Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*:
a confessionally propagandistic tragedy

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Introduction

For Renaissance humanists, the study of classical antiquity was inextricably bound up with deeply felt educational concerns, as they "aimed to spread knowledge in order to improve people morally and religiously on the basis of the classics" (Bloemendal and Norland 2013, 2). The most rewarding opportunities for such endeavours of improvement would concern the young and hopefully still mouldable. Within the *studia humanitatis*, the Renaissance curriculum which revolved around the reading, interpreting and imitation of Latin (and later Greek) authors, an important place was accorded to drama, which was increasingly recognized for its edifying value with regard to Latin eloquence as well as Christian ethics (Parente 1987, 7). The comedies of Plautus and Terence (third and second centuries BC) were regarded as highly conducive to pupils' command of Latin, but soon newly created humanist plays exceeded them in popularity. Bloemendal asserts that this did not so much result from an aversion to pagan and often licentious dramatic content, but rather from a desire to extend means of edification beyond the limited arsenal provided by the Roman comedists, and thus for the humanists to "add moralizing and other edifying remarks, serve their own literary aspirations, and develop other biblical and religious themes" (Bloemendal 2013, 331).

The moral usefulness of drama was certainly recognized by the Catholic order of the Jesuits, which was founded at Rome in 1534. It soon became one of the major orders aimed at education and mission, and its institutions flourished in the Southern Low Countries after the establishment of its first settlement at Louvain in 1547 (Bloemendal 2013, 333). Jesuit school drama in northern Europe naturally combined training pupils in Latin eloquence with the general humanist occupation with their moral improvement,[1] but its character was also essentially decided by pressing contemporary concerns of a political-religious nature. The Reformation had begun with Luther's disclosure of his principles and objections to the Catholic Church in Wittenberg in 1517, and the ensuing Protestant movement that forced secession from the Church elicited a fiercely defensive Catholic reaction, the Counter-Reformation. Political turmoil and religious wars ensued in Europe. Thus the French Wars of Religion (1562-98) involved Catholics and Protestant Huguenots, while the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) in central Europe began as a war between Catholic and Protestant states within the Holy Roman Empire. The Low Countries suffered their own Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), in which independence from Habsburg ruler Philip II from Spain was vehemently sought and eventually obtained by the northern provinces, while the Southern Low Countries continued their allegiance to the Catholic Habsburgs. Although the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands was proclaimed in 1581, the separation between this Protestant Republic and the Catholic southern provinces was not officially

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[1] Rädle notes that in principle, Jesuit moralizing occurred on a generally spiritual level, had an inward direction and was aimed at long-term effects, as it entailed "moral and religious instruction that should lead both to the reinforcement and psychological comfort of individuals and to a solidarity of Catholic feeling in the community" (Rädle 2013, 218).

established until the Peace of Münster (as part of the Peace of Westphalia) in 1648. Up until then the Southern Low Countries remained a confessional battlefield, with reformational and counter-reformational ideas and convictions as most common weaponry. These could be effectively contained in drama.[2] Bloemendal observes that after 1600, among Catholics especially the Jesuits "used theatre as a *propaganda fidei* and a weapon of Counter-Reformation" while they "preferred hagiographical and historical themes in which they could show that man's obedience to the Church guaranteed his salvation" (Bloemendal 2013, 342). One deeply concerned Jesuit playwright who used a dramatic rendition of history for confessional purposes was Nicolaus Vernulaeus, or de Vernulz (1583-1649), professor of Latin eloquence at the Collegium Porcense ('college of the pig') in Louvain.

In addition to, and closely bound up with, his directly instructing activities, Vernulaeus was a prolific writer whose work centred on oratory, history, politics and moral philosophy. His pedagogic objective as well as his literary output bear witness to a profound confessionalism, which was an all-pervasive sentiment at Louvain as Catholic bulwark and especially at its university. Schuster notes that Vernulaeus persisted in his belief in the religious unity of the Low Countries and that in his opinion it could be "regained only by the dominance of the Throne-Altar dyarchy to which he subscribed" (Schuster 1964, 28). This diarchy involved a clearly delineated distinction between spiritual authority (the pope's prerogative) and earthly, political authority (of a king or emperor).[3] Most of Vernulaeus' fourteen historical tragedies treat this subject, more specifically "a major conflict in which spiritual authority, usually in the person of an ecclesiastic, clashes with temporal power in the person of a king or military leader" (Schuster 1964, 11).[4] One of these tragedies was *Henricus Octavus*, or *Henricus Octavus seu schisma Anglicanum, tragoedia*, performed by Vernulaeus' pupils in 1624, which turned to quite recent historical events that had left their profound mark on the Catholic/Protestant proportions in Europe.

The story of England's king Henry VIII (1491-1547) and his secession from the Church was of course teeming with confessional relevance. In his tragedy's introductory *argumentum* Vernulaeus gives his account of the causes of the English Reformation. Henry married Spanish Catherine, nominally widow of his prematurely deceased brother Arthur, with special papal permission (*de Pontificis Summi venia*, *Argumentum*, v.6). He then rejected her, pretending to be motivated by religious objections to her earlier marriage to his brother (*religione, ut prae se ferebat, motus, quod*

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[2] Early neo-Latin drama in the Low Countries (from 1500) was largely biblical, and whether these plays were actually intended as religious polemic or not, they were "often read in the light of the clash between Protestants and Catholics" (Bloemendal 2013, 303).

[3] Vernulaeus evidently saw the Habsburg dynasty as worthy component of this diarchy, and his lifelong dedication to the Spanish/Austrian emperorship, resulting concretely in the treatment of its illustrious history in his *Annus Austriacus* (1628), earned him the function of imperial historiographer (Depuydt 2009).

[4] Other examples include a conflict between an abbot from Dutch Gorinchem against a Sea Beggar (Protestant *watergeus*) in *Gorcomienses* (1609) and between Thomas Becket and Henry II of England in *Thomas Cantuariensis* (1623).

uxor fratris sui fuisset, v.11-2), while the real reason was his infatuation with Anne Boleyn (*Annam Bolenam, quam deperibat*, v.13). When the Roman Pontifex condemned this new marriage and Catherine's rejection, Henry rendered himself Primate of the Anglian Church (*in Ecclesia Anglicana Primatum*, v.15-6). He executed those who refused obedience, which resulted in many martyrs (*tot Martyres*, v.17-8) in England and Ireland. This was then the sole cause of Heresy's intrusion into the former tributary province of the Catholic Church (*Una enim & hac sola occasione in Angliam, tributariam olim Romanae Ecclesiae Provinciam Haeresis irrepsit*, v. 19-21). As we will see, one of the main themes of Vernulaeus' play are the dreadful consequences for England of the religious schism caused by Henry.[5] Schuster notes that the play's confessional significance was meant to reach beyond the Collegium Porcense and the university of Louvain, as Vernulaeus issued this play (like his other pieces) in printed form, and writes in his introductory letter to erstwhile spectator reverend Desbois: *Legant alii quae vidisti* ('May others read what you have seen', v.31) (Schuster 1964, 210).

Meanwhile, Vernulaeus himself termed his confessionally themed play a *tragoedia*, which (like all literary genres) entails formal and content-related conventions in turn. Parente remarks that the converging of classical dramatic form and contemporary edifying intentions posed a challenge to humanist playwrights: "The christianization of antique theater was based on a variety of moralistic and aesthetic arguments which betrayed the religious playwright's attempt to establish an ideal balance between these two tendencies" (Parente 1987, 31-2). What balance did Vernulaeus strike between the chosen form of tragedy and his contribution to the unremitting confessional conflict? In order to shed light on this question, Vernulaeus' play and its propagandistic Catholic message will be considered within the context of neoclassical theory on tragedy. Italian theorists in the sixteenth century were very influential in their discussing and combining classical theory derived from Aristotle and Horace, as has been made abundantly clear by Herrick's influential study from 1946. Although these theorizings took place in a different phase of the Renaissance, Vernulaeus is likely to have been aware of their existence and significance. To what extent and in what ways does Vernulaeus in his propagandistic tragedy *Henricus Octavus* seem to adhere to neoclassical rules and central concepts that were derived from classical theory on tragedy? In order to answer this question, neoclassical theory on tragedy will be considered first (chapter 1), followed by a consideration of Vernulaeus' tragedy in the light of this theory (chapters 2-4).

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[5] At quite an advanced stage in his commentary on *Henricus Octavus*, Schuster reminds his readers that Henry rejected papal authority, but not the Catholic faith, that England did not become formally Protestant until the end of the sixteenth century (under Elizabeth I) and that the English populace in general was not greatly perturbed by Henry's religious-political conflict with Rome (Schuster 1964, 277). Such nuances were clearly lost on Vernulaeus, who chose to represent Henry as indubitable confessional antagonist opposed to faith and pope alike.

1. Neoclassical theory for tragedy

The story of neoclassical tragedy in fact began in the late Middle Ages, with Seneca. After an eleventh-century manuscript containing nine Senecan tragedies (the Codex Etruscus)[6] was rediscovered at the Benedictine abbey of Pomposa, Italy, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Paduan circle of scholars around Lovato dei Lovati would be pivotal in spreading Seneca as absolutely unrivalled tragic model for humanist playwrights (Grund 2011, xiv-xv).[7] The model's main emphasis, it must be noted, was linguistic rather than dramatic, and Charlton observes with some admiration: "In fact, Seneca's genius must be measured by the skill with which he diverts Tragedy to rhetorical opportunity" (Charlton 1974, 22). This opportunity was likewise seized by neoclassical playwrights, who shared among themselves an eagerness to practise and flaunt their Latin writing skills. Braden advises against seeing these newly created plays in undoubtedly discomforting stage performances, but also appreciates that the generally resulting static sequences of long speeches were understandable. He partly blames Seneca: "Seneca offered no effective guide for pulling them together in terms of plot and character, only at best a vague notion of subordinating everything to some tumultuous mood" (Braden 1985, 104).[8] The potentially mitigating factor that Seneca's tragedies might have been principally intended for being read aloud rather than conceived with a view to dramatic performance is wholly neglected by Braden.[9] After having considered Seneca's failure to provide the Renaissance dramatists with insight into matters of effective staging, Braden observes that early Renaissance theory for tragedy was not exactly helpful in this respect either, as it involved hardly any notion of dramaturgical value. The unfortunate combination with Senecan

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[6] The tragedies contained in this codex (also succinctly known as 'E') were *Hercules Furens*, *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes* and *Hercules Oetaeus*, and although some doubts remain with regard to the last, these nine tragedies are generally regarded as authentic (Conte 1994, 416). This modern opinion was already shared in the sixteenth century by Julius Caesar Scaliger, although his contemporaries for the most part believed that Seneca had ten tragedies to his name by including *Octavia* (Charlton 1974, 29). This play had surfaced in the less authoritative 'A' manuscript tradition.

[7] The overwhelming humanist popularity of Seneca did leave room for interest in and ensuing influence of Greek tragedy, but for its wider dissemination it was dependent upon willing and capable Latin translators. Some of Euripides' tragedies were translated by Erasmus and George Buchanan in the early sixteenth century, while Sophocles and Aeschylus only became generally known amongst the Renaissance literati from 1550 onwards, and slowly too (IJsewijn and Sacré 1998, 140).

[8] Grund puts forward the first Renaissance tragedy *Ecerinis* (1314) as particularly effective, and naturally unsubtle, imitation of the Senecan model in rhetorical as well as other aspects, labelling it: "Mussato's crude attempt to out-Seneca Seneca in the presentation of bloody sensationalism, the rhetorical flourishes of set speeches, and the terror of Fortune's unruly wheel" (Grund 2011, viii).

[9] Conte expressly aligns himself with the dominant tradition that holds that Seneca's tragedies were chiefly intended for reading, but also reveals the intricacies of the discussion at hand. He mentions vaguely defined 'stylistic peculiarities' as main reason for the 'reading instead of performance hypothesis' (my words), but also argues that the use of machinery and cruel spectacle as implied by the text "might seem to presuppose rather than give the lie to stage performance in situations where a mere reading would limit, if not destroy altogether, the effects required by the dramatic text" (Conte 1999, 418).

imitation was in his view "deadly, with theory reinforcing the worst features of the original" (Braden 1985, 104).

The popularity of Seneca as a tragic model would, however, combine forces with the comic models provided by Plautus and Terence in establishing formal generalities as widely accepted 'rules' before any neoclassical interplay with classical dramatic theory took place. The most notable and endurable example is the five-act structure, which became "perhaps the most faithfully observed dramatic rule" and would be derived from Horace by the neoclassical theorists (Herrick 1946, 90). The recognition of the iambic metre as most suitable for drama must also have occurred in the course of the Renaissance playwrights' manifold encounters with classical comedies and tragedies, while the neoclassical theorists found corroboration for the iamb's appropriateness for dramatic action in both Horace and Aristotle (Herrick 1946, 23-4).[10]

Still, despite this detection of simple and instructive regularities in classical drama and their application to Renaissance creations, especially for the benefit of tragedy more extensive theoretical guidance seems to have been needed with some dramatic urgency. Dramatists seeking such guidance relied on a theoretical basis that was "far from systematic", which resulted in their "drawing on whatever sources they could find" (Ford and Taylor 2013, 7). The field of Renaissance dramatic theory was characterized by its sheer volume and exuberance, and although the dynamic playing field was very alluring to eager theorists, for those with more practically dramatic aspirations it proved to be less accessible.

My consideration of the relationship between Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus* and contemporary theoretical fundamentals would have been daunting indeed (if not non-existent) if it had not been for Herrick's having condensed the truly complicated matter of Renaissance dramatic theory into serviceable form. From the neoclassical involvement with Horace and Aristotle he deduced seven neoclassical 'rules'.[11] Of these rules, the most important and most testable regarding plot and character will be seen to form the backbone of this research. In addition, Herrick states that the sixteenth-century theorists found evidence for the workings of 'probability and necessity' and for their preference for simple and natural language in both Horace and Aristotle, which two rules/concepts I have also intended to include in this research. And lastly, the concept of the 'tragic hero' and of elevated and enhanced language could be seen as 'Aristotelian', of which the former is not treated by Herrick, whereas the latter is. The overview of theory presented here was thus not

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[10] Both Aristotle and Horace considered the iamb the dramatic metre par excellence because of its closeness to natural speech (*Poetics* 1449a and *Ars Poetica* 73 ff.). The neoclassical commentators seem to have received this Greek-Roman unanimity on metrical matters heartily, and Robortellus explicated with general contemporary assent that "the humble iamb is right for dramatic poetry" (Herrick 1946, 24).

[11] Herrick's neoclassical rules are: 1) Plot is the soul of poetry, 2) The dramatic unities must be observed, 3) Characters should be conventionalized, 4) All plays should be divided into five acts, 5) The chorus should be treated as one of the actors, 6) The *deus ex machina* should be used but sparingly, and 7) Spectacle is the least artistic element in the theater (Herrick 1964, 67-105).

established by consulting primary sources, but for convenience's sake I have relied on a limited number of secondary works, most notably Herrick's because of his defining and explaining the influential neoclassical 'rules', whereas the broader surveys of Carlson and, to a lesser extent, Sidnell, will emerge as having been invaluable as well. Van den Boogerd provided insight into Jesuit theorists. In this theoretically themed chapter, I will first briefly consider the Renaissance reception of Horace and Aristotle, and subsequently the theoretical 'rules' and concepts concerning plot, character and language that I intend to consider with regard to Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*.

1.1 Neoclassicists, Horace and Aristotle

The proper entering of dramatic theory onto the Renaissance scene occurred when Horace's *Ars Poetica* was successively translated into Italian (1535), French (1545) and English (1567) (Herrick 1946, 1). Roman dramatic theory, in Horace's case in fine epistolary form, did by no means fall on barren ground, but happened to fit neatly into an existing tradition. This tradition, with its insistence on a combined rhetorical and moral function of poetry, in fact had its origins with Horace himself. He was unambiguous in the goal he perceived for poetry, as revealed by his much-quoted adage that it should 'delight and instruct' (*aut prodesse ... aut delectare*, *Ars Poetica*, 333). Poetry's unequivocal two-fold function he presumed to be widely recognized: *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, / lectorem delectando pariterque monendo*, 'Wide support befell him who combined the useful with the pleasing, by delighting the reader and at the same time instructing him' (343-4). Horace's combined rhetorical-moral approach was elaborated by the fourth-century grammarians Evanthius and Donatus. Their writings combined formally poetic concerns (while drawing on Roman rhetoricians) with a moral tone, and they were a substantial source for Roman dramatic theory while being widely distributed and quoted in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance (Carlson 1984, 26). Thus these late-classical grammarians were very influential in shaping the rhetorical-moral Roman approach to poetry's purpose. During the Middle Ages, the moral aspect of the approach was strengthened further by the commanding religious drama tradition, which also essentially engaged itself with moral instruction and included stress on dramatic elements in Mass itself (Carlson 1984, 36). By medieval times, then, the moral taste of the Roman critical tradition of drama had been turned into a decidedly moralistic approach, into which Horace's original text was welcomed back quite naturally.

The entry of Aristotle´s *Poetics* on the Renaissance scene, on the other hand, made matters of formal criticism more complicated, as well as arguably more interesting. Although Lorenzo Valla´s translation into Latin, which appeared posthumously in 1498, had not received much critical attention, Pacius´ version of 1536 evidently fell into more fertile ground and resulted in commentaries on Aristotle´s poetics by Robortellus (1548) and Madius (1550) (Herrick 1946, 1). The neoclassical theorists faced quite a challenge. On the one hand, Aristotle's emphasis on unity and

formal qualities appeared to hint strongly at a function of poetry that was aesthetic rather than rhetorical or moral. On the other, his dense dramatic theory was far less accessible than Horace's legible (though not very explicit) poetic instruction in epistle form. And thus "the mid-sixteenth century critics undertook the formidable task of decoding Aristotle, using, naturally enough, the concepts of the already established Latin tradition with its emphasis on moral instruction" (Carlson 1984, 38). It was precisely Aristotle's recurring lack of terminological precision that must have stimulated endeavours of traditionally inclined neoclassical theorists to enlist him for their cause.[12] Central Aristotelian concepts like *catharsis* and *hamartia* apparently offered enough room to allow for interpretations of a notably moral-didactic nature, which would afterwards be truly influential.[13]

According to Herrick, between 1531 and 1555 the neoclassical commentators achieved a fusion of Aristotelian and Horatian theory, in which the former was repeatedly subjected to selective interpretation before it could be properly incorporated: "by 1555, then, Aristotle's emphasis on the aesthetic function of poetry has been absorbed in the dual function advocated by Horace and suggested by Cicero", and "after 1555 both pleasure and instruction are supposedly authorized by both Horace and Aristotle" (Herrick 1946, 45). Meanwhile, the neoclassical commentators were not mere theorizers, but ultimately concerned with the practical implications of classical dramatic theory, and perhaps indeed "intent upon making Aristotle and Horace as thoroughly prescriptive and so as useful as possible" (Sidnell 1991, 3). Herricks's derived neoclassical 'rules' in their concreteness also bear witness to the theorists' orientation towards dramatic practice. And although most of the theory was applicable to comedy as well as tragedy, it must have been particularly useful for Renaissance playwrights who wished to add dramaturgical depth to their imitations of Seneca.

When one considers Vernulaeus and his ambitions for the Louvain school drama, it must be noted that the Jesuits engaged in dramatic theorizing as well. Rädle stresses the overriding importance of dramatic models for the order's teachers, and contests that the Jesuits benefited from "the rules of poetics, which always remained theoretical and were also misunderstood" (Rädle 2013, 213). One could well imagine the Jesuits' reluctance (as well as lack of precious time) to grapple with

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[12] These traditionalists may have formed a large majority in Italy all through the Renaissance, a deviant minority did nevertheless not refrain from loudly voicing its objections. The result was a conflict "between those who followed the medieval and rhetorical tradition of seeking a moral, didactic end in drama and those who considered its end to be artistic pleasure, derived from the form itself, the mimesis, or admiration of the artist's achievements" (Carlson 1984, 55). From an objective perspective, the latter's claimed support from Aristotle would certainly seem to be less roundabout than that of the former assemblage.

[13] The term *catharsis*, for example, appears in Aristotle's definition of tragedy, which should involve the *catharsis* of pity and fear through the occurrence of these emotions: δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν, *Poetics* 1449b27-8)). Debate on Aristotle's intended meaning has been rife, and Sifakis for one verges on resignation: "Aristotle's terse definition of tragedy's effect on its audience appears to defy clarification" (Sifakis 2001, 73). In neoclassical times, commentators felt vindicated to quite readily replace a medical interpretation of the term (involving some sort of wholesome, homeopathic effect on fear and pity) with one that saw *catharsis* as moral purification (Carlson 1984, 18).

classical dramatic theory and especially Aristotle, but despite their seemingly endless dissensions, the neoclassical theorists did bring the essential issues and available choices to the fore. According to Parente, Jesuit scholars (like Protestant pastors) were generally acquainted with recent developments in contemporary literary theory (Parente 1987, 9). This also emerges from Van den Boogerd´s useful overview of specifically Jesuit dramatic theory. He distinguishes between three schools: Italian-Spanish, German and French. The first, beginning in 1593, was according to Van den Boogerd entirely dependent on humanist theories and knew little involvement with the theatrical practice, whereas the German Jacobus Masen would properly herald a new phase in dramatic theory in 1645 by basing his examination and recommendations on actual plays by himself and others (Van den Boogerd 1961, 78 and 92). Van den Boogerd expressly explains that he will consider the theories as far as they pertain to matters of definition in order to be able to test them against the dramatic Jesuit practice. Still, the observations of the Italian and Spanish Jesuits already seem to reveal a strong inclination to render Renaissance theory relevant and applicable to the Jesuit theater, like for example Famiano Strada's defense of the *deus ex machina* resolution and Tarquinio Galluzzi's insistence on the so-called 'unity of time' (Van den Boogerd 1961, 82 and 85). So whereas the neoclassical theorists generally aimed at deducing concrete rules that could be followed, this must have been an even more pressing concern for the Jesuits with their moral and confessional agenda. Effective and straightforward directions would then have also appealed strongly to practically-oriented teacher and budding playwright Vernulaeus. To begin with, then, what 'rules' or central concepts did the neoclassical theorists derive from combining Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace´s *Ars Poetica* and leave behind for Vernulaeus, among other drama practitioners, to apply?

