



Staging Republic and Empire: Politics of English Drama, 1603-1660

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STAGING REPUBLIC AND EMPIRE:
POLITICS OF ENGLISH DRAMA, 1603-1660

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STAGING REPUBLIC AND EMPIRE:
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This study argues that the classical legal concepts of *dominium* and *imperium*, ownership and rule, illuminate the political tensions of seventeenth century English drama. The concept of *imperium* was central to seventeenth century debates over the terms of international commerce, setting important precedents for the development of modern international law. Geopolitical disputes over *dominium* and *imperium* shadow the developing conflict between republican, monarchical, and imperial models of the English state from the Stuart monarchy to the post-revolutionary English republic. In the drama of the early to mid-seventeenth century, we can trace the emergence of designs for an imperial English state well before the Restoration and the eighteenth century. Moving from the reign of James I to the Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell, this study reevaluates the genres of tragicomedy, closet drama, topical drama, and operatic masques, analyzing Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's Philaster and A King and No King, Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedy of Mariam, Philip Massinger and John Fletcher's The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavelte, and William Davenant's The Siege of Rhodes. The aim of this work is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the politics of pre-revolutionary seventeenth century drama, beyond the traditional focus on the antagonism between royalist and anti-royalist factions, and to redress the conventional neglect of English drama between the closure of the playhouses in 1642 and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Judy Hyo Jung Park received a B.A. in Literatures in English at the University of California, San Diego, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in English from Cornell University. She is currently Assistant Professor of English at Loyola Marymount University.

For my family.

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Introduction

Yes, the feat is now done, and Law and Equity must both give way: the Trayterous Tragedie[n]s are upon their Exit, and poor King CHARLES at the Brinke of the *Pitt*; The *Prologue* is past, the *Proclamation made*, His Sentence is given, and we daily expect the sad *Catastrophie*; and then behold! The Sceane is *chang'd*:

England but now [a] glorious *Monarchy*

Degraded to a base *Democracy*.

The *Play* thus done, or rather the WORKE *Finish'd*; the Epilogue remains, to wit the Epitaph of a slaughter'd King; which I reserve to another Opportunity; hoping Heaven may prevent you, ere your Sceane be finish'd; (as you did those poor Players lately in the middle of their's; not onely depriving them of their present subsistence, but of the meanes of the future) but what doe we talke of such slight Injuries to them that are now undoing Kingdomes [...]?¹ —*Mercurius*

Pragmaticus

On 30 January 1649, the day of Charles I's execution, an anonymous author (perhaps Marchamont Nedham) in the royalist newspaper Mercurius Pragmaticus reported on the imminent spectacle of judicial regicide as though it were a drama on the stage. The author was "hoping," in this moment of mortal suspense ("ere your Sceane be finish'd") for divine intervention, a *deus ex machina* that would prevent the

¹ Mercurius Pragmaticus quoted in Leslie Hotson, The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928) 42. The original printed copy of the text can be found in the British Library: BL, E.540[15].

king's murder and transform the tragic plot of the English Civil War into the reconciliation of tragicomedy.² Much as the author likens the spectacle of the execution to a tragedy, and the king to its tragic protagonist, the author seems to compare the royalists to "poor Players" whose performance in the theatre of war has been abruptly curtailed by defeat. However, the "poor Players" may also refer to the actors of the London stage, who, in the months preceding the execution, faced the redoubled efforts of parliamentarians to enforce their ordinances against Stage-Plays—above all the 1642 ordinance (An Ordinance of Both Houses of Parliament for the Suppressing of Publike Stage-Playes [2 September 1642]), which led to the arrest and imprisonment of the Players and the demolition of the "stages, boxes, seats, and galleries" in their playhouses.³ Paradoxically, the stages of the London theatres were dismantled only to construct the penultimate stage of the English Civil War, the scaffolds where Charles I made his exit.

In both English history broadly conceived and in the more specialized history of seventeenth century English drama, 1642 is a momentous date. In English history it marks the start of the English Civil War; in the history of English drama, it marks the concomitant closure of the playhouses by Parliament's order "that while these sad Causes and set times of Humiliation doe continue, publike Stage-playes shall cease,

² In 1643, with the English Civil War underway, Marchamont Nedham began writing for the Mercurius Britannicus, a newspaper associated with parliamentary politics, but after his brief imprisonment, Nedham, it appears, changed his political allegiances when he began to contribute to the royalist newspaper, the Mercurius Pragmaticus. However, following the defeat of the royalist faction in the English Civil War, Nedham began work with the Mercurius Politicus, the official newspaper of the newly established English republic. Philip A. Knachel notes "That Nedham became a contributor to the [royalist] newspaper [the Mercurius Pragmaticus] is certain enough, though it is difficult to identify precisely which sections are his" (Knachel xxii). Philip A. Knachel, "Introduction" to Marchamont Nedham, The Case of the Commonwealth of England, Stated, Ed. Philip A. Knachel (Charlottesville: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library [by] University Press of Virginia, 1969).

³ Hotson 43.

and bee forborne [...].”⁴ However, 1649 (the year of the regicide and the victory of the pro-parliamentarian New Model Army) marks an important point of divergence between the history of English drama and English history. In the conventional periodization of early modern English drama, the significance of 1649 and of the Interregnum (1649-1660) is overshadowed by the 1642 closure of the playhouses, which seems to record a definitive break and the start of an eighteen-year gap in dramatic history, an enduring absence that persists until the Restoration and the revival of theatre under a renewed monarchy.

When dramatic production between 1642 and 1660 is (reluctantly) acknowledged, as in the case of Cavalier drama, it is typically acknowledged in ways that imply the self-evidence of the gap in the history of drama. Alfred Harbage, for instance, argues that “Nearly all Cavalier plays are inferior in quality, and the historian’s penalty for dealing with a body of literature which Time has justly submerged is self-evident.”⁵ Yet, as the Mercurius Pragmaticus suggests with its decidedly theatrical representation of the political shock of Charles’s execution on 30 January 1649, drama retained its influence on the contemporary discourses of culture and politics between 1642 and 1660. Moreover, as the Mercurius author’s vision of the execution as an unfolding “Sceane” suggests, drama was a crucial field in which pre- and post-revolutionary English politics were imagined, debated, and enacted. The ambiguous analogy between the defeated royalists and the “poor Players,” whose arrest and expulsion from the theatres “not onely depriv[ed] them of their present

⁴ An Ordinance of Both Houses of Parliament for the Suppressing of Publike Stage-Playes throughout the Kingdome, during these Calamitous Times. 2 September 1642. London: Printed for John Wright, 1642.

⁵ Harbage, Alfred. Cavalier Drama: An Historical and Critical Supplement to the Study of the Elizabethan and Restoration Stage (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1936) 2.

subsistence, but of the means of the future,” implicitly affirms the abiding influence of drama and theatre after the 1642 ordinance against Stage-Plays.

Indeed, Leslie Hotson in The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage (1928) has shown that “even during the height of the war, plays were given with remarkable frequency at the regular playhouses in London” despite government censure.⁶ In more recent years, a handful of literary scholars concerned with seventeenth century English drama between the Civil War and Restoration have argued persuasively for a critical reassessment of the conventional periodization, which discounts the possibility of significant dramatic innovations between the closure of the theatres and the restoration of monarchy.⁷ Lois Potter and Susan Wiseman have challenged the assumption that English drama of the 1640s and 1650s necessarily takes a royalist or Cavalier position in the partisan division of the English Civil War. Nonetheless, Wiseman argues that “Assumptions that drama in the period was solely royalist, coterie, or ‘closet’ remain influential despite extensive critical re-readings of the 1640s [...]”⁸

The current study builds on the intellectual contributions of Potter, Wiseman, and Dale B.J. Randall in arguing for the importance of recovering this neglected period in English dramatic history, while also trying to situate this period in a broader

⁶ Hotson 16; see also pp. 17-29.

⁷ See Lois Potter, Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641-1660 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Susan Wiseman, Drama and Politics in The English Civil War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Dale B.J. Randall, Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642-1660 (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 1995); Martin Butler, Theatre and Crisis 1631-1642 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). David Norbrook and Nigel Smith, focusing on poetry and prose, have argued similarly for the importance of problematizing received wisdom concerning literary works of the English Civil War and Interregnum. See David Norbrook, Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Nigel Smith, Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). See also David Loewenstein, Representing Revolution in Milton and His Contemporaries: Religion, Politics, and Polemics in Radical Puritanism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸ Wiseman, Drama and Politics in The English Civil War xvii.

historical perspective. The effort of reconstructing this unjustly obscure field of dramatic production as an object of study has meant that their scholarship focuses closely on the period between 1642 and 1660 (when 'Stage-Plays' were officially suppressed). Their work is valuable in part for its lucid presentation of the ambiguous cultural politics of the period, when the same dramatic forms (such as the supposedly 'royalist' form of tragicomedy) were taken up as instruments of political struggle by royalists and anti-royalists alike. Without minimizing the importance of the struggle between royalist and anti-royalist factions (a struggle which clearly had revolutionary consequences), the present work examines the less overt tension in English politics and culture between the contradictory impulses toward republicanism and empire, spanning from the pre-revolutionary Stuart monarchy to the post-revolutionary English republic.

This work investigates the relationship between dramatic form and political form from the reign of James I to the Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell, reevaluating the genres of tragicomedy, closet drama, topical drama, and the operatic masque. The danger of relying exclusively on royalism and anti-royalism as the primary political categories of analysis for pre-revolutionary drama is that this focus can blur the outlines of other political tensions in the period. Additionally, if we assume that the political valences of pre-revolutionary drama are exhausted by the struggle between royalist and anti-royalist factions, we are left with little reason to examine the dramatic works that follow the suppression and exile of the royalists during the Interregnum. By doing so, we may inadvertently conclude that seventeenth century English drama must be sutured to the English monarchy, from the pre-revolutionary Stuart court to the Restoration, and thereby inadvertently reaffirm the assumption that the period between 1642 and 1660 constitutes a dramatic vacuum. Furthermore, an exclusive focus on the antagonism between royalism and anti-

royalism in the politics of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary English drama may obscure the shifting terms of political debate from the pre-revolutionary period to the 1650s, as well as the real conflicts *within* the royalist and anti-royalist factions.

In turning my own attention from the struggle over monarchy to the tension between imperial and republican projects before and after the revolution, I hope to shed light on some of the less overt political conflicts of the seventeenth century. The concept of imperium—particularly as situated within the seventeenth century debates over the rights and wrongs of international trade, which informed the development of modern international law—enables us to understand the emergent conflict among republican, monarchical, and imperial models of the English state during the seventeenth century, and to trace the emergence of designs for an imperial English state well before the Restoration and the eighteenth century. In doing so, I draw on the innovative historical research of such scholars as David Armitage, who has argued for the impact of the concept of imperium on republican politics during both the Stuart monarchy and the Cromwellian Protectorate. Armitage’s historical research focuses on the intellectual history of seventeenth and eighteenth century conflicts between republican and imperial ideologies, but leaves the expression of this conflict in seventeenth century literary history largely unexplored, for all his sensitivity to the discourses of empire.

The first chapter of the present work, “Tragicomedy and the Hybrid Republic,” examines two of the most successful tragicomedies by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Philaster, or Love Lies a-Bleeding and A King and No King. Just as tragicomedy has been considered a fundamentally conservative genre on the basis of its socially conciliatory endings, Beaumont and Fletcher, its most influential English practitioners in the seventeenth century, have often been criticized (by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, among others) for their presumed royalist sympathies. In this chapter,

however, I read Beaumont and Fletcher against the grain of their critical reception to show the playwrights' strong concern with republican politics and their participation in the political contradictions that would later be heightened to the point of civil war in 1642. In my reading of Philaster, I analyze the political effects of the playwrights' use of the pastoral mode in the mixed form of tragicomedy. I argue that Beaumont and Fletcher link the play's pastoral episodes to a conception of natural law that allows spontaneous affective bonds to subvert the established power relations of absolutist monarchy. I then turn to A King and No King, in which Beaumont and Fletcher explore the extremes of instrumental rationality, exemplified by the scheming courtier Gobrius, and animal license, embodied by the erratic king Arbaces in his incestuous passion. While Beaumont and Fletcher imagine a kingdom subject to the tyrannical whims of its king, in which the language of commerce increasingly permeates the rhetoric of the state, the playwrights offer a critical alternative to this situation in the character of the advisor Mardonius. Mardonius, like the courtier Dion in Philaster, argues that royal power should be founded in the will of the people, and that political passivity among the king's subjects is an invitation to tyranny. The prominence that Beaumont and Fletcher give to the commentary of these two advisor-figures suggests the playwrights' willingness to stage arguments for republicanism. Furthermore, the play suggests the importance of "the law of nature and of nations" [*jus gentium*], as a bulwark against the absolutist claims of any one nation and its sovereign.

In the second chapter, "The World's Commanding Mistress," I reevaluate the genre of Senecan closet drama, traditionally associated with aristocratic coteries, with reference to the first English play known to have been written and published by a woman, Elizabeth Cary's The Tragedy of Mariam (published 1613). I argue for the importance of factors of race and empire in understanding Cary's representation of gender, and demonstrate how the play constructs gender norms and racial identities

through the proto-racial discourse of darkness and fairness, within the historically specific imperial context of Cary's play. Cary's representation of empire and commerce illuminates English anxieties at a time when English ships were laying the infrastructure of empire, while English intellectuals debated the possibility of a maritime empire in terms of the perceived tension between *imperium* and *dominium*, rule and ownership. Cary's play explores these geopolitical questions through its representations of race and gender: the racial discourse (by turns moral and aesthetic) of darkness and fairness attempts to police national and interpersonal borders, while the patriarchal struggle to contain women's bodies and speech betrays the fault lines of absolutist sovereignty.

In the third chapter, "Staging Republic and Commerce," I turn to Philip Massinger and John Fletcher's Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnaveit (1619), which is fascinatingly anomalous as an attempt to represent contemporary political events on the tragic stage, without the customary protection of allegorical distancing. I analyze the play, which recounts the last days of the Dutch republican statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, and which was performed within four months of his execution, as an ambivalent response to the relationship between monarchy, mercantilism, and republicanism. By taking contemporary Dutch politics as their subject, Massinger and Fletcher were able to raise troubling questions about the sources of sovereign authority, the dangers of absolutism, the tangled history of English and Dutch relations, and the relationship between the forms of state power and the forms of commerce. I argue that Massinger and Fletcher represent the conflict between monarchical and republican government both in political terms (through the rivalry between Barnaveit and Maurice, Prince of Orange) and in economic terms, as social bonds based on market exchange undermine power structures based on inherited social rank. Furthermore, I argue that the play addresses the problems of international

economic sovereignty, exemplified by the debate (during James I's reign) between Hugo Grotius and John Selden over the common use of the seas.

In the fourth and final chapter, ““O'er-running kingdoms, stopping at a town,”” I return to the conflict between imperial and republican ambitions for England after the revolution, examining the revival of the English theater in the first part of William Davenant's opera The Siege of Rhodes (1656). This work not only marked the return of state-sanctioned theatrical performance, but also introduced moving scenery and female acting to the English stage, and was arguably the first English opera. While earlier plays implied the contradictions of *dominium* and *imperium*, *mare clausum* and *mare liberum*, The Siege of Rhodes directly thematizes the possibility of a maritime empire. However, even as Davenant's opera makes it possible to imagine the English Commonwealth achieving an empire no longer territorially bounded on land, the opera also introduces aesthetic limits to this expansion. I argue that the opera both celebrates English expansion under Cromwell and covertly suggests the material limits to imperial expansion through its formal practices of visual representation.

**Tragicomedy and the Hybrid Republic in Beaumont and Fletcher's
*Philaster and A King and No King***

Around 1607-8, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher inaugurated their collaboration on a series of celebrated tragicomedies with their play, Philaster, Or Love Lies a-Bleeding, a success soon followed by A King and No King. While their tragicomedies were remarkably popular with audiences and influential on other playwrights throughout the seventeenth century, the burgeoning genre of tragicomedy was also maligned as an aesthetically impure form of drama for its indecorous mingling of comedy and tragedy—indecorous by the standards of neo-classical poetics. Tragicomedy continues to be maligned in modern critical history, though for different reasons: the notion that the genre supports royalist politics has been a commonplace at least since Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare. This judgment is typically made on the basis of the conciliatory endings of many tragicomedies, since these endings seem to affirm, rather than to trouble, monarchical and even absolutist authority.

In this chapter, I will reexamine the politics of tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher's exemplary experiments, Philaster and A King and No King, including the relationship between formal construction and political insinuation in these works. I will argue that Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies expose important aspects of the ideological construction of monarchical authority, and that these plays stage a sustained reflection on possible alternatives to the monarchical state-form, such as constitutional monarchy and republicanism. In this process, I will consider how the theatrical projection of such alternative forms of political organization, forms that affirm the rights and liberties of the political subject, is made possible by the form of tragicomic drama, and I will question the conventional assessment of the politics of

tragicomedy. My attempt to recover a potentially radical hope in the form of seventeenth century English tragicomedy is a minority project, although it is not entirely novel. In roughly the past two decades, a small number of literary scholars, to whom my own work is indebted, have tried to demonstrate the ambiguous political valences of English tragicomedy, but more work remains to be done in the reappraisal of the genre. Yet my main concern in the present chapter is not to argue that tragicomedy is actually less politically conservative than it has been considered (a point which Philaster and A King and No King would seem to support).

Rather, I want to propose that Beaumont and Fletcher's plays offer a unique perspective on monarchical authority and its potential political alternatives (which is to say, rivals) at a crucial moment in English political history, a moment which looks ahead to the rising tensions among competing political interests in the coming decades, tensions which would culminate in the English Civil War. However, this is not to reinscribe royalist politics into tragicomedy by other means, and so to reaffirm the dominant image of tragicomedy as a royalist genre. Instead, I want to introduce a new political category to the discussion of seventeenth-century English tragicomedy: republicanism. The notion of republicanism has not been associated with pre-revolutionary Stuart tragicomedy precisely because of the ossified association, in conventional scholarly accounts, between the genre and political conservatism.

I want to suggest that if we cut Philaster and A King and No King adrift from their traditional associations (royalism, absolutist monarchy, the overall political conservatism of the Stuart monarchy), and resituate Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies in the *longue durée* of the pre-revolutionary period, the result will be a new understanding of the genre's relation to revolutionary political culture. In recent years, a handful of literary scholars (notably, Lois Potter and Susan Wiseman) have demonstrated the political ambiguities of tragicomedy, whether royalist or anti-

royalist, from the period of the English Civil War and Interregnum. However, there have been few attempts to find these ambiguities, before the outbreak of the civil war, in Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies, because their politics have been thought to be self-evident, and therefore unrelated to the development of a republican politics in the later decades. If in the present chapter I will focus on the relationship between dramatic form and politics in Philaster and A King and No King, I thereby hope to prepare the foundation for further study of the broader scope of pre-revolutionary tragicomedies, as well as of other supposedly unambiguously royalist, aristocratic, or coterie genres in the seventeenth century, such as the closet drama or the masque.

“New Brave Ballads”:

Revolutionary Time and Form in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*

Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher were the dominant tragicomic playwrights of their time and their drama, Philaster, Or Love Lies a-Bleeding, is among the first plays in their short but highly successful period of collaboration from around 1607-8 to 1613, the year of Beaumont's death. Along with Shakespeare's romances, Philaster is largely responsible for establishing the commercial viability of tragicomedy on the English stage. Prior to their collaboration, each author had written a notably unsuccessful play: John Fletcher his pastoral tragicomedy, *The Faithful Shepherdess* (first performed in 1608, first published between 1608 and 1610), and Francis Beaumont his satiric comedy, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (first performed 1607, first published 1613). Fletcher attributed the failure of his solo work to the English audience's incomprehension of the tragicomic form, which he attempts to emend in his later prefatory text, “To the Reader.”

Tragicomedy, Fletcher explains: “is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is inough to make it no tragedie, yet brings some neere it, which is inough to make it no comedie: which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kinde of trouble as no life be questioned, so that a God is as lawfull in this as in a tragedie, and meane people as in a comedie.”¹ While Gordon McMullen and Jonathan Hope argue that Fletcher’s note, “To the Reader,” should not be thought to encompass the variety and diversity of seventeenth-century English tragicomedy, they concede that it has become the dominant lens through which to view the genre, due in large part to the force of Beaumont and Fletcher’s influence.

The dominant critical view, which considers English tragicomedy, in general, and Beaumont and Fletcher’s drama, in particular, to be fundamentally royalist in politics has largely taken Fletcher’s note at its word. These critics focus on the scenes of reconciliation on which Beaumont and Fletcher’s tragicomedies typically end, on the improbable escapes the characters are granted, on the plays’ frequent mixing of historical and geographical referents, and conclude on this basis that these plays provided their audience with escapist entertainment. Una Ellis-Fermor, for example, compares Beaumont and Fletcher’s drama to “a dream or a fairy-tale,” and charges it with “escap[ing] from the tyranny of Jacobean incertitude into a world of its own creating. It is bound neither by the weight and horror which oppresses the tragedy nor by the compensatory pragmatism which binds the comedy to realistic portraiture.”² Even attempts to challenge this dominant view accept many of its assumptions.

Mary Adkins and Peter Davison, in their respective essays, were among the first critics to observe the political valences of the play and, particularly, Beaumont

¹ John Fletcher, The Faithful Shepherdess, ed. Cyrus Hoy in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon, Gen. Ed. Fredson Bowers. 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 3: 497.

² Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation (London: Methuen, 1958) 201.

and Fletcher's response to the political doctrines of King James I.³ While received critical opinion has long held Philaster to be either apolitical or as reflecting Beaumont and Fletcher's supposedly royalist sympathies, Adkins and Davison argue that Philaster is exceptional among Beaumont and Fletcher's plays for its relatively sympathetic portrayal of the people. Although Adkins and Davison are illuminating about the political contexts to which Philaster responds, they make unnecessary concessions to the conventional reading of Beaumont and Fletcher's drama as escapist entertainment and as a passive support for aristocratic ideology.

Davison argues that, insofar as Beaumont and Fletcher had political concerns in Philaster, it would be seen in their attempt to imaginatively reconcile the competing political claims of king and parliament in contemporary England. Davison traces Beaumont and Fletcher's response, within the play, to the political debates surrounding James I's doctrine of the divine right of kings, and he places Philaster in a pre-revolutionary context, claiming that Beaumont and Fletcher were concerned to reconcile divisions in the government of James I, a concern he relates to a supposed "urge for order in Elizabethan society."⁴

Despite his contribution to our understanding of Beaumont and Fletcher's imaginative use of the debate around James I's doctrines, his tone remains apologetic as in fact the title of his essay, "The Serious Concerns of Philaster" suggests. That Davison apologizes, at the end of his essay, for the ease with which Beaumont and Fletcher can be read as offering "mere escape" and therefore "irresponsibility," is indicative of the standard interpretation of their works as politically conservative in outlook.⁵

³ Mary Grace Muse Adkins, "The Citizens in 'Philaster': Their Function and Significance," Studies in Philology, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1946) 203-212. Peter Davison, "The Serious Concerns of *Philaster*," ELH, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1963): 1-15.

⁴ Davison 15.

⁵ Ibid.

Mary Adkins, on the other hand, accepts the so-called “dictum” of Beaumont and Fletcher’s critical reception that their works pander to and reinforce the political biases of their aristocratic audience, biases which they themselves derive “naturally from their gentle birth” (Adkins 203). She explains apologetically that her intention in the essay is not to challenge this commonplace, but to suggest that Philaster is “an exception” which is “significant in showing the direction of the political winds in early seventeenth-century England.”⁶

Adkins claims that “the citizens are the dominant force” in the plot of Philaster⁷; however, she attempts to mitigate the controversial force of her claim by including a number of qualifying statements that belie her concerns about making too strong an argument on the play’s politics:

One can grant that Philaster is primarily romantic in interest, its major appeal directed to the fashionable audiences in the Jacobean theatres; can recognize that the outspoken criticism of the king is, after all, criticism of a usurper (and, as such, to be welcomed by a lawfully reigning king); must admit that the courtiers are really, albeit unobtrusively, responsible for the rebellion and that they are contemptuous of the human agents they use to consummate it—yet the fact remains that in the political action of the play the citizens are the decisive force. Their importance is not only admitted; it is made emphatic. And that fact has at least the significance of a straw in the wind.⁸

⁶ Adkins 203.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Adkins 208.

Adkins' analysis of "the political action of the play" includes her interpretation of the character Dion as a figure whose primary function is "to interpret for the audience the mood and temper of the people."⁹

While Adkins identifies the citizens as the principal force in the political action of the play and implies that Dion's function as an interpreter of the people is a further indication of their importance, she argues that Dion, in fact, views the people with "the usual aristocratic contempt for the character and the intelligence of the common people."¹⁰ Adkins indicates Dion's response to the nobleman Thrasiline at the opening of Act 1 as a defining instance of this fundamental disdain: "Faith, sir, the multitude (that seldom know anything but their own opinions) speak that they would have. But the Prince, before his own approach, received so many confident messages from the state that I think she's resolved to be ruled" (1.1.11-15).¹¹

The context in which Dion's response appears, Adkins argues, makes evident that his comments are intended to portray the people "as ignorant, uninformed, emotionally unstable" whilst allowing that Dion later extols the people in Act 5 for their role in restoring Philaster to power (Adkins 207). Despite Dion's laudatory references to the people in Act 5 as "brave followers" and "my fine dear countrymen" (5.3.108, 109), Adkins interprets his comment to Cleremont shortly after his praise as ironic and condescending ("Well, my dear countrymen What-ye-lacks, if you continue and fall not back upon the first broken shin I'll have ye chronicled [...]").

Contrary to Adkins' interpretation of the scene, the context of Dion's response to Thrasiline in Act 1 shows that the people can know only what is possible for them to know. Dion's use of the word "opinions" must be interpreted in its larger context,

⁹ Adkins 206.

¹⁰ Adkins 206-207.

¹¹ Quotations from Philaster are taken from: Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Philaster or Love Lies a-Bleeding, ed. Andrew Gurr (London: Methuen, 1969).

namely in its relationship to the “confident messages” of the state. The contrast between these two forms of information (“opinions” and “confident messages”) in Dion’s response suggests that the people “seldom know anything but their own opinions” since they can hardly be expected to know the clandestine correspondences of the state, the facts, as it were, precisely because of their secret nature.

It must be said that Adkins rightfully mentions Philaster’s respectful discourse to the people in the mutiny scene (Act 5, Sc. 4) as a significant departure from the apparent contemptuous disregard of the other nobles.¹² Adkins interprets the scene as a moment of political didacticism, in which Philaster models for the audience how “the relations between sovereign and subject should be.”¹³ While Adkins hesitantly allows for the play’s political themes, she nevertheless concludes: “The political action ends here. The remainder of the play disposes of various unfinished business in the romantic plot.”¹⁴ However, the play itself does not divide neatly into one simply political plot and one simply romantic plot.

A nuanced political reading of Philaster is possible on the condition that the interpreter does not decide ahead of time what speeches, what actions, and what scenes can be considered political. More than sixty years since the original publication of Adkins’ article, the limitation of the article seems self-evident: Adkins’ reliance on an overly narrow conception of politics, one that can only recognize politics under the conventional signs of state power.¹⁵ More recent theoretical

¹² Adkins 207.

¹³ Adkins 208.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Walter Cohen, for example, has argued that the “leftist critics who work along generic lines” in early modern studies, for the most part, “have located the radical or subversive tradition of Renaissance drama primarily in tragedy. [...] When they turn to Shakespearean tragicomedy and romance, some of these writers join a chorus of political denunciation.” Walter Cohen, “Prerevolutionary Drama,” The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After, ed. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992) 125. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne cite Fredric Jameson for historicizing romance and for analyzing political contentions in the romance form, but their Introduction does not itself stress the necessity of a political reading of the form. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne,

contributions from thinkers as disparate as Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, and Judith Butler have given us important ways to understand the complexities of power relations in experiences that had not previously been acknowledged as political, particularly in the permeation of politics by culture.

The development of cultural studies, which has drawn on the insights of these thinkers, among others, into culture and ideology, has had a significant impact on Early Modern Studies, particularly in such important developments as Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. As a result, early modern scholars have been able to raise vital questions about the constructions of gender, race, sexuality and class in the period, and have related these processes to the development of nationalism and colonialism through the lens of dramas, such as *The Tempest*, that had once been seen as merely fanciful and apolitical. Nonetheless, the prejudice that seventeenth-century tragicomedy was escapist entertainment with nothing of radical consequence to say about the political upheavals of its time still persists in the dominant critical view of tragicomedy.

As Adkins restricts her political reading of politics to those scenes explicitly coded as political, that is, to those scenes where the insignia of royal power are visible, a common temptation in contemporary criticism is to read the conciliatory endings of tragicomedies as definitive of the plays' political stances. Rather than privilege the typical narrative endpoint of tragicomedy as a self-explanatory statement of the form's politics, this analysis will attend to the complex peripeteia of tragicomedy's plots: this analysis will attend to the social disruptions, displacements, and modes of dissent that provide the genre's affective power and prepare the audience to see the patchwork quality of tragicomedy's concluding tapestries of social reconciliation.

"Introduction: Into the Forest," Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne (New York: Routledge, 2009) 3.

My wager is that Philaster poses a more radical challenge to royal power than either Adkins and Davison can admit, and that in doing so it compels us to revise our received understanding of tragicomedy. While Adkins and Davison point to politically radical content in Philaster, I will argue that Philaster must be understood as radical not merely on a thematic level, but also on the level of form. Against the idealized continuity of royal succession upheld by the chronicle history, the play offers the open and discontinuous time of mutability, the revolutionary chronicle, and revolutionary action. Furthermore, while the pastoral mode is often associated with culturally nostalgic escapism, in Philaster the pastoral provides a site of social transformation, and of the collective recognition of extra-legal bonds opposed to the obligations of state power.

The plot of Philaster is tortuous, but its outlines can be briefly sketched. Wars between the kingdoms of Sicily and Calabria have ended in Sicily's defeat, its king's death, and the ascension of the king of Calabria to the thrones of both kingdoms. Philaster, the late king's son, bristles at his father's death and his own dispossession from the Sicilian throne, but restrains himself from open revolt, despite the support of the Sicilian people. As the play begins, the king is planning to consolidate his power in Sicily and gain the support of a foreign kingdom by marrying his daughter, Arethusa, whom Philaster loves, to the Spanish prince Pharamond. However, the engagement is threatened when Pharamond's sexual liaison with Megra, a lady of the court, is discovered. In order to protect her reputation, Megra falsely accuses Arethusa of having a sexual relationship with her page, Bellario. In fact, Bellario is a young lady of the court, the councilor Dion's daughter Euphrasia, who has disguised herself as a boy to serve Philaster, whom she chastely loves and admires.

Philaster is enraged by this supposed betrayal by his beloved and his servant, and during a hunting trip with the king and his court, he attacks and wounds both Arethusa and Bellario. Philaster himself is wounded by a Country Fellow wandering through the woods, who witnesses the prince attacking Arethusa, and stops Philaster from killing her. Philaster is captured by the king, who agrees to put the prince under Arethusa's custody, and to allow his daughter to set the penalty. Arethusa announces that Philaster will be executed, but secretly arranges to marry him in prison, and Philaster realizes that Arethusa and Bellario have been faithful to him. When the king learns of the marriage, he announces his intention to kill his daughter, but the executions are prevented when the Sicilian people revolt to free Philaster. After the king, frightened by the uprising, promises the Sicilian throne to Philaster, the prince peacefully quiets the rebellion, and saves Pharamond from dismemberment by a band of rebels. Arethusa's reputation is restored after Bellario reveals herself to be a woman, and Megra and Pharamond are sent from the court in disgrace, leaving Arethusa and Philaster to rule Sicily in peace.

The play begins with a conversation between Dion, Cleremont, and Thrasiline speculating about the circumstances of the match between the King's daughter, Arethusa, and the Spanish prince Pharamond. Their conversation suggests that the people have been commanded to attend an announcement at court, but no one is actually present. Dion speculates that the king has assembled the nobles to hear the news of the arrival of the Spanish prince "that's come to marry our kingdom's heir and be our sovereign" (1.1.7-8). Thrasiline remarks that many have observed that the King's daughter, Arethusa "looks not on/ him like a maid in love" (1.1.10). Dion replies that "the multitude" would prefer that Arethusa not approve the match, but that

it appears that the princess is resigned to marry following the pressures of the state (1.1.11-15).

This marriage will mean that the Spanish prince, Pharamond, will gain authority over the kingdoms of Sicily and Calabria, which the present king rules. Dion observes that this will not be achieved “without controversy” given that Philaster, the “right heir” to one kingdom, Sicily, still lives and is loved by the people who have been “admiring the bravery of his mind and lamenting his injuries” (1.1.21-22). Philaster’s father was “unrighteously deposed” from his throne in the course of the war with Calabria, and the victor, whom Dion refers to as “our late King of Calabria,” now controls both Calabria and Sicily. Though the present king would prefer to imprison Philaster to contain his political threat, the prince has been allowed his freedom in order to placate the Sicilian people and avoid a revolt. The King hopes to buttress his power by forming an alliance with Spain.

In his first appearance, the King depicts his virgin daughter as a blank slate on which to inscribe male desire. Arethusa’s youth has taught her “nothing but her fears and blushes,/ Desires without desires, discourse and knowledge/ Only of what herself is to herself” (1.1.95-97). The King tells Pharamond not to be dissuaded by her “modesty,” arguing that her inexperience and reticence of affection are more genuine expressions of feeling than the ready ease of an older, experienced woman (1.1.104). The King reveals that he has called for the public gathering to announce the impending marriage of Arethusa and Pharamond and to declare his expectation of receiving, in no more than a month, the oaths of “the nobles and the gentry of these kingdoms” (1.1.112) approving the succession of the Spanish prince as his “immediate heir” (1.1.89).

In his public address to the King and his subjects, Pharamond offers freedom, which is in fact only an appearance of freedom. The implied metaphor of an easy

reign is that of the light burden. He uses the language of mastery and servitude, promising “My reign shall be so easy to the subject/ That every man shall be his prince himself/ And his own law; yet I his prince and law” (1.1.145-47). The immediate coincidence of the person of the prince and law renders the obligation of the legal subject to the law equivalent to a slave’s submission to his master.

Pharamond promises a society in which the subject can no longer distinguish between his own self-mastery and his submission to the sovereign because he will desire no more than the law allows. The discourse of mastery and slavery was a familiar part of the political language that Beaumont and Fletcher’s audience would likely have known; in many texts unjust and illegitimate rule was denounced for reducing the English people to the condition of slavery. In fact, what Pharamond offers is merely the appearance of freedom masking the reality of subjugation, insofar as every man is free only to the extent that his exercise of freedom corresponds to the will of the prince. The irony of Pharamond’s promise is intensified by his obvious failure to act on his own law (that is, to rule his sexual desires). On the basis of Act 1, Pharamond promises to be a bad ruler and possibly a tyrant.

Pharamond’s unsuitability as the prospective bearer of the law in Sicily is further underlined by his consternation at his sexual rejection by Galatea: “ten such camphor constitutions as this [...]” (2.2.53-58). Here the begetting of legitimate children in legal marriage is paradoxically seen as a transgression of the norm of cuckoldry. Pharamond’s invocation of the constitution of his body (1.2.204) and Galatea’s cold “camphor” constitution refers primarily to sexual purity but secondarily to physiology (so that Galatea’s cold humors allow her to resist Pharamond’s sexual

advances while also connoting the juridical responsibilities that Pharamond is likely to abuse).¹⁶

Dion introduces Megra to the audience, upon her first appearance, as a promiscuous woman who “loves to try the several constitutions of men’s bodies, and indeed she has destroyed the worth of her own body by making experiment upon it for the good of the commonwealth” (1.1.55-58). Megra’s promiscuity is here ironically raised to the dignity of a civic duty, and Dion’s interlocutor Cleremont emphasizes the political connotations of these “constitutions” (the word here, as elsewhere, is used to refer both to bodily integrity and sexual purity or impurity) by replying that Megra is “a profitable member” (1.1.59), where member can refer both to a participant in a group and to an organ of the body. The bodily constitution, then, is inseparable from the ethical constitution implicit in one’s sexual behavior, and from the juridical constitution of the lawful body politic. In contrast to Megra’s uncontrolled sexual desire, Arethusa’s “Desires without desire” imply that, because she is too young and innocent to have a definite object of desire outside of herself, she is an ideal instrument to preserve Pharamond’s line of royal succession (1.1.94). Ironically, however, Pharamond shows that he regards cuckoldry as the norm and legal marriage as a form of transgression.

After hearing Pharamond’s speech, Dion asks, “I wonder what’s his price? For certainly he’ll sell him-/ self, he has so prais’d his shape,” anatomizing Pharamond as one who employs rhetorical declamation for personal interest and profit (1.1.158-

¹⁶ According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) the following senses of “constitution” were in use by between 1608 and 1610. “3.a. A decree, ordinance, law, regulation; usually, one made by a superior authority, civil or ecclesiastical; *spec.* in *Rom. Law*, an enactment made by the emperor. Also *fig.* (Now only *Hist.*)” “5. *spec. a.* Physical nature or character of the body in regard to healthiness, strength, vitality, etc.” “6. The mode in which a state is constituted or organized; especially, as to the location of the sovereign power, as a *monarchical*, *oligarchical*, or *democratic constitution*.”

59).¹⁷ Philaster enters and Dion contrasts Pharamond's bombastic self-inflation with Philaster's noble manner of speech, which reinforces Cleremont's satirical dismissal of Pharamond's discourse as "nothing but a large inventory of his own commendations" (1.1.156-57). The narrative framing of Philaster's entrance prefigures his address to the King that immediately follows and directs the sympathies of the audience toward the virtues which are ascribed to him and which he demonstrates in words and in actions. In effect, the dramatic opposition of these two figures models for the play's audience the appropriate contexts and uses of declamation.

Dion and Cleremont's satirical comments on Pharamond's speech, which frame the audience's judgment of Pharamond's character, thus serve to contain the potentially corruptive effects of the Spanish prince's false speech. The play's anxieties about the material consequences of rhetoric are later figured by Megra's slander against Arethusa and the page Bellario, which sets the potentially tragic plot of the play in motion.

When Philaster addresses his criticism to Pharamond, he identifies his speech as having an explicit movement and direction: "Then I thus turn/ My language to you, prince, you foreign man" (1.1.173-74). The appearance of the play's protagonist introduces a change in tone from the satirical treatment of Pharamond's speech to Philaster's tragic assessment of his oppression. The notion that one may "turn" language reifies speech as an object with material and instrumental properties. Philaster's verbal cue ("I thus turn/ My language") in fact initiates a turn in speech, as a trope (*tropos*) is a turning in language, signaling a shift in mode from satire to

¹⁷ Eugene Waith discusses the significance of the rhetorical tradition in the dramatic works of Beaumont and Fletcher. Eugene Waith, The Pattern of Tragicomedies in Beaumont and Fletcher (New Haven: Yale UP, 1952) 86. See the chapter, "The Art of Declamation" (pp. 86-98).

romance, and suggesting the generic possibility of tragedy in the narrative course of the play.

The opening scene of Philaster raises the question of genre in three ways. First, Beaumont and Fletcher signal their play's proximity to and difference from tragedy through their allusions to *Hamlet*. Philaster is so overcome by the injustice of his usurped crown and of the King's intention of transferring to Pharamond his rightful succession to the throne of Sicily that his speech becomes increasingly harsh. Pharamond and the King attribute Philaster's belligerence to madness. Attempting to limit his public denunciations and to discover the cause of his disquietude, the King requests a private conference with Philaster, where the King initially entreats him to return to his senses and then warns of negative consequences for his continued disobedience (1.1.255-60). Philaster, however, credits his impudence to the inspiration of his father's "factious spirit" calling him to become king. Presumably directing his gaze at the courtly gathering and also perhaps at the audience, Philaster speaks in his father's voice to rebuke the illegitimate king:

It's here, O King,

A dangerous spirit; now he tells me, King,

I was a King's heir, bids me be a King,

And whispers to me, these are my subjects.

'Tis strange, he will not let me sleep but dives

Into my Fancy and there gives me shapes

That kneel and do me service, cry me King.

But I'll suppress him [...]. (1.1.268-75)

Hamlet and Philaster are forced by the usurpation of their rightful thrones to assume antic dispositions; the similarity between the two heroes' predicaments promises a tragic trajectory that Beaumont and Fletcher will, instead, interrupt. Beaumont and

Fletcher seem to instruct the audience on the genre of tragicomedy, leading the audience to expect the imminent death of principal characters resulting in a tragic denouement, but instead bringing their characters close to death while arranging fortuitous escapes. While Hamlet's sanity remains radically ambiguous, Philaster's air of instability and his invocation of his father's spirit are consciously intended to frighten the illegitimate king, and indeed seem to make the King's "soul melt within him, and his blood/ Run into whey/ It stood upon his brow/ Like a cold winter dew" (1.1.294-96). While Hamlet's political impotence makes him suicidally yearn "that this too too sullied flesh would melt,/ Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew" (*Hamlet*, 1.2.129-30), Philaster's self-conscious uses of tragic tropes have their desired effect on the King.¹⁸

Both Hamlet and Philaster seem out of joint with the historical moment of their courts. While Hamlet, who has returned to Elsinore from his studies in Wittenberg, seems to be too modern to be understood by the Danish court, Philaster and the courtier Dion embody a continuity with an idealized past associated with chivalrous deeds: both characters appear as figures of romance. Romance is "naturally a sequential and processional form," according to Northrop Frye, and in romance, as in tragicomedy, the progress of the plot is the locus of meaning, rather than the psychological complexity of the individual characters.¹⁹ As Eugene Waith suggests, in Beaumont and Fletcher's drama "[t]he passions, of which Beaumont and Fletcher's characters have an inexhaustible store, have more real solidity than the characters themselves."²⁰ Philaster and Dion are not the complex, round characters that we might expect in Shakespearean tragedy; rather, they have significance insofar as they

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G.R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987).

¹⁹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 186.

²⁰ Waith 39.

represent the old social order that the current king has overthrown, and that will be restored in the play's conclusion.

One way that this is shown in the language of the play is through the appearance of the word "age," used both in the sense of a distinct historical period and in the sense of temporality (as a principle of mutability and erasure). The play begins with the social corruption that has been inaugurated by the war with Calabria and the rise of the usurping king. Dion first employs the term "age" to refer to the present historical age as he observes the King's private conversation with Philaster:

Every man in this age has not a soul of crystal, for all men to read their actions through; men's hearts and faces are so far asunder that they hold no intelligence. Do but view yon stranger well, and you shall see a fever through all his bravery, and feel him shake like a true tenant; if he give not back his crown upon the report of an elder-gun, I have no augury. (1.1.247-54)

Dion complains about the gap between appearance and essence, or the discrepancy between social appearance and moral nature that renders appearance unreliable, since "men's hearts and faces are so far asunder that they hold no intelligence." At the same time that Dion complains about this gap, he also seems to surmount it by accurately inferring the King's fear and irresolution from his facial expressions as the King confers privately with Philaster. In this case, ironically, appearances are revelatory and the play will prove Dion's predictions correct.

This contradiction between Dion's assumption that correct interpretations of appearances are impossible in this corrupt age and his ability to correctly interpret the King's appearance can be read in two primary ways. First, we could assume that Dion has superior insight because of his internal distance from the workings of the King's court; this critical relation to the court allows him, at times, to pronounce critical

commentary on the social relations of which he is a part. Dion's superior knowledge is not infallible, though: elsewhere he misjudges Arethusa and Bellario, believing Megra's false accusations, and he fails to recognize Bellario as his disguised daughter, Euphrasia, when she challenges him to recognize her in the final act (5.5.98-129).

Second, we could assume the play itself needs to limit the implications of Dion's claim that appearance and moral nature have become wholly separated. In order for the audience to invest their emotions in the play, there must be the pretense that characters manifest themselves through appearances to the audience, even as we in the audience are consciously aware that the actors are playing imagined characters and that their actions are not entirely real. (In the theatre, at least, Hegel's dictum that "essence must appear" is a necessary assumption.)²¹ It is distinctive of tragicomedy, in which the good are recognized and rewarded and the bad are revealed and punished according to their due, that the gap Dion bemoans is resolved over the course of the play where the characters are shown to be noble or servile according to their actions. The dramatization of the play's social conflicts – that is, precisely, their enactment – ultimately resolves both Dion's epistemological problem of the unreliability of appearances and the political problem of the King's illegitimate power.

The moments of recognition (*anagnorisis*) of Philaster's virtue, Bellario's loyalty, and Arethusa's fidelity are not confined to individual psychology, but, fully understood, are social and collective acts of recognition: the privileges of the aristocracy and the legitimacy of the monarch are dependent on the will of the people. This is suggested in Dion's first speech in Act 3, when he responds to the accusations that the King's daughter is unchaste:

Ay, and 'tis the gods

That raised this punishment to scourge the King

²¹ G.W.F Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. Clark Butler (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008) 80.

With his own issue. Is it not a shame
For us that should write 'noble' in the land,
For us that should be free men, to behold
A man that is the bravery of his age,
Philaster, pressed down from his royal right
By this regardless King? And only look
And see the scepter ready to be cast
Into the hands of that lascivious lady
That lives in lust with a smooth boy, now to be
Married to yon strange Prince, who, but that people
Please to let him be a Prince, is born a slave
In that which should be his most noble part,
His mind. (3.1.1-15)

Dion indicts the present age for its corruption, observing that a person as slavish-minded as Pharamond is allowed to be a prince by his people's consent, while a person as virtuous as Philaster, a paragon of his age, is kept from his throne by an usurping king and an inert and cowardly aristocracy. Philaster's inability to take power reveals the impotence and servility of the nobles under the rule of the King. By contrast with the servility of the Spanish populace and the Sicilian nobles, Dion praises the courage of the Sicilian people who correctly recognize Philaster's virtues and agitate for his freedom. A popular revolution rather than an intervention by the nobles ultimately restores Philaster to power. During the popular uprising, the Captain's confrontation with Pharamond is emblematic of the social basis of recognition (*anagnorisis*) in the play:

Pharamond: Why, you rude slave, do you know what you do?

Captain: My pretty Prince of puppets, we do know, and give your Greatness warning that you talk no more such bug's words or that soldered crown shall be scratched with a musket: dear Prince Pippin, down with your noble blood or as I live I'll have you coddled. Let him loose, my spirits; make us a round ring with your bills, my Hectors, and let me see what this trim man dares do. (5.4.22-29)

Pharamond assumes that the people are incapable of politically exercising reason and therefore accosts the Captain as their leader, calling him to individual responsibility. The Captain, however, meets his challenge with a collective voice (“we do know”) indicating the people’s conscious exercise of reason and showing that he is merely the representative of the popular resolve. In response to Pharamond’s dismissal of the revolt as the product of blind fanaticism, the Captain charges the prince with the artificiality of his claim to power (“that solder crown shall be scratched with a musket”).

Philaster’s use of the word “age” resonates with Dion’s use of the word in the historical sense when he responds to Dion and Cleremont’s exhortation to seize the throne: “Friends, no more;/ Our ears may be corrupted; ’tis an age/ We dare not trust our wills to. Do you love me?” (1.1.315-18). In Philaster’s usage, however, “age” acquires connotations of temporal mutability and erasure, as his address to Dion and Cleremont shows: “Y’are all honest./ Go get you home again, and make your country/ A virtuous court, to which your great ones may/ In their diseasèd age retire and live recluse” (1.1.300-303). Philaster applies the phrase “diseasèd age” as a pun on natural age and the present historical epoch. This is a conception of the age that brings only change and annihilation.

This conception of time compels the characters to preserve themselves in memory, whether through the cultural means of physical monuments and textual

chronicles, or through a line of heirs. It is in this sense that we can understand Philaster's unusual request to be changed by the Gods into a stone monument to his own betrayal, so that future ages may remember Arethusa and Bellario's villainy: "Some good god look down/ And shrink these veins up; stick me here a stone,/ Lasting to ages in the memory/ Of this damned act" (4.5.30-33). For Arethusa, on the other hand, the mutability of opinion, which is arguably another aspect of the mutability of time, renders even noble monuments vulnerable to destruction:

Where may a maiden live securely free.
Keeping her honour fair? Not with the living;
They feed upon opinions, errors, dreams,
And make 'em truths; they draw a nourishment
Out of defaming, grow upon disgraces;
And, when they see a virtue fortified
Strongly above the battery of their tongues,
O, how they cast to sink it; and defeated
(Soul-sick with poison) strike the monuments
Where noble names lie sleeping, till they sweat,
And the cold marble melt. (3.2.44-54)

Arethusa laments the fact that not only the reputations of the living but also that of the dead are subject to the mutability of opinion in present discourse. However, if the power of present discourse over both the living and the dead carries the danger (as Arethusa suggests) that opinions, errors, and dreams will be elevated to the level of truths, we can also see in this a trace of the positive and productive aspect of mutability, that is, the possibility of revolution. We can consider revolution as a way of appropriating mutability in human action.

