

EPHEMERAL VELOCITY: INARTICULATE EROTICS ON THE SEVENTEENTH-  
CENTURY FRENCH STAGE

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My dissertation analyzes non-normative erotics on the seventeenth century stage. Changing norms and discourses around sex collide with an emerging chronobiopolitical governmentality, or a disciplining of the time of life. In this context, discourses, bodies and intimacies were increasingly choreographed to an emerging national temporality under a burgeoning centralized state. My project traces the disjointed desires that fail to be properly attuned to this sovereign temporality. Inhabiting a middle ground between speech and silence, “inarticulate erotics” do not cohere under the dominant forms of discourse, yet are expressed through their difference- in a slowness or fastness relative to the normative pace of life. Taking into account “temporal orientations” means considering the ways that slowness or haste can feel erotic or the ways that chrononormativity creates monolithic expectations of gender. In their divergence from the exigencies of a chrono-normative pace, these inarticulate erotics diversify an approach to the history of sexuality and shine a new light on ways of thinking about theater in seventeenth century France.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jennifer E. Row completed her Ph.D in Comparative Literature at Cornell University. She previously studied at Yale University, obtaining a B.A. in Literature and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies (*magna cum laude*). She has previously taught at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and at the Université de Paris-IV Sorbonne. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of French in Boston University's Romance Studies department.

To my parents, who believed in my dream of becoming a professor and sought every educational opportunity possible for me to realize that goal.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BM= *Between Men*, Sedgwick

CC= *Corneille, Classicism and the Ruses of Symmetry*, Greenberg

CS= *Canonical States, Canonical Stages*, Greenberg

DF= "La Différance," Derrida

DS= *La Dissemination*, Derrida

DT= *Drama Trauma*, Murray

HS= *History of Sexuality*, Foucault

LFL= *Literary Fat Ladies*, Parker

SS = *Subjectivity and Subjugation*, Greenberg

SM = *Shakespeare from the Margins*, Parker

TF= *Touching Feeling*, Sedgwick

TB= *Time Binds*, Freeman

TP = *Tragic Passages*, Racevskis

TWK= *Time and Ways of Knowing Under Louis XIV*, Racevskis

## Introduction

### *I. Inarticulate Erotics*

When seventeenth-century French theater experienced a peak in the output and aesthetic refinement of dramatic literature, within same period, the theater paradoxically, was submitted to an overall tightening-up of rules of sexual expression on the stage. These limitations of expression marked a shift from the beginning half of the century, during which transgressive erotics were still permitted in dramatic literature. Reading this transition from early to late dramas reveals changing norms of acceptable and unacceptable socio-sexual behavior and expression, a turn that opens up both possibilities and quandaries in terms of the ways we read sexuality of the past. For example, on the wedding night depicted in Isaac de Benserade's 1634 play, *Iphis et Iante*, Iphis wrings his hands, struggling to express something to his new bride:

Hélas! Ne sauriez-vous lire dans ma pensée  
L'étrange mouvement de ma flamme insensée?  
Mon coeur par des soupirs peut-il s'expliquer mieux,  
Et le mal qui me tient n'est-il pas dans mes yeux? (IV, 1)<sup>1</sup>

An "étrange mouvement" characterizes this mixture of burning desire and a hidden "mal" that seizes Iphis. Despite the hope that such strange movement will make legible the illegible, to "lire dans [sa] pensée," the inarticulable emotions Iphis experiences remain both unspoken and unspeakable. Seventeenth-century theatergoers familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* could guess that the secret that Iphis conceals is that he is actually female, having been raised by her mother under a male guise to protect her from Iphis' father. The hymneal night, then, becomes nuptial

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<sup>1</sup> "Alas, do you not know how to read in the depths of my thoughts/ the strange movement of my crazed desire/ Through sighs, could my heart explain itself better/ and the pain that grips me, is it not visible in my eyes?"

consummation, gender revelation as well as sexual transgression. Iphis delays the moment of revealing his/her body and engaging in the long-wished for act:

L'hymen qui convertit le crime en innocence  
À mes jeunes désires donne toute licence,  
J'aime et si je possède, en ce retardement  
Ne vous doutez-vous pas de mon secret tourment? (IV, 1)<sup>2</sup>

Iphis hopes that delay itself, the slowed tempo leading to the desired moment, will itself inscribe a certain legibility to her love and enable Iante to insinuate the secret of his/her sex. Since the nuptial night is sequenced in a predetermined temporal order of events (courtship, engagement, marriage, and consummation), the signaling delay remains obscured. The two spouses proceed to consummate the act, which effectively stands as one of the few female-female lovemaking scenes recounted in the French seventeenth-century theater.

For Iphis, revealing the truth of her body enables a temporality of forgetting — a momentary, convenient erasure that diminishes the overarching weight of a binary sex (male/female) and allows her to approach Iante in a flurry of verbs describing intimate contact, caresses, and kisses. Iphis tells her mother the following day:

J'oubliais quelque temps que j'étais une fille,  
Je ne reçus jamais tant de contentements,  
Je me laissais aller à mes ravissements...  
J'embrassais ce beau corps, dont la blancheur extrême  
M'excitent à lui faire une place en moi-même  
Je touchais, je baisais, j'avais le coeur content (V, 4).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “The marriage that transforms crime to innocence/ to my youthful desires gives full reign/ I love and if I possess, in this delay/ Do you not guess my secret torment?”

<sup>3</sup> “I forgot for some time that I was a girl/ I have never received so much satisfaction/ I let myself go in my delights/ I kissed this beautiful body, whose extreme paleness/ Aroused me to make a place for her within

By foregrounding touch, sensation and bodies, Iphis speaks of an erotic intimacy that leaves aside the question of gender identity or sexual orientation. And yet, her narration of the wedding night depicts an intimacy that exceeds norms of penetrator/ penetrated, lesbian/gay/straight, or more. Iphis takes the “passive” position, wishes to make “space” within herself for her lover, but also employs a variety of active verbs in regards to a mixture of hesitation and haste when approaching her beloved Iante.

In the end, Iphis and Iante’s situation is easily rectified by the goddess Isis, who arrives to magically transform Iphis into a man. But before the hetero-sexed resolution can take place, Iante and Iphis both struggle to find a language to express their situation, wavering between innocence and crime, between masculine and feminine gender identities, between legitimate heterosexual nuptials and gender-transgressive sex. After Iphis enthuses to her mother about the delights of their wedding night, she admits that Iante's only response, far from shock or disgust, is “de ne nous point parler.”<sup>4</sup> This command to be silenced acts a type of neutral and neutralizing response (*neutre* in French means both neutered and neutral), a reaction that Télétuze signals as odd: “C’est ce que mon esprit trouve le plus étrange” (V, 4).<sup>5</sup> Of all of the “strange” sentiments circulating in this play— Iphis’s same sex desire for Iante, Iante’s lack of horror upon seeing Iphis’ non-male body, the years of maternally-imposed cross-dressing — out of all of these intimacies and gender dynamics, the thing that Télétuze finds most strange is Iante’s silence. And it is this silence as well as Iphis' and Iante's inarticulacies in the face of non-normative desires and intimacies that interests me the most, as they point to the limits of sexual expression.

Such inarticulacies animate my project, one that endeavors to bring together two narratives, the story of changing norms and discourses around sex in the seventeenth century and the story of an emerging governmentality in the period that was specifically informed by a

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myself/ I touched, I kissed, I had a contented heart”

<sup>4</sup> “For us never to speak.”

<sup>5</sup> “That is what my mind finds the most bizarre”

“chronobiopolitics,” or a disciplining of the time of life. My reading of the convergence of these two trajectories argues that bodies, intimacies and sexualities were choreographed by and conditioned to an emerging national tempo. In this movement that offers forth new discursive standards and (hetero)sexual norms under a burgeoning centralized state, there also emerges disjointed bodies and desires that fail to be properly attuned to this sovereign temporality. What intrigues me is that these divergent sexualities lie in “plain sight” in their presentation, in a such a way that begs neither excoriation nor embrace. Rather, they make minimal claims on legibility and on action.

One way of tracing these resistant erotics has been to analyze obscene literature, transgender memoirs, or early modern same-sex friendship in the period, an approach that is worthy in its recuperative effort. My project's point of departure from this precedent is the critique that such “recuperative” efforts do not go far enough, insofar as I see these “transgressive” emergences as part and parcel of Foucault's “explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail” (18), the corollary that contributes to the fiction of “liberation” from the so-called repression of sexuality.<sup>6</sup> This research hypothesizes that there are erotics that stand in excess of Foucault's repressive hypothesis, or desires that are neither suppressed nor made to speak their transgression. Inhabiting a middle ground between speech and silence, and differing

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<sup>6</sup> The seventeenth century saw changing norms not only for acceptable and illicit sexuality, but also for the ways that sexuality could be rendered into discourse. Foucault has indicated the seventeenth century as a type of threshold turning point in the ways that sexuality could be discussed:

XVIIeme siècle: ce serait le début d'un âge de répression, propre aux sociétés qu'on appelle bourgeoises, et dont nous ne serions peut être pas encore tout à fait affranchis. Nommer le sexe serait, de ce moment, devenu plus difficile et plus coûteux. Comme si, pour le maîtriser dans le réel, il avait fallu d'abord le réduire au niveau du langage, contrôler sa libre circulation dans le discours, le chasser des choses dites et éteindre les mots qui le rendent trop sensiblement présent (25).

In a world in which discourse around sexuality was being monitored, regulated and controlled, instead of a top-down injunction to silence, it was during this period that sexuality was also being made to flourish in other controlled, surveyed domains— in religious confession, in legal discourse, and later in the *scientia sexualis* of psychoanalysis. And the injunction to verbal proliferation, far from freeing us from the repression, actually serves as a false “outlet” that is still complicit with the ways that sexuality was being disciplined, insofar as one sexuality finds concretization in language, it becomes seizable, analyzable. It also performatively iterates and contributes to a fixed domain of what “counts” as legible and illegible sexuality. Thus, discursive proliferation, far from being defiant, only serves to propagate the repression.

from language that outright signals itself as “marginal,” I term these queer desires “inarticulate erotics.” In their divergence from the exigencies of a chrono-normative pace, these erotics emerge in a disjointed temporality, a temporality whose slowness or fastness relative to the normative pace of life means that such queer desires lie in plain sight but do not register themselves as such. Inarticulate erotics appear in their relative slowness and haste that are “bizarre,” to borrow Télétuze’s word, and appear obliquely in relation to expectations and behaviors according to a normative tempo. In this sense, my work closely follows that of Anne-Lise François’s *Open Secrets*, in which she examines gestures, disclosures and announcements that often go unnoticed, unregistered, or even are released, toward *no* specific end. It is the absence of something that we would mark as absence:

Rather than either dismiss this movement of recessive disclosure as a nonevent whose sole effect is defensive— to bar change and ensure that nothing happen— or, on the contrary (but this amounts to the same), recognize it as the magic act essential to the effective workings of social relations— [*Open Secrets*] focuses on the ways in which the open secret as a gesture of self-canceling revelation permits a release from the ethical imperative to *act* upon knowledge (3).

If it is power that formalizes desire, that lays the terms under and grounds upon which desire (deviant or not) can even be made legible, even and especially under the conditions particular to seventeenth-century drama, inarticulate erotics decline participation in a discursive economy in which a (sexual) declaration, once announced, can be acted upon. Such an approach belies the “obvious” presentation of same-sex intimacy, insofar as *Iphis et Iante*, for example, is often read (and critiqued/celebrated) in terms of its proto-transgressive gender and sexual politics, an “obviousness” that accompanies certain imperatives to see, to act and to react. Such “openness” obscures the fact that there can be possibly other, more minimally present sexual dynamics

equally at hand.

Certain kinds of gestures and moments appear as sexual in *Iphis et Iante*, or at least “sexual” according to our contemporary standards of what desire looks like-- for example, consummating a wedding night, or Iphis' desire for Iante's “blancheur extrême,” or the repetition of “je touchais, je baisais.” What kind of intimacy is at play in repeating and divulging in great voyeuristic detail one’s sexual experiences to one’s mother, as Iphis does? Or what would make legible the erotic dynamics of forbidding one’s partner to speak, as Iante does, in her “de ne nous point parler?” How does one begin to define, or consider the mixture of anticipation and trepidation that Iphis experiences, dragging out time before “the act” while also longing to hasten toward tasting sexual pleasure with Iante?

Inarticulate erotics minimize their claims on legibility, not out of paranoid concealment or defeated futility, but because they wish, in their very minimality, in their difference from and to norms of legibility, to challenge fixed ideologies of progress and discernability. Thus, these “uncounted” or “reticent” utterances contest “the normative bias in favor of the demonstrable, dramatic development and realization of human powers characteristic of, but not limited to, the capitalist investment in value and work and the Enlightenment allegiance to rationalism and unbounded progress” (François xvi). François's analytic of uncounted experience resists a type of normative temporality, one fashioned upon an unquestioned belief in “progress” and development. While her work centers on an epistemic shift in the Enlightenment, I turn to the seventeenth century in this project as a means of considering the nascent stages of an emerging chronobiopolitics that would eventually be realized in Enlightenment rationalism. I ground my own analysis of these inarticulate erotics-- as minimal as François’s reticent and recessive claims-- in the historic flux and change of temporality itself that was underway in the seventeenth century, a shift that had larger implications not only economically, aesthetically and

politically-- but also and most importantly, sexually. In this sense, “temporality” becomes an object of analysis while at the same time serving as a means of tracing such liminal desires.

As I will analyze in a later section, certain trends in queer theory's turn to temporality addresses the normativizing force such investments in “rationalism and unbounded progress.” In my analysis of these queer approaches, however, I believe that previous queer early modern studies have taken the open secret, or the inarticulate erotics, too literally. By this I mean that the open secret is either understood to mark “secret of openness” or the “fetish of nonclosure” (5) that promotes an ever-deeper investigation of the “true” sexuality, eroticism or desire at hand, or else the openness is taken as part of a false smoke-and-mirrors effect, a dazzling presentation of “openness” /legibility in the service of distracting from “other,” more invisible differences (6).<sup>7</sup>

This queer turn to temporality, analyzing the ways that sexualities and intimacies are influenced by such normative chronobiopolitics, still lacks a critical attention paid to *speeds* that govern the quality and shape of life. Such varied and plural tempos of existence clash frictionally against each other and create entire zones of incomprehension and incompatibility (“c'est ce que mon esprit trouve le plus étrange,” says Télétuze) but these are zones that have been simply dismissed as mere “nonsense” or outright resistances.