1.2 Neoclassical theory on plot[14]

Herrick observes that the theme of plot was quite neglected in Horace's *Ars Poetica* and that therefore the neoclassical commentators felt forced to draw arguments from Aristotle (Herrick 1946, 71). Matters are not as simple, however, since Horace´s influence on neoclassical views of plot is significant and all-pervasive, as we will see. The resultant rules are therefore in a sense less 'un-

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[14] It might well be contrary to modern expectations, which after all associate tragedy with human suffering together with a likely culmination in a dreadful (as well as expected and in a sense enjoyable) conclusion, but neoclassical rules on plot did not involve an unhappy ending. Aristotle, in his characteristically descriptive mode and while assessing the dramatic practice of his time, in *Poetics* 1453a considered the most effective plot to be one in which a hero passes from fortune to misfortune (not through wickedness, but through some flaw: δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά, *Poetics*, 1453a9-10). In their occupation with the clearest possible distinction between the genres of comedy and tragedy, the fourth-century grammarians Diomedes and Donatus capitalized on this plot-related preference voiced by Aristotle. When considering tragedy's nature, their unanimous emphasis was on the "unhappy ending as a distinctive and virtually inevitable trait of tragedy" (Kelly 1993, 11). The association between tragedy and dreadful endings was thus established, and would be abiding.

Roman' than they might seem in their Aristotelian exterior and occupation with artistic and structural matters.

1.2.1 Unities of action, time and place

One essential neoclassical rule derived mainly from Aristotle is that of the 'unity of action'. In his definition of tragedy, Aristotle states that action that is imitated within plot should be complete in having a certain length: [πράξεως] τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης (1449b25). The theme is returned to later in the *Poetics*, when Aristotle maintains that the plot, since it is an imitation of an action, should be imitating one action and the whole of it: τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μίμησίς ἐστι, μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης ὅλης (1451a31-2). Horace actually agreed on this simplicity and unity of plot (*simplex dumtaxat et unum*, 23). The sixteenth-century commentators seem to have taken Horace especially as authoritative regarding the preference of a single action without subplots, although there were exceptions to this narrow interpretation (Herrick 1946, 76-8). The unity of action was apparently less controversial than the plot's contended simplicity, and an artistic whole seems to have involved a beginning, middle and end. The coherence between the subsequent events would be defined by another rule concerning plot, which will be treated shortly.

The unities of time and place might have become inextricably linked with the unity of action, but unlike the latter these are actually more the fruit of Italian Renaissance minds than features of Aristotle's theory. They were, however, deduced from Aristotle under the influence of the all-important concept of Horatian 'decorum'.[15] Herrick chooses not to number 'decorum' in his orderly list of neoclassical rules (nos. 1-7), because the concept was so omnipresent in the neoclassical understanding of classical dramatic theory (which would have deserved a number-one position in the list, one would think). 'Decorum' for Horace may have embodied literary appropriateness with regard to character types and language, but in the Renaissance dramatic tradition the concept was enthusiastically extended to "all aspects of the drama, under the assumption that members of the audience will be most easily persuaded and moved by actions, character and language that seem in harmony with their already existing conceptions" (Carlson 1984, 39). The additional 'unities of time and place' seem to have originated in this fixation on credibility.[16] Thus the 'unity of time' was deduced from Aristotle by Robortellus, who pondered upon Aristotle's indication that tragedy should keep more or less within a single circuit of the sun (ὑπὸ μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου εἶναι ἢ μικρὸν

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[15] The term 'decorum' in this meaning was in fact first used by Cicero (*Orator* 21.70), and the Roman rhetorician had probably borrowed it from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 3.7.1-2, where τὸ πρέπον also refers to propriety of style (Herrick 1946, 48).

[16] Also according to Olson, who includes the rather reverently termed "Neo-Classical doctrine of the Three Unities of Time, Place and Action" in his general observations on the verisimilitude that is so indispensable to occidental drama (Olson 1966, 25-6).

ἐξαλλάττειν, 1449b13) and concluded that this must entail the diurnal period of twelve hours, as people sleep at night after all (Herrick 1946, 78). Robortellus' logically substantiated interpretation was to be very influential, although the dramatic implementation of verisimilitude permitted divergent opinions as well.[17] The rule recommending a 'unity of place', that is limitation of the performance to one location, seemingly had its origins in Castelvetro, who combined the Renaissance principle of verisimilitude with Aristotle's observation that tragedy has the disadvantage (compared to epic) of being limited to events taking place on (a single) stage (1459b22-6) (Herrick 1946, 81). According to Herrick, the "non-essential, non-Aristotelian unities of time and place" were recognized but more often than not neglected in practice by the Elizabethan dramatists, whereas the seventeenth-century French would strongly favour strict adherence (Herrick 1964, 81).

1.2.2 Probability and necessity (or verisimilitude)

An additional 'rule' concerning dramatic plot is the concept of 'probability and necessity'. Herrick discusses the concept in his chapter on 'Nature and art', but does not mention it in his final enumeration of neoclassical rules. The reason for this probably (though not necessarily) lies in the leading Renaissance critics' handling of the originally Aristotelian term. At the beginning of caput (chapter) 9, Aristotle states that it is not a poet's task to present actual events, but things that might or could happen in accordance with probability and necessity (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, 1451a37-8). The meaning would be that, in poetry, depicted events should follow each other in a plausible ('probable') sequence and relate to each other causally (since they are 'necessary'). Aristotle's observations seem limited to matters within the plot, which would agree with a generally aesthetic and formally poetic approach. Robortellus was leading in interpreting Aristotle's recommendation of probability and necessity in the more convenient light of Horace, who had written that fictions that are meant to amuse should closely resemble truth (*ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris*, 338). Robortellus' widely acknowledged argumentation, helpfully extracted again by Herrick, went as follows: "According to Aristotle, the poet may depart from truth or reality, so long as he feigns nothing contrary to the possible, the probable, or the necessary, i.e., so long as he observes verisimilitude" (Herrick 1946, 13). Thus again, the neoclassical theorists had a strong inclination to absorb Aristotle into the prevailing critical Renaissance ideal.

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[17] One of the most radical proponents of the Renaissance ideal of dramatic verisimilitude was Julius Caesar Scaliger (c. 1484-1558). He was among those who proposed that, for the sake of credibility, the action depicted in a performance should take exactly the time a performance lasts (Herrick 1946, 80). His systematic interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* expressly disagreed with its source on a number of (essential) issues, like the definitions of comedy and tragedy, as he "unhesitatingly chose consistency over authority" (Carlson 1984, 45). The Renaissance avowal to verisimilitude and its problematic relationship with Aristotle even meant that Scaliger's self-willed interpretation/adaptation of Aristotle was "so fundamental to the dramatic and poetic theory of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that allusions to Aristotle were, in fact, often allusions to Scaliger" (Sidnell 1991, 98).

This was certainly not the whole story. In the meantime our neoclassical commentators did persist in their attempts to interpret Aristotle as best they could. And within their ideal of verisimilitude they found more room for essential Aristotelian concepts. Poetic verisimilitude of course is still not equal to actual truth, and they happily endorsed Aristotle's essential distinction between truth and the poetic imitation of it, which they indeed also conceived as "a creative process, an idealized fiction" (Herrick 1946, 33). Poetry then somehow had to resemble the truth without being it. The depiction of history provided an especially interesting case to the theorists' already considerably challenged minds. According to Aristotle, history (γενόμενα, events that happened) could still be the subject of poetry, since nothing prevents some historical events from being like things that happen according to probability or those that are possible (τῶν γὰργενομένων ἔνια οὐδὲν κωλύει τοιαῦτα εἶναι οἷα ἂν εἰκὸς γενέσθαι καὶ δυνατὰ γενέσθαι, 1451b30-2). The popular judgment among the sixteenth-century Renaissance critics was that historical, nonfictional writing could not qualify as poetry because of its "non-imitative subject" (Herrick 1946, 37). Despite the difficulties he posed, Aristotle by all means continued to be taken seriously, and 'probability and necessity' as structuring principle for plot was not neglected completely, despite its receiving much less critical attention than the more convenient Renaissance 'verisimilar' understanding of the concept. Perhaps it is not surprising at all that we do encounter the principle in several of the Jesuit theorists that were active during Vernulaeus' time. Thus Delrio (from the Southern Low Countries) argues that the events in a plot should form a sequence of events that elicit each other (Van den Boogerd 1966, 81), and, in a similar vein, Galluzi insists that the depicted material form a whole with parts that have been allotted their respective places and will be altogether disruptive when removed (Van den Boogerd 1966, 84).

The next neoclassical 'sub-rule' here under consideration, dictating that sensational events should be narrated instead of displayed on stage, interestingly enough owes more to Aristotle than to Horace. Horace's remarks on the inexpedience of explicitly 'spectacular' incidents in fact would tie in neatly with the Renaissance predilection for dramatic verisimilitude. The Roman distinguishes between events represented on the stage and those that are delivered through narration because they should take place out of the audience's sight (*intus digna geri*, 82-3). After stating that the spectators should be exempt from witnessing Medea's infanticide, Atreus' culinary exertions with human ingredients or Cadmus' serpentine alteration, Horace reveals that he detests such display because it would be unbelievable (*incredulus odi*, 188). Instead of their usual practice of turning to Aristotle for confirmation of Aristotle's arguments (the persistent theme of Herrick's survey, e.g. Herrick 1946, 21), the neoclassical theorists apparently found Aristotle's observations interesting in their own, structurally oriented right. This could well be the reason behind Herrick's rather circumspect formulation of the rule (#7) as 'Spectacle is the least artistic element in theater'.

Aristotle contended that the desired effect of fear and pity could be achieved by employing spectacle (ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως), as well as by the plot structure itself (ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τῶν πραγμάτων), which would be better and more worthy of a poet (ποιητοῦἀμείνονος) (1453b1-3). The organization of the plot, with its unity and essential coherence through probability and necessity, should be able to do the dramatic trick autonomously. According to Herrick's study, Aristotle's arguments against the displaying of sensational events on stage were elucidated and defended by several influential sixteenth-century commentators, among whom Minturno, Castelvetro and Scaliger (Herrick 120-3). And indeed, Herrick meaningfully designates the neoclassical objections to reliance on spectacle for dramatic effect "Aristotelian-Horatian" (Herrick 1946, 104).

1.2.3 Chorus as actor

The last rule regarding plot treated here, which stipulated that a tragedy's chorus should function as an actor, the neoclassical theorists could again conveniently derive from both Aristotle and Horace. In his *Ars Poetica*, the latter insists that the chorus should play the part of an actor (*Actoris partes chorus defendat*, 193), which involves important tasks such as favouring the righteous and giving them friendly advice, controlling the infuriated and encouraging the fearful (196-7). Although Aristotle's direct influence on Horace is notoriously difficult to determine precisely,[18] this seems a probable instance of Horace's relying on and expanding Aristotle's observations. Aristotle also states that it is necessary to consider the chorus as one of the actors; it should be a part within the entirety of the play and participate in the action (τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι (1456a25-7)). This rule was widely recognized in the Renaissance, but the theorists did not postulate strict obedience (Herrick 1946, 94).

1.3 Neoclassical theory on character

Modern commentators often seem to feel it incumbent upon themselves to defend tragedy from the tenacious belief that its characters should necessarily be of noble and concomitantly prosperous standing. The Italian and Spanish Jesuit theorists certainly could be called culpable of this conviction, as they promoted kings and princes as preferred tragic characters, although the Jesuit theorist Donatus was the first to add religious dignitaries to the conventional range of character types and thus established quite a trend in Jesuit tragedy (Van den Boogerd 1966, 86). Speaking of Donatus, the fourth-century grammarians with their neat and detailed distinctions between the comic and the

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[18] Herrick indicates something of the necessary elasticity of the neoclassical feat he portrays when he clarifies that for the Renaissance theorists in their joint studies of Horace and Aristotle these two were "almost inextricably mingled", and proceeds to concede (with modern theory) that there was "no direct connection between the *Ars Poetica* and the *Poetics*", but that in the neoclassical commentators' eyes, the influence must have certainly been there (Herrick 1946, 2-3).

tragic genre seem to have been at least partly responsible for the thorough and wide settlement of the belief, and Diomedes deserves special mention for including kings and leaders among tragic characters, thereby launching social distinction as the "critical standard by which tragedy was defined" (Grund 2011, xi).[19] The Renaissance commentators are believed to have found substantiation for the expected socially elevated status of tragic characters in Aristotle. When the Greek distinguishes between comedy and tragedy, he states that the latter deals with the noble actions and those of noble men (τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, 1448b25-6). Aristotle also terms the subjects of tragedy 'better than average men' (σπουδαίους, 1448a2) and explains that tragedy aims to present those that are better than people are today (ἡ δὲ βελτίους μιμεῖσθαι βούλεται τῶν νῦν, 1448b17-8). Carlson accuses the neoclassics in particular of rendering the term socially rather than morally distinguishing, and almost audibly sighs: "Besides averting Aristotle into a prescriptive rule-maker, a position he studiously avoided, this interpretation errs further in not realizing that for him, character (*ethos*) is determined not by birth, but by moral choice" (Carlson 1984, 20). In their efforts to denounce oversimplified interpretations of Aristotle, scholars like Carlson actually seem to impose their own (admittedly understandable) generalizing preferences on the esteemed Greek. According to Fuhrmann, Aristotle did in fact principally allude to his preferred hero's socially distinguished status when he termed him *spoudaios*, for (characteristic) reasons of narrative methodology. As we recall, tragedy in its most effective form (that is, producing and in some way dissolving the emotions of fear and pity) for him necessitated a hero's fall from prosperity to adversity. Fuhrmann believes that 'prosperity' for Aristotle connoted material circumstances, or in his words "die äußere Seite des Glücks": "die Verhältnisse, die Umstände, wie Macht, Einfluß, Reichtum, edle Geburt usw." (Fuhrmann 1992, 39). A socially and materially privileged position would thus enhance the tragedy's desired effect.[20] More importantly, perhaps, a distinctly moral interpretation of the term *spoudaios* implies a value judgment that would be hard to accord with certain essentials of Aristotle's outlook on tragic character (to which I will return later). The neoclassical theorists, in the meantime, had found their own ingress into classical dramatic theory regarding character, and again, Horace was found obliging to their preferences.

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[19] Herrick, in what is not his most lucid passage, on differences between tragedy and epic, asserts that Horace's denoting epic as *Res gestae regumque ducumque* ('the feats of kings and leaders', *Ars Poetica*, 73), contributed to "the traditional prescription of gods and kings for tragedy and epic poetry", because Horace would follow Aristotle in additionally implying 'tragedy' when speaking of 'epic' (Herrick 1946, 61).

[20] Sidnell also considers the motives behind the omnipresence of regal and princely protagonists in tragedy and detects "an interesting interplay between social ideas and aesthetics". An 'aesthetic' reason for providing tragic heroes with noble origins is in his opinion that their decisions unavoidably affect many people and that therefore these heroes are bound to make tragedies highly interesting (Sidnell 1991, 11).

1.3.1 Conventionalized characters

The neoclassical embrace of Horace's all-pervading concept of decorum resulted in the dramatic 'rule' of conventionalized characters (Herrick's rule #3). In his *Ars Poetica*, Horace gives the aspiring writer (named Piso or otherwise) explicit advice on characterization, recommending that characters be either traditional or consistent in themselves: *Aut famam sequere aut sibi conuenientia finge / scriptor* (*Ars Poetica*, 119-20). When encountering Aristotle's four recommendations for characterization (1454a15-28), the sixteenth-century theorists focused their discussions above all on τὸ ὁμαλόν (constancy) (rather than the character's goodness, appropriateness and resemblance to reality), and these discussions further strengthened the preference for conventionalized characters that was recommended by the Horatian commentators (Herrick 1946, 88). Horatian commentators were thus leading in the promotion of fixed character types, and agreed with their favourite Roman that "the language and action of individual characters should be in keeping with tradition and the commonly held ideas of how persons of particular ages, social positions and emotional states should behave" (Carlson 1984, 24). Thus, characters should be easily recognizable and subsequently not confound, let alone negate, the well-defined expectations they have aroused by, for example, being an old man or of a merry disposition. As we saw, Horace's alternative for character creation was following tradition (*famam sequere*) and this must have led the commentators to making an exception to conventionalization for historical figures. The neoclassicists thus conceded that "[u]nder the rule, historical characters, to be sure, may be more complex" (Herrick 1946, 89).

1.3.2 The tragic hero

When considering Renaissance opinions on character, the Aristotelian concept of the 'tragic hero', to be positioned midway between good and bad, also deserves attention. Ford and Taylor, when considering the "far from systematic" theoretical basis available to neo-Latin dramatists, remark that Aristotle's *Poetics* was known relatively late and frequently misunderstood, but also that its influence found expression in, among other matters, the concept of the 'tragic hero' (Ford and Taylor 2013, 8). Notably, the context Ford and Taylor refer to is practical, rather than theoretical, and the suggested interpretation of Aristotle was apparently likewise practice-based. When our main authority on neoclassical rulemaking Herrick considers characterization, however, he only considers Aristotle's reflections on these matters as far as they permitted integration into the neoclassical creed of verisimilitude. Instead of commending moral excellence, Aristotle strongly advises a tragic hero's nature to be neither wholly good nor completely wicked, and that misfortune befalls him because of some humanly conceivable error (*hamartia*) (1453a). This then precisely causes the audience to feel pity and fear, Aristotle explains in lucid terms, because on the one hand, the hero is seen as not deserving of his misfortune (ὁ μὲν γὰρ περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιόν ἐστιν δυστυχοῦντα), and on the other,

we can identify with him *(ὁ δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον)* (1453a4-5).[21] Sifakis argues that the recognizably ambivalent presentation of human nature requires a "deeper understanding of characters and their predicaments" and that the amalgamation of feeling and reasoning leads to a fair judgment as well as feelings of empathy (Sifakis 2001, 111-2). Although the Aristotelian concept of the 'tragic hero' seems to have been all but barred from orthodox Renaissance dramatic theory, it did surface here and there in the work of scholars of a less orthodox and more Aristotelian class, both within and outside of pivotal Italy. Carlson commends the eminent Dutch humanist Heinsius (1580-1655) for "coming closer than many Italians to an understanding of Aristotle's interest in creating empathy with the tragic hero, who like ourselves should be a mixture of good and evil", although he 'unfortunately' uses this understanding towards advancing a morally didactic (hence traditional) purpose for tragedy (Carlson 1984, 87).[22] Did the virtual exclusion of Aristotle's 'tragic hero' concept also mean that it did not find entrance into the dramatic practice? This would have to emerge from considering individual plays, it seems.

Some more insight into the practical employment of the tragic hero in drama can in fact be gained from the always practically inclined Renaissance Jesuit theorists on drama, as summarily portrayed by Van den Boogerd (1961). In his considerations on tragedy (1593), Delrio mentions pity, abhorrence and admiration as the emotions that tragic heroes should evoke (Van den Boogerd 1961, 80). Strada strikes an even more patently Aristotelian chord when he states that a tragedy's audience should experience a *purgatio affectionum animi* (a 'purgation of the passions of the mind') after witnessing the tribulations suffered by noble folk and consequently feel fostered to amend themselves (Van den Boogerd 1961, 82). Jesuit Donatus considered saints and martyrs particularly appropriate for tragic treatment, as their hapless fates inspired pity and fear, even when the holy ones themselves would display devoted perseverance and no sign of spiritual submission (Van den Boogerd 1961, 86). These Jesuit theoreticians, then, seem to have realized a viable application of the Aristotelian concept of the 'tragic hero'. This application is of course thoroughly moralistic, which

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[21] Fuhrmann believes that the dramatic objective of making the Athenian audience identify with the tragic hero on the one hand implied that Aristotle recommended a marginally superior moral character profile ("ein einigermaßen über den Durchschnitt herausragendes sittliches Niveau") as optimal (Fuhrmann 1992, 43). It is not clear whether this dramatic strategy stemmed from a contemporary optimistic assessment of Greek moral standards or entailed an early recognition of the undeniable fact that the human species has a natural propensity for resorting to (mild) overestimation.

[22] In Carlson's seemingly quite inclusive yet handy-sized survey of dramatic theory up until his own time the 'tragic hero' emerges to an increasing extent. Corneille was still an anomaly among his contemporaries in seventeenth-century France when in one of his essays he deliberated on Aristotelian concepts like *catharsis* and the morally balanced tragic hero (Charlton 1984, 102). William Dryden (eighteenth-century England) offered one of the first detailed discussions of Aristotelian principles (including the tragic hero) in English and felt forced to choose between faithfulness to the neoclassical principles and the more unruly practice of amongst others Shakespeare (choosing theory, unbelievable as it might seem) (Charlton 1984, 120-1). A more modern instance of the popularity of the tragic hero is the neoclassical revival in early twentieth-century Germany, which rejected the contemporary movement of realism and put forward a socialist type of tragic hero that was struggling with "expressing his individuality in conflict with society" (Charlton 1984, 333).

would probably induce frowning on Carlson's part, but he should at least concede that the dramatic theorists of the Jesuit denomination, no matter the precise extent of their grasp on Aristotle, were well capable of analyzing an essential concept such as the ´tragic hero´ and, moreover, of applying it according to their purposes.

1.4 Neoclassical theory on language

Where the language of tragedy was concerned, the neoclassical theorists could again find valuable directions in Horace's indeed widely serviceable concept of 'decorum', although Aristotle turns out to be ultimately indispensible for a full understanding of tragic language matters.