Much as physical monuments express the desire to prolong one's life by giving the memory of that life an enduring material form, so too are textual chronicles used to translate a life into an ideal order of retold historical events. Pharamond promises the King, as he publicly consents to the arranged marriage with the King's daughter Arethusa, that he will offer himself to act as a chronicle. That is, he will remember the King's name to future ages by producing heirs:

O, this country,
By more than all the gods, I hold it happy;
Happy in their dear memories that have been
Kings great and good; happy in yours that is;
And from you (as a chronicle to keep
Your noble name from eating age) do I
Opine myself most happy. (1.1.132-38)

Pharamond assures the King that by fathering heirs with Arethusa, he will prevent the King's name and nascent dynasty from being eaten away by the course of time. Pharamond's flattery constructs an imagined continuity between past, present, and future ages in which he hopes to legitimate the King's reign and his own future rule over Sicily and Calabria.

The King's rapid rise to power in Sicily and his success in unjustly breaking Philaster's line of succession makes him desperately anxious about the possibility that his own name will be erased from history almost as soon as it was established. His very success in overthrowing Philaster's father makes him acutely aware of the contingency of his own reign. The King believes that the punishment for his evil deed will be his erasure from history, as evidenced by his response to accusations of his daughter's unchastity:

[*Aside*] You gods, I see that who unrighteously

Holds wealth or state from others shall be cursed
In that which meaner men are blessed withal:
Ages to come shall know no male of him
Left to inherit, and his name shall be
Blotted from earth [...]. (2.4.53-58)

The King's anxiety about being forgotten by history also implies the fear that the hegemonic authority of the chronicle, as a means of transmitting through time an idealized representation of royal power, would be challenged by the intervention of competing, popular forms of representation, such as the ballad or the woodcut.

The King's fears are ultimately realized by the popular insurrection that follows his stated intention to execute Philaster. While the king cowers, Dion exuberantly cheers on the rebels:

Well, my dear countrymen What-ye-lacks, if you continue and fall not
back upon the first broken shin I'll have ye chronicled and chronicled,
and cut and chronicled, and all to-be-praised and sung in sonnets and
bathed in new brave ballads that all tongues shall troll you *in saecula
saeculorum*, my kind can-carriers. (5.3.128-34)

Dion's speech names the possibility of a revolutionary form of the chronicle. Whereas the traditional chronicle, as in Pharamond's flattery, creates an idealized continuity in the royal succession of kings, the revolutionary chronicle would disrupt and transverse that imagined teleology. While the conventional chronicle imagines historical progress as a homogenous and unmediated succession of temporal moments demarcated by the life and death of kings, the revolutionary chronicle opens history to unpredictable interventions by multiple social forces. The revolutionary chronicle would also be formally heteroglossic as, for example, Dion's speech links the chronicle with forms associated with folk culture such as the ballad, forms associated

with urban popular culture such as the woodcut, and forms associated with aristocratic culture such as the Petrarchan sonnet.²²

It would thus express not only a formal dialogism but a social heterogeneity in that each of these forms of cultural production would denote a specific social or economic determination and a specific stake in the historical process. By including in the revolutionary chronicle seemingly sub-historical modes of discourse, the revolutionary chronicle reveals the political intentions of social groups and social classes that would otherwise go unrepresented by official history. While the traditional chronicle would ensure the transmission of the history of the ruling class and thus act as an instrument to legitimate the hegemonic forces, the revolutionary chronicle would allow the unrepresented classes to construct an alternate history “in new brave ballads” (5.3.132).²³

While the revolutionary chronicle transforms the homogenous time of official history in Philaster, the retreat to the pastoral in Act 4 (as the characters move from court to forest) transforms the social. The pastoral mode allows the characters to purge their destructive passions and reveals the natural limits of the King’s authority. The subtitle of Philaster, or, Love Lies a-Bleeding suggests an affinity in the play

²² I am drawing here from Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia.” M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1981).

²³ Scholarly editions of Philaster take the corrected Second Quarto (Q2) of 1622 as their copy text (subsequent publications were based on the Q2), since the First Quarto (Q1) of 1620 is considered corrupt. The first and last scenes of Q1 seem to have been added by a later writer to fill gaps in an incomplete manuscript, since they diverge considerably from the Q2 version. While few scholars consider these variant scenes reliable, nonetheless there is one variant speech in the concluding scene of Q1 that seems relevant here. After Pharamond’s engagement to the now-married Arethusa has been broken, Bellario has revealed herself as a woman, and Megra has been banished from the court, Pharamond makes his exit with the lines: “Heres such an age of transformation, that I doe not know how to trust my selfe, I’le get me gone to: Sir, the disparagement you have done, must be cald in question. I have power to right my selfe, and will” (Q2: 5.5.167-70). Pharamond’s interpretation of the final scene as “an age of transformation” supports the idea of a revolutionary chronicle (throughout the more reliable Q2 text) as a form of alternate history that transverses the undifferentiated time of the official chronicle that is seen, for example, in the king’s use of the word “age.”

between nature and purgation, referring to the flower, love-lies-a-bleeding, to the emotional situation of Philaster and Arethusa's frustrated love, and to the play's climactic sequence in the forest when Philaster wounds Arethusa, is wounded in turn by the Country Fellow, and finally wounds Bellario. The pastoral locale of the forest allows the characters the spatial and critical distance from the court to rethink their social obligations. However, the pastoral appears in the play as a rhetorical construct, namely, as a figurative locus of moral regeneration, before it becomes literally present to the characters in the form of the forest. Philaster's rhetorical address to Dion and Cleremont in Act 1 anticipates the physical movement of the court to the country in Act 4: "Go get you home again, and make your country/ A virtuous court, to which your great ones may/ In their diseasèd age retire and live recluse" (1.1.301-303). Much as his earlier speech to Pharamond shortly before ("Then thus I turn/ My language to you," 1.1.173-74) had enacted both a rhetorical turn in Philaster's language and a modal turn from satire to romance in the play itself, Philaster's advice to the nobles implies that a spatial turn to the country will be necessary for a moral turn toward honest expression.

The spatial turn to the forest in Act 4 leads to the culmination of the play's tensions. Philaster's misjudgments and distemper are cured through the series of literal and symbolic acts of blood-letting he enacts and undergoes with Arethusa and Bellario, who are shown to be innocent of their alleged sexual betrayal. The pastoral environment allows Philaster, Arethusa, and Bellario to discharge their erring passions through the controlled violence of blood-letting that modifies the humors without causing death. The movement from the court to the forest enables Philaster's return to reason and the purgation of his melancholic suspicion of Arethusa and Bellario as he realizes their innocence. Furthermore, in the forest, political conflicts between the King and his subjects intensify to the point of open insubordination. In other words,

the forest is a place where the characters' deeper emotional bonds are reasserted – where bonds of affective kinship are shown to be stronger than bonds of political obligation.

In Philaster's second meeting with Bellario, Philaster finds him with Arethusa. Discovering the two together, he curses them and asks Bellario to kill him to relieve his suffering. Bellario refuses and is sent fleeing. Alone with Arethusa, Philaster asks her either to kill him or to let him kill her, since "we are two/ Earth cannot bear at once" (4.5.62-63). Arethusa asks to be killed in order to be free of her accusers. Philaster wounds Arethusa and is wounded in turn by the Country Fellow, a good-hearted commoner who witnesses him attacking Arethusa. Wounded and hearing the members of the court in the distance, Philaster crawls off and comes upon Bellario sleeping. Philaster wounds the page in revenge, but Bellario, who is not seriously injured, forgives his master and urges him to hide in the bushes to evade his pursuers. In order to protect his master, Bellario falsely confesses to the courtiers that he has attacked Arethusa, but Philaster, who now realizes his page's loyalty, reveals himself and confesses his crime. Philaster's contrition for distrusting Bellario and Arethusa is evident in his comment to the pair in Act 5: "I am a man/ False to a pair of the most trusty ones/ That ever earth bore. Can it bear us all?/ Forgive, and leave me" (5.2.5-8). Whereas earlier Philaster had rejected the possibility that the earth could "bear at once" both him and Arethusa (4.5.62-63), here he suggests that the earth would bear the two innocents but not him.

In bringing the characters near death without killing them and thus making the play irrevocably tragic, the play hews to John Fletcher's definition of tragicomedy in his note, "To the Reader," in his earlier pastoral drama *The Faithful Shepherdess*: "A tragie-comedie is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is inough to make it no tragedie, yet brings some neere it, which is

inough to make it no comedie [...].”²⁴ Fletcher’s pastoral tragicomedy was in large part adapted from *Il Pastor Fido* by Guarini, who stated in his defense of the form, *The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry*, that the “instrumental end” of the genre was to purge the audience of melancholy.²⁵

The pastoral setting of Beaumont and Fletcher’s play serves as the site of the “instrumental end” of tragicomedy proposed by Guarini. Disgusted with Arethusa and the court, Philaster searches for another way of life in the forest: “O that I had been nourished in these woods/ With milk of goats and acorns, and not known/ the right of crowns nor the dissembling trains/ Of women’s looks, but digged myself a cave/ Where I, my fire, my cattle, and my bed,/ Might have been shut together in one shed.... This had been a life/ Free from vexation” (4.3.1-6, 12-13). Philaster implies that the idyllic life of a shepherd, separated from the larger society, would not encounter royal power and would be undisturbed by the struggle for “the right of crowns.”

Philaster’s fantasy of the shepherd also expresses his desire to become part of nature, as in his idealized description of his imagined companion, the “mountain girl,” who would be “chaste as the hardened rocks/ Whereon she dwelt” and nearly indistinguishable from her natural surroundings (4.3.7-9). Philaster’s desire to fuse himself with nature can best be understood in terms of nature’s indifference to human authority. The insubordination of the King’s subjects is identified figuratively with the natural limits of the King’s power. When the King finds Arethusa missing from the hunting party (presumably on what Dion calls “a little necessary natural business”) he demands that his subjects find his daughter and bring her back to the party (4.4.12).

²⁴ John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess* 497.

²⁵ Giambattista Guarini, “The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry,” *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940) 524.

Cleremont and Dion both refuse to obey their king, neither of them knowing where Arethusa is, and Dion explains that the King can only “command things possible and honest” if he expects to be obeyed by his subjects (4.4.35). In his rage the King argues that his power is absolute, shouting: “Thou traitor, thou darest confine thy King to things/ Possible and honest! Show her me,/ Or let me perish if I cover not/ All Sicily with blood” (4.4.37-40). The King claims furthermore that, if he wills it, his “breath can still the winds,/ Uncloud the sun, charm down the swelling sea,/ And stop the floods of heaven” (4.4.45-47). When Dion refuses to accredit the King’s empty threats, the King is astonished:

Alas, what are we kings?

Why do you gods place us above the rest,

To be served, flattered, and adored till we

Believe we hold within our hands your thunder,

And when we come to try the power we have,

There’s not a leaf shakes at our threatenings? (4.4.53-58)

The King’s lament reveals that nature, identified here with the will of the gods, is indifferent to the power of kings. Dion’s defiance of the King in the face of illogical and impossible demands is analogous to nature’s indifference to the will of kings; as the King comes to realize, “not a leaf shakes at our threatenings.” Thus nature forms a limit to the abuses of sovereign power. Dion suggests as much when he ironically alludes to the King’s pretensions of divinity: “He articles with the gods; would somebody would draw bonds for the performance of covenants betwixt them” (4.4.62-64).

The King’s consternation leads him to plead with the gods to let him choose his own manner of punishment: “let me choose/ My way, and lay it on” (4.4.60-61). Similarly, after Philaster is wounded by the Country Fellow and he hears people

approaching, he runs away saying that he will make his own manner of death: “I would find a course/ To lose it rather by my will than force” (4.5.105-106). Although Philaster and the King represent very different models of royal rule, both characters must delay the fulfillment of their royal prerogatives until they return to the site of the court. This suspension of royal power in the forest scene indicates the power of the pastoral.

As Peter Davison has suggested, the King’s exchange with Dion alludes to the contemporary debate about the bounds and nature of royal power initiated by King James I’s assertion that kings, since they govern their subjects as the human deputies of God, should have absolute power within their kingdoms. In “The Trew Law of Free Monarchies,” first published in 1598 and republished in London in April 1603, weeks after James had ascended to the English throne, James I argues that although a contract exists between a legitimate king and his subjects, they are not equally bound. James I’s opponents would claim that if a king were to betray his responsibility to his people, and so break his contract with his subjects, he could be rightfully overthrown. James counters that:

[...] *the question is, who should bee iudge of the breake* [...]. Now in this contract (I say) betwixt the king and his people, God is doubtles the only Iudge, both because to him onely the king must make count of his administration (as is oft said before) as likewise by the oath in the coronation, God is made iudge and reuenger of the breakers: For in his presence, as only iudge of oaths, all oaths ought to be made. Then since God is the onely Iudge betwixt the two parties contractors, the cognition and reuenge must onely appertaine to him: It followes therefore of necessitie, that *God must first giue sentence vpon the King*

*that breaketh, before the people can thinke themselues freed of their oath.*²⁶

In other words, James I argues that there is a non-reciprocal contract between the king and his subjects, under which the king is only responsible to God's judgment, not to the people's. In Philaster, the King's speech implies the same belief, although only Dion expresses this directly. In fact, the King cannot even comprehend Dion's insubordination as a direct political challenge: to preserve his fiction of his divine election to rule, he addresses the gods, crying "I have sinned, 'tis true, and here stand to be punished;/ Yet would not thus be punished; let me choose/ My way, and lay it on" (4.4.59-61). However, the play refutes the King's belief, when he is overthrown by the will of the people, not the will of the gods.

In light of this, we can move beyond Davison's argument. In place of James I's claim to rule by divine right, Beaumont and Fletcher gesture toward a conception of right that resembles the Stoic concept of natural law, and this gesture is made precisely through the playwrights' use of the pastoral. Ernst Bloch argues, in his genealogy of concepts of natural law, that:

Two pillars support the true *doctrine* of Stoic natural law: the concept of common notions, *koinai ennoiai*, and the postulate of a life in harmony with nature, *homologoumenos te physei zen*. These common ideas are, thanks to the nature of our thought, able to be deduced by experience by everyone. They not only provide the basis for the essential consensus of all people, the *consensus gentium* spoken of in the later theories of natural law (Cicero, Grotius), but they also contain

²⁶ King James VI and I, "The Trew Law of Free Monarchies: Or The Reciproock And Mvtuall Dvetie Betwist A Free King, And His Naturall Subiects" in Political Writings, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 81, my italics.

the most certain truth insofar as they can be deduced with natural necessity.²⁷

According to this doctrine, all people, regardless of their possessions or social status, have the dignity that rests in their access to these certain truths, the common ideas. Thomas Hobbes is conventionally associated with the theory of natural law, on the basis of his myth of the state of nature in *Leviathan*: a state of universal insecurity that compels individuals to trade their freedom for the sake of security under a sovereign power, to which they sacrifice their power to kill. In this mythic state of nature, it would be impossible to conceive of justice or injustice, since every individual would be vulnerable to violent attack by every other individual. While the dominant school of legal positivism, following Hobbes, regards the laws instituted by the state as the only measure of justice, the more radical doctrine of natural law that proceeds from the Stoics suggests that social ties can be founded on affective bonds, and secured by the essential consensus of all people, prior to any state-form.

Dennis J. Schmidt comments on Bloch's study of natural law that "[r]adical natural law can only be founded upon a view of human nature that is not yet closed and 'determined to its end'. Only here, says Bloch, can one find a true home in solidarity. Such a natural law does not domesticate, but rather liberates the human being at its center, and this is the revolutionary accent in it. Such a natural law is determined, not 'from above', from the vantage point of what seems finished, but 'from below', from what is unfinished".²⁸ This radical natural law, legislated "'from below', from what is unfinished," would, when put into practice, explode the

²⁷ Ernst Bloch, Natural Law and Human Dignity, trans. Dennis J. Schmidt (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press, 1986) 14.

²⁸ Dennis J. Schmidt, "Translator's Introduction: In the Spirit of Bloch," in Bloch, Natural Law and Human Dignity, xviii.

conception of monarchical right implicit in the royal chronicle, which takes the sheer fact of royal rule in the past as an argument for its continued legitimation in the future.

The legitimacy of positive law rests on precedent, on the determination of the past. While positive law attempts to constrain and determine the forces of the future by projecting an ideal continuity of hegemonic rule, natural law depends upon the radical indeterminacy of the future, that which is never finished beforehand. The revolutionary chronicle transverses the imaginary continuity of past, present, and future denoted by the once and future succession of kings. It is this continuity that Pharamond promises the King that he will deliver by marrying Arethusa and producing heirs, thereby acting “as a chronicle to keep / Your noble name from eating age” (1.1.136-37). The play’s movement from the oppressive court, to the pastoral forest, and back to the court where the King will be overthrown by the Sicilian people, enacts the transversal motion of radical history. The formal structure of the play thus shapes the play’s conception of history.

The Country Fellow acts in Philaster as a figure for natural affect, rather than rhetorically-determined affect, and his intervention into the events of the play is made possible by the play’s shift to the pastoral. That intervention, which saves Arethusa’s life, also saves the play from becoming a tragedy rather than a tragicomedy. The Country Fellow goes one step further than Dion, who only hopes to limit the King’s demands to those that are “possible and honest” (4.4.35), by dismissing distinctions in social classes as no more profound than differences in dress: “I can see nothing but people better horsed than myself, that outride me; I can hear nothing but shouting. These Kings had need of good brains, this whooping is able to put a mean man out of his wits” (4.5.77-81). The Country Fellow reduces the discourse of the approaching nobles to mere cacophonous sounds (“I can hear nothing but shouting”); he is aware of the signs of social prestige, but those signs fail to signify for him.

The Country Fellow's refusal to recognize the discourse of the court indicates a broader suspension of the force of courtly conventions and the material efficacy of rhetoric in the pastoral setting of the forest. When the Country Fellow intervenes to protect Arethusa from Philaster's attack, she reproves him for his impolite intrusion: "What ill-bred man art thou, to intrude thyself/ Upon our private sports, our recreations?" (4.5.90-91). Philaster joins Arethusa's rebuke: "Pursue thy own affairs; it will be ill/ To multiply blood upon my head,/ Which thou wilt force me to" (4.5.94-96). What Arethusa euphemizes as a private sport, the Country Fellow takes at its literal meaning: "I understand you not; but I know the rogue has hurt you" (4.5.92-93). Similarly, he dismisses Philaster's threat as merely rhetorical: "I know not your rhetoric, but I can lay it on if you touch the woman" (4.5.97-98).

The Country Fellow is guided by his immediate affects, rather than the responses prescribed by the courtly conventions of behavior and speech. His intervention anticipates the popular uprising against the King's plans to execute Philaster, and suggests that in the world of the play, humans can recognize ethical responsibilities to one another on the basis of affect rather than preexisting social conventions or legal injunctions. In the pastoral setting, with those conventions and injunctions suspended, the more fundamental validity of the characters' affective bonds can be recognized, and the artificiality of those conventions and injunctions can be exposed.

"Thou boughtst thy reason at too dear a rate":

Passion, Instrumental Reason, and Republican Virtue in *A King and No King*

Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedy *A King and No King* (the first recorded performance of which took place on December 26, 1611) followed and consolidated

the success of Philaster, the playwrights' first tragicomic collaboration. Theatrical records show that the popularity of A King and No King persisted through the seventeenth century, despite all the ruptures in the English state and the English stage. Even during the Commonwealth, when the theatres were closed, A King and No King was secretly staged at the Salisbury Court on October 6, 1647, although the performance was interrupted by the authorities,²⁹ and on April 23, 1654, a letter by one J. Nicholas to Lord Clarendon's secretary, William Edgeman, mentioned that members of the exiled royal court in Holland were planning a Whitsuntide amateur performance for the Princess Royal, an event that "all loyal persons are astonished when they hear it named."³⁰ On the Restoration stage, A King and No King was popular enough to be declared among "the choicest and most applauded English tragedies of this last age" in 1677 by Thomas Rymer, who nonetheless harshly censured Beaumont and Fletcher for their offenses against public decency and Aristotelian unities, and for imitating the "obscurities" and "blindsides of nature." John Dryden, however, claimed that in Beaumont and Fletcher "the English language... arrived to its highest perfection," and noted that two of their plays were often "acted through the year for one of Shakspeare's or Jonson's: the reason is, because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suit generally with all men's humours."³¹ The enormous popularity of A King and No King during the seventeenth century, the decisive influence it exerted (with Beaumont and Fletcher's other plays) on the development of tragicomedy, and its focus on the characteristically tragicomic themes of sexual intrigue, perverse desire,

²⁹ See Hyder E. Rollins, "A Contribution to the History of Commonwealth Drama," Studies in Philology 18 (1921), p. 284.

³⁰ Qtd. in Rollins 313.

³¹ John Dryden, "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," in Dramatic Essays (J.M. Dent and Sons: New York, 1912) 41.

and dizzying reversals in social status, all argue for the centrality of this play to an analysis of the tragicomic genre.

Robert Turner voices a common criticism of tragicomedies when he criticizes A King and No King for apparently abdicating the moral responsibilities of tragedy. Turner comments, with thinly disguised contempt, that “[t]hematically the play becomes a kind of philosophical pipedream, in which Will has its way while Reason stands by and nods approvingly. Punishment for surrender to the passions vanishes, a subversion of the moral and intellectual code which had formed the basis of tragedy. It is probably for this reason that A King and No King has seemed to some readers immoral: indulgence becomes in it not only respectable but very nearly sanctified. And it is no wonder that A King and No King and plays like it gained a quick popularity.”³² While Turner views the incest-theme in Beaumont and Fletcher’s play primarily as an object of titillation for the jaded audience at the Blackfriars’ theater, Lee Bliss connects Beaumont and Fletcher’s treatment of incest to a more serious concern with royal misrule and misjudgment, noting that “[i]ncest shared with bestiality (indeed, was often included in the term) a sinful confusion and mixing of categories.”³³ Bliss does not discuss what this sexual and social “mixing of categories” might suggest for tragicomic form, although we can argue that the mixing of genres constitutive to tragicomedies renders the genre itself formally transgressive, even, in a way, incestuous. In tragicomic plots, sexual transgressions such as incest are common, while the mixed form of tragicomedies allows for it to remain unsettlingly ambiguous in its moral stance on such acts. While Turner suggests that tragedy typically makes a strong moral claim and enforces that claim to the end (sins are

³² Robert K. Turner, Jr., “Introduction” in A King and No King (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1963) xxv.

³³ Lee Bliss, “Introduction” in A King and No King (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004) 23. All quotations from A King and No King are taken from this edition.

punished and reason prevails, however bloodily), tragicomedy allows for its playwrights to explore more ambiguous moral claims, because its necessary drive toward a comic resolution means that its characters will be reconciled, whatever their crimes or intentions. Tragicomedy's acceptance of moral ambiguity makes tragicomedy, still more than tragedy, potentially disruptive for the established social order.

While the spectacular joys, sorrows, and other affective excesses common to tragicomedy's characters might at first seem to support the critical view that tragicomedy primarily offers sentimental escapism, in A King and No King we see, on the contrary, that the exaggerated emotions and inflated rhetoric of the major characters can just as well foreclose the audience's emotional investment in the play. Rather than fostering the audience's identification with the passions of the tyrannical protagonist, Beaumont and Fletcher can encourage the audience to view the events of the play with analytical detachment, which is the attitude of the play's most stoic character, the military commander Mardonius. The play would thus advance a rational aesthetic, one that promotes objectivity and a careful weighing of passion against reason, and one in which we can see the nascent form of a *sensus communis*, a basis for political judgment within a shared context of debate. The play enacts a dialectical course between the extremes of blind passion and a no less impoverished instrumental reason, and implicitly promotes an ideal of constitutional power based on the consent of the people.³⁴

³⁴ In what follows, I am indebted to Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's genealogies of instrumental reason, particularly as developed in their seminal Dialectic of Enlightenment. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments, Trans. Edmund Jephcott, Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

A King and No King begins shortly after the end of a long war between the nations of Iberia and Armenia. Arbaces, the Iberian king, has defeated the Armenian army by taking their king, Tigranes, as a captive in battle. Arbaces plans to arrange a marriage between his prisoner Tigranes, whom he has led back to Iberia in triumph, and his sister Panthea. However, upon seeing Panthea for the first time as an adult, Arbaces is shocked to find himself falling in love with her, and he calls off her engagement to Tigranes. Tigranes, despite his love for the Armenian lady Spaconia, falls in love with Panthea as well. Arbaces, after struggling with his love for his sister, asks his two attendant military commanders, the virtuous Mardonius and the cowardly braggart Bessus, to help him seduce Panthea, but Mardonius refuses to be complicit with the king's incest, while Bessus horrifies the king by his amoral acceptance of the plan. Arbaces attempts to seduce Panthea himself, and learns that Panthea shares his love, although she remains hesitant to commit incest.

Driven near madness by his desire, Arbaces resolves to rape his sister, kill his advisor Gobrius (who had repeatedly praised Panthea's beauty in his letters to the king), and finally kill himself. However, when he confronts Gobrius, Gobrius reveals to Arbaces that he is not the rightful possessor of the throne. Gobrius explains that Arbaces's apparent mother, Queen Arane (who has been imprisoned for repeatedly attempting to assassinate Arbaces) had long ago feigned her pregnancy, hoping to preserve her power in the court and fearing that the king, her husband, was too old to father an heir. Gobrius had given Arane his own infant son, Arbaces, to present as her own, but their plan was frustrated several years later when Arane actually did conceive a daughter, Panthea, by the king shortly before his death.

After Arane began her attempts to kill Arbaces, in order to ensure that Panthea, the legitimate heir, could inherit the throne, Gobrius foiled the attempted regicides and plotted to reconcile Arbaces's power with Panthea's rightful claim to the throne by

inducing the two to fall in love. Arbaces is overjoyed to find that he is no king and that his love for Panthea is not technically incestuous, and so he refrains from his crimes. Tigranes decides to stay faithful to Spaconia, who has followed him into his imprisonment in Iberia, and Arbaces releases the couple to marry and return to Armenia. The play ends with the imminent prospect that Arbaces will regain the throne by marrying Panthea.

Although Arbaces seems at first to adhere to a set of strictly military values, he is as mutable in his emotions and actions as the exchange-value of a commodity on the market. Furthermore, Arbaces actively introduces financial discourse into questions of valor and statecraft. This is evident in the play's first scene, when, after Mardonius praises Arbaces for his courage, but upbraids him for his "hasty tempers" (1.1.366) and his attempt to take sole responsibility for the Iberian army's victory over Armenia, the embarrassed king claims, "Thou and I/ Have not been merry lately," and tries to lighten the tone of the conversation (1.1.400-401). Arbaces comments on a jewel Mardonius had won in conquering an Armenian city, teasing the commander: "A wench, upon my life, a wench, Mardonius,/ Gave thee that jewel" (1.1.404-405). When Mardonius resists the king's banter, replying that women are not interested in him, Arbaces presses further, punning on the language of tenant relations to suggest that Mardonius has been frequenting prostitutes who are now raising their prices: "Why, do the wenches encroach upon thee? [...] Didst thou sit at an old rent with 'em? [...] And do they improve themselves?" (1.1.411-15). In his critical apparatus to the play, Lee Bliss indicates that "improve" in this case means both to "better their lot" or to "raise their charge," improving being a term for raising rents, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Arbaces's awkward attempt at bawdy humor with Mardonius codes the relationship of king and subject in terms of capitalistic relations: as a relationship founded on material profit and dependence rather than on moral or religious terms, such as divine right. In his attempt at levity, Arbaces reverses Mardonius's earlier claim that, in criticizing his king, "what shall fall to me is not material" (1.1.381-82). Ironically, Arbaces reverses Mardonius's statement that the consequences of his speaking the truth are "not material" to him (1.1.380-82). Arbaces takes values whose worth Mardonius deems irreducible and intrinsic, such as duty and honor, and reduces them wholly to material quantities. What Mardonius sees as use-value, Arbaces turns to exchange-value. Indeed, Arbaces sets a price to Mardonius's life at the same time that he exalts his commander's loyalty when he translates the intrinsic, and presumably unquantifiable, value of Mardonius's loyalty and service to the cost of "More than ten such lives/ As mine, Mardonius" (1.1.383-84). Arbaces's strained attempt at humor implies the erosion of the hegemonic feudal society and the intervention of emergent capitalist relations, a process which, here, is paradoxically initiated by the king, the presumed head of the feudal social order.³⁵

Arbaces's use of mercantile discourse in his private conversation with Mardonius is no aberration, as we can see by his first public speech to the wider body politic in Act 2, Scene 2, in which Arbaces proclaims his military victory. He tells the people that war is the necessary condition for peace. Peace can only be achieved at the cost of blood: "All the account that I can render you/ For all the love you have bestowed on me,/ All your expenses to maintain my war,/ Is but a little word./ You

³⁵ Raymond Williams develops the concept of "dominant," "emergent," and "residual" cultural formations to account for the discontinuities and irregularities in social change. Social change may operate at different rates depending on the specific social formations at which one looks. Williams defines the "emergent" as "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship" that "are substantially alternative or oppositional" to the dominant social order rather than being "merely novel" developments within the dominant order. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977) 123. See also pp. 121-127.

will imagine/ 'Tis slender payment; yet 'tis such a word/ As is not to be bought without our bloods: 'Tis peace" (2.2.84-90). Arbaces tells the people that he would sacrifice his own life to preserve the peace of the state: "And may you all whose good thoughts I have gained/ Hold me unworthy when I think my life/ A sacrifice too great to keep you thus/ In such a calm estate" (2.2.98-101). The conversation of the citizens undercuts Arbaces's rhetoric of victory. What seems at first like gratuitous comic business actually serves the dramatic purpose of deflating Arbaces's bombastic claims. The citizens who have gathered to hear Arbaces are fairly indifferent to his speech: they mistake, for example, Arbaces's offer of "peace" as an offer of "peas" (2.2.156). The peace he offers, however, is cast in doubt by the earlier conversation between Arbaces and Mardonius in which Mardonius asks Arbaces ironically why he conquered Tigranes, whom he deemed a worthy prince (1.1.201-12). But the conversation implies that Arbaces had sought war with Tigranes for his own glory, rather than to defend his people from invasion. The casual banter of the citizens' wives about going to the countryside, presumably to give birth to their illegitimate children, prefigures the play's revelation of the illegitimacy of Arbaces's reign.

This revelation in turn is open to two readings. On the one hand, Arbaces's emotional unfitness as a ruler could be retroactively explained by his lack of true royal blood; in this reading Beaumont and Fletcher would be naturalizing the practice of monarchical succession. On the other hand, the revelation of the deceptions that had allowed Arbaces to succeed to the throne shows the ease with which that system of succession could be manipulated from within the court. Act 2, Scene 2 mingles the mercantile concerns and low sexual banter of city comedy with the high bombast of courtly rhetoric, casting each in a satiric light and suggesting the mercantile aims of a supposedly higher aristocratic politics.

Arbaces speaks to his subjects as if to a board of shareholders, describing an economy of war: the people's expenses to maintain his war have bought them peace and with that profit Arbaces tells his subjects that they can "make the miseries/Of other kingdoms a discourse for you/ And lend them sorrows" (2.2.94-96). Arbaces's language suggests that Iberia's military dominance, which will allow the Iberians to "lend" other kingdoms "sorrows," secures their economic profit. It is this that allows them to keep "such a calm estate" (2.2.101), where a "state" can refer simultaneously to a condition of a political body and to a mass of property. Arbaces implies that his conquest breaks down trade barriers; the "peace" that Arbaces brings promises future returns of profit for his subjects' initial "expenses" in money and in blood. Arbaces's use of economic metaphors, here, as in his earlier conversation with Mardonius (when he introduces the terms of lord and tenant relations into what had been a discussion about loyalty and service), paradoxically desublimates the romanticized values of loyalty, honor, and chivalric glory that are typically used to legitimate royal rule. Here again the capitalist erosion of feudal relations is ironically carried out by the highest office of feudal power: Arbaces openly espouses the mercantilist economic assumptions that aristocratic ideology officially represses in order to preserve its own interests.

Accordingly, Arbaces is reluctant to recognize any social reality that his desire cannot reshape, which is scandalously evident when Arbaces becomes sexually obsessed with Panthea, who he and the court believe to be his sister. Arbaces is transfixed by Panthea's presence which he delays acknowledging. Finally, after being prompted by Mardonius, he speaks to her: "—Alas,/ Madam, your beauty uses to command/ And not to beg./ What is your suit to me?/ It shall be granted, yet the time is short/ And my affairs are great.—But where's my sister?/ I bade she should be brought" (3.1.109-14). The speech shows Arbaces's readiness to construct elaborate

fantasies in order to prevent reality from interfering with his desires. After this speech, Arbaces accepts that Panthea is his sister, but he fantasizes that his royal power gives him the authority to declare her no longer his sister. Arbaces's tyranny results from his inability to accept the fact that royal power must recognize the demands of reality.³⁶

Arbaces hopes to transform nature through the hyperbole of his royal pronouncements: "She is no kin to me, nor shall she be;/ If she were any, I create her none./ And which of you can question this? My power/ Is like the sea, that is to be obeyed/ And not disputed with. I have decreed her/ As far from having part of blood with me/ As the naked Indians. Come and answer me,/ He that is boldest now. Is that my sister?" (3.1.168-75). While Arbaces claims an absolute power in his royal speech that makes no concession to external forces whether natural or social, he nonetheless ends his speech by asking his subjects' consent: "Come and answer me,/ He that is boldest now. Is that my sister?" Significantly, the only responses that Arbaces receives are from the two most servile characters in the play: Bessus, who agrees with Arbaces, "an't please your majesty./ I never thought she was; she's nothing like you" (3.1.177-78), and Panthea, who admits her helplessness amidst her subjection before

³⁶ Arbaces acknowledges that Panthea is his sister but his fantasy that he can declare her unrelated to him seems to take the form of fetishistic disavowal. In Freud's understanding of fetishism, the fetishist simultaneously accepts and denies reality. See Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," trans. Joan Riviere in *Collected Papers*, ed. James Strachey. 5 vols. (New York: Basic Books, 1959) 5: 198-204. The fetishist selects an object that can, in his fantasy, replace the missing penis of the woman he desires; Freud notes that "[i]n very subtle cases the fetish itself has become the vehicle both of denying and of asseverating the fact of castration" (Freud 203). The question of the validity of Freud's discourse on sexual difference is less relevant, here, than the structure of belief that Freud describes. Octave Mannoni has described this structure by the formula: "I know well, but all the same...." See Octave Mannoni, "I Know Well, But All the Same," trans. G. M. Goshgarian, *Perversion and the Social Relation*, ed. Molly Ann Rothenberg, et al. (Durham: Duke UP, 2003) 68-92. If the classic Freudian fetishistic fantasy is "I know well that my mother has no penis, but all the same I am going to believe that she does," then Arbaces's fantasy could be restated as, "I know very well that this woman is my sister, but all the same I am going to believe that I can undo this my royal decree and so lift the incest taboo."

the “unquestioned word” of her brother (3.1.186) and will later passively agree to return her brother’s incestuous passions in Act 4, Scene 4.

Beaumont and Fletcher stage a similar scene of absolutist tyranny in Philaster when the king declares: “ ’Tis the King/ Will have it so, whose breath can still the winds,/ Uncloud the sun, charm down the swelling sea,/ And stop the floods of heaven. Speak, can it not?” (Philaster 4.4.44-47).³⁷ Absolute power claims an authority higher than the strongest natural forces and admits no social limits, but it betrays its claim by its need to threaten its subjects into providing it with social recognition. Although Arbaces hopes that his royal speech can undo the ties of blood kinship, his apparent kinship with Panthea will not be undone by any royal action, but rather by the devices of the play’s plot. By using the notion of “the naked Indians” as a figure of the most distant relation possible between himself and other humans, Arbaces implicitly attempts to place himself above natural law, since, in English culture during this period, it would have been common to regard the native people of the new world as having the zero degree of culture. In this understanding, the natives, lacking any cultural or institutional law, would possess only natural law.

The plot complications in A King and No King arise from both Arbaces and Bessus holding high social offices on false pretenses and due to accidental circumstances, rather than through monarchical succession or military merit. Although Bessus’s subplot seems to burlesque the main plot of the play, based as it is on Arbaces’s social misrecognition, Bessus’s soliloquy at the beginning of Act 3, Scene 2 (the longest soliloquy in the play) paradoxically shows that the clown figure has powers of self-examination that appear to be absent in the king. Whereas Arbaces introduces the language of commerce into the discourse of the state, Bessus’s rise

³⁷ Quotations from Philaster are taken from: Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Philaster or Love Lies a-Bleeding, ed. Andrew Gurr (London: Methuen, 1969).

shows the ease with which social distinction can be obtained. While Bessus is never consistently an object of pathos in the play, his cowardice and deception here are explained by the persuasion of his “empty guts” (3.2.10-11). Penniless in the city “without means or parts to deserve friends” (3.2.10), Bessus supported himself by alternately slandering citizens to entertain his dinner hosts, and being beaten by the citizens, until a cousin of his, who took him “to be a gallant young spirit” (3.2.24), raised a company for him through newly inherited money, and sent him to war in Armenia. There he was mistaken for a hero, after accidentally scattering the enemy in the course of a fumbled retreat. Bessus’s soliloquy, narrating his social rise, is dotted by economic metaphors. Bessus claims that he “will afford any man a reasonable pennyworth” of fame (3.2.2), and he worries that his newly purchased honor will “cost me many a beating” (3.2.35) by the citizens he had insulted, who now “call me freshly to account...by the way of challenge” (3.2.37-39).

Bessus shows how readily courtly values such as honor, valor, and eloquence can be reduced to exchange value, just as Arbaces mingles the prospects of military glory and economic advantage when he promises that his subjects may “make the miseries/ Of other kingdoms a discourse for you/ And lend them sorrows “ (2.2.93-96). Even as Bessus’s language reflects the commodification of social values (as in the case of city comedies); this process of commodification rhetorically fragments his body into a series of discrete organs, each imagined to have its own agency over the whole person: Bessus explains that after each past beating, he would “fast two days, till my hunger cried out on me, ‘Rail still’; then, methought, I had a monstrous stomach to abuse them again and did it” (3.2.12-15). Similarly, Bessus remarks that, fleeing in battle, “I...was so afraid that I saw no more than my shoulders do” (3.2.29-30). This world turned upside down, in which reason is subjected to the body, and the body ordered by its parts, suggests the carnivalesque dimensions of A King and No

King, in which both Bessus and Arbaces achieve positions of power despite their common births and unruly appetites.

Once Bessus becomes socially respectable on the basis of his supposed military valor, challenges to duels from the citizens he had insulted swiftly follow. Just as Bessus rhetorically fragments his person into discreet body parts, he fragments his letters of challenge into their generic components: “Um—reputation; um—call you to an account; um—forced to this; um—with my sword; um—like a gentleman; um—dear to me; um—satisfaction.—’Tis very well, sir. I do accept it, but he must await an answer this thirteen weeks” (3.2.58-62). Bessus’s rhetorical fragmentation of these letters of challenge, which he treats as interchangeable, reflects the process of commodification in which words in circulation become abstracted from the social forms of life where they once had their context. While the citizens attempt to give their challenges distinction by delivering them on good paper, Bessus refuses to let them signify and sees only an opportunity for further profit:

If they would send me challenges thus thick, as long as I lived I would have no other living; I can make seven shillings a day o’ th’ paper to the grocers. Yet I learn nothing by all these but a little skill in comparing of styles. I do find evidently that there is some one scrivener in this town that has a great hand in writing of challenges, for they are all of a cut and six of ’em in a hand; and they all end ‘My reputation is dear to me, and I must require satisfaction.’—Who’s there? More paper, I hope. (3.2.90-99)

Receiving these challenges, Bessus ignores the citizens’ appeals to abstract values such as honor and reputation. The citizens’ words of honor are of value only to the extent that their material medium, the paper on which they are written, can be further

circulated in the market and resold by grocers, radically divested of their original meaning and resignified as wrapping paper.

In an increasingly commodified society, Arbaces and Bessus deny that any unified, morally responsible self can emerge from the mutable social positions and affective states that they pass through. When the lord Bacurius challenges Bessus to a duel, angrily remarking that he is “none of the multitude that believe your conversion from coward” (3.2.113-14), Bessus replies that “I seek not quarrels, and this belongs not to me. I am not the one to maintain it. [...] Bessus the coward wronged you. [...] And shall Bessus the valiant maintain what Bessus the coward did?”³⁸ (3.2.115-21). While Arbaces makes no such explicit claims, he escapes censure for his incestuous desire, his tyrannical speech, and his murderous plans, through the revelation that due to the secret of his birth he is rightfully no king, although he will return to the throne by marrying Panthea. These changes in name and social significations have material consequences: Bessus can be challenged as a valiant soldier but not as a coward. The commodity object, as an object of exchange rather than use, is amenable to constant resignification, and Bessus and Arbaces’s changing fortunes imply the emergent power of capitalist exchange to destabilize traditional social hierarchies and conventions of signification. It is truly a world turned upside down in which a king can become no king, and become a king again, just as quickly as a penniless clown can become a respected commander, or as quickly as a written challenge between gentlemen can become a grocer’s wrapping paper.

A King and No King presents reason as the faculty that, by placing limits on the passions, differentiates humans from animals. When Arbaces confronts Panthea in

³⁸ Similarly, in Act 5, Scene 4, after the entire court learns that Arbaces is no king, Bessus remarks: “Here will arise another question now amongst the swordmen, whether I be to call him to account for beating me now he’s proved no king” (5.4.300-302).

private, intending to tell her of his incestuous passion for her, he explains: “Know I have lost/ The only difference betwixt man and beast,/ My reason” (4.4.64-66).

Without the “bound” of reason (4.4.67), Arbaces suggests, he is as subject to the unpredictable play of his passions as “the wild ocean that obeys the winds” is subject to the play of atmospheric forces (4.4.68), and his extreme assertion of will tips over into the sheer passivity of an object to be thrown: “Each sudden passion throws me as it lists/ And overwhelms all that oppose my will” (4.4.69-70). Paradoxically, the lack of any limit to his will leaves him passive before his will, and Arbaces is reduced to the status of a thing.

Panthea reminds her brother of the moral evil of incest, and regards her situation as one to be suffered with a different form of passivity, that of stoic reserve: “Far be it from me to revile the King!/ But it is true that I should rather choose/ To search out death [...] /Than welcome such a sin. It is my fate;/ To these cross accidents I was ordained/ And must have patience; and but that my eyes / Have more of woman in ’em than my heart,/ I would not weep” (4.4.86-94). In Panthea’s terms, the eyes, by allowing sight, admit desires and passions into the self, while the heart is the source of moral knowledge. When Arbaces meets Panthea for the first time as an adult in Act 3 Scene 1, his immediate attraction to his sister is conveyed through his speechless gaze, as he scandalously fails to acknowledge Panthea’s presence in the court. Arbaces uses a similar figure when he learns that Panthea shares his attraction, and that she “could wish as heartily as you/ I were no sister to you” (4.4.105-106). Arbaces implores seductively, “Panthea,/ What shall we do? Shall we stand firmly here/ And gaze our eyes out?” (4.4.128-29).

This mutual indulgence in the pleasure of the gaze would symbolically stage a sexual act, but Panthea responds to her brother’s proposition, “Would I could do so,/ But I shall weep out mine,” suggesting that weeping may be able to purge destructive

passions (4.4.130-31). Arbaces envies the license of the beasts, lamenting: “Accursèd man,/ Thou boughtst thy reason at too dear a rate,/ For thou hast all thy actions bounded in/ With curious rules when every beast is free./ What is there that acknowledges a kindred/ But wretched man? Who ever saw the bull/ Fearfully leave the heifer that he liked/ Because they had one dam?” (4.4.131-38). Arbaces’s figures of the bull and the heifer suggest the lustful, objectifying nature of his love, but his complaint that humans have bought “reason at too dear a rate” (4.4.132) contains a kernel of truth: the extreme of passionate beastliness, unbounded by the “curious rules” of reason (4.4.134), reveals the opposing extreme of the instrumental reason that seeks to bind “all ... actions” (4.4.133) for the sake of calculated future gain. Reason constitutes beastliness through a movement of self-division and exclusion, much as Bessus’s cowardice works as a negative example to maintain the courage of Bessus’s fellow soldiers: Mardonius explains that “such fellows/ Be in all royal camps, and have and must be,/ To make the sin of coward more detested/ In the mean soldier, that with such a foil/ Sets off much valour” (5.1.29-33).

In fact, Arbaces’s perverse, transgressive passions have already been conditioned by Gobrius’s reason: this courtier plans both to legitimate his son’s rule and to allow the true royal heir, Panthea, to “get part of her right again” (5.4.253) by arranging a marriage between the supposed siblings. This, he explains to his son, was “the reason why I sought to kindle/ Some spark of love in you to fair Panthea,” by sending Arbaces numerous letters praising Panthea during the war with Armenia, and by assuring Arbaces of Panthea’s loyalty after her mother tries and fails to assassinate Arbaces (5.4.251-52). The seemingly spontaneous passions of the play’s characters are in fact incited by rhetorical persuasion, as Arbaces’s seduction prompts Panthea to admit, “I feel a sin growing upon my blood/ Worse than all these, hotter, I fear, than

yours” (4.4.161-62), just as his earlier praise of Panthea’s beauty had tempted Tigranes, for a time, from his love for Spaconia.

Arbaces expresses more than he knows when he tells Mardonius of Gobrius’s plot: “O, the whole story/ Would be a wilderness to lose thyself/ For ever!” (5.4.289-91). That is, Gobrius’s instrumental reason produces and channels Arbaces’s beastliness: as the story produces the wilderness, Gobrius’s rational pursuit of gain produces the chaos of the tyrant’s passions. The play presents virtue, not passionate desire, as truly spontaneous and unconditioned, through the example of Mardonius. When Mardonius refuses to help Arbaces seduce Panthea, he meets with equanimity the threat that he may lose Arbaces’s favor and be forced from the court, telling his king:

I find my heart too big; I feel I have not patience to look on whilst you run these forbidden courses. Means I have none but your favour, and I am rather glad that I shall lose ’em both together than keep ’em with such conditions. I shall find a dwelling amongst some people where, though our garments perhaps be coarser, we shall be richer far within and harbor no such vices in ’em. (3.3.102-108)

While Mardonius’s speech anticipates Panthea’s distinction between her desirous eyes and her truth-telling heart, Mardonius’s virtue arises spontaneously, without external conditions.³⁹

³⁹ The play contrasts the independence of Mardonius’s thought with the enslavement of Arbaces’s reason to his desires and passions. Though by leaving the court Mardonius would wear “garments...coarser” than he is accustomed to, the commander implies that he would be free in mind and virtue. This stoic indifference to material comfort recalls Spaconia’s conference with Tigranes in Act 1, Scene 2, when she reminds her lover that Arbaces “has won but half of thee,/ Thy body; but thy mind may be as free/ As his. His will did never combat thine/ And take it prisoner” (1.2.18-21). Here Beaumont and Fletcher identify servility not with low social rank, or even physical imprisonment, but with submissive habits of mind, much as they had done in *Philaster* with their portrayal of Pharamond, who “is born a slave/ In that which should be his most noble part,/ His mind” (*Philaster*, 3.1.13-15).

That Mardonius's language is not subject to the dramatic irony that undercuts Arbaces, Bessus, and Panthea's speeches suggests Mardonius's distance from the action of the play and his importance as a critic of the court. The play alerts the audience to Mardonius's superior wisdom in its very first scene, which Mardonius inaugurates by commenting on the end of the wars. He then proceeds to expose the pretensions of his interlocutor, Bessus, who has won military glory through a cowardly accident, and goes on to frame the audience's perception of Arbaces by complicating Bessus's praise of the king's military bravery: "He is so, Bessus. I wonder how thou com'st to know it. But if thou wert a man of understanding, I would tell thee he is vainglorious and humble, and angry and patient, and merry and dull, and joyful and sorrowful, in extremities in an hour. Do not think me thy friend for this, for if I cared who knew it, thou shouldst not hear it, Bessus" (1.1.81-87).

