⁶
Je l'ay dans le pommeau de ma fatale espée.

[p.69]

*Il prend le poison du pommeau de son espée, & le detrempe dans une couppe*⁷

Ce poison que je garde avec beaucoup de soin,
Comme j'avois preveu, me sert à ce besoin.
1395 Donnez-moi cette couppe, & faites que je voie
Des signes sur ces fronts d'une parfaite joie,
Ne me travaillez point de nouvelles douleurs,
C'est envier mon bien que d'en verser des pleurs.
C'est rendre à vostre pere un tres mauvais office.
1400 Si son mal vous desplaist, permettez qu'il finisse.

⁴ AF: 'On dit, *Nos neveux*, dans le genre sublime, & en poësie, pour dire, La postérité, ceux qui viendront après nous'.

⁵ Bernardin comments after the *stances* that 'la situation devient terrible, si terrible que le cinquième acte de *Rodogune* ne l'est pas davantage, et qu'un poète plus habile que La Calprenède en eût pu tirer un effet prodigieux' (p. 10).

⁶ In 87 BC L. Cornelius Sulla was sent from Rome to drive Mithradates out of Greece. He succeeded in delivering heavy blows to Mithradates' forces at the battles of Chaeronea and Orchomenos, but returned to Italy before a decisive victory over the Pontic king. Lucullus was his chief of staff and took over command during the Third Mithradatic War, only to be replaced by Pompey (see Act IV, n. 31).

⁷ This stage direction runs down the right-hand margin from the top of page 69.

Apprenez le secours qu'il reçoit de sa main,
Et préférez sa mort au triomphe Romain.

NISE.

Les pleurs qui malgré nous coulent sur nos visages,
Ne sont pas des effets de nos foibles courages.
1405 Vos filles comme vous ont des cœurs genereux,
Mais un peu de douleur sied bien aux malheureux.
La mort qui nous depeust a maintenant des charmes :
Mais regarder la vostre & retenir ses larmes,
Seroit se despouiller de toute humanité.

MITRIDATIE.

1410 Toutefois ce regret tient de la lâcheté,⁸
Ne nous opposons plus au vouloir de mon pere,
La mort est plus sensible,⁹ alors qu'on la differe.
Puis que rien maintenant ne nous peut secourir,
J'appreuve comme vous le dessein de mourir.
1415 Dans un autre climat je vous suivrai contente, [p.70]
J'aurois vescu captive, & je meurs triomphante,
Nous changerons de vie & de condition.

MITRIDATE.

Ce courage me plaist, & cette affection.
O d'un bon naturel exemple memorable !
1420 Mais puis que je vous perds serai-je pardonnable,
Sans vous interesser contre mes ennemis,
Avec de puissans Rois qui vous estoient promis,¹⁰
Vous pouviez doucement voir couler vos années,
Et celui qui les fist¹¹ coupe vos destinées,
1425 Ah ! le plus grand regret qui me suit au tombeau.

HYPsicRATEE.

Ne dois-je point rougir d'un exemple si beau !
Et pourrai-je prouver à mon cher Mitridate,
Qu'après tant d'amitié je ne suis pas ingrate.
S'il ne peut profiter du service d'autrui,

⁸ DFC: mollesse, nonchalance, manque d'énergie.

⁹ AF: 'Qui frappe les sens, qui se fait sentir'. The meaning of the line is: 'Plus on diffère la mort, plus on la ressent vivement'.

¹⁰ Appian mentions that the daughters Mithradates and Nyssa were betrothed respectively to the kings of Egypt and of Cyprus.

¹¹ That is, their father, Mitridate.

La Mort de Mitridate

1430 Qu'on ne le peut sauver en se perdant pour lui,
Comment m'est-il permis de tesmoigner mon zele ?¹²

MITRIDATE.

Ah ! mon cœur ce discours te rendroit criminelle.
Par le flambeau du jour je n'ai jamais douté,
Qu'on ne void rien d'egal à ta fidelité.
1435 Ta vertu, ton amour, n'ont rien de comparable,
Je suis le plus ingrat & le plus redevable.

[p.71]

HYPsicRATEE.