1.4.1 Simple and natural language

Although Herrick does not present it as a discrete rule amongst his varied compilation, a rule stipulating that language should be simple and natural could in fact be seen as one concrete neoclassical derivative of the Horatian concept of 'decorum'. In his *Ars Poetica*, Horace commands playwrights to use the dramatic model provided by life and human behaviour (*Respicere exemplar uitae morumque iubebo*, 317) and from these to infer 'living speech' (*uiuas hinc ducere uoces*, 318). Horace was a worthy component of the Roman tradition, where "rhetorical concerns dominated all others" (Carlson 1984, 23). The neoclassical theorists naturally detected another acknowledgment of dramatic verisimilitude and the common persuasion could be effortlessly made to encompass the linguistic field. The previously mentioned appointment of the smooth iambic metre as most appropriate for dramatic action, not only by Horace but also by Aristotle, gave additional support to the partiality for colloquial speech in drama. Influential as well in this sense was the currency of Roman comedy in the Renaissance, and its immense value for the humanist occupation with rhetoric. For the development of pupils´ oral language skills, the everyday style of Plautus and Terence was highly instructive, as it amply allowed for the practice of enunciation (*pronuntiatio*) and memory (*memoria*), which had been termed all-important by both Cicero and Quintilian (Parente 1987, 13). Even the stern Jesuits found the vivacious Latin comedies too alluring to resist, and despite the order's official objections to the often scabrous content of the plays, in practice the Jesuits seized the opportunity to "offer pupils the experience of learning colloquial Latin from Antiquity seasoned with humour", as Latin was after all the academic vernacular too (Rädle 2013, 211).[23] The extension of colloquial speech from comedy to tragedy did not appear illogical to the neoclassical commentators at all. According to Herrick, later Horatian commentators once more turned to Aristotle for confirmation of Horace's preference for simple diction. And indeed, they also detected an

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[23] With regard to Renaissance school drama in the Low Countries, Verweij points out that the extent to which liberty was assumed with Plautus and Terence was highly dependent on the prevalent religious and political circumstances, and that from the latter half of the sixteenth century onwards, the importance of moralisation was much more strongly felt and school drama's general tone grew more tragic than comic (Verweij 2013, 96).

Aristotelian preference for naturalness of diction, although they based their conclusion on Aristotle's observations in the *Rhetoric*, where he was in point of fact mostly speaking of prose (Herrick 1946, 22). Thus Aristotle was effectively, but not entirely soundly, enlisted for the beloved cause again. Aristotle's own notions on tragic language did not abound in consistency, but were nevertheless seemingly deviating from what Horace had conveniently furnished the sixteenth-century drama theoreticians with,[24] and these notions demand due attention too.

1.4.2 Elevated, enhanced language

In what could be called his typically subdued mode, especially when compared to Horace, Aristotle imparted to the Renaissance the theoretical concept of elevated, enhanced language, which was by no means less important and arguably more suitable to describe the practice of Renaissance tragedy. In a concurrent manner, Grund and Carlson state that in Aristotle's very definition of the tragic genre he argued for the employment of "artistically enhanced" (Carlson 1984, 17) or "heightened" (Grund 2011, ix) language. They, or rather the translations they have used, thus take Aristotle's reference to language (ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ, 1449b25) as a reference to style, which is in itself understandable, as ἤδυσμα means 'spice, that which seasons'. However, immediately following his definition, Aristotle helpfully elucidates his use of the term ἡδυσμένον by defining the 'spicing' as the use of rhythm, melody and music (1449b28-9). Contrary to Grund and Carlson, the neoclassical theorists seem to have regarded the definition in its (more or less) direct context, as they turned elsewhere in Aristotle's writings for his opinions on style. When considering the third book of the *Rhetoric*, the neoclassicists first encountered Aristotle's mentioning of perspicuity as chief merit for style, but then immediately following was Aristotle's description of the poetic style as also elevated, ornate and dignified in departing from the ordinary (Herrick 1946, 21). The perspicuity must have been much more warmly welcomed than the ensuing observations in their lack of complying with 'verisimilitude'. According to Herrick, the sixteenth-century theorists on drama 'agree' with Aristotle

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[24] Herrick, one presumes while following the neoclassicists, does not refer to a section in the *Ars Poetica* where an undeniable distinction is made between a comic and a tragic style: *Versibus exponi tragicis res comica non uult* ('The comic does not wish to be presented in verses of the tragic style', 89). Horace subsequently remarks that the desirable and generally observed stylistic difference between the two genres is sometimes abandoned, as when a tragic actor grieves in plain language (95). As select example he mentions the tragic characters Peleus and Telephus, who discarded their grandiloquence and long-winded words in order to try and let their laments touch the hearts of the spectators (96-8). Herrick, after the neoclassical theorists, adduces this final sentence to further substantiate the observation that Horace favours an easy, natural style, pointedly observing that "Horace suggests that the tragic hero should put aside his lofty manners, if he wants to touch the hearts of his audience" (Herrick 1946, 22). However, it must be noted that Horace is speaking of exceptions to the generic regularities here. One would therefore also think that the illustrating example included an objective that should be seen as Aristotelian rather than fitting Horace's preferred (and celebrated) rhetorical-moral function of tragedy. The same sentence seems to have confused Kelly, who deduces from it that Horace's purpose for tragedy is 'to touch the heart' and "make the audience sympathize with the sufferings they witness" (Kelly 1993, 6). Maybe we all have an irrepressible desire to mingle the Horatian with the Aristotelian when we possibly can.

"that poetic diction should be elevated and distinctive", while they 'accept' his "insistence upon perspicuity of style" (Herrick 1946, 21). From what precedes, one gets the impression that 'agreeing' actually entails much less actual agreement than 'accepting', that the former was more theoretical and rather superficial, whereas the latter involved more conviction. It seems that Aristotle's ideas about elevated language were understood and recognized by the theorists, but in effect rendered almost inconsequential because they were not deemed accommodating enough.

The Renaissance dramatic practice, however, seems to have complied with the concept of elevated and enhanced language more than the neoclassical theorists seemed to be willing to give Aristotle credit for. This practice, as we have seen, had its origins in Senecan imitations, and the "categorical appeal of declamatory rhetoric" (Braden 1985, 105) partly explained Seneca's continuous popularity. Rädle numbers Seneca's "lofty speech of tragedy with its pathos and wealth of aphorisms" as essential part of his appeal to the Jesuits (Rädle 2013, 212). These aphorisms were a common denominator with Plautus and Terence, but the difference between naturally fast-paced dialogue and mannered monologue could hardly be greater, stylistically. Style was apparently of little interest to the Jesuit theorists of Van den Boogerd's first category, or at least it does not emerge in his survey of their poetic opinions. The Bohemian Jesuit Pontanus, however, distinguishes between comic and tragic styles in his dramatic theories (1594). Within the light of *eloquentia*, the "ideal of the humanist school drama", Pontanus sees tragic language with its graceful words, intense feelings and momentous utterances as far more instructive (Van den Boogerd 1961, 90). Perhaps Pontanus based his observations on the distinctly tragic style on actual theatrical performances, which would fit in with Van den Boogerd's comment that the German Jesuits were more connected to the dramatic practice than their Italian-Spanish predecessors. Why the former apparently did not form clear opinions on the preferred style for tragedy, and whether this may have had anything to do with the discrepancy between Renaissance theory and the dramatic practice that formed their objective, are indeed interesting questions that unfortunately cannot be considered here.

Conclusion

Theoretical guidance for the Renaissance tragedians who had enthusiastically applied themselves to imitating Seneca was to greatly enhance the dramaturgical quality of plays typified by rhetorical elaborations. This guidance was provided by neoclassical theorists in a combined (if not always easily so) study of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* and moulded into a number of clear and easily applicable rules, as formulated by Herrick (1946). The typical Renaissance longing for clarity together with an existing and decisively 'Roman' critical tradition with strong emphasis on rhetoric and moral instruction meant that Horace was not only easier to understand, but moreover much easier to relate to than Aristotle, who emerged later in the process. Horace's pervasive concept of 'decorum' above all resulted in a dominant occupation with 'verisimilitude' among the Renaissance

theorists. In his old, but highly valuable study of the sixteenth-century 'fusion' of Horace and Aristotle, Herrick shows that Aristotle was constantly turned to by the commentators for an authoritative confirmation of Horace's ideas, but that selective reading and interpretation were often required to obtain a satisfying result. The rules that have been considered in this chapter therefore owe much more to Horace than to Aristotle, which in a sense even applies to the 'three unities', as we have seen. For all that, Aristotle's importance is certainly not to be disregarded. Influential concepts that are unequivocally Aristotelian are that of 'probability and necessity' (in an aesthetic sense, not the 'Horatian' rule with its essence of verisimilitude), the 'tragic hero' and a tragic style that is elevated and enhanced. Interestingly enough, especially the first two concepts receive considerable attention in the Jesuit dramatic theory of the Renaissance, where they are considered in the typically practical Jesuit manner. The Jesuits, then, seem to have found ways of making both Horace and Aristotle useful for their dramatic purposes. This makes the matter of Vernulaeus' adherence to the several dramatic rules and essential concepts from Renaissance dramatic theory even more interesting. The subject will be addressed in the remaining chapters, which will successively deal with the plot, characters and language of *Henricus Octavus*.

2. Plot in Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*

Plot devising was not self-evident for Jesuit dramatists, who were descendants in a dramatic tradition that had hitherto seen scarce reason to attach great importance to such structural matters. The late-medieval mystery plays had relied on the narratives contained in the bible, whereas the more straightforwardly didactic morality plays had no genuinely narrative pretensions in being representations of "human life, represented by allegories, in illustrative decisive situations" (Rädle 2013, 202). Shore mentions the rather isolated place of Counter-Reformation drama within a decidedly non-dramatic context, and labels it "a *theatrum* whose closest relatives were the processions, pronouncements and public rituals of a society not preoccupied with the conventions of drama as propounded by Aristotle, French theorists or the requirements of court etiquette" (Shore 2013, 370). That narrative structuring did not come completely naturally to Vernulaeus either is manifest from the development Schuster recognizes in his dramatic output. *Henricus Octavus* in fact meant a new phase in the playwright's plot devising, as his first two plays (*Gorcomienses* of 1609 and *Divus Eustachius* of 1612) had exhibited experimentation with the structuring of events, whereas the plot of his third play (*Theodoricus*, 1623) had closely followed one by a contemporary playwright (Schuster 1964, 34-6). Vernulaeus based the plot of *Henricus Octavus* closely on Nicholas Sander's (or Sanders') *Liber de Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani* (1573), which provided him with detailed accounts of Henry VIII's breaking away from Rome and his subsequent establishment of the Anglican Church. When Vernulaeus informs the Reader concisely about the theme and source of *Henricus Octavus* in its attendant introduction (*ad Lectorem: tragoediae argumentu*m), he expressly insists on the historical veracity of his subject matter: *Nulla fabula aut figmentum in hac Tragoedia est*[25]*, Lector, en Historiam compendio tibi do*, 'This tragedy does not contain any fairy tale or fabrications, reader, but I offer you history in abridged form´ (v. 1-2). However, Vernulaeus' concern for 'historical truth' needs to be contextualized, as it was indeed "the truth of history, as he saw it" (Schuster 1964, 30). Sander's account of earlier English events was already highly subjective in its characteristically one-sided Catholic approach to the disruptive genesis of the Anglican Church.[26] One of the

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[25] Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history in *Poetics* 1451a is one between different kinds of truth. Whereas history describes what has happened and thus deals with singulars, poetry treats what might happen as a result of being probable or necessary, hence presenting universals. The latter reveal a "truth of a higher and more abstract order" (Sifakis 2001, 21). Vernulaeus was of course interested in both kinds of truth. On the one hand, he was deeply dismayed by the events in England and found them shocking enough in themselves. On the other, however, for Vernulaeus their meaning went far beyond English history and hence had to be presented as effectively as possible in dramatic form.

[26] McNevin Veech observes somewhat ruefully that "[i]n so delicate a matter as the history of the Reformation in England, when an historian requires all his coolness of judgment and a complete lack of prejudice, Sanders was handicapped by the misfortunes of his life" (McNevin Veech 1935, 256). The Oxford don and priest had felt forced to flee England after Elizabeth's accession and the subsequent institution of threatening Protestant legislation. He resided at Louvain for some time, which was then the "intellectual and political hub of activity for the English refugees who had settled in Spanish Flanders and northern France" (Schuster 1964, 51).

consequences of Sander's biased stance towards the English schism was that he presented Henry VIII's divorce as the sole cause of England's breaking out of the Catholic fold, whereas historians unanimously agree that there were stronger forces at work, which included anti-papal feelings of increasing intensity and a growing nationalism under the Tudor monarchs that Sander failed to appreciate (McNevin Veech 1935, 246). Sander's simplified rendition of the schismatic causes and consequences was followed by Vernulaeus. The fact that he still had to mould Sander's detailed historical rendition into an effective play makes aesthetic considerations on plot interesting. To what extent, then, does the plot of Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus* adhere to the Aristotelian 'dramatic unities', to the rule of 'probability and necessity', and to the requisite functioning of the chorus as actor?

2.1 The 'dramatic unities'

2.1.1 Unity of action

When the unity of action in Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus* is considered, one is presented with a seemingly intended dramatic unity of plot that nevertheless suffers from tension. When Schuster brings the tragedy's literary, aesthetic merit to our attention, he commends its being "a dramatic organism with an integrity of its own" (Schuster 1964, 64). This was not Vernulaeus' merit entirely, as one of Sander's invaluable contributions to Vernulaeus was his already dividing the royal divorce into a narrative beginning, middle and end "with its international repercussions and the personages drawn into its current" (Schuster 1964, 59). Schuster indeed trustworthily identifies the different narrative phases contained within the tragedy's conventional five-act structure. In the first phase, up until scene II.v, the narrative theme is expounded and the tragedy's essential characters are introduced. Thus one of the opening scene's functions is thematic in prophesying England's submission to calamity (Schuster 1964, 214). Heresy malevolently augurs: *versa iam, versa Anglia / Latus in ruinam flectet, & pestilem trahit*, 'England, already badly afflicted, will expose its body to disaster and inhales deadly pestilence' (I.i.18-19). After sketching the dire consequences of England's ruin for the despised pope (*Nunc iura perdat, funera & diras neces / Numeret suorum*, 'Let him lose his jurisdiction over you, let him count the deaths and cruel executions of his followers' (I.i.25-6), Heresy reveals the cause of the vices' inevitable triumph in English lands: *Sed certa iam sunt auspicia; Venerem suam / Rex ustulatus deperit*, 'A favourable outcome is already certain; the king, consumed by passion, is madly in love with his darling', I.i.33-4). In the following scenes (up until II.v), the exposition of the current situation indicates the play's point of departure. King Henry believes Anne should be his, although he turns out to have some moral scruples as well (*Est turpe Regem pectoris*

McNevin Veech's approach to history is thoroughly modern in its insistence on 'historical truth', and he blames Sander in retrospect for not adhering to historiographical conventions that did not become common before the nineteenth century.

flammam pati, 'It is scandalous for a king to admit burning passion inside' (I.ii.139)). Anne, however, has raised seemingly insurmountable objections: *Amore vinctus coniugem fac me tuam. / Amare tantum coniugem possum meum*, 'If you are overcome by love for me, make me your wife. I can only love him who is my husband' (I.iii.185-6). In scene I.v, Cardinal Wolsey comes to the help of the bewildered king by insisting that the marriage between Henry and Catherine is illegal as she was married to his brother Arthur first. Catherine is then wrecked with confusion and grief by Henry's subsequent rejection of her. The other characters side themselves with either the king or the despondent queen, rather than with Anne or Catherine, as Schuster asserts (Schuster 1964, 63). Toady Brian encourages the king's desired course of action by reminding him of his regal might: *Regibus quicquid lubet istud licet: nam Iura Reges non ligant*, 'Kings are allowed to do as they please, for laws do not bind kings' (II.ii.522-3). The strongest defendants of the queen's cause are Bishop Fisher and Thomas More. Thus Fisher predicts confidently about God: *Non feret, nunquam feret / Quod obstinata mente moliris nefas*, 'He will not tolerate, he will never tolerate the impious act that you commit with obstinate mind' (II.iv.630-1).

After this first, introductory part of the tragedy, its middle section consists of complications to Henry's intentions while also including his desired marriage to Anne (which by no means ends the complications, as it will turn out). Following Schuster, it can be seen to start with judge Campeggio's arrival from Rome (II.v.), which heralds the divorce proceedings and thus "the beginning of the action yields logically to the middle" (Schuster 1964, 242). The complications can be said to be largely legal. Catherine refuses to acknowledge the judges and location of the trial, stating *Provoco, appello; meus / Sit ipse Iudex Pontifex*, 'I appeal to a higher court; Let the pope himself be my judge' (II.vii.771-2). A serious blow for Henry is Fisher and More's pertinent refusal to approve of their king's marriage, thus More: *Nunquam probabo: liberam mentem vides, / Nunquam probabo*, 'I will never approve of it: you see a mind that is free, I will never approve' (III.iii.22-3). It comes as a relief to Henry that the pope is reported by Longland to pronounce the final decision on Henry's case himself (III.vi). Just before that Henry has made up his mind to marry Anne (*Haec est voluntas, iura connubii mei, / Vel mox resolvant Iudices; vel iam moras / Abrumpo cunctas*, 'This is my wish, either the judges will soon dissolve my marriage bonds or I myself will put an end to all delay', III.v.1126-8). Henry's impatience wins out, and in scene III.viii, he triumphantly celebrates Anne's coronation. The play's climax would involve the height of Henry's happiness with newly obtained Anne, which is ultimately delusional in that it presages his downfall rather than a blissful married life. Schuster rather vaguely locates the climax in act III (Schuster 1964, 63), but I would specifically place it at the very end of the act, when Henry relates his marital interchange to the public: *Catharina coniux hactenus, nunc abdico* ('I hereby renounce my previous wife Catherine', III.viii.1226) and, announcing Anne, *haec coniux mea est, / Regina vestra est* ('This woman is my wife, she is your queen', III.viii.1227-8). The chorus of

triumphant vices and downhearted virtues (appearing after act III) is followed by an emotional scene in which Catherine admits defeat (IV.i), which factually serves as a conclusion to the tragedy's middle section with its exposition of complications to Henry's cause.

The concluding part of Henry's story treats his unavoidable downfall and England's ruin, and commences with the pope's rejection of the king's new marriage (imparted to Henry at the beginning of scene IV.ii). Incited by the allegorical vices Henry decides to solve his problems by becoming both king ánd pope of England (*Pontifex & Rex ero* (IV.iv.1518)). His decision is to be announced as far as the edges of England: *Fateantur omnes, & data iurent fide*, 'all people must acknowledge my edict and solemnly swear to obey' (IV.v.1600). Henry then steadily progresses into tyranny, and even rejects personified Catholic religion (Religio) herself: *Ecclesiae caput Anglicanae sim, volo. / Vel hinc recedes*, 'I want to be the head of the Anglican Church. Either accept this, or you will have to leave from here' (V.ii.1815-6).[27] Fisher and More are sacrificed to their king's relentless religious oppression (their untimely deaths at the scaffold occurring straight after scenes IV.viii and V.vi respectively). And lastly, the final acted scene (V.x, a concluding prayer follows) treats the king's death in anxiety and remorse.

However, it should be noted that this unity of plot as emphasized and moderately celebrated by Schuster does reveal tension with Vernulaeus' choice for historical subject matter. Schuster may constantly refer to the playwright's dedication to historical truth (as he and Sander saw it), but the tragedy's conclusion of course involved a marked violation of that truth (and of Sander as source, for that matter).[28] Vernulaeus' wish to render Henry's divorce and concomitant rejection of the faith into effective tragic form meant a drastically truncated life span for the king as well as the exclusion of as many as six of his notorious spouses. On this matter, Schuster merely remarks that Vernulaeus regarded these as "an anti-climax of subsequent wives" (Schuster 1964, 61). Even without them, Vernulaeus was still presented with quite a magnitude of historical events to recount. All in all, one would be inclined to agree with Schuster that Vernulaeus, following Sander, succeeded in rendering historical events into a unified plot that was regarded as effective for tragedy.

Despite his tragedy's unified and essentially (dramatically) complete plot, however, Vernulaeus strongly emphasizes its after-effects and consequently also its incompleteness. Henry's death does not directly precede the curtains closing on the Louvain stage, but is followed by a final

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[27] Schuster points out that actually "Henry, except for his refusal to submit to Rome, kept to the Catholic faith" (Schuster 1964, 277). Vernulaeus' moral objective for his students required him to make the clearest possible distinction between good and bad in more than one way. This of course is ultimately one of the main themes of this thesis.

[28] The tragedy's beginning *in medias res* might arguably also indicate a potentially problematic relationship between the historical subject matter and Vernulaeus' dramatic mould for it, but on the other hand, it could also be seen as just another type of (recognizable) beginning. Moreover, a beginning *in medias res* actually met with the neoclassical theorists' wide approval, as they strongly preferred an artistic rather than a natural order for the arrangement of material in literature (Herrick 1946, 16-7).

short scene in which Religio ends the tragedy with a prayer to *vindex Tonans*, avenging God. Although the enemy has fallen, the faithful in England are still suffering bitterly under Heresy, albeit with perseverance: *pectore infracto necem / Pro te subibunt*, 'With fearless heart they will accept death for you' (V.xi.2246-7). Religio then prays that some day English kings *tuam noscant fidem; / Et rursus Anglos Roma connumeret suos*, 'that they acknowledge your faith, and that Rome count the English as hers again' (V.xi.2251-2). The prayer ends with a strong invocation: *Aliquando Christe! per tuam mortem peto. / Aliquando Christe! per tuam crucem peto*, 'O Christ! I implore you by your death. / O Christ! I implore you by your cross' (V.xi.2254-5). That this prayer is not merely an afterthought is borne out by one of the last sentences of Vernulaeus' *argumentum* to this tragedy: *Faxit[29] Deus, ut aliquando sapiat, & redeat*, 'May God ordain, that England some day regain her senses, and return to the faith', v.20-1). In a significant sense, then, Vernulaeus left the ending of his tragedy open.[30] It is therefore questionable to what extent the play's end can qualify as a tragic end, which is after all not merely the result of preceding developments. As Fuhrmann elucidates in his comments on Aristotle "Das Ende, heißt es bei der Erörterung der Ganzheit, gehe [...] aus etwas anderem hervor, ohne selbst wiederum etwas anderes aus sich hervorgehen zu lassen" (Fuhrmann 1992, 29). Vernulaeus' emphasis on the intense and far-reaching consequences of Henry's conduct, reverberating the persistent confessional tensions of his time, then certainly can be said to undermine his tragedy's unity of action.

