De-centring the Countess's Circle: Mary Sidney Herbert and Cleopatra

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La traduction par Mary Sidney Herbert, comtesse de Pembroke, de la tragédie Marc Antoine de Robert Garnier est un facteur déterminant dans la notion critique d'un cercle de Pembroke, cercle sinon véritable, du moins virtuel, réunissant des esprits semblables. Cet article cherche ailleurs l'origine de l'intérêt de la comtesse pour la pièce française. Il s'agit alors d'analyser la traduction en soi et dans le contexte du volume où elle a paru pour la première fois en 1592, afin de mieux comprendre les démarches de la traductrice dans le contexte de sa vie et de son œuvre. Également en question sont les liens intellectuels qu'elle a maintenus avec le protestantisme français, incarné par Philippe de Mornay, en même temps qu'elle poursuivait un projet particulièrement personnel qui rendait ces liens instables, fragiles.

At least since the pioneering study by Alexander Witherspoon in 1924, the dominant view has relegated the ideas on drama of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, the translator of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (as *Antonius*, pub. 1592), to reactionary idealism, a futile aristocratic attempt to impose neo-classical decorum on the populist Elizabethan stage, in keeping with her brother's strictures in *An Apology for Poetry*.¹ The only direct evidence for such an aim was the disdain expressed by Samuel Daniel for "this tyrant of the North, / Gross Barbarism," in the dedication to the Countess of his own *Cleopatra* (1594), a self-described sequel by the poet who was then her devoted protégé ("Loe heere the worke the which she did impose, / Who onely doth predominate my Muse").² The hypothesis also depended on—and in turn was used to reinforce—the notion, if not quite of a salon on the European model, at least of a "circle" of patronage and influence with the Countess at its centre.

The existence of any such structure has increasingly been called into question, notably by Mary Ellen Lamb and Michael Brennan, the latter qualifying the premise of his own study, *Literary Patronage in the English Renais-*

sance: *The Pembroke Family*, in a persuasively argued section entitled, “The Myth of Patronage.”³ At the same time, Brennan’s conclusion, which again aligns him with Lamb, offers a framework for reassessing the translation of Garnier. In the place of one myth Brennan reads another, this one self-created—that of the surviving sister of “an honorary Protestant saint,” an idealized identity conferring “spiritual potency” akin to Queen Elizabeth’s, an “aura of semi-divinity.”⁴ The latter myth is abundantly documented, being rooted in the Countess’s highly public role, not just as her brother’s literary executor, but as the manager of his immortal memory, to which her own appears to be self-conjured as a sort of supplement in Derrida’s sense, at once denying and revealing lack in the original. Hence, her revision of Sidney’s (and nominally *her own*) *Arcadia*, accompanied by touchiness about the competing version published by Fulke Greville and, perhaps, by a concern to chasten the work’s eroticism. Hence, too, her completion of the Psalms, an act that, as Margaret P. Hannay has demonstrated, effectively recuperates Sidney’s association with both the political and spiritual ethic of militant French Protestantism.⁵ From this perspective, it seems possible at least to figure the Countess as imaginatively drawing English and Continental writers and thinkers within the orbit of a coherent aesthetic and religious sensibility.

Hannay’s assimilation of the translation of Garnier to such a picture, however, is less than convincing, in part because she also insists on placing the Countess’s dramatic initiatives at the cutting edge, both ideologically and culturally. In translating Garnier and sponsoring Daniel, it seems, Pembroke was not merely “combatting formal weaknesses of the early English drama” and promoting the “salutary” importation of “a drama of character, not of action,” but also showing the English “that drama could be used for political statement.”⁶ Garnier suited that purpose because he was “a magistrate who used his drama to criticize the state” and whose “dramas were at the forefront of the contemporary movement in Continental historical tragedy, the avant-garde of the theater.”⁷

To say the least, Garnier would have failed to recognize his political reflection in such a Brechtian light. Of course, the playwright readily admitted to indirectly deploring, through his classical and biblical tragedies, the civil wars that had been tearing France apart, with brief intervals of respite, since 1562. But he was also a dispenser of the king’s justice, and his poems included the *Hymne de la Monarchie* (1567), as well as contributions to a volume of *tombeaux* for Charles IX (1574) celebrating the latter’s struggle against heresy—a struggle whose high point was the Saint Bartholomew massacre.⁸ He seems never to have doubted that the fault lay, not with the divinely sanctioned “state,” but with Huguenot challenges to it and forms of Catho-

lic impiety that had induced God's wrath. He was a moderate Catholic but hardly a Politique, and his adherence to the *Sainte Ligue* in 1588 (two years before his death), however belated and lukewarm, manifested a continuing conviction that only a state committed to religious repression could pretend to legitimacy. This position is confirmed by the recurrent political refrain of the plays, which places human suffering against a background of divine displeasure and ultimate vengeance. It is worth recalling that Garnier's mentor and model, to whom he addressed the *Hymne de la Monarchie* and dedicated *Marc Antoine*, was Guy Du Faur de Pibrac, who, on the one hand, gained a similar reputation as a humane intellectual, largely through his Neo-Stoic *Quatrains*, and, on the other hand, produced the pack of lies comprising the quasi-official justification of the 1572 massacre. We falsify literary history (and much else besides) when we offer such figures excuses they showed no sign of asking for and obscure their belief in a higher truth which sometimes "must be cruel only to be kind" (to borrow Hamlet's expression for his role as heaven's "scourge and minister").⁹