Si ma fidelité vous oblige à ce point,
Je vous demande un bien, ne me refusez point.
Permettez moy, Seigneur, de mourir la premiere.

MITRIDATE.

1440 Je te fais, ma chere ame, une mesme priere,
Espreuve mon amour par de plus grands efforts,
Et ne me force point de souffrir mille morts,
Il suffit que la tienne...¹³

HYPsicRATEE.

O trop legere excuse!¹⁴
Donc pour ce dernier bien mon espoux me refuse ?
1445 Est-il quelque raison qui l'en peut dispenser ?

MITRIDATE.

Mais me le demandant crois-tu pas m'offenser ?
Et si pour mon repos quelque soin il te reste,
Veux-tu rendre ma mort mille fois plus funeste ?
Toutefois je craindrois de te mescontenter,
1450 Et jusques au tombeau je te veux respecter.
On ne peut deslier le nœud qui nous assemble,
Mais puis qu'il faut perir, nous perirons ensemble.
Nous devons expirer tous deux en mesme temps,
Et nous expirerons l'un & l'autre contens.
1455 Poison qui dois couper une trame si belle,

¹² With three women vying to die first, Riffaud comments that this scene is a direct echo of Act V, scene 5 of Mairet's *Marc-Antoine* 'où Cléopâtre et ses filles se disputent la priorité du trépas' (*Théâtre complet*, I, 202, n. 3).

¹³ Although there is a full stop here in the seventeenth-century texts, the sense is once again of a character cutting off another. Scherer also supplies suspension marks.

¹⁴ The original texts have a question mark; Scherer makes a similar change.

*Il prend la coupe.*¹⁵

Fais sur moy ton effect, adoucis toy pour elle.
Modere pour un peu tes violens efforts,
Pour la priver de vie ils sont bien assez forts.
Preste luy sans douleur un secours favorable,
1460 Et sois à ces beautez un bourreau pitoiable.
Mais c'est trop differer.

*Il avale le poison.*¹⁶

NISE.

O Ciel trop inhumain !

MITRIDATE.

Reçoy, chere moitié, ce reste de ma main,
Puis qu'à toy seulement mon ame fut ouverte,
Juge avec quel regret je consens à ta perte,
1465 Que c'est pour fuir un joug & honteux & pesant.

HYPsicRATEE.

Ah ! que vostre amitié m'oblige en ce present,
Ouy tout ce que j'ay fait vaut moins que cette grace.
Mais recevons la mort avec la mesme face,
Que nous l'avons bravée aux plus affreux dangers.
1470 Chez nous tous ses tableaux ne sont plus estrangers.

*Elle avale le poison.*¹⁷

Ce poison agreable est la fin de nos peines.
Je sens que sa froideur se coule dans mes veines,
Qu'une sueur de mort s'empare de mon front,
Presages d'un succes tres heureux & tres prompt.

MITRIDATIE.

1475 Quelle honte ma sœur de mourir les dernieres !
Quoy donc attendrons nous de nous voir prisonnieres ?
Et tandis qu'il nous reste & le cœur & les mains,
Devons nous esperer le secours des Romains ?

¹⁵ This stage direction runs down the left-hand margin from the top of page 72.

¹⁶ This stage direction is in the left-hand margin at the level of the second hemistich of line 1461.

¹⁷ This stage direction is in the left-hand margin at line 1471.

1480 Imitons sans regret une vertu si rare,
Ne fuions point l'honneur que la mort nous prepare.
Monstrons que nostre sexe a du cœur à son tour,
Et fuyons le triomphe en nous privant du jour.
Vous nous l'accorderez ?

MITRIDATE.

Ouy, je vous en dispence,
Et vous laisse sur vous une entiere puissance.
1485 La mort aux malheureux est un trop grand bonheur,
Et je l'ayme bien mieux que vostre deshonneur.

MITRIDATIE.

Puis que pour mon salut mon seigneur me l'ordonne,
Je vay donc me servir du pouvoir qu'il me donne.
Je vous offre la mort & j'attends le pardon.

*Elle prend le poison, & presente la coupe à Nise qui en fait de mesme.*¹⁸

NISE.

1490 Je reçoÿ de bon cœur cet agreable don.

[p.74]

SCENE II.