Scholars such as Lewis Seifert, Gary Ferguson, and Joan DeJean, among others, have

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<sup>7</sup> Anne-Lise François has put forth these dynamics more clearly than I can, but before I cite her, I would also mention that I believe that these two means of approaching the open secret can correspond to Sedgwick's “paranoid” hermeneutic (the paranoid position that fantasizes that “the secret is, there is always more to be known, it can be forever opened”) or her idea of “reparative” reading (paying close attention to the surprising dynamics and unexpected revelations that are present, and have always been present). François writes: “On another level, as a figure of ellipsis- of the set that no determinate content can fill and whose ends trail off into the implicit and nonspecifiable— the open secret also corresponds to the *secret of openness* or the fetish of nonclosure to which Žižek repeatedly draws our attention in his numerous accounts of how the symbolic order of Western modernity turns out to be premised on a gap it posits as having to remain empty or unfilled, always capable of accommodating one more articulated content, whether in question are human rights or the reasons of desire” (5) “In other cases the figure of the open secret is understood as itself an instance of ideological mystification, and the critical work consists of unmasking one of the two antithesis— “open” or “secret” — as the illusion hiding the truth of the other. Thus the claim to openness, nondifferentiation, universality, or accessibility may be revealed as the illusion masking— either to protect or deny— the existence of the invisible minority and secret of unmarked difference” (6)



forged the way in thinking through the careful socio-historical analysis of modes of homoeroticism and same-sex desire in seventeenth century France. At the same time, my research takes up a different form of queerness: the erotics, intimacies, and desires that remain unsaid--that which struggles to take shape either on the stage or on the page, but in this struggle, intervenes in the available and dominant forms of sexual expression. In this project, I ask a different form of question of chronobiopolitics. Instead of paying attention to queered forms of desire that lie outside of kinship, reproduction, and intimacy, my question is: what are queer speeds? What are the normative paces and tempos of desire and sexuality and how does this normalcy produce its own set of exclusionary blinders? My position is not to argue against abdicating either the anticipatory or agnostic approach<sup>8</sup> – methods that treat the history of sexuality as either excavating the “proto-gay” identities or throwing up one's hands in a “we can't ever know” celebration of queer ambiguitites--- as I will argue later, both of these approaches have their benefits as well as their downfalls. The anticipatory, while trending toward the teleologic, also helps us understand and read larger trends in the shifts in sexuality throughout history. This history and historiography of sexuality, while written aslant to such a linear teleologic impulse, still took place in a certain form of sequence (if not progress). The openness that the “agnostic” approach affords can help broaden one's expectations and scope of what “counts” as sexuality, although the too-quick turn to the aporetic impasse may mean that we refuse to perform deeper work and instead resort to the “out” of ambiguity. My approach, juggling both the agnostic and the anticipatory, the erotohistoriographic and antifuturistic goes beyond examining the way one is oriented towards (for example, reaching out to or rejecting) an optimistic future or a mourned-for past. Instead of taking into account one's orientation to time (past/present/future), I instead examine the cultivation of divergent speeds and paces -- queer

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<sup>8</sup> These categories are from Peter Coviello's *Tomorrow's Parties*, although as I mention in a later section of this introduction, I read these categories and trends in queer theory as symptomatic of certain attitudes and anxieties taken toward the problem of legibility/illegibility of sexualities of the past.

velocities of life.

It is a commonplace that sexuality as we conceive of it today did not exist as such in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, prior to undertaking deconstructive gestures to destabilize a discursive analysis of historical sexualities, it is important to establish the field of these multiple and competing axes of sexual knowledge. At the same time that the line demarcating permissible and impermissible speech was being drawn, the very idea of what constituted sexuality and deviance itself was changing. Historian Katherine Crawford notes that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw changing and competing notions of non-normative intimacies, or sodomy: “A capital offense in early modern France (although not often prosecuted), sodomy was conceptualized as a sin against nature. It encompassed a range of nonreproductive sexual acts that included masturbation as well as acts involving two men, a person or a man and a woman if performed in such a way as to prevent conception” (514). The problem with the declaration of sodomy as going “against nature” is that the very sense of what was “natural” was also ambiguous.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the status of sexual acts between women occupies a vague gray zone: while “tribadism” did appear in the French dictionary of 1690, the dictionary gives a definition that avoids moral judgement and declines to give very many details regarding how the act took place and its distance from or proximity to the “natural”: “Tribade: Mot qui vient du Grec. C’est celle qui s’acouple avec une autre personne de son sexe & qui contrefait l’homme.”<sup>10</sup> In the definition of the word, the same-sex act and the trans-gender posturing (“contrefait l’homme”) are twinned together, as one type of sexual deviance. In all of these emerging, changing and

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<sup>9</sup> To give another example of this gray zone, theologian Jean Benedicti wrote in 1610 of sodomy: “This sin is against the natural order because it is committed against the sexual order, a sin that is more grievous than having relations with one’s sister, or even with one’s own mother. Now there is sodomy, and there is the sodomitical act, which are two different things. [marginal note in Latin: Sodomitical copulation is committed by a male by ejaculating semen inside the posterior pudenda. The sodomitical act is committed by polluting oneself with another person, and this is perhaps sodomy of women as much as it can also be of men]”(Merrick and Ragan, 3) It is significant here that this discourse can only define sodomy in a comparatively negative term (what it is “worse than”)

<sup>10</sup> “Tribade. Word that comes from Greek. It's she who couples with another person of her sex and who feigns to be a man”

competing discourses around sexuality, the seventeenth century furnishes a particularly rich site of investigation for queer analysis.<sup>11</sup>

Although removed from the concretizing grasp of such a fixed and nameable ontology, the queer sexuality in *Iphis et Iante* juggles multiple discourses around sexuality and transgression, fumbling around a nebulous dividing line between proper and perverted intimate contact. In a monologue the day following her wedding night, the deceived Iante indicates this flux point of different factors shaping her sexual speech— she admits that she really has nothing against the same-sex marriage between them, but it is only social conventions and the fear of religious retribution that causes her to hesitate:

Ce mariage est doux, j’y trouve assez d’appâts  
Et si l’on n’en riat, je ne m’en plaindrais pas:  
Je n’aurais pas regret qu’on nous joignît ensemble,

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<sup>11</sup>To give one example, Dejean’s work focuses on the censorship and obscenity trials relating to Théophile de Viau; for the first time in French literary history, obscenity would be associated with the writer’s perceived sexual transgression (de Viau’s homosexuality played a major role in the scandal and in his trials) as opposed to being censored for heresy. Her careful historical work demonstrates how the seventeenth century was experiencing a dramatic shift in attitudes toward sexuality. For her, this moment marks

the most evident, and perhaps the most dramatic, shift in Western European standards for decency, as those standards applies to the representation of sexuality in literature. How else can we understand the fact that, in the late Middle Ages, Chaucer’s work was apparently acceptable to the full contemporary audience for literature, whereas by the end of the seventeenth century, parts of it were expurgated because of their alleged indecency? How else do we understand the dramatic shift from the sixteenth century, when Boccaccio and Rabelais were censured for their anticlericalism, rather than for their lustiness, to the late seventeenth century, when their frank depictions of sexuality had become inconceivable? (18)

This marked shift in attitudes is apparent in Le Père Garasse's writings against Théophile's scandalous sonnet. Dejean cites Garasse in order to analyze the heatedness of his rhetoric:

“In the past, the minute the word sodomy was mentioned, everyone began to talk about burning alive the person even suspected of it,” whereas now “a book is being sold publicly which open with a sonnet in which the author, who calls himself the sieur Théophile, repents because he has contracted an infamous disease from a prostitute, and swears to God to remain a SODOMITE all the rest of his days” (781). From this point on, whenever Garasse brings up Théophile, he invariably refers to him as a sodomite-- and, lest there be any doubt about what he means by this term, he never misses the chance to describe the poet in suspicious male company” (46)

In many senses Garasse's diatribe marks several important shifts taking place in this period. The focus shifts from prosecuting those suspected of the act-- monitoring circulating gossip and rumors-- to a honed interested specifically in printed speech and acceptable language. The distance between lived experience, Théophile's “male company” and the author's literary representation becomes collapsed. Furthermore, we find here the nascent stages of the shift from sodomitical acts to an identity, a shift that Foucault describes in the *History of Sexuality*, that after 1870 “the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (HS 43).

Si l'on ne profanait le noeud qui nous assemble" (V, 1) <sup>12</sup>

Iante lacks a means to express her desires or her situation— while she cannot affirm anything clear about their intimacy or their relationship, she can only express things in a double negative, in a plethora of “ne” phrases: no regrets and no complaints are possible only minus the threat of societal mockery or profaning their religious institutions. These latter represent two domains that Foucault claims that discourse around deviant intimacies were made to flourish, in order to be actively scrutinized, monitored and discussed. In this sense, Iante's monologue indicates a type of hinge point between sexual repression and discursive incitement.

However, relying on this solely “discursive” narrative means that we tend to exclude *other* presentations of desire— we see the history of sexuality as a dynamic between emergence and disappearance, between thriving and repression. Peter Coviello argues,

The regime of sexuality, in other words, is one of implantation and investment: an intensification of zones of the body, a making-vulnerable or making-sensitized, a saturation of personhood with proddings and incitements and solicitations. Much of this goes missing when we think of sex as discourse, or when we under-read what Foucault means when he suggests sex is 'discursively constituted'" (17).

Tracing all of these changing dynamics of institutional power and governmental censorship certainly can provide us a background for understanding the multiple ways that sexuality was being conditioned, brought to light, and disciplined in this time. At the same time as it is useful to find overarching trends of flourishing and repression around seventeenth century in France, I argue that the clear-cut division between a “before” and an “after” of sexual discursivity is a fantasy, or at least a fantasy-generating device, in which those who study sexualities in the past wish to posit a time prior, replete with possibilities, a “uchronia” akin to a utopia.

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<sup>12</sup> “This marriage is sweet, in it I find plenty of delight/ And if one didn't mock it, I wouldn't complain/ I would have no regrets that we have been joined together/ if the binding marital knot were not profaned by others.”

In response to this desire of getting back to the past, or the charges of anachronism (applying queer theory to a past that may not have understood or wanted it), Freeman proposes another way of approaching studying sexualities of the past, saying:

It's not simple nostalgia, for it requires giving up the notion that a given form has a stable referent, a prior wholeness locatable in a time and place we ought to 'get back to.' It is more like what I think Sedgwick means by reparative criticism: that because we can't know in advance— we can only know retrospectively, if even then— what is queer and what is not, we gather and combine eclectically and idiosyncratically, dragging a bunch of cultural debris "*not necessarily like any preexisting whole*" ("Still After," 31, citing Sedgwick from *Touching Feeling* [128])

In a similar vein, Coviello follows David Halperin in suggesting that "modern" sexuality is made up of an "unprecedented *combination* of...previously uncorrelated conceptual entities" (9) including a number of vectors (psychoanalytic, identitarian, political) that comprise the formation of modern same-sex sexuality. It is for this reason that analysis of discourse alone is not sufficient, since examining "moments before this coordination is to look squarely at possibilities for the disaggregation, or staggered articulation, or differential emphasis, of one or more of these not-yet-coordinated vectors of being. It is to see something of the shape sex could take— errant, unlikely, not always legible *as* sex— before it quite became the sexuality we now know, or think we know" (Coviello, 10). Thus, following Freeman and Coviello, instead of looking at the story of sexuality, and seventeenth century sexuality as a simple story of before and after, repression and resistance, pre-gay and post-gay, I would contend that the focus on the repressive hypothesis as the dominant model for investigating sexuality in the seventeenth century fails to consider the "errant and unlikely" modes of intimacy that may not even cohere or

make sense. The question then becomes: how can we look for and look at that which is “not necessarily like any pre-existing whole”? “Ne sauriez-vous lire dans ma pensée?” Iphis asks us.

These “open secrets” of the minimal utterance that points to divergent erotics are not the hidden “there” of the text to be unearthed<sup>13</sup>. Rather, if early modern sexuality and temporality were undergoing such a period of contestation, change and flux, these early dramas that I analyze provide a type of “snapshot” of such dynamics. Against the charge that it is I (the critic) who is “putting” these queer erotics in the text, or against the suspicion that I am arguing that Corneille, Benserade and Racine “hid” or placed such queer erotics in the text, I would respond in two ways. First, there is a certain convergence of possibilities (and impossibilities) of sexual articulation in this period, some of which are familiar, legible and recognizable to us, and other “errant and unlikely” structures that condition what erotics can and can not be possible. These are “not like any pre-existing whole” but also unlike anything that would *come to be*. And thus, the “snapshot” quality of the dramas that I am alluding to means that such a weird nexus of structuring possibilities is captured, allowing us to re-imagine the very conditions of possibility available for sexual, textual, and dramatic representation in that time. The second response that I could make is that I/ Racine/Corneille did not “put” these deviant erotics there. Rather, these inarticulate erotics have *already been present all along*, yet obscured by our particular reading lenses that only makes apparent certain types of behavior and tempos that are properly aligned with and in tune with a normative chronobiopolitical pace and sequence of life.

These inarticulate erotics types of desires, embedded in temporalities, that are not necessarily forbidden or repressed, nor do they strain to take shape in speech. The experience of the temporality of sexuality, in its rushes and hesitations, creates its own set of affects, eroticisms, and desires. There still remains something in excess of the cut that divides outright

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<sup>13</sup> See footnote #7 for a further discussion

subversion (of the female-female lovemaking scene) and sexual silence. What happens, for example, when the eroticism is the slowness itself, the announcement and the anticipation-- and *not* the actual act? What would it mean for time to feel erotic-- in this case a slowed time replete with possibilities for Iphis (of rejection, horror, transgression, delight, recognition, and more)?<sup>14</sup> The actual “act” itself (whatever a sexual act is, anyway) cannot comprise and condense these varied tempos of possibility-- time, here, becomes a mode of eroticism that seeks neither release nor affirmation. In this sense, following François,

... whereas Sedgwick's early work tends to emphasize only this first direction, concentrating on the open secret's disciplinary effects in keeping knowledge impotent because never admitted, I want to pay closer attention to what the open secret enables, namely a strangely passive, all but agentless and guiltless, exchange between people [...] The open secret is not simply a retractive mode of expression-- a way of making something about oneself unavailable, burying it in the very means of its revelation; it is also a way of letting oneself be known without even seeming to, calling into play the interpretative powers of one's auditors and engaging their moral freedom (81).

What I call “inarticulate erotics” offers one way of addressing the history of sexuality that neither follows the narrative of the “repressive hypothesis,” nor clearly adheres to codes of legibility that seem clearly and obviously sexual. Examining inarticulate erotics takes as axiomatic that there are types of attachments that may not make sense in terms of what we understand to be the “logical” divisions between acceptable and obscene, inside and outside,

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<sup>14</sup>I would be interested in relating and expanding the losses inscribed in the open secret-- an unregistered and unregistrable loss, with Butler's work on ungrievable lives. See the “Introduction: Acting in Concert” in *Undoing Gender* for more. François writes: “this type of minimally inflected transition from the latency of unactualized, dormant possibility (with its attendant, residual temporality of suspended hope and quiet waiting) to “more” absolute privation-- a change difficult to show as such from the presence of something missed, left unrealized, to its actual disappearance”(38)

deviant and normative. Carla Mazzio's book *The Inarticulate Renaissance* indicates such a middle ground of expression: "the inarticulate here . . . marks something between, but not reducible to either, speech and silence" (5). Between Foucault's dynamics of outright repression and flourishing, or DeJean's analysis of censorship and the literary obscene, there lies a middle territory of half-formed, partially understood utterances and expressions that are never fully flagged. Thus, it is by taking up this middle ground of inarticulacy between speech and silence and its concomitant affects we might better understand the breadth of a whole other range of possibilities of what Coviello has called the "not-yet coordinated vectors of being." He analyzes the "earliness of the erotic being of these writers," specifying that "what I mean to capture in the term 'earliness' is instead the experience of sexuality as something in the crosshairs of a number of forms of knowledge and regulation *but not yet wholly captivated or made coordinate by them*" (7). Lingering closely around such inarticulate utterances can illuminate the possibilities of queer desire in a way that eschews an overly romanticized fantasy of a "before," in favor of situating such inarticulacies in their historical and discursive particularity.