With regard to the "avant-garde" status of Garnier's drama, not only does the label imply far more of a "movement" than is consistent with the spotty records of theatrical activity in contemporary France—composition, publication, and staging alike—but *Marc Antoine*, which was Garnier's last Roman play, dates from twelve years before the Countess presumably began her translation (in 1590), and *Les Juifves*, his final dramatic composition, from 1583. Further, it is misleading to term Garnier's a "drama of character," except insofar as character is understood as a sequence of moral and emotional postures, mainly conveyed through elaborately rhetorical monologues and stichomythia. One cannot claim that even the Shakespeare of the early comedies and history plays had much to learn from Garnier with respect to the theatrical imitation of human thought and behaviour. (Certainly, any indebtedness of *Antony and Cleopatra*, whether directly or through Pembroke, is of a different order.)

Perhaps the fatal flaw in Hannay's argument, however, is that if politics had been the primary concern, the Countess could have chosen, among Garnier's tragedies, works that are far more politically engaged. To take only the Roman plays, *Porcie* and *Cornélie* (the latter due to be translated by Thomas Kyd in 1593 or 1594 on the warrant of Pembroke's example) are more directly and forcefully concerned with questions of power and resistance, the tyrannical tendencies of ambition, and indeed the suffering of the innocent—a theme towards which the chorus of Egyptians in *Marc Antoine* makes a perfunctory gesture by comparison. As for the implicit warning to rulers about the dangerous public consequences of their private passions, *Marc Antoine*

was hardly breaking new ground here even for English audiences: that eminently Senecan truism had been at home on the English stage at least since the early 1560s, with *Cambyzes* and *Gorboduc* (the latter considered by the Countess's brother, of course, as a promising, if flawed, model for an English neo-classical drama¹⁰). There was nothing notably pungent about the political point of *Marc Antoine* in its original context, and whatever lent Greville's dramatization of the story such affinity with the case of Essex that he chose to destroy it, the politics of the translation seem no more adventurous than those of Daniel's *Cleopatra*, which (unlike *Philotas*) got that author into no trouble.¹¹

Instead, Lamb is surely right to trace the Countess's particular interest in *Cleopatra* to the figure of the nobly mourning heroine.¹² Such a view also opens a further perspective on the thematic connection, first pointed out by Willard Farnham,¹³ between *Antonius* and its companion translation in the 1592 volume: the *Excellent discours de la vie et de la mort* (1576) by the Huguenot statesman and soldier Philippe de Mornay, a personal friend of Sidney. This treatise is as relentlessly Neo-Stoic as it is devout, and Lamb finds not only continuity in the preoccupation with dying well but a development from the treatise to the play in a feminist direction (accompanied by suppressed anger at the patriarchal structure). *Cleopatra*, Lamb proposes, exemplifies a female form of the Stoic ideal, an "heroics of constancy" acceptable for a woman because tied to the memory of a beloved man.¹⁴ Thus, too, in dedicating the Psalms to her brother's "spirit," the Countess expresses her aspiration to follow him in death. Another step takes place with her sponsorship of Daniel's *Cleopatra*, in which the "violent emotions" beneath her own Stoicism find indirect expression in the Egyptian queen's achievement of freedom from male tyranny and shaming of male cowardice.¹⁵ Lamb, I am convinced, has identified an important dynamic here. Closer examination of the several texts involved, however, reveals a less stable portrait of the Countess both as a translator and as her brother's survivor, as well as a more complex relation between the two component pieces of her volume, which in turn emerges as a meta-translation, so to speak, of a partly obscured original.

Let me begin with the extraordinary poetic address "To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney," whose revelatory quality is heightened by the contrast between its two extant versions. One is found as the dedicatory poem in the Tixall manuscript of the Psalms; the other was published in 1623, after being recovered among Daniel's papers. As a number of commentators have observed, the manuscript version lavishly invests the relation of supplementarity between sister and brother with an immediate, intense, and personal—indeed, highly erotic—energy, of which there is far

less in the measured, stately, and sober printed version, universally presumed to represent an early draft.¹⁶ This contrast turns out to be germane to the translation of Garnier, so I will briefly document it, and if the main idea is familiar, it may be lent new energy by detaching it from the standard narrative of Pembroke's development of a distinctive poetic voice.

A comparison of the opening and closing stanzas of the two versions will succinctly introduce the point. The Tixall manuscript text begins as follows:

To thee pure sprite, to thee alone's addres't
 this coupled worke, by double int'rest thine:
 First rais'de by thy blest hand, and what is mine
 inspir'd by thee, thy secret power imprest.
 So dar'd my Muse with thine it selfe combine,
 as mortall stuff with that which is divine,
 Thy lightning beames give lustre to the rest. (1–7)

Here is the 1623 published equivalent:

To the pure Spirit, to thee alone address
 In this joynt worke, by double intrist thine,
 Thine by his owne, and what is done of mine
 Inspir'd by thee, thy secret powre imprest.
 My Muse with thine, it selfe dar'd to combine
 As mortall staffe with that which is divine:
 Let thy faire beames give luster to the rest. (1–7)¹⁷