BERENICE. MITRIDATE.
HYPsicRATEE. MITRIDATIE.
NISE.

*Berenice qui entre & les void en ceste posture, se jette aux pieds de Mitridate.*¹⁹

BERENICE.

O Vous grand Mitridate, & vous Hypsicratée,
Quel crime ay-je commis pour estre regettée ?
Pourquoy le mesme honneur ne me sera permis ?²⁰
Suis-je d'intelligence avec vos ennemis ?
1495 Si je ne consens pas au peché de Pharnace,
Que²¹ ne m'accorde-t'on une pareille grace ?

¹⁸ This stage direction runs down the right-hand margin from line 1487.

¹⁹ This stage direction runs down the left-hand margin from line 1491.

²⁰ Working within the twelve-syllable alexandrine, La Calprenède uses a wide variety of interrogatives; as well as dropping *pas* here, he also does not provide a postposed pronoun.

MITRIDATE.

Parce qu'en vous perdant j'offencerois les Dieux,
 Votre premier destin se va changer en mieux,
 Recevez le bonheur que le Ciel vous envoie.

BERENICE.

1500 Mon esprit desormais incapable de joye,
 Ne verroit ces bonheurs que comme indifferens,
 Et quittant un ingrat je suivray ses parens.

[p.75]

HYPsicRATEE.

Si dans nostre trespas vous n'estes appellée,
 C'est parce qu'en nos maux vous n'estes point meslée,
 1505 Votre seule vertu qui cause ces desirs,
 Vous fait participer à tous nos desplaisirs.
 Mais pour nous secourir serez vous malheureuse,
 Et devez vous perir pour estre genereuse ?
 Pour nostre seule gloire, ou bien pour son amour,
 1510 Mitridate consent que je perde le jour.
 Il coupe par pitié ma trame infortunée,
 Pour ne me voir jamais en triomphe menée,
 Mesme sort attendoit ces courageuses sœurs.
 Mais vous à qui nos maux destinent des douceurs,
 1515 Qui pouvez respirer sous une autre fortune.
 Vous vous exempterez de la perte commune,
 Votre esprit desormais pourra vivre content,
 Et des mains d'un mary le Sceptre vous attend.

BERENICE.

Si je n'avois pour vous un respect veritable,
 1520 Cette offence envers moy seroit irreparable.
 Une ame vertueuse abhorre un tel honneur,
 Sur d'autres fondemens je bastis mon bon-heur.
 Je deteste le bien qu'un perfide me donne,
 Et deut²² tout l'univers reverer ma couronne,
 1525 Les Princes plus puissans se soumettre à mes loix,
 Le trespas où je cours me plaist mieux mille fois.
 Ne me faites donc plus une vaine defence,

[p.76]²³

²¹ Fournier explains that such a *que* is an *adverbe interrogatif*, the equivalent of *pourquoi* (§ 179).

²² This is an imperfect subjunctive: *dût*.

²³ This page is numbered 75 in all original copies, although the previous page is actually 75 and is numbered so. From this page to page 80 the pagination is faulty in all original copies.

1530 Puis que je me roidis contre la resistance,
Que le fer, & le feu, m'en feront la raison,
Si vous me refusez la grace du poison.

MITRIDATIE.

Par la sainte amitié qui joint nos destinées,
Ma sœur ayez pitié de vos jeunes années.

BERENICE.

1535 Cette mesme amitié me conduit au trespas,
Je veux dans les enfers accompagner vos pas,
Et le sacré lien d'une amitié si rare,
Mesmes apres la mort jamais ne se separe.
Si la mienne chez vous me laisse du pouvoir,
Ne me conseillez point contre vostre devoir.

*Elle se jette derechef aux pieds de Mitridate.*²⁴

1540 Et vous, dont la bonté m'a conservé la vie,
Ne vous opposez plus à ma derniere envie.
Vous devez le trespas à ma premiere amour,
Et vous vous offensez de me laisser le jour.
Vous me devez haïr d'une pareille haine,
Que celui qui vous perd pour l'amitié Romaine.
1545 Et son ressouvenir vous doit rendre odieux,
Comme un monstre d'horreur, ce qu'il aima le mieux.
Ne differez donc plus, accordez-moy de grace,
Ce qu'aussi malgré vous il faudra que je face.