Mardonius distinguishes a naïve understanding of the king's courage from a sophisticated understanding that, granting the king's courage, also perceives the king's contradictory qualities; by doing so, he implicitly invites the audience to view the play's protagonist with a similarly sober eye. Commenting in asides on Arbaces's first conversation with his prisoner, Tigranes, Mardonius deflates Arbaces's grandiose rhetoric, and notes that the king's "valour and...passions severed would have made two excellent fellows in their kinds. [...] Would one of 'em were away" (1.1.172-76). Mardonius remains on stage throughout the scene, observing and commenting on the activities of the court, but he is not simply a figure of the amused satirist: he proves his willingness to speak truth to power, as well as to fools like Bessus, by criticizing the king's braggadocio at the risk of his life. Finally, Mardonius is given the last line in the first scene, commenting on Arbaces's speech, "I ne'er saw such sudden extremities" (1.1.514), which indicates that Mardonius's function in the play is to contain and mediate the passionate extremities of Arbaces and the other characters. In

all of these ways, the play's first scene establishes Mardonius's epistemological authority over the other characters in A King and No King. Mardonius and the schemer Gobrius speak in the presentational style much more often than the rest of the cast, but while Mardonius and Gobrius are responsible for most of the play's expository speeches, Mardonius has none of the moral ambiguities that collect around Gobrius's machinations.

While Gobrius owes his knowledge to his deep involvement with the conspiracies of the court, Mardonius resolves to leave the court for a life among obscure people with coarser garments, but with lives "richer far within" in virtue (3.3.108), in a manner reminiscent of Philaster's pastoral fantasy of "a life free/ From vexation" in the forest (Philaster 4.3.12-13), away from the "right of crowns" (Philaster 4.3.3). Mardonius's fantasy of an idyllic life outside the court, however, is closer to a spiritual utopia than the physical Arcadia that Philaster imagines. The inward, subjective nature of Mardonius's ideal society is conveyed through the verbal ambiguity of "richer far within," where "far" may modify either "richer" or "within," while "richer" refers to degree but "within" to spatial interiority, perhaps both the interiority of the self and a pastoral remove (*A King or No King* 3.3.108). The heart, or the source of virtue, is not outwardly perceptible, like the eyes, nor conditioned by social persuasion, like the reason.

Gobrius, Arbaces's true father and the Lord Protector of the realm, plans and executes the intricate political scheme that drives the plot of A King and No King.⁴⁰ In the final act of the play, with Arbaces on the verge of committing murder, incestuous rape, and suicide, Gobrius reveals the secret of Arbaces's birth: Arane, thinking the aged former king infertile, and despairing of conceiving an heir, had

⁴⁰ Like Prospero in Shakespeare's The Tempest, Gobrius appears as a metatheatrical figure, directing the actions of the characters around him, and like Prospero, Gobrius directs others' actions through his control over time.

feigned pregnancy, and claimed Arbaces, Gobrius's newborn child, as her own. Gobrius had agreed to secretly give the queen his child, and declare his own son dead, so that Arbaces could succeed to the throne. Against her expectations, Arane went on to conceive a daughter, Panthea, with the aged king shortly before his death; later, when Arbaces reached adulthood, Arane attempted to poison him to ensure that her true child could inherit the throne. Gobrius foiled this assassination, and responded by plotting to marry Arbaces to Panthea, presumably to reestablish the princess's claim. Gobrius is a Machiavel, but nonetheless a morally equivocal schemer: he encourages Arbaces and Panthea's seemingly incestuous love so that his son and Panthea, the former king's actual heir, can share the throne peacefully. For all his moral ambiguity, Gobrius nonetheless acts as a figure of tragicomic reconciliation. Gobrius presides over the generic shift from threatened tragedy back to tragicomedy in Act 5, as he indicates in telling his murderous son, "Forbear these starts,/ Or I will leave you wedded to despair/ As you are now" (5.4.197-99).

The eventual fulfillment of Gobrius's plot requires secrecy and patience, and Gobrius often draws attention to his ability to defer, to recognize the right moment for action, and thus to control time. In Act 2, after Arane tries and fails to poison Arbaces, Gobrius accuses the queen of being unwomanly, of having "so little womanhood/ And natural goodness as to think the death/ Of her own son" (2.1.11-13). Arane responds that Gobrius knows her true motivation, telling him, "You talk to me as having got a time/ Fit for your purpose, but you know I know/ You speak not what you think" (2.1.26-28). Speaking to the queen privately, Gobrius asks for time to set matters right, reminding her: "I bade you rest/ With patience, and a time would come for me/ To reconcile all to your own content;/ [...] Your urging being done,/ I must preserve mine own. But time may bring/ All this to light and happily for all" (2.1.52-59). Instrumental reason depends on sacrificing the demands of the present to a

calculated future profit, subordinating time to the purpose, and it is not until Act 5, when Arbaces and Panthea's desires have been stirred almost to the point of a tragic resolution, with Arbaces resolving to gratify his desires even at the cost of crime, suicide, and damnation, that Gobrius intervenes: "Now is the time. —Hear me but speak" (5.4.111).

While Gobrius cannot curb Arbaces's destructive passions until the pre-established endpoint of his plan has arrived, Mardonius constantly attempts to deflate Arbaces's boastful absolutism: Mardonius's virtue, which seeks no profit, is not constrained by the linear teleology of instrumental reason. We could compare these two competing models of time, Gobrius's linear time (which moves from a known past to a presupposed future profit) and Mardonius's transversal time (which can intervene to preserve the good of the kingdom at any time), to the models of time implicit in the royal chronicle and the revolutionary chronicle in Philaster. There, the royal chronicle would preserve the imaginary continuity of royal succession, legitimating royal power by presenting it as the unchallenged norm, while the revolutionary chronicle would disrupt this continuity by opening the political field to a multiplicity of unforeseeable interventions. While Gobrius's instrumental reason both secretly perverts and outwardly preserves the continuity of royal succession in the name of his own future profit, Mardonius, who has neither a claim to the throne nor any desire for sovereign power, embodies a countervailing republican principle.

We see this when Mardonius rebukes Arbaces for asking him to be complicit in the king's incestuous desire, on the basis of justice rather than of any positive law: "You must understand, nothing that you can utter can remove my love and service from my prince. But otherwise, I think I shall not love you more; for you are sinful, and if you do this crime, you ought to have no laws, for after this it will be great injustice in you to punish any offender for any crime" (3.3.96-101). While Gobrius

perverts the conventional virtue of patience by allowing Arbaces and Panthea to suffer their present degradation for the sake of a future consolidation of power, Mardonius simply tells his sovereign, “I have not patience to look on whilst you run these forbidden courses” (3.3.102-103). Robert Turner voices a common criticism of the play’s supposed amorality when he claims that, by allowing Arbaces to lawfully marry Panthea and retain the throne, “the tragic mood is completely dispelled,” which allows the play to evade the moral seriousness of tragedy, and to deny tragedy’s insistence that indulgences in passion will always be punished.⁴¹ However, through Mardonius, the play questions the value of power gained without moral virtue, which suggests that the common moral argument against the supposed wish fulfillment of the play’s ending is short-sighted. Once again, the predominant critical temptation to interpret tragicomedy’s ethical and political implications solely on the basis of its seemingly conservative ending proves misleading.

While Gobrius’s elaborate plan to allow his son and Panthea to share the Iberian throne seems, on a superficial level, to be justified by its success, however dangerous its execution, the play’s problems are not as neatly resolved as they may seem at first. Although Arbaces seems to have been humbled by his experience of a degrading passion, he retains his mercurial personality—the very quality that threatened to make him a tyrant—in the closing speeches of the play. When Arbaces allows his captives, Tigranes and Spaconia, to return to Armenia, his gestures of repentance are as grandiose and delusional as his earlier outbursts of passion: Tigranes is promised “chariots easier than air/ That I will have invented” (5.4.317-18) and Ligones is meant to “ride before him/ On a horse cut out of an entire diamond/ That shall be made to go with golden wheels,/ I know not how yet” (5.4.320-23).

⁴¹ Turner, “Introduction,” xxv.

The ludicrous excess of Arbaces's speech is further underscored by the bathos of its ending, when Arbaces admits that he "know[s] not how yet" Ligones's ornamental horse could be made to move (5.4.323). Arbaces's rhetoric of commodification throughout the play culminates in his promise to Spaconia: "we'll have the kingdom/ Sold utterly and put into a toy/ Which she shall wear about her carelessly,/ Somewhere or other.—" (5.4.326-29). Arbaces, blithely speculating about selling the kingdom to buy Spaconia jewelry, seems as careless of his responsibilities as ruler as he imagines Spaconia would be with her "toy" (5.4.327). Although the immediate dangers of the king's lusts and rages have been averted in the play's final reconciliation, we are given no reason to believe that he will be a more reliable sovereign. If we take Arbaces's desire for Panthea, conditioned and encouraged as it is by Gobrius's rhetoric, to be paradigmatic of his excessive passions, then Gobrius's instrumental reason is to blame for Arbaces's mercurial, tyrannical, even beastly misrule.

One common understanding of tyranny in classical political discourse, which remained influential on early modern discourses on statecraft, held that there was an intimate connection between animality and tyranny. In his pretensions to absolute authority and in his defiance of law and justice, the tyrant comes to resemble the beast, and both must remain outside of the political sphere, if the human is understood (as in Aristotle) as being "by nature a political animal" on the basis of a sense of justice and injustice that can be shared with other humans.⁴² One of the most influential

⁴² Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T.A. Sinclair, revised by T.J. Saunders (New York: Penguin, 1981) 59. "It follows that the state belongs to the class of objects which exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. Any one who by his nature and not simply by ill-luck has no state is either too bad or too good, either superhuman or subhuman [...]. For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have perception of good and evil, just and unjust, etc. It is the sharing of a common view in these matters that makes a household and a state" (Aristotle 59-60). "[...] Among all men, then, there is a natural impulse towards this kind of association; and the first man to construct a state deserves credit for conferring very great benefits. For as man is the best of all animals when he has reached his full development, so is he worst of all when divorced from law and justice. Injustice

expressions of this link between animality and tyranny occurs in Book VIII of Plato's *Republic*,⁴³ when Socrates warns his interlocutor against the power of demagogues to stir popular resentment against the free, property-owning citizens:

What is the beginning of the transformation from leader of the people to tyrant? Isn't it clear that it happens when the leader begins to behave like the man in the story told about the temple of the Lycean Zeus in Arcadia?

What story is that?

That anyone who tastes the one piece of human innards that's chopped up with those of other sacrificial victims must inevitably become a wolf. Haven't you heard that story?

I have.

Then doesn't the same happen with a leader of the people who dominates a docile mob and doesn't restrain himself from spilling kindred blood? He brings someone to trial on false charges and murders him (as tyrants so often do), and, by thus blotting out a human life, his impious tongue and lips taste kindred citizen blood. He banishes some, kills others, and drops hints to the people about the cancellation of debts and the redistribution of land. And because of those things, isn't a man like that inevitably fated either to be killed by

armed is hardest to deal with [...]. Hence man without virtue is the most savage, the most unrighteous, and the worst in regard to sexual licence and gluttony" (61).

⁴³ Giorgio Agamben cites this passage as evidence that "Sovereign power is in truth founded not on a pact but on the exclusive inclusion of bare life in the state. And just as sovereign power's first and immediate referent is, in this sense, the life that may be killed but not sacrificed, and that has its paradigm in *homo sacer*, so in the person of the sovereign, the werewolf, the wolf-man of man, dwells permanently in the city" (*Homo Sacer* 107). Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998) 107.

his enemies or to be transformed from a man into a wolf by becoming a tyrant.⁴⁴

Walter Benjamin's research indicates that such a conception remained active in seventeenth-century drama: citing passages from Calderón, Opitz, and Hallmann (among other playwrights) in which the sovereign is described as a beast or as the ruler of beasts, Benjamin concludes that "The level of the state of creation, the terrain on which the *Trauerspiel* [literally, Baroque "mourning-play"] is enacted, also unmistakably exercises a determining influence on the sovereign. However highly he is enthroned over subject and state, his status is confined to the world of creation; he is the lord of creatures, but he remains a creature."⁴⁵ Furthermore, Benjamin suggests, in Baroque drama, the delusions of "despots in their madness," such as Nebuchadnezzar growing feathers and talons, or Antiochus "driven mad [...] by the sight of a fish's head at a table [...] reflects the conviction that in the ruler, the supreme creature, the beast can re-emerge with unsuspected power."⁴⁶

This link between the beast and the tyrant is implied throughout *A King and No King*. Beaumont and Fletcher present this relation in paradigmatic form in the play's first scene—when Mardonius criticizes Arbaces's boasting, the king responds with indignation: "Talked enough!/ While you confine my words, by heaven and earth,/ I were much better be a king of beasts/ Than such a people.—If I had not

⁴⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 2nd ed., trans. G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992) Book VIII, 565d-566, p. 236.

⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977) 85. Benjamin describes *Trauerspiel* as a form of Baroque drama that bears a superficial resemblance to classical tragedy (focusing as it does on the physical and mental suffering of noble characters, and those characters' destruction by fate), but which in fact deviates from the Aristotelian unities of place and time as well as from the supposedly edifying effects of tragedy (Benjamin 60-62). The *Trauerspiel*, which Benjamin derives from medieval morality plays (76-78), takes the sufferings of rulers as its subject matter, with the martyr-drama and the tyrant-drama representing its two extreme poles (69). Benjamin argues that while classical tragedy is concerned with myth, *Trauerspiel* has a more direct relation to history (62).

⁴⁶ Benjamin, *German Tragic Drama*, 86.

patience/ Above a god, I should be called a tyrant/ Throughout the world. [...] Let me hear thee speak again/ And thou art earth again” (1.1.232-39). Arbaces, that is, would prefer to be “a king of beasts,” as violent and voiceless as the animals he dominates, than rule over human subjects, who have the ability to “confine [his] words” by speaking back. Accordingly, Arbaces’s next threat is to execute Mardonius for insubordination (“Let me hear thee speak again/ And thou art earth again”), as if to reduce the role of the sovereign (as it will later be elaborated in the Hobbesian understanding of sovereign power) to the minimal form of the power to make die and let live.⁴⁷ Arbaces conceives of the state of nature as a state of total freedom from social or ethical constraint; for Arbaces, by submitting to the incest taboo and other social laws, “Accursèd man” has bought “reason at too dear a rate” (4.4.131-32).

Tyranny, then, would be a condition of animal license in a position of sovereign power. When Arbaces recoils from the amoral servility of Bessus, who offers to help the king seduce his sister and murder his mother, Arbaces blames the passivity of his subjects for his own planned misdeeds, and threatens to turn Bessus

⁴⁷ See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction (concluding chapter on biopolitics), and Agamben, Homo Sacer, 106. Michel Foucault notes that in the classical conception of sovereign power, “The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or to refrain from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right that was formulated as the ‘power of life and death’ was in reality the ability to *take* life or *let* live” (Foucault 136). Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978). In Homo Sacer, Giorgio Agamben credits Michel Foucault (in The History of Sexuality) and Hannah Arendt (in her analysis of labor in The Human Condition) with developing the concept of biopolitics (Agamben 3-4), while Agamben hopes to develop their analyses further through Walter Benjamin’s concept of bare life (7-9). Benjamin sketches out the concept of bare life through a series of remarks in his early essays “Fate and Character” and “Critique of Violence.” Agamben links the concept of bare life further through his analysis of the “sovereign ban” (in which a subject is both excluded from a social body and included through that act of exclusion) (28-29) and of the figure of *homo sacer*, a figure in Roman law who can be killed but not sacrificed, and who is thus constantly subject to the threat of violence and excluded from the social order (71-74 and *passim*). See Walter Benjamin, “Fate and Character,” trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Selected Writings, Vol. 1: 1913-1926, 4 vols., ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael J. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996) 201-206. See also Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Selected Writings, Vol. 1: 1913-1926, pp. 236-52. See also Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1998) 79-135.

out of the court: “If there were no such instruments as thou,/ We kings could never act such wicked deeds./ Seek out a man that mocks divinity,/ That breaks each precept, both of God’s and man’s/ And Nature’s too, and does it without lust,/ Merely because it is law and good,/ And live with him, for him thou canst not spoil./ Away, I say!—” (3.3.186-93). Here, the correlative power Arbaces attributes to Bessus suggests that there may be a more reciprocal power relationship between the sovereign and his subjects than Arbaces’s absolutism can typically admit.

Ironically, then, Arbaces’s speech implicitly supports Mardonius’s republican sentiments, and recalls Dion’s criticism of the Spanish people in *Philaster* for passively acquiescing to Pharamond’s power, “who, but that people/ Please to let him be a Prince, is born a slave/ In that which should be his most noble part,/ His mind” (*Philaster* 3.1.12-15). The received idea that Beaumont and Fletcher’s drama is fundamentally royalist in its sympathies is complicated by the prominence the playwrights give in *A King and No King* and *Philaster* to the commentary of Mardonius and Dion (respectively) who, while they act as advisors to Arbaces and *Philaster*, nonetheless suggest that royal power should be founded in the consent of the people and, further, that political passivity among the people is an invitation to tyranny. As Mardonius wryly notes when Arbaces learns of the illegitimacy of his rule, “Indeed, ’twere well for you/ If you might be a little less obeyed” (5.4.269-70).

Protesting against the social barriers to his incestuous desires, Arbaces asks, “What is there that acknowledges a kindred/ But wretched man?” (4.4.135-36). Acknowledgment, as an act of social recognition closely linked to that of consent, is often at issue in *A King and No King*. Within the play, acknowledgment acts as a cultural supplement to the natural relation of blood kinship—only man would need to acknowledge kindred—and it thus has a key function in regulating lines of inheritance

and royal succession.⁴⁸ When Arbaces scandalously fails to acknowledge or speak to Panthea in Act 3, Scene 1, out of shock at his desire for his sister and out of fear of the consequences of this desire, Panthea is terrified: “By the same power/ You make my blood a stranger unto yours/ You may command me dead, and so much love/ A stranger may importune, pray you, do./ If this request appear too much to grant,/ Adopt me of some other family/ [...], else I shall live/ Like sinful issues that are left in streets/ By their regardless mothers, and no name/ Will be found for me” (3.1.180-89). In other words, Panthea claims to prefer an officially sanctioned death to existence with “no name” outside the recognized social order (3.1.188). Even more jarringly, she claims that it would be better to be killed by one’s brother than to be adopted by “some other family” (3.1.185).

If we take Panthea’s bombastic rhetoric at its literal meaning, Panthea can only think of social relations in terms of blood kinship, not political fraternity or contractual agreements.⁴⁹ Tigranes is overcome with desire for Panthea and pity for her affront, and despite his existing ties to Spaconia, offers to acknowledge Panthea through marriage: “Can you want owning?/ [...] Acknowledge yourself mine—/ [...] And then see if you want an owner. / [...] Nations shall own you for their queen” (3.1.233-

⁴⁸ In A King and No King, blood ties appear as a corrupt form of social organization, compared to the seemingly more abstract but ultimately more stable form of social relations implicit in Tigranes’s appeal to the “law of nature and of nations” (3.1.253). Similarly, in Philaster, as I have argued, moments of individual *anagnorisis* or recognition are subordinated to acts of collective or social recognition.

⁴⁹ Lee Bliss, the editor of the Revels edition, argues (with reference to Panthea’s speech at 3.1.62-68) that “Panthea here matches Arbaces in extreme rhetoric that verges on the ridiculous, a technique of characterisation that conveys their youthful innocence as romance protagonists while ensuring the audience’s emotional disengagement from either their joy or their anguish” (“Introduction,” A King and No King, 101fn). We could compare Beaumont and Fletcher’s use of this extreme bombast to Bertolt Brecht’s use of “alienation effects” [*Verfremdungseffekte*] in his drama to interrupt the audience’s tendency towards empathy with the characters of the play, and thus to encourage a politically critical cast of mind in the audience. See Bertolt Brecht, “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting,” trans. John Willett, in Brecht on Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964) 91-99. See also Walter Benjamin, “What is the Epic Theater? (II),” trans. Harry Zohn, in Selected Writings, Vol. 4: 1938-1940, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003) 302-307.

37). Beaumont and Fletcher again link acknowledgment to blood kinship, here mediated through marriage. Earlier in the scene, Arane tells Arbaces, who has recently survived his mother's most recent attempt to assassinate him, that she has come to the court "Only to show my duty and acknowledge/ My sorrow for my sins [...]" (3.1.57-58). Her show of penance thus serves to acknowledge her maternal identity once more, as Arbaces acknowledges when he raises her from her bow. Finally, Arbaces shifts from his murderous rage toward Gobrius to "the obedience of a child" (5.4.186) once Gobrius offers to "bring comfort" (5.4.185) to his son by explaining Arbaces's past: kneeling and sheathing his sword, the king implores Gobrius, "Good father, speak; I do acknowledge you,/ So you bring comfort" (5.4.187-88).

Arbaces's baffling gesture of obedience to Gobrius for the sake of "comfort," at the play's climax, is prefigured by the play's first scene, in which Arbaces expresses his anguish at Gobrius's report of the queen's plot against him: "What will the world/ Conceive of me? With what unnatural sins/ Will they suppose me laden, when my life/ Is sought by her who gave it to the world?! *But yet he writes me comfort here. My sister,/ He says, is grown in beauty and in grace [...]*" (1.1.488-93, my italics). The "comfort" that Gobrius sends to the king will also, paradoxically, create the king's suffering by inciting his desire for his sister. This passage suggests the difficulty of deciding whether Arbaces himself is monstrous or whether his family relations, instead, are truly unnatural.

Throughout the play, acknowledgment is invoked to socially code ties of blood kinship, or to constitute those ties through marriage. Yet all of these instances occur under notably perverse circumstances: Arbaces refuses to acknowledge Panthea, Tigranes offers to acknowledge Panthea through marriage and risks disowning Spaconia, Arane acknowledges her role as mother only after failing to kill her son, and

Arbaces acknowledges Gobrius's paternal authority at the promise of "comfort" from the man he had promised to kill. Far from confirming the validity of natural kinship as the foundation for political institutions (ensuring the connection between *oikonomia* and *polis*), A King and No King presents the family as a site of corruption. One may argue that the play confirms the notion that the moral integrity and social order of the family is indicative of the larger political organization of the state and that, therefore, tyranny in the *polis* is only the logical consequence of the moral degradation of the *oikos* in the play. Furthermore, the play also seems to reward bad behavior by allowing Arbaces to regain power after he has been found to be no true king.⁵⁰ Michael Neill, for example, argues that A King and No King upholds a "libertine skepticism" in which "[m]en finally *are* nothing more than sophisticated beasts."⁵¹ However, these charges against the play's supposed conservatism or apolitical misanthropy overlook its specific critique of monarchy.

The play shows the mechanisms of royal succession to have failed, leaving Arbaces on the throne despite his intemperance, tyranny, and illegitimacy, but this expresses a subterranean current of republican thought rather than any abstract disgust with human nature. Arbaces, as we have said, blames "such instruments" (3.3.186) as his subject Bessus for making kings capable of their "wicked deeds" (3.3.187), implying that a ruler's power is always dependent on the willingness of subjects to carry out the royal will. Tigranes upholds "the law of nature and of nations" in asserting his right, even as a prisoner, to defy Arbaces, suggesting the validity of extraterritorial laws above the rights of any single sovereign (3.1.253). Finally, Mardonius suggests that there should be a constitutional basis for royal authority when

⁵⁰ However, Beaumont and Fletcher are not reluctant to punish bad kings, for in The Maid's Tragedy the price of tyranny is regicide.

⁵¹ Michael Neill, "The Defence of Contraries: Skeptical Paradox in A King and No King," Studies in English Literature 21.2 (1981), 332.

he refuses to help Arbaces act on his incestuous desire, telling the king, “if you do this crime, you ought to have no laws, for after this it will be great injustice in you to punish any offender for any crime” (3.3.99-101).

In contrast to the scenes of acknowledgment discussed earlier, these scenes imply the presence of another kind of political body, authorized not by blood kinship but by a constitutional order in which a king’s power has no transcendental guarantee, but must depend on the will of the people, and so is subject to the consensus of the law of nations. The ending of A King and No King, in which Arbaces regains his authority, shows that if such a reckless and illegitimate person as Arbaces could be king, monarchy violates its own mechanisms of legitimation (hereditary succession) and is itself a corrupt institution.

Despite their reputations as royalist entertainments, both Philaster and A King and No King have disquieting implications for an absolutist ideology, such as James’s, that would identify the will of the king with the binding reality of the law. In Philaster, the Country Fellow’s intervention against Philaster’s jealous madness suggests that established royal authority can be challenged by the spontaneity of natural affect, while the play’s recourse to the pastoral suggests that affective bonds can repair the corruption of pre-established social conventions. In A King and No King, the stoic advisor Mardonius and the captive king Tigranes suggest the necessity of a “law of nature and of nations” that would stand higher than the authority of any single ruler, and would act as a counterweight to Arbaces’s tyranny. Both plays thus gesture toward the possibility of international laws that could limit the absolutist claims by the rulers of nations. Both Philaster and A King and No King, for the most part, contain the complexities of international relations within the sphere of the court.

For example, in A King and No King, the war between Iberia and Armenia has already been decided by the start of the play, and Arbaces's victorious return to Iberia allows him to slide into his quasi-incestuous obsession. Similarly, in *Philaster*, the war between Sicily and Calabria has already brought the Calabrian king to the Sicilian throne by the beginning of the play, as Philaster rails against the domestic usurper. As we shall see, however, in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, however, the affairs of the Judean court are still more decisively inscribed within the wider geopolitical—imperial—frame of Roman politics, which sustains the reign of the tyrant Herod on its periphery, even as the Roman Republic decays into Empire with the consolidation of power under Octavian. Accordingly, Cary's play gives us a clearer view of the relationship between empire, race, and gender, as both personal and national identities are negotiated in the flux of international commerce.

“The world’s commanding mistress”:

Race, Gender, and Empire in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*

Elizabeth Cary’s closet drama The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry, written sometime between 1603 and 1612 and published in 1613, is distinguished by being the first original English play known to have been written by a woman.¹ While The Tragedy of Mariam had been largely forgotten by the twentieth century,² it has received increasingly extensive and rigorous critical attention in the past two decades, in large part because of the pioneering efforts of feminist scholars. Cary’s work was published in a time when women’s public speech was condemned as a form of unchastity and license. Accordingly, feminist scholarship often analyzes The Tragedy of Mariam as a text that responds to the gender discourses of its time, particularly the patriarchal claim that women’s bodies are the property of men. The nature of that response is by no means obvious or uncontroversial. As Margaret W. Ferguson writes, “*Mariam* seems at times to mount a radical attack on the Renaissance concept of the wife as the property of her husband; but the play also seems—or has seemed to some of its readers, both feminist and nonfeminist—to justify, even to advocate, a highly conservative doctrine of female obedience to male authority.”³ A

¹ Cary’s publication of The Tragedy of Mariam is all the more remarkable in that only six books by women (among which just three were first editions) were published in England between 1611 and 1615, according to Richard Bell and Patricia Crawford. See Bell and Crawford, “Statistical Analysis of Women’s Printed Writings 1600-1700,” in Women in English Society 1500-1800, Ed. Mary Prior (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) 265.

² Cary is never mentioned in Virginia Woolf’s pathbreaking work of feminist criticism, A Room of One’s Own, for example, despite Woolf’s interest in the socioeconomic conditions that stifled early modern women’s writing. See Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own (London: Hogarth Press, 1929).

³ Margaret W. Ferguson, “Running On with Almost Public Voice: The Case of ‘E.C.’,” in Tradition and the Talents of Women, Ed. Florence Howe (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). Ferguson provides an illuminating biographical account of Cary’s life and the text of Mariam. See also Ferguson and Weller’s “Introduction” to Cary’s life and work: Margaret W. Ferguson and Barry Weller,

number of critics have approached the central problem of closeted female speech in Cary's closet drama by examining the biographical resonances between The Tragedy of Mariam and The Lady Falkland Her Life, a biography of Cary written by one of her daughters (who oddly mentions nothing about Cary's authorship of Mariam). The Tragedy of Mariam tells the story of the turbulent and eventually fatal marriage between the princess Mariam and Herod, made King of Judea by violent intrigue and Roman consent. (Historically, Mariam married Herod around 42 B.C.) Cary's main source for the story is a 1602 English translation by Thomas Lodge of Josephus's Jewish Antiquities (written in Greek around 93 A.D.).⁴ Margaret Ferguson conjectures that Cary, a devout Catholic, may have been drawn to Josephus's work because his account of Jewish oppression under Roman imperial rule gave her an allegorical means to comment on Catholic oppression under the Protestant English state.⁵ Elizabeth Cary's marriage to Sir Henry Cary, later the Viscount Falkland, is known to have been troubled by Sir Henry's distaste for his wife's Catholic devotions and her 'public' speech, and many biographically-focused critics interpret Mariam's persecution for her public discourse as Cary's reflection on this conflict.

"Introduction" in The Tragedy of Mariam: The Fair Queen of Jewry, Ed. Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁴ Betty Travitsky stresses Cary's immersion in her historical materials and her "ability to accept a situation on its own terms: there are no anachronisms, no Christianization of the Jewish scene. Rather, as in the case of Salome's divorce, there is an understanding of the position of the woman who wanted to sue for divorce under Jewish law" (Travitsky 215). Betty Travitsky, "Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary (1585-1639), in The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance, Ed. Betty Travitsky (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

⁵ Ferguson and Weller, "Introduction" in The Tragedy of Mariam, p. 18. Paul Salzman provides a useful overview of Cary's life and the existing critical editions of Mariam, as well as a general overview of scholarly criticism of Cary. See Paul Salzman, Reading Early Modern Women's Writing (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 148-51. Nancy Cotton Pearse examines biographical details of Cary's life in relation to the composition of Mariam. See Nancy Cotton Pearse, "Elizabeth Cary, Renaissance Playwright." Texas Studies in Language and Literature 18 (1977): 601-8.

The Tragedy of Mariam is as much noted for its generic form as a closet drama as it is for its thematic treatment of women's speech and ideology, and this is precisely because these formal and thematic threads are so closely interwoven in Cary's text.⁶ If Cary's culture held women's public speech to be tantamount to sexual transgression, the closet drama, an aristocratic form which by definition is not intended for public performance, helped Cary to negotiate her authorial position despite the danger of patriarchal censure. Cary's social predicament as a wealthy lawyer's only daughter,

⁶ Karen Raber and Marta Straznicky have done important research on women's closet drama, including Cary's Mariam. Regarding sixteenth and seventeenth century English closet dramas, specifically, Karen Raber observes that "The only thing all closet plays appear to share is class affiliation. Not all are written by aristocrats, but all demonstrate a sympathy with elite literary forms and elite class pursuits" (Raber 17). Raber's work attempts to recuperate the closet drama as an important moment in the development of early modern English drama, against the dominant view that, in the words of T.S. Eliot, "the history of this type of play belongs rather to the history of scholarship and culture than to the history of the Drama" (qtd. in Raber 26). Raber argues that closet drama's distance from "the stage, that is from the physical and conceptual space of the theater," gives it an unique critical perspective on the forms of power that underwrite dramatic practices: "Drama, abstracted from performance, becomes a study of the ideological conditions and limitations that produce dramatic form itself" (Raber 26-27). See Karen Raber, Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001). Like Raber, Marta Straznicky examines women's closet drama in relation to stage drama, and Straznicky's work demonstrates the importance of understanding closet drama as a part of broader theatrical tradition. Analyzing the categories of privacy and publicity evoked by the distinction between the closet drama and stage drama, Straznicky argues that "closet drama—unlike commercial theatre—focuses the tensions and points of contact between public and private realms in a way that simultaneously involves retreat and engagement in public culture" (Straznicky, Privacy, p. 3). Straznicky's work demonstrates the significance of preserving "the category of privacy" in the examination of women's closet drama, and through her analysis of "the overlapping discourses of play publishing and antitheatricality" in women's closet drama, Straznicky articulates how: "private space can be construed as the site of theatrical display, both literally and metaphorically, and that playreading in turn intersects with social and political economies. Most importantly, the crossover between closet and stage, between solitary reading and political engagement, between print and performance reveals the adaptability of privacy to a variety of social, political, and economic agendas" (Straznicky, Privacy, p. 3, 4). See Marta Straznicky, Privacy, Playreading, and Women Closet Drama, 1550-1700 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Like Straznicky, Margaret Ferguson argues that the boundary between public and private domains of speech were ambiguous in this period, and that the closet drama "need not have lacked either the ambition or the power to comment on public affairs in a politically significant way" simply because of its private nature (Dido's Daughters 288). See Margaret W. Ferguson, Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

elevated to the nobility through her marriage to Sir Henry Cary, has been noted by critics for the light it sheds on early modern constructions of class and gender, two key issues in the speeches of Mariam and Salome, Cary's central female characters. Furthermore, critics often relate the social and political injunctions against a wife's speech in Mariam (expressed most vehemently by the play's Chorus) to the biographical detail that Cary had inscribed the motto "be and seem" on her daughter's wedding ring. Since Cary's motto evokes the tenets of chastity, silence, and obedience central both to the common-law doctrine of the *femme covert* and to the educational practices that aimed to teach women to uphold these strictures, biographical interpretations of Mariam suggest that we may read the prohibitions against the numerous forms of women's unchastity and Cary's relationship to these prohibitions in her play.⁷ The biographical criticism of The Tragedy of Mariam is

⁷ For example, the sixteenth-century Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives links the virtue of chastity in women to their suspicion of public display. In an instructional tract on marriage, Vives argues that "chastyte is the principall virtue of a Woman [...]: if she have that, no man wyll loke for any other: and if she lacke that, no man wyll regarde other. [...] [N]owe shamfastnes and sobrenes be the inseperable companions of chastite, in so moche that she can nat be chaste that is nat ashamed: for that is as a cover and a vaylle of her face" (Vives 51). Juan Luis Vives, The Instruction of a Christen Woman, Ed. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, Margaret Mikesell et al. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Suzanne W. Hull discusses the function of marriage guides and instructional books in the education of English women in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. See Suzanne W. Hull, Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640 (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982) 47-60. See also Ann Rosalind Jones's discussion of the education of women and the prohibitions against women's speech in Renaissance marriage manuals. Ann Rosalind Jones, The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540 – 1620 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990) 20-28. Margaret W. Ferguson examines the common notion in early modern culture that female chastity compels not only sexual purity but also silence and obedience. See Margaret W. Ferguson, "A Room Not Their Own: Renaissance Women as Readers and Writers" in The Comparative Perspective on Literature: Approaches to Theory and Practice, Ed. Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Ferguson discusses the *femme covert* and women's education in "Running On with Almost Public Voice: The Case of 'E.C.,'" p. 40. See also Betty S. Travitsky's discussion of the *femme covert* in Betty S. Travitsky, "The *Feme Covert* [sic] in Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*," in Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Ed. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987). See also Shari A. Zimmerman's analysis of legal doctrines on female speech in relation to Cary and Milton. Zimmerman focuses in particular on Cary's and Milton's conflicting interpretations of divorce and Mosaic divorce law. See Shari A.

useful in part because so much about early modern women's lived experience remains to be recovered, and because it contributes to our understanding of the complex interaction between class and gender in women's 'closeted' speech, as well as the broader political effects of women's speech in seventeenth century England. For all these reasons, biographical criticism of The Tragedy of Mariam is valuable and necessary. The danger of interpreting Mariam primarily through the lens of Cary's life (or even The Lady Falkland Her Life), however, is that we may limit ourselves to scrutinizing the elements of the play that seem to cohere with what we know of the life of the author, and thus overlook what Cary's play might tell us about other facets of seventeenth century English culture.⁸

Although the modern reception history of The Tragedy of Mariam has justifiably made gender a key focus for critics, two other key dimensions of Cary's text remain relatively unexplored. While my analysis of The Tragedy of Mariam will attend to the relationship between gender hierarchies and political authority in the

Zimmerman, "Disaffection, Dissimulation, and the Uncertain Ground of Silent Dismission: Juxtaposing John Milton and Elizabeth Cary." ELH. 66.3 (1999): 553-589.

⁸ I agree with Alexandra Bennett's claim that contemporary criticism on The Tragedy of Mariam tends to read Cary's play "as an extension or expression of its author's own life and struggles, both within a difficult marriage and involving her conversion to Catholicism" (Bennett 293). Alexandra G. Bennett, "Female Performativity in the Tragedy of Mariam," SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900. 40.2 (2000): 293-309. We can see the pitfalls of a primarily biographical interpretation of Cary's text in Angeline Goreau's anthology The Whole Duty of a Woman, in which the Chorus's speech in Act III of The Tragedy of Mariam is cited as evidence of the "irreconcilability of feminine modesty and making one's thoughts public" (Goreau 13). Oddly, though, this speech is taken out of its dramatic context (although it is printed along with other excerpts from the play elsewhere in the volume) and simply framed as "a poem written by Lady Elizabeth Cary" (Goreau 13), as though it directly expressed Cary's personal opinions: "Chastity for women, Carey contends, includes chastity of the mind as well as body—and that precludes communication of thought" (Goreau 14). See Angeline Goreau, The Whole Duty of a Woman: Female Writers in Seventeenth-Century England (New York: Dial Press, 1985). A recent collection of essays, The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680, draws on early feminist scholarship on Cary and attempts to reexamine the categories of gender and authorship as they have been applied to Cary, by "incorporating critical and historical analyses of her forays into other genres" (Wolfe 1). See Heather Wolfe, Ed. The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

play, I will argue that Cary's representation of gender can be more fully understood in relationship to factors of race and empire. Building on the work of Kim F. Hall and Dympna Callaghan,⁹ I will argue that throughout Cary's play, gender norms and racial identities are articulated through a series of convergent discourses, most notably the discourse of darkness and fairness. I will argue, further, that interconnection between the construction of racial identities and the enforcement of gender norms needs to be understood in the specifically *imperial* context of Cary's play.¹⁰ The tragic action of

⁹ I share Callaghan's view that the subject of race remains practically unexplored in the existing scholarship on The Tragedy of Mariam. Little has changed in this regard since 1994, when Callaghan observed that "In current criticism of *Mariam*, 'race' is a non-issue. The overwhelmingly biographical emphasis of the few full critical essays we have is partly a consequence of the fact that current essays constitute the necessary work of feminist archeology; they are, therefore, concerned with the relation between the subject position of the woman writer and the literary text" (Callaghan 165). Callaghan rightly argues that "'Race' is actually part of the manifest content of *Mariam*," evident in the play's central conflict between "a conspicuously white female protagonist and a tawny female villain" (Callaghan 164). Callaghan's work is situated in the broader framework of contemporary feminist scholarship on early modern literary culture, but her work is also critical of what she describes as the "habitual tendency" of feminist criticism "to take gender as the diacritical difference of culture, and in so doing to erase other systems of difference" such as race (Callaghan 163). Callaghan treats the existing criticism of Cary as emblematic of the danger of analyzing gender as "the diacritical difference of culture" without sufficient attention to the interaction between gender and other systemic power relations; she argues that "suppression of 'race' not only erases important thematic issues, but also impairs our understanding of gender within the play and the position of Cary as a Renaissance woman writer" (Callaghan 164). Although critical interest in Mariam has grown over the years, Callaghan reminds us that a great deal of research on Cary's representation of race remains to be done. See Dympna Callaghan, "Re-reading Elizabeth's Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*" in Women, 'Race', and Writing in The Early Modern Period, Ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994). My work has also been enriched by Kim F. Hall's treatment of racial tropes of darkness and fairness as they function within early modern discourses of beauty, morality, and politics. I will discuss the specific implications of Hall's work for my analysis over the course of this chapter. See Kim F. Hall, Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Margaret W. Ferguson's extensive scholarship on The Tragedy of Mariam, as well as her thoroughly annotated edition of the play, have significantly elucidated the problem of women's speech in Cary's play and in early modern English culture. Ferguson has insightfully built on the scholarship of Gordon Braden and Marta Straznicky in analyzing Cary's representation of empire. However, Ferguson is primarily interested in Cary's representation of the Roman Empire as both a utopian figure for a united Catholic state and as a dystopian figure for the Protestant hegemony that Cary found oppressive. In my analysis, by contrast, I emphasize the continuities between Cary's representation of empire and later imperial ideologies as they function in English history. See Margaret W. Ferguson, "Allegories of

the play, set into motion by the unexpected survival of the tyrant Herod after his patron Antony's defeat by Octavian, depends on the contingencies of Roman power as the imperial center reacts from afar upon the Judean periphery. In turn, the imperial subjection of the Judean court also makes possible an ongoing and unpredictable cross-cultural commerce that renders the borders of national, racial, and personal identity fluid and negotiable. Finally, throughout the play, the characters articulate their anxieties about this imperial situation of social flux through their attempts to control women's bodies and speech.¹¹ On the one hand, we need to examine the apparent paradox (outlined by Marta Straznicky) that in the Senecan closet dramas of the Sidney circle, a politically pro-Puritan coterie of aristocrats frequently took the abuses of empire and the possibility of republicanism as their themes.¹² On the other

Imperial Subjection: Literacy as Equivocation in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*," in *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* 265-332.

¹¹ Catherine Belsey claims that the issue of "A wife's right to speak, to subjectivity, to a position from which to protest" is one of the central themes of *Mariam* (Belsey 171). Belsey provocatively argues that the Chorus in *Mariam* "evades the full implication of the play's identification of a wife as subject. If speech is the expression of subjectivity, and if women as subjects are individuals (undivided) only on the basis of the unity of thought and speech, can speech be given away in marriage? If so, marriage is the surrender of subjectivity, a retreat from the place the play has defined for its heroine into a condition where thought is forbidden, a state of unconsciousness, non-being" (Belsey 174). See Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985) 171-75.

¹² Marta Straznicky insightfully details the influence of the Stoic principles of self-restraint and self-rule on Sidnean closet drama, including *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Straznicky argues that the "material political location of the proponents of stoicism... is one of disempowerment, and the ideal of self-control, self-sufficiency, and immunity to the assaults of any external force is consequently a strategy of empowerment, an attempt to locate the center of power in the self" (Straznicky, "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes,'" p. 110). Straznicky analyzes this paradoxical relation between disempowerment and empowerment in her division between "male-centered" and "female-centered" closet dramas: "in the former, females are generally the embodiments of unbridled passions, in the latter they exemplify complete self-control" (Straznicky, "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes,'" p. 119). See Marta Straznicky, "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes': *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Sidnean Closet Drama," *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 (1994), 104-34. Sidnean closet drama was influenced by the work of Robert Garnier. For a treatment of politics in Garnier's work and Garnier's influence on English drama, see: Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Alexander M. Witherspoon, *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968).

hand, Cary's representation of empire and commerce sheds light on England at a time when English naval excursions were laying the infrastructure of empire, and when the prospect of an empire administered by sea was becoming newly conceivable. Cary's contemporaries debated England's imperial claims, both over England's neighboring territories and overseas, in terms of the proper relationship between *imperium* and *dominium*, rule and ownership. In The Tragedy of Mariam, Cary explores these problems through her representation of race and gender: the racial discourse of darkness and fairness mediates between moral and aesthetic discourses while maintaining national and interpersonal borders, and the patriarchal struggle to contain women's bodies and speech reveals the instability of absolutist sovereignty.

The Tragedy of Mariam begins in Jerusalem, with the tyrannical king Herod absent and presumed dead by his court. Shortly before the beginning of the action, Octavian (Augustus Caesar) has defeated Marc Antony, whose support had allowed Herod to seize the Judean throne. Caesar, who has now consolidated his imperial power, summons Herod to Rome to account for his alliance with Antony. As the play begins, the characters believe that Herod has been killed. Herod had ordered his servant Sohemus to murder Mariam in the event of his own death, but Sohemus refuses to do so now, and reveals Herod's command to Mariam, who already resented Herod for his tyranny and for murdering her relatives to protect his claim to the throne. When Herod unexpectedly returns home, alive and with Caesar's support, Mariam is scandalously frank in her disappointment, and reproaches her husband for his crimes. Mariam is in turn reproached by Herod and even her supporters for her dangerous display of public speech. Meanwhile, Herod's sister Salome exploits the opportunity of Herod's return to take revenge on her husband Constabarus for refusing

to grant her a divorce, and on Mariam for scorning her lower birth. She blackmails Herod's brother into telling the king that Constabarus has treasonously protected Herod's political enemies, Babas's sons, by hiding them on his farm to save them from execution. As a result, both Constabarus and Babas's sons are executed. Salome disposes of Mariam and Sohemus by playing on Herod's suspicion, convincing the king that Mariam and Sohemus were lovers, and were plotting Herod's murder. Sohemus's execution is something of an afterthought for Herod, but after ordering Mariam's death the king is paralyzed by indecision. Salome, however, ensures that the death sentence is carried out. After Herod is told about the nobility with which Mariam goes to her death, the king falls into a deep melancholy, resolving to hide himself from human society.

Constabarus assures the sons of Babas, whom he has secretly sheltered from execution, that he has no need for compensation: "With friends there is not such a word as 'debt':/ Where amity is tied with bond of truth,/ All benefits are there in common set [...] All names of properties, are banish'd quite:/ Division, and distinction, are eschew'd:/ Each hath to what belongs to others right" (2.2.100-106).¹³ While Constabarus's praise of friendship follows the conventional descriptions of friendship, Constabarus appears to describe the ideal social conditions of communism, or more mildly, a form of republicanism which would transcend the hierarchical structures of sovereignty. Constabarus directly relates the social bonds of friendship to their political effects: "All friendship should the pattern imitate,/ Of Jesse's son and valiant Jonathan:/ For neither sovereign's nor father's hate/ A friendship fix'd on

¹³ Quotations from Cary's play are taken from: Elizabeth Cary, The Tragedy of Mariam: The Fair Queen of Jewry, Ed. Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

virtue sever can./ Too much of this, 'tis written in the heart,/ And [needs] no amplifying with the tongue” (2.2.111-116). Constabarus stresses that these bonds must be “written in the heart” and “[needs] no amplifying with the tongue.” While Constabarus’s invocation of Jonathan and David’s friendship finds a biblical precedent for his love for Babas’ sons, his speech also recalls early modern pastoral conventions by associating the communion of shared “benefits” in friendship with the heralding of a “golden age”: “Then is the golden age with them renew’d,/ All names of properties are banish’d quite:/ Divisions, and distinction, are eschew’d:/ Each hath to what belongs to others right” (2.2.103-106). Constabarus implies that this “golden age” is already here inasmuch as the ties of friendship that he and the sons of Babas share renew its presence. The metaphor of the “golden age” functions as a spatial and temporal trope in Constabarus’s speech that allows him to claim the simultaneous presence of the reality of Herod’s court and the ideal “golden age,” and therefore it posits the presence of an alternative community both inside and outside the mainstream society. When, after Herod’s return, Constabarus and the sons of Babas are sentenced to death, Constabarus remains faithful to his vow of friendship. When Babas’ First Son regrets that Constabarus has been sentenced to die with them, Constabarus comforts his friends: “Still wilt thou wrong the sacred name of friend?/ Then should’st thou never style it friendship more:/ But base mechanic traffic that doth lend,/ Yet will be sure they shall the debt restore” (4.6.287-290). Again, Constabarus associates remembrance of services in friendship as a form of vulgar economic exchange.

Despite Constabarus’s vision of an egalitarian and communistic “golden age” founded on friendship, the play suggests that this ideal society is meant exclusively for men, barring access to women and implying further that women are incompatible with friendship. The Chorus in Act 3 asks rhetorically whether women, when they marry,

do not abandon themselves to their husbands: “When to their husbands they themselves do bind,/ Do they not wholly give themselves away?/ Or give they but their body, not their mind, Reserving that, though best, for others’ prey?/ No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,/ And therefore should to none but one be known” (3.3.233-38). This notion of property in the husband’s claim to the wife’s mind and body is supported by Herod’s self-description as the “owner of the pride of Palestine” implying Mariam as his private property (5.1.176). When a wife speaks, she breaks her contractual obligation and risks the danger of unchastity by making herself available to public access: “Then she usurps upon another’s right,/ That seeks to be by public language grac’d:/ And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,/ Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste./ For in a wife it is no worse to find,/ A common body than a common mind” (3.3.239-44). The Chorus warns that if the wife’s mind is not privately owned (“peculiar”), but held in “common,” then she is perforce unchaste. The Chorus advances the contractual rights of husbands to hold the mind and body of their wives as private property; a married woman’s violation of her husband’s private rights through her own public speech is seen not only as a moral violation or an ethical dilemma, but as a challenge to the very principle of private property. In the logic of the Chorus, Mariam has become “common,” a term that carries both the sense of being public and also low-born or coarse, an object held in common.