The divergent effects of “coupled” and “joynt” in the second lines may stand for the general difference, which is consistent throughout the two works. In these alternative terms the Oxford editors detect merely a possible indication of “time sequence as Sidney first began the work and then inspired her to complete it,”¹⁸ although that point appears to depend on, rather than mandate, their premise that the printed version is an earlier unrevised text: arguably, “joynt” is a more appropriate term for the grafting-on of new parts to a existing structure, while “coupled” better matches the active collaboration possible during Sidney's lifetime. Thus Coburn Freer was led, by a meticulous technical study of the Psalms, to conjecture that Sidney may have passed his translations on to his sister “in an unfinished state, expecting her to revise them,” but that “[d]uring the initial stages of the work, the two poets were probably in touch with each other, for in her dedicatory poem to Sidney, Mary Herbert does refer to the psalter as ‘this coupled worke.’”¹⁹ Regardless of any chronological implication, “coupled,” with the support of

the inevitable sexual suggestion, evokes a far more intimate and dynamic kind of union than does “joynt,” a word whose applications in the period are commonly legal or technical. Whatever accounts for the distinction, a drastic de-intensification and emotional diminishing can be traced between the manuscript and the published version. The personal and physical terms of the former (“rais’de by thy blest hand”) contrast with the abstract ones of the latter (“Thine by his owne”), the active (“what is mine”) with the passive (“what is done of mine”), the direct with the indirect (as in the word order of line five), the vividly recorded (“Thy lightning beames give lustre”) with the distantly imagined (“Let thy faire beames give luster”).

The final stanza of the printed version is only five lines long and amounts to a formal *envoi*; the poet withdraws from the poem, as from its addressee, effacing herself in an image of abstract sorrow, borne aloft by prayer:

Receive these Hims, these obsequies receive,
 (If any marke of thy secret spirit thou beare)
 Made only thine, and no name els must weare.
 I can no more deare soule, I take my leave,
 My sorrow strives to mount the highest Sphere. (71–75)

By contrast, in the longer manuscript version, the poet not only evokes her brother’s presence within her work (“...thy sweet sprite appeare”), instead of figuring his absent soul (“...thy secret spirit thou beare”), but goes on to project herself assertively, through the intensity of her grief, into an imaginative (re)union that is irresistibly suggestive of sexual fulfilment (“...would mount thy highest sphere”):

Receive theise Hymnes, theise obsequies receive;
 if any marke of thy sweet sprite appeare,
 well are they borne, no title else shall beare.
 I can no more: Deare Soule I take my leave;
 Sorrowe still strives, would mount thy highest sphere
 presuming so just cause might meet thee there,
 Oh happie chaunge! could I so take my leave. (85–91)

To reduce this version’s ending to the “conventional wish in elegy that the mourner could join the departed”²⁰ appears to me seriously to undervalue not only the lines’ erotic force but also the heterodoxy toward which that force is allowed to tend. When full weight is allowed to the use of “chaunge” in the sense of “death,” the conclusion strongly evokes a bereaved lover desperate for reunion with her beloved and arrogating to herself a judgement about the value of life and death (“presuming so just cause”) such as is normally

reserved to God. Even in the context of highly personal and intense religious feeling, this makes an incongruous introduction to the Psalms: “presuming” emerges as very much the operative word.

The incongruity is only enhanced by a striking echo of the farewell to Antony that Garnier assigns to his Cléopâtre, whose “obseques” (1881)²¹ convert to kisses, as the mourning queen anticipates—in terms that evoke the familiar trope for sexual climax—expiring upon her lover’s body:

Que de mille baisers, et mille et mille encore,
Pour office dernier ma bouche vous honore:
Et qu’en un tel devoir mon corps affoiblissant
Defaille dessus vous, mon ame vomissant. (1996–99)

It is the essence of my approach to *Antonius* that, even as she faithfully (if rather woodenly) renders the heroine’s passion—

A thousand kisses, thousand thousand more
Let you my mouth for honors farewell give:
That in this office weake my limmes may growe,
Fainting on you, and fourth my soule may flowe (2019–22)

—Pembroke shies away from the same formal religious term (“obsequies”) that she applies to her brother’s soul in the Christian context: Garnier’s “obseques” is flattened into “due rites” (1904).

No responsible person could hold a brief for John Aubrey’s scandal-sheet claim, citing local gossip, that Sidney and his sister slept together (indeed, produced a child).²² A number of serious critics, however, have followed the path thus signposted, if not to Wilton itself, at least back into the shadowy poetic groves of both Sidney and Pembroke, and there they have discovered, if nothing else, that where there is smoke, there is smoke. Gary F. Waller has come to think better of his original formulation of the problem, preferring, with particular regard to “Angel Spirit,” to shift the ground from “the perils of historical psychoanalysis,” which he associates with the male gaze, to the text’s “cultural unconscious,” deemed to allow for female *jouissance*.²³ If he still registers a sense of “forbidden love,” the death of that love now constitutes “a liberation into autonomy, into being more than a passive reader of the significance of her brother’s life.”²⁴ Meanwhile, Jonathan Crewe, approaching the question from Sidney’s side, and in terms of “totalizing desire” within aristocratic gamesmanship, has elicited from *Astrophil and Stella* a double movement of revelation and concealment, appropriation and denial.²⁵ Not surprisingly, a similar doubleness has been attached to Pembroke’s Cleopatra, and Janet MacArthur has usefully stressed the freedom from religious,

as well moral, strictures offered by that figure: "The subliminal erotic aspect of Mary Sidney's love for her brother is articulated by Cleopatra who in a pagan and profane voice, safely distanced from the Countess's own, declares an intemperate, self-destructive yet constant love."²⁶ Of course, translation itself is another distancing factor, but one perhaps offering less safety, since the distance can, to some degree, be measured.