My approach might be thought of as akin to what Sedgwick has metaphorized as "gravestone rubbing." She writes: "The dense back-and-forth touch of the crayon leaves a positive map not of excrescences but of lines of absence or excised matter. And the pressure of insistence that makes a continuous legibility called sexual knowledge emerge from and take the shape of the furrows of prohibition or of stupor is, most powerfully, the *reader's* energy of need, fear, repudiation projection" (*T*, 46). Inarticulate erotics considers the carved-out excised spaces while avoiding Sedgwick's critique of the "reader's energy of need." This energy creates the insistence that is the (crayon) pressure of bringing something to light in a clearly legible manner. Instead of rallying around spectacularly transgressive obscene literature or hiding in repressed silence, these inarticulate erotics find recourse to expression in ways that may not even seem



sexual or may not even appear as means of coding or gesturing toward the erotic or intimate.

Expanding upon earlier work on early modern sexualities and same-sex desires, this project asks different questions of the “uncaptivated” or “un-coordinated” types of desires, taking seriously Sedgwick's definition of queer as the “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically” (*T*, 8). One of these entities, or axes of capture, ought to include temporality, and more specifically, velocity. Iphis summons up the ‘étrange mouvement’ and ‘retardements’ to speak of a type of longing and intermixed affects that remain not quite clear— a position of loving one’s legitimate wife, while dreading revealing one’s true gender all the while delighting in such a trans-gendered disguise that permits proximity and touch— all of these dynamics of privilege and exclusion, legibility and hiddenness intermix to produce an eroticism that is not quite lesbian, nor straight, nor trans, but can be thought of as generally queer. At the same time, such dragging is a way to mark a departure from a certain tempo of expectation. If it is through movement, slowness and speed that Iphis attempts to articulate her desire, we like Iante, are unable to see such speeds and movements as signaling the inarticulable. There are certain normative temporalities that are associated with gender that create times of expectations— the speed of decision making, the sequence of what “should” follow (e.g. nuptials after engagement, consummation after marriage, the proper speed of courtship).

My research on inarticulate erotics does take a cue from Mazzio’s work. However, her approach endeavors to shine a light on the “history and dramatic representation of verbal *sparagmos* or outright unintelligibility” as well as “mumbling, babbling, and rhyming without reason [...], confused or unintelligible elocution” or the “sighs, groans, and vivid inarticulacy of lovers” (7-8). And yet all of these stammerings and stutterings, in Mazzio’s analysis, still signal

language in distress, or at least moments when inarticulacy “vividly” flags itself as such, as pressing against the limits of intelligible and unintelligible speech.

In contrast to this notion of language in distress, what interests me most about Iphis’ case and in the other plays that I analyze are the moments of serious inarticulacy, moments that do not dramatically falter but rather “hide in plain sight.” Deleuze writes of this linguistic faltering and the generative torsions it can produce:

Stammering, in general, is a speech problem. But to make language stammer is a different matter. It is to impose the work of continuous variation on language, on all interior elements of language, phonological, syntactical, and semantic... To be a stranger, then, in one’s own language... It is to impose on language, as it is spoken perfectly and soberly, this line of variation that will make you a foreigner in *your own* language or make a foreign language your own or make your language a bilingualism immanent to your foreignness (247).

In the plays that I analyze, I trace this kind of speech that appears to adhere to the conventions of discourse but nevertheless creates “friction” against the norms and expected pace of representation by dragging against or rushing forward in strange and unexpected ways.

Given such a weight placed on legible speech and societal acceptance, Mazzio hypothesizes that “being inarticulate is often conditioned by social contexts that, if undetected or unexamined, can lead to injurious forms of internalization; to the pathos of ‘feeling inarticulate’ rather than a condition of knowing that one is unacknowledged or uninterpolated into a community of legitimate speakers” (3). And extending on this sentiment of pathos, perhaps it is not coincidental that the plays that I analyze in the following chapters are all tragedies, insofar as the tragic allows a specific interrogation of pathos of loss. This loss, according to Benjamin, is one that stems from a fallen “non-messianic” temporality, and thus establishes theater as a

particularly apt means to consider the representation of the time of life.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the question becomes what happens when we leave aside the promised fixity and fulfillment of a messianic temporality in favor of an openness to the contingencies and fault lines of the emerging early modern chronobiopolitics? Samuel Weber argues that theater provides one answer to this quandary:

Precisely this capacity of theater to offer a possible way out of the dilemmas resulting from a failing religious and cosmic order will guide Benjamin in his approach to the German *Trauerspiel* and to modernity in general. Theater, it should be remembered, is here defined as a space that is riven, spatially and temporally, and that therefore can offer a possible escape from the circular orbit of a closed but discredited cosmos (161).

It is the “rivenness” of the theater space and time that interests my study. I follow Mazzio's and Patricia Parker's interest in drama insofar as it is “particular medium through which cultural formations of the inarticulate became most audible and subject to public scrutiny, [a genre that] always involves communal situations of interaction and interlocution. Tensions constituting

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<sup>15</sup> One could equally argue, however, that the German *Trauerspiel* and French classical drama are far from being analogous art forms, even though written in the same “historical” timeframe. This difference is the subject of Christopher Braider's article, “Talking Like a Book,” in which he imagines what Benjamin might have written about French classical drama if he had included Racine and Corneille along with his counterexamples of Calderon and Shakespeare.

What grants [these plays] the contemporary afterlife they enjoy is precisely the sophistication that distinguishes them from the German baroque. For this sophistication implies the critical self-consciousness required to conceal the condition French tragedy shares with German *Trauerspiel*: the lack of eschatological promise. By granting the action a perfected dramatic immanence, French poets create an artful surrogate whose warrant is the convincing facsimile of real life they bring to the stage. The procedure needed to read them in their historical (as opposed to dramatic) truth thus anticipates a Foucauldian *archeology* designed to uncover the hidden ideological grammar the glamorous surface of theatrical performance occludes. Benjamin would likely have explored, from within the forms destined to conceal it, the self-censoring awareness of the condition French tragedy appears to escape. The plays would thereby become allegories of the sort *Trauerspiel* presents with such earnest literal-mindedness, ...French classical tragedy cashes out baroque *Trauerspiel* without remainder; [...] the artful concealment that German dramatists failed to achieve sustains the make-believe required to keep the faith the historical moment destroys. Where German drama abjectly confesses the historical impasse reached, the French converts it into the public theater of redemptive Cornelian will or the private chamber of Racinian lamentation” (385-386).

dramatic affect typically reflect the fault lines of communication, rifts in the production of shared meanings and imagined communities” (Parker, *SM*, 2). The archive of drama, and especially tragic drama is the most useful for this analysis insofar as these three plays that comprise my study-- Corneille's *Polyeucte* and Racine's *Andromaque* and *Bérénice* are all plays about pronouncements and announcements appearing in the “fault lines” of such a “riven space”: the announcement of a conversion, the declaration of a marriage promise and the decision to save a son's life. The main “action” of such clear pronouncements is haunted by other inarticulate erotics which are obscured by an over-attention to the tempo of expectation and waiting that the dramas create. As such, these inarticulate erotics mark the pathos and the “earliness” in ways that don't rail against “uninterpollation” but don't disavow their distance from and divergence from the normative and expected pace of action.

## ***II. Chronobiopolitics, Temporality and the Sun King***

Slowness or movement may seem like strange rhetorical strategies to signal one's desire or to indicate the oddness of a particular sexed/gendered/queered intimacy. At the same time, Iphis' manipulation of temporality both signals and resists what Elizabeth Freeman calls “chrononormativity” by dragging against the expected pace of marital consummation, which is a dominant tempo or speed that structures lived intimacies and relations:

Chrononormativity is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls “hidden rhythms forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege.” Manipulations of time convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines, which in

turn organize the value and meaning of time. The advent of wage work, for example, entailed a violent retemporalization of bodies once tuned to the seasonal rhythms of agricultural labor (*TB* 3).

This notion of chronormativity may seem more fitting to a Taylorist management of the modern working body or a Marxist attention to the temporality waged labor. At the same time, it is important to remember that the seventeenth century saw the advent of technologies of temporal measurement and scientific advancements that reflected specific political ideologies and economies in flux.

Chronobiopolitics figures in this study insofar as the seventeenth century, under the reign of Louis XIII, saw a proliferation of practices, spectacles and traditions all carefully designed to “invest life through and through” (Foucault, *HS* 139). No longer was the sovereign the dealer of death, but rather he became the condensation and source of a “calculated management of life” (140). The harnessing of temporality to adhere to absolutist rhythms became a key component of both managing and proliferating such control. Mitchell Greenberg argues that in France “something portentously revolutionary occurred during the period 1580-1680.” He continues::

to some, the major transformation was economic: seventeenth century-mercantilism is seen to negotiate the passage from an essentially agrarian to a market economy, thus serving as the intermediary in the economic evolution from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist society. To others, of whom Foucault is the leading figure, the change presented a fundamental break in epistemology, shifting Europe out of the sphere of analogical reason and into the realm of (Classical) representation [...the] period sees a general reorganization of affective familial and sexual ties. The reorganization radically altered the way human beings reflected their own lived experience and relate it to the socio-political structures in which

they are born and evolve (SS 12).

Sovereign power shifted from a spectacular power adjudicating a clear life-or-death division, cleaving friends from enemies to a biopolitical regime. In this governance paradigm, the sovereign then becomes source of myriad and multiple micro-mechanisms of power. Most of these regimes of control and disciplining are temporally related, but offer themselves in the service of *life*-- of appearing to cultivate a certain quality and longevity of life, in life's fullest rhythms, paces, and "fulfillment". A by-product of this shift of power was a move from the slow, cyclical time of agrarian culture to the haste of the mercantile system.

For Greenberg, this temporal evolution is one that can be seen in particular in the changing family unit. He draws upon social historians who

see the seventeenth century as precisely the period that witnessed the 'actual' transformation of the family... the family gradually shifted away from that large, inchoate unit for which the term 'household' ('maison,' 'maisonnée' in French) would be more appropriate and towards the 'family' as that smaller, affective bourgeois unit the eighteenth century was to cherish. This family comprised, and was usually limited to, the biological unit of mother, father, and their offspring. It is during the seventeenth century that the more archaic 'economic' definition of family gradually gave way to the newer 'affective' one (SS 13).

Not only does temporality structure relations, moving from economically-influenced ties to affective relations of kinship, but also temporality conditions the family unit itself produces, in terms of the notions of generational progress, reproduction, and futurity. The seventeenth century emerges as a prime site of inquiry to consider these changing dynamics and temporalities of kinship and attachment.

An interest in chronobiopolitics, according to Freeman and Dana Luciano, merges

together these concepts of chrononormativity and biopolitics. It signals not only the ways that the sovereign could control subjects, but also indicates the temporal conditions upon which the very grounds for subjectivity itself are created-- through a proliferation of practices that generated, monitored, and encouraged the condition and quality of life. Freeman argues:

In chronobiopolitics, this process extends beyond individual anatomies to encompass the management of entire populations: people whose individual bodies are synchronized not only with one another but also with larger temporal schemata experience belonging itself as natural. In a chronobiological society, the state and other institutions, including representational apparatuses, link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change. These are teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death and its attendant rituals (4).

And for Luciano, this arrangement and organization reflects “the sexual arrangement of the time of life” (9). The ways that these seventeenth century bodies were being marshalled into “properly temporalized” rhythms occurred not through a “top-down” injunction, but rather through multiple micro-pathways of control, conditioning and measurement. Freeman takes up Luciano’s suggestion that “following Walter Benjamin, aesthetic objects— especially outdated ones— “*make time appear*” in ways that contest dominant modes of writing and feeling properly historical: they demand that we read, and they themselves write, historiographically aslant” (31). In the interest of approaching these desires that appear through the aslant or non-normative, we might pause and consider the interwoven network of structures that created such an emerging chronobiopolitics.

Temporal dynamics are multiply an extension of sovereign power. On a

“microdiachronic” level, these temporal conditionings of the rhythms of life, from the minuteness of post-office letter mail pickups to literary debates over the acceptable duration of a play seem to be nothing more than social niceties and conventions. However, such conditioning reflects the far-flung (and indeed totally hidden) ways that Absolutism disciplined and cultivated the temporality of the social and sexual spheres. Whether in the spectacles of Louis XIV or in the tiniest affairs of everyday life, time was being “straightened” in two different ways-- it was being regularized and standardized along a national (absolutist) logic, but it was also being straightened in its increasing adherence to sexually coherent and permissible constellations that contributed to a favorable chronobiopolitical monitoring.<sup>16</sup>

Even after the death of the Roi Soleil, his reign of artistic, literary, and scientific glory continued to shine. This flourishing was not merely an after-effect of a glorious reign, but rather a product of well-oiled and minutely regulated state machinery built explicitly to impress with glory and power. But this was a machine that fed on the cultivation of information, measurement, and the production of a standardized, precise time. Historian Charles Frostin describes:

Dix-huit mois après la mort du ministre de Louis XIV (1683), le samedi 3 mars 1685, le vaisseau de guerre l’*Oiseau* appareillait de Brest à destination du Siam [...] Parmi les passagers du navire figurait aussi, en transit, une petite équipe de six jésuites porteurs de lettres patentes de ‘mathématiciens du Roi’ et munis d’un imposant matériel: “machines de Römer”, horloge sur plan incliné, pendules

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<sup>16</sup> In a longer version of this project it would be useful to compare the structuring of temporality in the ever-centralized French state to the conditioning of temporality in the French colonies, and the encounter with different and varied rhythms of life. Carolyn Dinshaw, in a “Theorizing QueerTemporalities” roundtable published by *GLQ* points out that critical attention paid to such plural temporalities is not limited to a certain period in the past “This refusal of linear historicism has freed me to think further about multiple temporalities in the present. Postcolonial historians have been most influential in this process, and the turn toward temporality has been thrilling: it opens the way for other modes of consciousness to be considered seriously-- those of ghosts, for example, and mystics. But the condition of heterogeneous temporalities can be exploited for deconstruction as well as expansion: Ernst Bloch recounts chillingly the Nazi’s deployment of temporal asynchrony in recruiting Germans who felt backward in the face of an alien modernity. So we must take seriously temporality’s tremendous social and political force” ( 178).