The conflict between privacy and commonality invoked by the Chorus in Act 3 finds a parallel in Constabarus’s speech to the sons of Babas in Act 2, when he expounds on the qualities of friendship. In Constabarus’s speech the common bond of friendship transcends all considerations of private ownership. Friendship demands public access, and private ownership, contrary to the Chorus in Act 3, takes the shape of base commerce or economic exchange, tarnishing the moral probity of friendship. While in the Chorus’s speech in Act 2, the violation of the marriage bond is

understood as the breach of an implied legal contract, for Constabarus the violation of a bond of friendship must result in moral corruption. Similarly, while the preservation of the bond of marriage in the former case preserves the principle of private ownership, the preservation of the bond of friendship in the latter preserves not only moral integrity but also stimulates the generation and the renewal of an alternative temporality and an alternative society (both existing within and outside of the material world) where all property is held in common and abundance is the order of the day (the “golden age”).

Constabarus implicitly excludes marriage from the egalitarian sphere of friendship because, like the Chorus, he understands the marriage bond as a private relationship (and a private contract). If married women are the private property of their husbands, marriage must forcibly exclude women from sociability, and the restriction of women’s speech to their husbands’ households makes Constabarus’s vision of friendship as egalitarian community impossible between women. While Mariam is like Constabarus in her steadfast adherence to her personal “vows” and in her unfailing commitment to moral innocence, she remains friendless, and ultimately incapable of friendship because she is confined to her identity as a wife and a subject. While Constabarus enjoys the equality and equity of his male companions, the sons of Babas, and even Silleus when he offers Silleus shelter, Mariam’s closest tie to friendship is the figure of the courtier and advisor, Sohemus, who is nevertheless her subordinate and who can only “admire” but “dare not love” Mariam (3.3.212). While Mariam manifests Stoic qualities similar to those of Constabarus, and although she is most closely aligned with Constabarus in her moral convictions and actions, Cary’s play allows us to understand the gendered limitations of Stoicism and the figure of the Stoic advisor-figure as represented in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher.

Insofar as the play figures women as both the private property of their husbands and as privileged tokens of the legal obligations of the marriage contract, The Tragedy of Mariam represents the female body as both an object of exchange between men and the chief symbol of commercial exchange more broadly, of the “base mechanic traffic” (4.6.289) that Constabarus curses along with the female sex, which he calls “the human curse” (4.6.315). For example, Alexandra’s praise of Mariam’s beauty is predicated on her supposed exchange-value as a wife or love object. Favorably comparing Mariam’s beauty to Cleopatra’s, Alexandra imagines that Antony would have preferred her as a mistress: “Then Mariam in a Roman’s chariot set,/ In place of Cleopatra might have shown:/ A mart of beauties in her visage met,/ And part in this, that they were all her own” (1.2.195-98). Displayed in a public space, “in a Roman’s chariot set,” Mariam’s face becomes a space of public display itself, in which “A mart of beauties in her visage met” in the same way that a profusion of goods meet in a single marketplace (“mart”). Alexandra’s praise of Mariam in fact further objectifies her: Mariam is imagined not only as an exchangeable object on public display but as a microcosm of the space of exchange (the “mart of beauties” contained in one face). Similarly, the reification of the female body as both the object of and site of exchange in Alexandra’s praise of Mariam is echoed by Salome’s description of her marriage bond to Constabarus. Speaking in soliloquy, Salome laments that her marriage to Constabarus prevents her from marrying Silleus, whom she now desires: “Had not my fate been too too contrary,/ When I on Constabarus first did gaze,/ Silleus had been object to mine eye:/ Whose looks and personage must [all eyes] amaze./ But now, ill-fated Salome, thy tongue/ To Constabarus by itself is tied” (1.4.273-78).

Salome identifies her tongue as both the object of and site of contractual obligation, which “To Constabarus by itself is tied”: her tongue is bound by “the

principles of Moses' laws" (1.4.299), which prohibits divorce for women but allows divorce for men. Although Salome's tongue is bound by marriage and therefore also bound by the law which oppresses it, the tongue is also vested with the power to create bonds outside the sanction of law, such as when Salome recalls that her tongue had once preserved Constabarus's life: "But now I must divorce him from my bed,/ That my Silleus may possess his room:/ Had I not begg'd his life, he had been dead,/ I curse my tongue, the hind'rer of his doom,/ But then my wand'ring heart to him was fast,/ Nor did I dream of change" (1.4.317-21). That a woman's tongue must be tethered to the authority of her husband suggests that the untethered female tongue would be dangerously wayward and potentially subversive. Salome criticizes the unequal rights of men over women in the law such as the right of divorce for men, a benefit denied to women: "Why should such privilege to man be given?/ Or given to them, why barr'd from women then?" (1.4.305-306). Salome determines that in the face of unequal rights, she must violate the law that preserves inequality: "I'll be the custom-breaker; and begin/ To show my sex the way to freedom's door,/ And with an off'ring will I purge my sin;/ The law was made for none but who are poor" (1.4.309-12). When Silleus greets her, she tells him of the legal restrictions against a wife's divorce, and of her plans to circumvent these restrictions: "In this our land we have an ancient use,/ Permitted first by our law-giver's head:/ Who hates his wife, though for no just abuse,/ May with a bill divorce her from his bed./ But in this custom women are not free,/ Yet I for once will wrest it; blame not thou/ The ill I do, since what I do's for thee,/ Though others blame, Silleus should allow" (1.5.333-40). In response, Silleus seems to mitigate and to authorize the potential dangers of female speech when he assures Salome that he, unlike Constabarus, would not employ his tongue to reproach her actions: "Thinks Salome, Silleus hath a tongue/ To censure her fair actions? Let my

blood/ Bedash my proper brow, for such a wrong,/ The being yours, can make even vices good” (1.5.341-44).

Although Salome’s tongue is bound to Constabarus by the matrimonial “yoke that did so much displease” (1.4.304), Salome’s tongue eventually sets her free: through her artful speech, Salome persuades her brother Herod to order the execution of Constabarus, releasing Salome from her marriage, and cutting her ties definitively, fatally. While Silleus reserves the moral judgment of his “tongue” and claims that even Salome’s “vices” are made “good” by belonging to her, Constabarus rebukes her shameful conduct upon discovering her in conversation with Silleus:

Oh Salome, how much you wrong your name,
Your race, your country, and your husband most!
A stranger’s private conference is shame,
I blush for you, that have your blushing lost.
Oft have I found, and found you to my grief,
Consorted with this base Arabian here:
[...]
Oft with a silent sorrow have I heard
How ill Judea’s mouth doth censure thee:
And did I not thine honour much regard,
Thou shouldst not be exhorted thus for me. (1.6.375-80, 387-90)

In admonishing his wife, Constabarus likens the danger of unchaste female speech, or speech which has the potential to incite infidelity by exceeding the husband’s control, to the threat of political treason. Much as, for Salome, “Moses’s laws” (1.3.299) both ground the Judean polity and keep her from “being the Arabian’s wife” (1.3.298), Constabarus asserts a patriarchal chain of equivalences between family, “name,” “race,” “country,” and “husband”: presumably, by representing each of the general

terms himself, Constabarus can claim that Salome wrongs her “husband most.” In the same way, as the patriarchal representative of public morality, Constabarus can remain “with a silent sorrow” when “Judea’s mouth doth censure” his wife for unchaste speech with an implicitly menacing racial and national Other (“this base Arabian”), and rebuke his wife directly to reassert patriarchal morality when “Judea’s mouth is silent”, to “blush for you, that have your blushing lost.” The exchange and transmission of these affects of shame (with Constabarus blushing on behalf of his wife, speaking on behalf of “Judea’s mouth,” and remaining in “silent sorrow” when Salome’s unchastity is publicly attacked) maintains the cohesion of Judean mores, and allows Constabarus to present the sanctity of his marital right as both analogous to, and necessary to, the stability of Judean society.

Constabarus’s patriarchal attempt to preserve Salome’s chastity and Judea’s integrity suggests an analogy between two dangers: the danger that the expansively wayward female tongue poses to the property right of the husband (as figured by the chaste female body), and the danger that foreign political bodies, such as Arabia and its head of state Silleus, pose to the sovereign self-identity of the Judean state. However, any such attempt to preserve the pure self-identity of the state and the female body is itself endangered by the subsumption of Judea’s sovereignty into the imperial Roman state, which continually redraws boundaries and political borders. Herod’s conception of empire illustrates the protean instability of both the boundaries of the female body projected by women’s speech, and the boundaries of the Judean polity under imperial rule.

When Herod finally makes his appearance in Act 4, he speaks of his desire to see his wife Mariam, praising Mariam’s beauty by comparison to what he deems the less impressive “Roman beauties” whom he had seen during his time in the imperial

capital. Herod's speech is dense with allusions to the sights of the capital, and the visual focus of Herod's sense-imagery is underscored by Herod's unusual apostrophe to his eyes, whom he asks for patience. Herod is soon greeted by Pheroras who identifies Herod's fortunes "With Rome-commanding Caesar," his new patron, Augustus (4.2.45). The comparison of Pheroras's reference to imperial authority with Herod's preceding speech reveals an intriguing tension between two different conceptions of imperial space. While a reference to Rome might imply its imperial satellites, Pheroras nevertheless localizes imperial authority within the city of Rome, referring to Caesar as "Rome-commanding." Herod, on the other hand, extends the reach of empire, referring to Rome as "You world-commanding city, Europe's grace" and to "Livia, Caesar's love" and second wife as "The world's commanding mistress" (4.1.30). In each instance, Herod emphasizes the imperial extension of Rome's power, defining empire not by its center in Rome but by the relationship between the capital and the periphery. The cohesion of the peripheral sites of imperial authority now seems to constitute Roman power, and Herod's language effectively inverts the proposition that Rome is the world, into the proposition that the world is Rome. Mariam's beauty, which surpasses all "Roman beauties," even Livia, "The world's commanding mistress," thus becomes a crucial measure of spatial and power relations under empire.

While Livia's beauty evokes the global reach of imperial Roman authority, Mariam figures an authority that surpasses even the Roman imperium. As though Herod were unable to cognize this political limit or to hold Mariam's beauty in his mind, the king enjoins his eyes to remain within their physical limits: "Be patient but a little while, mine eyes,/ Within your compass'd limits be contain'd:/ That object straight shall your desires suffice,/ From which you were so long a while restrain'd" (4.1.33-36). The fact that Herod's eyes are "compass'd," or framed within the circles

of their sockets, as his desires are precariously restrained by the frame of his reason, suggests a visual limit point beyond which his eyes can no longer 'see'. This threat of blindness outside the bodily frame of the eye sockets could be read metatheatrically, in addition to being a figure for the threat that Herod's excessive desires pose to his psychological integrity. Herod's "eyes" can see only because they are "compass'd," but they threaten to strain into blindness: this tension suggests the problematic theatrical status of The Tragedy of Mariam, which as a closet drama is not intended for the visual framing of the stage. Since closet drama is intended to be read, not seen, the threat that Mariam's beauty represents for Herod's powers of cognition may suggest the imaginative capacities of the mind as a space of theatre. If Herod represents Mariam as an immeasurable limit or an expansive force comparable to the unbounded mind, then Herod's injunction to his eyes to remain "compass'd" would represent an attempt to reinscribe the notion of a stage within the play.

Furthermore, Herod's injunction to his eyes to remain circumscribed within their physical boundaries ("Within your "compass'd limits be contain'd") at the thought of Mariam implies that Mariam's rival Livia can be contained by Herod's eyes, and does not need to be commanded or implored. In turn this implies that the Roman empire itself, symbolized by Livia's surpassable beauty, is itself limited in its authority and territorial reach. In contrast to Livia, Mariam represents an unperceivable limit of beauty and in turn a more expansive and unperceivable boundary of political authority and physical reach, threatening to extend beyond the "compass'd limits" of Herod's sight and cognition. Herod's relief that Mariam has delayed his long-anticipated meeting suggests relief at avoiding such a danger of perceptual and territorial overreach: "How wisely Mariam doth the time delay,/ Lest sudden joy my sense should suffocate:/ I am prepar'd, thou need'st no longer stay" (4.1.37-38). While Herod fears that seeing Mariam may overextend his sight ("my

sense should suffocate”), leaving him unable to ‘see’ the borders of imperium, Constabarus does not need to ‘see’ the physical borders of empire, because he locates imperium within himself rather than in the outward extension of Rome.

To understand Constabarus’s inward turn, we need to reconsider the form of the play: closet drama, or, more specifically, neo-Senecan tragedy. If Seneca’s closet dramas provide the formal model for the closet dramas of the Sidney circle, they also connect the classical philosophical tradition of Stoicism, in which Seneca participated, to the dramatic conventions of early modern English tragedy: Thomas Kyd’s The Spanish Tragedy and Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus are only two of the most famous English revisions of Senecan revenge tragedy. Gordon Braden has made a valuable study of the philosophical context of Senecan tragedy in Anger’s Privilege.¹⁴ His findings caution us not to understand Constabarus’s interiorization of imperium as a merely ascetic gesture, although Constabarus’s misogynistic tirade before his execution could easily be read as an expression of contempt for the world. Braden argues that “[t]hroughout Stoicism the operative values are [...] power and control: we restrict our desires less because they are bad in themselves than in order to create a zone in which we know no contradictions.”¹⁵ In Braden’s reading, Stoic psychological theory imagined the soul to be homologous with imperial hierarchy, representing the soul as “a unitary structure of differentiated faculties inscribed within a single ruling principle, the *hêgemonicon*.”¹⁶ While the Stoic ethic of *ataraxia* [indifference or tranquility] and mental independence in the face of coercion by external authorities may have radically egalitarian implications, as I have suggested in my readings of Philaster and A King and No King, Braden instead emphasizes the

¹⁴ Gordon Braden, Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁵ Braden 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

continuities between the Stoic sage's self-rule and the power to rule others. "The Stoic critique of monarchic power, like its critique of honor," Braden argues, "is only the first movement in a process of internalization, an effort to recreate that power more securely: 'imperare sibi maximum imperium est' (Seneca, *Ep.* 113.31; empire over yourself is the greatest empire). Imperium remains the common value, the desideratum for both sage and emperor."¹⁷ To rule oneself, *imperare sibi*, is the greatest empire, *maximum imperium est*, because the imperium of the mind excludes contradiction, while the spatial boundaries of imperium in the external world can always be challenged or attacked, in fact if not by right. According to this understanding, the imperium of the mind is the greatest empire because it is the most secure, but rule over the self is not different in kind from rule over others.

In The Tragedy of Mariam, Constabarus suggests that the rule of the individual over his mind supersedes the authority of worldly law over the individual subject. We see this when Silleus confronts Constabarus, challenging him to a fight to defend Salome's "unspotted name" (2.4.297). Constabarus refuses to fight, saying that Silleus must present another "ground" for the challenge because Salome is not worth personal injury, and he has already "vow'd" to uphold his decision: "For I have vow'd, vows must unbroken be" (2.4.292). Constabarus's "vows" refers to his decision not to fight because of Salome, but it also implies the legal "vows" of marriage he has refused to violate by consenting to Salome's demand for a divorce. It is evident from his reassurances to Babas' First Son in the previous scene that Constabarus has renounced Salome as his wife when he refers to her in the past tense: "But be it so that Herod have his life,/ Concealment would not then a whit avail:/ For certain 'tis, that she that was my wife,/ Would not to set her accusation fail" (2.2.197-

¹⁷ Braden 21.

200). Constabarus has, in theory, if not in fact, already divorced his wife, but he has pledged to honor the law above his personal sentiments. However, the Mosaic law also guarantees the rights of divorce for men, and it is uncertain why he chooses to privilege the law of union over the law of separation if both are legally valid, and where he has essentially ‘divorced’ Salome already. Constabarus’s strict adherence to his personal vows despite the greater liberty of action available by law (including an option which clearly supports a choice he has already made), circumvents rather than upholds the authority of the law.

In refusing to grant Salome a divorce, Constabarus in one sense upholds the legal institution of marriage, far enough to ask Silleus “Do thou our Moses’ sacred laws disgrace” to give him better cause to fight than Salome (2.4.305). However, by refusing to divorce Salome in the eyes of the law because he has already ‘divorced’ her in his mind, Constabarus places personal conviction over the authority of the law, suggesting that what has been achieved in the mind does not require the sanction of the law. Furthermore, Constabarus affirms the superiority of the mind over physical strength, by offering Silleus shelter when he is too badly hurt to fight on: “Come, I will thee unto my lodging bear,/ I hate thy body, but I love thy mind” (2.4.387-88). Constabarus attempts to shelter himself from the political violence of the Judean court, whose tyrannical king is kept in power by the Roman imperium, by cultivating the imperium of his mind. For a time, he can retreat from the threatening and chaotic world of the court into contemplation of the ideal of egalitarian friendship “written in the heart” (2.2.111). Within the imperium of his mind he can reconstitute a “golden age” of friendship with Babas’s sons in hiding, a secret republic at a tangent to the Roman imperium (2.2.103). We might expect Mariam’s virtue to afford her similar consolations, but the play suggests the gendered limits of Constabarus’s Stoic stance.

Mariam shares Constabarus's Stoic ideals of moral virtue and steadfastness. Although, like Constabarus, she upholds the imperium over the mind against the imperium of the material world, Mariam in both instances encounters the prohibitions of the dominant social mores as represented by the Chorus. Although Constabarus may rhetorically take refuge in his mind as his own imperium, the Chorus denies Mariam's claim to her own body, let alone to her own mind. The Chorus argues that in the contract of marriage the wife completely endows her husband with the rights to her body as well as to her mind, which the Chorus describes as the "best" feature of the wife (3.3.233-59). Mariam may not use her own mind as the basis of her own imperium, apart from her husband and the state, because according to the Chorus and the conventions of her society, as a wife and as a subject, 'wedded' to her husband and her king literally and figuratively Mariam may not claim even her mind as her own. The Roman legal concept of *dominium* sheds light on the assumptions behind Herod's property claim over Mariam's mind and body. This is not simply an instance of Cary's fidelity to her historical sources, since the concept of *dominium* had wide purchase in the political thought and foreign policy of Cary's time during the reign of James I, which it would retain in the post-revolutionary government of Cromwell.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) records that the Roman legal term *dominium* is "variously rendered" in English translation as "lordship, ownership, property, demesne, domain, [and] dominion." *Dominium*, which can be held both by rulers and private individuals, has the sense of both "property-rights and sovereignty": it is not only the property-right itself but the power given to the owner.¹⁸ Yanagihara Masaharu notes that "*Dominium* is usually equated with right over things, and

¹⁸ Anthony Pagden, "The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Image of Empire in the Atlantic to c. 1700," in The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. 1: The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century, Ed. Nicholas Canny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 40.

imperium with right over persons,” but points out that this distinction is blurred in Hugo Grotius, who holds that “the right of parents over infants, or husbands over wives are also classified as *dominium*.”¹⁹ According to David Armitage, the relationship between *dominium* as “private ownership” and *imperium* as “public sovereignty”²⁰ was hotly contested in early modern legal and political thought—indeed, “[t]he problem of uniting *dominium* and *imperium* would persist [...] as the fundamental [...] dilemma at the core of British imperial ideology.”²¹

Early-modern English thinkers derived their senses of “empire” through their interpretations of Roman writings on law. As Raymond Williams points out, “imperial” can be found in English usage by the fourteenth century, deriving from “*imperium*,” for “command or supreme power.”²² As Williams explains, “imperialist” upon its development in the seventeenth century primarily denoted one who supported an emperor or imperial form of rule, taking on a more complex ideological sense in relation to a “system of organized colonial trade and organized colonial rule” in the later nineteenth century, around the same time that “imperialist” came into English usage.²³ In Roman usage, David Armitage claims, *imperium* “originally signified the supreme authority held by a military commander, and from thence came to mean ‘rule’ more generally, and ultimately the territory over which such rule was exercised.”²⁴ In early-modern usage, the sense of “supreme authority” was applied to:

¹⁹ Yanagihara Masaharu, “Dominium and Imperium,” in *A Normative Approach to War: Peace, War, and Justice in Hugo Grotius*, Ed. Yasuaki Ōnuma (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 147.

²⁰ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 98.

²¹ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, 94.

²² Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 159.

²³ Williams 159.

²⁴ David Armitage, “Literature and Empire,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. 1: The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, Ed. Nicholas Canny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 103.

any power that recognized no superior, and, by extension, a political community that was self-governing and acknowledged no higher allegiance, on the analogy of the universalist supremacy of the Roman empire, and its Carolingian, Ottonian, and later successors. It was but a short step [...] to the assertion that an empire was an absolute monarchy under a single head like the Spanish monarchy [...]. Empire approached most closely to its modern meaning when applied to the community of different territories [...] ruled by a common superior, such as the Holy Roman Empire.²⁵

The legal ambiguity between *dominium* and *imperium* in Hugo Grotius's thought—in which the “right over things” (*dominium*) is conflated with the “right over persons” (*imperium*), resulting in the *dominium* of “husbands over wives”—reverberates in The Tragedy of Mariam. The Chorus endorses Herod's right over Mariam's person as a subject of his kingdom but further deprives Mariam of the right to claim authority over her mind by reducing her mind to a thing that falls under Herod's *dominium*. As we have seen, the Chorus argues that a wife's public speech violates the contractual rights of the husband, her owner: through public discourse, the wife endangers her chastity and risks becoming a “common” thing. Mariam's open speech violates Herod's private ownership by implicitly appealing to the communal domain of public discourse. The Chorus, acting as the mouthpiece for the dominant social conventions, understands this apostrophe to the public as a form of commerce, tantamount to the traffic of the unchaste female body (3.3.241-50). A woman's speech and body threaten the distinctions between private and public ownership: they

²⁵ Armitage, “Literature and Empire,” 104.

evoke the dangerous potential of other forms of social mixing. In his anxious apostrophe to his eyes to stay within their “compass’d limits” (4.1.34), Herod attempts to maintain the tenuous boundary between *dominium* and *imperium*, despite Mariam’s supposed impurities of speech and conduct. The tasks of containing female speech and regulating the commerce of women become metaphors for the difficulty of maintaining other social boundaries, whether territorial, legal (as in the Mosaic law), or racial (as we shall see). Constabarus disdains such forms of commerce (“base mechanic traffic”) as the instrumentalization of friendship and the public trumpeting of private bonds (“A friendship...’tis written in the heart,/ And [needs] no amplifying with the tongue”). Yet Mariam, whose society coerces her to disdain such commerce, cannot but engage in commerce: she is from the start an object of exchange, falling in turns under the *dominium* of a husband as his property or under the *imperium* of a monarch as a subject, the two modes of authority that converge in the single figure of Herod.

The borders of authority implicit in the figure of female speech and the female body remain unresolved; Herod wants Mariam to at least preserve the appearance of their separation (that is, to dissemble, to put on an act) when he asks her to seem to be an affectionate wife, though her appearance may not correspond to reality. When Herod is reunited with his wife, Mariam denounces his crimes against her family, rather than meeting him with the welcome he had eagerly anticipated. Herod in turn dismisses her charges as the effects of a “froward humor”:

Herod. I will not speak, unless to be believ’d,
 This froward humour will not do you good:
 It hath too much already Herod griev’d,
 To think that you on terms of hate have stood.
 Yet smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile,

And I will all unkind conceits exile.

Mariam. I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught

My face a look dissenting from my thought. (4.3.139-46)

In her response to Herod, Mariam affirms what she had already announced to Sohemus, her councilor, who before Herod's arrival had pleaded with Mariam to appear to be amenable to her husband and to break her vow to abandon Herod's bed despite the opposition of these actions to her true thoughts and her internal moral objections (3.3.134, 133-50). Mariam refuses to perform the role of an obedient wife, although she privately acknowledges her potential ability to manipulate Herod through the deceptive abilities of speech: "I know I could enchain him with a smile:/ And lead him captive with a gentle word,/ I scorn my look should ever man beguile,/ Or other speech than meaning to afford" (3.3.163-66). Moreover, Mariam could have long since thwarted Salome's plots for Mariam's downfall, defeating Salome's cunning "tongue" with her own "gentle word": "Else Salome in vain might spend her wind,/ In vain might Herod's mother whet her tongue:/ In vain had they complotted and combin'd,/ For I could overthrow them all ere long" (3.3.167-71). Mariam knows herself capable of external, political *imperium* by manipulating Herod through her speech. Rather than claiming the mental imperium of the Stoic, Mariam could reclaim the outward monarchy of Judea that is her birthright. However, Mariam chooses the assuring knowledge of her innocence ("Oh, what a shelter is mine innocence"), asserting that she would not trade her innocence for the wider borders of imperial authority: "To be commandress of the triple earth,/ And sit in safety from a fall secure:/ To have all nations celebrate my birth, I would not that my spirit were impure" (3.3.171, 175-78). Although the Stoic philosopher holds *imperium* to be the

“desideratum for both sage and emperor,”²⁶ Mariam’s choice—whether to dissemble and gain a political kingdom or to be innocent and to rule the kingdom of her mind—implies the contradiction between sage and emperor. Mariam cannot maintain her innocence and gain a kingdom, nor can she dissemble and gain the *imperium* of her mind. The alternatives set before Mariam are the path of Constabarus, who chooses the authority of his mind and pays the price of death, and the path of Herod, who has no claim to innocence, but rules a kingdom through dissembling, and pays the price of psychological disintegration by the play’s end.

Mariam’s refusal to dissemble through speech is symptomatic of the paradoxical relationship between appearance and speech throughout Cary’s play: as in a chiasmus, speech functions as a form of appearance and appearance as a form of speech. For instance, as Mariam verbally and physically denounces Herod for his crimes against her family, Herod later accuses Mariam of attempting to poison him. This is a false and paranoid accusation, but one which he believes to be true: “Now do I know thy falsehood, painted devil,/ Thou white enchantress. Oh, thou art so foul,/ [...] A beauteous body hides a loathsome soul” (4.4.176-78). Herod also reduces the acquisition of self-knowledge to an external performance, as if the inner self were wholly consistent with a visible performance of virtues or vices. He marvels at the supposed asymmetry between Mariam’s physical body and her mind: “Oh, thine eye/ Is pure as Heaven, but impure thy mind,/ And for impurity shall Mariam die” (4.4.190-92). He vacillates between anguish over the enigma of Mariam’s mind, and the certitude of a verdict: “It is as plain as water, and denial/ Makes of thy falsehood but a greater trial” (4.4.197-98). Herod cannot reconcile Mariam’s rebellious speech and her presumed murderous designs to her outwardly fair complexion, which appears

²⁶ Braden 21.

to testify to her innocence. Herod claims to be able to perceive the “impure” mind (4.4.191) beneath Mariam’s beauty, while trying to resolve such a contradiction between form and essence by attributing her beauty to “theft” (4.4.221). Herod suggests that by this apparent paradox he might already have guessed Mariam’s guilt: “I might have seen thy falsehood in thy face;/ Where could’st thou get thy that serv’d for eyes/ Except by theft, and theft is foul disgrace?” (4.4.219-21). Herod’s judgments are marked by indecision which creeps into his speech in the form of a question: “theft is foul disgrace?” If Mariam had literally stolen the stars for eyes, would this “theft” make her guilty? The instability of Herod’s speech and the errant nature of his decision mark him as another histrionic tyrant in the mold of Beaumont and Fletcher’s Arbaces in A King and No King, and also invokes the paradoxical link between sovereignty and indecision in many early modern tragedies.²⁷

On the one hand, Herod assumes that the outward performance of affection corresponds to inward affection. However, he is willing to accept that the one is not an

²⁷ On the provenance of the histrionic tyrant in tragedy, see Rebecca W. Bushnell, Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), which I discuss in more detail in chapter 1. In his study of the Baroque *Trauerspiel* (mourning-play), Walter Benjamin inverts Carl Schmitt’s conception of sovereignty in terms of the ability to decide on the exception to the law, by pointing out the prevalence of sovereigns who are shown to be incapable of decision in much early modern drama: “The prince, who is responsible for making the decision to proclaim the state of emergency, reveals, at the first opportunity, that he is almost incapable of making a decision. Just as compositions with restful lighting are virtually unknown in mannerist painting, so it is that the theatrical figures of this epoch always appear in the harsh light of their changing resolve. What is conspicuous about them is not so much the sovereignty evident in the stoic turns of phrase, as the sheer arbitrariness of a constantly shifting emotional storm” (Benjamin 71). Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama, Trans. John Osborne, (London: Verso, 1977). Notably, Herod was a mobile signifier: if modern critics have often interpreted Cary’s Herod as an allegorical type of James I, for many Tudor Protestants Herod also served as a figure for Catholic abuses. According to Richard Baukham, “Cain and Abel typified the conflict” between Catholic authority and Protestant martyrs “because they were the first murderer and the first martyr, and the line of Cain continued in such notable persecutors as ‘Jereboam, Ahab, Jezeel, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, Herod’”. This was the list given by the martyr Ralph Allerton, who concluded that by the persecution of Protestants ‘all the world may know that [the papists] are the bloody church, figured in Cain the tyrant’” (Baukham 59). See Richard Baukham, Tudor Apocalypse (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978).

effect of the other, when he asks Mariam simply to smile despite her disaffections: “Yet smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile,/ And I will all unkind conceits exile” (4.3.143-44). On the other hand, Herod also implies an equivalence between the physical appearance of beauty and the purity of one’s mind, an equivalence which he learns to be false. Herod learns that appearances do not correspond to reality, but even this knowledge is founded on the false assumption of Mariam’s guilt. Herod’s errors show the indeterminacy and instability of speech, action, appearance, and performance. One is and is not what one appears to be. The play constantly foregrounds the tension and indecipherability between appearance and reality, fact and fiction, truth and deceit. Although closet dramas are defined by their exclusion from public theatrical performance, The Tragedy of Mariam nonetheless persistently examines the paradoxes of theatricality. Herod’s confusion of senses parallels the Chorus’s cautionary remarks at the end of Act 2, in which the Chorus warns that the fallibility of the senses (the “ears” that are given to “prejudicate” and “sight” that sees only “partially”) makes it dangerous to invest too much trust in the reports of Herod’s death (2.4.401-18). The Chorus implies that, in falling victim to the partial knowledge of the senses, one falls hazard to commerce and fortune: “Our ears and hearts are apt to hold for good/ That we ourselves do most desire to be:/ And then we drown objections in the flood/ Of partiality, ’tis that we see/ That makes false rumours long with credit pass’d,/ Though they like rumours must conclude at last” (2.4.413-18). The Chorus’s use of the term “credit,” for the circulation of “false rumours” believed [*creditus*] to be true and “pass’d” along, introduces a financial register of connotation which is then reinforced by the metaphor of pawning to describe the characters’ risking their futures on the rumor of Herod’s death: “On this same doubt, on this so light a breath,/ They pawn their lives and fortunes. For they all/ Behave them as the news of Herod’s death/ They did of most undoubted credit call:/ But if their actions

now do rightly hit,/ Let them commend their fortune, not their wit” (2.4.431-36). By extending “credit” to the purported news of Herod’s death, the characters “pawn their lives and fortunes,” entering into a world of commerce where social and political distinctions are exposed to contingency. The Chorus’s warning is notably affirmed in Act 4, when Mariam, sentenced to death for her alleged plot against Herod’s life, laments that she had “wager[ed]” on Herod’s unremitting affections: “[...] on the wager even my life did pawn:/ Because I thought, and yet but truly thought,/ That Herod’s love could not from me be drawn./ But now, though out of time, I plainly see/ It could be drawn [...]” (4.8.554-58).

Against the uncertainties of a material world ruled by the contingencies of commerce and fortune and shadowed by the threat of political violence, Mariam opts for the security and comfort of her innocence, retreating to the imperium of the mind while abjuring the political imperium of a ruling monarch. If the double bind of the subject of monarchy, as I have argued,²⁸ means that the subject is caught between the equally valid but contradictory moral alternatives of obeying a tyrannical sovereign or following one’s own moral dictates, then Mariam’s predicament is one in which siding with one’s moral dictates exacts the higher cost. In this, Cary’s play is unlike the Beaumont and Fletcher tragicomedies, in which the demands of moral conscience are reconciled with the exigencies of life under monarchic rule, since the king’s abuses are at least curbed by the continued life and counsel of the Stoic advisor figures (Dion in Philaster and Mardonius in A King and No King). According to Gordon Braden’s reading of Seneca and Stoicism in relation to Renaissance tragedy, the Stoics viewed

²⁸ See chapter 1, above.

education as a process of “learning to distinguish between what is yours and what is not yours,” which Braden defines as “effectively the primary Stoic act.”²⁹

The Senecan heritage in English drama can be seen in the range of tragic protagonists compelled to distinguish between what is theirs and is what is not theirs, often to the point of forcing the tragic crisis by vengefully taking back what is theirs in an act of revenge, as Hieronimo avenges his son in The Spanish Tragedy by slaughtering his son’s murderers in the play-within-the-play, as Titus avenges his daughter’s rape by tricking Tamora into devouring her children in Titus Andronicus, or as Hamlet eventually avenges his father after proclaiming himself “the Dane” in Act 5 of Hamlet. Mariam’s preference for the imperium of the self seems to conform to the Stoic pattern of the internalization of glory and honor, but her preference also complicates the perceived distinction between what does and does not belong to the self. As we see in the course of the play, Mariam has legitimate claims to what is hers as a legitimate heir to the throne of Judea, which is now occupied by Herod. Although Herod has taken Judea’s throne through marriage, he offers Mariam imperium over her kingdom and even over Arabia if she would only abide him by smiling: “Or if thou think Judea’s narrow bound/ Too strict a limit for thy great command:/ Thou shalt be empress of Arabia crown’d,/ For thou shalt rule, and I will win the land” (4.3.101-104). By presenting Mariam’s death as a prefiguration of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the play implies that Mariam’s rejection of worldly imperium earns her a place in a coming spiritual community.³⁰ The play thus complicates the

²⁹ Braden 19.

³⁰ Margaret Ferguson and Barry Weller have elucidated Cary’s use of the traditions of English religious drama, noting that “in the play’s final act [...] Mariam acquires symbolic features of Christ and his precursors, the Slaughtered Innocents and the beheaded John the Baptist” (Ferguson and Weller, “Introduction” 21). In English mystery plays such as the Corpus Christi cycle, Ferguson and Weller argue, the scriptural episode of the Slaughter of the Innocents (the killing of all Jewish boys under the age of two by order of Herod the Great) “became a ‘powerful focal point’ in the cycles, a moment of symbolic transition from Old to New Testament time when, as Cynthia Bourgeault observes, the death

Stoic analogy between rule over self and worldly rule over others. Braden argues that “Stoicism’s deference to fate is ultimately consistent with the exercise of monarchic power. In fact, if Stoicism is, in Eliot’s famous taunt, ‘of course a philosophy suited to slaves’, it also achieves...a striking popularity among rulers as well, becoming at last the philosophy of the emperor himself.”³¹ Stoicism rejects classical standards of selfhood defined by the potential for heroic action, but the “classical drive for esteem is not suppressed but only redirected toward a more secure and elite kind of self-esteem.”³² Confronted by the “undependable *nomoi* of the city-states,” the Stoic strives to live “consistently with nature” [*physis*] which “is an order deeper and firmer” than the *nomoi*.³³ Braden argues that the “classical drive for esteem,” in turn, needs to be understood in relation to the classical conception of anger, or *thymos*.

‘Anger’ is the first word in classical literature: *mênis*, the announced theme of the Iliad and the ruling emotion of the best warrior among the Greeks. Achilles’ prowess in battle is clearly linked to his capacity for anger, though not simply as instinctual ferocity; his rage is focused and, by Homeric standards, high-minded. Agamemnon has taken a captive woman from him; Achilles resents her loss not for reasons of love or even lust, but because she is the outward demarcation of his *timê*, his martial honor and worth. Agamemnon has trespassed on almost

of the Jewish boys provided an ‘ironic counterpoint to Jesus’s birth’ and also a ‘foreshadowing of Jesus’s innocent death’” (Ferguson and Weller 22). Sandra K. Fischer reads Herod’s swift repentance for Mariam’s execution not as an instance of his tyrannical intemperance but as a sign of “the religious effect of [Mariam’s] sacrifice,” arguing that “[t]he redemption of humanity by Christ’s sacrifice becomes equivalent to the redemption of womanhood by Mariam’s sacrifice” (Fischer 236). See Sandra K. Fischer, “Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny, Domestic and Religious,” in Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works, Ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985).

³¹ Braden 18.

³² Braden 18.

³³ Braden 19.

physical territory, whose largely arbitrary markers are given their very real meaning precisely by Achilles' anger, the emotion that locates and maintains the borders of a kind of honorific self. Such borders are almost a part of Homeric nature, and it is apparently in their original role as guardians of the natural order that Erinyes, precursors of the Roman Furies, intervene in the dispute. Yet the borders are also continuously problematic, since, for one thing, they must continuously expand; the aristocratic code in Homer is a code of excellence in the transitive sense [...].³⁴

Anger is a means of policing the boundaries of the self in Cary's play as well. Mariam's first soliloquy is devoted to the anger she has nursed against the husband who has killed her family members and restricted her liberty, and whom she now finds herself half-mourning:

When Herod liv'd, that now is done to death,
Oft have I wish'd that I from him free:
Oft have I wish'd that he might lose his breath,
Oft have I wish'd his carcass dead to see.
Then rage and scorn had put my love to flight,
The love which once on him was firmly set:
Hate hid his true affection from my sight,
[...]
For he, by barring me from liberty,
To shun my ranging, taught me first to range. (1.1.15-26)

³⁴ Braden 10. For other reflections on the role of *thymos* in political thought, see Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man (New York: Free Press, 1992), and Peter Sloterdijk, Rage and Time: A Psychopolitical Investigation, Trans. Mario Wenning (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

If we note the parallels the play establishes between Mariam's unjust execution (before which she predicts that her husband "By three days hence, if wishes could revive, / [...] would make me oft alive") and Christ's later crucifixion (to be followed by his resurrection three days after), then the contrast between Christ's readiness to forgive and Mariam's righteous anger makes the intensity of her anger all the more striking (5.1.77-78). Mariam is here less concerned to lament the deaths of her relatives than to protest the restrictions Herod's jealousy had put on her free ethical expression: "he, by barring me from liberty, / To shun my ranging, taught me first to range" (1.1.25-26). When Mariam rebukes Salome for her insubordination and lower birth, Salome accuses the queen of being too easily moved to fury: "Now stirs the tongue that is so quickly mov'd, / But more than once your choler have I borne: / Your furnish words are sooner said than prov'd" (1.1.227-29). In fact, Salome claims that her resentment of Mariam's scorn has motivated her will to have Mariam killed: "She shall be charged with so horrid crime, / As Herod's fear shall turn his love to hate: / [...] I scorn that she should live my birth t'upbraid, / To call me base and hungry Edomite: / With patient show her choler I betray'd, / And watch'd the time to be reveng'd by sleight" (3.2.89-96). Mariam's habitual rage against Herod's crimes and Salome's ambition might seem to conflict with the Stoic ethos of indifference to worldly power, but in fact Constabarus, who also embodies typical Stoic virtues, also strains to contain his wrath over Salome's machinations: "You have my patience often exercis'd, / Use make my choler keep within the banks: / [...] I prithee, Salome, dismiss this mood, / Thou dost not know how ill it fits thy place: / My words were all intended for thy good, / To raise thine honour and to stop disgrace" (1.6.405-412). Constabarus strains to dam the potential flood of his "choler [...] within the banks" of patriarchal moral instruction, and to make his wife aware, socially and morally, of the "place" of her "honour." Constabarus understands the borders of his self in overtly spatial terms:

his choler must be carefully contained in order to preserve the structural integrity of his mind. Herod shows the consequences of having no such restraints: when his anger erupts and causes Mariam's death, Herod laments the excessive rage that has made him a foreign enemy to himself. He compares Mariam to his "one inestimable jewel,/ Yet one I had no monarch had the like,/ And therefore I may curse myself as cruel:/ [...] I in sudden choler cast it down,/ And pash'd it all to pieces: 'twas no foe/ That robb'd me of it; no Arabian host,/ Nor no Armenian guide hath us'd me so:/ But Herod's wretched self hath Herod cross'd" (5.5.119-32). Far from enforcing any ethical order, Herod's "sudden choler" merely sets Herod at war with himself; Herod's crime is figured as a breach of his political borders. "Cross'd" by his own rage, Herod is so far from the Stoic ethic of the integral self with its faculties harmonized under the benevolent rule of reason (*hêgemonicon*) that he enacts the threatening otherness of the treacherous "Arabian host" or "Armenian guide."³⁵ In Herod's figure, Mariam's singular beauty (Herod's jewel, which "no monarch had the like") implies the precariousness of his reign.

Greek literature repeatedly returns to the potential conflict between the common good and the individual's desire for glory (*timê*), as Braden has pointed out; we can see this tension reflected from the Iliad, in which Achilles' indignant withdrawal from the Trojan conflict threatens disaster for his Greek allies, to Solon's observation that a "city is destroyed by great men."³⁶ In The Tragedy of Mariam, the Chorus, whom Cary identifies generically as "a company of Jews," appears to voice the patriarchal norms of Judean society. Their speeches attempt to provide a normative frame for the action of the play, although the extent to which Cary implicitly vests their judgments with authority is a matter of significant debate: they

³⁵ See Braden's definition of *hêgemonicon* in Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition, 20.

³⁶ Braden 11.

end each act by first stating general moral maxims and then moving to judgment on the particular acts of the play's characters. The Chorus's debate with Mariam hinges on glory. After Mariam learns of Herod's return, her consolation in the face of this danger and Salome's manipulations is her innocence: "Let my distressed state unpitied be,/ Mine innocence is hope enough for me," Mariam reflects (3.3.179-80). Yet the Chorus finds Mariam blameworthy even in innocence for risking the appearance of guilt for the sake of glory:

Chorus. 'Tis not enough for one that is a wife
To keep her spotless from an act of ill:
But from suspicion she should free her life,
And bare herself of power as well as will.
'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,
As by her proper self restrain'd to be.

When she hath spacious ground to walk upon,
Why on the ridge should she desire to go?
It is no glory to forbear alone
Those things that may her honour overthrow.
But 'tis thankworthy if she will not take
All lawful liberties for honour's sake.

That wife her hand against her fame doth rear,
That more than to her lord alone will give
A private word to any second ear,
And though she may with reputation live,
Yet though most chaste, she does her glory blot,

And wounds her honour, though she kills it not.

[...]

And every mind, though free from thought of ill,

That out of glory seeks a worth to show,

When any's ears but one therewith they fill,

Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow.

Now Mariam had (but that to this she bent)

Been free from fear, as well as innocent. (3.3.215-232; 245-50)

The first and third stanzas of the Chorus's speech cite "glory" in their closing couplet, emphasizing its importance to the Chorus's efforts of containment. The Chorus's speech voices the general norms of proper behavior for "one that is a wife" (3.3.215), before blaming Mariam, in its final lines, for having "bent" to confide in Sohemus (3.3.249). The Chorus attempts to confine married women's "glory" within the marriage bond alone, although the final stanza, warning against the "mind [...] / That out of glory seeks a worth to show" to "any ears but one [i.e. the husband]" makes it clear that their attempted equation of "glory" with marital and sexual "honour" is polemically aimed against another conception of glory that would involve the self in the public order.

The Chorus argues that wives must not only be innocent but also free from suspicion, and so must avoid even morally "lawful" situations in which their chastity could be falsely called into question ("'tis thankworthy if she shall not take / All lawful liberties for honour's sake"), including communication outside marriage (the wife that gives "A private word to any second ear, / [...] does her glory blot, / And wounds her honour, though she kills it not"). The Chorus's rhetoric employs figures of confinement: an innocent freedom is "not so glorious" for the married woman "As by

her proper self restrain'd to be," that is, for a woman to be free and innocent is less glorious than it is for her to be restrained by her sense of social decorum. If moral and social laws place limits on women's freedom in marriage, the Chorus argues, even that remaining freedom must be further limited: "When she hath spacious ground to walk upon,/ Why on the ridge should she desire to go?" The Chorus censures Mariam's angry decision to resist Herod upon his return ("I shall not to his love be reconcil'd,/ With solemn vows I have forsworn his bed" (3.3.133-34)) as a form of glory-seeking, not simply because she resists her husband, but also because Mariam communicates this decision to Sohemus, against their judgment that "every mind [...] / That out of glory seeks a worth to show,/ When any ears but one therewith they fill,/ Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow" (3.3.245-48). The Chorus's suspicion of Mariam indicates the connection the play establishes between anger and glory-seeking, as means of expanding and defending the "continuously problematic"³⁷ honorific borders of the self. In turn, these boundaries of individual honor are figured in spatial terms throughout the play, and increasingly identified with political borders in the physical world.³⁸

This analogy between boundaries of personal honor and political boundaries in physical space appears most clearly in Constabarus's response to Salome's request for a divorce, for the sake of remarriage to the Arabian king Silleus. Constabarus objects: "Oh Salome, how much you wrong your name,/ Your race, your country, and your

³⁷ Braden 10. See Braden's discussion of Achilles's rage.

³⁸ Indeed, Carl Schmitt has controversially argued in his account of the historical origins of the concept of *nomos* (a key term in classical Greek philosophy and political thought for law or convention) that the earliest sense of the term refers to the territorial distribution of land: "The Greek word for the first measure of all subsequent measures, for the first land-appropriation understood as the first partition and classification of space, for the primeval division and distribution, is *nomos*. This word, understood in its original spatial sense, is best suited to describe the fundamental process involved in the relation between order and orientation" (Schmitt 67). Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, Trans. G.L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2006) 67.

husband most!” (1.6.375-76). As though to underline the connection between the marital fidelity expected of Salome as a wife with the national and religious fidelity expected of her as a Jew, Constabarus curses her “base Arabian” lover (1.6.380), and swears “Now by the stately carvéd edifice/ That on Mount Sion makes so fair a show,/ And by the altar fit for sacrifice,/ I love thee more than thou thyself dost know” (1.6.383-86). While Salome rejects “the principles of Moses’ laws” which keep her from marrying her lover, Constabarus asserts the continuity of his authority as a husband, who indeed loves his wife more than she knows, with the authority of the traditional religious and political institutions of his society, as embodied by the altar of the Temple (1.6.299). Constabarus’s rhetoric implies that for Salome to violate the borders of her honor and her marriage would be equivalent to violating the borders of Judea (however uncertain they might be under Roman imperial rule).

For Salome to usurp the legal right to divorce from her husband, Constabarus argues, would overturn gender hierarchies with the same force as the inversion of tribal and spatial hierarchies: “Are Hebrew women transformed to men?/ [...] Suffer this, and then/ Let all the world be topsy-turvéd quite./ Let fishes graze, beasts [swim], and birds descend,/ Let fire burn downwards while the earth aspires:/ [...] Use us as Joshua did the Gibonites” (1.6.422-32). The subjugation of the Jews, as Joshua had defeated and enslaved the Gibonites, would be a political and military event, as the transformation of the legal rights of women in Judean society would be a political and religious event, but Constabarus’s figurative language assimilates both to the spatial absurdity of a “topsy-turvéd” world. If such a world in which “fishes graze, beasts [swim], and birds descend” while “fire burn[s] downward” hardly seems possible, Constabarus is nonetheless attempting to persuade himself to defend his honor rather than to “Suffer this” offence to his legal right as a husband, an offence which he views as an equally absurd development. The purpose of Constabarus’s self-apostrophe is to

convince himself to resist a real threat to his honor, no less real for appearing impossible. That Constabarus imagines this threat through a fantasy in which Joshua's enslavement of the Gibeonites would be visited on the men of Judea (itself a subject state under the Roman empire) indicates that the borders of the honorific self—constantly seeking to expand through glorious acts and constantly endangered by dishonor—are being mapped directly onto the borders of the state.

In the relationship Constabarus projects between the borders of the honorific self and the physical borders of the territorial state, women's speech and bodies are figured as both the objects of commerce and the sites where commerce can take place: women's speech and bodies serve as the figurative sites where political, territorial, and legal boundaries can be mapped and contested. Insofar as women's speech and bodies function as privileged sites where these boundaries can be imagined, they are both invested with patriarchal desire and shadowed by the anxiety that those boundaries can be violated. The patriarchal association between women's speech and commerce means that the political boundaries of nation and empire are implicated in women's speech, but beyond this, the circulation of women's speech in commerce (a word which both denotes and connotes commingling) invokes the dangerous specter of racial and political mixing made possible by unregulated female speech and commerce. For the Chorus and for Constabarus, female speech is a political problem, because it has the potential to transgress the established boundaries between chastity and unchastity, privacy and publicity. For Constabarus in particular, unregulated female speech threatens to allow the unlicensed mixing of races and bodies, throwing the established political boundaries into confusion. The rhetoric of fairness and darkness throughout Cary's play—which is used to articulate a vast range of social distinctions, including physical beauty and ugliness, moral virtue and corruption,

wealth and poverty, and political power and subjugation—indicates the intimate confusion between discourses of race and gender in the ongoing construction of imperium.