The manuscript version of "Angel Spirit" may be read against its printed version according to a model of self-generating original and distancing translation. The sense of Pembroke's "love" for Sidney is so heavily eroticized in the manuscript text as to convey a strong sense of the relation, at least as reimagined across the experience of loss, as profoundly amorous, and therefore as entailing a love that does not simply flow in "normal" channels:

Oh! when to this Accompt, this cast upp Summe,
 this Reckoning made, this Audit of my woe,
 I call my thoughts where so strange passions flowe;
 Howe workes my hart, my sences stricken dumbe ?
 that would thee more, then ever hart could showe...(43–47)

As opposed to summoning "thoughts where so strange passions flowe" to supplement and complicate the "Audit of my woe," the persona of the more disciplined printed version speaks more neutrally of "swelling passions," which the same "audit" actually serves to calm:

O when from this accompt, this cast-up somme,
 This reckning made the Audit of my woo,
 Sometime of rase my swelling passions know...(57–59)

The mysterious and organic processes of grief itself are, in the manuscript text, beyond even the power of the "hart," not merely of "words," to "showe" (47). Moreover, it is suggested that this mystery puts Pembroke's grief beyond the range of conventional consolation: it can be neither stoically mastered nor accommodated within Christian resignation. The manuscript version makes the production of "thy praise" (49) an end in itself, which can have no end. The published text, by contrast, implicitly declares consolation to be achievable: "praise" is transcended, transformed, and so contained; the focus of production becomes "thy prayer" (63).

I will not dispute the scholarly consensus that the printed version of the dedicatory poem is chronologically prior to that of the manuscript, although the only evidence appears to be inferential, and editors may be overhasty in applying to the special case of "Angel Spirit" the conclusion clearly warrant-

ed by the Psalms themselves—namely, that Pembroke “increasingly asserts herself as a poet” over time and with practice.²⁷ Quite possibly, the eroticized spirituality in the dedicatory poem was liberated, rather than contained, by the process of revision. What is demonstrable in any case is that Pembroke’s translation of *Marc Antoine* tends in the contrary direction, flattening and restraining the more extravagant impulses of the original. The sense, in Garnier, of passion overflowing the approved categories of emotional response, the boundaries of the self, and the expressive capacities of language matches the claim of the manuscript “Angel Spirit” to a “love” that cannot “enough in world of words unfold” (28); Pembroke’s *Antonius*, by contrast, strongly tends to the sobriety of the dedicatory poem’s printed version, which figures that love as “justly here contrould” (42).

Much of this effect seems merely inadvertent, as if Pembroke’s verbal skills are simply not up to the challenge, although to say so goes very much against the grain of recent commentary. Most previous studies of *Antonius*, when they have not simply ignored the original, have waxed eloquent over the translator’s fidelity,²⁸ commended her dexterity “in the difficult exercise of converting Garnier’s alexandrines into English blank verse,”²⁹ or even given the impression that she enhances the quality of the poetry: one is informed that the Countess “retains or expands the imagery” and “carries through metaphors”; she “amplifies”; she “adds” and “extends.”³⁰ Yet while some such observations are technically correct, the degree of praise seems to me overgenerous and the cumulative effect quite misleading. Howard B. Norland provides a more balanced view, and my observations broadly document his judgement that Pembroke “reduces the emotional intensity of the original.”³¹ As Norland points out, several aspects of Garnier’s Cléopâtre come under particular pressure by way of changes in vocabulary, syntax, and versification: Pembroke diminishes the force of the heroine’s beauty and conveys greater “moral disapproval” of the lovers’ conduct, even as she “emphasizes Cleopatra’s social standing.”³² These elements suggest a double movement, whereby the Countess at once invests herself in her heroine and struggles to set limits to that investment, especially when it comes to the power of passion.

It is finally very difficult to praise Pembroke’s translation without short-changing the original, explicitly or implicitly. In general, Garnier’s rhetoric, however relentless, is intricately structured, dramatically functional, and richly evocative. Thus his Cléopâtre laments over the body of Antoine in terms first cosmic, then intensely personal, so that her guilt-ridden internalizing of the loss is strongly conveyed: “O cruelle fortune ! ô desastre execrable ! / O pestilente amour ! ô torche abominable !” (1792–93); this is what

gives point to the unusual verb “infortune,” as she proceeds, in apostrophe, to exalt the value “De vous que j’infortune, et que de main sanglante / Je contrains devaler sous la tombe relante” (1808–9). The queen’s terrible sense of Antoine’s blood on her hands thus modulates into conjuration of an atmosphere akin to that imagined by Juliet, who dreads waking in the “foul mouth” of the Capulet tomb, reeking “with loathsome smells,” “Where bloody Tybalt...lies fest’ring in his shroud.”³³ This subtle progression is collapsed by the Countess into disconnected formulaic expletives more reminiscent of Shakespeare’s lamenting Nurse—“O cruell Fortune ! ô accursed lott ! / O plaguy love ! ô most detested brand” (1815–16); it culminates in lines that not only leave fortune out of the picture but teeter (like a great many, in fact) on the brink of *Pyramus and Thisbe*-style parody: “Of you, whom I have plagu’d, whom I have made / With bloudie hand a guest of mouldie Tombe” (1831–32).