diverses, “quadran équinoxial’, quarts de nonates’, miroirs ardents’, microscopes, thermomètres, baromètres, etc. En qualité de ‘mathématiciens du Roi’, les pères devaient ‘se transporter aux Indes et à la Chine pour y faire toutes les observations nécessaires pour la perfection des Arts et des Sciences, l’exactitude de la Géographie et établir de plus en plus la sûreté de la navigation’ (325).<sup>17</sup>

The boat bound for Siam was not just coincidentally filled to the brim with clocks and pendula, but had amassed such instruments as necessary and integral players in a spectacle of sovereign knowledge and wealth. The drama being staged was one of scientific acquisitiveness — an ever-precise combing of the natural world in order to tame, know, and control it. The intensified epistemo-critical function in regards to temporality, I argue, served to concretize and to give the appearance of masterable time units and a governable quality of life. Foucault remarks that there are twin effects of this turn to biopolitics:

D’un côté il relève des disciplines du corps: dressage, intensification et distribution des forces, a justement et économie des énergies. De l’autre, il relève de la regulation des populations, par tous les effets globaux qu’il induit. Il s’insère simultanément sur les deux registres; il donne lieu à des surveillances infinitesimales, à des contrôles de tous les instants, à des aménagements spatiaux d’une extrême méticulosité, à des examens médicaux ou psychologiques indéfinis, à tout un micro-pouvoir sur le corps ; mais il donne lieu aussi à des mesures massives, à des estimations statistiques, à des interventions qui visent le corps social tout entier ou des groupes pris dans leur ensemble. Le sexe est accè

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<sup>17</sup> “Eighteen months after the death of the minister of Louis XIV, Saturday March 3, 1685, the war ship *l’Oiseau*, was rigged out from Brest, headed for Siam [...] among the passengers of the boat, a small group of six Jesuits were also included, carrying letters from the “mathématiciens of the King” and bearing significant materials: “Romer machines,” “clocks on an inclined plane,” diverse pendula, “equinoxial quadrants,” “quarts de nonantes” silvered mirrors, microscopes, thermometers, barometers, etc. As the “mathématiciens of the King,” the Jesuits were supposed to “travel to the Indies and to China to undertake there all of the necessary observations for the perfection of Arts and Sciences, the exactitude of Geography and to establish navigation with greater and greater precision.”

à la fois à la vie du corps et à la vie de l'espèce (191-192).<sup>18</sup>

Looking at the sun's angle in the sky, whether from Paris or from the sea or from Siam, the instruments indicated a faith in an ability to measure universally. The more that this knowledge was harnessed and cultivated, the more extensive the influence of the sovereign's grasp on dynamics of life, movement, circulation, and sociality.

The value of this knowledge was emphasized by an anecdote from the visit of the Ottoman ambassador Mehmed Efendi:

s'émervillant devant le matériel qui y était accumulé [à l'Observatoire, il] [...] interroge des Français de son escorte, et ceux-ci d'insister sur l'héritage laissé par Louis XIV. 'Ils me dirent que ce prince, qui connaissait par lui-même le prix de la science, comblait de bienfaits ceux qui inventaient quelque nouvelle machine et que, lorsque l'on lui en présentait, il les faisait mettre dans l'Observatoire pour l'usage des étudiants. Véritablement, j'y vis tant de choses admirables qu'un trésor même ne suffirait pas pour en faire l'acquisition' (329).<sup>19</sup>

Particularly in the ambassador's use of the words "treasure" and "acquisition" we see a conflation of the actual material value of tools themselves and the inherent (ideological) value of such scientific investigation. The instrument laden ship and the dazzling Observatoire space participated in a spectacle of ostentation. These technological instruments were treasured as

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<sup>18</sup> On the one hand it was tied to the disciplines of the body: the harnessing, intensification, and distribution of forces, the adjustment and economy of energies. On the other hand, it was applied to the regulation of populations, through all the far-reaching effects of its activity. It fitted in both categories at once, giving rise to infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations, to an entire micro-power concerned with the body. But it gave rise as well to comprehensive measure, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups taken as a whole. Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. (Foucault, HS 145-146)

<sup>19</sup> "Marveling before the amount of accumulated material in the Observatory [he] asked the Frenchmen escorting him, and they emphasized the legacy left by Louis XIV. 'They told me that this prince, who understood himself the value of science, showered rewards on those who invented some new machine, and would, as soon as the invention was revealed to him, would have them put it in the Observatory for students' use. Truly, I saw so many remarkable things that even a treasure would not suffice to purchase these things.'"

costly ideologically as well as monetarily.<sup>20</sup>

More than mere spectacle and bedazzlement, however, the ship laden with these tools emblemized a crucially changing mindset of the period, one that undergirded overall social relations. Time itself, under Louis XIV, was becoming more precise than ever. One of Colbert's protégés, Christiaan Huygens, performed most of his research and engineering in Paris, and thus left a trace back to the reign and realm of the Sun King. I follow the approach of Roland Racevskis here in tracing certain socio-cultural shifts that were directly or indirectly derived from these scientific advancements. He summarizes:

Huygens ushered in a new era of precision in time-measurement when he successfully applied Galileo Galilei's (1564-1642) invention of the pendulum as a regulator to a clock mechanism in 1657. This advance permitted a new degree of accuracy for clocks and a new way of audibly tracking the passage of time [...] Instead of being conceived as a continuous movement, the measure of time becomes an experience of steady discontinuity, the breaking-up of the passing of time by the alternating gears of the clock mechanism coming into contact with the teeth of the escapement. The resulting experience is one of time analyzed, or broken down, an experience henceforth to be reinforced aurally by the ticking of the pendulum (*TWK* 13).

Racevskis takes this temporal fragmentation as the basis for a formation of a fragmented subjective experience and an attunement to the tiniest “microdiachronics” of life. The tick of an ever-precise timepiece became integrated in the rhythms and dynamics of society— and, most importantly, such a tick was made invisible in the moment that it emerged as most naturalized

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<sup>20</sup> As Greenberg notes, “Louis was, in his self-representation, the most ‘theoretical’ of monarchs: his persona was both a theory and a theater of kingship. Having perceived that the essence of political power resided in the images and imaginary of the majesty, he proceeded to project these images into the world in a way that had never been seen before” (SS 1).

and the most controlling. It is in this sense that the metaphor of the sun for the Roi Soleil becomes even more pertinent. Both the sun, the Roi Soleil's "power" and the temporality of the sun/ Sun King infused and permeated daily life. Instead of the minutest rhythms of everyday life being rendered *analogous* to sovereign control and his own daily rhythms, the tempo of life becomes only possible thanks to the King. Just as we notice "light" and "heat" as their own entities without tracing it back metonymically to its source, normative temporality structures meeting times, postal services, theater spectacles, and tempos of relationality without marking itself as being constructed or artificially generated, governed by Absolutist ideologies. "This kind of temporal self-awareness required a specific focus on small time increments. Restricted temporal units framed within microdiachronies of daily experience constituted a new domain of consciousness. Fragmented into constitutive components, time was conceived in a new complexity by early modern subjects" (Racevskis,19).

Temporality shifted from a state concern (regarding the timing of military battles, scientific investigations and more) to become an increasingly popular trend with ideological implications. Initially, the numerous clocks and personal timepieces were "rare in the initial stages of their development, and their distribution early in the Sun King's reign was thus limited to the most privileged sectors of society" (Racevskis 41-42). In this sense, while a critical difference can be carved out between "personal" time and "clock" time, with the proliferation and the commodification of these timepieces, personal time became national time. Although watches were first treated a status piece – often gilded, enameled, or jewel-encrusted-- by the mid eighteenth century personal timekeeping devices were more and more common. Thus the seventeenth century saw a transition from a moment when the novelty of time (and time-keeping devices) literalized the intellectual and cultural value in its ostentatious presentation to a period when such "commodity" was ubiquitous and naturalized.

This culture of ostentation intended to dazzle, distract and pacify the French nobles, an early modern “society of the spectacle” in the service of establishing and putting forth a specific form of society choreographed to a national rhythm. Through specific rituals and practices, chronobiopolitics was harnessed to the body of the king. Racevskis writes,

The ‘premier gentilhomme’ of the king’s chambers would open the bed’s curtains at a quarter past eight. After fifteen minutes of prayer, Louis XIV arose from his bed and put on his slippers and robe and, while being combed by the head barber, began to be clothed [...] Every gesture involved in the process of dressing Louis XIV was measured and repeated in the same way from day to day. A specific rhythm of daily experience structured mornings at Versailles, as anxious court members observed the proceedings and remained constantly aware of the moments at which they might speak to the king (68-69).

These twinned movements of centralizing unifying power and a temporal fragmentation that also shattered the body were two sides of the same coin, and can be thought of as corresponding to a national rhythm. Emerging here is a practice that broke down temporality into units specifically designed for the purpose of conditioning the rhythms of the body, a national and ever-precise tempo that lays the grounds for what paces and speeds of life are normative and possible. Temporality, and the temporality of the (King's) body itself became the stuff of the main “dramas” of such theatrical spectacle. Racevskis writes of the anxieties and anticipations surrounding the haste and rush to execute the “Plaisirs de l’île enchantée” to inaugurate Versailles as the locus and center of royal prestige and control in France: “One of the purposes of this festival of 1664 was thus the accomplishment of a temporal subterfuge, executed through a rhetoric of anticipation and projection. Time became a privileged object of manipulation in the structure and spectacle of the kingly magnificence” (58). Seventeenth century cultural studies

have remarked on the clear relationship between the performing arts as cultivated carefully under Louis XIII and Louis XIV (including ballets, festivals, music, and theater) and Absolutist authority. But this was not a proliferation of theater merely meant to dazzle. Rather, as Timothy Murray suggests, the very act of authorizing theatrical production, starting with Louis XIII's Act of April 1641, staged a performance of sovereign authority. Murray writes,

For such a declaration of theatre as a legitimate means of entertainment is synonymous with the speaker's assertion of sovereign authority to make decrees. Legitimation of theatre is in this sense performative. It is a royal speech act that legalizes theatre for the participants through decrees or public expressions of patronage... In the seventeenth century, the enactment of the king's office depended partially on the public's acknowledgement (legitimation) of his declarative authority (*Theatrical*, 112).

Since both an emerging chronobiopolitical temporality as well as ways of seeing were directly related to a fast-developing centralized absolutism, the stakes of the sexual language of dramatic literature, far from being a merely aesthetic and stylistic convention, had far-reaching socio-cultural as well as political implications. Dramatic language on stage adjudicated and dictated, in a sense, what the dominant forms of sexual expression could and could not look like. And significantly, in this period, sexual language on stage was being more and more erased.<sup>21</sup> Unlike

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<sup>21</sup> Schérer writes of this shift, “ Le comportement proprement sexuel des personnages est également une matière interdite à partir de 1650 environ.... Il faut d'ailleurs, même dans les oeuvres qui, en apparence, respectent scrupuleusement les bienséances les plus exigeantes, faire la part de la convention. Bayle en 1684 [Nouvelles de la république des lettres] nous donne une indication précieuse sur l'état de l'esprit du public à ce sujet. “On est persuadé plus loin que le livre ne dit” (4) Ce qui est vrai du roman l'est aussi du théâtre: les ‘feux’, les ‘soupirs’ des héros les plus respectueux et des jeunes filles les plus modestes ne paraissaient sans doute pas toujours au public classique aussi éthérés que les auteurs voulaient bien le dire” (406)

Schérer focuses on language, or rather the disallowed language of sexuality on the stage, and the ways that any indication of desire had to be reduced to the “ethereal” or faintly delineated by sighs. He presents examples from dramatic literature prior to 1650 to demonstrate, in contrast, the range of sexual expressions that had been banished after this “divide.” Suffice it to note that in *Iphis et Iante* the staged wedding-night scene and the explicit recounting of the moment of intimacy between the two women would be unthinkable in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

English or Spanish tragedy in the period, French classical drama was unique in its strict adherence to the unity of time. The limit was not just an arbitrary stylistic convention, but an actual part of the construction of the action. Schérer writes: “Si le noeud est action, et si toute action se déroule nécessairement dans le temps, la quantité de temps que se donne l’auteur dramatique est bien l’un des éléments premiers du problème qui se pose, un élément inhérent à la conception de l’oeuvre et non à son exécution”(110).<sup>22</sup> If the temporal limit became the origin and genesis (*la conception*) of the work itself, then the very establishment of such a fixed temporal frame in some ways allegorizes and redoubles the authority of absolutism: not only was the sovereign the chronobiopolitical regulator of time, but even in the theatrical/dramatic extension of his spectacular glory, temporality becomes the hidden generator and source.

Theatrical time itself was linked to the sun, and the ways that the sun's measurement, movement and speed in its revolution created a “day.” Fittingly enough, the root of the word ephemeral, in Greek, we recall, means “lasting only one day.” Pierre Corneille famously struggled against the “règle tyrannique” of temporal constraint, while his younger contemporary Jean Racine flourished under the same delimited time span. Corneille, in his *Trois discours sur le poème dramatique*, cites Aristotle in regard to this constraint : “La règle de l'unité de jour a son fondement sur ce mot d'Aristote, que la tragédie doit renfermer la durée de son action dans un tour de soleil, ou tâcher de ne le passer pas de beaucoup”(137).<sup>23</sup> Try as he might, however, Corneille can offer little to no justification for this rule himself. The best he can do is to attribute it to the authority of tradition and something vague which he calls “natural reason”: “Beaucoup déclament contre cette règle, qu'ils nomment tyrannique, et auraient raison, si elle n'était fondée

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<sup>22</sup> “If the dramatic knot is action, and if all actions take place necessarily in time, the quantity of time that the author gives to his drama is actually one of the first elements of the problem that presents itself, an element that is inherent to the origin of the work, rather than to its execution.”

<sup>23</sup> “The rule of the unity of time is founded upon Aristotle's sayings: “that the action of tragedy should be enclosed within one turn of the sun, or to take care not to exceed it by much.” (*all translations without pagination my own*)

que sur l'autorité d'Aristote; mais ce qui la doit faire accepter, c'est la raison naturelle qui lui sert d'appui" (139).<sup>24</sup>The sun, here, figures and condenses two absolutes: as the favored symbol of the sovereign and as the sun's movement that governed and generated the time of the play. At the same time, resisting this temporal limit meant struggling against the seamless naturalization of the chronobiological straightening that was underway.

Given the importance of such temporality as a valuable and viable tool for the cultivation of an emerging chronobiopolitics, it is clear why such "velocities" that challenged an emerging national temporality could not outright announce its divergence or challenge the artificiality of sovereign power (artificial in the very scientific pursuit that "constructed" and standardized time, or the theatrical treatises that fixed the unity of time as the essential core of the drama). Deviances from such norms could only present themselves, minimally, in the type of recessive claim that bore no threatening or competing stakes.