Mariam herself employs the normative force of the rhetoric of darkness when she uses racial epithets to condemn Salome's moral iniquity at their first meeting in Act 1, after Salome accuses Mariam of feeling "joy for Herod's death" and "plotting" for another king to replace her supposedly dead husband (1.3.207-10). According to the historian Josephus, the historical Salome's resentment of Mariam had been a contributing cause of the execution of her first husband (and uncle) Joseph: Salome had charged that Mariam had had "criminal conversation" with Joseph in order to damage her rival's reputation.³⁹ In Act 1, Scene 3 of the play, Salome alludes to these earlier events by reiterating that she "did the plots reveal,/ That pass'd betwixt your favourites and you:/ [...] Thus Salome your minion Joseph[us] slew" (1.3.246-250). Mariam responds to Salome's slander by denouncing her conduct as "black acts," mingling moral with racial discourse: "I favour thee when nothing else I say,/ With thy black acts I'll not pollute my breath:/ Else to thy charge I might full justly lay/ A shameful life, besides a husband's death" (1.3.243-46). The figure of "black acts" is common enough in English usage that the racial undertones of the figure might not be immediately apparent, but Mariam reinforces the link between moral and racial discourse by condemning Salome as a "mongrel" relating Salome's mixed "race" with her moral corruption: "Though I thy brother's face had never seen,/ My birth thy baser birth so far excell'd,/ I had to both of you the princess been./ Thou parti-Jew, and

³⁹ See Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* in *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition*, Trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987) 27-542. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.3.5, p. 402.

parti-Edomite,/ Thou mongrel: issu'd from rejected race,/ Thy ancestors against the
Heavens did fight,/ And thou like them wilt heavenly birth disgrace" (1.3.232-38).

The proto-racial rhetoric of darkness and fairness is here the discursive skein into which Mariam weaves her disparate assertions of Salome's inferiority and in turn of her own superiority. Mariam's rebuke combines accusations of national inferiority, moral degradation, and class insubordination. Mariam denigrates Salome's ancestry as mixed and "mongrel," describing her "parti-Jew and part-Edomite" origins as grounds to dismiss her as a member of a "rejected race." Salome's perceived membership in a "rejected race" allows Mariam to connect social disrepute to moral censure, insofar as the Edomites, conquered and compelled to convert to Judaism by the Israelites, were commonly thought to have been descended from Esau.⁴⁰ Although in the biblical story Esau was older than his brother Jacob, and thus would have conventionally been his father's heir, he sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage, doing his "heavenly birth disgrace." Esau's association with base submission conventionally extended to his supposed descendents, the Edomites, who, in fighting unsuccessfully against the Israelites, "against the Heavens did fight." In other words, although the Edomites might have been a superior race by birthright, they were thought (by their conquerors) to have corrupted their 'race' through the moral degradation of Esau's bargain, who basely sold his birthright for nothing more than a transitory meal. Finally, this nexus of miscegenation and moral degradation contributes to "the princess" Mariam's richly overdetermined contempt for what she

⁴⁰ Josephus claims that the Israelite leader "Hyrcanus [...] subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted [...]; at which time therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews" (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.9.1; p. 352). Elsewhere he notes that the Edomites, or Idumeans, were only considered half-Jewish in Judea: "Antigonus [...] said, that they would not do justly if they gave the kingdom to Herod, who was no more than a private man, and an Idumean, i.e. a half Jew" (*Antiquities* 14.15.2; p. 391).

calls Salome's "baser birth," a class inferiority that is tied up with her miscegenation and moral degradation, and which renders Salome's defiance all the more infuriating to Mariam. There are further examples of the association with blackness with morality. During Herod's dispute with Mariam, when the Butler arrives with what Herod mistakenly believes is a poisoned drink meant to kill him, Herod curses Mariam, denouncing her supposed plot to poison him as an act of "black revenge" (4.4.183). Then, speaking in soliloquy, the Butler laments his part in the false accusations against Mariam which contribute to Herod's condemnation of his wife. The Butler blames Salome as "the cause" by which his "heart to darkest falsehood won" and describes his crime as "the blackest deed that ever was" (4.5.265-72). Doris finds similar fault with Mariam, rebuking the queen for the blackness of her moral character in supposedly usurping Doris's rightful place as Herod's wife: "Ay, Heav'n—your beauty cannot bring you thither/ Your soul is black and spotted, full of sin:/ You in adult'ry liv'd nine year together,/ And Heav'n will never let adult'ry in" (4.8.575-78). By connecting Mariam's presumed "black and spotted" soul to the supposed divine sanction against the queen, Doris clearly links darkness and fairness with vice and virtue.

As Doris's speech suggests, the language of blackness and fairness is not applied unequivocally. Salome, whom the other characters generally deem to be devious and murderous, may well justify the charge that her deeds are "black"; however, when Doris blames Mariam for Herod's faults, we see that these terms are not consistently applied. For instance, when Salome criticizes the Mosaic law that prohibits wives from divorcing their husbands (therefore prohibiting her marriage to Silleus), she laments that "I cannot be the fair Arabian bride" (1.4.280).

Salome's pronouncement which follows her expression of her moral quandary over the "wrong" she would inflict on Constabarus by pursuing an illegal marriage

with Silleus, suggests that her immoral deeds bar her from being a “fair” or virtuous companion to Silleus, the prince of Arabia, and thus also a “fair” member of the Arabian body politic. Yet Salome’s phrase (“the fair Arabian bride”) can also be read to refer to the bride of the fair Arabian prince (“the fair Arabian’s bride”), which would suggest that Silleus himself is morally virtuous, physically “fair,” or both. The second sense, which would emphasize Silleus’s moral virtue, is supported by Salome’s description of the country of Arabia, which Silleus represents as a “fruit” represents the “tree” that bore it: “Oh blest Arabia, in best climate plac’d,/ I by the fruit will censure of the tree:/ ’Tis not in vain thy happy name thou hast,/ If all Arabians like Silleus be” (1.4.269-72). The implication that Silleus is fair, according to the second sense (“the fair Arabian’s bride”), indirectly justifies Salome’s pursuit of Silleus, and would resonate with Silleus’s overt references to Salome as “fair Salome, Judea’s pride” and to her plotting as “fair actions” (1.5.325, 342). Salome’s rhetorical identification between Silleus and the geography of Arabia (which, situated in the “best climate,” bears Silleus as its “fruit”) perhaps diverts attention away from the more common orientalist association of Arabia with the purported licentiousness of Islam. Indeed, Silleus seems to conform to the early modern European stereotype of Islamic licentiousness by lusting after a woman who is already married, and passively encouraging her adultery. Moreover, that Silleus can praise Salome’s actions as morally and socially laudable suggests that Silleus may share Salome’s depravity.

Edward Said notes that starting in the Middle Ages, “since Mohammed was viewed as the disseminator of a false Revelation, he became as well the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries, all of which derived ‘logically’ from his doctrinal impostures.”⁴¹ The transgressive sexual license

⁴¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 62. Samuel C. Chew examines English theatrical representations of the Ottoman Turks and their contestations with Christian Europe,

that European Christians imaginatively projected onto Mohammed colored the dominant European image of Muslims and Islamic culture more broadly. Daniel J. Vitkus observes that:

In European descriptions of Islamic society, the harem, polygamy, and concubinage were frequently presented as if they were universally practiced by the Muslims. [...] In medieval and early modern accounts of Islam, ‘Mahomet’s paradise’ is described as a false vision of sexual and sensual delights with its nubile houris, rivers of wine, and luxurious gardens. [...] The erotic rewards of the Islamic afterlife were frequently condemned by Christian writers who also asserted that the attraction of conversion of Islam [...] was based primarily upon the greater sexual freedom permitted under Islamic law. Christian writers also saw a connection between the alleged sexual excesses of the Muslims and Turks and those attributed to the Moors and black Africans, who are frequently described in the Western tradition as a people naturally given to promiscuity.”⁴²

Such terms of comparison would have been ready to hand in early seventeenth century England. For instance, while describing an entertainment in James I’s court for the visiting king of Denmark in 1606 (including the “representation of Solomon his Temple and the coming of the Queen of Sheba”), Sir John Harrington reports to his correspondent that: “I have been well nigh overwhelmed with carousal and sports of all kinds. The sports began each day in such manner and in such sorte, as well nigh persuaded me of Mahomets paradise. We had women, and indeed wine too, of such

as well as English notions of the licentiousness of Islam in: The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937).

⁴² Daniel J. Vitkus, “Introduction,” Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: Selimus, A Christian Turned Turk, The Renegado, Ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) 13-15.

plenty, as would have astonished each sober onlooker.”⁴³ Beyond seventeenth century England in particular, Said argues for the centrality of the imagined Orient as a feared and desired space of cultural difference for European literature in general: “The European imagination was nourished extensively from this repertoire: between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century such major authors as Ariosto, Milton, Marlowe, Tasso, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and the authors of the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Poema del Cid* drew on the Orient’s riches for their productions, in ways that sharpened the outlines of imagery, ideas, and figures populating it.”⁴⁴ Elizabeth Cary, too, drew not only on the resources of scripture and Josephus’s history of the Judean court, but also on the European and Christian ideological images of Islam and the Arab world that circulated in her society. Salome and Silleus use the moralizing rhetoric of fairness and darkness to naturalize their socially dubious adulterous desire. They apply the cultural terminology of fairness to legitimate their desires; they rewrite and extend the borders of the self, and in turn the borders of the political body, by naturalizing what is morally and politically other, although at the cost of blurring the boundaries of the self and the political body.

In this racial dynamic of darkness and fairness, the imagined but absent female figure of Cleopatra plays a unique role in the problem of political borders and zones of authority, morality, and class that is embodied by this dynamic of darkness and fairness in Cary’s play. Cleopatra and Egypt are referred to synonymously, so that to invoke Egypt as a political body is simultaneously to invoke the female body of Cleopatra. For instance, in Act 4, Scene 8, when Mariam has been imprisoned by Herod for her supposed plot against his life, Mariam reprimands herself for the hubris

⁴³ Sir John Harington [sic], “Sir John Harington to Mr. Secretary Barlow, [from London,] 1606,” *Nugae Antiquae: Being a Miscellaneous Collection of Original Papers, in Prose and Verse*, Vol. 1, Ed. Henry Harington and Thomas Park (London: 1804) 349. See pp. 348-54.

⁴⁴ Said 63.

of assuming that her beauty alone could protect her from death. In her self-criticism, she refers to Cleopatra both directly by name and indirectly as Egypt, and even as a figure of the larger geographical region of “Asia” (4.8.545). Mariam observes that “False Cleopatra” who sought only personal gain, attempted in vain to secure Herod’s love. She gloats that the king rejected Cleopatra and thought only of Mariam: “That face and person that in Asia late/ For beauty’s goddess, Paphos’ queen, was ta’en:/ That face that did captive great Julius’ fate,/ That very face that was Anthonius’ bane,/ That face that to be Egypt’s pride was born,/ That face that all the world esteem’d so rare:/ Did Herod hate, despise, neglect, and scorn,/ When with the same, he Mariam’s did compare” (4.8.545-52). The female body here becomes the site onto which international conflicts are mapped. The distant polities of Asia, Paphos on Cyprus (the site of a temple to Aphrodite), Egypt, and Rome are linked by desire for Cleopatra’s face, which first “did captive” Julius Caesar and then, as “Anthonius’s bane,” is held to have caused Mark Antony’s defeat at the hands of Octavian. The anaphoric repetition of “That face,” as Ferguson and Weller note, recalls Faustus’s question upon seeing the specter of Helen of Troy in Marlowe’s Tragical History of Doctor Faustus: “Is this the face that launched a thousand ships,/ And burned the towers of Ilium?” (5.1.109-110). This echo of Marlowe’s play implicitly links Cleopatra to Helen, and so to the most famous Western narrative of geopolitical conflict (here, between the Greek city-states and Troy) precipitated by competition for the possession of a woman.

In Mariam’s catalogue of the effects of her rival Cleopatra’s beauty, Europe (Rome), Africa (Egypt), and Asia are linked by competitive desire, and the conflicting claims of Cleopatra’s and Mariam’s beauty on Herod’s affection becomes a form of political struggle. Elsewhere, in Herod’s description of his visit to Rome, the king praises Mariam’s beauty above that of “The fair and famous Livia, Caesar’s love,/ The world’s commanding mistress [...] Whose beauties both the world and Rome

approve” (4.1.29-31). Livia’s universally recognized beauty is figured as a form of imperial authority (in that Livia is “The world’s commanding mistress”), and the Roman Empire and its outside are simultaneously united and divided, in that the “world and Rome” separately “approve” Livia’s beauty, but the Roman emperor’s wife is also the “world’s commanding mistress.” The fascination of the “fair and famous Livia” (4.1.29) and the “brown Egyptian” Cleopatra (1.2.190) demonstrates that throughout The Tragedy of Mariam, the racialized and gendered female body rhetorically embodies the object and the cause of geopolitical conflict and imperial struggle. Mariam emerges victorious in the struggle against Cleopatra for Herod’s love, but her fate is no less certain than Cleopatra’s. Although Cleopatra is absent throughout The Tragedy of Mariam, the characters’ insistent comparisons between Mariam and the Egyptian queen indicate the play’s anxiety about the subversion of racial identities and national borders through the cultural mixing that characterizes imperial rule and international commerce. Kim F. Hall draws our attention to the tendency in early modern English drama to register anxieties about unstable racial and sexual identities through the figure of Cleopatra, who is often directly identified with Egypt:

Egypt itself is a very malleable sign. [...] Egypt is a focal point of East-West confrontation, claimed as African or ‘Asiatic’ simultaneously, existing as a constantly claimed but ultimately unfixed signifier. Throughout Leo Africanus’s *Geographical Historie*, for example, Egypt is alternately both an early cradle of Christianity and a bastion of ‘Mohammetism.’ With its mixture of religions and races, Egypt is itself like the threatening ‘infinite variety’ attributed to Cleopatra.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Kim F. Hall, Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 155.

In light of this, Mariam and Alexandra's rehearsals of Mariam's triumph over Cleopatra implies the fragility of the power that Mariam's fairness and pure descent from the Judean royal line can afford her, now that Judean national sovereignty has been subsumed by the Roman empire. Mariam recognizes that her "wager" (4.8.554) on the power of her beauty to protect her from Herod's anger has failed: it is not true that her "face must needs preserve [her] breath" (4.8.525). The political machinations of the Judean court, in which the action of Cary's play is confined, are ultimately determined by the vagaries of Roman imperial power, as Herod's tyrannical rule depends on the backing of his Roman allies. Under such conditions, Mariam's fairness itself becomes, as it were, a "constantly claimed but ultimately unfixed signifier,"⁴⁶ fluctuating in value and finally failing to preserve Mariam. The writings of Cary's contemporaries on English colonization in Ireland explore similar anxieties that the imperial expansion of English power may jeopardize the purity of the English language and national identity. Hall observes that in Edmund Spenser's dialogue A View of the Present State of Ireland:

One of the fears that erupts from the discussion of the dubious lineage of Spaniards (seen as a mixed-raced people) is the problematic purity of the Englishmen living in Ireland. Miscegenation (which, like blackness in George Best, is dubbed an 'infection' by Spenser) and assimilation show their first effect in language.... [...] Cultural and political differences between the English, the Scottish, and the Irish are distilled to problematic linguistic differences, the overcoming and assimilation of which is the first step in an imperialist project."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Hall 155.

⁴⁷ Hall 145, 146. Indeed, Spenser's character Irenius blames "the Eville Customes of the English" in Ireland on "the abuse of language, that is for the speakeinge of Irishe, amongst the Englishe, which as yt [is] vnnatural that any people should loue anothers language more than their own, so ys yt verie

If, in Spenser's text, "cultural and political differences" are displaced into problems of linguistic purity, the patriarchal society of The Tragedy of Mariam relentlessly equates women's sexual chastity with the purity of their tongues, as when Salome denounces Mariam to Herod with the accusation that "She speaks a beauteous language, but within/ Her heart is false as powder: and her tongue/ Doth but allure the auditors to sin, / And is the instrument to do you wrong" (4.7.429-432). Furthermore, Constabarus initially reprimands his wife Salome for having "wrong[ed] your name,/ Your race, your country, and your husband most" (1.6.375-76) in speaking privately to her lover Silleus, telling her that "A stranger's private conference is shame" (1.6.377). The Chorus, in speaking for the dominant values of Judean culture, similarly chastises Mariam for confiding in Sohemus: "[E]very mind, though free from thought of ill, / That out of glory seeks a worth to show, / When any's ears but one [the husband's] therewith they fill, / Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow" (3.3.248-50). Women's commerce in language, beyond the borders of the marriage bond, thus threatens to subvert their status as strictly the objects of exchange in marriage.

That commerce in language, in turn, needs to be understood within the imperial context of the play, with its unpredictable encounters between nations and cultures, and the construction of racial identities through the discourses of darkness and fairness. Seen in this light, Salome could embody seventeenth century anxieties about the power of international trade to destabilize established political orders. In The Tragedy of Mariam, Cary treats a moment of crisis in Jewish history under Roman rule both as a distinct historical moment of transition—from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire, from the Old to the New Testament—and as a means of reflection upon the claims of absolutist monarchy and the strange new prospects of

inconvenient and the cause of manye other evils" (Spenser 87). Edmund Spenser, A View of the Present State of Ireland, Ed. W.L. Renwick (London: Eric Partridge, 1934).

international trade in her own society. But in The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt, to which I now turn, Philip Massinger and John Fletcher render contemporary political events in the Dutch Republic with a surprising minimum of allegorical distance, and, in so doing, reflect upon the possibilities of mercantilism and republicanism in their own society.

Staging Republic and Commerce:

Massinger and Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnaveit*

“And for maintenance and testimonie of these natural unions of the peoples of these kingdoms and countries in perpetuall amitie, there are extant sundrie autentique Treaties and Transactions for mutuall commerce, entercourse and straight amitie of ancient times [...]” - Elizabeth I¹

In Elizabeth’s declaration of support for the Dutch rebels against the Spanish monarchy in 1585, the queen justifies England’s intervention in the Dutch Revolt by the long-standing “mutual Bondes” between the peoples of England and the Low Countries, and above all by the “mutuall commerce” between the two countries. In her Declaration, Elizabeth describes England’s involvement in the Revolt as a defensive move to “ayde the naturall people of those countries, onely to defende them and their townes from sacking and desolation, and thereby to procure them safetie [...]”² Along with justifying England’s intervention as a defensive measure rather than a direct provocation to Spain, the Declaration repeatedly stresses the well-established “commerce” between England and the Low Countries, described variously as “a continuall traffique and commerce betwixt the people of England, and the Naturall people of these lowe Countries,” the “commerce and entercourse of Marchantes,” “mutuall commerce, entercourse and straight amitie of ancient times,” and the “mutuall and naturall concourse and commerce” shared by England and the

¹ Elizabeth I, A declaration of the causes moouing the Queene of England to giue aide to the defence of the people afflicted and oppressed in the lowe countries (London: 1585) 3-4.

² Elizabeth 18.

Low Countries.³ Early in the Declaration, Elizabeth tries to establish that there has been an enduring relationship between the two countries, citing the “many speciall alliances and confederations” shared between the “Kinges of England” and the “Lordes of the said countries of *Flanders, Holland, Zeeland* and their adherents,” and describing the “special Obligations and Stipulations” that were made between the sovereigns of England and the Low Countries:

[...] for maintenance both of commerce and entercourse of Marchantes, and also of speciall mutuall amitie to be observed betwixt the people and inhabitants of both parties as well Ecclesiasticall as Secular: and very expresse provision in suche Treaties contained for mutuall favours, affections, and all other friendly offices to be used and prosecuted by the people of the one Nation towards the other. By which mutual Bondes, there hath continued perpetuall unions of the peoples hearts together, and so by way of continuall entercourses, from age to age the same mutuall love hath bene inviolable kept and exercised, as it had been by the woorke of nature, and never utterly dissolved, nor yet for any long time discontinued, howsoever the kings, and the Lordes of the countries sometimes (though very rarely) have beene at difference by sinister meanes of some other Princes their Neighbours, enuying the felicitie of these two Countries.”⁴

³ Elizabeth 2-4 passim. Among the stated desired outcomes of England’s military and financial support include a “restitution” of the “ancient liberties & government” of the Low Countries “And thereby, a suretie of our selves and our realme to be free from invading neighbours, And our people to enjoy in those countries their lawful commerce & entercourse of friendship & marchandise, according to the ancient usage and treaties of entercourse, made betwixt our Progenitors and the Lordes and Earles of those countries, and betwixt our people and the people of those countries” (Elizabeth 19).

⁴ Elizabeth 3.

The commercial exchanges between English and Dutch merchants (“commerce and entercourse of Marchantes”) are the foremost relations described in Elizabeth’s Declaration. That is, official relations were established for the purpose of “commerce,” a word which the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines as: “Exchange between men of the products of nature or art; buying and selling together; trading; exchange of merchandise, *esp.* as conducted on a large scale between different countries or districts; including the whole of the transactions, arrangements, etc.” For an early recorded example of this usage, the OED cites Abraham Fleming’s 1587 embellishment of Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande, where it is written: “So hath the same mutuall and naturall concourse and commerce beene without interruption...to the singular great benefit and inriching of their people.”

Starting first from the foundation of commercial exchange, the relations between the English and the Dutch in Elizabeth’s text extend to religious matters (“Ecclesiasticall as Secular”), since both countries share a Protestant faith. From such “continuall entercourses,” bonds of “mutuall love” emanate that have endured perpetually, as though by “the woorke of nature.” Elizabeth naturalizes the “entercourse of Marchanntes” by association with the more intimate bonds of “mutuall love,” suggesting that the bonds of commerce form a union as natural as that of the family. Indeed, Elizabeth says that England being the “most ancient allies and familiar neighbours” of the Low Countries, it may be said that the bonds of the two countries have “of long time resembled and termed as man and wife.”⁵ This description of the union of the two countries as that of “man and wife” prefigures the manner in which King James I would describe his relationship to the three kingdoms (England, Scotland, and Ireland) after ascending to the English throne: “I am the

⁵ Elizabeth 8.

Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body.”⁶ Moreover, Elizabeth’s conceit of natural bonds forged by commerce between England and the Low Countries echoes Richard Hakluyt’s (1552-1616) encomium to colonization, which, according to David Armitage, “confirmed the natural jurisprudential argument that God had so disposed the world’s commodities that the reciprocity of scarcity and abundance between states would promote the ‘benefit of traffic and intercourse of merchants’.”⁷

Though they differed in their foreign policies towards the Low Countries and the Protestant republic of the United Provinces, both Elizabeth and James were by turns allies and rivals to their Protestant neighbors. Although Elizabeth blames the subversion of foreign “Princes their Neighbours, enuying the felicitie of these two Countries” for any tensions between England and the Low Countries, in reality Anglo-Dutch trade was a source of conflict as much as unity (as much “mutuall amitie” in matters “Ecclesiasticall as Secular” as the two countries shared in their mutual “commerce and entercourse of Marchantes,” well into the seventeenth century when war would arise over these very issues of commerce, religion, and government in a period of emergent colonial expansion.

Along with Prince William of Orange (1533-1584), the statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt⁸ (1547-1619) was the founding father of the Dutch Republic. As Advocate of Holland, Oldenbarnevelt held a pivotal role in Anglo-Dutch relations during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, until 1619, when he was driven from power,

⁶ James VI and I, “Speech to parliament of 19 March 1604” in Political Writings, Ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 136.

⁷ Richard Hakluyt quoted in David Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 71.

⁸ I use the Dutch spelling “Johan van Oldenbarnevelt” or “Oldenbarnevelt” to refer to the historical figure, and “Barnavel” to refer to Massinger and Fletcher’s representation of the statesman in The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavel.

tried, and executed in The Hague. Oldenbarnevelt led the wealthy and powerful province of Holland, and guided the United Provinces during crucial events in Anglo-Dutch relations, from the Treaty of Nonsuch (1585) brokered between the States General and Elizabeth, which secured England's military and financial commitment to the United Provinces, to the religious controversies between Calvinist Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants in the early seventeenth century: doctrinal disputes which also led to struggles over the proper form of government (Erastian, relatively tolerant state policy versus religious and political dogmatism).⁹ Indeed, writing in his Apology (1618), a document defending his actions in the course of the religious controversies (in which James I himself directly participated), Oldenbarnevelt cites the numerous occasions on which he had the privilege of consulting with the sovereigns of England:

[...] I my selfe spake to Kings, face to face. The first was in the yeere 85, wherein we first obtained of the Queene of *England*, the ayde of foure thousand armed men, to raysse the siege from *Antwerpe* & afterward a promise of 5000 foote-men, and a thousand horse-men [...]. In my Embassage to the King of *England* at this day, I obtained, that the King gave us libertie to muster two or three thousand souldiers in *Scotland* for the benefit of the Provinces [...].¹⁰

Oldenbarnevelt's Apology is an autobiographical account of the Advocate's services to the Dutch Republic "for the space of 32 yeeres," but it also reads as a veritable

⁹ See for instance, James I's declaration addressed to the States General of the United Provinces calling on the States to retract the appointment of the Arminian theologian, Conradus Vortius (1569-1622), to Leiden University: James I, His Maiesties declaration concerning his proceedings with the States generall of the Vnited Provinces of the Low Countreys, in the cause of D. Conradus Vorstius (London: 1612).

¹⁰ Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, Barneuels apology: or Holland mysterie. With marginall castigations. (London: 1618).

history of the mutual relations Elizabeth I described between England and the Low Countries. Oldenbarnevelt discusses the effects of the Treaty of Nonsuch and the Earl of Leicester's brief governorship of the United Provinces (1585-1587) when he worked to calm the tumult of religious and political strife that Leicester's ineptitude incited among the provinces, and defends his own consistent policy of religious toleration throughout the Arminian controversy. Oldenbarnevelt's importance in Dutch politics did not escape the attention of its neighbor, England. Oldenbarnevelt's execution on May 3, 1619 was reported within the day to James I through Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador at The Hague.¹¹ Shortly thereafter, pamphlets were published in England giving accounts of the trial and execution. Ivo Kamps notes that "[t]he overall printed record suggests that Oldenbarnevelt's untimely death was not received with particular sadness. The popular (though not universally held) English view of the Oldenbarnevelt affair was expressed crudely in a contemporary ballad entitled 'Murther Unmasked'."¹² Philip Massinger and John Fletcher thought Oldenbarnevelt's fall urgent enough that they set to work to depict the political fall of the Dutch statesmen within the month of Oldenbarnevelt's execution. They composed their play, The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnaveit within two months of the Advocate's execution, and the play was performed at the Globe theatre in August 1619.¹³

¹¹ Fredson Bowers, "Textual Introduction" in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon, Vol. 8, Ed. Fredson Bowers, et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 486.

¹² Ivo Kamps, Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 141. On English reactions to Oldenbarnevelt's death see: Jan den Tex, Oldenbarnevelt, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 2: 691.

¹³ Bowers, "Textual Introduction" 486. Bowers notes: "How popular this topical play was and how long it was kept on the stage is unknown. Whether the fact that it was not printed reflects a lack of public interest beyond the novelty level, or else possible concern about difficulties for publication despite permission having been given for acting, cannot be determined. However, it may be thought that after the excitement following Barnaveit's execution had died down, the play would hold a minimal

Scholarly accounts of Massinger and Fletcher's Barnavel¹⁴ have most often focused on what the play's surviving manuscript can tell us about censorship in England, because the manuscript contains the uniquely extensive traces of its reception by the censor George Buc (1560-1622), the Master of the Revels, who particularly objected to the playwrights' sometimes unsympathetic portrayal of Prince Maurits of Nassau (1567-1625), a living person and a political ally of James I.¹⁵ The play has also been examined as a commentary on Calvinist doctrine, as an oblique representation of the conflict between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants, for its significance for understanding republicanism, and for the resonances between England and the Low Countries.¹⁶

intrinsic drawing-power as pure drama, despite several powerful scenes" (Bowers 486). See also Kamps 143.

¹⁴ All textual references to Barnavel are taken from: Philip Massinger and John Fletcher, The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavel in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon, Vol. 8, Ed. Fredson Bowers, et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 483-632.

¹⁵ I use the Dutch spelling "Maurits" to refer to the historical person and "Maurice" to refer to Massinger and Fletcher's representation of the Dutch prince. T.H. Howard-Hill offers a detailed investigation of George Buc's censorship of Massinger and Fletcher's play, as well as an insightful analysis of Buc's personal connections to the Low Countries that help to shed light on the nature of his comments on Barnavel. T.H. Howard-Hill, "Buc and the Censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel* in 1619," Review of English Studies 39.153 (1988): 39-63. See also: T.H. Howard-Hill, "Crane's 1619 'Promptbook' of 'Barnavel' and Theatrical Processes," Modern Philology 86.2 (1988): 146-170; Joseph F. Stephenson, "On the Markings in the Manuscript of Sir John Van Olden Barnavel," Notes and Queries 53.4 (2006): 522-524.

¹⁶ See John Curran for a discussion of Massinger and Fletcher's play in relation to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination: John Curran, "'You Are Yourself': Calvinist Dramaturgy and Its Discontents in *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavel*," Exemplaria 16 (2004): 235-265. In Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama, Ivo Kamps offers an engaging analysis of the play's "republican and anti-authoritarian connotations" (142) that are worked out through competing modes of historiography (providentialist versus Machiavellian or humanist). For his part, James I seems to have viewed his office as king as part of a providential history, albeit from a staunchly Protestant position. See Katharine R. Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 131-32. Joseph Stephenson argues that Buc's censorship of Barnavel reflects his anxieties about the potential threat of the representation of republican government to English monarchy: Joseph F. Stephenson, "England and the Shadow of the Low Countries: Drama and Dutchness from Shakespeare to Dryden," Diss. University of Connecticut, 2007.

In what follows, I would like to examine the play not simply as an artifact of Jacobean censorship or a warning against revolt, but as a complex, often internally conflicted response to the relationship between monarchy, mercantilism, and the promise (or threat) of republicanism. By taking contemporary Dutch politics as their subject, Massinger and Fletcher were able to raise troubling questions about the sources of sovereign authority, the dangers of absolutism, the tangled history of English and Dutch relations, and the relationship between the forms of state power and the forms of commerce. The Low Countries, at that time the staging ground of both the republican experiment and vigorous mercantile capitalism, allow Massinger and Fletcher to rehearse English possibilities. Throughout Barnavelt, the conflict between monarchical and republican government is not only examined through the political rivalry between Maurice and Barnavelt, but understood in economic terms, as social bonds based on market exchange undermine power structures based on inherited social rank. On a larger scale, the play engages with questions of international economic sovereignty, exemplified by the debate (during James I's reign) between Hugo Grotius and John Selden over the common use of the seas.¹⁷ Before discussing Massinger and Fletcher's treatment of these problems, though, we must first examine the historical context that Barnavelt presupposes but does not directly explain or represent, particularly the English involvement in the Dutch Revolt, and the politically charged religious disputes that precipitated Oldenbarnevelt's direct conflict with the Prince of Orange and his indirect conflict with James I.

¹⁷ Kenneth R. Andrews notes that "it was the reign of James that saw the effective beginnings of the British Empire: the establishment of colonies in North America, the development of direct trade with the East, and even the first annexation of territory in a recognized Spanish sphere of influence—the West Indies" (Andrews 13). Yet upon James's coronation in 1603, "the crown's attitude to overseas enterprise underwent no radical change [...]: such matters continued to have low priority" (Andrews 13). Kenneth R. Andrews, Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

“Haec Libertatis Ergo”: Historical Backgrounds

Since Massinger and Fletcher leave the events leading to the conflict between Barnavelt’s and Maurice’s factions unstated, for the most part, it will be necessary to retrace the historical factors behind this conflict, including the history of the English involvement in the Dutch Revolt against Spanish rule. Though it is difficult to identify a single event as the decisive cause of the Dutch Revolt and the Eighty Years’ War between Spain and the Low Countries (1568-1648), many historians believe that the Iconoclastic Fury [*Beeldenstorm*] of 1566 heralded the coming war. Pieter Geyl, for example, describes 1566, the year of “the ‘Breaking of the Images [*Beeldenstorm*] and the ‘Hedge-Row Sermons,’” as the “first frankly revolutionary year.”¹⁸ The Iconoclastic Fury of August 1566 was the culmination of a resistance led by William, prince of Orange, count of Nassau (1533-84) against the increasingly centralized government of Philip II. Along with like-minded noblemen, William petitioned for official religious toleration of Calvinism and the other Protestant faiths spreading rapidly across Flanders and Brabant. Encouraged by these nobles’ resistance, Dutch Protestants in many towns destroyed Catholic churches and icons, which they viewed as evidence that the Catholics sacrilegiously worshipped idols. Amid the increasing radicalization of Calvinists, this insurrection alarmed Philip II, who sent the Duke of Alva (appointed Governor-General of the Low Countries from 1567 to 1573) to bring order to the provinces with the aid of mercenary troops. In 1568, the Council of Troubles, established by the Duke of Alva, sentenced the counts of Egmont and Hornes to death for treason, galvanizing many Dutch nobles to oppose Spanish rule.¹⁹ Among his numerous draconian measures, the Duke of Alva tried to strengthen the

¹⁸ Pieter Geyl, *History of the Low Countries* (London: Macmillan, 1964) 7.

¹⁹ See Henk van Nierop, “The Nobles and the Revolt” in *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt*, Ed. Graham Darby (London: Routledge, 2001) 62.

authority of the Spanish government in the Low Countries through a system of taxation that essentially made the government's functioning independent of public consent. The Duke of Alva's repressive rule and the occupation of towns by Spanish troops only intensified the resentment of the Dutch and fueled the popular resistance in the Low Countries. Ultimately, the cost of the military presence proved to be a financial burden on Spain, a burden which was aggravated by Spain's costly war with the Ottoman Empire from 1568 to 1571.

In 1575, the Spanish government declared bankruptcy, and Philip II delayed paying his troops; the situation was made still worse when the English seized a number of Spanish ships that contained money for the troops' wages. The Spanish troops consequently sought to remunerate themselves by sacking various towns, including Antwerp on November 4, 1576. The Spanish Fury [*Spaanse Furie*], as the event is known, shocked the Dutch provinces and alienated even Catholic supporters of Spain in the Low Countries. Only four days later on November 8, 1576, the predominantly Calvinist northern provinces and the Catholic southern provinces were compelled by the event to set aside their religious differences. They signed the Pacification of Ghent [*Pacificatie van Gent*], which united the provinces in revolt against Spanish rule of the Low Countries and authorized the formation of troops to defend against the mutinying Spanish soldiers and ensuring limited toleration of religion. Although the declaration of alliance signed by the provinces did not totally deny Philip II's sovereign authority, it did seek to broker reconciliation with the Spanish king in terms favorable to the rebel provinces. The rebels' declaration called for the removal of Spanish troops from the Low Countries, the restoration of provincial authority over local affairs, and the toleration of Calvinists. Furthermore, the alliance between the northern and southern provinces implicitly recognized the right of Holland and Zeeland—predominantly Calvinist provinces and military

strongholds led by William I, Prince of Orange, against Spain—to manage their own affairs, and secured the agreement of neighboring Catholic provinces for religious toleration of Calvinists, provided that Calvinist provinces did not attempt to spread their religion beyond their borders. Spain accepted the terms of the Pacification, and Spanish troops were ordered out of the Low Countries in 1577. However, hostilities between Spain and the Low Countries soon resumed. Calvinism continued to spread throughout the south in violation of earlier agreements, and relations among the allied provinces deteriorated from within.

By 1579, the alliance between the northern and southern provinces splintered into two separate unions, the Union of Arras and the Union of Utrecht, both of which sought to align the political and religious interests of the individual provinces more closely. On January 6, 1579, the Union of Arras [*Unie van Atrecht*], favoring a conciliatory reading of the Pacification, joined Artois (Arras was its center), Hainaut, and Douay in shared allegiance to the Catholic faith and to King Philip II, as well as to his appointed Governor-General of the Low Countries, Don Juan of Austria. Largely in response to the Union of Arras, the northern provinces formed the Union of Utrecht [*Unie van Utrecht*] on January 23, 1579. The Union of Utrecht pledged to continue sustained military resistance against Spanish control of the Low Countries, to defend each other's rights and privileges, to defer to arbitration in matters of dispute, and to refuse to negotiate peace with Phillip II without mutual consent.²⁰ The initial signatories of the Union of Utrecht included Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, and Zutphen. In the following year, the Union was expanded by the commitment of additional northern provinces, including the whole of Overijssel (Zutphen, a municipality of Overijssel, had joined the previous year), and the majority of Friesland

²⁰ For further discussion of the unions see: History of the Low Countries, Trans. James C. Kennedy, Ed. J. C. H. Blom and Emiel Lamberts (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998).

and Groningen, as well as the allegiance of cities to the south, including Antwerp and Breda in the region of Brabant, and Ghent, Brugge, and Ypres in the region of Flanders. The Union of Utrecht initially recognized the sovereign authority of Philip II over the provinces, even though it maintained that the respective *stadthouders* of the provinces should represent the Union's interests as its appointed leaders.²¹ However, two years later, on July 26, 1581, the States General abrogated Philip II's sovereignty of the Low Countries in the Act of Abjuration [*Plakkaat van Verlatinghe*] on the grounds of tyranny.²² In the Act of Abjuration,

²¹ The office of the *stadtholder* or *stadthouder* emerged in the fifteenth century under the Burgundian rule of the Low Countries. It continued through the Hapsburg rule, and until the collapse of the Dutch Republic in 1795. The stadthouders were the governors of the provincial states, charged with overlooking their own provincial governments and the command of the armies. At its inception in the fifteenth century, the office of the stadthouder was awarded by royal appointment, with the stadthouder acting as a deputy to the sovereign, but during the Dutch Revolt (1568-1609), the office became an elected position (initially the States-General elected the stadthouders, and later the individual provincial states). "In 1581, [...] when Philip II was repudiated as sovereign," Maarten Prak notes, "the office of the stadtholder should have been abolished, since from a constitutional standpoint it no longer had grounds for existence. Instead, the stadtholder's position was reinforced" (Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age*, Trans. Diane Webb. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 178). Despite the "shaky constitutional position of the stadthouderate" (Prak 180), the stadthouders wielded considerable power in the provinces that remained independent of Spanish rule, since they appointed "the selfsame magistrates to whom they themselves were then answerable" in the state assemblies (Prak 179). The authority of the individual stadthouders was strengthened by their ability to govern on behalf of multiple provinces: William I of Orange, for example, acted as stadthouder of four provinces. The House of Orange, to which Maurice of Nassau belonged, remained dominant in the independent provinces' stadthouderate throughout the seventeenth century, and acted as a political counterweight to the Grand Pensionary, or Advocate of Holland. The Grand Pensionary "acted informally as prime minister and foreign secretary combined," being responsible for advising the States of Holland and formulating their proposals, while also communicating "privately – indeed, more or less in secret — with the Republic's foreign envoys" (Prak 183).

²² The States-General was a governmental body founded in the fifteenth century by the ruling dukes of Burgundy (from the French house of Valois) in order to strengthen the central administration of the various states under Burgundian rule and to facilitate the appropriation of taxes; the institution was maintained by the succeeding Hapsburg rulers (House of Austria), including Philip II of Spain. Notably, in February 10, 1477 the States-General obtained its own constitution, the Great Privilege [*Het Groot Privilege*], which was granted by Duchess Mary of Burgundy in the course of deliberations aimed at addressing the threat of French invasion. The Great Privilege may be described as "the Magna Charta of Holland" and "the foundation of the [Dutch] republic" which served as the basis of the rights

the States-General outlined which promises Philip II had broken in the contract that he had made with his subjects at the beginning of his reign. Philip had also violated natural law, existing rights like...the Great Privilege [*Het Groot Privilege*] of 1477, and had repeatedly scorned many other customs and laws. He had treated his subjects in the Low Countries arbitrarily, as if they were colonial natives. He had even sought to rule over their consciences. [...] For these reasons, Philip was no longer fit to rule over them, and the States-General would choose and crown a more deserving prince.”²³

of subjects, including the right to resist sovereigns (“The Netherlands Under Burgundy and the Empire, 1436-1555” in The Historians’ History of the World. Ed. Henry Smith Williams. London: The History Association, 1904. 362). The constitution provided that: “no war could be declared and no marriage concluded by the ducal sovereign without the consent of the [States-General]; to establish the necessity of their approval for fresh taxes, to confine the tenure of office to natives, to insist on the use of the national tongue in all public documents, to secure to the several provinces the control of the government’s commercial policy and a check upon the use of its military force” (A. W. Ward, “The Netherlands” in The Cambridge Modern History. Vol. 1. Ed. A.W. Ward, et. al. London: Macmillan, 1912. 438). The States-General was composed of delegates appointed from among the seventeen provincial states. Delegates to the States-General represented the specific interests of their own state, but any decisions made by the States-General required the unanimous consent of all the states. Although originally designed to facilitate the control of the Burgundian and later Hapsburg rulers over the Low Countries, the States-General came to acquire an independent significance, notably in 1576 when it convened without the sanction of the Spanish crown, so as to negotiate reconciliation with Spain and the expulsion of mutinying Spanish troops from the Low Countries through the Pacification of Ghent, an accord which also formed the basis of continued resistance to Spain through the general union of the southern and northern provinces. With the formation of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, or the Dutch Republic (during the Dutch Revolt, 1568-1609), the States-General of the Dutch Republic consisted of delegates from among the seven provinces and represented those provinces in the Union of Utrecht. Although the states varied in their number of deputies, each deputation functioned as a single unit and cast one vote. The States-General was entrusted with the foreign affairs, military and naval authority, and supervisory control of finances. For further explanation of various political positions and institutions (States-General, stadthouder, etc.) in the complex system of government in the Low Countries, see: George Edmundson, History of Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) 138-147.

²³ W.P. Blockmans, “The Formation of a Political Union, 1300-1600” in History of the Low Countries, Trans. James C. Kennedy, Ed. J. C. H. Blom and Emiel Lamberts (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998) 139.

The Act of Abjuration questioned the notion of the divine right of kings, claiming that “supreme authority rested in the collective will of representatives whose mandate was provisional and temporary. [Representatives] remained responsible to local communities who could always hold them accountable. It was only during the Revolt that these concepts were systematically worked out, but they had long existed in the political traditions of the Low Countries [...] The States-General now applied the principle of representative government to themselves.”²⁴

The Act of 1581 uniformly declared the independence of the Low Countries, but given the differences between the northern and southern provinces and their respective unions (including their varying degrees of cooperation with Spanish rule), the long-term political effects of the declaration were limited primarily to the northern provinces joined under the Union of Utrecht, which formed the basis of an independent republic. One effect of this declaration of independence was the establishment of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands [*Republiek der Zeven Verenigde Nederlanden*], also known as the United Provinces or the Dutch Republic (1581-1795). The Republic’s independence was recognized at first only *de facto* by

²⁴ Blockmans 139. Bernard H. M. Vlekke also indicates that political thought on the legitimacy of revolution developed in tandem with the Revolt, only after the Revolt was underway; moreover “[t]he legitimacy of resistance and the rightful authority of those who led it were always emphasized. Not for a moment did the Netherlanders assert a ‘right of revolution’; they always claimed to be the defenders of law and justice.” Bernard H. M. Vlekke, *Evolution of the Dutch Nation* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1945) 157. For an examination of concepts of sovereignty and representative government during the Dutch Revolt see: Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Van Gelderen discusses the political ideas that served to legitimate the Revolt against the rule of Philip II over the Low Countries, including notions of popular sovereignty and constitutionalism; Van Gelderen makes reference to the debates concerning religious toleration and the relationship of the church and state that formed an important backdrop in the political conflict between Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and Prince Maurice of Orange. See also: E. H. Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic: Three Studies* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2000); Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Jonathan I. Israel, and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, eds., *The Emergence of Tolerance in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997).

Philip III during the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) between the Dutch Republic and Spain; not until 1648, and the Peace of Westphalia, would Spain recognize the independent Republic *de jure*. After rejecting Philip II's sovereignty over the Low Countries, the States-General set out to appoint a more suitable ruler. Prince William of Orange approached the Duke of Anjou, the youngest son of King Henry II of France, hoping to enlist the support of the French king. The Duke of Anjou accepted the lordship of the Low Countries, but he failed to deliver the French military support he had promised, and fell short of his agreement to work in concert with the States-General, who thought the Duke of Anjou's office of lordship should exist within a constitutional framework (requiring the appointment and consent of the States-General), not as a front for a new absolute monarchy. In 1583, the Duke of Anjou tried and failed to seize greater power through a coup in Antwerp. In the following year, a fanatical Catholic assassinated the Prince of Orange, who had led the rebels in the Dutch Revolt on July 1584. The Duke of Parma, acting for Spain, gained control of Antwerp on August 17, 1585, after a seven-month siege, and Spanish troops forged on into Flanders and Brabant.

These dispiriting events convinced the States General to seek the help of England. They offered sovereignty of the Low Countries to Elizabeth I, who refused the offer.²⁵ Nonetheless, England agreed to extend its protectorate over the Republic, signing the Treaty of Nonsuch on August 20, 1585, whereby “[t]roops and commanders would be sent, repayments and cautionary towns (Flushing, The Brill and Fort Rammekens) were agreed on, and a number of financial, religious, political and economic obligations were recorded in clear, simple terms.”²⁶ In addition, the Treaty allowed for the position of Governor-General to be held by an English subject, but

²⁵ King Henry III of France had been made the same offer with the same result.

²⁶ Roy C. Strong and J. A. van Dorsten, *Leicester's Triumph* (Leiden: University of Leiden, 1964) 25.

“the actual position and authority of an English commander in the Netherlands remained vaguely formulated.”²⁷ Elizabeth appointed Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester (c. 1530-88) as her Lieutenant-General in the rebel provinces. Although Elizabeth had not appointed Leicester for the position of Governor-General in the Low Countries, the States-General instructed its delegates in London “to use every means to ensure Leicester’s appointment as Governor-General, and the appointment of Walsingham’s son-in-law Sir Philip Sidney and Lord Burghley’s son Thomas Cecil as Governors of Flushing and Brill.”²⁸ In order to legitimize the United Provinces, the Dutch rebels sought the protection of a sovereign ruler after the assassination of William of Orange, unsuccessfully attempting to enlist first Henry III of France and then Elizabeth I of England. Leicester had been courted as Governor-General for this reason, rather than from any desire for an absolute authority.²⁹ In her instructions to Leicester on December 1585, Elizabeth explicitly states her refusal of the States-General’s offer of sovereignty over the Low Countries, injoining Leicester:

To lett the states understand, that, where by their commissioneres they made offer unto her majestie, first, of the soueraintie of those countreyes, which for sundrie respects she did not accept, secondlie, unto her protection, offering to be absolutelie gouerned by such as her majestie wold appoint and send ouer to be her lieftenaunt. That her majestie, although she would not take soe much upon her as to comaund them in such absolute sort, yet unlesse they should shew themselves forward to use the advise of her majestie to be delivered unto them by her lieftenaunte, to work amongst them a faire unitie and

²⁷ Strong and van Dorsten 25.

²⁸ Strong and van Dorsten 25-26.

²⁹ Jan den Tex, Oldenbarnevelt, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 1: 66.

concurrence for their owne defence, in liberall taxacions and good husbanding of their contribucions, for the more speedie atteyninge of a peace, her majestie wold think her favours unworthelye bestowed upon them. To offer all his lordships travaile, care, and en devour, to understand their estates, and to geve them advice, from tyme to tyme, in that which maie be for the suretie of their estate and her majesties honour.³⁰

When Leicester arrived in The Hague in January 1586, he was entreated, as before, to accept the position of Governor-General, which he then did.³¹ At the signing of the Treaty of Nonsuch, the title of Governor-General carried a different significance for the Queen from what it did for the delegates of the States-General:

Until he was sworn in as Governor-General on February 4th 1586, the official interpretation remained ‘a general with very limited civil power’. But it is abundantly clear from the earlier correspondence, if studied and compared chronologically, that the common reading was ‘one with the same civil and military authority as a governor under

³⁰ “Abstracts of the earle of Leicesters instructions, appointed by her majestie to be her lieftenaunt-generall of her forces in the Low Contreys” in Robert Dudley, Correspondence of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leycester, During His Government of the Low Countries, in the Years 1585 and 1586, Ed. John Bruce (London: Printed for the Camden Society by J.B. Nichols and Son, 1844) 15.