Such instances of the blunting of poetical point and impact—and dozens might be cited—are presumably quite unintentional, but in an exercise whose intention, precisely, appears provocatively conflicted, it becomes significant that they are of a piece with more definite tendencies and apparent choices. When Antoine (speaking to himself) laments the unhappy day “que te gagna l’Amour” (52), the Countess might simply be mistranslating when she inverts the syntax—“that gained thee thy love” (53)—but elsewhere, too (as indeed in the lines cited above), she consistently downplays the agency of erotic passion. This is the broader issue, surely, behind the impression that she is “much less taken by Cleopatra’s charms than Garnier.”³⁴ That passion’s destructive physicality and teasing deceptiveness are vividly conveyed in the French, when Antoine (again to himself) speaks of “le visage aimé, dont le semblant mocqueur / Errant en ta mouëlle, envenime ton cœur” (111–12). The colours fade in translation: “Sight of that face whose guilefull semblant doth / (Wandering in thee) infect thy tainted heart” (112–13). By the same token, while Cléopâtre’s “ardente jealousy” (464) must be acknowledged (“burning jealousy” [471]), since it is directly stated, the transfer of the possessive pronoun from “Antoine” to “absence” and the change in word order sap the force of the emotion and especially diminish her fear of abandonment, when “Par-ce je craignois que mon Antoine absent / Reprint son Octavie, et m’allast delaissant” (466) becomes, “Fearing least in my absence *Antony* / Should leaving me retake *Octavia*” (472–73).

The most sensitive and suggestive points, however, are those that touch on divinity and eschatology. The blatant idolatry of Antoine’s fixation—“J’ay son idole faux en l’esprit nuict et jour” (911)—is sanitized into amorous remembrance: “Each day, each night her Image haunts my minde” (922). And

while there appears an impulse on the translator's part to associate passion with hell ("horrible amour" [285] becomes "hellish love" [289]), Cleopatra herself is stripped of the desire to follow her lover "aux Enfers pallissans" (650): the phrase is simply omitted from the equivalent line (657).³⁵ At the points where Garnier allows for a positive quasi-religious power in Cléopâtre's beauty, the translator's flattening hand is still more conspicuous. In making a case for Shakespeare's familiarity with *Antonius*, Ernest Schanzer has cited the speech of Diomed ("Nature by such a worke / Her selfe, should seme, in workmanship hath past..." [717 ff.]) as the basis for Enobarbus' wondrous evocation of Cleopatra in Rome (*Antony and Cleopatra* II.ii.190 ff.).³⁶ Norland rightly observes that "Diomed's enthusiasm rather disappears in Sidney's prosaic rendering."³⁷ But an entire dimension of that enthusiasm is excised with special rigour. In Garnier's "L'alabastre qui blanchist sur son visage saint" (713), Pembroke fails to translate "saint" ("The Allablaster covering of hir face" [721]), while "son esprit divin" (720) is made as anodyne as possible: "her cælestiall Sp'rite" (728). Finally at stake—and in a way that suggests Shakespeare's own recourse to the source, not merely to the translation—is Enobarbus' resounding conclusion that "vildest things / Become themselves in her, that the holy priests / Bless her when she is riggish" (II.ii.237–39). Finally, while there is obviously no thwarting the structural momentum towards Cléopâtre's suicide, Pembroke effaces the subtle suggestion that hope actually lies within her despair—"L'esperoir de mes malheurs ne gist plus en la force" (428) is reduced to "In striving lyes no hope of my mishapps" (435)—and strips the *Liebestod* of its Neoplatonic sacramentality; the reader relying upon the line, "And our true loves your dolefull voice commend" (665), would never suspect the lyrical claim to mystical transcendence that lies behind it: "Et nos saintes amours vostre voix benira" (658).

Suicide thus emerges across the Countess's translation as a more highly charged issue than Lamb's straightforward theory of a female "heroics of constancy" would allow, and this realization imposes reconsideration of the play's original companion piece, which, indeed, received both priority of place in the 1592 volume and top billing (including larger type) in its title.³⁸ There are two points to make at the outset: first, there could have been no better French Protestant counterweight than Mornay to the flawed religious and political credentials of Garnier; secondly, as Stoical as Mornay's treatise may be, with its insistence on the vanity of life and the reasons for welcoming death, it is hardly (and of course could hardly be, in Christian terms) an endorsement of suicide. On the contrary, as if he is anxious precisely to counteract any such impression, Mornay concludes by stressing that to seek death is "temeritie" and "despaire," as wholly lacking in "magnanimitie" as

is over-fondness for life, and that there is “nothing more uncertaine then the houre of death, knowen onlie to God, the onlie Author of life and death, to whom wee all ought endeavour both to live and to die.”³⁹

Seneca was the Renaissance’s most popular philosopher, as he was its favourite tragedian, not least because his moral pronouncements lent themselves, selectively, to extraction from their pagan context and translation into Christian terms. In this there was continuity with medieval practice, given the early and wide diffusion of the pseudo-Senecan *Formula Vitae Honestae* or *De Quatuor Virtutibus*, which began to be attributed instead to Saint Martin of Braga only in editions well into the sixteenth century. The tragedies provided grist to the Christian mill thanks largely to Pierre Grosnet in France, who, beginning in 1539, published a collection of sentences shorn of all dramatic accompaniments but embroidered with moral commentary and enriched with biblical parallels.⁴⁰ Seneca’s insistence on personal spiritual development in the face of implacable destiny was at least as compatible with Reformed as with Catholic doctrine, and it is therefore not surprising that Mornay (like Pibrac) drew heavily on Seneca on the subject of death. But Mornay did more: he appended to the *Excellent discours* a substantial collection of excerpts from several works of Seneca, especially the *Epistulae Morales*, explaining in his preface that he considered Seneca’s testimony regarding the vanity of life to be especially salutary because it came from natural judgement, learning, and experience without the benefit of revelation.