[p.77]²⁵

MITRIDATE.

1550 Puis que vostre dessein ne se peut arrester,
Je vous accorde tout ne pouvant l'eviter.
Vous mourrez avec nous Princesse vertueuse,
Détrempez ce poison.

BERENICE.

Ah ! que je suis heureuse.
Que ma perte rendra les Romains envieux,
Et que j'expireray d'un trespas glorieux.

²⁴ This stage direction runs down the left-hand margin from line 1539.

²⁵ This page is numbered 76 in all original copies.

*Elle prend le poison qu'elle avale comme les autres.*²⁶

NISE.

1555 Ah! Ma sœur soustenez une foiblesse extremesme.

MITRIDATIE.

Ce bras est impuissant, & je tombe de mesme.

*Elles tombent toutes deux sur un lict.*²⁷

MITRIDATE.

O le premier sucez d'un poison violent!
Que son effect est prompt, mais plustost qu'il est lent.
Contraignez vous mes yeux dans le mal qui me presse.

NISE.

1560 Quelle estrange douleur succede à ma foiblesse!

HYPsicRATEE.

Je vous assisterois s'il ne falloit mourir,
Et si ce corps mourant vous pouvoit secourir,
Mais à peine mes yeux supportent la lumiere.

[p.78]

MITRIDATE.

Bel astre de mes jours, mourrois-tu la premiere?

MITRIDATIE.

1565 Au moins, ma chere sœur, souffre que le trespas,
Nos cœurs estans unis, ne nous separe pas.
Tends ces bras languissans, permets que je t'embrasse.

NISE.

Mitridatie, adieu, c'en est fait, je trespasse.

MITRIDATIE.

1570 Ouvre encore tes yeux, voi²⁸ ta sœur qui te suit,
Et qui pert la clarté du soleil qui la fuit.

²⁶ This stage direction is placed in the right-hand margin at the level of the previous speech.

²⁷ This stage direction is placed in the right-hand margin at line 1555.

²⁸ Vaugelas has a section entitled 'S'il faut mettre une *s*, en la seconde personne du singulier de l'imperatif'. For a verb like *voir*, opinion seems to have been divided: 'Et les uns croyent qu'il ne faut point d'*s*, à ceux qui terminent en *i*, *ai*, *ain*, *ein*, *oy*, *en* et *üy*, et les autres, qu'il en faut' (I, 320).

BERENICE.

O Ciel impitoyable!

MITRIDATE.

O destin trop severe!

O cruauté du sort, ô miserable pere!

O de tous les mortels le plus infortuné!

Au moins, sers toy du bien que le Ciel t'a donné,

1575 Ferme encore les yeux à toute ta famille,

Et cette charité commence par ta fille.

[p.79]²⁹

HYPsicRATEE.

Paravant que³⁰ j'expire, approche, & qu'en ce lieu

Je puisse sur ta bouche imprimer un adieu.

Les douleurs que je sens m'annoncent desja l'heure.

1580 Quoy ! je respire encore, & Mitridate pleure.

Le plus grand Roy du monde est si peu resolu,

Et regrette un trespas que luy mesme a voulu.

Quelle honte!

MITRIDATE.

Permits la douleur qui m'emporte.

Ma constance se perd, & ma raison est morte.

1585 Je ne me puis resoudre.

HYPsicRATEE.

Il te faut toutefois

Supporter sans regret l'estat où tu me vois.

Ne t'en afflige point, ou je meurs mécontente.

Il est vray, ma douleur est un peu violente.

Mais elle doit finir par une prompte mort,

1590 Nostre ame se separe avec un peu d'effort.

Permits moy cependant que ma bouche t'assure,

Que je garde en mourant ma premiere blessure :

Que mon feu fut si grand, & si pur & si beau,

Que sa premiere ardeur me suit dans le tombeau.

[p.80]

MITRIDATE.

1595 Et moy, par tous les Dieux que l'univers adore,

²⁹ This page is numbered 76 in all original copies.