2.1.2 Unities of place and time

As these two additional neoclassical unities were in the sixteenth and seventeenth century's dramatic practice less strictly obeyed (except by French theoretical purists), it is perhaps not surprising that in Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*, these 'unities' are made subservient to historical veracity. The Jesuit theorists of Vernulaeus' time held quite diverging opinions on the matter. Thus Delrio and Galluzzi defend the unity of time while not mentioning that of place, whereas Donatus deemed both unities necessary (Van den Boogerd 1961, 81-88). To begin with, the course of Vernulaeus' tragedy exhibits a (surveyable) variety of locations. How these were represented would depend entirely on the application of stage technique, and this discussion will be limited to identifying the different places involved. The most used of these is the royal palace itself, in which Henry appears to receive his visitors from the throne (Longland: *Sed en Senatus, Regium accedit thronum*, 'Look, the members of Parliament approach the royal throne, II.iii.608). In his increasingly

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[29] An old form of the perfect subjunctive (from s-aorist).
[30] Schuster comments that Religio's prayer is "disclosing a new horizon of spiritual courage that lies ahead and lifting the play into a spiritual dimension that balances the bitterness and rancor of religious strife" (Schuster 1964, 288). I am inclined to find this view a bit too spiritually inclined indeed, but also almost naively optimistic. In Vernulaeus' time, the religious turmoil and violence in Europe had by no means subsided, to which the perceived urgency behind this play of course testifies.

occurring more restless moments, the king will undoubtedly not remain seated, one imagines. Catherine receives her guests (e.g. More in II.i and Wolsey in II.vi) in her own quarters, which (one imagines) could quite effectively (and credibly) be situated at the other side of the stage from Henry's. One could argue that so far, there seems to be a unity of place.[31] The eventful court sessions, from scene II.vii onwards, take place at the *Tribunal*, the council chamber.[32] This also seems to be located at the palace, as suggested by Catherine and Warham's easy transition from the queen's room to this assembly hall at the end of scene II.vi.[33] The action shifts between these locations within the palace for some time, until the scene of action is suddenly moved outside in scene IV.vi, where the crier is instructed to issue the new royal proclamation to the people. Furthermore, scene V.iv moves the spectators, together with distressed Alice and Margaret, to More's prison cell. And although Fisher and later More are questioned at the *Tribunal*, this time the term does not seem to designate the assembly hall within the palace. In any case, both unfortunate believers are led to their execution (in scenes IV.viii and V.vi respectively) straight from there by their executioners.[34] Henry's final scenes of course again take place at the now familiar environment of the palace.

Although the Jesuit theorists seemingly attached more importance to the unity of time than that of place, the temporal unity is not adhered to by Vernulaeus in this play either. As Vernulaeus chooses to employ the academic stage for the representation of all phases of Henry's gradual decline and fall, adherence to the unities of time and place naturally loses out. By choosing to include the court proceedings, Anne's coronation and the executions of Fisher and More (to name only a few notable events), Vernulaeus naturally had to comprise historical time into dramatic time.[35] The staggering pace of events probably makes that the viewers do not think or even care about matters of credible time spans anyway. However, Vernulaeus does emphasize the passing of time when he lets Religio relate the horrific consequences of Henry's renouncing the Catholic faith. *Mors morte premitur, funeri est funus grave*, 'Death is heaped upon death, bodies press upon bodies' (V.i.1775).

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[31] According to Goodkin, different parts of a building could very well qualify as one place, however not for the neoclassical French, who had a strong tendency to carry dramatic rules of the sort "to quite an extreme", preferably allowing no change of scenery at all (Goodkin 2005, 386).

[32] In historical reality, the three court sessions dealing with Henry's desired divorce from Catherine took place in the rooms of the Legatine Court at Blackfriars in London (Schuster 1964, 60).

[33] This transition has its slightly miraculous side, as Warham testifies to the possibility of witnessing from the interior of Catherine's room the arrivals at the council chamber (*en Regem vides, / Venit ad Tribunal, Iudices adsunt simul*, 'Look, you can see the king arriving at the council chamber, the judges are present as well' (II.vii.747-8)

[34] In reality the interrogations of amongst others Fisher took place in the Tower (Schuster 1964, 273).

[35] To give an idea of the historical time span: Anne was crowned queen in April 1533 and Thomas More summoned to trial in July 1535 (Schuster 1964, 280).

The consequences include groaning torture racks, ransacked churches and monasteries streaming with blood (V.i.1772-4).[36]

One reason for Vernulaeus' purposeful violation of the unity of time is then again his occupation with England's ruin as a consequence of Henry's moral lapse. But anyway, Vernulaeus' desire to recount his version of Henry's story from beginning to end and his close following of Sander as source necessarily involves infringement of the unities of time and place. In addition, there may well have been ulterior motives for wanting to include certain scenes. Thus the playwright is likely to have also wanted to present the court sessions because they provide such exquisite opportunities for Vernulaeus' students to brush up on their skills in deliberative rhetoric (if they would need it). The touching encounter of More's family in his prison cell (V.iv) as well as Catherine's banishment scene (IV.i), on the other hand, appear to have their reason of dramatic existence in their emotional force. Olsen would classify these scenes as incidents with a representational function, since they are not part of the plot, but serve to make it more probable or effective (Olson 1966, 68). In these instances we seem to be dealing with enhanced emotional effectiveness, as the scenes in question mainly seem to be intended to emphasize the almost heart-rending results of Henry's selfishness.[37] Theatrical authority Freytag is likely to have condoned Vernulaeus' excursions outside his central plot, as he concedes that "there will be occasional deviations desirable which may strengthen the color of the piece, in a manner conformable to its purpose" (Freytag 1895, 46-7). Vernulaeus' palette would unquestionably reveal an assortment of colours verging on Stygian black as well as sharply contrasting hues of blood-red.

Despite not adhering to the theoretically conceived unities of time and place, Vernulaeus seems intent upon giving the impression that he does in fact comply with them as far as possible. His favourite transition from one scene to the next is an expressly uttered transition, as in: 'Look here comes ...' (e.g. Heresy on Henry's approach: *En ipse*; I.ii.69). These notable utterances underline the continuity of time and place in almost the whole of the first act. They then seem to recur whenever this is possible, as with Brian in scene II.ii (*Longlandus ecce, Regis affatum petit*, 'Here comes Longland, he wishes to speak with the king', II.ii.547) and the heralding of the king and his new wife before the scene of Anne's coronation: *En Rex & ipsa, prodeunt cuncti simul*, 'There the king and queen are coming, together with all their attendants' (III.viii.1200). Henry himself announces *Sed en Senatum cerno, quod superest agam*, 'But I see my council approaching, I will do what remains to be

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[36] The influence of Seneca on these forceful images is beyond doubt, but I intend to return to matters of language later on.

[37] Catherine's 'banishment scene' is actually one of the scenes that do not follow directly from Sander, but are an invention of Vernulaeus (Schuster 1964, 265). Catherine complains that she has been rejected by the king, but it is not clear whether this scene still takes place at the palace or somewhere else.

done' (IV.iv.1523). In these explicit scene transitions one can discern Vernulaeus' awareness of the unities here under discussion and they seem to imply that he was by no means indifferent to them.

2.2 Probability and necessity

The rule of ´probability and necessity´ in an aesthetic, Aristotelian sense proves to apply neatly to Vernulaeus' play. In tragedy, probability and necessity wholly evolve from the decisions of characters. Or, as Freytag put it (quite some time ago) in Aristotelian fashion, "The task of the poet was not to present the facts to us, on the stage, but to make them perceptible in the feeling, desire and action of his persons, to make them more evident, to develop them in accordance with probability and reason" (Freytag 1895, 31). This emphasis on human actions and their repercussions contrasted sharply with the medieval concept of tragedy, which revolved around the figure of Fortune. This "soulless trope of personified chance" (Kelly 1993, 221) was believed to allot prosperity and misfortunes without considering to what extent its recipients were actually deserving of either.[38] In *Henricus Octavus*, on the other hand, its eponymous main character is presented as carrying the ultimate responsibility for his choices.[39] The main plot of *Henricus Octavus* consists of Henry's decisions and resulting conduct, while an additional line of action is brought about from the papal headquarters in Rome. The royal and pontifical plotlines converge rather dramatically in scene IV.ii, when Brian imparts the pope's condemnation of Henry's latest marriage.

Henry's decision-making adheres to the rule of probability and necessity through the interaction between the tragedy's driving force of king Henry's lust for Anne[40] and the counterforce

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[38] The medieval belief in Fortune and its morally unfounded workings do occur in the play. Catherine for one seems to regard herself as a victim of its undeserved punishment. After the fallen queen has been banished, she tells Longland not to call her queen, for *Fortuna tantum nomen invidit mihi*, 'Fortune begrudges me such a great name' (IV.1.1307). He seeks to console her by arguing that adverse fortune does not make one disreputable, but vicious behaviour (*crimen infamem facit, / Adversa non sors*, IV.i.1331-2). And when Alice More visits her imprisoned husband, she observes feelingly *Vires vicesque More fortunae subis*, 'You are experiencing the cruel effects of Fortune' (V.iv.1925). Acquiescent More himself has relinquished all fear: *quisquis est sapiens sua / spe vincit omne sortis adversae malum*, 'The wise man triumphs over every adversity of fate by means of his hope' (V.iv.1927-8).

[39] According to Rädle, Jesuit playwrights were attracted to Seneca's tragedies for this reason among others. Precisely the fact "that there is no room in his dramas for divine rule and that fortune is countered by the power of free man" gave Jesuits the opportunity of "pointing at the positive possibilities of man to act in a manner that is morally good" (Rädle 2013, 213). This unwavering reliance on man's ability to reform himself was typical for Renaissance school drama, but also in effect contrary to theological opinion with its insistence on the necessity of God's grace for human salvation, notes Parente. He asserts with regard to salvation that "the playwright's representation of this mystery frequently suggested that man's adherence to virtue alone would preserve him from evil and earn him an eternal reward", and thus in school drama, salvation was "not so much a theological concept as a moral goal which could be won through man's exemplary conduct" (Parente 1987, 62-3).

[40] Sander already ignored the suggestions by historical commentators that Henry's want of a male heir generated his tendency to freely liaise with other women: "Sanders preferred, however, to believe that the cause of the king's unfaithfulness was to be sought in his gradual surrender to the promptings of sensuality, fired by the evil advice of the flatterers by whom Henry was surrounded" (McNevin Veech 1935, 243).

of his moral (Catholic) conscience. As Vernulaeus states plainly in the play's *argumentum*, Henry's desired engagements with Anne were the cause of his abandoning of Catherine: *re autem vera, ut Annam Bolenam, quam deperibat eius loco supponeret, repudiavit*, 'But in truth he discarded her to replace her with Anne Boleyn, whom he was deeply in love with' (*Argumentum*, v.12-3). Henry's hardly controllable lusting after Anne in combination with her refusal to engage in extramarital liaisons cause his unendurable predicament. Vernulaeus seems to take great pains to make Henry's forceful desires as credible as he can. Thus Henry sighs at the play's very beginning *Cura non animum levis / tristem flagellat*, 'It is no light sorrow that flogs my sad mind' (I.ii.98-9) and *At hoc Bolena pectus, / hanc mentem trahit*, 'But Anne pulls at my heart and my mind' (I.ii.101). Henry is in fact overflowing with his love for Anne, and she is besieged by his declarations of love in scene I.iii. When she recommends him to relax his mind (*Recreare mentem fas sit*), he reacts:

> *At te per mihi*
> *Bolena fas sit: cordis idolum mei es,*
> *Amore victum iam tuo Regem vides.*
> I should relax by having you, Anne,
> you are the idol of my heart,
> you see here a king who is conquered by your love.
> (I.iii.183-5)

Those who dare to voice their objections to the king's ever stronger inclinations to act upon his passionate feelings, he tries to convince of his morally sound motivations. After Fisher has warned him of Venus' damning effects on kings, he retorts *Amor hoc salutis corde sub nostro latet, / Non est libido,* 'A concern for my moral welfare lies deep within my heart, this is not lust' (II.iv.645-6). This alleged concern for his moral welfare will eventually lead to the king's decision to marry Anne and abandon his lawful and unquestionably devout wife. It has also made him highly susceptible to favourable advice. However, although Wolsey fully admits to having instigated Henry's divorce (*Fateor, & solus fui*, IV.ii.1393), this confession of guilt feels rather perfunctory and not very credible.[41] Moreover, Wolsey's advice merely caused the king's letter to Rome on the matter of the questioned validity of his marriage to Catherine. Brian's earlier reassuring lies, in which he for example alleges that the English people regard Anne as *Regio dignam toro, / dignamque sceptro virginem,* 'worthy of the royal bed, a woman worthy of the sceptre' (II.i.507-8), did alleviate the king's qualms for the moment, but by no means strongly contribute to Henry's lust-fuelled behaviour either. However, Henry receives essential support for his cause from a rather different and far more devastatingly effective side, namely that of the vices.

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[41] Sander presented Wolsey as ultimate causer of Henry's divorce. However, Schuster states that "Sander's view of Wolsey as instigator of the divorce, while reflecting the general contemporary opinion, has been considerably qualified by modern scholarship" and concludes that "Wolsey adopted but did not originate the divorce" (Schuster 1964, 227).

The driving force behind the play's developments, Henry's lust, can only succeed because it is strengthened by the wilful interference of the four vices. The vices heresy, lust, impiety and tyranny literally announce their respective tasks in the very first scene. Thus, Lust reveals to have already been working effectually on the king (*Nostris perustus ignibus totus furit*, 'Burnt by our flames he is completely mad', I.i.44), Impiety has high hopes for the king's renouncing both the pope and God (*Coeli recedit cura*, 'His concern with heaven is diminishing', I.i.56) and Tyranny nourishes its own frightening plans (*Et efferatum & mente crudelem impia / Agitabo Regem*, 'I will turn him into a savage and ruthless king with an impious mind', I.i.63-4). After Henry has relented a little towards distraught Catherine at the end of scene III.iv, the vices seize upon the confused king and incite him to muster courage. After Lust has tauntingly questioned his love for Anne, Impiety encourages him to alter the laws according to his needs, like a proper king (*Favere Iura Regibus semper solent / Cum Iura mutant*, 'When kings change laws, these always come to their advantage', III.v.115-6). Tyranny, not surprisingly, heartily suggests resorting to violence (*occidat, qui non probat*, 'Let him die who disobeys', III.v.1123). Henry then makes up his mind to dissolve his marriage himself if a judicial decision remains forthcoming. But then the pope's condemning decision nearly causes Henry to renege on his marriage to Anne and reinstate Catherine as queen (scene IV.ii). Next, however, Anne reminds him of the loyalty he has meanwhile pledged her: *Coniugi Coniux mihi / Fidem dedisti*, 'As a husband you have pledged loyalty to me as wife' (IV.iii.43-4). It turns out that Henry's decisions cannot be undone anymore. In scene IV.iv, the vices seem to be decisive in steering Henry's fate towards inevitable disaster. Heresy, Impiety and Tyranny pull together in persuading Henry that the solution to all his trouble is for him to be king as well as pope of England[42] and to violently suppress any resistance. Henry takes their advice to heart only too willingly, uttering the words that must after all come as a shock to the audience: *Pontifex & Rex ero*, 'I will be pontiff and king' (IV.iv.1518). That Henry will not even be swayed by Religio, the Catholic religion, herself (scene V.ii) will probably also rather challenge the spectators' imagination.

Henry's Catholic conscience works as counterforce against the internal and external evil forces in this tragedy, and as such it is readily more conceivable to the audience. On the one hand, it finds expression in Henry's moral qualms. These become manifestly stronger after the pope's unfavourable judgment, as here:

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[42] To our modern ears, some of the arguments actually might not sound implausible at all: *Dat iura solus Regibus Regum Deus*, 'Only the God of kings gives laws to kings' (IV.iv.1494) and *Saxa Tarpeius regat / Romana Rector: Angliae in regno tuum est / et regere populos, & dare populis fidem*, 'Let the Tarpeian Ruler govern his Roman rocks. In your kingdom it is your responsibility to rule over the people and to give the people their religion' (IV.iv.1497-9). Vernulaeus' audience, however, will have instantly recognized such utterances as the kind of scandalmongering of their pope that the Reformists were wont to employ. Likewise, one imagines that Vernulaeus' use of the term of address *Tonans* for both the pope and God did not confuse or bother his audience in the least.

Meam Bolenam deseram? vitam meam?
MIhi revellam cor meum? summus cupit
Mandatque Praesul, fulminis sacri minas
Intentat idem. Christianus sum, meum est
Parere tanto Praesuli.
Should I forsake Anne? My life?
Should I tear out my heart? The Supreme
Pontiff wants and demands it, he also threatens
me with his sacred thunderbolt. I am a Christian,
I should obey the Pontiff.

(IV.ii.1372-6)

Such strong objections to Henry's chosen course of action are articulated more eloquently by Fisher and More above all others, whose objections have been shortly alluded to above. Longland, the king's confessor, is another mouthpiece of the need for Catholic dutifulness: *Una est salutis, crede Rex, certae via, / Quod lege certa Praesulum sanxit Pater / Mutare nolle*, 'Believe me, Highness, there is only one way to guarantee your salvation. Do not change what the High Pontiff has determined by unequivocal law' (II.ii.565-7). The three personified virtues, Reason, Piety and Clemency, also put their moralizing oar in, while in an immaculately organized way trying to dissuade him from lust, impiety and tyranny successively in scene I.vi. Thus Clemency, anticipating on future events, implores: *Ferrum benignos non decet Reges*, 'Violence is not befitting good-natured kings' (I.vi.347) and Reason advises him strongly to heed his reputation. They might sound boringly explicit, but this is probably not the reason for Henry's eventual ignoring them.

When one considers the many-voiced strength of the strongly moralistic, Catholic counterforce in combination with Vernulaeus' intended audience, one realizes that the play's most significant instance of probability, or rather necessity, is the ultimate consequence of king Henry's combined actions: his death in agony and remorse. According to Sifakis, the truth of literature is "relative to, and dependent to a large extent on, the collective beliefs and ideology of a specific historical society" (Sifakis 2001, 24). The king's transgressions could never go unpunished, that much was clear to the Louvain audience in 1624. In an aesthetic sense, the tragedy's unmistakable moral proportions also make me of the opinion that it has a simple, rather than a complex plot. The latter, after Aristotle (1452a) includes a reversal in fortune ($\pi\varepsilon\rho\iota\pi\acute{\varepsilon}\tau\varepsilon\iota\alpha$), or in Fuhrmann's words: "das Handeln schlage ins Gegenteil um, d.h. eine Handlung führt einen anderen Erfolg herbei, als der Handelnde beabsichtigt hatte" (Fuhrmann 1992, 37) During the coronation scene, Henry is triumphantly confident, saying *Decuit, & favit polus*, 'It was a proper decision, and heaven has favoured it' (III.viii.1211). Although indeed the king and newly consecrated queen might be "at the top of Fortune's wheel" (Schuster 1964, 61) in their own perception, the audience of course knows better. They might feel slightly ill at ease with this joyously presented development, but will be corroborated in their moral judgment immediately after this scene by the chorus of shamelessly

victorious vices and despondent virtues. To provide credible resistance to this moral certainty, it is no wonder that Henry's passions needed the strengthening cooperation of the four ruthless vices. Interesting in this light is Olson's apt observation that tragedy benefits most from 'conditional natural probability'. According to Olson, within a tragic plot, ideally certain conditions are decisive for the occurring of events (in contrast to the realistic and naturalistic 'common natural probability') (Olson 1966, 48). The pivotal influence of the personified vices in Henry's decisions makes one question the 'naturalness' of the plot's probability and necessity. One could admittedly argue that the vices and virtues are in fact outwardly projected machinations of Henry's mind,[43] but in my opinion they are rather presented as independently acting energies. Although the artificial contrastive forces might arguably not undermine the plot's effective structure but rather enable it, it raises the question to what extent it undermines the tragedy as a whole. This would also depend on the audience's attitude towards Henry, to which I will return later.

The neoclassical rule of probability and necessity also implied that spectacle was to be kept off stage, an additional dramatic prescription that was both obeyed and violated by Vernulaeus. The executions of Fisher and More are presented as taking place off stage, after scenes IV.viii and V.v. However, one can raise mild objections to Vernulaeus´ apparent obeying of this rule. All drama surrounding the executions is in fact presented, including Religio as dismayed bystander at More's final breathing moments:

> *O Tonans? Et hoc caput*
> *Caput hoc secabit impiae ferrum manus?*
> *Et illa cervix, Angliae haec cervix cadet?*
> Is this true, God? This head,
> will the sword in that unrighteous hand strike it off?
> And that neck, will this neck of England fall down?
>
> (V.vi.2041-3)

One wonders whether perhaps the fatal blows were left out by Vernulaeus because they were impossible to be staged to credible effect. This view could arguably be confirmed by Henry's death in the tragedy's last actual scene, which makes for an incontestable breaching of the rule. After Henry's final remorseful words (*Actum est, peractum est, cuncta perdidimus*, 'It is over, all has finished, we have lost everything'', V.x.2236), Brian records *Iacet / Extincta vita est*, 'He has collapsed. his life is spent' (V.x.2237-8). Olson notes that represented scenes can give either probability or emotional power to a plot (or alternatively have purely representational reasons of existence) (Olson 1966, 93). The emotional power of the king's witnessed demise in combination with the relatively credible

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[43] Thus Schuster remarks with reference to scene III.v that Henry "is again besieged by selfish emotions that haunt him in the persons of evil allegories" (Schuster 1964, 261).

possibility of representing it was apparently too alluring for Vernulaeus to resist. A dramatic rule did, however, have to be sacrificed in the process.[44]

2.3 Chorus as actor

The neoclassical insistence on Aristotle's and Horace's concerted opinion that the chorus should function as an actor within the play has evidently found no willing ear on Vernulaeus. He had other purposes in mind for his choruses. The tragedy's first two choral songs are uttered by a band of English maidens and the last by a group of English refugees.[45] There is no interaction whatsoever between the choir members and the tragedy's other characters, which would surely be the main requisite for their being deemed characters in the play. The third chorus consists of the by now familiar vices and virtues battling it out, but although all these figures have been interacting with Henry and each other before, in this chorus they are wholly occupied with themselves in what feels like a somewhat surreal intermezzo. These choral episodes are thus self-contained and within the context of the tragedy's plot actually disruptive, with an ensuing adverse effect on the unities of time, place and action.[46] In neo-Latin drama, choral participation was conventionally restricted to advising, warning or interrupting (Janning 2005, 63). That the choruses in this tragedy by Vernulaeus do not engage in these activities, might well have to do with the fact that Henry is advised and warned (yet seldom interrupted, it seems) by about everyone he encounters. To Vernulaeus, then, the chorus not only provided an excellent additional opportunity for lavishly displayed rhetoric, but also one (rather: four) for uninterrupted moralizing.[47] Vernulaeus' chorus was not to interact with other members of the *dramatis personae*, but with the audience. Janning lists three ways in which the chorus can influence the audience. Choruses can influence the general reactions of the viewers by reacting to events on the stage with emotional commitment, express criticism or praise of single characters and influence the audience's attitude to them, or directly instruct, admonish or appeal either to the audience in general or to a distinct group among them (Janning 2005, 82).