One key turning point in the representation of temporality in the theater took place over Corneille's *Le Cid*, a literary scandal that showed the magnitude of a reaction against temporal deviances. Exceeding this unity, as Corneille did, manifests not merely an author's struggles with creative constraint but symptomatizes a subjectivity straining under the new demands of the emerging chronobiopolitics. Corneille's popularly successful play was lambasted by pamphlet writers and critics, those jealous of his success and those zealous to show that he had exceeded his poetic license in the composition of his piece. The play, set in medieval Spain, tells the story of woebegotten lovers Chimène and Rodrigue. When Chimène's father insults Rodrigue's father, Rodrigue is asked to either duel to defend his father's honor or let the slight go unpunished. In the duel, he kills the father of his beloved Chimène who, horrified, calls for Rodrigue to be excuted in retribution. The King, Don Fernand, summons valorous Rodrigue to fight against the

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<sup>24</sup> "Many rail against this rule, calling it tyrannical, and would be correct, if it were only founded on Aristotle's authority; but what should make them accept the rule is the natural reason upon which the rule relies."



Moorish invasion, giving him a chance to win back his lost honor and the hand of Chimène. Chimène finds herself being ordered to do exactly what she both longs for and fears: being commanded by Don Fernand to marry Rodrigue. Don Fernand mediates the conflict by mandating an odd end. He prescribes time as a balm to the past wounds as well as uses the temporal command for Chimène to wait as an example and extension of his own power. Such a dual employment of temporality underscores the ways that a sovereign's savvy use of temporality could be deployed to secure the order of society. He says, "Le temps assez souvent a rendu légitime/ Ce qui semblait d'abord ne se pouvoir sans crime [...] Cet hymen différé ne rompt point une loi/ Qui sans marquer de temps, lui destine ta foi" (V, 7, 1813-1814; 1819-1820). In this sense, the imposed waiting becomes a temporality that normalizes, that assuages the pain of loss and establishes a palliative of forgiveness.

The pamphlet wars attacked Corneille's so-called plagiarism, launching debates about the nature of authorial creativity and invention; others critiqued the lack of *vraisemblance*, and still others mocked Corneille's own vain character-- and, most significantly, the inability for Corneille to adhere to the unity of time. When the Académie Française intervened in the matter, publishing the "official" judgment on the piece, the rhetoric condemning Corneille's divergence from the unity of time is strong:

Objection que fait l'Observateur en suite nous semble tres-considerable. Car un des principaux preceptes de la Poesie imitatrice, est de ne se point charger de tant de matieres qu'elles ne laissent pas le moyen d'employer les ornemens qui luy son necessaires, & de donner à l'action qu'elle se propose d'imiter toute l'estendüe qu'elle doit avoir. Et certes l'Authour ne peut nier icy que l'Art luy ait manqué, lors qu'il a compris tant d'actions remarquables dans l'espace de vingt-quatre heures, & qu'il n'a peu autrement fournir les cinq Actes de sa Piece qu'en

entassant tant de choses l'une sur l'autre en si peu de temps... en cecy, il ne s'agit pas simplement d'assembler plusieurs aventures diverses & grandes en un si petit espace de temps, mais de faire entrer dans un mesme esprit. & dans moins de vingt-quatre heures, deux pensées si opposées l'une à l'autre, comme sont pour la poursuite de la mort d'un Pere, & le consentement d'espouser son meurtrier (955-956)<sup>25</sup>

On the one hand it seems that Corneille was being censured merely for overstuffing his drama with too many events. But one could equally ask the question, was it really so terrible to exceed the twenty-four hour time limit? Or could it be that violating the limit symbolized another kind of affront to power? The rules themselves, it seems, were not merely arbitrary constraints.

Katherine Ibbett notes that “From the 1630s on, when Chapelain, who was one of Richelieu’s favorites at the new Académie, began to insist that rules were necessary in order to gain theatrical perfection, the body of work on the *règles* had gathered pace... La Mesnardière’s *Poétique* of 1640, commissioned by Richelieu, furthered the political import of the *Sentiments* by promoting the new and regular French tragedy as a vehicle for the newly regular French state” (141). The necessity to adhere to such (politicized) rules became more and more crucial.

The extent that this quarrel gripped the country is impressive, but perhaps what is more significant is, as Murray notes, the ways that Richelieu deftly mastered and orchestrated the national attention to representation, power, and legitimation, all behind-the-scenes. The main “actors” of the *Le Cid* quarrel were extremely vehement and prolific in their attacks and

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<sup>25</sup> “The objection of the observer seems quite serious. For one of the principle precepts of imitative poetry is not to overburden the work with so many subjects that there is not a way to use modes of expression that are necessary, and to give to the action that the play depicts sufficient time to be fully expressed. And certainly the Author here can no deny that he lacks Art (artistry), for he has compressed far too many exceptional actions in the space of twenty-four hours, and that he can not otherwise give enough time to the five Acts of his play unless he crams in too many things one after another in so short a time. In this, it is not merely a matter of bringing together so many diverse and dramatic adventures in such a short amount of time, but rather to juxtapose, in one mind, and in less than twenty four hours, two thoughts that are so opposed to one another, such as the aftermath of a death of a Father, and the consent to wed the murderer.”

defenses. Indeed, Jean-Marc Civardi's tome collecting all of the letters, documents and pamphlets related to the quarrel (*La Querelle du Cid: édition critique intégrale*) stands at an impressive 1200 pages. Murray argues, however, that the quarrellers' main goal was not to "win" the debate, but rather to gain Richelieu's favor or to defer to his opinion. Murray writes,

The extent of Richelieu's influence over the poetic conventions of the public stage is well documented by the dispute concerning *Le Cid*. Although Richelieu did not openly express his exact position in the debate regarding *Le Cid's* verisimilitude and unity of time, the texts documenting the controversy consistently display wide-spread deference to the cardinal's judgment. Lancaster reports that Corneille cooperated with the Académie Française's review of *Le Cid* only after learning the Richelieu wished the matter to be handled by the Académie (115).

This situation of political deference and control is replicated in the play itself, insofar as the characters continually defer to the sovereign, seeking to restore order and to receive glory through Don Fernand alone. Chimène begs him for vengeance and Don Diegue and Le Comte (the two fathers) quarrel and insult each other because they each seek favoritism in the eyes of the king. Thus both meta-theatrically and intradiegetically, what appeared to be interpersonal relations and disputes were actually indebted to and directed toward the gaze of a higher authority.

The seventeenth century sense and need for such an aesthetic constraint (the unity of time) might be linked to temporality's relationship to rite. Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* advanced the relation between the King's body and the analogies that propagate the Body of Christ-- in the idea that the king's body mortal, as a translation of the material "corpus naturale" of the Eucharist, had to be "sacrificed" in order to attain the transcendence of the emergence of the body politic (itself a translation of the *corpus mysticum*). Whether in Henry III's vision of

himself as appointed by God or even Louis XIV's nickname (Louis-Dieudonné), the relationship between royalty and the sacred was not merely a political instrument, but an integral part of seventeenth century governance. Jean Marie Apostolidès reads the theatrical unities as an integral part of the ways that theater replaced (and displaced) ordinary sacrificial and sacred-making kingly rites.<sup>26</sup> Apostolidès argues that it is tragedy in particular that becomes the site of such “sacrifice” in the seventeenth century political theater:

Elle [la tragédie] est le spectacle du sacrifice originel que le monarque n'accomplit plus parce que les institutions ont pris la place des rites et que le roi est devenu un gestionnaire qui agit dans la longue durée. En la personne du prince, le roi machiniste, c'est-à-dire organisateur de l'État et metteur en scène des fêtes de cour, s'oppose au roi sacrifié, victime originellement désignée dans les sociétés ne possédant pas de système judiciaire. A cause de ses caractéristiques esthétiques, de son essence, le théâtre est simulacre d'action, mais il reste action, *drama*. En ce sens, nous ne devons pas interpréter les règles d'unité du poème dramatique

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<sup>26</sup> The ritual-sacred aspect of theater also emerged as a site of producing sexual ideologies and norms. While Henry III's 'mignons' were more or less tolerated in his youth, as he took on the kingship, Katherine Crawford argues, his enemies were bent on painting him as an unvirile, and therefore emasculated, unfit to rule because incapable of producing an heir:

As Henry wended his way home in the company of the gentlemen companions who had shared his 'exile' (as he called it), Henry's brother, Alençon, agitated for a larger role in governance [...] One strategy adopted by the Malcontents was to cast aspersions on Henry's masculinity. To counter their charges, Henry chose to combine his coronation (*sacre*) with his marriage. In the eyes of contemporaries, both the *sacre* and the marriage ceremonies conferred special sorts of masculine authority. The *sacre* made Henry “the father of his people,” and marriage gave him (as it did other men) a wide range of legal and social powers as husband and father. Combining both ceremonies enabled Henry to assert his virility. (517)

While the ceremony of the *sacre* was neither precisely theater nor religious sacrifice, what is underlined here is the importance of spectacle in securing both normative gender and sexual identity as well as royal authority. The performance of virility (in the marriage ceremony) affirms and enables the confirmation of Henry as King. At the same time, what Crawford does not underscore is that there is a type of sacrifice happening here: the sacrifice of Henry's former life, among his “gentlemen companions,” in exchange for aligning himself with expectations of marriage and heir-producing. Whether or not these “mignons” could be considered proto-queer in some sense, Henry's attachment to them was seen as detrimental. And therefore the loss of these companions, who had shared time with him out of the country (and therefore off the “grid” of national/royal time), stands as what Butler might call an ungrievable loss-- a loss that does not get to be properly marked.

comme une contrainte arbitraire imposée aux auteurs par quelques pédants mais bien plutôt comme un ensemble de recettes, connues et admises de tous, qui visent à renforcer l'aspect "acte" du cérémonial. Ce qui se passe sur scène ne se déroule pas seulement au présent, mais en présence des spectateurs : le temps du spectacle vise à recouvrir le temps intime du spectateur. (47) <sup>27</sup>

In this sense, the theatrical unities, including and especially the unity of time, makes possible the performative conditions that constitute an "act," be it the performative effect of an allegorized sacrifice or the act of the Eucharist. Such a conflation of the sacred and political may partially explain why tempers flared in reaction to the careful structures that were in place that enabled such an "act" and rites to happen.

The theatrical unities also altered a certain sense of temporality and history. Anne Ubersfeld considers the unity of time to be a "coupe nécessaire et brutale dans le temps historique, prive les rapports humains (socio-historiques) de tout développement, de tout processus. Le théâtre classique devient, par le biais de l'unité de temps, un acte instantané, excluant la durée indéfinie des conflits, comme la récurrence et le retour des déterminations psychiques" (Ubersfeld 153).<sup>28</sup> In this interpretation, the unity of time is not just a critical foundation enabling the act/ event of sacrifice. It is, itself, the act at hand--if Apostolides associates the rite of the theater as a type of re-interpretation of the sacrifice of the sovereign, we also have the theater here as an allegory of the sacrifice of time, the movement from a nebulous

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<sup>27</sup> "Tragedy is the original spectacle of sacrifice that the monarch no longer enacts because institutions have taken the place of rites and the king has become an administrator who oversees over time. The person of the price, the machinist king, that is to say the organizer of the State and the director of the festivities in the court, can be counterposed to the sacrificed king, the victim originally marked in societies which lacked judiciary systems. Because of its aesthetic characteristics, its essence, theatre is the simulacrum of action, but it remains action, *drama*. In this sense, we shouldn't interpret the rules of the unities of dramatic writing as an arbitrary constraint imposed on authors by a few pedants, but rather as an ensemble of formulae, accepted and known by all, which aim to reinforce the "act" quality of the ceremony."

<sup>28</sup> "a necessary and brutal cut in historical time, stripping human relations (socio historical) of all development, of all process. Classical theatre becomes, through the unity of time, an instantaneous act, excluding the indefinite duration of conflicts, like the recurrence and the return of psychic determination" (128)

(agrarian, unmeasured and unmeasurable) temporality to one that became “ceaselessly impelled” by a proliferation of timekeeping devices, temporally-linked priorities and chronobiopolitical conditioning and monitoring. Thus, the unity of time is itself a sacrificial cut, marking a division from a historical time that could progress normally in coherent narrative sense. In the separation enabled by the unity of time, it puts forth another type of unified temporality, or a microcosm world in which the temporality could deviate (in slownesses and fastnesses) that allow the possibility of inarticulate erotics.

Going back to the outrage over *Le Cid's* exceeding the limits of the temporal unity, we see now why the Académie reacted so strongly to the violations of laws. “Le Poëte voulant que ce Poëme finist heureusement, pour suivre les regles de la Tragicomedie, fait encore en cet endroit que Chimene foule aux pieds celles que la Nature a establies, & dont le mespris & la transgression doivent donner de l'horreur aux ignorants & aux habiles” (997).<sup>29</sup> What is equally surprising, though is that the main source of this vitriol is directed against Chimène, and the ways that she dashes the so-called laws of Nature to the ground. At the same time, it is not clear if the transgression is Corneille's error (for “forcing” too many things into a small window of time) or if “le mespris et la transgression” refers instead of Chimène's decision to remarry. And here I think that the Académie is accusing Chimène of an unseemly velocity-- a haste that appears vulgar and inappropriate, a readiness to marry the murderer of her father. At the same time, Chimène's velocity, choosing to marry Rodrigue, but only after a year's delay, performs a strange admixture of rushing (forgiving/loving her father's murderer “too soon”) and slowness (normally a play that ends in marriage would culminate in the happy occasion, not the deferred promise of the nuptials). Her choice creates both an aberrant rush and an unsatisfying stalling.

I would argue that what has been read as disgust-inducing (“doivent donner de l'horreur”)

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<sup>29</sup> “The poet wants this Poem to finish happily, to follow the rules of the Tragicomedy, here makes Chimène trample on all of the rules that Nature has established, and whose disdain and transgression ought to shock the ignorant as well as the skilled.”

actually does adequately map the mixed emotions that Chimène might feel: the revulsion to be wedded to her father's murderer, the still-lingering sentiments of love, the erotics of Rodrigue's valorous exploits and display of virility, and the temporality of mourning and loss. Such a combination of “fastnesses” and “slownesses” could well produce this hybrid time that Chimène enacts, a personal time that is flagged as aberrant from the expectations and norms of the unity of time and its ideological import.

A similar rhetoric about violating the laws of nature is used by Claude LeBrun de La Rochette, a lawyer from Lyon, when he writes on sodomy. We recall that in the seventeenth century sodomy comprised a wide range of nonreproductive sexual acts. Le Brun writes, “And, in truth, it is rightly called the sin against nature, considering that other iniquities, such as fornication, adultery, rape are either in conformity with nature or derived from natural (albeit contrary to reason) instinct. But this one, trampling the laws of nature underfoot, going madly beyond its bounds, attacks it, confounds it, and violates it completely”(15). Going outside the bounds of nature, here, is depicted as a far worse crime than pushing natural logic/instincts/desires to their breaking point. Curiously, many of the same words that the lawyer uses to denigrate sodomy are the same terms that the Académie Française draws upon to attack Chimène's haste to agree to marry her father's murderer: throwing the laws of Nature to the ground, trampling them, and going beyond (transgressing) reason. Whether or not the Académie sensed the “sodomitical” implications for these frictional velocities, what is clear is that *Le Cid* depicts erotic temporalities that challenge and defy the emerging chronobiopolitics and the rules that subtended it.