³⁰ This is a shortened version of *auparavant que*. Vaugelas has a section on the latter wherein he prefers *avant que*: 'Les bons Escrivains ne diront jamais par exemple, *auparavant que vous soyez venu*, pour dire *avant*, ou *devant que vous soyez venu*' (II, 207).

Par ces beaux yeux mourans que je revere encore :
 Par ce front la terreur des plus superbes Roys,
 Par cette belle bouche à qui j'ay mille fois,
 Par mes ardens baisers tesmoigné tant de flame,
 1600 Que je perds te perdant la moitié de mon ame.

BERENICE.

*Elle tombe.*³¹

Je vous quitte madame, ô dieux ! je n'en puis plus.

HYPsicRATEE.

Helas ne me fais point des sermens superflus.
 Je n'ay jamais douté, ny je ne doute encore.
 Mais dieux ! il faut ceder au feu qui me devore,
 1605 Mes yeux sont obscurcis, à peine je te voy,
 Par ce dernier baiser prends un congé de moy.

*Elle meurt entre les bras de Mitridate.*³²

MITRIDATE.

Ah! ne meurs pas si tost, retiens un peu ton ame,
 Je la rappelleray par un baiser de flame.
 Mais je perds follement des discours superflus,
 1610 Je te rappelle en vain, & tu ne m'entends plus.
 Dans mes bras languissans je te voy trespasée,
 Tu n'es plus du passé qu'une image effacée.
 Dans un somme eternal tes yeux ensevelis,
 Aux roses de ton teint font succeder les lys.
 1615 Ta paupiere abbatuë & ta levre deteinte,
 L'impitoyable mort dans tous tes membres peinte,
 M'enleve l'esperance & me laisse l'horreur.
 Que ne sors-tu mon ame en ta juste fureur?³³
 S'il te souvient encor d'une amitié si rare,
 1620 Lâche, peux-tu souffrir le coup qui nous separe?

[p.81]

BERENICE.

S'il m'est encor permis de toucher vostre main,
 Je mourray satisfaite.

³¹ This stage direction is in the left-hand margin at the level of the character's name.

³² This stage direction runs down the left-hand margin from line 1604.

³³ In this apostrophe to his soul, the *que* stands for *pourquoi* (see line 1496) and the *pas* is dropped in the interrogative.

MITRIDATE.

O spectacle inhumain !

Miserable tesmoin de tant & tant de pertes.
Tu vis donc insensible & tu les a souffertes,
1625 Berenice attends moy, vis encor un moment,
Je t'accompagneray, je parle vainement.

*Berenice meurt.*³⁴

Elle a perdu le jour & je le vois encore,
Lacheté manifeste, & qui me deshonore.³⁵
J'emprunte du secours par de foibles moyens,
1630 Et je voy sans mourir la mort de tous les miens.
Je reste seul vivant & je suis seul coupable.
O Dieux ! fut-il jamais de fortune semblable ?
Hysicratée est morte, & je ne le suis pas.
Ah ! je suivray bien tost la trace de tes pas.
1635 Mais de quelques douleurs que je me persuade,
Je sens que mon esprit seulement est malade.
Ce poison est trop lent pour causer mon trespas.
Doncques voulant mourir tu ne m'assistes pas. [p.82]³⁶
Un fils ne l'estant point serois-tu pitoyable,
1640 Ou me veux-tu trahir comme cet execrable ?
Je tente ton secours, mais inutilement.

*SCENE III.*³⁷

MENANDRE. MITRIDATE.

MENANDRE.

Seigneur vous vous devez resoudre promptement,
Desormais du salut toute esperance est morte,
Pharnace s'est fait jour dans la premiere porte,
1645 Les Romains l'ont suivy dans la prochaine cour.³⁸

³⁴ The stage direction is in the right-hand margin at line 1626.

³⁵ The line numbering in the Pléiade edition is faulty from this line to line 1645. This line is numbered 1630, confusion having arisen over the divided alexandrine and the stage direction. Between lines 1640 and 1645 inclusively there are then eight lines before the numbering rights itself.

³⁶ This page is numbered page 28 in all original texts except in one of the Arsenal's copies (4-BL-3477) and the Sorbonne text.

³⁷ This scene is numbered *SCENE V* in all seventeenth-century copies.