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[44] According to Schuster, Vernulaeus made concessions to dramatic propriety for the sake of presenting his view on historical truth with some reluctance. Thus, Vernulaeus explicated and defended his inclusion of spectacular scenes involving Catholic martyrs in *Gorcomienses* by stating in his *praefatio* that by having performed many things that should be related, he was more mindful perhaps of historical accuracy and truth than of art (Schuster 1964, 30).

[45] Bloemendal observes that one pragmatic reason for the humanists to reintroduce the chorus (after having found it lacking in Plautus and Terence) was its providing more opportunities for students to actively participate in the production (Bloemendal 2013, 304). Schuster assumes that the schoolboys dressed up as English maidens numbered five in total (Schuster 1964, 231) and one supposes about the same amount for the choir of refugees.

[46] When Henry complains about Catherine's delaying tactics in scene III.i, one is almost inclined to tell him 'You actually have some unexpectedly verbose English maidens to blame for that!'.

[47] For this function of the separated chorus Vernulaeus might well have found his model in Seneca again. In Senecan tragedy, the isolation of the chorus left it "free to become a unique medium for moralisings on life at large" (Charlton 1974, 21).

Direct instruction, admonishment or appeal turns out not to be Vernulaeus' principal aim for his choruses, although the English maidens can be caught with some edifying pieces of wisdom, or *sententiae*.[48] The hazards of love are a favourite theme. After Henry has been called a slave of his passion, the maidens generalize *Amantium haec est servitus*, 'This is the slavery lovers are prone to' (Chorus I.372) and later *Nam sic perit, qui deperit*, 'Thus he perishes, who loses himself in lust' (Chorus I.392). And on a more optimistic note they state *Quicunque amat flecti potest, / Humanitatis est capax,* 'Every lover can be changed in his ways, and is capable of kindness' (Chorus II.801-2). Commentary on Henry's, and to a lesser extent Anne's behaviour is a more prominent function of the choirs. I will return to this matter in my chapter on character.

The most conspicuous and apparently important task of the chorus in *Henricus Octavus* is its moralizing through emotional appeals to the audience. Of course the English maidens of choruses I and II and the staged exiles/refugees with the same nationality of the final chorus have been selected for this role especially. And so the maidens exclaim: *Anglia, quos nunc, Anglia quos nunc, / Tristi mittes pectore luctus?*, 'England, what laments, o England, will you release from your sorrowful heart?' (Chorus I.400-1), and realize: *Subire fortunam decet, / quam fata donant patria*, 'We must accept the fate that is allotted to our native country' (Chorus II.857-8). The choir of exiles/refugees must have been counted upon for even more emotional perturbation. When they describe the state of affairs in the country that they feel forced to flee, they appeal to the imagination of the by now indubitably distraught audience:

> *Verbera mixto resonant planctu,*
> *Undique luctus, undique lachrymae,*
> *Quisquis renuit iurare prius,*
> *Pellitur agris,, patraque domo.*
> Screaming mixes with the sound of whips
> Groans everywhere, tears everywhere.
> He who refuses the oath is driven at once
> from his fields, his country and his home.

<div align="right">(Chorus IV.1697-1700)</div>

A wholly different kind of emotional appeal occurs in the third chorus, which features the virtues and above all the vices, who are having their own 'marriage' procession with torches. On the one hand, the vices' ruthless celebrating and wicked concocting of more evil is highly disturbing and frightening.[49] Heresy joyfully invokes the Styx, Phlegethon ánd Acheron and claims *fas est ridere sub*

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[48] Whether such expressions of moral advice should be included in the range of rhetorical techniques is a matter of discord. Billerbeck finds (or creates) no place for them in her discussion of Seneca's stylistic devices (Billerbeck 1988, 101-41) (nor, understandably, in her sections on vocabulary and syntax). Canter, on the other hand, does discuss the *sententiae*, defensively arguing that "their use serves a rhetorical aim not less conspicuous or important than that of figures" (Canter 1970, 85).

[49] Braden directly compares this kind of "Satanic energy", which in his eyes also largely qualified the first humanist tragedy, Mussato's *Ecerinis*, to "the competitive dynamism that drives the protagonists of Senecan tragedy" (Braden 1985, 105).

Orco ...., / Invidiam satiare suam, rabiemque replere, 'It is allowed to laugh in hell ..., satisfy one's jealousy and fulfil one's rage', (Chorus III.1232-4). Tyranny sings the praise of Heresy's dominance on English soil and tells that it has its foundations in blood (*firmatque in sanguine sedem*, Chorus III.1263). The virtues can only agree on the horror of the country's current situation and focus on the vices' complete power over Henry and the damaging consequences, according to Luxuria: *Donec voluptas, Luxus, & Venus placent, / Tu possedibis Angliam, & Regem simul*, 'As long as pleasure, debauchery and lasciviousness are popular, you will possess England and at the same time its king' (Chorus III. 1275-6) and *Catholicus non esse potest*, 'He cannot remain a Catholic' (Chorus III.1285). The main aim of the chorus, then, is to convince the theatregoers of the dreadful results of Henry's moral demise.

Conclusion

After having considered Vernulaeus' observance of four neoclassical (and essentially Aristotelian) 'rules' regarding the plot of tragedy, we are left with an ambiguous overall impression. Schuster emphasizes that the unity of action was all-important to Vernulaeus and could be easily derived from Sander, and identifies an introductory first part, a middle section that is governed by complications, and the play's conclusion that depicts Henry's coming to destruction and his unavoidable death. Indeed, the story of the English monarch's downfall and England's ruin are rendered to maximum dramatic effect. However, the consequences beyond the dramatic narrative are deemed even more important, as Vernulaeus dedicates a final, heart-felt prayer to England's deliverance, and thus ultimately presents his plot as both finished and incomplete.

The unities of time and place seem to have been abandoned reluctantly by Vernulaeus, in fact mainly as an apparent result of his insistence on the unity of action and historical veracity. Certain scenes are included for a desired emotional effect and for providing opportunities to exercise rhetoric. Vernulaeus supplies a smooth transition from one scene to the next wherever possible, thus seemingly striving for a partial impression of temporal and local unity.

The rule of 'probability and necessity' is again observed by Vernulaeus in this play. Its events depend on interaction between Henry's lust as driving force and his Catholic conscience as ultimately unsuccessful counterforce. The vices play an indispensible role on Henry's part and are apparently deemed necessary in offering credible resistance to the far more strongly represented counterforce of the true Catholic faith. Vernulaeus obeys the additional rule that keeps spectacle off stage when treating the executions of Fisher and More, but then flouts it with the public display of Henry's final collapse.

And lastly, Vernulaeus does not integrate his several choruses into his tragedy as actors. Their isolated position allows them to appeal abundantly to the viewers' emotions when they are

made to witness in their imaginations the awful outcome of Henry's decisions for the English people.

It then seems likely that Vernulaeus was convinced that plots could be rendered effective by following certain dramatic directions. However, above all, it is clear that he assigned even more importance to following Sander as his source and to the transparency of his moral and confessional message. At this stage it would be too early to credibly allege that this tragedy is unsuccessful in an aesthetic, literary sense, but for now it is important to note that Vernulaeus' considerations with regard to his plot denote that the tragedy's ultimate significance lay beyond rather than within the formal boundaries of his tragedy. In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the tragedy's literary merit in relation to its propagandistic meaning, a consideration of the tragedy's characters would be advisable, and indeed announces itself.

3. Character in Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*

When one considers the notion of 'character' with regard to Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*, one is inclined to first briefly dwell upon the quite considerable amount of characters[50] drawn into the tragedy. This was of course more than convenient for classroom purposes, and it can be said that the school theatre simply required a large number of roles in general (IJsewijn and Sacré 1998, 143). This by no means leads automatically to complexity. As we saw earlier, the plot of our tragedy is straightforward and leaves very little to the audience's imagination. In Olson's book, this would class Vernulaeus with Racine, who is in turn contrasted to Shakespeare. Vernulaeus' dramatic intention, like Racine's, would involve a clear exposition of the principles and issues involved, thus "proposing the universal directly" instead of having it deduced from circumstances and incidents (Olson 1966, 230). Schuster traces Vernulaeus' predilection for straightforwardness to the dramatic tradition he was writing in: "the use of plot and character to express the heterogeneous complexity of the human condition is foreign not only to the Vernulaeus theatre but to academic drama in general" (Schuster 1964, 39-40). In theory then, it would not be inconceivable at all that Vernulaeus would comply with the neoclassical recommendation of a conventionalized rendering of characters. Interesting in another character-related way is of course that Vernulaeus had literary aspirations for his play (as could be expected from a *tragoedia).* In his dedicatory letter to Reverend Desbois Vernulaeus first reminds him of the dreadful events involving Henry VIII of England and several most worthy innocent victims, but then refers to the intended enjoyment of his rendering them in tragic form: *Sed quoniam placuit quicquid tamen displicebat, ecce Tibi clausam tum Scenam iterum aperio, & cothurnatum hunc Regem tuo sub patrocinio in publicam lucem adduco*, 'But since whatever displeased, also gave pleasure, see how I here reopen the stage for you, and with your patronage I bring this tragic king back to the stage' (Dedicatory letter, v. 30). Two lines of enquiry then seem to call for attention. In what way do Vernulaeus' characters in *Henricus Octavus* in dramatic practice conform to the neoclassical rule that prescribed conventionalized characters and what is its precise relationship to the more complicated concept of the 'tragic hero'?

3.1 Conventionalized characters

The tragedy at hand turns out to be populated by all sorts of conventionalized characters, that is characters whose predictable behaviour stems from an univocal characterization. The characters in *Henricus Octavus* are specifically acting in a *morally* conventionalized capacity, and Sifakis aptly labels such characters "morally specified archetypes" (Sifakis 2001, 24). The morals concerned are naturally

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[50] Schuster counts 26 without the two choruses, but excludes Catherine's servants from his tally. He draws attention to the fact that with this plethora of characters, Vernulaeus "preserved the multifariousness of his source" (Schuster 1964, 61).

those propagated by the Roman Catholic Church and the characters staged by Vernulaeus could therefore be termed *catholically* or *confessionally* conventionalized.

The Catholic martyrs (More and Fisher)

The most affectively portrayed representatives of the Catholic religion are More and Fisher, who could be typified succinctly as 'the Catholic martyr'.[51] Vernulaeus describes the pair with reverence in his dedicatory letter: *viri mortales immortalite dignissimi. abeuntem illam [Religionem] retinere voluerunt; cum non possent, in eius amplexu sanguinem & vitam effuderunt*, 'mortal men who were highly deserving of immortality, who desired to hold fast to the faith although it was slipping away; and when they could not do this, they lost their blood and life while embracing it' (Dedicatory letter, v. 9-11). Their behaviour is defined by their devotion to the Catholic faith and their heartfelt concern for their country (Fisher: *Periclitatur Angliae regni salus*, 'The welfare of our English kingdom is at stake here', III.ii.953). Moral righteousness and the Catholic faith naturally convene in these two men, who zealously apply themselves to trying to keep their morally wavering king on the straight and narrow path. Thus Fisher advocates a God-fearing attitude, even for mighty kings: *At ipse Regum Rector, & Regum est Deus*, 'But he is the ruler of kings, and he is the God of kings' (II.iv.620), since God's punishment should never be underestimated (*Istud verendum est*, II.iv.628). He also forcefully warns against the effects of physical appetite: *Ista transversos agit / Cupido Reges*, 'This disgusting desire turns kings awry' (II.iv.635-6). More withstands the king's attempts at bribery with natural ease: *vir bonus constans manet, / quem dona flectit esse non potest bonus*, 'A righteous man is steadfast, he who is swayed by gifts cannot be a righteous man' (III.iii.1030-1). When Henry has made himself King-cum-Pope, the brave men's fates are sealed. Their dedication to the pope is after all unconditional, as Fisher informs his delayed interrogators:

> *hactenus nostri fidem*
> *Tenuere primam, iura Romanus dedit*
> *Sacrata Praesul. Quod novum est constans nego:*
> *Rex hic receptam tollere haud potest fidem.*
> All this time our people have kept to the original faith,
> the Roman Bishop gave us laws in religious matters.
> I am determined in rejecting any innovation:
> the king has no power to abolish the traditional religion in this country.
> (IV.viii.1644-47)

Fisher's and More's shared reaction to their ordeal involves unalloyed joy, as both feel certain of a much more agreeable life after their deaths. Thus Fisher states: *Occasione laetor, haec vitam dabit / hinc cum relinquam*, 'This for me is an occasion of joy, since it will give me a new life as I will leave from here' (Iv.vii.1634-5). Both martyrs also demonstrate resignation of the Stoic variety, as their

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[51] Sander again proved to be an attractive model for Vernulaeus, as he gave "a long and elegant description of the first martyrs of the new legislation, with a special attention to the two glories of the English Church, Sir Thomas More and John Fisher, bishop of Rochester" (McNevin Veech 1935, 251).

equanimity naturally dispels futile emotions.[52] Thus, when More tries to offer consolation to his sorrowful family, he insists: *nullus hoc pectus timor, vis nulla vincet*, 'No fear, no power will conquer this soul' and readily admits: *spem facit tantam Tonans, / Non merita vitae*, 'God gives me the only hope there is, not the merits of my life', V.v.1963-5). Moments before More's execution, he somewhat unnecessarily seems to comment on his own status as martyr: *Et Christianus sanguinem effundo meum*, 'And as a Christian do I pour out my blood' (V.vi.234). Religio, who has witnessed the dreadful events with rising incredulity, concludes after the decapitation that England herself has fallen together with More (*Britanna Tellus, en iaces, ipsa hic iaces*, 'Land of Britain, see, you yourself lie here', V.vii.2052). With their irreproachable, selfless and courageous behaviour and their representation of the Catholic faith, one would almost begin to think that in effect More and Fisher are the real heroes of the tragedy.[53]

The virtuous Catholic woman (Catherine)

Another morally defined character type is that of the virtuous Catholic woman, in this case Catherine. In his dedicatory letter Vernulaeus refers to her as *piissima Regina* ('most pious queen', Dedicatory letter, v. 19) and *omni regno excelsior* ('exalted above any royal power', v.20). Her devoutness to God and the concomitantly undeserved nature of her ordeal convene are emphasized throughout the play. Catherine's relationship with God is so close, that she ventures upon calling Him to account (after having addressed Him reverentially and extensively):

> *Scilicet quando tuas*
> *Observo leges, regii quando tori*
> *Intacta servo iura, nec pravo fides*
> *Violata motu est, regis expellar domo*
> *Non digna Coniux?*
> Can it be that I who observe your laws,
> who keep the vows of my royal marriage intact,
> whose honour was never shaken by an improper action,
> am driven from the king's palace as an unworthy wife?
>
> (II.1.434-8)

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[52] The Stoic philosophy, with its emphasis on the resistance to passions, had appealed to the Christian mind since early Christianity (when it was adopted by for example Jerome and the writing apostle Paul), and "a distinctly Stoic aura" can be perceived in expressions of the virtue of fortitude throughout the Middle Ages (Braden 1985, 70-1). One of Vernulaeus' predecessors as professor at Louvain, Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), in fact founded the philosophical movement of Neostoicism, which sought the use of Senecan philosophy for Christian benefit. Braden remarks without geographical indication that the "general Stoic style of unpersuadable obstinacy has its obvious relevance in the religious and political turmoils of the sixteenth century" (Braden 1976, 76), and of course this relevance applied especially to the Low Countries with their intense religious clashes and urgency of confessional stances.

[53] Schuster reckons that in any case they were to be seen as shining examples to be followed by "most of his students who would serve church and state as laymen" (Schuster 1964, 281). Such expectations might well in turn have filled at least some of even the most ambitious students with mild trepidation.

Catherine's rock-solid belief in the validity of her marriage results in a preservation of her marital loyalty until her dying breath. She rather theatrically offers her breast to her husband's sword: *hinc stricta manu / Pro amore ducat sanguinem*, 'Let him draw blood from it with an unsheathed sword because of my love for him' (IV.i.1318-20). Even in her final moments, Henry's salvation was uppermost in her mind, as Warham reports: *quoties ait / Moriens, marito Christe condona meo*, 'how many times she said 'Christ, grant pardon to my husband'' (V.viii.2109-10). Catherine's martyrdom, then, is above all that of an unjustly rejected wife.

When considering the characters of More, Fisher and Catherine, we encounter an uncomfortable discrepancy between the widely proclaimed almightiness of God and His apparent unwillingness or inability to avert such patent injustice. At some point, Catherine asks her God with an undeniable accusatory slant *Et ista pateris? Istud amentis nefas / Facinusque regis*, 'And will you allow these dreadful events? This sinful crime of the insane king?' (II.vi.712-3). Warham advises her not to become agitated, as *diriget causam Tonans*, 'God will take care of your cause' (II.vi.714).[54] When commenting on humanist tragedy in general, Bloemendal detects a "serious problem of reconciling a tragic outlook in which the denouement was unhappy and poetic justice was not always apparent, with a Christian world view in which God governs all, is always just and turns each misfortune into good fortune" (Bloemendal 2013, 343). All-importantly and contrary to Bloemendal's general observations, *Henricus Octavus*' unhappy denouement, which is 'happy' in involving Henry's well-deserved punishment, coincides with justice of the literary (poetic) kind as well as (far more importantly) divine justice. On the other hand, it should be noted that More and Fisher are portrayed as confidently triumphant in their defiance over death, and their deaths do by no means detract from God's justice, but rather highlight it all the more. In fact, martyr dramas were a favourite genre in religiously turbulent Europe, and they directly aimed at encouraging audiences to "forbear more suffering and thereby gain an eternal reward" (Parente 1987, 64). Vernulaeus was thus well capable of imbuing his tragedy with Christian morality, it is rather the question to what extent this morality left room for actual tragedy.

The honourable woman and destructive harlot (Anne)

The king's love interest and ultimate second wife, on the other hand, is not presented as a single morally construed type, but as two flatly opposed ones with each a different function. She is introduced to us as an optimistic, light-hearted and (most importantly) honourable and responsible young woman. She owes up to reciprocally passionate sensations for the king, which she subdues with sensible determination (*at pudor placet*, 'but modesty is my choice', II.ii.544). Because, after all,

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[54] I agree with Schuster's translational decision that Warham must refer Catherine's personal *causam*, as consolations of a more generally Neostoic nature would undoubtedly be lost on the distraught queen.

Nec virginem solvent preces / nec amor pudicam, 'Entreaties will not overcome a chaste girl, nor will love' (II.ii.541-2). We can also recognize this version of Anne in the coronation scene, when she seems innocent and grateful: *Tua est voluntas, ut tui regni simul / Sim facta consors*, 'It is your will that I am made consort of your kingdom at the same time' (III.viii.1209-10). After Henry has been thrown into mental disarray by the adverse judgment of his marriage issued at Rome, Anne is portrayed as deeply upset and vulnerable. She asks him to remove her disputed crown (IV.iii.41-2) and tells the king to order Catherine's return: *Revocanda Coniux altera est*, 'Your other wife should be called back' (IV.iii.1445). Painful indeed. However, Anne is also witnessed saying the following:

> *Pontifex sed me eiicit,*
> *Et fulmen in me barbarum intorquet ferus.*
> *Patieris? & me Regia expelles domo?*
> The pope rejects me,
> and violently hurls his savage thunderbolt at me.
> Will you tolerate this? And will you expel me from the royal palace?
>
> (IV.iii.1450-1)

Does this reek of emotional manipulation or should it be seen as a desperate attempt at self-preservation of a woman who finds herself cornered? It could be both, one imagines with some empathy. However, Anne's fierce criticism of the pope might well have reminded the theatre audience of Anne's infamy, if they were actually taken in by her coyness and modesty in the first place.

Anne's opposite personality, which will probably have met with more recognition, though certainly not approval, reveals her as a deceitful and severely indecent woman. The chorus of English maidens in fact already warned about Anne's disreputable personality at a very early stage, when they state outspokenly about the king: *Spurcae thalamum pellicis ardet*, 'He desires the bed of a vile mistress' (Chorus I.397) and *Totum meretrix possidet animum*, ´The harlot possesses his whole mind´ (Chorus I.399). The chaste maidens later accuse Anne of malicious deceit (*Perversitatis est genus / Miseros amore fallere*, 'It is a kind of perversity to take in the poor by means of love' (Chorus II.829-30) and voice their trembling fear: Anne taking possession of the royal throne, royal sceptre ánd royal bed (Chorus II.847-50). More likewise informs the king of Anne's widespread reputation as the lewdest of women:

> *Vulgus infamem putat*
> *Et impudicam, prostituto quae suum*
> *Pudore passim perdita extinxit decus.*
> The people think she is disreputable
> and shameless, a depraved woman who has
> lost her honour by squandering her chastity.
>
> (II.iv. 654-6)

Both England herself and France (*Gallia*) have been witness to the appalling disgrace, according to More (II.iv.657-9). Anne's following the suspicious sect of Luther (*Sectam Lutheri sequitur*, II.iv.664)

could hardly come as a surprise either. And indeed, Brian will later report to his shocked king on Anne's multiple adulterousness, which involved her own brother, deducing: *una Reginam omnibus / Libido facilem subiicit*, 'The queen's desire in itself makes her an easy conquest for all and sundry' (V.viii.2118-9).[55] The queen herself appears in the scene as well, insisting on her innocence and appealing to the king's (and audience's) compassion. Schuster suggests that this confrontation between Anne and Henry could well be Vernulaueus' invention (Schuster 1964, 285). Anne's emotional pleas include *Et me repelles cordis idolum tui?*, 'And you expel me, your heart's desire?' (V.viii.2129), *Si mihi Coniux negas / Tuos amores, da meam hanc vitam mihi*, 'If you deny me your love, husband, at least let me live' (V.viii.2134-5) and finally, to no avail of course, *Miserere Rex! miserere Coniux! O Tonans!*, 'Have mercy, king! Have mercy, husband! O God!' (V.viii.2144). Anne's being 'disclosed' may not come as a surprise to those who take More's insights seriously by default and those who knew their history, but the fact remains that in Vernulaeus' play, Anne's character shows an ambiguity that is decidedly awkward. The way we witness her ourselves and her disreputable conduct as reported are simply too divergent to allow for credible union. Vernulaeus' attitude towards Anne is then above all dictated by terms of functionality. Olson remarks that dramatic characters "need to be adequate to their function" (Olson 1966, 84). Anne's function would be to raise moral and practical barriers to the king's infatuation, to subsequently prove his moral self-destruction both more deserved ánd painful for him when she turns out not to be the desirable spouse he thought she was, and finally to become a pitiable victim of his indomitable anger. The eminent Catholic martyrs and Catherine fitted easily in Vernulaeus' representation of this imperative stretch of history, but Anne's confusing multiple personality reveals that uniform characterization could become subordinate to dramatic functionality.