### ***III. Turning Away from the Temporal Turn: Queer Theory's Anticipations and Agnosticisms***

Far from being solely a recent “turn” in queer theory, the relationship between gender or sexual identity and temporality has roots in feminist theory. In Julia Kristeva's 1979 “Woman's Time” she argues that “woman” has typically come to be associated with cyclical, non-progressive time, a temporality that stands in contrast to “masculine” forms of progress, production, nation-building and history (192). This gendered characterization of temporality, according to Kristeva, has served as the justification for female discrimination (reducing women's voices to “merely” hysterical or biologically/primitively rooted) as well as the galvanizing point of feminist struggle (the desire to “enter” into history). Kristeva's seminal essay illuminated the ways that temporal ideologies could influence gender and sexual dynamics.

Extending this notion that temporality, far from being a mere form of measurement, or even a tool in the promulgation of a national culture, the so-called temporal turn in queer theory emphasizes the ways that orientations toward the past or toward the future are never neutral, but are instead conditioned by certain socio-cultural norms. The queer temporal turn can be roughly divided into two camps: one, invested in contesting future-driven ideologies and another celebrating the unexpected pleasures of the past. I will quickly delineate these two perspectives before demonstrating how I believe an analytic of “velocity” can intervene in the blind spots of some of these queer temporal theories as well as advance an alternate methodology for considering the “chronobiopolitics” of the seventeenth century.

The temporal turn away from futurity has been largely galvanized by Lee Edelman's 2004 polemic *No Future*. taking a stand against “reproductive futurity,” which he defines as an unquestioned privileging of the future as a marker of social good, and the site of the fantasy of “meaning's eventual realization” (4). Elsewhere, Edelman has critiqued a sense of “normative” temporality as defined, conditioned by, and predicated on the trope of the child:

This compulsion to produce the ‘after’ of sex through the naturalization of history



expresses itself in two very different, though not unrelated, ways: first, in the privileging of reproduction as the after-event of sex — an after-event whose potential, implicit in the ideal, if not always in the reality, of heterogenital coupling, imbues straight sex with its meaning as the agent of historical continuity; second, in the conflation of meaning itself with those forms of historical knowing whose authority depends on the fetishistic prestige of origin, genealogy, telos (“Ever After,” 470).

As Edelman maintains, this fantasy of the “after” is precisely that — a fantasy— but it is a fantasy so attractive that it purchases our libidinal investment in the (never-ending) pursuit of the illusion of Symbolic fulfillment at the cost of the strict disavowal of any type of negativity, especially the negativity which would reveal the Symbolic's promissory note of *l'avenir* to always be *à venir*. In this similar vein, Heather Love's *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* also moves against affects of positive progress by lingering over the “backward” affects: “messy, uncomfortable realities of identity... looking to the feelings of pain, shame, self-hatred and loss” (“Queers”185). Similarly, Judith Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* proposes that failure gives us the opportunity “to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (3). Such “toxic positivity,” the price of the investment in what Edelman terms “reproductive futurity” means that negative feelings are overlooked, dismissed, and erased by a societal injunction to “look ahead” or “think of the future.”

If we continue to nuance an unquestioned investment in ideologies of the future (generated by a chronobiopolitics that privileges reproduction and norms of intimacies), might we also need to question whether triumphant teleology necessarily has to take up the negative? Consider an apophatically inclined polemic that defines itself by what it is *not*-- not-positive,

not-futural, what space does such rejection leave to pay attention to myriad other components of Love's "uncomfortable realities of identity" that may not even announce themselves as rallying against normative future-invested affects. What about the inarticulate erotics that cannot even cohere to announce the "not"? A second problem with the antifutural turn in queer studies is that it slides between two economies of sequence: the sequence of reproduction is conflated with the sequence of normativized temporalities, the two held together by nothing more than an analogizing link to secure the chain. Even though Edelman clearly maps out two kinds of normativities invested in the "after," he does not demonstrate how one gets from the reproductive "after-event of sex" to the "fetishistic prestige of...telos" other than through what Valerie Traub has critiqued as weak associative logic.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to the antifuturity movement, the second form of this temporal turn in queer theory is one generated from "queer touches of time" as advanced by Carolyn Dinshaw as well as Beth Freeman, Carla Freccero and others. Here, instead of recovering and recuperating the negative affects such as failure, shame or miserly greed in order to be used as ammunition against a saccharine-sweet (optimistic) future being force-fed to us, these other theorists argue instead for a turn to the past. This involves an attention to bodily sensations, unexpected pleasures, and wayward fantasies in the service of valorizing nostalgia and outdatedness as a critical means of engaging with the study of past sexualities.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, the queer temporal

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<sup>30</sup> Traub's article "The New Unhistoricism" argues that "Goldberg, Menon, Freccero's 'rejection of 'straight temporality' forges a tight metonymic chain among the alleged operations of sex, time and history. They link these operations through rhetorical maneuvers whereby difference and sameness are constellated with concepts that stand in as near cognates: not only hetero and homo but also difference and similitude, distance and proximity, multiplicity and self-identity, change and stasis, disidentification and mimesis. These close cognates allude to both abstract theoretical principles and specific material realities. Yet drawn as they are from different epistemological registers—psychic, social, temporal, formal, historiographic— and abstracted from contexts of space or time, they are rhetorically deployed to cross seamlessly from one conceptual domain to another" (30). I agree with Traub's analysis and I would also add that while formal qualities of a text can extend and reflect underlying queer and affective dynamics—and I do use these in my own approach-- it can be both risky and sloppy to use the shortcut of a one-to-one correspondence between textual samenesses and same-sex love, for example.

<sup>31</sup> Dinshaw writes: "A desire for some kind of contact with the past, for a touch across time, across death, turns out to have been a constant preoccupation, variously formulated, in the long and varied career of Barthes [...] But just to

engagement shifts from the rallying cry to “poke holes” into overinvestment in futurity (destabilizing the neutral linear temporal trajectory), and becomes more of a reading analytic. One does not need to apologize for the temporal distance between the past and the present by overly excusing an “anachronistic” application of queer theory. Rather, engaging with this temporal distance itself produces and generates its own range of affects. Coviello summarizes:

One might think instead of the overlapping of historical frames more in the terms suggested by Freeman’s erotohistoriography—that is, as a kind of friction, an always-erotic rubbing together of similarities and differences. Such an approach neither ontologizes difference—there is in it no refusal of what Carolyn Dinshaw calls the “touch across time” that queer work can enable—nor elides the fact of specific differences, themselves only loosely grasped in their abstraction as *différance* (14).

This pleasure-infused methodology seems to (over)correct for a historicist approach that would apply what Sedgwick terms a “paranoid” hermeneutic to rescue queer bodies, selves and identities from the prison of a repressive past.

What Freeman has coined “erotohistoriography” also responds to the charge that queer theory has forgotten actual sex, with actual bodies. In this sense, what is queer (sexual/sensual/erotic) becomes reaching out to other bodies, selves, and identities, even and especially if they are embedded in the past. Freeman writes:

Erotohistoriography is distinct from the desire for a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times. Erotohistoriography does not write the lost object

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imagine bodies extending across boundaries of space and time, as both Barthes and Foucault do (explicitly or implicitly here), is to imagine bodies that undo conventional or ordinary historical conceptions. To imagine such bodies making contact is to put a new spin on the notion of contingent history: think of the etymology of ‘contingent,’ from the Latin *to touch* [...] Such deep imagining is crucial for thinking sex and sexuality different. It suggests a use of history for unraveling assumptions about the ways bodies exist in place and time, assumptions about how they are produced and constrained” (“Touching on the Past” 70)

into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present itself as hybrid. And it uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter. Erotohistoriography admits that contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding. It sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations (*TB* 95)

This “forgetting” of sex is one concern of the editors of the volume *After Sex*: that queer theory is, in a sense, “post” sex, and sexual acts, and sexed bodies, and has moved to an understanding of queer that is expansively encompassing. Freccero suggests that “theoretically anything can queer something, and anything, given a certain odd twist, can become queer” (“Queer Times,” 485).<sup>32</sup> While such an expansive sense of “queer” allows for an opening up of what could count as “erotic,” outside of a purely identitarian approach, it also risks naming anything and everything as “queer” and thus diluting queer's critical capacities. While my research is invested in paying close attention to the possibilities of desire that are “unlike any pre-existing whole,” this focus on openness pays close attention to the historical situatedness of these “unlike” possibilities rather than overeagerly giving “anything... a certain odd twist” (Freccero, “Queer Times, 485). Just as the antifuturity theories connect via a sliding analogy the sequence and chronology of heteronormative reproduction and temporality at large, in erotohistoriography, that which is considered erotic, or pleasurable, might be critiqued as being equally loosely analogized and linked, from the pleasures of sex to the pleasures of the historian. Such a broad notion of

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<sup>32</sup> Freccero writes, “My work has been mostly about advocating for queer’s verbally and adjectivally unsettling force against claims for this definition stability, so theoretically anything can queer something, and anything, given a certain odd twist, can become queer [...] Queer, to me, is the name of a certain unsettling in relation to heteronormativity. It can be thought of as, and is akin to, the ‘trace’ in the field of sexuality. Thus *créolité*, *hybridity*, *mestizaje*, *métissage*, *spectrality*, *the trace* and *the uncanny* all find themselves in certain ways allied with *queer* as terms that do the work of *différence* in relation to the identitarian inflections they carry” (“Queer Times” 485).

pleasure risks forgetting the specificity of sexual acts and identities in the pursuit of an ever-expanding vision of what “queer” can be. While I believe this elaboration of queer’s destabilizing potential is exciting, I also choose to follow a more critical, narrow definition of queer in my project. I am most interested in considering queer as that which intervenes in the normativizing disciplining of chronobiopolitics.

Although there are many ways that this “temporal turn” in queer theory has generated varied approaches and methodologies, I would contend that both of these approaches (the antifutural and the erotohistoriographic) are attempting to respond to a challenge raised by Eve Sedgwick in *Touching Feeling*: how to get away from the dualistic thinking occasioned by Foucault's repressive hypothesis? And how to consider the temporality of sexuality in ways other than the “supercession” model predicated on what she calls the Great Paradigm Shift? This supposed epistemic and ontological break is attributed to the famous quotation by Foucault, that after 1870 “Le sodomite était un relaps, l’homosexuel est maintenant une espèce” (56).<sup>33</sup> This shift both enables and erases: it anchors a modern (minoritized) aberrance in an evolving continuum, giving the impression of a modern homosexuality “as we know it today” (44) to stand as a teleologic end point of this paradigm shift. What such a narrative erases are all of the contingent, intervening and unknown other possible modes of sexual and gender expression. The tendency of supercession that Sedgwick critiques is a paradigm in which one model of sexuality “replaces” the previous one, which “drops out” or disappears. These modes of analysis only serve to reinforce a “shift” or a turning point as a main structuring device of an overarching episteme. The “shift” occasions a range of attitudes and affects toward the future (liberatory) or the past (prohibition and repression) that allow or disallow certain types of intimacies and desires to flourish or falter.

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<sup>33</sup> “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (48)

As long as we hold onto to this concept of a paradigm shift and cling to a fantasy moment of a keystone moment of legibility and coherence, we continue to erase alternate possibilities of sexual articulation. And I will risk a brief digression here to consider the interplay between erasure and forced legibility that “inarticulacy” can negotiate. Leaving aside the question of when or how “sexual identity” emerges, the term, or concept of “sexual identity” itself is predicated on a sense of cohesiveness that is only figurative, or false, or what Judith Butler would term “catachrestic.” And here I would extend Butler's assertions about the “feminine” to “sexual identity” as a false-figuration for something that really is a “nothing”-- the term groups together an inchoate mass of fantasized oppositions, forms only possible differentially, and a network of affective, gendered, erotic, emotional, corporeal possibilities under a unified term that erases the internal heterogeneities.

But what work does the gesture of “grouping together” perform? What desires for legibility and coherence does it manifest? Butler takes up Irigaray's argument that feminist philosophers who argue against woman as mere “matter” (lumpen clay to be “shaped” by the reason of man, or else the feminine linked to the mere matter of bodily rhythms and procreation) are actually missing the point. Once “woman” has been conscripted into the binary of matter vs metaphysics, the game has already been lost, since the very *terms* of the binary (the word, concept and category of “matter”) has already been predetermined by a phallogocentric economy. Because of this predetermined foreclosure, “No wonder then that the feminine appears for Irigaray only in *catachresis*, that is, in those figures that function improperly, as an improper transfer of sense, the use of a proper name to describe that which does not properly belong to it, and that return to haunt and coopt the very language from which the feminine is excluded” (Butler 37).

To turn back to the play *Iphis et Iante*, the terms under which Iphis would have to declare

herself as really a “woman” or “actually not a man” are already predetermined for her. But even when one can diagnose her as truly a “woman” that gendered term already inadequately marks a network of varied experiences – social position, childhood history and spoushood-- that does not, and can never, fully add up to “woman” for Iphis. And in the act of grouping, that Butler terms “catachrestic,” this term is made to be made intelligible, without having any say in the very conditions (the “phallogocentrism”) that constitute the ground of intelligibility.<sup>34</sup>

The repressive hypothesis too has the effect of creating a temporal shift, between a before of repression and an after of liberation. Although she does not specifically root it in a temporalized narrative, the either/or binary is also what Sedgwick has to critique about the repressive hypothesis:

I knew what I wanted from it: some ways of understanding human desire that might be quite to the side of prohibition and repression, that might hence be structured quite differently from the heroic, ‘liberatory,’ inescapably dualistic righteousness of hunting down and attacking prohibition/repression in all its chameleonic guises. If the critical analysis of repression is itself inseparable from repression, then surely to think with any efficacy has to be to think in some distinctly different way (*TF*, 10).

In this manner, although the “temporal turn” in queer theory is concerned with “poking holes” in a contemporary “toxic positivity” or else the erotohistoriographic immerses itself in unforeseen and often forgettable pleasures of reaching to the past, both advance approaches to thinking about queer sexuality in time, or across time, still ring of some “liberatory” gesture.

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<sup>34</sup> Butler continues, “The feminine, to use a catachresis, is domesticated and rendered unintelligible within a phallogocentrism that claims to be self-constituting. Disavowed, the remnant of the feminine survives as the *inscriptional space* of that phallogocentrism, the specular surface which receives the marks of a masculine signifying act only to give back a (false) reflection and guarantee of phallogocentric self-sufficiency, without making any contribution of its own” (39) This position of being limited to the “non-contribution” and “unintelligible” also points to the stakes of inarticulate erotics insofar as it offers a critical stance on the very domain of the intelligible.