³⁸ The sense of urgency becomes acute as the Romans storm into the palace. For *se faire jour*, see line 609. One must also imagine noises offstage (cf. l. 1665).

MITRIDATE.

Menandre malgré moy je conserve le jour,
 Tu vois devant tes yeux ces objets pitoyables,
 J'ay recherché la mort par des moyens semblables,
 Et le poison ne peut me donner le trespas,
 1650 Mon ame veut sortir, mais elle ne peut pas.

[p.83]

MENANDRE.

Si je ne suis deçeu par cette experience,
 Ce sont là les effets de vostre prevoyance,
 Lors que pour vous garder de quelque trahison,
 Vous ne vous nourrissiez que de contre poison,
 1655 Vostre cœur s'est muny...³⁹

MITRIDATE.

Menandre je l'avouë.
 Mais comment de mes jours la fortune se jouë.
 Je craignois le poison quand je craignois la mort,
 Et quand je la desire il ne fait point d'effort.
 Suppleons au defaut de cet impitoyable,
 1660 Puis que de mon trespas ma main seule est capable.
 Rome à qui je ravis un superbe ornement,
 Ne me verra vaincu que par moy seulement.
 Elle en aura le fruit & j'en auray la gloire,
 Et mon fils le loyer d'une telle victoire.
 1665 Mais c'est trop retarder, & le bruit que j'entends,
 Si je veux mourir Roy m'advertit qu'il est temps.
 Sus doncque dans mon cœur cette lame plantée,

*Il se tuë.*⁴⁰

Rejoigne mon esprit avec Hypsicratée.
 Au moins j'auray ce bien dans mon dernier malheur,
 1670 Que mourant pres de toy je mourray sans douleur.⁴¹
 Et toy par le pouvoir que le passé me donne,
 Je t'enjoins d'obeïr à ce que je t'ordonne.
 Fais que ces ennemis & ce fils desloyal,
 Treuvent ce pasle corps dans le throsne Royal.⁴²

[p.84]

³⁹ This line ends with a full stop in all original texts, but the sense is again of a character being cut off by another. Scherer also supplies suspension marks.

⁴⁰ This stage direction is placed in the right-hand margin between lines 1668 and 1669.

⁴¹ Lines 1669 and 1670 are addressed to Hypsicratée. From line 1670 Mitridate is speaking to Menandre.

⁴² Mitridate directs what will amount to a performance-within-a-play. See the Introduction, p. 58.

1675 Conserve dans ma mort ma dignité première,
Mais je perds la parole en perdant la lumière.⁴³

DERNIERE SCENE.

PHARNACE. MENANDRE. EMILE.

PHARNACE.

Voyez de respecter la personne du Roy,
Que tous les plus hardis prennent exemple à moy,
Et sans vous irriter d'une deffense vaine,
1680 Traitez avec honneur & mes sœurs & la Reine.
Que le sexe & le rang arrestent vostre main,
Tousjours le plus vaillant est le moins inhumain.

*Pharnace entre dans la chambre, où la tapisserie tirée il void Mitridate & Hysicratée sur des thrones, & sa femme & ses sœurs à leurs pieds.*⁴⁴

Quel spectacle bons dieux, quelle vaine constance ?
Quoy ! l'on redoute ainsi la Romaine puissance.
1685 Ce visible mespris & cette gravité,
Se peuvent-ils souffrir dans la captivité ?

MENANDRE.

S'ils conservent encor les droicts de la Couronne,
C'est qu'ils sont en estat de ne craindre personne.
Ces visages ternis, & ces habits sanglans,⁴⁵
1690 Vous tesmoignent assez leurs trespas violans.
Ces corps que vous voyez viennent de rendre l'ame,
Par le poison vos sœurs, la Reine & vostre femme : [p.85]
Et le Roy par le fer.

PHARNACE.

O Dieux que me dis-tu ?
Toutefois ce teint pasle & cet œil abbatu,
1695 Et ce sang qui découle encore d'une playe,
Me font desja juger cette assurance vraye.

⁴³ The curtain must be pulled across the central chamber at this point in order for the actors to arrange themselves on and around the throne for the final tableau. See the stage direction after line 1682.