The wicked and good councillors (Brian, Wolsey and Longland)

Vernulaeus' passionate interest in rhetoric must have given him special interest in Henry's different councillors, and indeed the playwright stages advisers with morally divergent intentions: the wicked councillors Brian and Wolsey and their morally sound counterpart, Longland. The latter functions as the externalized devoutly Catholic moral conscience of the king, advising for example *Quod lege certa Praesulum sanxit Pater / Mutare nolle*, 'Do not change what the father of bishops has determined by indisputable law' (II.iii.566-7). In addition to papal thunderbolts, practically minded Longland reminds his monarch of the military might of the Habsburg Emperor (*Rex Burgundica*), Catherine's alarmed uncle (II.ii.579-84). Longland later attempts to counter his king's strong

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[55] According to Schuster, Vernulaeus' trusted source Sander uttered "frankly vulgar comments" on Anne Boleyn, an opinion which Vernulaeus chose not to pronounce too expressly in his play (Schuster 1964, 241). Sander does, however, relate that Anne's sexual resorting to her own brother resulted from desperation at not providing the king with a male heir (Schuster 1964, 285).

emotions bravely and eloquently: *Ratione motus hos regas*, 'Control these passions with reason' (III.vi.1151) and *Tempus est semper breve / Quando ira praeceps in nefas longum ruit*, 'It takes little time before anger rushes headlong into a crime of lasting consequence' (III.vi. 1156-7). By this time, such unwelcome advice obtains hardly any hearing with Henry. The troubled king is more receptive to the counsel of Brian and Wolsey. According to Schuster, Brian's erroneous opinions are particularly transparent to the audience. In the beginning of the play, he professes almost sardonic joy at the king's infatuation (*Una est Bolena Regis incensi Venus. / Amore totus vincitur, totus periit*, 'Anne is the only love of the incensed king, he is completely conquered, has completely gone to ruin' (I.iii.199-200) and *semper placet / Habere quod quis non potest*, 'It is always joyful to have what you cannot have' (I.v.244-5). Schuster even labels Brian's comments "urbanely amoral and dispassionate" (Schuster 1964, 224).[56] Wolsey's case proves a little more complex. On the one hand the cardinal is held solely responsible for the regal misery by amongst others Henry (*tu mihi divortii / Causa extitisti*, 'You turned out to be the cause of my divorce', IV.ii.1392-3) and readily takes on all the blame. As observed in the previous chapter, on plot, this accusatory course of events does not in the least satisfy the spectator, who has witnessed complex consequential forces which he knows will continue their operations after Wolsey's contrite exit. Sander regarded Wolsey as the real villain and his thwarted ecclesiastical ambitions as one of the main causes of the English divorce and schism (McNevin Veech 1935, 244). Although Vernulaeus includes accusations along these lines through the queen's procurator Warham (IV.ii.14024), in the tragedy itself Wolsey actually seems to be motivated principally by sincere concern. He genuinely believes in the legal invalidity of the royal marriage (*haec certa est fides: / Catharina Regi nupsit, haud potuit tamen*, 'This is my conviction: Catharine married the king, but she was not allowed to do so' (I.iv.227-8). In his opinion, Henry's marriage to Catherine is an error unknown to the king himself (*error incertus tibi est*, I.v.270). Wolsey realises the graveness of the issue at stake, but states (after Henry's reference to the *Pontifex*) with conviction *Aeternus ille quod vetat mundi Tonans / Permittere Ipse non potest*, ''Even the pope himself cannot allow what the eternal lawgiver of the world forbids' (I.v.282-3).[57] Wolsey's concern with his king's moral welfare (*Tuam salutem, Magne Rex, solam peto*, I.v.260) would find appeal with the likes of More. All in all, Wolsey's character is not straightforwardly constructed and his alleged malevolent influence seems

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[56] Schuster notes that Sander preceded Vernulaeus in altering the historical Sir Francis Brian in order to typify him as "evil councelor" (Schuster 1964, 236). Rather surprisingly, this alteration seems to have concerned the man's advising role in Henry's life more than his supposedly evil character: "The historical Brian shared almost all of Henry's amusements and therefore acquired an unrivaled reputation for dissoluteness", and in a letter Cromwell called him "the vicar of hell" (Schuster 1964, 237).

[57] This is an interesting converging between two incontrovertible authorities. Would it not be a subject of high sensitivity to Vernulaeus' young actors and audience? What if God's and the pope's opinions would differ? It must have been crystal-clear in Vernulaeus' environment that these opinions were really not prone to diverging. Wrong and right are simply not negotiable, as would be obvious to divine and papal estimation alike. But maybe Wolsey's remark did stir some slight discomfort in a less rigidly religious person present?

to be subdued in Vernulaeus. Schuster believes that the contemporary Catholic opinion that ardently condemned Wolsey was shared and propagated by Vernulaeus (e.g. Schuster 1964, 259). According to him, Vernulaeus (after Sander) intended Wolsey's moral disturbances to be recognized by the audience as "sanctimonious display" (Schuster 1964, 225). Perhaps indeed Vernulaeus' intended audience did not need Wolsey's selfish motives and moral harmfulness to be spelled out for them. This would of course still not imply a commendable case of careful and coherent characterization.

The allegories: virtues and vices

When considering morally defined character types serving a confessionally determined purpose in Vernulaeus' tragedy, the allegorical characters cannot go unmentioned, as in fact they are the very distillation of moral characterizing. Grund observes that humanist tragedy was increasingly moralistic and that in that respect it aimed to continue "the vital tradition of the devotional representation within the Church that produced the great mystery cycles of the Middle Ages (Grund 2011, xviii). At least as influential as the mystery plays were in fact the late-medieval morality plays.[58] In this kind of drama, allegorical characters are used to dramatize religiously ethical principles. According to Rädle, the Jesuits' initial embrace of this dramatic genre (which they adopted directly from the Dutch rhetoricians (*Rederijkers*), known for their *Elkerlijc* from before 1475) in the 1540s-60s "represents the first severe period of the anti-Reformatory polemic, characterized by an internally insecure ideology that is aiming at demarcation and self-assertion" (Rädle 2013, 204). In *Henricus Octavus* the performing allegories are obviously secondary characters,[59] but – as discussed earlier on – they are represented as playing a decisive part in events. At least the vices are, of course, and their fearsome interference has already been alluded to in the earlier section on the tragedy's chorus. Their outright deviousness finds expression in unethical expression such as *non habet leges amor*, 'Love does not have laws' (Impiety, I.ii.114) and *non decent Regem preces. / Iubere Regum est; occidat, qui non probat*, 'Prayers do not become kings. It is for kings to command; Let him die who does not obey' (Tyranny, II.v.1122-3). Equally transparent to Vernulaeus' audience must have been the barefaced

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[58] IJsewijn in his first *Companion* to neo-Latin writing pays quite some attention to the continuity between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He expounds that medieval Latin literature "as a whole often displays strong resemblances in its themes, ideals and efforts to humanist works" (IJsewijn 1990, 22). The ideal of edification on Christian terms would certainly have contributed strongly to continuity between the two periods, which are after all often seen as divided by a watershed. Ford and Taylor mention that the early examples of neo-Latin drama were very often hybrid forms without clear classical models (Ford and Taylor 2013, 7).

[59] Martin van Dorp (*Dorpius*), a very influential predecessor of Vernulaeus' at Louvain (1485-1525), seems to have been daringly innovative in Jesuit terms by creatively combining the allegorical and mythological (letting the unlikely duo Hercules and Virtus combine forces in combatting Venus and Amor) (Schuster 1964, 16). It should be noted that this was a prose dialogue, so not intended for public staging. Schuster conjectures that Dorpius was in the end deterred from employing expressly pagan subject matter, as he abandoned classical plays at the height of his career and substituted his own, morally more straightforward compositions (Schuster 1964, 16).

anti-papal sentiments, such as that *Ille Tarpeia Tonans / E rupe* ('that he who thunders from the Tarpeian rock) is willed to *Nunc iura perdat, funera & diras neces / Numeret suorum* ('may he now lose his jurisdiction over you, may he count the deaths and cruel executions of his people' (Heresy, I.i.23-6)). And unsurpassable Heresy assures Henry (after he has dared to refer to the papal thunderer again):

> *Istum sacrorum Principem Reges timent*
> *Qui non timentur. Indoles magnae regunt.*
> *Parere turpe est, quando, quod prohibet, placet.*
> Kings who fear that despicable prince of the religious,
> are not being feared themselves. Rulers have natures to be reckoned with.
> To obey the pope is degrading when you desire what he forbids.
>
> (IV.iv.1485-7)

Such moralising could perhaps be called satiric if it was not so exceedingly overt. In a sense it might well contribute to the kind of confessional 'demarcation and self-assertion' that Rädle alludes to with reference to the early Jesuits' intense anti-Reformatism, but it appears that by now the phase of inward insecurity has passed and that the demarcation is now confidently aimed outwardly. The unimpeachable virtues utter Catholic truisms like *Fas est tibi, / Fas esse quod vult Pontifex*, 'What the pope decides to be lawful is lawful for you' (I.vi.318-9) and *tuam / Benignitatis iure famam sancies*, 'You should establish your reputation with the law of kindness' (I.vi.347-8). They soon lose their initial fighting spirit and foreshadow the king's ruin: *Hunc Deus alta despicit arce / Ruit exitii nescius atri*, 'God looks down on this sinner from his high throne, he rushes into dark destruction unknowingly' (Chorus III.1257-8). Despondency and despair ensue. When Religio asks them whether there is any hope left, Piety replies *Nulla spes, quando poli / Contemnit iras, iuraque & leges premit*, 'No hope whatsoever, since he scorns the anger of heaven, and suppresses rights and laws' (V.i.1783-5). They do join forces in a last attempt to persuade wayward Henry, for example reminding him of the pope's inestimable value for England:

> *Mores regit*
> *Et sacra regni, & subditis donans fidem*
> *Curat salutem.*
> He rules over the moral and spiritual needs of your kingdom,
> and by establishing your subjects in their faith
> he looks after their spiritual welfare.[60]
>
> (V.ii.1822-4)

The virtues may be the very embodiment of the play's central message, they are also ultimately ineffective and, in fact, almost annoyingly predictable. Schuster reminds one that aspects that we may find tedious (such as "glib righteousness") should be seen in the light of the stage conventions of the Renaissance academic theater (Schuster 1964, 64, incl. n.48). However, the allegorical virtues do lack the vices' vigour and More's (lasting) impact on the emotions.

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[60] Schuster's translation here is in my opinion really too pleasing to neglect.

After having considered most characters and their generally determined and morally defined roles within Vernulaeus' play, it is high time to focus on the eponymous central figure of the tragedy. To what extent could king Henry qualify as a tragic hero?

3.2 The 'tragic hero'

The quintessential 'Aristotelian' tragic hero, as we saw, was to be neither entirely good nor entirely wicked, but in the course of this tragedy, Henry happens to coincide more and more with another morally defined character type (on the objectionable side): the king-tyrant.[61] After a heated engagement with the notorious vices, Henry affirms for himself *Herois in me est sanguis, & Divus vigor. / Manet hoc repostum corde, quod Mundus tremat*, 'I have heroic blood in me and a divine strength. There is something in my heart that makes the world tremble' (I.iii.137-8).[62] Confessor Longland has already recognized the type with vehement disapproval: *Impetu Reges agunt / Plerumque tantu; quod volunt, idem iubent*, 'Usually kings act merely on impulse. Whatever they wish, they command' (I.iv.214-5). An initial step on the path towards political tyranny is Henry's resolved resistance to the mighty emperor: *Parebo regnans Caesari? Plusquam est satis? / Fiet, quod opto*, 'Should I, a ruler, obey the emperor? More than is necessary? Things will happen the way I want' (II.iii.590-1). During the legal sessions Henry decides to release himself from all obligations under human law: *Iudicem nullus suum / Rex confitetur; ipse mihi Iudex ero*, 'No king should submit to a judge concerned with him. I will be my own judge' (III.iii.1001-2). Henry seems to be testing the boundaries of the 'divine right of kings'. Schuster observes that this was a recurrent theme in Vernulaeus' drama and that (Schuster is restricting himself to Vernulaeus' drama, one assumes) it is "invariably advanced by secular rulers as a pretext for encroaching on sacral authority" (Schuster 1964, 223). Henry does not have the time to encroach on sacral authority, he simply seizes it with both hands. After another conference with the vices, the king has made his decision and declares it publicly in the next scene. He has decided that logically he should be both king and head of the Church of England (*Ut Anglicanae Pontifex Ecclesiae / Caputque sit Rex*, IV.v.1540-1), that the former pope should never be mentioned again (*nominet nemo Papam*, IV.v.1541) and that anyone denying this is found guilty of treason and hence subject to death (*Sit perduellis, qui negat, mortis reus*, IV.v.1546). Henry proves to be a king-tyrant of the worst calibre: a Reformational one. The king has identified his enemy. More and Fisher are to pay for their insolence (*Vincentur ambo*, 'Both of them

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[61] In fact, a historical king as tragic hero was by no means a broadly accepted phenomenon. The humanists introduced a number of new heroes, including figures from contemporary history, who would afterwards be adopted by the modern theatre (IJsewijn and Sacré 1998, 145). According to Braden, the king-tyrant was a recurring character in the first Renaissance tragedies, which involved 'civic self-defense' and issued "warnings about the possibility of unconstrained political power" (Braden 1985, 107-8).

[62] The difference between a good king and a tyrant was one of Vernulaeus' most-loved themes and he had written about it in extensive and enlightening terms in his *Institutionum politicarum libri* ('Books on political institutions'). His theories had not been lost on his students (Schuster 1964, 220).

will be crushed', IV.v.1579). Henry's adversary is of course in fact a multitude: *Christianorum Phalanx / Istas in iras me vocat*, 'That terrible phalanx of Christians provokes me to this anger' (V.ii.1805-6) and *Ista, ista Religio nocet. Vel Rex ero, / vel hinc recedet*, 'This blasted religion is harmful. Either I will act like a king or it will withdraw from this country' (V.ii.1808-9). The consequences of Henry's oppression to believers of the long-standing faith will be dire. When he is informed that the faithful actually enjoy dying in cruel ways for their devotion, unyielding Henry says: *Saevire certum est attamen: flectam impios / Aut morte tollam*, 'Still I am determined to use violence. I will convert the irreverent or eliminate them by death' (V.iii.1852-3). The priests prove to be most perseveringly resistant. After Henry has been informed that the Franciscan order commits insubordination and has gathered quite a crowd (*arguit Regis nefas, / Et concitata plebe defendit Papam*, 'They accuse the king of crime and defend the pope before an excited crowd' (V.iii.1880-1), Henry orders *Injicite flammas, pellite infandam luem, / Abeant, recedant, exulent, fato occidant*, 'Cover them in flames, force out this horrible pestilence, let them leave, let hem recede, let them be banished or let them die' (V.iii.1888-9). And when the Carthusian monks (*Carthusiana gens*) are reported to offer equally fierce resistance, Henry directs *Etiam hi per ignes ultimatum fatum ferant; / Exterminate, morte delictum luent*, 'Let them also meet their end by being burned alive; Annihilate them, let them pay for their crimes with their deaths' (V.iv.1892-3).[63] Henry's wreaking havoc among religious orders must have been specifically shocking to the aborning priests in Vernulaeus' classes.The chorus of English refugees described the deplorable wreckage in Catholic England earlier on:

> *Gens Christiadum devota neci est.*
> *Sacri multo sanguine patres,*
> *Laceram fundunt sub nece vitam,*
> *Delubra iacent obruta flammis,*
> *Sacros rapiunt cineres venti,*
> *Destruit aras impius ignis,*
> *Christusque suis pellitur aris,*
> The Christian people is given over to slaughter.
> Holy priests, drenched in their blood,
> lose their lives in torture and pain,
> Churches lie in ruins, destroyed by flames,
> The winds carry along sacred ash,
> An ungodly fire destroys the altars,
> and Christ is driven from his own shrines.
>
> (Chorus IV.1687-93)

Henry's manifestation as the worst type of tyrant is contrasted to the unswerving faith of More and Fisher in the dedicatory letter: *Ita Regius Pontifex dum authoritatem in Ecclesia Anglicana saeviendo*

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[63] Vernulaeus in fact exaggerated the national Catholic resistance to Henry's decisions in order to maintain "the exterior conflict between good and evil (as he saw it) and thus [he] sustained the interior conflict of the protagonist" (Schuster 1964, 277). I would certainly agree with Schuster on the presentation of an uncomplicated 'exterior' state of affairs, but Henry is by this time not exactly prone to scruples of any sort. The king has definitely crossed to the other side.

quaerit, Martyres fecit, 'Thus the King-Pope, after he had sought after the supremacy over the Anglican Church with raging violence, made them martyrs' (Dedicatory letter, v. 17). This very much sounds like an unequivocal condemnation and, as should have been made clear, the course of the play only bears this out. However, this is evidently not all there is to the character of Henry.

The case brought against the morally depraved king-tyrant is demonstrably mitigated in a number of ways. First of all, the matter of causality, as we saw, is by no means trouble-free. Although the suspect advisers of the human kind are really not that influential (see also the chapter on plot), they do have the effect of making Henry seem less guilty at these specific occasions. When Henry reproaches Wolsey with causing his misery (*Et inde nostrae damna tot passim Domus; / Inde hi labores!*, 'And because of this, these tragedies are pervading our house; Because of this, I have these difficulties!', IV.ii.1396-7), one tends to follow his reasoning for a short moment. More decisive influence is at critical moments exacted by the vices, as we also saw previously. This arguably would make him less guilty, but would it also make him a better person? This seems doubtful, as in the end Henry is judged purely by his personal decisions. That these are so thoroughly amoral certainly in a sense also increases his responsibility, as someone has to be responsible for them, after all.

Still, it seems Vernulaeus' purposeful intention to make his audience sympathize with Henry at recurring moments in the play. First, the king himself draws attention to the unenviable position of kings in general. So after he has taken in his regal attire, Henry comments: *Nempe sic fuco tegit / Fortuna Reges, sic dolo innectit decus*, 'Thus Fortune clothes kings in appearance, thus glory folds round him cunningly' (I.ii.74-5). It does by no means imply he is carefree, as his problematic love life testifies (*Una est dolorem quae mihi tantum fecit, / Una est Bolena* ('One woman is the cause of my great grief, and that one woman is Anne', I.ii.82-3). Schuster believes that Henry's deliberations reveal him to be "sensitive to moral issues and candid in his analysis of their urgency", which would make Vernulaeus' portrayal "sympathetic and dramatic in its objective handling" (Schuster 1964, 218). However, Henry's sensitivity to moral issues does not seem to run deeper than a rather egotistic concern for his personal welfare. What he reveals above all instead is an already feeble resistance to harmful passions. Henry seems to attest to more insight into the burdensome, responsible life of kings elsewhere: *Sic vita Regum; turba curarum influit / Et turba rursum; nulla regnantum est quies*, 'Such is the life of kings, one flood of troubles streams in, another follows immediately. There is no peace and quiet for men who rule' (II.iii.550-1). The trouble of this king, however, is then identified as the people's refusal to approve of his fancies. His solution: *aut votum assequar, / aut cuncta vertam*, 'I will get my wishes granted, or I will overturn everything' (II.iii.555-6). Schuster also recognizes the change in tone between the "sympathetically conceived" verses and what follows, which he mildly terms "a natural nobility of purpose discernible even in tyrants" (Schuster 1964, 237). The audience is not likely to appreciate anything noble or even natural about

the king's immensely harmful purposefulness. This specimen is not exactly the best spokesman of the royal kind.

Henry stands a higher chance of educing sympathy with his hesitations and qualms. These in fact do constitute different categories, and hesitations are more selfish and have a strong tendency not to take root. So Henry ponders worriedly *Instabilis instar aequoris raptus feror. / Quid, Anime, titubas?*, 'I am taken and swept along like the changeable sea. Soul, why do you stagger with doubt?' (III.iii.998-9), and then promptly decides to discard the whole concept of human law. One is also hardly induced to feel sympathy when Henry bemoans the widely raised objections to his fulfilling his desires and suspects heavenly sabotage (*Ipse coniurat polus*, 'Heaven itself conspires against me', II.v.1110-1). Later still he complains: *Immane quantum pectoris saevo quies / Turbata motu est!*, 'It is terrible to what extent my peace of mind is wrecked by savage disturbance!' (V.ii.1795-6). Within about the same draught of breath he resolves *Non ita, cruenta quod volo fiet manu*, 'If not in that way, what I want will be brought about by bloodstained violence' (V.ii.1804).