The pre- and post- shift marking a galvanizing point of “origin” structures time in such a way that a linear notion of progression and sequence is generated, lining up “protogay” sentiments as precedents to modern “queer” identities. Such sequence creates a present-day (catachrestic) perspective of a modern gay identity that is anachronistically put into similitude with or in contrast to the earlier “protogay” sentiments, or else scholarly anxieties accompanying any definitive declaration of what “they” felt/experienced/desired “back then.” Coviello draws upon a useful shorthand analysis of these gestures: “Depending on the critic’s inclination this ‘knowledge’ tends to cause the moments in quest to be regarded in one of two ways: either with pleased certainty (“*This* is what’s really happening here”) or committed epistemological skepticism (“It is impossible now to say what, if anything, is happening here”). We can term these two options, for the sake of brevity, the anticipatory and the agnostic approach” (Coviello 13). The “anticipatory” would diagnose something like Iphis and Iante's intimacy as pre-lesbian, reading their intimacy as the nascent stages of what “would become” lesbianism, even though such an identity and even a sexual act did not necessarily exist in the seventeenth century.

Coviello writes of the downfalls of the anticipatory:

But what if the sexual possibilities dreamed into being in the era before sexology proved not to be amenable to the forms of sexual subjectivity and sexual specificity that would, in fact, arrive? What if the queerness any of these authors proposed, or yearned after, or otherwise intuited, fell somehow aslant of the languages of sexual specificity that were to come, with a newly legible homosexual identity in tow? What if what we find are not uncanny foretellings but, as Molly McGarry has it, ghosts of futures past? (15)

This is to say that even our expectations of what “sexuality” should look like (alloerotic, monogamous, contingent on the other person's gender and biological sex) can not even begin to



account for the types of eroticisms that might have been anticipated or yearned-for in that time.

The agnostic method would be something like teasing out the ambiguities of not being able to know if the wedding night act could be considered lesbian, the impossibility of knowing if Iphis could be even understood as transgender. Here this concept of agnosticism adds one more aspects of inarticulacy that I draw upon to enrich my concept of inarticulate erotics. We have previously mentioned that the inarticulate, as per Mazzio's analysis, signals both a departure from dominant modes of discourse as well as marks an affective “outsider” position that has failed to be or resists being properly inscribed in certain communities. Coviello writes that agnostic readings “emphasize the intractable illegibility of the past—those that, we might say, side with James’s point about the unspeakability of the dynamics of intimate life from across the divide of modern sexual categories—have the virtue of a certain refusal. They resist, in the first instance, the impulse to erode the distinctiveness of the past by rendering it in the terms and taxonomies of the present” (13). At the same time, overly valorizing the unspeakability, or the inarticulacy as an unbreachable barrier behind which the past's sexualities hide beyond our grasp also has its weaknesses.

Treating the past agnostically risks “understress[ing] movements *toward* a consolidation of sexual ideology that were already afoot, and that could be felt in their encroachment from a number of vantages [...] To regard the presexological past too strictly as a site of Jamesian unspeakability and illegibility, in other words, is to miss the degree to which the emergence of modern sexuality was a movement, a slowly unfolding process, rather than an event, (Coviello 14). The erotohistoriographic is not the solution to the agnostic. The approach of embracing and reaching out to the “queer touches” of the past and embracing the “beautiful and weird” (Freeman, *TB*, 61) possibilities means that one could risk overlooking the specific structures and movements that were beginning to shape and nudge such nebulous desires into form.

Likewise, the antifutural project is not the solution to the teleologic pitfalls of the anticipatory approach. It might seem that rallying against the future, poking holes in the smoothness of linear progress, or disrupting the sequence of the supercessional model might be the answer to the question of how to rectify an approach overeager to find nascent incarnations of modernity in the past. So between anticipatory and agnostic, antifutural and erotohistoriographic, the dualisms of the Great Paradigm Shift and the Repressive Hypothesis-- what ways do we have out of this binary approach, juggling multiple risks and downfalls of one queer approach over another?

#### ***IV. Velocity and Ephemerality: A New Approach to Queer Studies***

My methodology is to treat chronobiopolitics as a sieve. In other words, it acts as an apparatus akin to blinkers that makes certain sexualities and intimacies legible and others not possible. The dividing line between articulable and inarticulable is fashioned by gender and sexual norms, norms that elicit certain paces, speeds and sequences. For example there is a forward-moving temporal direction, as well as a speed, that follows from the marriage vows in *Iphis et Iante*. After the ceremony, it is expected that the vows will be consummated, and going “backwards” or retracting, would be unthinkable. Delay, as well, is inconceivable, or goes undernoticed—no one expects that delay would inscribe or signal a type of gender or sexual intimacy in and of itself. Instead, delay stands as a sticking point, or a hurdle to be surmounted. Its insignificance, or the annoyance it causes, cloaks its enunciative properties. One anticipates and hopes that the marriage night will rush along, to fulfill the contract bringing together the two lovers, and delay is the *mere* snag in the forward thrust of the action, and can rarely point to, or

even “be” the “real” eroticism at hand.<sup>35</sup>

This project contends that *speed* itself has gone undernoticed as a component of the temporal disciplining of queer sexualities. According to Annamarie Jagose, queer temporality is “a mode of inhabiting time that is attentive to the recursive eddies and back-to-the-future loops that often pass undetected or uncherished beneath the official narrations of the linear sequence that is taken to structure normative life” (158). Jagose's assertion here is that time can be folded upon itself, but such a consideration of queer temporality only takes into account the directionality (orientation to the past or future) and not necessarily the pace at which events take place. Clocks, sovereign daily rhythms, or the timing of a spectacle all shape and measure the rate, or pace at which lives can and “ought” to be lived. Speed itself is one under-noticed means of disciplining certain vectors of sexual experience and intimacy. Jasbir Puar writes in *Terrorist Assemblages*:

Oliver Sacks, who has brilliantly written on the “wild range of speeds” experienced by the human brain. In his exposition he details other ways of measuring time outside of the past-present-future triad and their scrambling, as an intensification or de-intensification of the experience of time, as one of “registering larger or smaller numbers of events in a given time.” Relationships between speed (how fast or slow time feels), pace (the tempo, rate, or intervals of registering events within time), and duration (the length of time within which these events are registered) alter and are altered (xxi).

Sacks has researched and examined the effects of drugs on those with Alzheimer’s disease.

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<sup>35</sup>This legibility of temporality and its relation to non-normative erotics might also be located in masochism, insofar as Deleuze asserts that waiting and suspense are the key characteristics of masochism. However, arguably, everything about masochism, from the future-oriented nature of the contract component to the incitement of desire enabled by such waiting, is in fact related to temporality. Where masochism diverges from the inarticulable erotics at hand here is that such temporality is dramatized and set center stage. While this would furnish more than enough material for another study, what interests me here are the ephemeral moments of temporal control, drag, and haste, moments that exist only fleetingly so as to challenge the hegemony of the given, graspable and dramatized.

Although the medications that these patients take exaggerate and dramatize the heterogeneity of velocities possible in the present, Sacks's temporally diverse model nevertheless illustrates the ways that the diversity of *lived* experiences, the tempo of decision making, reacting, speaking, or moving tends to be sharply divided along a normalized or non-normalized axis. To give one example, Sacks writes:

William Gooddy, a neurologist in England, remarks at the beginning of his book *Time and the Nervous System*. An observer may note, he says, how slowed a Parkinsonian's movements are, but "the patient will say, 'My own movements . . . seem normal unless I see how long they take by looking at a clock. The clock on the wall of the ward seems to be going exceptionally fast.'"

Gooddy refers here to "personal" time, as contrasted with "clock" time, and the extent to which personal time departs from clock time may become almost unbridgeable with the extreme bradykinesia common in post-encephalitic Parkinsonism. I would often see my patient Miron V. sitting in the hallway outside my office. He would appear motionless, with his right arm often lifted, sometimes an inch or two above his knee, sometimes near his face. When I questioned him about these frozen poses, he asked indignantly, "What do you mean, 'frozen poses'? I was just wiping my nose." (62)

Although the mundane example of "wiping one's nose" is chortle-worthy, the anecdote illustrates the illegibilities and inarticulacies engendered from the unbreachable division between personal time and clock time. I would argue that analogously there are occasionally certain kinds of inarticulate erotics that take place according to "personal time" and that fail to register within clock time. Just as Miron V is deeply committed to a gesture that takes place within his own "personal" time, these "other" queer erotics are embedded in another temporal speed. And this

“other” temporal pace, its particular slowness or fastness, need not be diagnosed along the anticipatory or the agnostic-- the queered time is not one that will eventually (anticipatorially) *become* the tempo of the present, nor is it a situation that we just can't know about or ever read. Such differences between personal and clock time does not mark a departure or deviance that signals distress. Miron's reality is not twisted or damaged in any way, it is just his own normal, mundane tempo and gesture, just as the inarticulate erotics are not inarticulate because there are deviant erotics-- they do not signal themselves through stammering, faltering, etc. What is at play is an intentionality that we cannot see or understand given the assumed universality of clock time.

While many queer theorists have focused on the ethics and critical importance of one's orientation to the future or to the past, some also neglect that there are multiple and plural *speeds* or paces of life at hand. This is what the contribution of velocity can add to queer methodology: to loosen the exclusivity of thinking of queer temporality only through an “orientation” to the past or to the future and to pay closer attention to the varied velocities of life. Such a challenge to temporal orientation helps us re-consider the nature of “orientation” more broadly, including, I would suggest, the nature of sexual orientation. Sara Ahmed suggests, “Emotions involve such affective forms of (re)orientation. It is not just that bodies are moved by the orientations they have; rather, the orientations we have toward others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies[...] Orientations, then, are about the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places” (8). Then, to take velocity as a prime means of investigation means letting go of certain assumptions we have about the fixity (and anchoring/homing possibilities) of orientation and to think of the ways that speeds and divergent paces of life also affect emotions and intimacy. Sacks emphasizes that there is an affective dimension to these plural speeds:

Not just the speed but the quality of movement and thought is altered in tourettism and parkinsonism. The accelerated state tends to be exuberant in invention and fancy, leaping rapidly from one association to the next, carried along by the force of its own impetus. Slowness, in contrast, tends to go with care and caution, a sober and critical stance, which has its uses no less than the "go" of effusion (64).

We tend to denigrate those other (personal) speeds as being recklessly fast or slowly dimwitted, in contrast to the "normal" speeds and tempo of expectations, and especially expectations, sequences and speeds that we associate with certain gender and sexed identities, with certain stereotypes accompanying the tempo of decision making, seduction, and more. Chimène's "haste" in agreeing to wed Rodrigue has previously only been read as "violating" the law of nature. However, it is by letting go of both senses of orientation that the queered velocity comes to light: we have to let go of our expectations that accompany sexual orientation (Chimène's "straightness") or temporal orientation (refusal to proceed toward the future or forget the past in a certain way). Once "orientation" ceases to be the prime hermeneutic, such "haste" can be viewed differently, signaling and merging together a variety of affects (revulsion, mourning, desire) that have no real recourse to proper expression, but also mark a different type of desire.

I would also clarify that I don't mean to bring an exclusively anticipatory or agnostic reading approach to these erotics-- in other words, my argument is not that Iphis is "actually trans" (anticipatory) and that her eroticism takes place in a "slower" time. The point I am making is actually that the speed itself, in the difference between personal time and clock time, can engender its own (secondary) set of enjoyments, pleasures, and affects. Just as the tempos that Sacks describes are accompanied by sentiments "exuberance" or "caution," I am interested in exploring the ways that such speeds engender their own set of affects that can be experienced along the lines of something queer.

As mentioned before, the fixed metricality of temporality was an integral part in Louis XIV's chronobiopolitical manipulation and proliferation. If the seventeenth century saw the advent and the development of the first reliable, personal timepieces, it also stands at a threshold point between metric and nonmetric time-- between the cloaked neutrality of a universalizable hour of a day and the arbitrary and nebulous ways that the temporal units were segmented and experienced. Puar writes:

In proposing what Elizabeth Freeman calls a “deviant chronopolitics,” one that envisions “relations across time and between times” that upturn developmentalist narratives of history, I would add that time must be conjured not only as nonlinear, but also as nonmetric. Manuel De Landa describes metric temporality as that which “take[s] for granted the flow of time already divided into identical instants bearing such close resemblance to one another that the flow may regarded as essentially homogenous.” Nonmetric time deconstructs the naturalization of the administrative units of measurement of the “familiar, divisible, and measurable time of everyday experience” and challenges the assumption that the repetition of these units, these “stable oscillators” at different scales, is “composed of identical instants” (xxi).

Thus what I will consider “queer temporality” as that which stages a critical intervention in the hegemony of metric temporality and the normalized “neutral” clock time that is its byproduct, by putting forth a velocity that may not “make sense” according to normal temporality, much like Miron's extremely slow-motion hand-to-nose gesture. Queer temporality, in my reading, points to ruptures where the personal time intrudes on the seamless “naturalness” of clock and metric time.

The ephemeral quality that I trace is significant because it relieves the pressure to

participate in the world “as is,” an empiric world in which such affection and intimacies, once phenomenally mapped, marked, or monitored, can be appropriated or shut aside. Fleetingness shines a light on the ways non-normative intimacies, attachments, or longings fail to get purchase on any type of enduring discursive structure. The analytic of “ephemeral velocity” in this case underscores the doubled ways (directional and temporal) that such non-normative desire resists the hegemonies of phenomenology<sup>36</sup>.

I borrow this concept of ephemerality from Rei Terada's *Looking Away*. In analysis of Coleridge's notebooks “as a case study of the mind that feels guilty about its discomfort with the coercion of the given and becomes a connoisseur of ephemeral phenomenality in order to manage a discomfort that remains unspeakable” (22), she summarizes and condenses many of the questions that animate the project as a whole: How to trace such “unspeakable” moments, if they are indeed left unsaid? And how are certain emotions (shame/guilt/discomfort) produced by an injunction to adhere to the “given?” This is a “given” world that, I would argue, is aided and made visible by the clear “metrics” of clock time and chrononormativity. If there is a certain unspeakability or inarticulability wrought from these discomforts, it is possible that velocity marks the very site of splitting divergence (from norms of speech as well as from norms of time) in whose cicatrice the very “*question* of identity” arises, to use Sedgwick’s phrase?