The *Excellent discours* of Mornay held a remarkable fascination for English translators (and presumably readers). The Countess’s translation was itself reissued in 1593 (without *Antonius*), in direct competition with another appearing in the same year—*A Christian View of Life and Death*, produced by an unidentified “A. W.” and published by Richard Field—then several times subsequently. More to the point, the Countess must have been intimately familiar with the prior version of the prolific translator Edward Aggas. The Oxford editors, in documenting her divergences from this precursor, also establish that she made use of his work, to the point where “some of her text exactly matches his.”⁴¹ Aggas, who specialized in strongly Protestant French texts, had produced the initial English version of the *Excellent discours* with evident haste. (It appeared in the same year as the French, 1576, and was republished in 1577.) Yet, unlike the Countess and “A. W.,” Aggas retained the Senecan supplement, hence the shape and scope of Mornay’s original volume, complete with introductory epistle.⁴²

Thereby reproduced as well was an underlying tension, further highlighted by Aggas’s one-sided title, *The Defence of Death*. Certainly, Mornay had deftly chosen his excerpts to illustrate the philosopher’s more Christian-

sounding counsels regarding mortality; together they amount to death's second "defence" in a broadly compatible consolatory vein. They retain, nevertheless, the trace of their origin within a radically different metaphysics, which is not completely effaced by the regular transposition of "fata" and "dei" into "God" (although Seneca is also conveniently capable of invoking "deum, quo auctore cuncta proveniunt"⁴³). Moreover, given the familiarity of the texts in question, the very principle of rigorous selection makes the omissions conspicuous.

The pivotal issue is precisely suicide, which for the philosopher constitutes the ultimate guarantee of personal freedom and assurance of power over adverse destiny, but which is forbidden to Christians as a denial of divine providence and, more essentially, as an affront to creation. Not only are all positive mentions of suicide avoided in the Senecan texts edited by Mornay, but the question is implicitly made the hinge between the treatise and its supplement. The opening of the Senecan excerpts, from Letter 24 of the *Epistulae Morales*, is carefully fashioned to dovetail with the pious conclusion of the treatise on the facing page, at the expense of fidelity to the original. Omitted is the lengthy opening section of that letter, which moves from endurance of hardship and pain to a celebration of the archetypal Stoic suicide, that of Cato. The remainder is severely compressed, and the conclusion, which evokes the idea that for many people life is merely pointless, is also dropped. Allowed to resonate in its place is what might sound like an absolute stricture against suicide, rather than what readers of the unexpurgated Seneca would have known it to be—an argument against making a premature and cowardly end:

The wise and valiaunt man muste not flee from this life, but soberly departe with all, and abooue all thinges eschew this vicious passion which hath over come many: namely, ouer greate desire of death. (Aggas, trans., sig. Di^v)

Read against the precursor volume of Aggas—and many contemporaries would so have read it—the Countess's double translation of 1592 might appear not only to have substituted Garnier's *Marc Antoine* for Mornay's Senecan excerpts, but also to have modified the play's neo-pagan eschatology in an analogous way, and likewise imperfectly. The point is more notable because of an echo, which, fortuitous or not, is likely to have served as an intertextually evocative "ungrammaticality." Schanzer has further linked Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with Pembroke's translation (although the point would work as well for Garnier's original) by way of the "ghost" character of "Lucillius," named in the opening stage direction of Act I, Scene ii, in the Folio text but never mentioned again.⁴⁴ According to Plutarch, Lu-

cilius was Antony's trusted servant, who first made an impression with his courage by impersonating Brutus at Philippi and who accompanied Antony into Asia. It was therefore natural for Garnier to use this name for the faithful friend of Antoine who, in Act III, attempts to console the hero for having yielded shamefully to love and to dissuade him from suicide—an argument refuted thus:

Allons, mon cher Lucile: hé ! pourquoi plorez-vous ?
 Cette fatalité commune est à nous tous,
 Nous devons tous mourir: chacun doit un hommage
 Au Dieu, qui les Enfers eut jadis en partage. (1242–45)

It is striking to a reader of Mornay's volume or Aggas's translation that the better part of the Senecan excerpts—those from the *Epistulae Morales*, certainly, but also the substantial extract from the *De Providentia* ("De la Providence Divine" for Mornay, "Of God's Providence" in Aggas's translation)—are directly addressed to the philosopher's own friend Lucilius, often naming him in the same familiar tone. While Mornay strove to Christianize these addresses, Garnier's recreated paganism is nowhere more vivid than in Antoine's dark justification of suicide as a sacrifice to the god of the underworld, and it is remarkable that Pembroke's translation is exceptionally faithful at this point:

Come, deare *Lucill*: alas: why wepe you thus!
 This mortall lot is common to us all.
 We must all die, each doth in homage⁴⁵ owe
 Unto that God that shar'd the Realmes belowe. (1255–58)

In fact, the incantations of Garnier's Cléopâtre summon Antoine himself as the god of death to whom she will make a joyous sacrifice:

Antoine je te pry' par nos amours fidelles,
 Par nos cœurs allumez de douces estincelles,
 Par nostre saint hymen, et la tendre pitié
 De nos petits enfans, nœu de nostre amitié,
 Que ma dolente voix à ton oreille arrive,
 Et que je t'accompagne en l'infernale rive,
 Ta femme et ton amie...(1944–50)

Here, at what might seem the least likely moment, Pembroke dares in frank language ("holy," "hellish") to reproduce that eschatology:

Antonie by our true loves I thee beseche,
And by our hearts swete sparks have sett on fire,
Our holy mariage, and the tender ruthe
Of our deare babes, knot of our amitie:
My dolefull vice thy eare let enttaine,
And take me with thee to the hellish plaine,
Thy wife, thy frend...(1967–73)

The fact remains that Pembroke chose a text in which the heroine's suicide is evoked but not actually accomplished. It is, rather, deferred into an off-stage future—precisely the one that Daniel was then entrusted with supplying. After all, Pembroke might instead have translated the play to which Garnier's was itself a supplement, the *Cléopâtre captive* of Étienne Jodelle (pub. 1574). Had politics been her point, that choice would have been natural, for Jodelle develops the theme of the queen's political triumph over Caesar through her suicide. But then, besides confronting the accomplishment of that act (at least as it is narrated), Pembroke would also have had to accommodate a very different representation of Antony. Jodelle's Antoine, far from undergoing a progression from self-loathing to loving reconciliation, deplores, from beyond the grave, his former expense of human spirit in a waste of shame (to recall the sexual disgust of Shakespeare's Sonnet 129):

Me voilà jà fuyant, oublieux de la guerre,
Pour suivre Cléopâtre, en faisant l'heur des armes
Céder à ce malheur des amoureux alarmes.
Me voilà dans sa ville, où j'ivrogne et putasse,
Me paissant de plaisirs...⁴⁶

The vengeful Ombre d'Antoine, in straightforward Senecan style, seeks nothing but his ex-lover's company in his eternal misery:

...Pour venir endurer en notre pâle bande,
Or se faisant compagne en ma peine et tristesse,
Qui s'est faite longtemps compagne en ma liesse. (104–6)

Hardly could such an Antoine have stood in for an "Angel Spirit" to whom the Countess might address herself, in the person of Cleopatra, to envisage a death recuperating Cato's philosophy in the cause of erotic union. Garnier, by contrast, offered a hero whose love, conflicted and morally dubious though it was, finally constitutes "so just cause" for the "happy change" his survivor quite literally envisages:

...je suis heureuse en mon mal devorant,
 De mourir avec toy, de t'embrasser mourant,
 Mon corps contre le tien, ma bouche desseichee
 De soupirs embrasez, à la tienne attachee...(1962–65)

This pair will transcend death by what could not more clearly be a “coupling”—or, it might be said, a “mingling,” to recall the terms with which Shakespeare’s Mardian falsely informs Antony of Cleopatra’s death but truly prophesies it: “My mistress lov’d thee, and her fortunes mingled / With thine entirely” (IV.xiv.24–25). Yet still the translator interposes a sign of resistance to the persona she chose to speak for her. As in the passage from one version of the “Angel Spirit” to another, this vivid *coupling* becomes a *joining*, which attaches a living body to an irrevocably dead one:

...most happie in this happles case,
 To die with thee, and dieng thee embrace:
 By bodie joynde with thine, my mouth with thine,
 My mouth, whose moisture burning sighes have dried...(1985–88)

Finally, however, despite what seem to have been her best efforts, Pembroke’s evident disavowal of Cleopatra on moral and religious grounds did not prevent her from effectively *translating* the transcendently erotic grief that Garnier had devoted his full rhetorical resources to evoking. On the contrary, the very resistance of the translation throws that potent emotional amalgam into ambivalent relief. Equally revealing intertextually is the impact on the 1592 volume of allowing the heroine’s suicidal momentum effectively to restore the major excision that had been imposed on Seneca’s Stoicism: the Countess thereby opened a discursive channel that flows around and beyond Mornay’s stern containment operation, with sudden currents and (self-?)surprising eddies. Her own juxtaposition of texts, which on the surface proposes an even starker contrast between discredited pagan ideas and enlightened Christian ones, thereby produces, paradoxically, not a statically “joynt worke,” but a dynamically “coupled” one.

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Notes

1. Alexander Maclaren Witherspoon, *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama*, « Yale Studies in English » 65 (1924; rpt. Hamdon, CT: Archon Books, 1968), esp. pp. 65–83; see also, notably, Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, “Sidney’s Sister as Translator of Garnier,” *Renaissance News* 10 (1957), pp. 8–13, and Pierre Spriet, *Samuel Daniel (1563–1619). Sa vie—son œuvre*, « Études Anglaises » 29 (Paris: Didier, 1968), pp. 344–49.