³¹ Preceding his departure to the Low Countries, Leicester was asked by representatives of the States-General at The Hague to accept the position of Governor-General: “And, forasmuch as at this present the service of her majeste, and preservation of the unyted Lowe Countryes, with that which dependeth thereof, princypallye consysteth in the admynstration and conducte of the martyall affaires and warres, aswell [*sic*] offensive as defensive, by sea and lande, and that in the same countryes, by fault of authorityte, comaundement, and dew order, is fownde greate confusyon, fraude, negligence, and dysobedience, to greate advauntadge of the enemye and noe lesse harme, losse and daunger of the foresayd countryes in severall respectes, that, therefore, yt please his excellence, as before, to hale authorityte, with the first, to declare him selfe unto all and everye unto whome yt shall appertaine, chiefe head and gouvernour generall, accordinge to the chardge and comyssyon of her majeste.” “The commissioners of the Lowe Countryes advise” in Robert Dudley, Correspondence of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leycester, During His Government of the Low Countries, in the Years 1585 and 1586, Ed. John Bruce (London: Printed for the Camden Society by J.B. Nichols and Son, 1844) 16-17.

Charles V'. It was well known that the Queen strongly objected to the implications of such a reading—which, incidentally, cut right across her secret negotiations with the enemy [...].³²

It might be said that through Leicester's acceptance of the title of Governor-General, Elizabeth had become the sovereign of the Low Countries. Leicester, who had previously been given strict instructions to reject any offers of sovereignty, was ordered by Elizabeth in March 1586 to relinquish the title, and by turns Elizabeth and the States-General arrived at a solution that dissolved Leicester's appointment to the Governor-Generalship and allowed him to continue on as Elizabeth's appointed Lieutenant-General.³³ Elizabeth's outrage at Leicester's violation of her explicit instructions was partly the result of Leicester's instatement to office having been kept a secret from her by her own advisers as well as the States-General. Yet Elizabeth's anger at the events also resulted from her equally secret peace negotiations with Spain concurrent with her new alliance with the United Provinces in the Treaty of Nonsuch. These negotiations were unknown to her allies, and even at first to Sir Francis Walsingham and his staunchly Puritan associates, who had played an important role in bringing about England's intervention in the Dutch Revolt.³⁴

Prior to Leicester's appointment to the Governor-Generalship in February 1586, Holland and its regents had hoped that Leicester would serve their interests with respect to the other provinces; however, the newly-appointed Governor-General

³² Strong and van Dorsten 50.

³³ Strong and van Dorsten 59.

³⁴ Den Tex 1: 55. George Clark examines how the Dutch Republic resulted in a number of conflicts involving not only the Low Countries, but other European countries, including England. Clark discusses the various social and political concerns that motivated foreign intervention in the revolt of the Low Countries, such as the unresolved conflict in western European nations between "the social forces represented in the assemblies of the estates" and the opposing "centralizing policy of kings and their ministers." G.N. Clark, "The Birth of the Dutch Republic" in Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946) 189-217.

punctured these hopes by instituting a predominantly anti-Holland Council of State.³⁵ Furthermore, contrary to the expectations of the States-General, which had pushed for Leicester's appointment, Leicester aligned himself with hard-line Calvinists in Utrecht and Friesland (provinces that resented the economic and political influence of Holland and Zeeland). This exacerbated the social and religious tensions between the anti-Erastian orthodox Calvinists in Utrecht and the comparatively tolerant oligarchs of Holland, antagonistic groups that had previously agreed to put aside their differences to revolt against the religious inquisitions and the centralizing authority of Spain.³⁶ To lessen the dangers of Leicester's hostility, the States of Holland unanimously voted in March 1586 to appoint Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), who had been a member of the delegation sent to England to negotiate the Treaty, as its new Advocate.³⁷ From the early years of the Revolt, Holland served as an important center

³⁵ Den Tex 1: 47.

³⁶ Strong and van Dorsten 76. Den Tex indicates that among Leicester's supporters were the lower classes, who were excluded from political power and who saw Leicester as "the hero sent by God, who drove the money-changers from the temple [i.e. the "money-changers" being the powerful regents of Holland]" (Den Tex 1: 63).

³⁷ Den Tex 1: 47, 48. Like the office of the Stadthouder, the Advocate [*landsadvocaat*] traced back to Burgundian rule. The Advocate of Holland functioned as the spokesman of the States of Holland. (After Oldenbarnevelt's execution in 1619, the office was renamed the Grand Pensionary of Holland.) Next to the Stadtholder of Holland, the Advocate of Holland was one of the most important positions in the Dutch Republic because he governed the domestic and foreign affairs of the wealthiest and most powerful province among the United Provinces, which generated the largest portion of tax revenue for the Republic. One of the principal duties of the Advocate "was to defend the States' interests, particularly in their privileges, and to maintain their authority against everyone, first of all the ruler of the country [in 1586, that ruler being Leicester]" (Den Tex 1: 49). Additionally, the Advocate "served as chairman of the regional States' assemblies, wrote the official correspondence to domestic and foreign officials, and led Holland's delegation at meetings of the States-General" (A.T. van Deursen, "The Dutch Republic, 1588-1780" in *History of the Low Countries*. Trans. James C. Kennedy. Ed. J. C. H. Blom and Emiel Lamberts. New York: Berghahn Books, 1998. 139). Although both the Advocate (or Pensionary) and the Stadthouder of Holland enjoyed considerable power, there are some important differences in the status and capacities of the two offices, which would prove to be important in conflict in later years between Oldenbarnevelt (Advocate of Holland) and Prince Maurits (Stadthouder of Holland). Chief among those differences is that the Advocate "received status *through* his office" and the Stadthouder "*because* of his status" (Van Deursen 151). Furthermore, the Stadthouder functioned as the commander-in-chief of the army and the navy, whereas the Advocate had no such power. The

of political resistance and leadership, appointing William of Orange as the Stadthouder of Holland and Zeeland in 1572 to lend legitimacy to the unfolding conflict in the Low Countries against Spain. Though William subsequently embraced Calvinism, the dominant faith of the northern provinces, up to the time of his assassination in 1584, he and the States of Holland had pursued a policy of religious toleration. With Leicester's arrival imminent, the regents of the States of Holland now feared that his influence threatened what they understood as the guiding principles of the Revolt. Led by Oldenbarnevelt, Hollands' regents sought to weaken Leicester's sway amongst his anti-Holland adherents, claiming that their opposition crucially upheld the principles of political freedom and religious toleration that they considered the core of the Revolt (against the doctrinal partisanship of Leicester's supporters).³⁸

Although England's intervention in the Revolt spanned only two years, from the Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585 to Leicester's departure from the Low Countries in 1587, it revealed the underlying tensions among the United Provinces. These tensions would violently resurface in the religious disputes of 1618 and 1619, culminating in the defeat of the Arminians at the National Synod (Synod of Dordrecht) and the trial and execution of Oldenbarnevelt. Ever since the Dutch Reformed Church was formed at the Synod of Emden in 1571, factions within the Church had debated the extent to which Calvinist doctrine should be enforced. Hard-line Calvinists opposed religious toleration, desiring a strict enforcement of Calvinist doctrine and stronger ties between the affairs of the Church and the state; accordingly, strict Calvinists criticized the

Stadthouder was prohibited from using his military powers other than in the service of the state; however, "if the interests of the Republic were defined differently by parties implacably opposed to each other, then the [stadthouder] could use military coercion to force the parties to accept his opinion" (Van Deursen 151). Incidentally, in 1618 Oldenbarnevelt boasts in his Remonstrance that he had essentially made Maurits the Stadthouder of Holland, a claim which Den Tex dismisses as inaccurate (Den Tex 1: 42).

³⁸ Jonathan I. Israel, The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 221.

regents of Holland who pursued a comparatively tolerant policy on religion and privileged the authority of the state over that of the Church.³⁹ Not only religion, also class conflict contributed to political tensions among the Dutch provinces. The regents of Holland, who had spearheaded the Revolt since 1572, consisted of town representatives from various social strata. However, in the other northern provinces, the nobility remained the ruling class; they resented both the merchant oligarchs at the helm of government in Holland and their own exclusion from governmental positions of influence. Consequently, both hard-line Calvinists and the disgruntled nobility (primarily from Flanders and Brabant) embraced Leicester in the Treaty. There were two main reasons for this. On the one hand, Leicester was known as an open defender of English Puritans and would thus presumably support the strict Calvinists in the Dutch provinces. On the other hand, Leicester was himself a nobleman, who sympathized with the disaffected Protestant nobility from Flanders and Brabant who now resided in the northern provinces.⁴⁰

The delegates of the States-General had high hopes for Leicester's tenure in the Low Countries, but the results were equivocal. England and the United Provinces shared a common faith, and Leicester's initial supporters in the Republic viewed the

³⁹ Israel 221.

⁴⁰ Israel 222. Strict Calvinists did indeed find a champion in Leicester who supported their call for a national synod to resolve doctrinal disputes in the Reformed Church. A national synod subsequently convened in The Hague, and "The Hague Synod drew up a strictly Calvinist Church order and rejected the claims of the provincial States to supervise the annual meetings of the provincial synods, as well as civil control over the appointment of preachers" (Israel 227). Although "Leicester's National Synod remained a dead letter" it nonetheless received considerable support, including the support of a couple of towns in Holland, such as Dordrecht (Israel 227). Den Tex observes that: "The controversy over the calling of a national synod was later to cost Oldenbarnevelt his liberty and his life" (Den Tex 1: 66). In other words, it would be "Leicester's National Synod" in 1586 that would spell Oldenbarnevelt's political fate in 1619. For a description of the particular nature of the call for the national synod in 1586, see Den Tex 1: 66-67. For a general account of the matters under consideration in the national synod of 1586 see: Hugo Grotius, "Introduction," Hugo Grotius, *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas*, 1613, Trans. Edwin Rabbie, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995) 14.

Anglo-Dutch alliance as the basis for a united Protestant front against Spain. Though Leicester's supporters had championed the cause of "The Religion" in their efforts, this rallying call had been understood as a reference to the union's defense of the "freedom of religion," which reflected the policy of religious toleration that the late Prince William of Orange had strongly advocated as leader of the revolt. Leicester's initial supporters "would have been horrified to promote a calvinistic [*sic*] blend of church authority and civil government replacing the *Haec Libertatis Ergo* [*All This for Freedom's Sake*] of the rebellious north."⁴¹ (Indeed, such disputes over Calvinist orthodoxy and religious toleration would persist in the coming years. The contestation between the orthodox Calvinist Gomarists and the reformist Calvinist Arminians in the Dutch Reformed Church would threaten to lead to civil war in the United Provinces, and would in fact lead to Johan van Oldenbarnevelt's downfall in 1619.)

From the beginning, Leicester's arrival polarized Dutch politics. Between 1585 and 1587, Leicester and the States of Holland clashed on matters including the appointment and powers of stadtholders, the representation of Flanders and Brabant in the States-General at The Hague, the finances of the Dutch state, and the embargo imposed by Leicester on trade with enemy territories, which weakened Holland's

⁴¹ Strong and van Dorsten 75. On the matter of religious toleration and notions of representative government in the Dutch Revolt, Bernard H.M. Vlekke observes that: "Anti-clericalism had been a strong influence in the early years of the revolt. The towns of Holland would no more permit Calvinist than Catholic theocracy. When Adriaan Taling, minister of the Church in Leiden during the siege, compared the city magistrates to 'pigs who look no farther than their fodder' because they had ordered the words *Haec Libertatis Ergo* ("All This for Freedom's Sake") printed on newly minted coins, instead of *Haec Religionis Ergo* ("All This for Religion's Sake"), Jan van Hout, town secretary, grabbed his gun and threatened to shoot down the minister from his pulpit. *Haec Libertatis Ergo* had a definite meaning, first expressed by Prince William of Orange in his manifesto of 1568, when he said: 'The liberties of the towns and provinces are not free grants of royal benevolence but contracts binding both the prince and the people'. Here for the first time, the 'contract' theory which fitted admirably into the constitutional traditions of the Low Countries, was propounded" (Vlekke 157-58).

booming maritime commerce.⁴² Religious contentions persisted throughout Leicester's tenure. In 1586, the political turmoil intensified when the militia in Utrecht, supported by Leicester, fomented social unrest in the city. The militia called for the city government to enforce Calvinist orthodoxy, and for the United Provinces to renew their offer to pass their sovereignty to the English Crown. This tension escalated in October 1586, when Leicester purged the Utrecht town council [*vroedschap*] in order to reconstitute the council with Calvinist and pro-English members. Utrecht and its new town council (led by Gerard Prouinck, a resolute supporter of the English earl) became the central locus of anti-Catholic, orthodox Calvinist resistance in the Republic.⁴³ However, Leicester, "accused of endangering the stability of the Republic and having 'put in hazard divers provinces'" returned to England in December 1586.⁴⁴ During his absence, the States of Holland, under Oldenbarnevelt's leadership, worked to recover political ground, a task made easier by the waning of popular support for the English troops garrisoned in the Dutch towns.

⁴² Israel 223-225. The Treaty provided that the Council of State [*Raad van State*] would determine all future appointments to the provincial stadthouderates, which meant that all future appointments would require the approval of the English Crown (Israel 223). England hoped to exercise control over Dutch political affairs through the regulation of the offices of the stadthouderate and through the subordination of the stadthouders to the Governor-General, who was assured to be an English appointee according to the terms of the treaty. Holland and Zeeland, however, resisted these foreign encroachments on their authority, and the States of Holland and Zeeland set out to appoint the 17-year old Maurits (the son of William of Orange) officially as their Stadthouder—before Leicester's arrival and in defiance of the provisions of the Treaty—so as to limit Leicester's influence (Israel 224). The States of Holland and Zeeland also maintained that Maurits, along with all the stadthouders of the United Provinces, were answerable to their respective provinces, and that their appointments could not be altered by Leicester or by any other sovereign power (Israel 224).

⁴³ Israel 228.

⁴⁴ Israel 228; Den Tex 1:109-112. For details of the historical circumstances surrounding Leicester's departure and his return to the Low Countries at Queen Elizabeth's request and Walsingham's prompting, as well as Oldenbarnevelt's response to Leicester's intervention in Dutch politics, see Den Tex 1: 85-124. On Leicester's second stay in the Dutch Republic in 1587, Elizabeth instructed Leicester to brooch the subject of peace with Spain with the States General, which the States General adamantly refused (Den Tex 83, 115, 116).

Leicester returned to the Low Countries in 1587, and found that his political faction had weakened. Leicester risked civil war in staging a coup d'état to reclaim his authority, as the Duke of Anjou had done unsuccessfully in 1583.⁴⁵ Leicester ended his sojourn in the Low Countries with a self-defeating show of force: first trying to arrest Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt in The Hague, then encouraging internal unrest in Holland (particularly in the town governments of Leiden and Amsterdam), and finally going to Amsterdam to rally and to consolidate his supporters in person.⁴⁶ Each stage of his planned coup d'état failed; three of his co-conspirators were executed, and Leicester returned to England for good. The States-General no longer sought to court the authority of foreign states after its failed alliances with the Duke of Anjou and the English: the States now preferred to act as their own sovereign.⁴⁷ Only a year after Leicester's final departure from the Low Countries, the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588—in a confrontation that had been catalyzed in part by England's involvement in the Dutch Revolt—overshadowed the Anglo-Dutch imbroglio and left a stronger impression on English literary culture.

This interlude in the Dutch Revolt was recounted in quite different ways by the English and the Dutch. For instance, Edmund Spenser, who seems to have allegorized Leicester as the idealized figure of Arthur in The Fairie Queene, apparently valorizes Leicester's expedition in the Low Countries. According to Tobias Gregory, Spenser

⁴⁵ Israel 228, 229. Leicester wrote to the States General that if they refused to afford him the same authority he had enjoyed before his departure then: "I shall need, to preserve the honour of her Majesty and myself, again to protest, if any loss or hardship occurs, that the blame and shame should not be given to her Majesty nor to me, but to those who are showing such dishonor and discourtesy to her Majesty" (qtd. in Den Tex 1: 117).

⁴⁶ Israel 230. Den Tex suggests that when Leicester arrived at The Hague, he may have intended to have Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt killed: "There is something mysterious in Leicester's behaviour at this time [September 1587]. When he entered The Hague with a strong military escort he probably intended to capture, if not to kill, Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt" (Den Tex 1: 118).

⁴⁷ Blockmans 140.

even privileges Leicester's view of the Anglo-Dutch episode over the Queen's, by "evoking Leicester's expedition in terms of rescuing a lady wronged."⁴⁸ Gregory argues that Spenser, moreover, portrays English Protestant intervention as "self-evidently just," constructing a world in which opposition to a tyrant (the Catholic King of Spain) "is simply a matter of doing the right thing" and where the hero "Arthur encounters no conflicts of realpolitik such as those faced by Leicester."⁴⁹ However, Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, whom George Edmundson describes as "the greatest man of letters that Holland has ever produced,"⁵⁰ adopted a different view of Leicester and the English affair, remarking in his Nederlandsche Historien [*Netherland Histories*] that Leicester "lost sight of himself in a cloud of vain glory."⁵¹ Paradoxically, Oldenbarnevelt, who had helped Holland expel Leicester, would be remembered in England after his trial and execution as a figure akin to Hooft's characterization of Leicester. John Ford, for instance, describes Oldenbarnevelt in A line of life Pointing at the immortalitie of a vertuous name (1620) as a great man destroyed by his excessive ambition:

SIR IOHN VANOLDEN BARNEVELT in the *Netherlands*, (whose ashes are scarce yet colde) is and will bee a liuely president of the mutabilitie of Greatnesse. Hee was the only one that traffiqued in the Counsels of forreine Princes, had factors in all Courts, Intelligencers amongst all Christian nations; stood as the ORACLE of the Prouinces [...] yet enforcing his publike Authoritie, too much to bee seruant to his priuate Ambition; hee left the Tongue of *Iustice* to proclayme that *long*

⁴⁸ Tobias Gregory, "Shadowing Intervention: On the Politics of "The Faerie Queene" Book 5 Cantos 10-12," English Literary History. 67. 2 (2000): 368.

⁴⁹ Gregory 368.

⁵⁰ George Edmundson, "Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft," English Historical Review. 9. 33 (1894): 77.

⁵¹ P.C. Hooft is quoted in Strong and van Dorsten 71-72.

life, and a *peacefull death* are not granted or held by the Charter of Honours, except vertuous RESOLVTION renew the Patent, at a daily expence of proficiencie in goodnesse.⁵²

Merchants and Princes: Between Republicanism and Monarchism

Massinger and Fletcher's Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt begins with Barnavelt, Modesbagen, Leidenberch, and Grotius in discussion of the popular support for Maurice, recently crowned Prince of Orange. Barnavelt declares his resentment for Maurice, who he feels has obscured his glory, and for the ungrateful Dutch, who have forgotten his achievements as a revolutionary and a statesman. Although his friend Modesbagen warns him against succumbing to prideful ambition in his old age, Barnavelt persists in his opposition to Maurice, whom he views not only as a political rival but also as a potentially despotic figure. Barnavelt declares his support for the Arminian sect and attempts to raise new companies of troops to stand with the Arminians against Maurice. (It should be noted that the playwrights do not directly explain or comment on the conflict between the Arminians and the Gomarists.) However, the English Captains whom Barnavelt attempts to win over to his side remain loyal to the Prince of Orange, objecting that their loyalties are to the Dutch Republic rather than any particular province. Maurice disperses the new troops with the help of the English soldiers, and Barnavelt's allies flee. Leidenberch and Modesbagen are captured by Maurice's troops. Although Barnavelt convinces Leidenberch to defy Maurice by committing suicide in prison, Leidenberch has already sworn a confession incriminating Barnavelt as a plotter against the state and the official religion. Despite Barnavelt's eloquent defense of his past service to the Dutch Republic, he is tried and sentenced to death, on Maurice's insistence. The play

⁵² John Ford, A line of life Pointing at the immortalitie of a vertuous name, (London: 1620) 77-81.

ends with the grotesque spectacle of Barnavelt's decapitation, with Leidenberch's body hung nearby in its coffin for a symbolic execution. Barnavelt refuses to publicly repent for his actions and reminds the spectators of his sacrifices for the Republic. With Maurice absent, anonymous lords look on as Barnavelt is beheaded onstage, the careless executioner cutting off some of Barnavelt's fingers as well in the act.

The play begins *in medias res*, with Barnavelt's incredulous response to Leidenberch's report: "The Prince of Orange now, all names are lost els/ That hee's alone the Father of his Cuntry?/ Said you not soe?" (1.1.1.3). We soon learn that Leidenberch, who claims to "speake the peoples Language," has just informed Barnavelt and his adherents that the people praise Grave Maurice, the Prince of Orange, as the man to whom they owe the "flourishing peace" of the "Provinces" of the Dutch Republic, and as the man who is "the Armyes soule/ By which it moves to victorie" (1.1.4-6). Modesbargen—who later emerges as a stoic advisor-figure reminiscent of the other Fletcherian characters, Dion and Mardonius, in Philaster and A King and No King—affirms Leidenberch's report, remarking succinctly, "So 'tis said, Sir" (1.1.7). Barnavelt's incredulity and indignation in the opening lines of the play register the recent elevation of Maurice's title from "Grave" [*Graaf*], or Count, to Prince upon the death of Philip William, his eldest half-brother in 1618. This situates the play's events in the year preceding the historical Oldenbarnevelt's trial and execution in May 1619. Barnavelt's opening lines conveys both this broader historical context of the play, and a sense of the speed of Maurice's rise from Grave to Prince, while also suggesting the potential dangers of such a sudden rise to fame and prestige. Grotius gives voice to Barnavelt's implied concerns, observing that the praise and adulation of the people have emboldened the Prince to take actions he would not have performed before his recent rise to power: "'Tis this that swells his pride/ Beyond those lymitts, his late modestie/ Ever observd; This makes him Court the Soldier,/ As

his owne creature, and to arrogate/ All prosperous proceedings to himself,/ Detracts from you, and all men: you scarce holding/ The second place” (1.1.17-23). Grotius’s claim that the Prince, encouraged by popular support, “Court[s] the Soldier,/ As his owne creature” echoes Barnavelt’s earlier reference to the purported opinion amongst the people of Maurice as the “Armyes soule” (1.1.5), but it also alludes to the particular relationship of the office of the Stadthouder to the military and to the Republic as a whole.⁵³

Maurits had been officially elected Stadthouder of Holland and Zeeland in 1585 by the States of Holland and Zeeland, as Stadthouder of Utrecht and Overijssel in 1590, of Gelderland in 1591, and several months after Massinger and Fletcher’s play, would be elected Stadthouder of Groningen and Drenthe in 1620 by the respective States of these provinces. Officially, as Stadthouder, Maurits functioned as the commander of the troops of the provinces in which he had been elected, but, in reality, he served as commander-in-chief of the military forces of the Dutch Republic as a whole. Despite his military authority, as Stadthouder, Maurits also answered to the States which had elected him, and he was entrusted to employ his authority in the service of the States. However, as A.T. van Deursen notes, “if the interests of the Republic were defined differently by parties implacably opposed to each other, then the [stadthouder] could use military coercion to force the parties to accept his opinion.”⁵⁴ That Maurice, according to Massinger and Fletcher’s play, “Court[s] the

⁵³ As I have discussed above, Stadthouder were governors of the provincial states, and though originally (from Burgundian times) their offices were conferred by royal appointment, by the seventeenth century (as a result of the Dutch Revolt), Stadthouder were elected by the States of the individual provinces that the Dutch Republic comprised. The exceptions to the policy of election in the Dutch Republic were twofold: “[t]he Stadholder of Gelderland, Overijssel, and Utrecht, Count Adolf von Neuenahr, a hardline German Calvinist, and Willem Lodewijk van Nassau, Stadholder of Friesland and the Ommelands, both appointed after [William of] Orange’s assassination, had received their commissions from the States-General” (Israel 224).

⁵⁴ Van Deursen 151.

Soldier,/ As his owne creature” (1.1.19-20) therefore implies the problematic status of the Prince’s authority, as commander-in-chief, in relation to the legal sovereignty of the republican States to whom he was technically subordinate.

This problem, alluded to in the play, echoes the situation of the brief Anglo-Dutch alliance in 1586, when the States of Holland and Zeeland vehemently argued that Maurits, and all other Stadthouders of the United Provinces, derived their authority from the States that had appointed them. However, at that time, the case was made so as to curb Leicester’s ambitions to sovereignty and to argue that Leicester could not subvert the authority of the sovereign provinces.⁵⁵ Both in 1619, when Barnavelt was written and performed, and in the time of the political events represented in the play, the tensions between the legal sovereignty of the provinces of the Dutch Republic (the States) and the ‘national’ sovereignty of the confederate assembly of provincial legislators (the States-General) were particularly strained. This conflict between collective bodies was mirrored by the individual conflict, both within and without the world of the play, between Oldenbarnevelt, the powerful Advocate of Holland, and the Stadthouder Maurits, over the nature of their powers and the future shape of the Republic. In the play, Grotius succinctly describes the political competition between Barnavel

t and Prince Maurice when he informs Barnavel

t that the Prince “arrogate[s]/ All prosperous proceedings to himself,/ Detracts from you, and all men: you scarce holding/ The second place” (1.1.20-23). Barnavel

t replies to this indirect challenge by claiming that he barely holds “The second place” with respect to Maurice, arguing that he himself has made Maurice’s authority possible: “When I gave him the first/ I robd myself; for it was justly mine” (1.1.24-25).

⁵⁵ Israel 224.

When Grotius and Barnavelt refer to the army and the soldier in the opening lines of the play, the playwrights sketch out a historical backdrop which they avoid painting in detail. In presenting the rivalry between Barnavelt and Maurice, the playwrights only briefly allude to the mounting tensions within the United Provinces after the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce (April 1609) with Spain, a truce which the historical Oldenbarnavelt had been largely responsible for negotiating and which Maurits of Nassau had strongly opposed. Once the external threat of the war with Spain had been temporarily halted by the Truce, the dormant political tensions internal to the United Provinces during the several decades of the Revolt reawakened. Religious strife became a principal cause of contention between the provinces of the Dutch Republic once again, as it had been during the brief Anglo-Dutch alliance (Treaty of Nonsuch) and the Leicester affair in the United Provinces. This internal dispute over religion reignited disagreements over whether the revolutionary state should struggle for civil liberty or bolster the Reformed church: "Haec Libertatis Ergo," or "Haec Religionis Ergo." One faction called for the closer integration of the Dutch Reformed Church with the government, and for strict enforcement of orthodox Calvinist doctrine in both spheres, while another faction called for the subordination of religious affairs to the interests of the state, and for relative toleration of religious worship.

In 1574, during the early years of the Revolt, the leaders of the city of Leiden, under siege by Spanish forces, minted emergency coins bearing the inscription "Haec Libertatis Ergo" [*All This for Freedom's Sake*], a statement which they believed to distill the fundamental motivation for the Revolt of the Low Countries against the perceived tyranny of Spanish rule.⁵⁶ Prince William of Orange (1533-84) coined this

⁵⁶ Maria A. Schenkeveld, Dutch Literature in the Age of Rembrandt: Themes and Ideas (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1991) 31.

expression, and held this conviction; as leader of the Dutch rebels, William had steadfastly defended the cause of liberty (including religious toleration), seeing the struggle for freedom as crucial justification for insurrection.⁵⁷ William in 1575 awarded Leiden with a university for its unrelenting resistance to the Spanish siege; the university took as its motto, “Praesidium Libertatis” [*Bastion of Liberty*], and allowed Calvinist theology to flourish alongside humanism.⁵⁸

When internal conflicts re-emerged in the Dutch provinces in the early 1600s over religious doctrine, they would coalesce at Leiden University in the controversy between two theologians, Franciscus Gomarus and Jacobus Arminius, concerning the nature of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Gomarus had already occupied his chair at Leiden, when in 1602, Maurits, on the suggestion of his personal chaplain and friend, Johannes Uytenbogaert (1557-1644), secured an appointment for Arminius at the university.⁵⁹ Arminius’s appointment would have significant consequences in the doctrinal disputes that emerged between Gomarus and Arminius, and in the far-reaching religious and political conflicts throughout the Dutch Republic that ensued. The two theologians crucially diverged in their interpretation of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination: Gomarus upheld the orthodox interpretation of salvation by predestined grace, maintaining that the elect had been chosen by God even before Adam’s Fall, while Arminius argued for a more liberal interpretation of doctrine, emphasizing the importance of free will and providing a role for individual faith in

⁵⁷ Writing in defense of the Revolt and favoring a constitutional notion of governance, William of Orange argued that: “The liberties of the towns and provinces are not free grants of royal benevolence but contracts binding both the prince and the people.” Quoted in Bernard H. M. Vlekke, Evolution of the Dutch Nation (New York: Roy Publishers, 1945) 158.

⁵⁸ Theo Hermans, A Literary History of the Low Countries (Rochester: Camden House, 2009) 184.

⁵⁹ The Cambridge Modern History, Ed. A.W. Ward, G.W. Prothero, Stanley Leathes, Vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1918) 646.

salvation.⁶⁰ The controversy between Gomarus and Arminius was taken up by two opposed religious factions, the Gomarists and the Arminians. There arose a growing call for a Synod to resolve doctrinal differences, as there had been during Leicester's time in the United Provinces. Though "Leicester's National Synod," as Jonathan Israel calls the religious convocation that convened at The Hague in 1586, remained largely ignored by the States-General at the time, the contentions addressed in Leicester's Synod prefigured the conflict between the Gomarists and the Arminians.⁶¹ The States once again avoided direct involvement in the disputes of 1609, wary of endangering their negotiations for a truce with Spain. When Arminius died that same year, Uytenbogaert, with Oldenbarnevelt's tacit support, organized the Arminians, intent on garnering the support of the States of Holland.⁶² In June 1610, the Arminians drafted The Five Articles of the Remonstrants, a petition consisting of five articles touching on their points of divergence from orthodox Calvinism, and, accordingly, their fundamental divergence from the Gomarist camp. Shortly thereafter, the Gomarists responded to the Arminians with their Contra-Remonstrance, affirming orthodox doctrine.

The intensifying religious conflict between the 'Remonstrants' and the 'Contra-Remonstrants,' as they came to be called, worsened political tensions as well. Oldenbarnevelt—who, like Maurits's dead father, William of Orange, championed the authority of secular government to arbitrate in ecclesiastical affairs—sided openly with the Remonstrants who, unlike their opponents, did not argue the supremacy of the Church over the State.⁶³ Motivated by Hugo Grotius (or, Hugo de Groot, 1583-1645),

⁶⁰ For further information on the theological ideas of Arminius, see: Jacobus Arminius, The Works of James Arminius. 3 Vols. Ed. James Nichols, William Nichols, and Carl Bangs (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986).

⁶¹ Israel 227.

⁶² The Cambridge Modern History 647.

⁶³ The Cambridge Modern History 647, 648.

the Pensionary of Rotterdam and Oldenbarnevelt's devoted supporter, the States of Holland passed a resolution barring the treatment of religious disputes at the pulpit. Though this resolution was meant to dampen what might kindle religious conflict, the resolution in fact deepened the existing divisions between the towns of Holland. For instance, Amsterdam, which supported the Contra-Remonstrants, refused to recognize the resolution. Faced with this act of defiance, Oldenbarnevelt, as Advocate of the States of Holland, was compelled to decide whether to call for a military solution to the conflict. However, military intervention required the approval and participation of the Stadthouder, Maurits of Nassau, with whom Oldenbarnevelt had grown increasingly distant since the Republic's nearly-failed military campaign in Flanders starting in 1600. For that matter, Maurits initially balked at taking measures that might ignite civil war; the ardent support of his own chaplain, Uytenbogaert, for the Arminian camp gave him further cause to hesitate.⁶⁴ Moved by the opinion of Oldenbarnevelt's detractors, including Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador at The Hague, Maurits declared his support for the Contra-Remonstrants.

In response to the Stadthouder's opposition and the threat of civil war, Oldenbarnevelt appealed to the sovereignty of the Dutch provinces in December 1616, proposing to the States of Holland that they raise 4,000 mercenary troops who would be loyal exclusively to the province of Holland. Demands for the assembly of a Synod again arose, and in May 1617, the States-General narrowly approved the assembly, but the States of Holland refused to comply, with the exception of Amsterdam. Furthermore, the States of Holland passed the Sharp Resolution on August 4, 1617, formally rejecting the passage of the call for a Synod by the States-General, explaining that it encroached on the rights of the individual provinces to govern their own internal

⁶⁴ The Cambridge Modern History 648.

religious affairs. The regents of Holland were instructed to maintain order in their cities through the use of arms if necessary, and public servants were required to take an oath of loyalty to the States of Holland exclusively.⁶⁵ In effect, the Resolution amounted to a declaration of sovereignty by the province of Holland. Maurits was enraged by Holland's resolution, given the anomaly of his predicament. Maurits was the chief commander of the army and navy of the Dutch Republic as a whole, but as the Stadthouder of Holland he was a public servant of the States of Holland, and technically beholden to their instructions. Maurits's alliance with the Contra-Remonstrants, against the interests of Holland's governing body, further complicated his loyalties. Oldenbarnevelt travelled to the province of Utrecht, a crucial ally, to rally support for Holland, but maintained correspondence with his chief political allies, namely, Grotius (left in charge at The Hague), Rombout Hoogerbeets, and Johan de Haan, the respective Pensionaries of Rotterdam, Leiden, and Haarlem.⁶⁶ (Two of these figures, Grotius and Hoogerbeets, notably appear in Massinger and Fletcher's Barnavel.⁶⁷)

The actions of the States of Holland threatened the authority of the States-General, the governing body of the United Provinces. While the States-General could not legally intervene in the political administration of Holland, or any other province, it relied on its support from Maurits, with whom it resolved, on July 23, 1618, to send representatives to Utrecht to negotiate the disbanding of the mercenary troops [*waardgelders*]. The gamesmanship between the States-General and the States of Holland continued, as Holland sent Grotius and Hoogerbeets to Utrecht in response, to try to urge the city to maintain its ground. The conflict came to a head when Maurits

⁶⁵ The Cambridge Modern History 650.

⁶⁶ Edmundson 162.

⁶⁷ Rombout Hoogerbeets is called "Hoogerbeets" in Barnavel.

entered Utrecht with his troops in July 31, 1618, and ordered the mercenaries to disarm, which they did without resistance.⁶⁸ Maurits then set about to reorganize the provincial government. Besides improving political conditions for the Contra-Remonstrants, this led to Utrecht's vote for a National Synod, a move that also acknowledged the authority of the States-General.⁶⁹ Weakened, the States of Holland acquiesced on August 25, and agreed to the assembly of a national Synod. Consequently, the States-General issued a secret resolution authorizing the arrest of Oldenbarnevelt and his associates: Grotius and Hoogerbeets were arrested en route to an assembly of the States, as later was Gilles van Ledenberg, the secretary of the States of Utrecht. Other prominent Remonstrant leaders, such as Uytenbogaert, who fled the country, evaded arrest.

Massinger and Fletcher exclude any treatment of these long-standing religious and political contentions motivating the events of their play, emphasizing the personal rivalry between Barnaveit and Prince Maurice instead. Incidentally, the character Utenbogart, a dramatic representation of the historical person, Uytenbogaert, has been crossed out by the scribe Ralph Crane along with the character Taurinus in the Barnaveit manuscript, presumably to make room for other parts, according to Fredson Bowers. The alterations are in Crane's hand, but it is uncertain who ordered Crane to delete Utenbogart and Taurinus from the manuscript. Bowers argues that this particular deletion was prompted by the requirements of stage production, rather than self-censorship.⁷⁰ The character Hogerbeets, the pensionary of Leiden, is substituted for the deleted Arminian divines, Utenbogart and Taurinus. Uytenbogaert was the personal Chaplain to Prince Maurits, and the recommendation of the Chaplain secured

⁶⁸ The Cambridge Modern History 651.

⁶⁹ The Cambridge Modern History 651.

⁷⁰ Bowers, "Textual Introduction" in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon 8: 492.

Maurits's fateful appointment of Arminius to Leiden University. Uytenbogaert, in other words, links Prince Maurits with the political divisions of the succeeding years, and that the Remonstrant pastor is excluded from the Barnavel manuscript seems to suggest that the company or the authors wished to distance further the character of the Prince from the religious turmoil in which the living person of the Prince had been recently involved, only months prior to the play's composition and performance in 1619.⁷¹

The play's opening conversation between Barnavel and his associates, discussed above, anticipates the chief problems that the play will address. Two English Captains enter and interrupt the conversation by presenting a petition to the Advocate, whom the First Captaine describes as "a Statesman, and a Frend" (1.1.133). Barnavel recognizes the Second Captaine immediately, addressing him as "You, Sir, you" (1.1.137), and when the Second Captaine offers his petition to the Advocate, Barnavel tears the petition and rebukes him, recalling how the Second Captaine had once approached the "States" (presumably the States of Holland) with disdain:

[...] you are he
That when your Company was viewd, and checkd
For your dead paies: stood on your termes of honour;
Cryde out I am a Gentleman, a Commaunder,
And shall I be curbd by my lords the States?
(For thus you said in scorne) that are but Merchants,
Lawyers, Appothecaries, and Phisitians,
Perhaps of worsser ranck? But you shall know Sir

⁷¹ The alterations are in Crane's hand, but it is uncertain who ordered Crane to delete Utenbogart and Taurinus from the manuscript. Fredson Bowers argues that this particular deletion was prompted by the requirements of stage production, rather than self-censorship ("Textual Introduction" in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon 492).

They are not such, but Potentates, and Princes

From whom you take pay. (1.1.138-147)

The Second Captaine responds in defense: "I beseech your Lordship:/ 'Twas wine, and anger" (1.1.148-49). The Second Captaine had claimed his superiority over the delegates of the States of Holland, placing hereditary prestige above the common rank of "Merchants, Lawyers, Appothecaries, and Phisitians" or even those "Perhaps of worsser ranck" that he sees as making up the States assembly. Barnavelt forcefully inverts the Second Captaine's claims when he observes that the members of the States "are not such, but Potentates, and Princes/ From whom you take pay," clearly denouncing the Captaine's view that the members are of "worsser ranck" and, moreover, elevating the members of the States (the "Merchants, Lawyers" etc.) to the rank of "Potentates" and "Princes": notably higher ranks than the "Gentleman" which the Captaine claims to be. This conflict of social rank and authority illustrates in miniature the play's larger concern with competing modes of governance.

The Second Captaine implicitly endorses a monarchist form of governance, where social relations are determined by inherited status; on the contrary, Barnavelt endorses a form of governance where common people may occupy positions of power traditionally held by Princes, and thus potentially serve as their own sovereigns. Barnavelt informs the Second Captaine that the men from whom he receives pay are rulers ("Potentates"), which conveys the power of the States' delegates, but also suggests that the delegates are rulers in relation to the Second Captaine, despite his claim to be a "Gentleman, a Commaunder" and their social better, because they are the people who grant the Second Captaine his pay. In other words, Barnavelt's speech levels conventional hierarchies of inherited social rank and prestige, such as the commoner's hereditary subordination to prince and gentleman, making the commoner, gentleman, and prince potentially equal agents in Dutch politics. However, this

political equality is implicitly mediated through the market, where the “Merchants, Lawyers, Apothecaries, and Physicians” are not of “worsser ranck” but made equal to the “Gentleman” and “Potentate” through the medium of exchange, both political and economic. When the Second Chaptaine attributes his rudeness to “wine, and anger” Barnavelt rejects his explanation and retorts that his actions indicate “want of dutie” (1.1.149). Barnavelt’s response suggests that he understands duty in terms of mutual obligation prescribed, not by relations of class fixed by birth, but by relations of economic exchange and payment.

The playwrights thus suggest the power of the public “exchange” of republican political discourse and the economic exchanges of the ascendant Dutch bourgeoisie (the merchant class reaching for the power of “Potentates and Princes”) to disrupt feudal social hierarchies. Barnavelt underlines the leveling potential of political and economic exchange in Act 1, Scene 2, when he meets with Grotius and Hogerbeets (the Pensionaries of Rotterdam and Leiden, respectively), among other associates. Barnavelt advises his associates to respond to the resistance of the “old Soldiers, garisond at *Utrecht*” (1.2.21) and the “sworne” enmity of Maurice “to your affections” (1.2.15-16):

[...] my advice is
That having won the Burgers to your partie
Perswade them to enroll new Companies
For their defence against the Insolence
Of the old Soldiers, garisond at *Utrecht*;
Yet practice on them too: and they may urge this,
That since they have their pay out of that Province,
Justice requires they should be of their partie:
All that is don in *Utrecht*, shalbe practisd

In *Roterdam*, and other Townes I name not [...]. (1.2.17-27)

Barnavelt thus advises Grotius and Hogerbeets to appeal to the citizenry to enlist new soldiers, whose payment by the provinces of Utrecht and Rotterdam would require that they obey the wishes of the provinces. The fact that Barnavelt asks Grotius and Hogerbeets to “practice on” the citizens (to encourage the citizens to assert their interests to the newly-enlisted soldiers) suggests that the citizens themselves must be taught their own rights and privileges as citizens. The people must be made to know that they are already sovereign rulers on the basis of their citizenship, not their social class or inherited rank. Barnavelt’s opening lines at the beginning of the play seem to be motivated by this egalitarianism when he jeers that Maurice, “The *Prince of Orange* now,” should think that “hee’s alone the Father of his Cuntrie” (1.1.1-2) by virtue of his recent elevation from the rank of “Grave” (Count) to the higher rank of “Prince,” an ascent that Modesbargen also notes when he refers to Maurice as “this *Grave Maurice*, this now *Prince of Orange*” (1.1.95). As with Barnavelt’s assertion of the States’ delegates’ authority (1.1.138-47), authority is invested in the citizens of the provinces through the medium of economic and political exchange, through the implied sphere of market exchange: a soldier’s duty is determined by the contractual exchange of payment for services rather than by obligations based on conventional fealty to a higher social rank. We are reminded of the relative novelty and instability of this form of obligation in the division between the “old Soldiers, garisond at *Utrecht*” (1.2.21), who Barnavelt suspects are loyal to the Prince, and the projected “new Companies” (1.2.19), who he hopes will serve the interests of the citizens.

Barnavelt acts as a political pragmatist, making his decisions on the grounds of expedience in order to further his strategic aims. He informs his associates, “I am of your belief/ In every point you hold touching religion” (1.2.3-4), and announces that “openly I will profess myself/ Of the Arminian sect” (1.2.5-6), apparently in order to

garner stronger support for their political goals. When Modesbargen warns of the dangerous effects of using “Religion” in order “to cloke our bad purposes” (1.2.31-32), Barnavelt criticizes Modesbargen for his political naiveté: “You are too holly:/ We live not now with Saincts, but wicked men,/ And any thriving way, we can make use of,/ What shape soere it weares, to crosse their arts/ We must embrace, and cherish: and this course/ (Carrying a zealous face) will countenance/ Our other actions; make the Burgers ours,/ Raise Soldiers for our guard: strengthen our side/ Against the now unequall opposition/ Of this prowde *Prince of Orange* [...]” (1.2.33-42). Although Barnavelt may be motivated in part by his ambition for political glory, which he calls “the fire of honour” (1.1.110), he has shown himself to be a capable statesman “For thirtie yeeres” (1.1.86), as his friend Modesbargen attests.

Barnavelt appears strongly invested in the republican values for which he believes the Dutch state stands. Addressing the assembly of the States-General, Barnavelt warns of the growing threat that the Prince’s power represents to the hard-won “liberties” of the States’ revolt: “have we with somuch blood/ Maintained our liberties? left the allegeance/ [...] To *Spaine*, to offer up our slavish necks/ To one, that onely is, what we have made him?/ For, be but you yourselves, this *Prince of Orange*/ Is but as Barnevelt, a Servant to/ Your Lordships, and the State: like me maintained:/ The pomp he keeps, at your charge: will you then/ Wayt his prowde pleasure, and in that confes/ By daring to doe nothing, that he knowes not/ You have no absolute powre?” (1.2.56-67). Barnavelt reminds the States-General that Grave Maurice, now Prince of Orange is, like himself, a public servant elected by the States, and therefore subordinate to the States’ authority. More boldly, Barnavelt argues that the Prince “onely is, what we have made him,” deriving the Prince’s political status from his services to the consenting state, rather than from his noble blood or inherited status.

By contrast, when Prince Maurice makes his first appearance in the play, just after Barnavelt has pleaded for republican values, the Prince defines himself by the inherited honor of his insurgent forebears: “I, now, methincks, I feele the happynes/ Of being sproong from such a noble Father/ That sacrificzd his honour, life, and fortune/ For his lov’d Cuntry: Now the blood and Kindred/ Of *Horne* and *Egmont* (Memories great Martires)/ That must out live all *Alva’s* Tirranies/ And when their Stories told ev’n shake his ashes,/ Methincks through theis vaines now, now at this instant/ I feele their Cuntries losse” (1.3.1-9). Maurice’s opening remark that he “now” can “feele the happynes/ Of being sproong from such a noble Father” recalls the rapidity of Maurice’s ascent in rank and power, “this *Grave Maurice*, this now *Prince of Orange*” (1.1.95). After alluding to his princely title, Maurice explicitly describes his noble parentage. Maurice draws attention to his “noble Father” Prince William of Orange, whom the rebellious provinces remembered as a leader of Dutch independence, reminding the audience that William of Orange, from whose blood he is “sproong,” had “sacrificzd his honour, life, and fortune/ For his lov’d Cuntry.” Maurice tries to imply by these allusions that he has inherited the virtues of his heroic father, and that he too would sacrifice his life for “his lov’d Cuntry.” Maurice’s rhetoric of inheritance is suspicious here, because he bears no direct relation to the revolutionary leaders “*Horne* and *Egmont*,” the Count of Hoorne (1524-1568) and the Count of Egmont (1522-1568). When Philip II sent the Duke of Alva to the Low Countries in 1567 to quell the rebellion in the provinces, William of Orange fled his base in Brussels, but Hoorne and Egmont remained, soon to be arrested, tried, and finally executed for treason on June 5, 1568. Hoorne and Egmont were later remembered as key figures of the resistance and their deaths as a catalyst to the ensuing Revolt. By citing the names of these murdered “Martires,” as well as the

memory of his murdered father, Maurice implicitly claims the social capital that these names bear in Dutch politics.

From the outset, Maurice defines his identity in relation to his noble birth and milieu. Barnavelt, by contrast, says nothing of his birth, but continually emphasizes the extent and quality of his services to the state as the basis of his political identity. Furthermore, Barnavelt encourages his fellow citizens to measure their worth by their status as free citizens of a republican state and sovereigns of their own government. While Maurice appears ostensibly humble in his political dealings and is even praised by his men and the lords of the States, Barnavelt appears haughty and ambitious, which seems to tarnish his many decades of commendable service to the Republic. When Maurice is excluded from the assembly of the States, he attempts to mollify his indignant supporters, explaining that the lords of the States are their masters:

The men you make so meane, so slight account of

[...]

Are Princes, powrefull Princes, mightie Princes,

That daylie feed more men of your great fashion

And noble ranck, pay, and maintaine their fortunes,

Then any Monarch Europe ha's

[...]

And honestly, with thanckfull harts remember

You are to pay them back againe your service:

They are your Masters, your best masters, noblest,

Those that protect your states, hold up your fortunes,

And for this good, you are to sacrifice

Your thancks, and duties, not your threats, and angers. (1.3.89-101)

Ironically, Maurice's speech, arguing that the men of the States "Are Princes, powrefull Princes, mightie Princes" echoes Barnavelt's admonishment of the Second Captaine for disdainning his employers as commoners rather than "Potentates, and Princes" (1.1.146). Barnavelt appears more overtly to be a Machiavel, since his political tactics and maneuvering are more extensively staged in the play, and since he openly endorses the use of deception as a political means. However, as Ivo Kamps argues, the Prince's humble persona makes him no less a Machiavel. Although Maurits pretends to be a humble and passive participant of the political action, as the play progresses, he proves to be a shrewd politician in ways that contradict his seemingly Christian virtues.⁷² Because Barnavelt's ambition is immediately apparent to the audience, the Prince seems a more sympathetic figure, with his humble and deferential demeanor. Yet despite Barnavelt's open desire for glory, the Advocate is shown to be the truer advocate of the rights and liberties which are made possible by republican government, and which he believes to be the common property of the citizens. Throughout the play, Barnavelt urges his supporters as well as the lords of the States to resist the threat of monarchy, which he equates with tyranny and absolutism, urging his listeners to remember the hard-won liberties of the Dutch revolt against Spanish monarchical rule.