⁴⁴ This stage direction is in the left-hand margin running down from line 1684 to line 1689.

⁴⁵ Only Mitridate's clothes should be bloody, but one senses that with this reference and that in the next line to 'trespas violans', La Calprenède wants to emphasize the baroque horror.

Il n'en faut plus douter, mon œil le void assez,
 Je touche tous ces corps, mais ils sont trespassez,⁴⁶
 La mort qui se remarque en leurs pasles visages
 1700 Est un tragique effect de leurs masles courages,
 Ils ont armé contr'eux leurs genereuses mains,
 Pour fuir ma tyrannie, & le joug des Romains.⁴⁷
 Ciel, qui fus le tesmoin d'une telle aventure,
 Tu peux encor souffrir ce monstre de nature !
 1705 Ce traistre qui rougit du sang de ses parens,
 Les crimes les plus noirs te sont indifferents.
 Quoy, tu vois ce barbare, & le coup du tonnerre
 Ne l'ensevelit pas au centre de la terre ?
 Le soleil se cacha pour un moindre attentat,
 1710 Et je voy son visage en son premier estat.
 Pour remplir l'univers de ce crime exemplaire,
 Pour le manifester ce perfide m'esclaire.⁴⁸
 Eh bien, que tout conspire à me rendre odieux,
 Pour mon plus grand bourreau je ne veux que mes yeux :
 1715 Je ne veux qu'œillader ces objets pitoyables,
 Et je rends d'un regard mes peines effroyables.
 Un simple souvenir fait naistre des remords, [p.86]
 Qui gesnent mon esprit de plus de mille morts.
 Ayant privé de vie & son pere & sa femme,
 1720 Ce monstre sans pitié ne vomit point son ame.
 Il respire un moment apres sa trahison,⁴⁹
 Et l'infame survit à toute sa maison.
 Non, ne supporte plus une tache si noire,
 Puis qu'il n'est plus en toy de recouvrer ta gloire,
 1725 Que tu n'es que l'horreur de tous ceux de ton rang,
 Au moins ensevelis ton crime dans ton sang.
 Manes de mes parens je vous veux satisfaire,

*Il se met à genoux devant le corps de Mitridate.*⁵⁰
 O vous reste sanglant d'un miserable pere,

⁴⁶ With Pharnace entering the theatrical space, the 'performance' ends and the spatial split dissolves as the real world of the play is once again whole.

⁴⁷ Racine's Mithridate exults as he dies: 'Je n'ai point de leur joug subi l'ignominie' (l. 1660).

⁴⁸ It is disappointing that this scene would appear to take place in daylight, unless the references to the sun are meant to be taken metaphorically. For the lighting effects that were possible for such scenes, see the Introduction, page 57, note 150.

⁴⁹ In the next seven lines, Pharnace's disorientation is conveyed by his jumping from one pronoun to another: *il, tu, je*, while always referring to himself.

⁵⁰ The stage direction is in the left-hand margin running down from line 1730.

1730 Si vous avez produit un tigre, un inhumain,
Qui vous a peu trahir pour l'Empire Romain,
Qui prefera l'éclat d'une simple Couronne,
A ce que le devoir & le sang nous ordonne.
Ne vous offensez point si pour suivre vos pas,
Il se veut acquitter par un simple trespas.
1735 Il est vray je devrois perdre cent fois la vie,
Je la reçeu de vous & je vous l'ay ravie :
*Et devant celuy de Berenice.*⁵¹
Et vous à qui les Dieux m'avoient si bien uni,
Indigne possesseur d'un bonheur infini,
Ne vous offensez pas que ce traistre vous touche,
1740 Et tout souillé qu'il est baise encor vostre bouche.⁵²
Mais non vostre vertu se fasche à mon abord,
Souffrez mon entretien comme celui d'un mort.
Je ne respire plus, puis que vous estes morte.

[p.87]

EMILE.

Quoi l'ami des Romains s'affliger de la sorte ?

PHARNACE.