2. Samuel Daniel, *Delia and Rosamond augmented, Cleopatra* (London: [James Roberts and Edward Allde for] Simon Waterston, 1594), sigs. H5^v and H4^r.
3. Michael Brennan, *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 78–83; Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 115–45.
4. Brennan, p. 82.
5. See Margaret P. Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 84–105.
6. Hannay, pp. 120–1.
7. Hannay, pp. 126, 119.
8. Pierre de Ronsard, Amadis Jamyn, and Robert Garnier, *Le Tombeau du feu Roy Tres-Chrestien Charles IX, etc.* (Paris: F. Morel, 1574).
9. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, gen. eds., 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), III.iv.178, 175. This edition is used throughout for Shakespearean references.
10. Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, Barnes and Noble, 1973), pp. 133–4.
11. See Spriet, pp. 107–8 (for Greville), and 154–8 (on Daniel's *Philotas*).
12. Lamb, pp. 115–45.
13. Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), p. 59; see also Spriet, p. 348.
14. Lamb, p. 130.
15. Lamb, p. 135.
16. See, notably, Gary F. Waller, "The Countess of Pembroke and Gendered Reading," in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), p. 335, and Beth Wynne Fisk, "'To the Angel spirit...': Mary Sidney's Entry into the 'World of Words'," in Haselkorn and Travitsky, eds. *op.cit.*, pp. 263–75.
17. Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 110–5. This edition is cited for all of Herbert's works. For comparison of the two versions on the premise of revision from the printed version to that of the manuscript, see pp. 74–76.
18. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 75.
19. Coburn Freer, *Music for a King: George Herbert's Style and the Metrical Psalms* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 89.
20. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 325, n. 91.
21. Robert Garnier, *Marc Antoine*, in *Marc Antoine, Hippolyte*, ed. Raymond Lebègue (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974); this edition is cited throughout.
22. John Aubrey, *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick, 2nd ed. (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1950), p. 139.

23. See Gary F. Waller, *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke: A Critical Study of Her Writings and Literary Milieu*, Salzburg studies in English Literature, Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 87 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1979), p. 100, and Waller, "The Countess of Pembroke," p. 336.
24. Waller, "The Countess of Pembroke," p. 339.
25. Jonathan Crewe, *Hidden Designs: The Critical Profession and Renaissance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1986), pp. 82–8.
26. Janet MacArthur, "Ventriloquizing Comfort and Despair: Mary Sidney's Female Personae in *The Triumph of Death* and *The Tragedy of Antony*," *Sidney Newsletter and Journal* 11.1 (1990), p. 7.
27. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 77. See vol. 1, pp. 303–4 for the transmission and authority of the poem's texts. The fact that the "Angel Spirit" of the title matches lines present only in the manuscript version cuts both ways. Indeed, it appears more likely that such a title would have been retained despite excision of the verses that gave rise to it than that Pembroke would subsequently have added lines to match a pre-existing title. Nevertheless, as is attested by both Fisker and Waller (see "The Countess of Pembroke," pp. 334–40), critics are strongly inclined to presume her growth in poetical power and distinctiveness.
28. Thus Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 151.
29. Brennan, p. 67.
30. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 66.
31. Howard B. Norland, "Englishing Garnier: Mary Sidney's Antonie and Daniel's Cleopatra," *Tudor Theatre: Emotion in the Theatre/L'émotion au théâtre*, ed. André Lascombes, Collection Théta (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), vol. 3, p. 165.
32. Norland, pp. 164–7.
33. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, IV.iii.34, 46, 42–43.
34. Norland, p. 165.
35. "[P]erhaps for theological reasons," the Oxford editors suggest (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 151).
36. As well as for V.ii.97 ff. See Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare: A Study of Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 151.
37. Norland, p. 165.
38. *A Discourse of Life and Death written in French by Ph. Mornay. Antonius, A Tragœdie written also in French by Ro. Garnier. Both done in English by the Countess of Pembroke* (London: William Ponsonby, 1592).
39. I cite Pembroke's translation in Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 254.
40. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Les Tragédies très-éloquentes du grans Philosophe Seneque diligemment traduites de Latin en Françoys. Avec plusieurs épitaphes, épigrammes, dictz moraulx et aultres choses mémorables nouvellement adjoustées*, ed. and trans. Pierre Grosnet (Lyons: [n. pub.], 1539).
41. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, eds., vol. 1, p. 223.

42. Philippe de Mornay, seigneur du Plessis-Marly, *The Defence of Death, Contayning a moste excellent discourse of life and death, etc.*, trans. Edward Aggas (London: John Alde for Edward Aggas, 1576). Aggas's translation, though sometimes less elegant than Pembroke's, is serviceable and generally accurate. I have verified the contents of his volume by comparison with the copy of the *Excellent discours* in the Médiathèque François Mitterrand, Poitiers.
43. *L. Annaei Senecae ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, ed. L. D. Reynolds, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), letter 107.9 (p. 449); letter 108, according to Mornay, followed by Aggas. Even here the Latin receives a Christian inflection, thanks to an idiomatic conversion that had become standard procedure. Seneca literally says that it is desirable to "follow" or "accompany" ("comitari") the divinity; the translation makes this submission to the divine "will" (Aggas, sig. Gi^v).
44. Ernest Schanzer, "Three Notes on Antony and Cleopatra," *Notes and Queries* 205 (1960), p. 22.
45. "[I]n homage" should probably read "an homage."
46. Étienne Jodelle, *Cléopâtre captive*, ed. Françoise Charpentier, Jean-Dominique Beaudin, and José Sanchez (Mugron: J. Feijóo, 1990), LL. 64–8.