"Two heads make monsters": Sovereignty and the Rhetoric of the Family

Employing the rhetoric of slavery and emancipation, Barnavelt exhorts his men (and, by extension, the common citizens) to resist the yoke of tyranny while they remain free:

Now Friends

⁷² Ivo Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 152.

I call not on your furtheraunce, to preserve
The lustre of my Actions: let me with them
Be nere remembered, so this government,
Your wives, your lives, and liberties be safe:
And therefore, as you would be what you are,
Freemen, and Masters of what yet is yours,
Rise up against this Tirant, and defend
With rigor, what too gentle lenitie
Hath almost lost. (2.1.148-57)

While Barnavelt observes that the citizens are yet “Freemen, and Masters” (2.1.154), he remarks that the lords of the States have become a “Wretched, and slavish people” (3.1.146), yielding to the “gripping yolk” of the Prince. Barnavelt demystifies the theological justification for absolute sovereignty, arguing that the Prince’s authority stems not from some divine sanction of his rank, but from the material “labours” of the people: “What is this man, this *Prince*, this god ye make now,/ But what our hands have molded, wrought to fashion,/ And by our constant labours, given a life to?/ And must we fall before him, now, adore him,/ Blow all we can, to fill his sailes with greatnes,/ Worship the Image we set up ourselves,/ Put fate into his hand, into his will/ Our lives, and fortunes?” (3.1.148-55). Maurice is figured as a ship whose motion depends on the wind of his public support “to fill his sailes with greatnes,” and as an icon or “Image” that the people, having “wrought to fashion,” can also destroy at will—a particularly politically charged figure when one remembers the importance of the Iconoclastic Fury in precipitating the Dutch Revolt. In accordance with his pragmatic understanding of religion as a political instrument, Barnavelt emphasizes the material construction of monarchical sovereignty, implicitly rejecting the notion that sovereignty is a product of divine providence rather than

human consent. Not only does Barnavelt assert popular authority over monarchical authority, but he also implicitly privileges the authority of popular government over and against the rule of religious authority.

As the play progresses, the lords of the States increasingly relinquish their power to Prince Maurice, whose authority comes to seem divinely sanctioned. When the lords of the States learn of Leidenberch's suicide, they do not know how to proceed against Barnavelt and his supporters. The Prince, who is present at the deliberations, explains to the States that his initial strategy was to persuade the lords to take "mild and sweet proceedings in this business" so that "nothing might be construed in't malicious" (4.2.7-8), yet now he pushes the lords to take strict measures against their opponents, warning that unless they do so, their power and reputation would be compromised: "The powre ye hold els, wilbe scornd, and laughd at/ And theis unchristian stroakes, be laid to your charge" (4.2.15-16). Notably, the Prince defines his opponents' actions in religious terms, condemning them as "unchristian stroakes." Bredero balks at taking action, and expresses his concern over popular support for Barnavelt, who "Is courted all the Cuntry over" (4.2.21). Prince Maurice oversteps his rights as Stadthouder when he assures the lords that he has already taken measures to muster troops for the conflict, although the lords of the States General had not mandated this military action. However, the lords of the States do not notice this indirect challenge to their authority. To the contrary, Bredero praises the Prince for his foresight, telling him, "You are nobely provident" (4.2.50), implying that divine providence, as well as worldly wisdom, is at work in the Prince's actions.

Furthermore, Vandort agrees to both the Prince's current precautions, and to any other future actions he may take ("And now proceed, when it please you: and what you thinck fit/ We shall subscribe to all" (4.3.51-52)), inadvertently supporting Barnavelt's claim that the States has become a "Wretched, and slavish people" (3.1.146), willing

to yield its rights and authority to a monarch in all but name, and willing to risk its republican liberties.

Maurice himself claims divine support for his actions at the conclusion of Barnavelt's trial, when he speculates that Barnavelt's execution will show the superior wisdom of providence: "Let them have it:/ And all that plot against the generall good/ Learne from this mans example, great in age,/ Greater in wealth, and in authoritie,/ But matchless in his worldly pollicie,/ That there is one above, that do's deride/ The wisest counsailes, that are misaplide" (5.1.213-19).⁷³ In fact, Maurice himself had urged these harsh measures against Barnavelt, arguing for the necessity of Barnavelt's execution ("I hold it fitt, that Barnavelt...should receive his Sentence,/ Then dye as he deserves [...]" (5.1.95-98)). Nonetheless, the Prince represents his actions and the actions of the States as the visible signs of a divine will, as the actions of "one above" (5.1.218), as though he himself has been 'elected' to administer divine justice. Maurice's self-serving use of religious discourse to justify his political actions and their effects contrasts with Barnavelt's frank willingness to use religion for political purposes (1.2.3-42, discussed above). Barnevelt accuses the States of "Worship[ping] the Image" of the Prince (3.1.153), in order to remind them that princely authority is

⁷³ Ivo Kamps calls our attention to the excessive quality of Barnavelt's execution, noting that "the inept executioner lops off not only the Advocate's head but also some of his fingers (an ahistorical detail added, no doubt, in part to underscore the nastiness of the whole affair). [...] The staging of the Advocate's untimely death is a subversive act, and the (fictional) detail of the butchered hand fiendishly satirizes the state's awesome power to disfigure or execute its citizens almost at will" (Kamps 164). While I agree with Kamps's broad claims about the implications of this scene, I would caution that the "ahistorical detail" of Barnavelt's mutilated hand is supported by historical record, as well as Jan Den Tex's authoritative biography of Oldenbarnevelt (Den Tex 2: 688): one pamphlet description of the Advocate's execution reports that "the Executioner drew out his sword behind him, and suddenly cut off his head, and two of his fingers. The execution done, they laid his body in an old unhandsome coffin, and carried it away." See Anonymous, The true description of the execution of iustice, done in the Grauenhage, by the counsell of the Generall States holden for the same purpose, vpon Sir Iohn van Olden Barnauelt (London: 1619) 2. See also Margaret E. Owens, Stages of Dismemberment (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005) 142. Kamps's reading remains valid, but the detail is significant for having been included in the play, not for having been invented.

founded on the “constant labours” (3.1.150) of the people. Despite the suspicion of the lords of the States and the Prince, Barnaveit enjoys popular support among the common Burgers, and the lords express their concerns that “The peoples love” for Barnaveit threatens their interests: “The peoples love grows dangerous,/ In every place the whispers of his rescue:/ The lowd, and common voice of his deservings/ Is floong abroad” (5.1.181-84).

Ultimately, the threat of civil war between Barnaveit’s and Maurice’s factions is averted not by the Dutch, but by the English First Captain and his troops, who refuse Barnaveit’s orders to fight on his side, and decide independently to deliver the town in which they are stationed to Prince Maurice. The First Captain argues that the troops have been commissioned to serve the States General rather than any individual province. He remarks that the troops would fight at Prince Maurice’s command if called: “We were entertaind/ To serve the generall States, and not one Province:/ To fight as often as the *Prince of Orange*/ Shall lead us forth, and not to stand against him:/ To guard this Cuntrie, not to ruyn it,/ To beat of forreigne Enemies, not to cherish/ Domestique Factions [...]” (2.1.56-62). Ironically, as we have seen, the English Second Captain, the First Captain’s associate, had previously insulted the representatives of the States for their low social rank in comparison to his position as “a Gentleman, a Commaunder” (1.1.142). However, both the First Captain, who “speak[s] for all” (2.1.55), and the Second Captain now side with the States against Barnaveit, not out of newfound respect for the republican assembly but out of loyalty to Prince Maurice. In this alliance, the Prince is implicitly placed at the head, inasmuch as the English troops would fight not at the command of the States General specifically to whom they “were entertaind” but “at Prince Maurice’s command whenever called.” The First Captain later instructs the English troops to use force

against “any Burgers, or *Arminian* Soldiers” who challenge the English Guard (2.3.4-5) and to maintain “a strong eye ore the Burgers” (2.3.10).

The prominent role ascribed to the English troops by Massinger and Fletcher is a striking invention, perhaps added to remind English audiences of their historical involvement with Dutch republican politics, or simply to flatter the nationalists among the audience: in reality, English troops played no role in the defeat of Oldenbarnevelt and the Remonstrants. In fact, the English presence in the play resembles not so much the immediate historical context of the play’s events represents, as the Anglo-Dutch alliance of the Treaty of Nonsuch (1585) and Leicester’s governorship of the United Provinces (1585-87)—events that precede the play’s historical frame, but which anticipate the early seventeenth-century political and religious conflicts which underlie the play. There are a number of similarities between the Anglo-Dutch alliance of the Treaty of Nonsuch and the period of the clash between the Arminians and Gomarists. These include Leicester and Maurits’s embattled attempts to centralize authority, their subsequent clashes with the authority of the States of Holland (led by Oldenbarnevelt as Advocate of Holland), and the politically-charged religious tensions that developed into the dispute between the Remonstrants and the Contra-Remonstrants, culminating in Oldenbarnevelt’s execution. The conflict between Barnaveit and Maurice in the play regarding the threat of Maurice’s absolutism closely echoes Oldenbarnevelt’s concern about Leicester’s contempt for the States, particularly the States of Holland, which Leicester viewed as an assembly of merchants and other persons of low rank, an opinion shared in the play by the Second Captain.

Furthermore, the religious disputes between orthodox Calvinists, whose cause Leicester championed, and the moderate Calvinists backed by Oldenbarnevelt, prefigure the religious opposition between both the historical persons, Maurits and Oldenbarnevelt, and Maurice and Barnevelt of Massinger and Fletcher’s play. In

addition to its parallels with the Anglo-Dutch alliance during Elizabeth's reign, the English presence in Barnavel recalls more recent rifts between James I and the Dutch Republic concerning matters of religion as well as politics and commerce. James took particular interest in the dispute between the Gomarists and Arminians in the early 1600s. He openly declared his opposition to the Arminians (who were thought to be Catholic and pro-Spanish in their religious and political sympathies); the king's opposition to the Arminians implied that he also opposed Oldenbarnevelt, commonly reported to be an Arminian himself.⁷⁴ When Conradus Vorstius (or Konrad Vorst, 1569-1622), an Arminian theologian, was appointed to replace Jacobus Arminius after his death in 1610, James strongly objected to the appointment. In February 1612, James sent the States General a document attacking the supposed heresy of Vorstius and the Remonstrants in defense of the true (i.e. orthodox) Calvinist faith, with the result that Vorstius's appointment was retracted.⁷⁵

At the time of this controversy, James courted Maurits as an anti-Spanish, anti-French, Protestant counterweight to the significant political influence of the Advocate of Holland in Dutch politics, Oldenbarnevelt, whom James believed maintained dangerously close diplomatic ties to Spain and France that threatened English interests.⁷⁶ Accordingly, James worked tacitly to undermine the Advocate's

⁷⁴ Den Tex argues that Oldenbarnevelt was not in fact an Arminian: "We can call [Oldenbarnevelt] an Arminian fellow-traveller in the sense that he joined forces with opponents in principle against a common enemy. But he was never an Arminian, or only on the political side" (Den Tex 2: 450).

⁷⁵ Willem Nijenhuis, Ecclesia Reformata: Studies on the Reformation, Vol. 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 139. Howard-Hill observes that James's active involvement in the religious controversy coincided with his exposure to two works by Vorstius accidentally sent by their author: (Theologicus de Deo (1611) and Apologetica Exegesis (1611)). James found the contents of the works dangerous and communicated his objections regarding Vorstius's appointment to the States-General (Howard-Hill, "Buc and the Censorship," 54). T.H. Howard-Hill, "Buc and the Censorship of *Sir John Van Olden Barnavel* in 1619," Review of English Studies. 39.153 (1988): 39-63.

⁷⁶ Den Tex 2: 490. Den Tex writes that in the eyes of King James: "When Oldenbarnevelt became a party instead of a state leader he was no longer able to steer the Republic in the desired direction; James automatically turned to Maurice, whom he rightly regarded as the future head of state" (Den Tex 2:

authority. Like James I, Maurits openly declared his opposition to the Remonstrants; subsequently, Maurits led the Contra-Remonstrant faction, which, according to C.G. Roelofsen, “had crystallized into the ‘Orangeist’ party, traditionally connected in Dutch history with Great Britain by religious and dynastic ties.”⁷⁷ Representatives of James’s court were even invited to attend the National Synod at Dordrecht composed exclusively of Contra-Remonstrants, reflecting England’s ties to Prince Maurits’s faction. The Synod at Dordrecht, which accompanied Oldenbarnevelt’s trial, ultimately condemned the Remonstrants on May 1, 1619; shortly afterwards, Oldenbarnevelt was executed on May 13, 1619. At the height of the religious controversy, James and Prince Maurits, along with the staunchly pro-Gomarist towns of Amsterdam and Zeeland, were the chief agents of Oldenbarnevelt’s final defeat.⁷⁸ Oldenbarnevelt’s trial was procedurally irregular in a number of ways unmentioned in the play. For example, it was strongly disputed whether the States General or the States of Holland had jurisdiction in the trial, leading to a compromise solution in which twelve judges were selected from Holland and twelve from the other six provinces⁷⁹; Den Tex notes that “the provinces [...] loaded the dice by their choice of

581). In response to the charges of Socinianism (or Nontrinitarian dissent) against the leaders of Holland, the Ordinum Pietas was published in October 1613, a work composed by Grotius defending the actions of the regents of Holland against the States’ orthodox Calvinist detractors. Ordinum Pietas was also written in the interest of maintaining England as an important ally of the Dutch Republic; the work therefore addresses some of the key concerns expressed by King James I, regarding Holland’s policies toward religion. Hugo Grotius, Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas, Trans. Edwin Rabbie (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995).

⁷⁷ C.G. Roelofsen, “Grotius and the International Politics of the Seventeenth Century” in Hugo Grotius and International Relations, Ed. Hedley Bull, Benedict Kingsbury, Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 117.

⁷⁸ Den Tex 2: 553.

⁷⁹ See Jonathan Israel, The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 458.

judges,”⁸⁰ heavily favoring Counter-Remonstrants; and Barnavelt’s execution was scheduled for the day after his sentencing, “to avoid intercessions on his behalf.”⁸¹

Massinger and Fletcher, in their adaptation of these historical events, are careful to avoid making direct associations between Prince Maurice and the religious controversy that riddled Dutch politics, but the presence of the English troops in Barnavelt, who contribute to Barnavelt’s fall by siding with Maurice and the Orangist party, may mark where the sympathies of the English crown actually lay, even if the threat of censorship prohibited any direct references to this.⁸² Wilhelmina Frijlinck and T.H. Howard-Hill show how Massinger and Fletcher were constrained in their representation of the Advocate: Frijlinck, by the authors’ almost exclusive dependence on the slanderous pamphlets that abounded on Oldenbarnevelt in the last two years of his life, and Howard-Hill by the censor’s personal connections to the Low Countries and by the institutional pressure to uphold official English views regarding Oldenbarnevelt and Prince Maurice.⁸³

However, Massinger and Fletcher do find ways to address the cultural and political differences between England and the Low Countries. The banter between the four “Duch-women” and the “English gentle-woman” in Act 2, Scenes 2 and 6, in which the Dutchwomen “pray for [the] conversion” of the English gentlewoman by telling her about the liberty Dutchwomen enjoy in marriage, initially seems like

⁸⁰ Den Tex 2: 665.

⁸¹ Israel 459.

⁸² T.H. Howard-Hill observes that the “character of the censor’s responsibility in *Barnavelt* is best explained by the special nature of James’s interest in the Netherlands” (Howard-Hill, “Buc and the Censorship,” 53). He argues that George Buc’s censorship of Massinger and Fletcher must be understood in relation to Buc’s personal connections to the Netherlands and Dutch affairs, moreover, that his “personal involvement...alone explains the character of Buc’s markings in the manuscript and their extraordinary number” (Howard-Hill, “Buc and the Censorship,” 39-40).

⁸³ Howard-Hill, “Buc and the Censorship,” 56; Wilhelmina Frijlinck, “Introduction,” *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt, Anonymous Elisabethan Play Edited from the Manuscript with Introduction and Notes by Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck* (Amsterdam: H. G. van Dorssen, 1922) xxiv-lviii.

innocuous comic relief from the tense political maneuverings of Barnavelt, Leidenberch, Grotius and others (2.2.2). Yet throughout this comic dialogue the playwrights continue to examine the merits of monarchy and republicanism, as coded through gender relations. The women's conversation is couched in terms of national types: the Second Dutchwoman gloats that, in the "generall freedom" (2.2.4) of the Dutch Republic, "No emperious Spanish eye, governes our Actions,/ Nor Italian jealouzie locks up our Meetings:/ We are ourselves, our own disposers, Masters,/ And those you call husbands, are our Servants" (2.2.5-9). While the Dutchwomen conform to the then-conventional notion of the libertine Dutch, they are also able to criticize the servility of life under the English monarchy, telling the English gentlewoman that "Your owne Cuntry breedes ye hansom, maintains ye brave,/ But with a stubborne hand, the husbands awe ye,/ You speake but what they please, looke where they point ye,/ And though ye have some liberty, 'tis lymitted" (2.2.10-13). The English gentlewoman, in turn, understands both royal and patriarchal marital authority in absolutist terms: "Our Cuntry brings us up to faire obedience,/ To know our husbands for our Governors,/ So to obey, and serve'em: two heads make monsters;/ Nor dare we think of what is don above us" (2.2.44-47). The English gentlewoman naturalizes both political and gender hierarchy through the organic figure she implies for the social bond and the marriage bond. If, as St. Paul had claimed, "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23, King James version), then according to this patriarchal understanding both equity in marriage and a political body with divided sovereignty would seem equally monstrous: "two heads make monsters" (2.2.46).

The analogy between husbands and governors is further stressed when Grotius's news that Maurice has "disarm'd all the strong Townes about us" (2.3.51) is

immediately followed by the English gentlewoman's reassertion of English social and political norms:

Now your wisdomes, Ladies,
Your learning also, Sir: [...]
You that dare prick your eares up, at great *Princes*,
And dole charge your tongue with new opinions,
What can you doe? or can theis holly woemen
That you have arm'd against obedience
And made contempners of the Fooles, their husbands,
Examiners of State, can they do anything?
Can they defy the Prince? (2.2.55-61)

The analogy between the husband and the ruler, an analogy which James I employed to rhetorically legitimate his reign, gives the playwrights license to rehearse potentially controversial political debates in the guise of bawdy wit. At least, the political connotations of the exchange were masked well enough that the passage shows fairly few traces of Buc's censorship—in contrast, for example, to the playwrights' scene of Maurice being humiliatingly barred from the Council meeting in Act 1, Scene 3, which drew Buc's rebuke in the margin of the manuscript: "I like not this: neith^r do I think y^t the pr[ince] was thus disgracefully vsed. besides he is to much presented."⁸⁴

The dialogue between the Dutchwomen and the English gentlewoman, in which the Dutchwomen attempt to show their interlocutor "the generall freedom/ We live and traffique in, the joy of Woemen" (2.2.4-5), is interwoven with the political and tactical debates between Barnavelt, Modesbargen and Leidenberch, and

⁸⁴ John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt*, Ed. T.H. Howard-Hill (Oxford: Malone Society Reprints, 1979) 13.

exemplifies the market “traffique” which undergirds Barnavelts’s demystification of power founded on rank and birth. The marketplace mediates between the household *oikos* and the public *polis*: the First Dutchwoman asks rhetorically, “Do you thinck ther’s any thing/ Our husbands labour for, and not for our ends?/ Are we shut out of Counsailes, privacies,/ And onely lymitted our household busines?/ No, certaine, Lady; we pertake with all,/ Or our good men pertake no rest” (2.2.17-22). This participation (“we pertake with all”) in discourse in the market and in political “Counsailes” structurally interrupts the men’s tactical discussions, conveying the leveling effects of the market through the rapid alternation between the two clusters of characters. Yet the republican state-form is here linked to the form of the market. When Leidenberch eventually sends the women away, telling them “this is no sport for you: goe cheere your husbands,/ And bid’em stand now bravely for their liberties./ [...]goe you, talke to the *Arminians*/ And raise their harts: good Ladies, no more Councells,/ This is no time to puppet in,” the exclusion of the women from the scene still at least involves them in the political project of rallying their husbands and the *Arminians* (2.2.64-70).

Early modern political thought generally conceived of the father’s power over his wife and children as a natural form of domination, and considered the king’s power to be analogous to the father’s. King James I made typical use of this rhetoric when he naturalized his sovereignty on the grounds that “By the Law of Nature the King becomes a naturall Father to all his Lieges at his Coronation.”⁸⁵ By contrast, the gendered figures in Barnavelts’s rhetoric consistently undo this conventional monarchical rhetoric. While the “peoples Language,” in the opening lines of the play, reportedly hails Maurice “alone” as “the Father of his Cuntrie” (1.1.1-4), Barnavelts’s

⁸⁵ King James VI and I, “The Trew Law of Free Monarchies,” in *Political Writings*, Ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 65. See chapter 1, above.

rhetoric throughout *the play recodes the father as a figure of republican, rather than monarchical, leadership. When told of Leidenberch's arrest, for example, Barnavelt rages against the ingratitude of the Dutch and proleptically imagines his own ruin: "My ruyns shall reach all: The valiant Soldier/ Whose eies are unacquainted but with anger/ Shall weep for me, because I fedd, and nursd him./ Princes shall mourne my losse, and this unthanckfull/ Forgetfull Cuntry, when I sleepe in ashes,/ Shall feele, and then confes I was a Father" (3.1.185-90). Barnavelt imagines himself as both father and mother of the Dutch citizenry, projecting the figure of the "valiant Soldier" whom he "fedd, and nursd" maternally through his political leadership. Besides notably exceeding the patriarchal bounds of the conventional figure of the sovereign, Barnavelt's metaphor also suggests a space for women within the Dutch state. Equally notable is Barnavelt's turn to the rhetoric of parenthood immediately after rhetorically disowning his own son, who has suggested that Barnavelt "try the *Prince*" and ask Maurice's forgiveness (3.1.177). Barnevelt rebukes him: "Art thou my son? thou lye: I never got a Parasite, a Coward" (3.1.178-79). This exchange shows Barnavelt's willingness to sublimate his flesh-and-blood family into the ideal family of the republican commonwealth. While the playwrights introduce Maurice in the act of boasting of "the happynes/ Of being sproong from such a noble Father/ That sacrificd his honour, life, and fortune/ For his lov'd Cuntry," and claiming for his own "the blood and Kindred/ Of Horne and Egmont (Memories great Martires)/ That must out live all *Alva's* Tirranies" (1.3.1-6), Barnavelt rejects the influence of hierarchies of noble birth on the politics of the republic. Elsewhere, when he laments his fall from power, he replaces the metaphor of marriage, with its implication of an indissoluble bond, with the metaphor of the lover, an elective bond: "This wanton State, that's wary of hir lovers,/ And cryes out, give me yonger still, and fresher,/ Is bound, and so far bound: I found hir naked,/ [...] An orphan State, that no eye smiled upon,/ And

then how carefully I undertook hir,/ How tenderly, and lovingly I noursd hir:/ But now she is fatt, and faire againe, and I foold, / A new love in hir armes, [...]/ And I must sue to him” (3.1.124-33). His claim to legitimate power is based on his past guardianship of the “orphan State,” rather than on right of birth: his claim appeals to the gratitude of the Dutch people rather than any transcendently grounded sovereignty. Such a claim would also provide an alternative to the theological legitimation of the monarchy typical of James’s reign.

“Crown your plenty”: From Republic to Empire

Barnavelts claims for his stewardship of the Dutch state can now be understood within a broader historical frame. Trade disputes between the English and the Dutch, no less than the political contrasts between English monarchy and Dutch republicanism, played an important role in the formation of an English imperial project. Because the English fishing industry was expanding in the early seventeenth century, fishing rights off the coasts of England became a key source of tension between England and the Dutch Republic around the time of the Twelve Years’ Truce.⁸⁶ In earlier disputes with Denmark and Spain, the English had attempted to protect their fishing, navigation, and trade interests by invoking *mare liberum*, or the principle that the seas were freely available to all people, and could not be made private property. In 1609, however, amid frequent disputes between English and Dutch fishermen in the waters near England, King James invoked *mare clausum*, or the principle that the closed seas could be apportioned between nations in the same way that land could be divided, in an official edict which restricted fishing rights in the waters around Britain and Ireland to the British, the Irish, and licensed foreigners.

⁸⁶ See G. Edmundson, “The Dutch Republic,” in The Cambridge Modern History, Vol. 3: The Wars of Religions, Planned by Lord Acton, Ed. A.W. Ward, G.W. Prothero, and Stanley Leathes (New York: Macmillan, 1918) 643-44.

This measure was intended to exclude the Dutch.⁸⁷ Such was the polemical context in which Grotius's treatise Mare Liberum (originally Chapter XII of the longer work De Jure Praedae, or On the Law of Plunder, written in the winter of 1604-5 but unpublished until 1868) was published anonymously in 1609. Although the longer work was written to defend the Dutch East India Company's seizure of the Portuguese vessel *St. Catherine*, Mare Liberum had obvious topical relevance to the debate between the Dutch and the English as well. Richard Hakluyt, a prominent supporter of English colonialism, made the first English translation of Mare Liberum, "presumably at the instigation of the East India Company,"⁸⁸ sometime after the publication of the Latin text in 1609 and before his death in November 1616. However, Hakluyt's translation was not published until 2004.⁸⁹ A précis written for the English ambassadors to the Council of Cologne in 1673 described the treatise as "made as if aimed at mortifying the Spaniards' usurpation in the W. and E. Indies, but aimed indeed at England."⁹⁰

In Mare Liberum, Grotius marshals an eclectic band of quotations and precedents throughout history to argue for the "axiom" of the "law of nations" [*iuris gentium*]: that "Every nation is free to travel to every other nation, and to trade with it.

⁸⁷ See David Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 107-9.

⁸⁸ Armitage 111.

⁸⁹ See Hugo Grotius, The Free Sea, Trans. Richard Hakluyt, Ed. David Armitage (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004).

⁹⁰ Quoted in Thomas Wemyss Fulton, The Sovereignty of the Sea: An Historical Account of the Claims of England to the Dominion of the British Seas, and of the Evolution of the Territorial Waters, with Special Reference to the Rights of Fishing and the Naval Salute (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1911) 371 n.1. Also cited in Armitage 109. Grotius's work has a long history of topicality: the first published English translation, by Ralph van Deman Magoffin, was funded by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and published in 1916 as an intervention in shipping conflicts during the First World War. More recently, Daniel Heller-Roazen discusses Grotius's thought as part of his argument that the legal discourse on piracy and sovereignty over the seas has formed the basis for the contemporary paradigm of terrorism and its extralegal state responses. See Daniel Heller-Roazen, The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations (New York: Zone Books, 2009).

God himself says this speaking through the voice of nature, and inasmuch as it is not His will to have Nature supply every place with all the necessities of life, He ordains that some nations excel in one art and others in another.”⁹¹ Grotius confers a moral value on the practical necessity of acquiring “all the necessities of life” through trade, speculating that God “wished human friendships to be engendered by mutual needs and resources, lest individuals deeming themselves entirely sufficient unto themselves should for that very reason be rendered unsociable.”⁹² For Grotius, the very existence of the oceans, which encompass the land and connect disparate nations, “offer sufficient proof that Nature has given to all peoples a right of access to all other peoples.”⁹³

The twinned freedoms of travel and trade, in Grotius’s argument, require that “the sea can in no way become the private property of any one, because nature not only allows but enjoins its common use. Neither can the shore become the private property of any one. [...] If any part of these things is by nature susceptible of occupation, it may become the property of the one who occupies it only so far as such occupation does not affect its common use.”⁹⁴ Grotius concludes that “he who prevents another from navigating the sea has no support in law,”⁹⁵ and that “freedom of trade is based on a primitive right of nations which has a natural and permanent cause.”⁹⁶ For Grotius, these principles of natural law would justify any Dutch war with Portugal necessary to defend its rights of navigation and trade, since “when a judgment which would be rendered in a court cannot be obtained, it should with

⁹¹ Hugo Grotius, The Freedom of the Seas, or The Right Which Belongs to the Dutch to Take Part in the East Indian Trade, Trans. Ralph van Deman Magoffin, Ed. James Brown Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1916) 7.

⁹² Grotius 7.

⁹³ Grotius 8.

⁹⁴ Grotius 30.

⁹⁵ Grotius 44.

⁹⁶ Grotius 64.

justice be demanded in a war.”⁹⁷ The Dutch would fight such a war “boldly, not only for [their] own liberty, but for that of the human race.”⁹⁸

Such an assertion of Dutch independence in commerce and war would not be uncontroversial. John Selden responded to Grotius with his treatise Mare Clausum (written in 1618, but unpublished for political reasons until 1635), which Marchamont Nedham translated into English in 1652 under the title Of the Dominion, or, Ownership of the Sea.⁹⁹ In this work, Selden argued for the British crown’s claim over the seas, and against Grotius’s doctrine of the freedom of the seas, on the basis of “matter of *Law*” and “matter of *Fact*” (Selden 3).¹⁰⁰ In the first volume of Mare Clausum, Selden argues *de jure* (on the “matter of *Law*”) that according to the “Customs of so many Ages and Nations, and as well out of the *Civil*, as the *Common* or *Intervenient Law* of most Nations, [...] any kinde of Sea whatsoever may by any sort of Law whatsoever bee capable of private Dominion” (179).¹⁰¹ Selden defines dominion, or *dominium* in the Latin original, as “a Right of Using, Enjoying, Alienating, and free Disposing” (16).¹⁰² In addition to compiling legal and customary precedents for private ownership of territory at sea, Selden seizes upon Grotius’s argument that “*the Sea [...] differs from the Shore in [...] that the Sea, unless it bee in som small part of it self, is not easily capable of Building or Inclosure. [...]* *Nevertheless, if any small part of it may bee thus possessed, it fall’s to him that enter’s*

⁹⁷ Grotius 75.

⁹⁸ Grotius 73.

⁹⁹ While Mónica Brito Vieira calls for renewed attention to the Portuguese friar Serafim de Freitas’s polemical response to Grotius’s Mare Liberum, she concedes that Selden’s text “has been, among all the replies to Grotius, the one which has exercised the greatest hold over scholars.” See Mónica Brito Vieira, “*Mare Liberum* vs. *Mare Clausum*: Grotius, Freitas, and Selden’s Debate on Dominion over the Seas,” Journal of the History of Ideas 64.3 (2003): 362.

¹⁰⁰ John Selden, Of the Dominion, Or, Ownership of the Sea, Trans. Marchamont Nedham, (New York: Arno Press, 1972) 3.

¹⁰¹ Selden 179.

¹⁰² Selden 16.

upon it first by occupation” (172).¹⁰³ Selden objects that “the difference of a lesser and a greater part, cannot take place [...] in the determining of private Dominion,” and that Grotius thus seems to concede the possibility of possessing part of the sea on the grounds of occupation (*ibid.*).¹⁰⁴ Selden goes on to distinguish “the inner and neighboring Seas from the open Sea or main Ocean”: while it would be “a very difficult thing to possess the whole Ocean,” the inner and neighboring seas would not be inalienable in principle (173).¹⁰⁵

In the second volume, Selden argues *de facto* (on the “matter of Fact”) and from reference to British history that:

from all Antiquitie, down to our times without interruption, that those [...] who have reigned here, whether *Britains, Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans*, and so the following Kings (each one according to the various latitude of his Empire) have enjoyed the Dominion of that Sea by perpetual occupation, that is to say, by using and enjoying it as their own [...] as an undoubted portion [...] of the *British* Empire, [...] or as an inseparable appendant of this Land. Lastly, that the Kings of Great Britain have had a peculiar Dominion or proprietie over the Sea flowing about it, as a Bound not bounding their Empire, but [...] as bounded by it; in the same manner as over the island it self, and the other neighboring isles which they possess about it. (182).¹⁰⁶

In other words, Selden attempted to prove that the successive rulers of British territory had, in practice, treated the seas around British land as their property. In this sense, the sea would be “a Bound not bounding [the kings’] Empire, but [...] bounded by”

¹⁰³ Selden 172.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Selden 173.

¹⁰⁶ Selden 182.

the land. According to Selden, Grotius's distinction between the land, which could be distributed and apportioned as private property, and the sea, which had to remain free for common use, was invalid in practice; British dominion over the seas was valid not only by law but by past practice, and could continue.

In effect, Selden's treatise was an apologia for the King's rights over British waters, but even after the English Revolution, Mare Clausum continued to be cited in support of the naval prerogatives of Cromwell's Commonwealth. Indeed, in 1652, as the Anglo-Dutch Wars approached, the English Council of State funded Nedham's translation of Selden's text in order to argue that the Rump Parliament should retain the King's naval holdings.¹⁰⁷ After the death of Cromwell and the restoration of the monarchy, Charles II cited Selden to justify his demand that foreign vessels should be required to salute his ships by lowering their pennants in the narrow seas.¹⁰⁸ Although English policy would later shift to advocate *mare liberum* rather than *mare clausum*, once England's rivalry with France displaced their older rivalry with the Dutch Republic,¹⁰⁹ David Armitage argues that Selden's tract "provided the foundation for later claims to dominion over the seas in the name of a 'British Empire,'" and that his claims "for English *dominium* and *imperium* over the British seas became a *locus classicus* for later students of the subject."¹¹¹

To return to the text of Barnavelt, we can note that Barnavelt's arguments for republican government are based on the prospect of economic abundance as well as political idealism. As we have discussed above, Barnavelt argues that he has nurtured

¹⁰⁷ See Armitage 118.

¹⁰⁸ See Eric G. M. Fletcher, "John Selden (Author of *Mare Clausum*) and His Contribution to International Law" in Transactions of the Grotius Society 19 (1933), p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ See Armitage 122.

¹¹⁰ Armitage 119.

¹¹¹ Armitage 122. According to Armitage, Thomas Hobbes was an "early admirer" of Selden's tract (*ibid.*).

the “orphan State” (3.1.128) until it became financially “fatt, and faire again” (3.1.131), alluding to his leadership in the aftermath of the assassination of William of Orange, and the playwrights do not seriously challenge Barnavelt’s claims for the prosperity of the Dutch Republic. The playwrights follow Oldenbarnevelt’s pamphlet Apology for his actions closely in composing Barnavelt’s speech in his own defense for the stage. In this speech, Barnavelt’s diplomatic, military, and economic achievements are given equal weight: his pride in “hav[ing] five times in regall Embassies/ And [...] spoken, face to face, with mightie Kings; twyce with that virgin Queene/ [...] *Elizabeth of England*; [...] / Once with the King of *Britaine*, that now is” (4.5.91-99) is balanced by his pride in having repeatedly “returnd [...] / With profit, as with honour, to my Cuntry”(4.5.102-3). He boasts that “Besides Soldiers/ So often leavied, by my meanes for you, / [...] Two Millions, and five hundred thousand pounds/ For which the Provinces stood bound, I wrought/ Freely to be dischargd; the Townes they pawned to be deliverd up” (4.5.105-111). In Barnavelt’s telling, his efforts “T’ unyte theis States” (4.5.113) have been both “meritorious, and prosperous” (4.5.112).

Fletcher and Massinger emphasize that the Dutch Revolt was a bourgeois revolt, that Barnavelt’s supporters were drawn from the merchants and Burghers rather than the aristocracy, from the “Merchants,/ Lawyers, Appothecaries, and Physitians” who rule as “Potentates, and Princes” (1.1.143-45), and that Barnavelt’s republican concerns are as much with freedom of trade as with formal political liberty. As he prepares to go to his death, Barnavelt urges his countrymen both to “bethinck you of your Justice” (5.3.91) and to remember the prosperity he had brought to his “fruitfull Nation” (5.3.113) through maritime trade, to remember “Who brought the plowgh againe, to crown your plenty;/ [...] who/ Unbard the havens, that the floating

Merchant/ Might clap his lynnnon wings up to the windes/ And back the raging waves to bring you profit” (5.3.108-111).

The figure of the “floating Merchant” combines defiance (as he “clap[s] his lynnnon wings up to the windes/ And back[s] the raging waves”) with a cool appraisal of the profit margin. Barnavelt’s invocation of the prosperity of the Twelve Years’ Truce, when “desolation,/ Fire, Sword, and Famine” (5.3.98-99) were succeeded by “the plowgh againe, to crowne your plenty” (5.3.108), suggests both the agricultural fruits of the peace and the biblical figure for the peace of God’s prophesied reign on earth: “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2: 4, King James version). The figure of the “plowgh [...] to crown your plenty,” the economic prosperity made possible by Dutch republicanism, is counterpoised against the crown of the monarchy, against whose resurgence Barnavelt warns: “here I prophecie, I that have lyvd/ And dye a free man, shall, when I am ashes/ Be sensible of your groanes, and wishes for me;/ And when too late you see this Goverment/ Chained to a Monarchie, you’ll howle in vaine/ And wish you had a Barnavelt againe” (4.5.197-202).

Barnavelt tells his countrymen to “lead me where you will” (4.5.203), and indeed the playwrights subtly but consistently raise the question of the choice between monarchy and republicanism, even if the possibility of an English republic cannot be openly broached. Barnavelt’s arguments are based not only on principle but also on economic calculation: they promote the political freedoms of the republican state form by showing the crowning plenty that those freedoms make possible. The “floating Merchant,” whom Barnavelt celebrates as a sign of prosperity, is at once an agent of trade and a citizen. (Bourgeois republicanism and economic liberalism join hands in Barnavelt’s rhetoric.) In turn, Grotius’s argument in Mare Liberum (as quoted above)

for the “right of access” of “all peoples” to other nations for the purpose of trading for “all the necessaries of life” seems to present an implicitly republican model for international law, egalitarian insofar as it affirms that “Every nation is free to travel to any other nation, and to trade with it.”

Grotius’s insistence that the sea, serving both as a means of trade and a symbol of divinely sanctioned social interdependence, must be kept common and free from territorial claims, for the “liberty” of “the human race,” could intimate a notion of the sea as a universal state in republican terms. Furthermore, Grotius’s reminder “To the Rulers and to the Free and Independent Nations of Christendom,” in the preface to Mare Liberum, suggests a correspondence between the right to universal commerce on the seas and the imperative to universal communication. Grotius argues that God “had not separated human beings, as He had the rest of living things, into different species and various divisions, but had willed them to be of one race [sed unius esse generis... voluisset] and to be known by one name; that furthermore He had given them the same origin, [...] language too, and other means of communication, in order that they all might recognize their natural social bond and kinship” (Grotius 1-2). Natural law and freedom of naval trade are closely conjoined in Grotius’s text, which goes on to argue that the “very laws themselves of each and every nation and city flow from that Divine source” of the laws “written in the minds and on the hearts of every individual,” and that those divinely founded laws serve to distinguish the “things which every man enjoys in common with all other men” from the “other things [...] which through the industry and labor of each man become his own. Laws [...] were given to cover both cases” (Grotius 2). Grotius’s insistence, on the one hand, that humanity is divinely united in a single *gens*, which can be recognized through communication and commerce, and, on the other hand, that divinely grounded natural laws distinguish goods for common use (the sea) from goods that can be appropriated through

“industry and labor,” suggests a moral justification for egalitarian access to naval trade.

Grotius figures the sea, which cannot “be considered as the territory of any people whatsoever,” as a kind of republic, insofar as the impossibility of making the sea the object of territorial rule or private property renders it both a privileged object of common use and a means of unifying disparate peoples (Grotius 34). In this sense, the sea could be seen as the site of a republican international that could transcend the claims that any particular state might make on the allegiance of its subjects. Given Grotius’s celebration of naval travel and trade as ways to affirm the common bonds between all nations, the “floating Merchant” whom Barnavelt praises as the privileged citizen of the Dutch republican state could also be the privileged citizen of the republic of the seas. But we have not yet directly confronted the problems of an ascendant bourgeois republic, concerned both with liberty and economic (indeed imperialist) expansion. These problems take on a clearer contour during Cromwell’s Commonwealth, in the operatic masques of William Davenant. The prosperity promised by the “floating Merchant” as a republican citizen and agent of trade in Massinger and Fletcher’s play gives way to the threat of a naval hegemony in Davenant’s The Siege of Rhodes.

“O’er-running kingdoms, stopping at a town”:

Staging Empire at a Standstill in William Davenant’s *The Siege of Rhodes*

The performance of William Davenant’s *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656) first in the ambiguously ‘private’ space of Rutland House, his home on Aldersgate Street, and later in the Cockpit on Drury Lane, marks a number of milestones in English dramatic history as well as in the cultural history of the Commonwealth.¹ *The Siege of Rhodes* not only marks the revival of drama on the London stage after the start of the English Civil War and the parliamentary “Order for Stage-plays to Cease” closed the playhouses on 2 September 1642: it is arguably also the first English opera, and it anticipates the new genre of the “heroic drama” in the Restoration, a genre most often

¹ Mary Edmond notes that *The Siege of Rhodes* “was completed before 17 August 1656, the date of the address ‘To the Reader’ preceding the text as published that year” (Edmond 126) and “presumably put on in September” (Edmond 128). In May 1656, several months before the first performance, Davenant had presented *The First Day’s Entertainment at Rutland House by Declamation and Music after the Manner of the Ancients*—described variously by critics as a “quasi-dramatic dialogue” (Clare, “Introduction” 181) or as an “‘entertainment’...quite unlike a stage play, with seated declaimers, and no dialogue, elaborate costumes or props” (Edmond 126)—composed of speeches by the cynic, Diogenes, and the comic playwright, Aristophanes in which the two figures debate the moral virtues of theatre, and thus prepare the way for the revival of public performance, a few months later, with *The Siege of Rhodes*. *The First Day’s Entertainment* is remarkable in that it was approved for performance by the Council of State under the Protectorate. As Susan Wiseman indicates: “*The First Days* [sic] *Entertainment at Rutland House* (staged on 23 May 1656) was the first piece of theatre permitted by the Protectorate government and it addresses directly the problem of the nature and value of theatrical representation, an issue also addressed by Edmund Gayton in his preface to the Lord Mayor’s show of 1655” (Wiseman, “‘History Digested’” 192). Regarding the ambiguously ‘private’ or quasi-public performance of the declamatory entertainment at Davenant’s home, an anonymous report of an attendee at Rutland House reports that there was a paying audience present for the performance: “‘Vpon Friday the 23 of May 1656’ [*The First Day’s Entertainment* was presented] ‘att the Charterhouse’ [i.e. Rutland House was near Charterhouse Square], and at a charge (five schillings a head) – thus making it something more than ‘private’. Four hundred people had been expected to attend, ‘but there appeared not above 150 auditors’ [...]” (qtd. in Edmond 122-23). See Mary Edmond, *Rare Sir William Davenant: Poet Laureate, Playwright, Civil War General, Restoration Theatre Manager* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987). Janet Clare, “Introduction” in *Drama of the English Republic, 1649-60*, Ed. Janet Clare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002). Susan J. Wiseman, “‘History Digested’: Opera and Colonialism in the 1650s” in *Literature and the English Civil War*, Ed. Thomas F. Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 189-204.

associated with John Dryden and the Restoration theatre.² Furthermore, Davenant's operatic drama inaugurates the use of mechanical scenery and the female actor that would become common features of the post-revolutionary public theatre, contributions to English drama that have led George H. Nettleton to argue that Davenant "not merely set the fashion for early Restoration playwrights, but stirred impulses that have powerfully affected the whole course of modern English dramatic development."³ Although Davenant's works are no longer performed or widely read, he occupies a singular position in the history of English drama as the only playwright whose dramas received the official sanction of the Commonwealth government during the Interregnum period, and as one of the few seventeenth century playwrights whose career spanned from before the revolution to the post-revolutionary period, comprising his Caroline masques, Commonwealth operas, and Restoration heroic dramas.⁴

As I have noted in Chapter 1, Guarini describes the republican form of government as a mixed form, combining the "power of the few and the power of the masses."⁵ If such a mixture can be possible in politics, Guarini argues, it should be

² As Edmond indicates, "It has sometimes been suggested that the honour of putting on the first English opera belongs to Richard Flecknoe, whose little *Ariadne* was printed in 1654, two years before Davenant's *Rhodes*" (Edmond 128-29). However, Edmond concludes that: "This seems...improbable. *Ariadne*, described on the title-page as 'A Dramatick Piece Acted for Recitative Musick. Written and Composed by RICHARD FLECKNOE', was (like most of his work) privately printed for the author, and in a description to the Duchess of Richmond and Lennox, Flecknoe presents 'this Model of my Recitative Musick to your fair Hands, as I shall shortly my Musick it self'" (qtd. in Edmond 129). Wiseman argues persuasively for a reassessment of the conventional wisdom that the 1642 ordinance of Parliament calling for the closure of the theatres is the defining endpoint of drama, that is, until the Restoration in 1660. Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in The English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 1-7.

³ George H. Nettleton, *English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1642-1780)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914) 33.

⁴ Wiseman notes that "although Davenant was the only officially sanctioned theatrical figure during the Interregnum, he was not the only dramatist favoured by Henrietta Maria to have had work performed during the Protectorate 1650s [...]." See Wiseman, "History Digested" 191.

⁵ Giambattista Guarini, "The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry," *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940) 511.

equally valid in drama to mix tragedy, the “imitation of the great,” with comedy, the “imitation of the humble.”⁶ Guarini’s description is meant to defend tragicomedy against its critics, by presenting its hybridization of the traditional dramatic forms of tragedy and comedy as a synthesis of their possibilities, rather than a mere dilution. The hybridization of Davenant’s drama during the Interregnum, as it incorporates elements of tragicomedy, opera, and the visual spectacles associated with the courtly masque, proceeds in parallel to the hybridization of practical politics under the republican Commonwealth. This chapter will argue that The Siege of Rhodes is divided between celebrating English expansion under Cromwell and meditating on the material limits to imperial expansion. This ambivalence, in turn, is implicit in the formal characteristics of the opera, in which the limits of visual representation on the stage suggest the paradoxes of imperial power. If the plays I have discussed in earlier chapters indirectly engaged the contradictions of *dominium* and *imperium*, *mare clausum* and *mare liberum*, The Siege of Rhodes boldly thematizes the possibility of a sea-based empire (in the frightening aspect of the Ottoman Empire). However, even as Davenant’s opera makes it possible to imagine the English Commonwealth achieving an empire no longer territorially bounded on land, the opera also introduces aesthetic limits to this expansion.

The Siege of Rhodes takes as its subject the Turkish siege led by Solyman the Magnificent against the island of Rhodes in 1522, although Davenant significantly ends the opera before the eventual sack of the city of Rhodes, and avoids the topic of the early defeat of the English defenders.⁷ The opera begins as the Turkish fleet

⁶ Guarini 511.

⁷ Davenant draws on Richard Knolles’s accounts of the sieges of Rhodes by Solyman and the Turks in Knolles’s The General History of the Turks (1631). Gerard Langbaine argues that in addition to

approaches the island. Alphonso, a young Sicilian duke visiting Rhodes shortly after his wedding, learns of the impending invasion, and is disturbed to learn that the Christian nations of Europe have refused to intervene against the Ottoman Empire. Alphonso is moved to stay and fight for Rhodes rather than return to his bride, the city marshals its international company of troops, among whom the English are presented as particularly brave, and as the Turkish fleet arrives, both sides settle in for the protracted siege. Although the Rhodian troops are badly outnumbered, they are able to hold the walls of the city.