The qualms of conscience are quite a different matter and enter the scene only after the pope's adverse verdict. Henry's ensuing indecisiveness is rendered vividly, as here:

> *Quid heu? Bolenam regia eiiciam domo?*
> *Parere iustum est; altera est coniux mea;*
> *Pronuntiavit Pontifex, certa est fides.*
> What to do? Should I throw Anne from the royal palace?
> It would be the right thing to obey, the other woman is my wife;
> The pope has given his judgment, the faith is clear on this.
>   (IV.iii.1429-31)

More indication that Henry embodies characteristics of a pitiable tragic hero follows shortly: *Nolo, voloque: quod volo gratum est mihi; / Quod nolo, iustum est*, 'I do not want it, while wanting it all the same: what I want is desirable for me; what I don't want, is the right thing to do' (IV.iv.1476-7). Importantly, these qualms of consciousness constitute a radical dramatic departure from Sander and other historical sources, which recorded Henry's indignation as well as indifference towards the whole situation (Schuster 1964, 267). In addition, Henry's ensuing sensitivity to Catherine's plight and decision to concede (temporarily) to her wishes (scene II.vii), which can also be seen as the coming through of moral conscience,[64] meant another dramatic departure from Sander and other historical soures (Schuster 1964, 268). Importantly, then, Vernulaeus makes a very conscious effort to elicit the audience's sympathy for Henry, even contrary to historical fact. But does sympathy for Henry actually lead to the audience's nourishing hope on his behalf? The only scene which could qualify as having

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[64] Vernulaeus refers to the limited effect of Catherine's tears on Henry in his dedicatory letter: *Ingemuit equidem ille (ea vis est conscientiae) sed victus non est*, 'Even the king himself was moved (such is the power of the moral conscience), but he was not overcome' (Dedicatory letter, v. 12-3). Sander did record the workings of Henry's conscious with regard to Catherine when he had not rejected her for Anne yet, stating that the king was "torn between respect and admiration for his wife and the easy life of pleasure that appealed to him" (McNevin Veech 1935, 243).

such workings is scene IV.ii. It features Henry's Catholic conscience at work, and in combination with sensible advice it causes him to a radical change of plan: *Regina redeat; nulla iam placet Venus, / Abi Bolena; desero amplexus tuos*, 'Let the queen return. Let no Venus delight me any longer. Go from here, Anne. I leave your embraces' (IV.ii.1387-8). This reversal of plan was, again, an invention of Vernulaeus that was not based on Sander or other historical sources (Schuster 1964, 268). Despite his judicious intentions, Henry states he needs time to consider his plans (*Consilia volvam meam*, IV.ii.1420) and the momentum of hopefulness turns out to have gone for good. Henry's leaning towards repentance does elicit hope for his salvation, but one wonders why somehow something is not as it should be. Olson writes about the working of hope for a tragic hero that when it is subsequently frustrated, the audience "feels more than ever the agony of the tragic hero's plight" (Olson 1966, 211). In fact, we feel more distance from Henry than ever, which only expands rapidly after he resorts to tyranny. And that is the problem with Henry: he cannot possibly be morally repulsive and sympathetic at the same time. Fuhrmann observes that an essential element of the tragic hero is a *Fehlgriff* (Aristotle's *hamartia*). He elucidates: "Sie ist nicht sittliche [=moral!] Schuld, sonst wäre der Untergang des Helden als verdiente Folge nicht geeignet, beim Zuschauer die tragischen Affekte hervorzurufen" (Fuhrmann 1992, 44). Henry's transgression is of course fundamentally to be regarded in moral terms. When Freytag elaborates on the tragic hero's struggle, he mentions that this hero "wages against opposing forces" (Freytag 1895, 104). Henry has to wage war against a force within himself. It may not seem completely fair, but in the end the spectator will hold him accountable for his far-reaching decisions and destructive actions. Schuster maintains with regard to Vernulaeus' Henry that "we never lose sympathy for his plight as a human being under the strain of decision" (Schuster 1964, 37). In the reality of Vernulaeus and his audience, Henry utterly squandered the audience's possible sympathy for him by resorting to destructive tyranny and will never be able to regain it.

Henry's final, guilt-ridden moments might seem to have also been intended by Vernulaeus to bring about the audience's commiseration with the ill-fated king. The king's last waking hours have been spent in mental and physical torture, as his body is bloated and his mind assailed (*Turba curarum ingerit / Se parte ab omni*, 'A mass of sorrows crowds in on me from all sides' (V.x.287-8)). The audience might well be stirred by despairing exclamations such as:

> *O dura vita! vivus heu mortem traho.*
> *Etiamne rexi? Mors veni, mors hanc meam*
> *Abrumpe vitam.*
> O cruel life! Alas, I inhale death while being alive.
> My sovereignty is even over? Come, death, come
> and seize this life of mine.
>
> (V.x.2190-2)

And at a more advanced stage Henry anticipates on God's punishment for him: *Imo imo tolle, effulmina, non sim amplius*, 'Yes, even strike me down, thunderbolts, let me live no longer' (2224). Schuster concludes that Henry´s "final dissolution, though terrifying and cautionary, is not unsympathetically treated", and that hence, "in spite of the sententious commentary of Religion, the final impression left by Henry's death is a tragic one" (Schuster 1964, 286). Important to note is that Vernulaeus followed Sander in revealing Henry's remorse and repentance, while other sources generally refrain from mentioning such emotions on Henry's part (Schuster 1964, 287). However, in dramatic reality the audience's sympathy for Henry is drowned out by the moralistic message. But to begin with, Henry's ruin is what the audience very much expects to take place. As was brought up in the chapter on the tragedy's plot, the most important and inevitable succession of cause and consequence is that of Henry's eventual punishment for disobeying the only authentic church and leading a whole country to damnation. Verweij observes, with regard to a comedy written for Catholic school drama in fact, that "moralising monologues also sharpen anticipation of the outcome in the audience – it knows that God never punishes the good or rewards the bad" (Verweij 2013, 104).[65] One could very much argue the same when it comes to all dramatic devices that help to delineate moral boundaries, like using morally discrete characters. In *Henricus Octavus* the audience's deep faith in God's eventual justice might have been shaken quite by the (probably not unexpected) inequitable deaths of More and Fisher, the play would not have been satisfactory at all without final retribution for Henry. Schuster may regard Religio's commentary as sententious, but he does not seem to realize the symbolic significance of this character for Vernulaeus and his audience. In this final acted scene, the moral message happens to be driven home by rejoicing Religio as well as, importantly, king Henry himself. In my opinion, and contrary to Schuster, the dying king's candid admissions of guilt do not contribute to the audience's feelings of compassion, but rather to their relieved conviction that finally justice is being done. Henry objects that placing hope in God is really not a plausible line of action for him at this stage: *Post tot cruentas capitis innocui neces; / Eversa post tot templa, tot raptas opes*, 'After so many bloody executions of innocent people, after destroying so many churches, robbing so many possessions?' (V.x.2205-6). Important in the light of earlier observations about seemingly complex causality may be that Henry now takes all the blame, and suffers for it: *Quam malum est heu sic mori! Vixisse sic quam nunc malum est!*, 'How evil, alas, it is to die like this! How evil it proves now to have lived like I did!' (X.v.2230-1). Religio can only heartily agree, and comments approvingly on Henry's death agonies: *Haec poena mentis consciae*

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[65] Verweij's short but very interesting chapter deals with Schonaeus, a Catholic schoolmaster at the Dutch city of Gouda (1541-1611). Verweij holds no illusions on the broader influence of Catholic school drama in the Low Countries: "If school drama played a role in the discussion of the reformation in contemporary Germany, this was not the case in the Low Countries. Most schoolmasters were decent Catholics in the service of decent Catholic, though tolerant and certainly not fanatic, city governments" (Verweij 2013, 95-6).

est! hoc est scelus; / Scelesta semper vita sic mortem timet, 'This is the punishment of his guilty conscience! It is his crime that can be witnessed. A sinful life always meets death with fear like this' (X.v.2199-2200). With intense contempt Religio also witnesses:

> *En Anglicanae Pontifex Ecclesiae;*
> *En qui cruorem Praesulum effudit furens;*
> *En qui supremi iura Pontificis negat,*
> *Summi tribunal Iudicis demens pavet.*
> Look at the pope of the English church;
> Look at the man who shed the blood of bishops in his rage;
> Look at the man who denies the laws of the sovereign pontiff,
> Beside himself with fear he dreads the tribunal of the highest judge.
>
> (X.v.2226-9)

It should be clear that I certainly would not want to defend a complete lack of appeal to commiseration with the fallen king on Vernulaeus' behalf. However, unlike Schuster, I object to Henry's being considered an effective Aristotelian 'tragic hero'. The appeals to the audience's commiseration seem more like deftly applied but ultimately unsuccessful dramatic techniques than anything with genuine moral implications. The tragedy's intended function within the confessional polemic of Vernulaeus' seventeenth-century Europe did not allow for genuine complexity and any lack of moral clarity, least of all in the character held partly responsible for this polemic's lamentable necessity. The supposed working of 'catharsis' is interesting in this light as well. Schuster attributes the much-discussed dramatic effect to *Henricus Octavus* (Schuster 1964, 286). Olson's remarks on the subject may sound a bit high-flown when he poses as cathartic effect "learning, momentarily at least, something of the great conditions upon which human happiness truly depends, and something of the high dignity of which man is capable" (Olson 1966, 208). The problem with the tragedy at hand might then exactly be that there is naught to 'learn', since its essential message has been unmistakable all along and had been since times immemorial. Olson also remarks that the veritable dramatic effect involves a 'significant experience' because it appeals to a superior sense of values, which includes the "absolute necessity of truth" (Olson 1966, 160). This of course does hold true for Vernulaeus' play on Henry VIII of England. It is a resounding, all-pervasive truth that could never be a match for faltering Henry. Interestingly, after having argued spiritedly for the literary merit of Vernulaeus' tragedy, Schuster names the concluding prayer truly fitting for this "historical tragedy, essentially a religious drama" (Schuster 1964, 288). In the confessionally polarised Europe of the tragedy's birth, this religious essence was urgently polemical, and this made the true coalescence with a tragic character ultimately impossible.

Conclusion

Apart from king Henry himself, the characters in Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus* are largely fitting to a morally straightforward, two-dimensional Catholic worldview. On the 'good' side we find the Catholic

martyrs, the virtuous Catholic woman, the honourable girl, the good councillor, the (Catholic) virtues and Religio. On the opposing side are the king-tyrant, the evil councillors, the harlot and the vices. All these characters are pivotal in contributing to Vernulaeus unquestionable and urgent confessional message: disobedience to the Church brings about frightful damnation. The incredibly split character of Anne and the possibly weakened immorality of Wolsey may have stemmed from their in Catholic surroundings widely accepted blackened reputations, which did not need exposition. More importantly, they apparently needed more adaptation in order to fit into Henry's story as Vernulaeus wanted to render it, and as such to a large extent should be seen as dramatically functional. In addition, Vernulaeus reproduced their historical roles as he found them in Sander, and did not have the space to expound much on these characters. Apart from perhaps Fisher and especially More, the character type of the 'king-tyrant in religious terms' is the most outspoken of the play. King Henry is not typified in this inexcusable manner from the dramatic beginnings, and the contribution of the vices to his deteriorating development may theoretically lessen his guilt. However, in the end only he is held accountable, by Religio and himself, by Vernulaeus and the audience alike. On the other hand, the playwright appeals to the audience's sympathy for Henry by notably departing from Sander and other sources in vividly representing Henry's moral qualms regarding his decisions. In addition, Henry's deathbed remorse and repentance were not clearly borne out by other historical accounts than Sander's. However, such repenting emotions in fact predominantly enhance Henry's ultimate guilt and deserved death. Schuster believes that Henry's death is tragic and Henry should be seen as a true tragic hero because Vernulaeus portrays him as deserving of the audience's sympathy. However, Vernulaeus' audience could never sincerely see Henry as deserving of their sympathy and of course were ultimately by no means meant to. In Vernulaeus' world of unambiguous moral demarcations, which is disturbed by Henry in almost inconceivable ways, this very same Henry cannot lay claim to tragic heroism at the same time. And indeed, More and Fisher would be the only genuine heroes of the play, but in their morally conventionalized and idealized ways, not in a properly tragic sense of the word.

After having realized that with regard to character in Vernulaeus' tragedy *Henricus Octavus*, the literary and the propagandistic are ultimately not truly reconcilable, it is now time to turn to the last aspect under discussion here: Vernulaeus' use of language.

4. Language in Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus*

Vernulaeus' main passion and scholarly interest was oratory, the art of effectively speaking and writing Latin. He could indeed be called a child of his time, as rhetoric lay at the very heart of Renaissance humanism. According to Mack, it "appealed to the humanists because it trained pupils to use the full resources of the ancient languages, and because it offered a genuinely classical view of the nature of language and its effective use in the world" (Mack 2012, 2). Vernulaeus was one among many in the Renaissance who issued a comprehensive manual on the matter.[66] His highly successful *De arte dicendi libri tres* (1615) formed the theoretical basis for his students' exercises in deliberative (persuasive or indeed dissuasive) rhetoric.[67] These were part of their *studia humanitatis* (humanistic arts curriculum), which combined thorough reading of classical works of oratory, history and poetry with "continuous composition exercises in prose and verse" (Van der Poel 2015, 8). The orations created by Vernulaeus' students did not constitute unworldly and ultimately irrelevant exercises, as they addressed the vital political and religious concerns of Vernulaeus' time, like the desirability of a forcible treatment of heretics and of a scholar's descent into public life (Schuster 1964, 9). Vernulaeus could readily extend his zeal for rhetoric to the field of academic theatre. According to Ford and Taylor, school drama's directly didactic benefit on pupils' rhetorical skills consisted of exercising the final two stages of the rhetorical programme, *memoria* (memorising) and *pronuntiatio/actio* (performance) (Ford and Taylor 2013, 7). The drama's didactic workings of course went further than that, as the pupils were continually exposed to fine Latin that they were encouraged to imitate. Schuster describes Vernulaeus' Latin for the school drama as "within the grasp of his pupils, though definitely above the level of student performance", and reveals a modest plethora of classical authors whose language could be recognized, among whom Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Juvenal (Schuster 1964, 65). Ford and Taylor are of course correct in implying that within school drama, rhetorical invention was the playwright's prerogative, whereas pupils (perhaps without realising it that well) joined the audience in forming the ultimate target. Mouchel underlines the vital importance of rhetoric in the Catholic Church's attempts to consolidate its spiritual influence at the end of the sixteenth century, and states that it relied more than ever on the success of a "théo-rhétorique" within the religious orders and on an increasingly effective use of the classics as

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[66] Mack explains this emergence of numerous newly composed, comprehensive manuals in the Renaissance as a result of the exhaustively wide-ranging subject matter of the available classical rhetoric manuals, and probably also of their tending to be very conservative, (Mack 2012, 2).

[67] The incrementally amended collection of published student orations *Rhetorum collegii Porcensis orationes*, issued in more than twenty editions between 1614 and 1721, could indeed justly be called a "bestseller", whereas the resounding success of Vernulaeus' oratorical handbook is evident from its being reissued ten times up until 1667 (Depuydt 2009).

their resources (Mouchel 1999, 492).[68] The Jesuits, Mack notes, had a predilection for Cicero's verbosity that was considered rather unorthodox in Catholic terms (Mack 2012, 176).[69] Our earlier considerations of neoclassical theory on language revealed a distinction between simple and natural language on the one hand, and elevated and enhanced language on the other. As far as linguistic matters are concerned, however, Vernulaeus was above all indebted to Seneca. The Roman provided his distant fellow playwright with fitting linguistic models for divergent situations, and thus served as a most useful model for complying with linguistic decorum (of the 'Horatian' kind, indeed). Renaissance theorists on *imitatio* of the best available classical models insisted on the necessity of attuning one's style to one's subject matter as well as on the proper employment of tropes and figures (Van der Poel 2015, 18). In what (Senecan) ways, then, does Vernulaeus make use of language to underscore the confessional significance of his tragedy *Henricus Octavus*?

4.1 Directly informative language (including rhetoric)

On the one hand, Vernulaeus' confessional, Catholic message is conveyed in unambiguous, calmly uttered, hence directly informative wordings. More and Fisher, with their characteristic unflagging equilibrium, serve as the perfect mouthpieces. Through More especially, Vernulaeus seems to indicate that the Catholic truth and man's truthfulness have no need of verbiage. More's clarity of heart finds expression in persistent verbal lucidity, and he is particularly capable of voicing the play's most essential message:

> *Res dubia non est, quam facit certam fides.*
> *Ecclesiarum Pontifex quod sit caput*
> *Ius omne dicit, prisca decernit fides.*
> Something can not be doubtful when faith makes it certain.

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[68] According to Mouchel, during the struggles of the Reformation rhetoric was above all the domain of the Catholic camp, which inspired the Protestant opponents in turn: "Dans cette periode de recousse, l'éloquence est devenue l'affaire de l'Église romain, et par contrecoup celle des 'Églises reformées'" (Mouchel 1999, 492). The besieged Church subsequently needed the rhetorical defensive weapon even more urgently, as noted above, and Fumaroli expressly dispels any possibly remaining lack of clarity: "Mais c'est Rome qui est le moteur de l'invention éloquente" Mouchel 1999, 492). Mack, on the other hand, amplifies on rhetoric's usefulness for the Protestant secession movement. Religious reformists used grammatical and rhetorical techniques to study the bible and early Christian writings, and this kind of study "tended to undermine authority and encourage the reassessment of traditional practices", while Protestants also used rhetoric to distribute their unorthodox ideas (Mack 2012, 309). Rhetoric, in Mack's somewhat accusatively sounding view, thus in effect "contributed to the Reformation division of Christian Europe" (id.).

[69] At the Council of Trent (1545-63), which was aimed at conceiving and implementing an appropriate Catholic reaction to the Reformation, the subject of rhetoric actually featured on the (clearly elaborate) agenda. According to Mack, the Council recognized the dire need for effectual preaching and to that end promoted "a restrained Christian eloquence based on the examples of the Church Fathers, and especially St. Augustine, rather than Cicero", but notes as well that the Jesuits were aberrantly more susceptible to "Ciceronian influences" (Mack 2012, 176). Very influential in the abiding Jesuit partiality for Cicero's more exuberant 'asianic' style (as opposed to sterner 'atticism') was the Spanish Jesuit Cyprian Soarez (1524-93). His rhetorical handbook *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (1562), which presented Cicero as its main source and the unequalled model for imitation, was immensely influential and held in such esteem that it was even incorporated into the Jesuits' *Ratio Studiorum* in 1599 (Mack 2012, 177-82).

<div style="text-align: center">

As the pope is the head of all churches,
he establishes all law. The old faith prescribes it.
(V.iv.1947-9)

</div>

More's calm assertion of this resounding truth benefits from its simple syntax and short sentences, which enhance its factual reverberation. In addition, the antitheses *dubia - certam* (V.iv.1947) and, less obviously, *Ius - fides* (V.iv.1949) help verbally strengthen the natural truth of papal authority. The result could be termed a Catholic *sententia*. Antithesis was one of Seneca's favourite stylistic devices, and it should also be noted that, despite his even greater partiality for thematic variation and expressive abundance, he generally favoured syntactic conciseness (Billerbeck 1988, 101).[70] More's companion in adversity Fisher generally shares his composed manner of speech (when not losing himself at the delightful prospect of death), but is more prone to embellished phrasing. He voices God's indubitable endorsement of the queen's cause and the extent of His might with the following extensive and classically inspired utterance:

<div style="text-align: center">

Vis magna Regum est; aurea quicquid face
Surgens ab undis lustrat, aut tegit cadens
Curru soluto Phoebus; hoc Reges habent.
Submissa Tellus, ceu vices magni gerant
Tonantis, illos suspicit, tremit, colit.
At ipse Regum Rector, & Regum est Deus,
Cuius Tonantes Numen horrescunt poli,
Timentque Manes;

Kings have much power; everything that Phoebus illuminates
with his golden torch when he rises from the waves,
and everything he touches while he descends
with his released chariot: kings possess it.
Conquered earth looks up at them, shivers for them and honours them, as if
they wield the great Thunderer's power.
But he himself rules over kings, the God of kings,
for whose might the thundering heavens begin to shudder,
and whose might the shades of the underworld fear.
(II.iv.615-22)

</div>

This passage reveals how skillfully Vernulaeus deploys figures of speech and classical imagery, inclusive of pagan gods, to advocate his unilaterally theocentric worldview. The description of earth's entirety from the perspective of the sun (*Phoebus*), whose light is rendered imaginatively by *aurea face*, would certainly qualify as a (modest) instance of Senecan verbal abundance, which was intended (to) "beim Hörer den Eindruck der sprachlichen Fülle und der abwechslungsreichen Darstellung zu erwecken" (Billerbeck 1988, 108). It features chiasm (*Surgens ... lustrat, .. tegit cadens*, II.iv.616), and the unexpected deferred appearance of the sentence's subject *Phoebus* (instead of a more straightforwardly solar indication) might well have produced sheer delight among those present. Another, perhaps more daring classical identification is that of God as almighty *Tonans*

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[70] For my references to rhetoric in Senecan tragedy, I rely (entirely and gratefully) on the resourceful overviews of Canter (1970) and Billerbeck (1988).

(II.iv.619).[71] The passage is typical for Counter-Reformation drama in constructing a 'moral universe' on the stage, while images are produced to convey relations in that universe (Shore 2013, 362). Vernulaeus obviously felt that the most appropriate and effective images were in fact of pagan origin. In Fisher's fine sentences, references to earth are subsequently seen to completely envelop references to kings (II.iv.618-9), but in reality the relationship is considered the contrary, as expressed by the asyndetic tricolon *(illos) suspicit, tremit, colit* (II.iv.619). *At ipse* then introduces a powerful contrast between the described earthly power relations and God's authoritative supremacy, which is emphasized by the cautionary repetition of *Regum*, as well as by the ellipse of *est* in the first constituent. The shuddering of the heavens (accustomed to thundering, according to the hyperbaton *Tonantes ... poli*, II.iv.21) and the apprehension among infernal shades emanate truly powerful and frightening images. Power relations within the universe, culminating in the unequivoval trust to be placed in God, are thus expressed in a manner that is highly effective in its calmness and rationality. The Catholic truth is not only presented as unassailable and everlasting, but also as a readily accessible source of solace. We find More at his most moved when consoling his wife and daughter in penitentiary circumstances: *Utinam dolorem tollere hunc vestrum queam./ Sedabit illum cuncta qui sedat Deus* ('If only I could remove your pain. But God who alleviates everything will alleviate it' (V.v.1970-1)). Their deep faith enables More and Fisher to bear their martyrdom in a consolatory Stoic way. Religio herself also bears witness to this recourse to Catholic comfort. Utterances like *Christianus non potest / Vel morte cogi* ('A Christian cannot be forced, not even by death', V.ii.18-9) and *cresco malis* ('I grow when afflicted', V.ii.1832) must have been intended at bolstering Catholic resilience as well as community cohesion.