1745 C'est peu que s'affliger, Emile, il faut mourir,
Quoi cruels malgré moi me faut il secourir ?⁵³
Barbares voulez-vous me contraindre de vivre,
Aimez-vous les tourments dont la mort me delivre ?
Et pour recompenser les services rendus,
1750 N'estes vous pas contens de mes parens perdus ?
Quoi vous voulez forcer une ame criminelle,
A souffrir parmi vous une peine eternelle ?
Pompée à son depart vous a-il ordonné,
De me traiter en serf, lui qui m'a couronné ?⁵⁴

EMILE.

1755 Nous vous rendrons raison de vostre retenuë,

⁵¹ This stage direction is placed in the left-hand margin running down from line 1741.

⁵² What Safty calls 'le baiser macabre' (p. 240) is a baroque topos.

⁵³ The implication is that Pharnace is being restrained by the Romans to prevent him from doing damage to himself.

⁵⁴ Mitridate's curse (ll. 1285-96) and Bérénice's fears of Pharnace's 'prochaine ruine' (l. 925) thus come true. The historical Pharnaces would rule for sixteen years and be the last king of Pontus, which would become a Roman province on his death at the hands of Julius Caesar in 47 BC, thus fulfilling the prediction of the 'dramatic' Mitridate (IV.3.1298-1304).

Quand nous verrons la vostre un peu mieux revenuë.⁵⁵
Mais delivrons ses yeux de l'horreur de ces morts,
Et pour les inhumer qu'on enleve ces corps.

F I N.

[p.88]

Extraict du Privilege.

Par grace & privilege du Roy donné à Roye le 30. jour de Septembre 1636. signé par le Roy en son Conseil, de Monsseaux. Il est permis à Anthoine de Sommaville marchand Libraire à Paris, d'imprimer ou faire imprimer, vendre & distribuer une piece de Theatre, intitulée. *La mort de Mitridate ; Tragedie*, & ce durant le temps de sept ans entiers & accomplis, à compter du jour que ledit livre sera achevé d'imprimer. Et defenses sont faites à tous Imprimeurs, & Libraires, estrangers, ou autres, de contrefaire ledit livre, ny en vendre aucun sinon de ceux qu'aura imprimé ou fait imprimer ledit de Sommaville, ou ceux ayant droit de luy. A peine aux contrevenans de trois mil livres d'amende ainsi qu'il est plus amplement porté par lesdites lettres cy-dessus dattées.

Achévé d'imprimer le 16. jour de Novembre 1636.

⁵⁵ The sense of these lines is: We will explain why you are being restrained ('vostre retenuë') once you have calmed down ('un peu mieux revenuë').

Liverpool Online Series

Current titles in the series

1. *Three Old French Narrative Lays: Trot, Lecheor, Nabaret* (edited and translated by Leslie Brook and Glyn Burgess, 1999)
2. *Nineteenth-Century Women Seeking Expression: Translations from the French* (edited by Rosemary Lloyd, 2000)
3. Jacques Autreau, *Le Chevalier Bayard* (performance and published versions, edited by Richard Waller, 2000)
4. Gustave Flaubert, *Mémoires d'un fou/Memoirs of a Madman* (parallel translation and critical edition by Timothy Unwin, 2001)
5. *Piramus et Tisbé* (edited by Penny Eley, 2001)
6. *Narcisus et Dané* (edited and translated by Penny Eley, 2002)
7. Philippe Quinault, *L'Amant indiscret, ou le maistre estourdi* (edited by William Brooks, 2003)
8. *Le Lai de l'Ombre* (translation and introduction by Adrian Tudor, text edited by Alan Hindley and Brian J. Levy, 2004)
9. *Doon and Tyolet: Two Old French Narrative Lays* (edited and translated by Leslie Brook and Glyn Burgess, 2005)
10. *Melion and Biclarel: Two Old French Werewolf Lays* (edited and translated by Amanda Hopkins, 2005)
11. Jules Lefèvre-Deumier, *Un poète romantique contre la peine de mort: quatre poèmes* (edited and translated by Loïc P. Guyon, 2005)

Items in the series may be freely viewed at the website (see details at the front of this volume). A small number of printed copies of each item are available for sale at £15.00 each. Please send orders to:

Liverpool Online Series
School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies
Modern Languages Building
The University of Liverpool
Liverpool L69 7ZR

Telephone: (+44) (0)151 794 2741

Fax: (+44) (0)151 794 2357