As the months pass, Alphonso's wife, Ianthe, is captured by the Turks while trying to deliver supplies from Sicily to Rhodes. Although Solyman is enraged by the Rhodian resistance, he is sufficiently impressed by Ianthe's courage and virtue that he offers her free passage to Rhodes, allows her the chance to return to Sicily with her husband, and even decides to delay the assault of his full army on Rhodes while she stays in the city. Ianthe rallies the Rhodian defenders, selling her jewels to buy supplies for the island, and rejoins her husband, but Alphonso is jealous of his wife's glory and suspicious of Solyman's act of mercy. As the siege continues, Solyman builds a castle outside the city walls to show his perseverance and masses his troops for the final assault, although he orders his troops to spare Ianthe's and Alphonso's lives. The growing mistrust between Ianthe and Alphonso spurs Alphonso to increasingly reckless acts, but when Ianthe is wounded while cheering on the English

Knolles Davenant also drew from the following works: "Thomas Artus, *Continuation de l'Histoire des Turcs* (Paris, 1612), Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della sacra religione et ill^{ma} [sic] militia di San Giovanni Gierosolimitano* (Rome, 1594-1602, translated into French in 1629), and Jean Jacques Boissard, *Vitae et Icones Sultanorum Turcicorum* (Frankfurt, 1596)" (Ann-Mari Hedbäck xlii). Ann-Mari Hedbäck dismisses Boissard as a potential source; however, she agrees with Langbaine that "In both Artus and Bosio...there are passages in which details are mentioned that are found in Davenant's play and that are not included in Knolles' account of the siege [...]" (Ann-Mari Hedbäck xlii). See Ann-Mari Hedbäck, "Introduction" in *The Siege of Rhodes: A Critical Edition*. Ed. Ann-Mari Hedbäck (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1973) xlii.

in the final assault, Alphonso chooses to rescue her himself rather than stay with the bulwark. The Rhodian forces repel the more numerous Turkish troops, although the siege continues, and the wounded Ianthe reconciles with Alphonso, who has also been injured in battle. As the opera closes, a chorus of Rhodian soldiers sing in defiant mockery of the Turks.

The Siege of Rhodes opens with danger approaching from the sea, foreshadowing the importance of the sea throughout the opera.⁸ Alphonso, confused and alarmed by the approach of the Turkish fleet, asks Villerius, the Grand Master of Rhodes, about the clamorous noises of the “shriller trumpet, and tempestuous drum” accompanying the fleet, and he wonders what manner of “danger” such signs “portend” (1.44-49). Villerius attempts to allay the Duke’s alarm, responding: “Such, gentle prince,/ As cannot fright, but yet must warn you hence” and adds that the “bright crescents” worn by the Turkish ensigns are emblems both of the imminent arrival of the “prodigious gross of Solyman,” and of the territorial expanse, the “increasing empire,” which though in its infancy (“still in nonage”) will continue to grow (1.50-57). Villerius’s expectation of the growing “prodigious gross” of Solyman’s fleet functions metonymically for the vast territorial expansion that Villerius “portend[s]” (1.48) on the land, a metonymic linkage that presents both sea and land as potential objects of imperial control.

The Ottoman Empire represents the triumph of imperial force, while the Christian nations of Europe are represented as disunited and distracted, too enfeebled by their colonial investments to come to the aid of their Christian neighbors in Rhodes.

⁸ William Davenant, The Siege of Rhodes in Drama of the English Republic, 1649-60, Ed., Janet Clare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 199. Quotations from The Siege of Rhodes are taken from this edition.

However, while the Admiral and Villerius figure the imperial ambitions of Spain and France by metaphors of human labor, whether agricultural (“By armies stowed in fleets, exhausted Spain/ Leaves half her land unploughed, to plough the main”) or horticultural (“France strives to have her lilies grow as fair/ In others’ realms as where they native are”), English imperial ambitions are presented as a natural expression of exuberant power: “The English lion ever loves to change/ His walks, and in remoter forests range” (2.19-26). Villerius implicitly contrasts the spontaneity of the “English lion,” proverbial king of beasts, with the quixotic labors of “exhausted Spain” and France, arbitrarily “striv[ing]” to extend its power beyond its “native” territory.⁹ England is represented as one possible exception to this European malaise. The prominence of the sea as a space of imperial authority continuous with land-based empire evokes the contestation between concepts of *imperium* and *dominium* and *mare clausum* and *mare liberum* discussed earlier (see Chapters 2 and 3). We may perhaps ask why the Ottoman Empire would be the opera’s privileged example of an expansionist state, admitting no limits to its powers at sea, and driven to subsuming the resistant island of Rhodes. While imperial expansion in Davenant’s time promised wealth and providential glory, it was by no means clear that it could be compatible with political liberty for its citizens: the egalitarian promise of republican citizenship, predicated on individual liberty, seemed difficult, perhaps impossible, to preserve under the forms of power necessary to maintain an empire. David Armitage comments on Machiavelli’s typology of states in his Discourses on Livy as the *locus classicus* for sixteenth-century discussions of the conflicting claims of imperial expansion and liberty. As Armitage notes:

⁹ The figure of the lion also appears in Davenant’s later Commonwealth dramas, The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru (1658) and in The History of Sir Francis Drake (1659). A symbol of both English monarchy and the English republic under Cromwell (the white lion on the coat of arms of the Commonwealth was also a symbol on Cromwell’s personal coat of arms), the lion valorizes English expeditions in the New World.

Machiavelli's analysis of expansion [...] offered three possibilities. A state could follow the course of Rome and order itself internally to be capable of mastering its external environment. It would be shaken by popular dissent, its lifespan would be limited, but it would nonetheless be glorious and would ride the flux of time. The German republics presented the second possibility, that of defensive stability and curbed ambition [...]. Finally, the model of Sparta, Athens, or Venice, which guaranteed internal tranquility and stability, could be followed, but only if neither necessity nor greed forced the state to expand [...]. [...] The main reason to prefer the course of Rome was not glory but security in a world of change and ambition.¹⁰

Machiavelli starts from the premise that all states are historically transient. If the Roman model of the expansionist state might gain glory for the state and resist conquest from outside, the history of the empire's decline showed that "*Imperio and libertá* would, at last, be incompatible."¹¹ Solyman practices the first model of political expansion, in which the continuous necessity of further acquisition must eventually reach its limit, resulting in the empire's inevitable waning. It is this dynamic of expansion and decline, perhaps, that allows Davenant to present the temporary stalemate between the Turks and the Rhodians at the opera's conclusion as a victory for Christendom.

¹⁰ David Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 130.

¹¹ Armitage, The Ideological Origins p. 130. Tristan Marshall argues that "the term 'empire' is used in the early seventeenth century as referring primarily to the internal sovereign state and only later with the connotations of overseas colonizing [...]" (Marshall 11). According to Marshall, "The Virginia Company was...ultimately responsible for turning imperial thinking away from imperium towards colonisation. In this change of emphasis from imperium to colonial empire no image was to be as potent as that of imperial Rome" (Marshall 18). Tristan Marshall, Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages Under James VI and I (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2000).

In his note “To the Reader,” Davenant forewarns that “we are like to give no great satisfaction in the quantity of our argument, which is in story very copious; but shrinks to a small narration here, because we could not convey it by more than seven persons” (lines 21-25).¹² Davenant’s distinction between the copiousness of the opera’s events “in story” (the full historical sweep of the Rhodian-Turkish conflict) and its shrunken “narration” (the selection of characters and dramatic action) also sheds light on the tension between the time of the opera’s still pictorial backdrops, which convey the broad collective dimensions of the narrative, and the acted time of the opera’s dialogue.

Between the first and second entries, the backdrop shifts (in Davenant’s description) from “the city Rhodes, when it was in prosperous estate, with so much view of the gardens and hills about it as the narrowness of the room could allow the scene” (1.4-5), to “the city, Rhodes, appear[ing] beleaguered at sea and land” (2.1-2). Yet the dialogue seems to lag behind this narrative transition. The visual details of the staging, and particularly the static backdrops, act as narrative markers in distinction to the opera’s enacted dialogue. In contrast to a play such as Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra, in which frequent, abrupt and jarring transitions in space and time between the dramatic antipodes of Egypt and Rome are conveyed almost entirely through dialogue (at least in the early productions of the play), Davenant conveys Rhodes’s changes in fortune most strongly through the montage of alternating backdrops. Although Davenant establishes a continuity between Villerius and Alphonso’s discussion of the disunity among the Christian imperial powers in the first entry and Villerius and the Admiral’s similar conversation in the second entry, this continuity of action is disrupted by the sudden shift in staging from the first entry’s backdrop of

¹² William Davenant, “To the Reader” in Drama of the English Republic, 1649-60, Ed., Clare, Janet (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 194-95.

“the city Rhodes, when it was in prosperous estate” (1.4) though menaced by the Turkish fleet on the horizon, to the second entry’s backdrop of Rhodes “beleaguered at sea and land” (2.1-2). The pictorial backdrops frame distinct stages in the play’s narrative, conforming to the stages of the first Turkish assault on Rhodes, but the flexibility of the recitative counterpoint in relation to the narrative markers allows Davenant to dilate and contract dramatic time, and ultimately to recast history in the mold of romance.

Davenant introduces wishful, counterfactual elements into the opera’s action by presenting the English soldiers defending the city as valiant and victorious (when in fact they were quickly overrun by the Turks), and by ending the play with the (fictional) lovers Ianthe and Alphonso’s reconciliation during the Turkish retreat rather than the eventual sack of Rhodes by the returning Turks. Janet Clare has argued that Davenant “rewrit[es] history as romance” by implicitly staging a victory for the defeated English royalists, insofar as there is “a suggestive analogy between the plight of the beleaguered chivalric Knights Hospitaller and that of defeated royalists,” and by organizing the plot around the triumphant love between Ianthe and Alphonso, who may allegorize Charles I and Henrietta Maria.¹³

The second entry anticipates Solyman’s arrival, as Alphonso recalls the valor of the European nations in recitative solo. The audience must imagine the fight against the Turkish siege of Rhodes, since the fighting is not dramatized, but only recounted. The Duke concludes by announcing Solyman’s arrival and the drama segues back into dialogue between Villerius and the Admiral, who, then, in chorus with Villerius and Alphonso, implies that the defeat of the European forces is inevitable: “Let us apace do worthily and give/ Our story length, though long we cannot live” (2.57-58). Alphonso’s praise of the Christian allies concludes with his

¹³ Clare, “Introduction” in *Drama of the English Republic, 1649-60* p. 183, 184.

announcement of Solyman's arrival on land: "Great Solyman is landed now./ All fate he seems to be,/ And brings those tempests in his brow/ Which he deserved at sea" (2.49-52). Much as Villerius had interpreted the "bright crescents" (1.53) worn by the Turkish ensigns as "emblems" (1.54) of the expansive military reach of the Ottoman empire and the implied union of land and sea in the first entry, Alphonso's speech again links the image of the sea to the Turkish imperium represented by "Great Solyman" (2.49). Although Alphonso suggests that Solyman should have been obstructed by "tempests" at sea, the emperor has brought the destructive force of those "tempests" to bear upon the shores of Rhodes, and his apparent imperviousness to the sublime force of the sea makes him seem as powerful as "All fate" (2.50).

Mustapha's salutation to the Turkish emperor further emphasizes Solyman's masterful "command" of the sea: "Great sultan, hail! though here at land/ Lost fools in opposition stand,/ Yet thou at sea dost all command" (2.110). Solyman's triumph over the perilous sea to land safely on Rhodes ("Great Solyman is landed now") implicitly bridges the natural division of land and water, and evokes the notion of a terrestrial imperium that could extend across the seas to aggregate both land and sea into a unified imperial body. This aggregation signified by the "prodigious gross" of Solyman's naval forces (1.57), is again suggested by Villerius's assurance that though Solyman may defeat the Christian forces, he only can win once: "He can at most but once prevail,/ Though armed with nations that were brought by more/ Gross galleys than would serve to hale/ This island to the Lycian shore" (2.53-56). In other words, Solyman's triumph over Rhodes could be accomplished only once, even if he employed the collective might of all his tributary "nations," and enough ships to drag ("hale") the island of Rhodes to Turkey's coast ("Lycian shore"). Villerius's hyperbole again figuratively collapses the natural boundaries between land and sea, and with them the political boundaries of sovereign states (e.g. England, France,

Spain) as the Turkish empire figuratively subsumes the defeated island of Rhodes into the shores of Turkey. Solyman, in turn, describes imperial conquest, including the Turkish assault on Rhodes, as a “race,” implying that an imperial power must constantly accelerate toward the “goal” of expansion:

What sudden halt hath stayed thy swift renown,
O'er-running kingdoms, stopping at a town?
He that will win the prize in honour's race
Must nearer to the goal still mend his pace.
If age thou feelest, the active camp forbear;
In sleepy cities rest, the caves of fear.
Thy mind was never valiant if, when old,
Thy courage cools because thy blood is cold. (2.63-70)

If imperial conquest or “O'er-running kingdoms” is figured as part of “honour's race,” then empire-building must be accomplished in a continuous motion, and in competition with the other aspiring imperial powers. Solyman figures the “mind” as the source of valor, which in turn is identified with imperial conquest. Like the heart, the seat of “courage” which “cools because thy blood is cold,” the empire must be in constant motion to survive. Pirrhus, the object of Solyman's criticism for his initial failure to conquer Rhodes, later reiterates the metaphor of the “race” for empire-building: “‘Tis well our valiant prophet did/ In us not only loss forbid,/ But has enjoined us still to get./ Empire must move apace/ When she begins the race,/ And apter is for wings than feet” (3.28-34). Pirrhus grants figurative agency to “Empire,” independent of the will of individual imperial subjects, in personifying “her” as the participant in a race. However, the autonomous “Empire” is thus subject to the necessity of competition: once “she begins the race,” “Empire *must* move apace” (my italics). Thus the political imperative for the empire to expand its holdings (the

demand of the race) joins the religious imperative “still to get.” While the play figures English expansionism as natural and voluntary (“The English lion ever loves to change/ His walks, and in remoter forests range” [2.25-26]), the Turkish campaign of conquest is represented as a form of compulsion. Intriguingly, Davenant’s paratextual statements about his ambitions for his opera’s production mirror the text’s thematic preoccupation with the demands of international competition for empire. Davenant’s comments on the production of The Siege of Rhodes in his prefatory letter “To the Reader” betray his anxieties that his imperial “Representation” in the semi-public theatrical space at Rutland House was all too spatially constricted:

It has been often wished that our scenes [...] had not been confined to eleven foot in height, and about fifteen in depth, including the places of passage reserved for the music. This is so narrow an allowance for the fleet of Solyman the Magnificent, his army, the island of Rhodes and the varieties attending the siege of the city that I fear you will think we invite you to such a contracted trifle as that of the Caesars carved upon a nut.¹⁴

Davenant’s rhetoric here seems to collapse representation and history together: he evokes the absurdity of confining “the fleet of Solyman the Magnificent, his army,” and Rhodes within the miniscule territory of the stage. The limitations of Davenant’s stage present an obstacle to the claims of Solyman’s empire; as Davenant’s final bathetic image suggests, it would be difficult to be aesthetically or politically overawed by “the Caesars carved upon a nut.” As with Herod in The Tragedy of Mariam, whose sovereign authority (preserved by his capacity for visible, spectacular violence) is significantly undercut by the closet drama’s strictly textual nature, Solyman’s imperial ambitions are delimited by the technical limitations of Davenant’s

¹⁴ Davenant, “To the Reader,” line 20-21.

pictorial spectacle. James Winn has observed that in Davenant's preface, which openly asks the reader to fund a grander production, the dramatist's "double negative describing the composers as 'perhaps not unequal to the best Masters abroad' betrays Davenant's awareness that English music was out of date, isolated from the Continent by the departure of many foreign musicians and the reduction of the court musical establishment at the end of the Civil War. The talk of attempting recitative as 'an obligation to our own [Nation]' makes catching up with Continental opera a patriotic necessity."¹⁵ That is, by abjuring "the usual length of English verse" (lines 54-55) for the variable meters of recitative, which Davenant describes as "unpracticed here, though of great reputation among other nations" (lines 45-46), Davenant participates in England's competition with the nations of Continental Europe on the level of dramatic form.¹⁶

Much as the physical borders of the pictorial scenery for The Siege of Rhodes limit the visual representation of Solyman's expansionist empire on stage, which in turn implies a political terminus to Solyman's imperial conquest (as when Davenant says that it would be impossible to carve the Caesars upon a nutshell), the drama also represents Ianthe's veiled beauty as a boundary against the expansion of empire. In each instance, the limits to imperium are material and aesthetic limits. Ianthe (performed by Catherine Coleman, the first known actress on the English public stage) is introduced to the audience and Solyman in her veil. Ianthe's veil is both a sign of her determination to remain chaste despite her captivity, and a material obstruction to Solyman's and the audience's vision. Solyman's first remark suggests the paradoxical status of the veil, as a barrier to vision that itself appears: "What is it thou wouldst show, and yet dost shroud?" (2.1.12). Mustapha's response acknowledges this

¹⁵ James A. Winn, "Heroic Song: a Proposal for a Revised History of English Theater and Opera, 1656-1711." Eighteenth-century Studies. 30.2 (1996): 115.

¹⁶ Davenant, "To the Reader," line 45-46, 54-55.

paradox, and implies through figures of copiousness that the promise of Ianthe's beauty is intensified by her face being withheld: "I bring the morning pictured in a cloud,/ A wealth more worth than all the sea does hide/ Or courts display in their triumphant pride" (2.113-15). The "morning" of Ianthe's beauty is both framed and obscured ("pictured") in the "cloud" of her veil: in the figure of "the morning pictured in a cloud," the morning's light could be either metonymically encapsulated in the glowing cloud, as Ianthe's veil works as a visible emblem of Ianthe's withheld beauty for the spectator, or obscured by the cloud that covers the sun, as the veil hides Ianthe's face from her onlookers.

Mustapha's belief in Ianthe's inherent "wealth more worth than all the sea does hide/ Or courts display" reiterates the link between naval power and imperial acquisition. In this case, Ianthe was acquired as a prisoner by the literal means of naval power: Mustapha describes the story of her capture as "full of fate, and yet [it] has much of glory./ A squadron of our galleys that did ply/ West from this coast met two of Sicily,/ Both fraught to furnish Rhodes. [...] And though this bashful lady then did wear/ Her face still veiled, her valour did appear" (2.119-127). Since Solyman's imperial power is associated with the sea throughout the opera, the "squadron of our galleys" is metonymic for the emperor's expansionist reach. Because Mustapha's description of his story as "full of fate" echoes Alphonso's earlier description of "Great Solyman" as seemingly "All fate," Mustapha's phrase underlines the fact that the apparently "fate[d]" capture of Ianthe is in fact the result of imperial rapaciousness. However, the virtuous beauty of the veiled Ianthe serves as a material and aesthetic border to Solyman's imperial ambition. Solyman calls on Mustapha to set a boundary to his seemingly exaggerated encomium of Ianthe: "Where are the limits thou wouldst set for praise/ Or to what height wilt thou my wonder raise?" (2.130-31). Solyman's call for rhetorical "limits" is all the more ironic because he has

previously suggested that the boundaries of imperium are limitless, since the “race” for imperial conquest is perpetual, leaving in place no natural boundary of land or sea. If the “wealth” of Ianthe’s beauty is valued at “more worth than...courts display in their triumphant pride” (2.114-15), Solyman pays homage to the higher ideal of virtue, while still persisting in war: “though our flags ne’er used to bow, they shall do virtue honor now./ Give fire still [i.e. order firing to cease] as [Ianthe] passes by,/ And let our streamers lower fly” (2.197-201). Ianthe’s virtuous beauty seems to remain beyond imperial conquest, as she suggests when she insists on her fidelity to Alphonso:

It were more honour, Sultan, to assail
A public strength against thy forces bent
Than to unwall this private tenement,
To which no monarch but my lord has right;
Nor will it yield to treaty or to might,
Where heaven’s great law defends him from surprise.
This curtain only opens to his eyes. (2.141-47)

In Ianthe’s rhetoric, her resolute chastity, under “heaven’s great law” against adultery, renders the “private tenement” of her body beyond the control of “public strength,” whether sanctified by “treaty” or bluntly asserted by “might.” Ianthe’s opposition between “public strength” and her walled “private tenement” recalls the problem of determining the seas as either public or private territories, as debated in Grotius’s Mare Liberum and John Selden’s Mare Clausum. In turn, Ianthe’s defiant statement that “This curtain only opens to [Alphonso’s] eyes” implicitly conflates the “curtain” of her veil with the curtain of Davenant’s stage. Somewhat startlingly, the identification of Ianthe’s veil, the emblem of her resistance to imperial possession, with the stage curtain suggests that the material frame of the stage may limit the ideal of limitless imperial expansion, as Davenant’s letter “To the Reader” had betrayed his

fears that his theatrical venture might be viewed as diminishing imperial splendor to the scale of a nutshell, or such “a contracted trifle as that of the Caesars carved upon a nut.”¹⁷ All the more startling, since Davenant’s operas, produced during the expansionist drive of Cromwell’s Western Design, seem so determined on the thematic level to celebrate English empire.

Shortly after the first Anglo-Dutch war ended with the Treaty of Westminster between England and the Dutch Republic in April 1654, Cromwell’s Council of State turned its attention to Spain, planning to attack Spanish colonies in the West Indies with the English fleets made newly available after the peace with the Dutch Republic. Cromwell’s anti-Spanish foreign policy, known as the Western Design, rejected the earlier alliances and agreements that had been made by the toppled monarchy. The supporters of the Western Design found various ideological justifications, arguing both for the imperial founding of new Rome in the West as well as for the providential founding of a new Jerusalem.¹⁸ Support for Cromwell’s imperial project was not

¹⁷ Davenant, “To the Reader,” lines 20-21.

¹⁸ David Armitage, “The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire.” *Historical Journal*. 35.3 (1992). 531-555. Armitage indicates that “In the early-modern period, an empire might be endowed with the rights of independent sovereign authority, but it could also be subject to the duties of an eschatological mission” (Armitage 537). Karen Ordahl Kupperman recounts anti-Spanish English sentiment tracing back to the Elizabeth I’s reign, as well as providentialist justifications for Cromwell’s Western Design in: Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Errand to the Indies: Puritan Colonization from Providence Island Through the Western Design.” *The William and Mary Quarterly: a Magazine of Early American History*. 45.1 (1988): 70-99. Kupperman analyzes the influence of the “lives and goals of the Elizabethans” on seventeenth century Protestant thinkers. For instance, in *The Life of Sidney* (published in 1652 though written long before the civil war), Fulke Greville (a former patron of Davenant) “eulogized both his friend and Queen Elizabeth for their staunch anti-Spanish policies and their realization that constant vigilance was required to protect reformed religion. He laid out a program for attacking Spanish possessions in the West Indies very similar to Cromwell’s Western Design” (Kupperman 89). Although critics would later criticize Cromwell for his foreign policy ‘blunder’ of attacking Spanish territories there, because this would help to strengthen France’s growing power, Cromwell regarded his antagonistic position toward Spain “not as an anachronistic throwback to the days of Elizabeth, but as the logical culmination of thirty years of development and struggle. The

unanimous. Royalists feared that Cromwell, who had achieved the union of the three kingdoms that had eluded the efforts of the Stuart monarchs, would claim the extra-judicial rights of an emperor over his subjects.¹⁹ By contrast, republicans feared that Cromwell's apparently imperial ambitions threatened the individual liberties of the citizen, degrading the citizen to the status of a monarchical subject, and dissolving the republic in the tyranny of empire and its drive toward expansion. Describing the origins of the Western Design, David Armitage observes that:

The English crown had been slow to take up the imperial gauntlet and had proceeded by colonies planted under charter by private individuals and companies. The Navigation Ordinance of 1651 tied Britain and its overseas possessions for the first time into a single transatlantic trading unit, as allegiance to the crown had been dissolved, and the central government disencumbered of dynastic and historic obligations. The turn to a non-dynastic foreign policy, which could repudiate past

civil wars began in an atmosphere of crisis, in the belief that Laudian policies aimed at reinstating popery in England. This sense of the precariousness of the Protestant establishment pushed people into open war, and they sought a conclusion that would end threats to it now and in the future. It was given to the Protector to make the reformed religion so secure that no future developments could threaten it. To accomplish that goal, he had to protect England from foreign invasion and from the activities of enemies within. Cromwell and those around him believed that, until Spain was severed from its sources of riches in the Indies, the danger of attacks on England would remain" (Kupperman 90). Although Spain's political and economic power had already waned by the time of Cromwell's Commonwealth in England, Kupperman observes that "The weakness of Spain was not an argument *against* attacking it; God had brought that country low just at the time when true Protestants were victorious in England so that the final blow could be struck and the power of Antichrist eliminated once and for all" (Kupperman 91).

¹⁹ According to Tristan Marshall: "The idea of the British imperium in the early modern period had its origins in the assertion made in the Act in Restraint of Appeals. Henry VIII thought of himself as *imperator in regno suo*, claiming the right to control the powers and liberties of the Church of England. More specifically, he sought the legal power of the Roman emperor within his own kingdom, having no temporal superior within his realm, an idea laid down by Roman law. In defence of this claim, subsequent English monarchs looked to the legacy of the Emperor Constantine and his British wife Helena, establishing a precedent for the practice of sovereign national power in England. The idea of imperium was thus one which strongly asserted the power and right of the English crown to control of its own affairs, both spiritual and temporal, within its own boundaries" (Marshall 13).

alliances and be propelled by economic or religious motives, left the commonwealth and Protectorate open to take an aggressive attitude towards the dominions of competing powers.²⁰

In December 1654 English fleets set sail from Portsmouth to the Spanish West Indies under the command of Admiral William Penn and General George Venables. They eventually reached the island of Hispaniola, where they tried and failed to seize the capital, San Domingo. Subsequently, the commanders of the expedition set forth to Jamaica, also then a Spanish colony, to recoup their defeat at San Domingo. Although the English commanders managed to occupy Jamaica, their success was owed not to any military victory, but to the fact that the Spanish on the island decided to negotiate a treaty with the English rather than to engage in violent conflict.²¹ Despite the tenuousness of their hold over Jamaica, Penn and Venables mistook their flimsy occupation as a success and returned to England, thus failing to achieve inroads against Spanish America. The idealized aims of the Western Design were abruptly foreclosed. Cromwell's confidence that providence favored his imperial vision for the

²⁰ Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire" p. 535. For further discussion of the political factors motivating the anti-Spanish foreign policy of the Western Design see Frank Strong, "The Causes of Cromwell's West Indian Expedition," The American Historical Association 4.2 (1899): 228-245. See also Anthony Pagden, Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France C. 1500-C. 1800 (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1995) 74. Strong attributes the following causes to Cromwell's expedition in the Spanish West Indies: "In the first place, the affair was inseparably connected with his foreign policy. In the second place, it was inseparably connected with the religious movement on which Cromwell had ridden to power. In the third place, it had a vital connection with the most important economic questions of the Protectorate. Subsidiary to these were the questions: how to unite the Protestants of Europe and protect the Huguenots of France; how to prevent forever the return of the Stuarts to the English throne; and, still further in the background, how to recover England's ancient possessions in France" (Strong 228). More recently, Anthony Pagden has noted that "The Western Design had been driven by the assumption that the English revolution, and the breed of Calvinism which underpinned it, must have been intended for universal exportation. 'We think God has not brought us hither where we are,' wrote the Protector, 'but to consider the work that we may do in the world as well as home'" (Pagden 74).

²¹ Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire," p. 540.

British republic was severely shaken in July 1655 by the news of Penn and Venables's desertion and the failure of the Western Design.²² The English public also met the failure of the expedition to the West Indies with anger and disappointment.

Critics of Cromwell's regime saw the failure as a sign of the republic's vulnerability to the turns of fortune and as an indication of God's disfavor with the English commonwealth.²³ Cromwell was driven to declare open war with Spain, seeking "a providential defeat of Spain in order that England could replace her as overlord of the Indies, thus turning back the clock to link the rediscovery of America with the reformed religion in a restorative *ridurre ai principii*."²⁴ Cromwell's supporters, in a similar gesture of "turning back the clock," retrospectively defended the English offensive against the Spanish West Indies, emphasizing the presumably Godly aims of the Western Design in order to distract from its actual failure. For

²² Regarding Cromwell's personal disappointments over the failure of the Western Design, Kupperman argues that "Cromwell was shattered by the defeat at Hispaniola; his confidence that he and the English nation were the agents of God never fully recovered from the blow. There were many who were prepared to point to England's sins, and even to the Protector's usurpation, as the reason for God's wrath. Cromwell repeatedly called for days of fasting and humiliation so that the nation could determine in what ways it had sinned, but no clear answer came. He never accepted that the failure of the Western Design signaled God's endorsement of Spain, but he was forced to see it as a rebuke of England" (Kupperman 98).

²³ Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire," p. 541. See also Kupperman 98-99, and Blair Worden, "Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England." Past and Present. (1985): 55-99.

²⁴ Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire," p. 542. Along with his discussion of Machiavelli, Steven B. Smith discusses seventeenth century interpretations of *ridurre ai principii*: "At the outset of modernity Machiavelli could still speak of revolution as a *ridurre ai principii*, that is, the periodic revitalization of civic life that can only come through a return to its original principles. In the same vein Hobbes could write of the events in England between 1649 and 1660 that 'I have seen in this Revolution a circular motion of Sovereign Power'. And Locke in the famous nineteenth chapter of the protorevolutionary *Second Treatise of Government* could describe the 'dissolution of government' as a return of the legislative power to its original hands" (Smith 221). Steven B. Smith, "Hegel and the French Revolution: An Epitaph for Republicanism" in The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity, Ed. Ferenc Fehér (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 221. David Norbrook discusses Milton's view of Cromwell as a champion of republican liberty and his rule as "a republican *ridurre ai principii*" in light of his "continual self-scrutiny and commitment to the principles of liberty" in: David Norbrook, Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric, and Politics, 1627-1660 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 335.

instance, A manifesto of the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, Ireland, &c. Published by consent and advice of his council. Wherein is shewn the reasonableness of the cause of this republic against the depredations of the Spaniards, a text attributed to John Milton, Cromwell's Latin secretary, and printed in 1655, argues:

That the Motives whereby we have been lately induced to make an Attack upon certain Islands in the *West-Indies*, which have been now for some time in the hands of *Spaniards*, are exceeding just and reasonable, every one will easily see, who considers in what a hostile Manner that King and his Subjects have all along, in those parts of *America*, treated the *English* nation; which Behaviour of theirs, as it was very unjust at the beginning, so ever since, with the same Injustice they have persevered in it, in a direct Contrariety to the Common Law of Nations [...]. It must indeed be acknowledged, the English for some Years past, have either patiently borne with these Injuries, or only defended themselves; which may possibly give Occasion to some to look upon that late Expedition of our Fleet to the *West-Indies* as a War voluntarily begun by us, instead of considering that this War was first begun and raised by the *Spaniards* themselves, as it Reality it will be found to be [...].²⁵

²⁵ John Milton, A manifesto of the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, Ireland, &c. Published by consent and advice of his council. Wherein is shewn the reasonableness of the cause of this republic against the depredations of the Spaniards. Written in Latin by John Milton, and first printed in 1655, now translated into English The second edition. To which is added, *Britannia*, a poem; by Mr. Thomson: first published in 1727. [1655.] London: 1738. pp. 3-4. John T. Shawcross notes that Milton's catalogue of the reasons for war with Spain was first drafted in 1652, and published in Latin in 1655 as Scriptum Dom. Protectoris Reipublicæ Angliæ, Scotiæ, Hiberniæ, &c. Ex consensu atque sententiâ Concilii Sui Editum; in quo hujus Reipublicæ Causa contra Hispanos justa esse demonstratur. We can infer that the text (which refers to 'late conflicts with Spain') would have been published to justify English military action against Spain in 1655, however much or little it may have been revised

Milton argues that, although the expedition to the West Indies may have been mistaken for an act of war by English volition, the Spanish should be held responsible for the conflict because of their prolonged aggression against England, in violation of the “Common Law of Nations.”²⁶ Cromwell attempted a similar justification in A declaration of His Highnes, by the advice of his council; setting forth, on the behalf of this Commonwealth, the justice of their cause against Spain (Oct. 1655), a statement in defense of the war initiated between England and Spain in the aftermath of the failure of the Western Design.²⁷ In his defense of the Commonwealth, Cromwell “proved the claims of the Spanish to the ‘sole Signiory of that New World’ to be spurious, and which showed the violations of the *jus gentium* and *jus naturale* against both Englishmen in the West Indies, and the natives ‘in whose bloud [the Spanish] have founded their Empire’, to be egregious and demanding revenge.”²⁸ Milton

from the manuscript draft for publication. The text was first ascribed to Milton in 1738 by Thomas Birch, who printed both the Latin original and an English translation in his collected edition of Milton's prose (A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of John Milton [London: 1738]). The English text was republished in 1741. Each of these editions was published (in 1655, 1738, and 1741) during moments of heightened tension with Spain: see John T. Shawcross, “John Milton and His Spanish and Portuguese Presence,” Milton Quarterly 32:2, p. 43-44. Gordon Campbell explains the reasons for the relative lack of information concerning Milton’s dealings under the Cromwellian Protectorate: “With the advent of the Protectorate in December 1653, responsibility for foreign affairs was to pass from the Council of State to Oliver Cromwell and his Secretary of State, John Thurloe. The fact that Milton now worked for an individual rather than a committee means that there is no detailed records of his activities as a servant of the Protectorate.” See Gordon Campbell, “The Life Records” in A Companion to Milton, Ed. Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 493.

²⁶ On the “law of nations,” that is, laws concerning the relationship between European states in the early modern period see: Daniel J. Hulsebosch, “The Ancient Constitution and the Expanding Empire: Sir Edward Coke's British Jurisprudence.” Law and History Review. 21.3 (2003): 439-482. Referring to the Stuart monarchy, Hulsebosch notes that the law of nations, “a body of custom that transcended national lines—provided a model for Coke when he devised a royal law of free passage and equal protection throughout James’s multiple kingdoms” (Hulsebosch 457).

²⁷ Oliver Cromwell, A declaration of His Highnes, by the advice of his council; setting forth, on the behalf of this Commonwealth, the justice of their cause against Spain. Friday the 26th of October, 1655. Ordered by His Highness the Lord Protector, and the council, that this declaration be forthwith printed and published. Hen. Scobell, Clerk of the Council. London: Printed by Henry Hills and John Field, Printers to His Highness, MDCLV. [1655]

²⁸ Quoted in Armitage, “The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire,” p. 542.

recounts the history of the Spanish offenses against England, and concludes by arguing against those who oppose war because of their “excessive desire for that small Profit to be made by trading to *Spain*, which cannot be obtained but upon such Conditions as are dishonourable and in some sort unlawful; and which may likewise be got some other way.”²⁹ Milton reminds his reader of the “Honour of this whole Nation,” the interests of “many Christian Brethren in *America*,” and the “utmost danger” posed to “the Souls of many young traders, by those terms upon which they now live and trade” in Spain.³⁰ If the matter is considered without prejudice, Milton concludes, it should be apparent that “the chief End of our late, Expedition into the *West-Indies* against the *Spaniards*” is to defend “the most noble Opportunities of promoting the Glory of God, and enlarging the Bounds of Christ’s kingdom.”³¹ Milton considers the economic arguments against war with Spain to be insufficient on their own terms, since “that small Profit to be made by trading with Spain” is dishonorable, unlawful, and could “be got some other way,” but he views the war as ultimately religiously grounded, since it gives England a chance at “enlarging the Bounds of Christ’s kingdom” in pushing back against the Catholic Spanish Empire.

By contrast, Davenant presents war as theater by other means, and provides secular, economic justifications for both theater and war.³² In the Prologue to the

²⁹ A Manifesto of the Lord Protector 29.

³⁰ A Manifesto of the Lord Protector 29.

³¹ A Manifesto of the Lord Protector 30.

³² There is little scholarly consensus on the nature of the relationship between Davenant’s Commonwealth operas and Cromwellian foreign policy. Wiseman, focusing on “representations of colonial ‘others’” (Wiseman, “‘History Digested’” 190) in Davenant’s Commonwealth dramas, argues that “these plays seek to solve questions of rule and government by dramatizing international crusades, in which the imperialist and colonialist English are seen not only to crush opposition, but are also the bearers of positive values of good government” (Wiseman “‘History Digested’” 202). Wiseman indicates that she is not concerned with matters of form in Davenant’s dramas, such as the function of the “musical aspects of the opera,” choosing to focus instead on “the ideological implications of the drama presenting itself as such” (Wiseman, “‘History Digested’” 190). Clare agrees with Wiseman that Davenant’s “work is indeed responsive to contemporary politics and exigencies,” but Clare argues that Davenant’s work also “shelter[s], by virtue of its subject-matter, under an immunity from ideological

second part of the expanded Siege of Rhodes (the first recorded performance of which took place in 1661, after the Restoration, and printed in 1663), he writes that if he could “half that Treasure spare,/ Which Faction gets from fools to nourish Warr;/ Then his contracted Scenes should wider be,/ And move by greater Engines, till you see/ (Whilst you Securely sit) fierce Armies meet,/ And raging Seas disperse a fighting Fleet.”³³ While Davenant here aspires to present a theatrical spectacle that would be indistinguishable from war except that it could be “Securely” viewed, in his 1656-57 memorandum, “Some Observations concerning the People of this Nation,” he describes the theater as both a means of establishing domestic order and as a field of geopolitical competition.³⁴

Davenant stresses the economic responsibility of the wealthy to spend lavishly in order to support the English craftsmen, “retaylers and mechanicks.”³⁵ The theater,

conflict” (Clare, “The Production and Reception...” 836). Clare, like Wiseman, stresses less the aesthetic form than the political function of Davenant’s works, remarking in her analysis of The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru that her “concern here... is not primarily with the aesthetics of Davenant’s entertainment, but with the politics which *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* purports to constitute as well as with those which are constituted in the masque” (Clare, “The Production and Reception...” 832). Janet Clare, “The Production and Reception of Davenant’s *Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*.” The Modern Language Review. 89.4 (1994): 832-841. Richard Frohock takes issue with Wiseman’s and Clare’s approaches, arguing “that the discourses of colonial conquest and nationhood in Davenant’s operas are intertwined, rather than mutually exclusive. Whereas Wiseman notes only compatibility between Davenant’s plays and Cromwell’s foreign policy, I wish to indicate the dissonances that exist: most prominently, Davenant’s avoidance of Cromwell’s overt providentialism” (Frohock 324). Richard Frohock, “Sir William Davenant’s American Operas.” The Modern Language Review. 96.2 (2001): 323-333.

³³ William D’Avenant, Sir William Davenant: The Siege of Rhodes : A Critical Edition, Ed., Ann-Mari Hedbäck, (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1973) 50.

³⁴ C.H. Firth notes that “In May 1656 Sir William Davenant obtained permission to produce a species of dramatic performance, in spite of the law against the acting of plays. [...] [Davenant’s memorandum] was apparently addressed to Secretary [John] Thurloe [Secretary of State], among whose papers in the Bodleian Library it now is” (Firth 319). C.H. Firth, “Sir William Davenant and the Revival of the Drama During the Protectorate,” English Historical Review. 18.70 (1903): 319-321. Firth’s mention of the date “May 1656” presumably refers to the performance, in May 1656, of Davenant’s dramatic dialogue, The First Day’s Entertainment at Rutland House by Declamation and Music after the Manner of the Ancients.

³⁵Quoted in Firth p. 320.

he implies, would be a proper outlet for that expenditure, with the added political benefit that, since the “People of England [...] require continuall divertisements, being otherwise naturally inclin'd to that melancholy that breeds sedition,” both the idle veterans of the Civil War and the “new generation of youth uningag'd in the late difference” could be kept “from licentiousnesse, gaming, and discontent” by edifying dramas or “morall representations.”³⁶ Calling to mind the recent English assault on Hispaniola, Davenant concludes his statement upon the economic virtues of drama with the suggestion of the political relevance of drama for Cromwellian foreign policy. Davenant anticipates his dramatization of Spanish colonial abuses of the indigenous population of Peru, which contrast with the benevolent intervention of the English in the final entry of The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru (1658), when he assures his reader that “If morall representations may be allow'd (being without obscenenesse, profanenesse, and scandal) the first arguments may consist of the Spaniards' barbarous conquests in the West Indies and of their severall cruelties there exercis'd upon the subjects of this nation.”³⁷ Indeed, Davenant's justification of the “morall” virtues of drama and its political purport did not escape the attention of the Council of State, who, in May 1656, had officially sanctioned the performance of Davenant's The First Day's Entertainment at Rutland House by Declamation and Music after the Manner of the Ancients in the ambiguously public and private space of Davenant's home, which for all this ambiguity nonetheless re-ignited public theatre in the Commonwealth.³⁸

³⁶ Quoted in Firth p. 320-21.

³⁷ Quoted in Firth p. 321.

³⁸ Janet Clare, “Introduction” in Drama of the English Republic, 1649-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 181. In The First Day's Entertainment Davenant describes the dialogue between “Diogenes *the Cynick*, and Aristophanes *the Poet*, in *Habits agreeable to their Country and Professions*” as a “Publique Entertianment” intended for the purpose of “Moral Representations” (2). William Davenant, The first days entertainment at Rutland-House, by declamations and musick: after the manner of the ancients. London: Printed by J.M. for H. Herringman, and sold at his shop at the Anchor, in the New-Exchange, in the Lower Walk., 1657. [i.e. 1656]

Cromwell's Western Design was first justified through an appeal to providential history, so that English colonial expansion could be seen, in the words of Milton, as a project of "enlarging the Bounds of Christ's kingdom" in accordance with God's will.³⁹ The failure of the Design, however, could alternately be interpreted as a providential sign of God's displeasure with the Commonwealth or as an example of the mutability of fortune.⁴⁰ Ianthe and Alphonso's dialogue in the fourth entry, in which they debate whether to accept Solyman's offer of free passage from the besieged city, captures this political uncertainty:

Ianthe. Fighting with him who strives to be your friend,
You not with virtue, but with power contend.

Alphonso. Forbid it, heaven, our friends should think that we
Did merit friendship from an enemy.

Ianthe. He is a foe to Rhodes, and not to you.

Alphonso. In Rhodes besieged, we must be Rhodians too.

Ianthe. 'Twas fortune that engaged you in this war.

Alphonso. 'Twas providence! Heaven's prisoners here we are.

Ianthe. That providence our freedom does restore;
That hand that shut, now opens the door.

Alphonso. Had heaven that passport for our freedom sent,
It would have chose some better instrument
Than faithless Solyman. (4.64-76)

Alphonso and Ianthe's debate suggests the broader problem of the arbitrariness of providential historical interpretation: if Alphonso's commitment to the Rhodian cause can be seen not as the result of contingent fortune but as the effect of divine

³⁹ A manifesto of the Lord Protector 30.

⁴⁰ See Armitage, "The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire" p. 545.

providence, would it not be equally valid to view his chance at escape as providential? Davenant's drama raises this question as well. While he takes given historical events as his source material, he repeatedly rewrites history in the wishful mode of romance: by granting the English troops in his opera the bravery they never showed in reality, by deferring the eventual conquest of Rhodes to make the Rhodians' temporarily successful defense appear as a decisive victory over Islamic domination, or by prophecying that the English will liberate the Indians of Peru from their Spanish masters (as Davenant does in the final entry of The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru). Although one effect of this is to implicitly construct a providential history for England as an imperial power, it also betrays the arbitrariness of the imperial project.

There is a crucial disjunction between the thematic celebration of providential English expansionism implicit in Davenant's drama and the material and aesthetic limits the space of the theater imposes on the staging of empire. Solyman's figure of the "race" for the competition of empires, all seeking to expand through alliance or conquest for fear of their dissolution, is curiously undone by the stasis of the final entry, so that the Admiral can represent the opera's final stalemate as a victory for Rhodes: "Rhodes [...] gained today a most important victory./ For our success, repelling this assault,/ Has taught the Ottomans to halt;/ Who may, wasting their heavy body, learn to fly" (5.206-209). It is important here that the victory is in the optative mode: the Ottomans "may [...] learn to fly," but they also may not (as history records). Yet Rhodes's success in making the Ottomans "halt" recalls other limits placed on imperial possession in the opera, such as the veil (the "curtain" which "only opens to [Alphonso's] eyes") that both protects Ianthe from her captors' power and acts as a figure for the opera's "curtain" (2.147). The halting, static ending of The Siege of Rhodes reflects its ambiguous political stance, as an opera which seems both to call for a triumphant Christian empire to overcome the infighting of the European

nations and take its place on the world stage lest “the crescent drives away the Cross” (2.28), and to register a deeper skepticism about the possibility of continuous expansion.⁴¹

More precisely, Davenant’s drama conjures the image of a constantly expanding sea-based empire. The safe arrival of Solyman’s “prodigious gross” fleet on the shores of Rhodes bridges land and water, and suggests the prospect of a state that, starting from its territorial imperium on land, could extend across the seas to ravenously subsume both land and water under a single imperium. Davenant’s characters warn that Turkish expansion will continue unchecked if the Christian nations of Europe remain disunited. As I have argued, while most of the European powers are presented as being enervated and distracted by their colonial adventures, so that Rhodes is left vulnerable to the Turks, English expansion is represented as natural and volitional rather than compulsive. Although the Turks are trapped in the “race” to maintain an expanding empire, Villerius claims that “The English lion ever loves to change/ His walks, and in remoter forests range” (2.25-26).

Davenant thus offers a curious justification for European imperialism, not as a good in itself, but as preferable to Ottoman hegemony, while simultaneously representing English expansion as relatively natural. Davenant evokes a similar contrast between the predations of Spanish imperialism and the benign spontaneity of

⁴¹ The second part of *The Siege of Rhodes* (entered into the Stationer’s Register on 30 May 1659, although the first performance recorded was noted by Samuel Pepys on July 2, 1661, after the Restoration; the text was then published with an expanded version of the first part in 1663) does stage the conquest of Rhodes, but the first part of the play was originally staged as a complete work, and thus merits analysis on its own. See Ann-Mari Hedbäck, “Introduction” to William Davenant, *The Siege of Rhodes: A Critical Edition*, Ed. Ann-Mari Hedbäck (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1973) xx-xxi. Similarly, Mary Edmond indicates that “Part II of *The Siege of Rhodes* was entered at Stationers’ Hall at the end of the month – on the 30th [30 May 1659]. It is not known in what month of 1659 it was staged, but it was probably June; and we cannot be certain of its then form, since (unlike Part I) no version was published until 1663” (Edmond 134). See Mary Edmond, *Rare Sir William Davenant: Poet Laureate, Playwright, Civil War General, Restoration Theatre Manager* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987).

English expansion in the final song in his operatic masque The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, which presents a “prophecy which foretells the subversion of the Spaniards by the English” (p. 259; 6.49-50): “We shall no longer fear/ The Spanish eagle darkly hovering here;/ [...] the English lion now/ Does still victorious grow,/ And does delight/ To make his walks as far/ As the other did e’er dare/ To make his flight” (259-60; 6.51-60). Again, English expansion is described as a harmless expression of “delight” in roaming, in stark contrast to the “Spanish eagle darkly hovering” in search of prey. The song ends with the Chorus anticipating that “The proud Spaniards our masters,/ When we extol our liberty at feasts,/ At table shall serve,/ Or else they shall starve;/ Whilst the English shall sit and rule as our guests” (p. 260; 70-74). While the dominating Spanish “masters” shall be reduced to servants in this historical fantasy, the “English shall [...] rule as our guests,” so that the situation of hospitality imagined by the Chorus (“When we extol our liberty at feasts”) seems to shade into a vision of economic imperialism in which the triumphant English would “rule as [...] guests”—that is, as privileged trading partners or as welcomed colonizers.

If Davenant thus seems to naturalize English expansion, perhaps to gratify the chauvinism of his audience, his portrayal of the threat of unchecked Ottoman imperialism nonetheless gestures toward the need for a body of international law as a barrier to such (non-English) hegemony. We see this in Ianthe’s rebuke to Solyman, discussed above, when she insists that “no monarch but my lord [her husband] has right” to the “private tenement” of her body: “Nor will it yield to treaty or to might,/ Where heaven’s great law defends him [Alphonso] from surprise” (2.143-47). Ianthe’s invocation of “heaven’s great law” as the defender of her chastity against the predations of “public strength” (2.142) thus acts as a figure for the broader political problem of the assertion of sovereign territorial borders against foreign seizure. As I

have argued, the relevant political context for Ianthe's rebuke is thus Selden's argument for the exclusivity of English property rights over the island's surrounding waters. As the implicit debate between Grotius and Selden shows, the question of whether the seas were resources for common use or territories to be claimed as national property remained a key problem in seventeenth century political and economic thought (see chapter 3). While I have argued that Philaster and A King and No King subtly register the need for an international "law of nature and of nations" to guard against absolutist tyranny (see chapter 1), in the imperial frame of The Tragedy of Mariam the vicissitudes of international trade, or commerce (as figured through Salome's mercenary plots), are posited as being potentially subversive of established political orders (see chapter 2). Paradoxically, Davenant's theatre of English exceptionalism also suggests the need for the international law that could respond to the development of international commerce and territorial expansion.

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