Calm and reasoned expression of the universal religious truth also emerges during the court sessions. Schuster praises Vernulaeus' endeavours to summarize Sander's historically accurate rendition of the argumentation, and discerns two resulting "lengthy, closely reasoned models of deliberative oratory that advance both sides of the dramatic conflict without providing a resolution" (Schuster 1964, 250).[72] And indeed, these exemplary addresses of course fitted neatly into Vernulaeus' broader educational programme. Schuster focuses largely on Vernulaeus' veracious (and very abbreviating) rendition of the arguments and counter-arguments regarding Henry's marriage to

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[71] Parente reports Christian controversy about the use by dramatists of pagan epithets for God (instead of the usual biblical terms), which was settled when Erasmus (ca. 1467-1536) recommended their inclusion and (in his *Ciceronianus*) voiced the assumption that if Cicero would be alive in their time, he would write like a Christian (Parente 1987, 40).

[72] The distinction between deliberative, politically oriented rhetoric (later termed the *genus deliberativum*), judicial rhetoric (*genus iudicale*) and epideictic rhetoric (*genus demonstrativum*, dispensing praise and blame) was originally Aristotelian and passed on to the Renaissance through the *Rhetoricum ad Herennium* (Mack 2012, 15). During the Renaissance, legal dialectic emerged as theoretical and practical derivative, that mainly focused on logic, but in his small section on such handbooks, Mack notes that these catered to the needs of a "relatively small target audience"(Mack 2012, 278).

Catherine, as well as on the eventual (historical as well as dramatic) failure of the sessions at the Legatine court. Warham's speech on behalf of the queen, which succeeds Brian's defense of the king, is not only lengthier, but combines historically factual contentions with more inspired considerations that appeal to the ear as well as the emotions:

> *Angliae testor plagas*
> *Quacunque tumidum parte despiciunt mare,*
> *Florere numquam posset hoc regnum magis.*
> I call to witness the lands of England,
> from whatever side they may look down on the swollen sea,
> that this kingdom can never have flourished more.
>
> (III.i.918-20)

The prominent positioning of *Angliae* is accompanied by a poetic rendition of the country's insular condition (III.i.919), which is all the more emphasized by the much-used contrast between the terrestrial and the oceanic (and note another hyperbaton in *tumidum ...mare*). Meanwhile, the poetic is used to enhance the personal conviction (*testor*, II.i.918) of a historically authorized truth (*numquam posset*, II.i.920). England's prosperity has benefited accumatively from the ancient faith, and this makes Henry's imminent destruction of it all the more extensive and lamentable. Warham's unsuspected poetic abilities shortly seem to inspire what could perhaps be called a rather daring form of *praeteritio*: *Si licet, testor tuum / Coeli Monarcha Numen*, 'If you will allow me, I hereby swear by your power, monarch of heaven' (III.i.929). The term of address (*Monarcha Caeli*) and the object of *testor* (*tuum Numen*) meaningfully merge into one, and the slight delay caused by the enjambment might make the expression even more powerful. Another, more earthly dimension of the self-evident universal proportions is calmly and authoritatively expressed by legatine judge Campeggio, who solemnly conveys greetings from the highest worldly authority[73] while in passing alluding to the established order among earthly rulers:

> *Urbemque & Orbem qui sacra fraenat manu*
> *Regum secundus Arbiter felix tibi*
> *lubet esse Regnum.*
> The favourable arbiter of kings, who rules
> the city and the world with sacred authority,
> it pleases that your kingdom brings you joy.
>
> (II.v.678-9)

Urbemque & Orbem (II.v.678) may strike us as somewhat conjuctively excessive, but with its "superfluity of conjunctions" it would qualify as a case of polysyndeton, used by Seneca to produce "emphasis, elevation, vivacity, or a sustained outburst of passion" (Canter 1970, 172). In Campeggio's impassive case, we would indeed be dealing with elevation and an emphasis of the earthly extent of the pontifical jurisdiction, which is strengthened by the very prominent position granted to this

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[73] A designation like this is naturally meant to refer to the timeless institution of 'pope', not so much the historical specimen on duty at the time of Henry's insubordinate dealings with Rome (which was Clemens VII).

grammatical object of the relative clause. The verbal closeness of *secundus Arbiter*, *felix* and *tibi* actually sounds rather threatening, foreshadowing the pope's disruptive influence on the addressee's power hungry happiness. Schuster recognizes the repeated recourse to plain truths as characteristic for the age as well as the man: "Vernulaeus capitalized on the Renaissance tendency to simplify, to explain, to interpret, and to apply: his scholarship was directed to the gleaning and dissemination of truth as he saw it, rather than to an extension of its horizons" (Schuster 1964, 12). These examples should then sufficiently illustrate how rationally and factually presented verity is enhanced by pleasant as well as poetically effective phrasing.

4.2 Indirectly persuasive, emotional language

A wholly different type of linguistic performance in Vernulaeus' tragedy, even more dependent on the Senecan model in fact, is emotional language that is void of all reason. On the one hand, such language stresses the painful incredibility of the faith's being under siege. It includes, for example, the allegorical virtues' incredulity at the shocking nature of the situation. When *Ratio* and her companions engage in dialogue with Henry, they indignantly fire disbelieving questions at him: *Catharina linquat Regium Coniux torum? / Abeat? recedat?*, 'What, Catherine should leave the royal couch? Should leave? Should withdraw?' (I.vi.311-2). Rhetorical questions, termed 'interrogation' by Canter, are another favourite linguistic artifice of Seneca's, and its represented emotions of "the violent type" include "[o]verwhelming sorrow" (Canter 1970, 141). A more direct appeal to the audience's sympathy and pity is voiced by Religio. As besieged woman in sheer despair who embodies the entire Catholic people she would undoubtedly emerge victorious in a hypothetical bid for the audience's commiseration. Religio cries out: *Quid agam? quid eheu? cuius implorem manum? / Et hinc abibo? vivet?* , 'Alas, what should I do? Whom could I implore for help? And shall I leave from here? Will he live on?' (V.vii.2070-1). Religio is fully aware that this barrage of questions will not find an audience capable of deliverance, but one that might feel frustrated in their powerlessness instead. Religio also turns out to dispose of moving poetic talent, even under severe duress. After having invoked the whole of nature, she reminds it of her identity and hapless fate:

> *Religio Coeli filia, & Romae parens,*
> *Demersa luctu, foeda, virgineos sinus*
> *Lacerata, fracta, sanguine effuso madens,*
> *Hinc uror, inde vexor, expellor, premor,*
> I am Religion, heaven's daughter and Rome's mother,
> plunged into grief, despised, with my virgin bosom lacerated,
> broken, drenched in streaming blood,
> On this side I am being burnt, on that abused, I am expelled, I am crushed.
> (V.i.1758-61)

Apposition is another ´Senecan´ figure of speech (Billerbeck 1988, 115-9) and here it provides for a powerful identification of Religio in which familial, and therefore natural associations underline her

mediating role between heaven and the Roman institution (V.i.1758). In addition, the horror of her treatment is enhanced by extended asyndeton, with variation in word classes (participia and adjectives) and some varied additional modifiers (ablative of 'figurative place' *luctu*, accusative Graecus *virgineos sinus*, ablative of manner *sanguine effuso*). Descriptions of her woeful condition naturally turn to perhaps even more urgently sounding indications of her present treatment in passive verbs, a single line full of witnessed mistreatment only modified by contrasting *Hinc* and *inde*. Religio*'s* finely phrased lamentation is aimed at eliciting the audience's commiseration and fear, as in a sense the spectators must have felt personally afflicted themselves. It would thus be a fine example of *pathos*, which Conte defines as "violent, dramatic, intensely emotional effect" (Conte 1994, 814). It was an effect that Seneca thrived on and, as can be remembered, one of the characteristics that made the Roman tragedist so irresistible to Jesuit playwrights (Rädle 2013, 212). Vernulaeus, then, also fully realized the potential of rhetoric to move the emotions. According to Mack, the arousal of emotions was re-established by the humanists as part of their rhetorical training, "partly as a result of giving new attention to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" (Mack 2012, 311).

Vividly rendered emotions that are aimed at producing hugely different effects in the audience are Henry's blind passion and his later political ruthlessness. Henry's longing for Anne results in some spicy and quick-witted discourse, which would have indeed appealed to Seneca. To Anne's chaste Cum pudore sint preces ('Let your pleas be made with modesty', II.ii.539), Henry readily responds Cum amore sunt ('They are made with love', II.ii.540), and when Anne labels herself a virginem pudicam ('chaste maiden'), Henry immediately retorts that she just does not know how to love her king (Nempe tu nescis tuum / Amare regem, II.ii.541-2). It might seem innocent enough, but of course these are the first telltale signs of a derailing royal enjoyment of power, with the most dreadful of consequences in its wake. Henry's ruthlessness towards the tragedy's end is on the one hand accompanied by chilling verbal pragmatism, as when he considers More's misplaced loyalty (to God) Iterum vocatur, pertinax si sit, cadat ('Let him be called back. If he remains obstinate, let him die', V.iii.1856) and his family's serviceability (Utamur illis, 'Let us use them', V.iii.1860). On the other hand, however, Henry is soon portrayed as steadily losing all composure. The final conversation between Henry and Anne underlines the king's utter loss of reasonableness, while Anne behaves like innocence incarnate. Again Henry cannot contain his feelings for her, but they have rather changed:

> Hen. *Moriatur; ite, abstrahite, moriatur cito;*
> *Et impudicum concidat ferro caput.*
> Bol. *O magne Rex!*
> Hen. *Jam senties Regem! peri.*
> Bol. *O chare Coniux.*
> Hen. *Non tibi charus fui.*
> *Cadat impudica ferrea cervix manu.*
> *Hen.* Let her die. Go, take her away, let her be killed immediately.
> And let the sword cut down her shameless head.

Bol.   O mighty king!
Hen.   You will experience that I am king! Die.
Bol.   O dear husband!
Hen.   I was never dear to you.
            Let her dissolute neck be cut with an iron hand.
                                    (V.ix.2136-40)

Henry's loss of reason culminates in his final moments full of agony, which include exclamations: *O misera Regum vita! vah etiam mori? / Et effluentis spatia Naturae ruunt?*, 'O wretched life of kings! Must even they die? And is advancing nature's time running forth?' (V.x.2201-2). Such emotional and bewildered cries have a double, seemingly contradictory effect. On the one hand, they indeed clearly illustrate Henry's progress into derangement. His wholesale submission to fears and doubts is of course all the more conspicuous when compared to More and Fisher's calm and dignified meeting their deaths, which were patently undeserved. All the king's prestige and nobleness have evaporated, he is pitilessly reduced to a miserable, raving wretch. *Furor* is thus presented as the frightful counterpart of *Ratio*. On the other hand, however, Vernulaeus utilizes the very same emotions to an intended 'aesthetic' and tragic effect, to which I will return shortly.

Vernulaeus also uses language to induce fear in his audience for the benefit of the Catholic cause. Especially the devious vices are competent at creating a dark, frightening world of immorality that the audience should attempt to avoid at all reasonable cost (were it not that the Catholic faith is presented as the glaringly beneficial and readily available alternative). The most compelling instance of Vernulaeus' depiction of frightfully baleful gloom is in fact Heresy's opening speech:

> *Orbem sepultum, lucis immunes domos,*
> *Tetrumque linquo noctis infernae chaos*
> *Genetrix nefanda fraudium, & saevae parens*
> *Crudelitatis, Haeresis. Titan tuos*
> *Absconde vultus, flammei occiduas petant*
> *Undas caballi, nulla lux spargat diem,*
> *Et ipsa noctis parvula obscurum tegat*
> *Velamen astra.*
> I leave the buried world, dwellings deprived of light,
> and hideous chaos of the infernal night,
> I, abhorrent source of perfidy, mother of grim cruelty, Heresy.
> Titan, hide your face, let your flaming horses
> reach the western waves, let no light spread the day,
> and let a dark shroud cover even the small stars of the night.
>   (I.i.1-5)

In the tragedy's very first line, earthly light (*lucis*) is literally enveloped by the forces of darkness (appearing in chiastic construction) and thus the nefarious wickedness that will strive to dominate dramatic events sets the pace immediately. Schuster remarks that Vernulaeus uses the three periphrastic descriptions of the underworld (lines 1-3, including another powerful instance of apposition) for his description of Christian hell (Schuster 1964, 215), and one realizes that indeed this

must have been the immediate and dreadful association of his audience. We can further note a direct and menacing appeal to the sun (here *Titan*, I.i.3-4) and an exquisitely functional reordering of adjectives and their concomitant nouns extending over verse boundaries which renders the imagery even more remarkable in *flammei occiduas petant / Undas caballi* (I.i.4-5). And lastly, the separation of *ipsa*, *parvula* and *astra* (I.i.5) indeed gives these tiny stars a sense of inconsequential scattering within the sentence as representative of enveloping darkness. The pictured "atmosphere of gloating horror", here rendered in the resounding victory of darkness over light, is also highly reminiscent of Seneca (Schuster 1964, 214). Elsewhere Heresy's crafty way with words involves an asyndetic tricolon and questions with an unmistakenly demonstrative purpose: *Ut ecce languet? impotens, tristis, vagus, / Ut huc & illuc errat?*, 'See how he languishes away, powerless, sad, listless? How he wanders here and there?' (III.v.97-8). Heresy and its iniquitous associates must have appealed to the audience's delight with Vernulaeus' full consent, but their blatant, and in the play ultimately successful debauchery must above all have educed the spectators' abhorrence and fear. Shore asserts that Counter-Reformation drama accommodated diverse emotional demands on the audience's part: "Like other public events in Catholic Europe, drama drew much of its emotional power from the setting in which it was staged and expectations of audiences eager not merely for distraction but also for representation on stage of their own hopes and fears" (Shore 2013, 356). In Vernulaeus' dramatic representation of dissolution and the ensuing downfall of Catholic religion, the spectators' hopes are barely satisfied with Henry's deservedly painful death. Their real hopes for England's and their own future are voiced by Religio in the tragedy's concluding prayer, and their fears are bound to exist as long as they live in a world ineluctably involving (Protestant) evil.

However, after these considerations of Vernulaeus' diverging use of emotional expressions for his confessional purposes, some more attention needs to be given to its precise use towards the 'dramatic' goal of educing the audience's sympathy for Henry. The king can be an apt interpreter of his interior condition, as when he perceives its incongruity with his regal appearance:

> *corde confuso ruo*
> *Mens lapsa retro cedit, huc volvor tremens,*
> *Illuc revolvor dubius; ac Ponti velut*
> *Incerta motus unda non capit suos,*
> *Sic flector, & sic agitor, & languens feror.*
> I rush about with a confounded heart,
> my power of reason has collapsed and withdraws,
> I am revolved this way while shaking,
> revolved back again in doubt,
> like an unsteady wave of the Pontic sea
> that cannot control its movements,
> like this I am turned around, like this I am driven along,
> and I am carried away without resistance.
> (I.v.255-8)

One notes the psychological insight and almost palpable personal movement in the variation *huc volvor tremens, / Illuc revolvor dubius* (I.v.256-7) as well as an instance of (marine) simile (I.v.257-8), which Canter also numbers under the Senecan rhetorical elements (Canter 1970, 99-105). Henry's inner turmoil is then further expressed by a verbal polysyndeton (I.v.258). Thus Henry eloquently presents himself as a pitiable victim of circumstances, and at this stage in the tragedy, he might still succeed in awakening feelings of sympathy. Such feelings, as we have seen on similar occasions, are neither profound nor long-lived. As has been briefly noted, emotional language is also used in its less reasoned and rhetorically enhanced way to render Henry's (interior) scruples and doubts (that is, when his moral consciousness still has some weight in matters). Thus he marvels, rhetorically questioning himself: *Quid heu? quid amens corde turbato loquor?*, 'Why, alas, do I talk as if I'm insane because of a disturbed heart?' (II.iii.588) and, when the pope's adverse judgment on his marriage to Anne has been delivered, Henry reveals his incredulity and anxiety: *Decisa causa est. Anime, quid restat tibi! / Ut ecce trepidas? nulla consilii est via*, 'My case has been decided. Heart, what to do! See how you tremble? I have no recourse to advice' (IV.ii.1370-1). Canter observes that rhetorical questions in Seneca are predominantly "of the unpleasant, the sad and introspective, the violent type" and that "the question is found frequently when the speaker deliberates, urging himself on to a course of action" (Canter 11970, 141-2). The use is readily recognized in Vernulaeus, and one must admit that such devices illustrate Henry's mental disintegration without real mercy, while occasionally eliciting some sympathy too. That such appeals to the audience's sympathy for Henry only succeeded temporarily (if at all, bearing Vernulaeus' audience in mind) and that, in my opinion, the moralistic objective behind the play did not permit Henry to be a properly tragic character, has been argued in the previous chapter.

Conclusion

This final chapter aimed to shed some light on Vernulaeus' use of language towards his tragedy's overriding confessional purport. On the one hand, we encounter calm and rational, hence directly informative expressions of Vernulaeus' Catholic convictions. More and Fisher, with their fitting Stoic dispositions, are the most powerful conveyors of this kind of truth, which can be deftly enhanced with rhetorical elements and classical imagery. On the other hand, however, Vernulaeus' rendition of emotional, more or less irrational language strengthens both the inherent righteousness of the Catholic cause (by using emotion to make its dreadful situation felt) and emphasizes the wickedness and immorality of the passionate powers, centered in Henry, that it of necessity attempts to overcome. Thus commiseration and fear turn out to be most expedient in rendering Vernulaeus' beloved distinction between the worthy and the morally detrimental as clear as possible. The use of calmly factual language and of emotionally determined language could be seen as Vernulaeus'

propagandistic use of 'decorum'. In addition, however, emotional language (including rhetoric artifice) is used by Vernulaeus to induce the audience's sympathy for Henry, albeit temporarily.

Thus both directly informative language and indirectly effective emotional language contribute to Vernulaeus' distinction between the world of the God-loving and that of the lost. Both types of language work together inseparably in giving out an all-powerful, not to be missed message for both the eagerly receptive as well as the less solidly faithful Catholic ear.

Conclusion

The research field for this thesis was formed by the relationship between Vernulaeus' confessionally propagandistic message in *Henricus Octavus* on the one hand, and instructive theory regarding the literary genre of tragedy on the other. The tragedy´s main character, Henry VIII, evidently functions as deterrrent in illustrating that his rejection of the Catholic faith, naturally inclusive of its papal earthly leader, is not only disastrous for the king himself, but also for the stability and welfare of the European people. Thus Vernulaeus took his unequivocal stance in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants that was continuing up until his own time as well as affecting him deeply. When striking a balance between moralistic confessional concerns and considerations regarding the aesthetic form of *Henricus Octavus*, Vernulaeus clearly consigned most importance to the effectiveness of his message. Neoclassical rules regarding plot can be seen to apply as far as they contributed to the confessional message (the dramatic unities, probability and necessity), and were conveniently discarded to the same effect (chorus as actor, spectacle off stage). The aesthetic was thus balanced quite naturally with the moralistic. As far as language was concerned, no balance needed to be found, as Seneca provided the ready model for the effective linguistic conveyance of truth. Character was a different matter, however, since Vernulaeus' endeavours to bestow 'tragic heroism' on Henry could not naturally coincide with his unequivocally causative role in the depicted dreadful events.

Schuster argues for Vernulaeus' success in presenting Henry as genuine tragic hero and consequently for the play's merit as genuine tragedy. Vernulaeus' endeavours to give Henry characteristics of a tragic hero (to no lasting avail), even bending historical truth in the process, seem to have been possible precisely because the tragedy's confessional meaning (and Henry's place in it) were so clear. Indeed Vernulaeus seems to have realized the importance of a 'tragic hero' for his chosen literary genre. Within his confessionally moralistic tragedy, however, Henry could only be such a hero in an aesthetic sense. This may coincide with Aristotle's meaning of the term, but with regard to character, the aesthetic could thus not enhance the confessionally meaningful. The dramatic result is a recognizable hybrid form, in which the literary and the propagandistic are seen not to merge entirely, rather than a truly coherent entity.

Does this necessarily entail the ultimate failure of Vernulaeus´ *Henricus Octavus* as tragedy? It would really depend on one's expectations as well as on an honest recognition of Vernulaeus' aims. His slightly earlier English contemporary Shakespeare (1564-1616) could liberally flout dramatic theory and still produce truly effective and timeless tragedies by focusing on the psychological vicissitudes of his (properly tragic) heroes. The difference between Vernulaeus and Shakespeare might well suggest that for truly effective and appealing tragedy, the Aristotelian concept of the 'tragic hero' was after all more important than any energetically discussed neoclassical rule. However, it would be good to realize that Vernulaeus, besides almost certainly not being able to

match Shakespeare's subtly expressed psychological insight nor probably his overall dramatic abilities, simply did not feel he had the luxury of focusing on a genuinely complicated tragic hero. His choice of subject matter did not allow it in the first place. So instead of lamenting the absence of an Othello, Lear or Hamlet, it feels better to commend Vernulaeus for his efforts to combine his literary aspirations and profound confessional concerns, which necessarily prevailed. The dramatic result might have a distinctly artificial feel to it (and arguably be verging on the schizophrenic). However, it must have been successful in Vernulaeus' own time, both in a reliably propagandistic sense and by presenting especially his students with the recognizable tragic form (including even some marks of a tragic hero). Rather than defending the play's merit as genuine tragedy and thus subtracting from its confessional relevance, Vernulaeus' *Henricus Octavus* could be recognized as one specific type of tragedy, like the Senecan and the Shakespearean, in this case strongly defined by its historical conditions of conception. It could, then, indeed only be designated as a tragedy of the confessionally propagandistic kind.

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