Put in another, more dramatized way, Judith Butler writes in “What is Critique?”: “Power

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<sup>36</sup> Terada does not explicitly carry the queer connection throughout her book, but does make the link between the two fields (of ephemeral phenomenology and queer theory) in her introduction. In a sense, my own work is seeking to fill the gap that she hints at but does not bring center stage: “Finally, by reading features of the texts in this book that have often been understood as queer—for instance, the recurrent fear that alienation is caused by bodily difference, and the justifiable intuition that alienation is grounded in some difference—I would like, throughout, to show that the phenomenality/dissatisfaction connection reflects a momentous collision between enlightenment epistemology and queer thought. Reread through this idea, Kant may be seen to observe the collision and arrange terms for its assimilation by philosophy. Attention to the queer strands of the discourse of mere appearance helps to explain the conflict between accepters and dissenters from the given. Historically, it's queer consciousness that has sensed most keenly the moments when fact is ambiguously social or natural, and has had motive and energy to examine and reexamine even those pervasive conditions that seem most natural. In the persistence of the queer mind and body, dissatisfaction “against nature” discerns its own durability and legitimacy. This is a point I won't make in any one place, but neither will it ever be far away” (12).



sets the limits to what a subject can ‘be,’ beyond which it no longer ‘is,’ or it dwells in a domain of suspended ontology. But power seeks to constrain the subject through the force of coercion, and the resistance to coercion consists in the stylization of the self at the limits of established being” (107). So while the force of coercion of phenomenality is minimal, even seamlessly (apparently) neutral, Terada would argue that the expectation of assenting to, or endorsing the phenomenal can be still sensed as a type of coercion. And this opens up the possibility for a divergent subjectivity in the space hollowed out by the shame of not being able to accept the world “as is,” a gap to be sutured by the hijacking potential of inarticulate erotics. This inarticulacy is not one that struggles to take shape but rather plays at the limits of Butler’s “established being” in and through the ‘stylization of the self.’ In the frictions, torsions and detours of discourse that can be made possible, and in the *mere* content that the minimal utterance of inarticulate erotics can produce, we find a possibility akin to Deleuze’s championing of stammering: “to make language stammer... to impose the work of continuous variation on language, on all interior elements of language” (247).

It is for this reason that I take up these ephemeral velocities. Against the standards of “clock time,” the minimalness of ephemeral velocities points *away* from the field of intelligibility by refusing to endure in a matter that could be cited and re-cited. And since velocity is also defined by its direction, this ephemerality, or what Terada calls “looking away”, also points “away” (directionally) from the field of norms of legibility, or the domain of the “as is.” This “awayness,” I would clarify, is not an awayness of marginalization, or outsidership. Rather, it might be thought of as more closely linked to Deleuze’s notion of “becoming minority,” which is a position of potential, disruption and change, by extension of which the minority becomes more powerful than the “majority” or the status quo accepted. He writes,

....minority here denotes the strength of a becoming while majority designates the

power or weakness of a state, of a situation. Here is where theater or art can surge forward with a specific, political function... Theater will surge forward as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness as a universal-becoming. It forges alliances here and there according to the circumstances, following the lines of transformation that exceed theater and take on another form, or else that transform themselves back into theater for another leap (255-256).

Whether we notice it or not, our orientation to the past, present and future is conditioned by a whole set of affects that “naturally” accompany those temporal focal points. For example, when we think about the past, the past as a concept tends to be associated with archive, memory, nostalgia, moving forward, looking back, and more. As a result, the “past” becomes more than just a moment in chronological (historical) time. Instead, it demands and commands a range of behaviors that properly cohere to these accompanying affective expectations. Overall, we can imagine that each temporal “orientation” is likewise accompanied by a whole host of additional emotions and expectations that serve to establish what is considered a “normal” relation to the past, present and future. In this increasingly frozen chrono-normative milieu of the seventeenth century, I argue that ephemeral velocities intervene to relieve the pressure of such affective norms, to allow alternative, even if fleeting, slowing and speeding of intimacies, erotics, and desires.

The three plays I take up in the following three chapters each complicate such “normal” ties to each temporal orientation (the past, the present, and the future), through the multiple and surprising emergences of inarticulate erotics. My dissertation begins with an analysis of Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1642), a play in which the eponymous martyr is “seduced” into the Christian faith by his dear friend Néarque. The pair's “coming out” as Christians shatters pre-

existing anchorings of subjective identity; the normative moorings of blood, lineage, marriage, and kinship are completely undone in favor of an identity that is affectively determined. While literary scholars have typically read this Polyeucte's martyrdom as allegorical of a type of brash heroism that claims a revolutionary future, such an investment in looking toward the future ignores the fleeting affective ties that the men forge between them en route to the conversion. The relationship between the two men wavers between fiercely faithful Christian brotherhood and something more intensely intimate. This detouring desire hinges on the trope of *metalepsis*: a rushed, sliding chain of similitudes (metonyms) in which the analogies of loving God and loving one another become pleasurably confused. Polyeucte and Néarque employ this figure to flee prying gazes while confirming each others' sentiments in surprising ways.

If Polyeucte and Néarque's queered relationality allows for another kind of motor to speed along the plot, moving toward a different kind of futurity, Racine's *Andromaque* (1667), in contrast, illustrates another kind of velocity: one of stasis. Two kinds of inarticulacies collide: one wrought from trauma, in the aftermath of the Trojan war, and one wrought from non-normative desires that lack recourse to expression. In the play, the eponymous widow of Hector is forced to choose between marrying her captor, Pyrrhus, or allowing her son to be executed. *Andromaque's* hesitation to make a decision has often (mis)read as a "bad" relation to the past, mired in obsessive widowhood or poor motherhood. Instead of understanding her behavior as diverging from the (temporally defined) expectations of her gender, I notice the ways that both the traumatic temporality and queer inarticulate erotics actually mutually engender and enable one another. *Andromaque* engages with the "cendres" of her dead husband in an active relationship (dialoguing with him, calling out to the ashes), which points to a divergence from merely being melancholic about her loss. She valorizes ash *qua* ash, in its double status as ruin (testament to the loss) and remainder (the persistent, material remains which enables memory to

endure). The “zero velocity” means that she refuses to “move on” according to normative rubrics of temporality, but also that she insists on pointing directionally “away” to other types of inarticulate desires, touched by trauma, that cannot be fully expressed according to the dominant forms of discourse.

While Andromaque’s delay to accept or decline Pyrrhus’ potentially lifesaving marriage proposal is called “criminelle” by others, delay in Racine’s *Bérénice* (1670) actually opens us an erotic space of a continually-deferred present. Titus, the emperor of Rome, must repudiate his beloved Bérénice because Roman law will not permit an emperor to marry a foreign-born queen. At the same time, Titus’s best friend Antiochus decides to confess a long-smoldering and long-silenced love to Bérénice. Until the moment of Bérénice’s departure, the undecidability of the situation enables strange substitutions and amorous triangulations. Titus’s delays in making the declaration troubles the status of the deictic “now” or the present. Norms as developed by political and sovereignty theories would dictate that the “now” stands as the defining temporal moment of sovereign decision. Titus’s inability to decide and to repudiate his love opens up a temporality that I call “dilatatory.” This is a velocity of circularity and a rejection of sovereign progress and change, one that spirals open with possibility.

Ultimately, in these plays’ presentations of velocities diverging from certain paces and codes of gender behavior as mandated by chronobiopolitics, we can see how such splitting away from temporal expectations allows inarticulate erotics to emerge. These inarticulate erotics—of a close male friendship, of an attachment to an object, or of a triangulated indeterminability, are perhaps not clearly or not fully condensed according to traditional expectations of how desire “ought” to be presented. Nevertheless, these erotics linger and haunt the text according to a “personal” temporality and the particular slownesses and fastnesses of ephemeral velocities. Each play that I take up presents a certain web of “queer velocities” that are at odds with

chrononormative temporality. As such, paying close attention to the plurality of speeds of intimacy shatters a monolithic, unified picture that we might have of a standardized, articulable sexuality. These ephemeral, fleetingly enacted velocities shed light on the ways that such queer desires are both constituted by and erased by chronobiopolitical norms and hegemonies.

## CHAPTER 1

### SEX, SECTS AND THE FUNDAMENTAL CUT IN CORNEILLE'S *POLYECUTE*

#### **I. *Representing a Radical Break***

Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1642) can be thought of as a play about a shattering an old system of identity and heralding a new one—not via a bloody revolution, but rather through one person's self-declared assertion. This is a declaration that makes a radical break with the past—indeed, Néarque tells his friend that he must “Négliger, pour lui plaire, et femme, et biens et rang.” In so doing, the two men gesture toward a different type of futurity, one not founded upon rank or blood, but rather upon desire.

In *Polyeucte*'s conversion to Christianity, the aftereffects of such a reversal are so radical that the other characters begin questioning the nature of origins: how could one person be convinced to give up a comfortable place in society, as the son-in-law of the governor, as a newly married husband, in favor of actively longing for a martyred death? Probing this question begins to unearth the ways that deep and strange queer attachments color such a radical shift.

In the play, Pauline, *Polyeucte*'s wife, has been troubled by dreams foretelling his demise. When Sévère, her former beloved, returns from war, she wavers between adhering to her social and filial obligations as a married woman and the longings she still harbors for Sévère. *Polyeucte* is “seduced” into the Christian faith by his friend Néarque, and they decide to reveal themselves to be Christian by rushing into the temple and publicly declaring their faith, breaking the idols of the pagan religion. Pauline is torn between her marriage vow to the doomed *Polyeucte* and the fact that her father Félix, a political governor, is strategically urging her to see Sévère, now a political favorite and military hero. Ultimately, when Félix has Néarque and

Polyeucte executed for the crime of their conversion, the others are so moved by the faith of the two martyred men that Félix and Pauline convert as well.

Polyeucte repeatedly declares the unsuturing of the legal and sexual ties that had bound him to his previous subjective position, and gestures, however broadly and illegibly, toward a type of subject-position founded on affinity, attunement, and desire. To convert, here, is not necessarily a “religious” gesture, but rather it inscribes a specific type of political upheaval.

Serge Doubrovsky has argued that

On n’a pas assez souligné, en effet, que *Polyeucte* était non seulement une tragédie religieuse, mais un *drame politique*, qui se joue autour d’une question d’État ou, plus exactement, d’une mise en question de l’État. Le ‘crime’ de Polyeucte n’est nullement un délit privé. Chef de la noblesse arménienne, issu du sang des rois, par son adhésion au christianisme, il renverse l’ordre et la hiérarchie, détruit l’Empire annoncé par Tulle et fondé par Auguste. La révolte contre les dieux est aussi rébellion contre la source légitime du pouvoir et les décrets de Décie (241).

Such a dramatic gesture of a conversion from a man who was integrated into the heart of the Armenian nobility and married to the Roman governor’s daughter might seem unexpected—if Polyeucte occupied such a comfortable place in society, what would compel him to break the social bonds that favored him so?

It is clear that Polyeucte converts to Christianity only thanks to the insistence of his friend Nearque. Stratonice, Pauline's friend, underscores the sexual underpinnings of this conversion, describing to Pauline the cause of her husband's conversion explicitly as seduction,

Néarque l’a séduit :

De leur vieille amitié c’est là l’indigne fruit.

Ce perfide tantôt, en dépit de lui-même,  
L'arrachant de vos bras, le traînait au baptême.  
Voilà ce grand secret et si mystérieux  
Que n'en pouvait tirer votre amour curieux. (III, ii, 807-812)<sup>37</sup>

In Stratonice's discourse, she seems to directly counteroppose the love that Pauline can provide (“de vos bras”) with another type of generative love (amitié) that Néarque's seduction is founded upon. Painted as such, the conversion does not merely enact a change in religious comportment or social status, but explicitly swaps out marital love for the strange fruit begotten of same-sex friendships. Thus, the “fruit” that is produced from such intimacy between men marks its deviance from the norms and closeness expected of marriage. The emergence of this “fruit” raises another question: how does “amitié” between two men shift to “séduit” and what happens in the aftermath of such a break?

In order to fully investigate my understanding of Polyeucte's reversals, I will first consider what exactly he is rebelling against—how are these norms of governmentality and representation constructed, specifically related to temporality and sexuality? The second section features a close analysis of the language that Polyeucte and Néarque use between them, illuminating how this break is effected, and what is produced in its aftermath. The employment of particular rhetorical devices produce odd temporal effects and forge unexpected pathways of intimacy and connection. Finally, in a third section, I will consider the ways that Polyeucte's break with norms of identification in favor of an affectively defined self has greater implications for thinking of gender and sexual difference at large.

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37 “Néarque seduced him/ this disgraceful fruit is begotten of their old friendship/ this traitor, rather, in despite of himself/ tearing Polyeucte from your arms, drove him to baptism./ Behold this secret, so mysterious/ that even your inquiring love could not draw from him.”



## Rebelling Against Representational Norms

Considering that which Polyeucte rebels against means taking into account the pre-existing political system. The play is one that hinges on the use of proxies and representatives and thus is set in a relatively contingent and fragile system of governance. Imperial Rome is represented by a stand-in governor, Félix, in Armenia, a borderland that represents both a geographically liminal space as well as a social terrain in flux. Greenberg writes:

As the play begins, at the far corners of the Empire, in Armenia, the Christians are an ever more present menace to the internal stability of the Roman world. On the borders of that world, the Persians, although contained for the moment, are a threat to its geographic integrity... the moment of passage from one order to another is a sacred one; it is a moment of agony, the agony of an entire system of legal, social and sexual codes, and of the birth pains of a new society (CC 118).

Throughout the play, Félix himself sends his daughter Pauline to convince and coerce on his behalf, creating layers of representatives and representations of power. In such a tenuous locale, fragilely secured both politically and ideologically, Polyeucte's gesture of overturning the old hierarchies of power becomes all the more dramatic.

Décie, the emperor, never actually appears in this drama, although it is for Polyeucte's and Néarque's treasonous crimes against him, the State and the state religion that they are executed. Pauline begs her father for Polyeucte's life, imploring clemency "Au nom de l'Empereur dont vous tenez la place" (III, 3, 918), to which Félix replies: "J'ai son pouvoir en main; mais, s'il me l'a commis, / C'est pour le déployer contre ses ennemis" (III, 3, 919-920). In this sense, the play's staging of a conversion is one that not only threatens but also questions the security of a represented government. Félix can only speak in the "name" of the emperor, as merely the placeholder, occupying an otherwise empty seat of power. And yet he admits that he

requires “ses ennemis” as a precondition for such a power to be transferred to him and deployed in the first place.

It is for this reason that the doubled status of representation that Louis Marin describes in *Le Portrait du roi* becomes all the more significant. Marin reveals the absolute sovereign to be an effect of, and contingent on, the power to represent: as both the presentation of the royal power’s plenitude itself and as the meta-representation of such power *to* present. However, what representation itself covers over is the originary lack or absence, ignoring that that which is represented is not (and can not be) *actually* present. Thus, every representation, while dazzling, also marks and conceals its own internal lacks:

Premier effet du dispositif représentatif, premier pouvoir de la représentation: effet et pouvoir de présence au lieu de l’absence et de la mort; deuxième effet, deuxième pouvoir: effet de sujet, c’est-à-dire pouvoir d’institution, d’autorisation et de légitimation comme résultante du fonctionnement réfléchi du dispositif sur lui-même. Si donc la représentation en général a en effet un double pouvoir: celui de rendre à nouveau et imaginaires présent, voire vivant, l’absent et le mort, et celui de constituer son propre sujet légitime et autorisé en exhibant qualifications, justifications et titres du présent et du vivant à l’être, autrement dit, si la représentation non seulement reproduit en fait mais encore en droit les conditions qui rendent possibles sa reproduction alors on comprend l’intérêt du pouvoir à se l’approprier. Représentation et pouvoir sont de même nature (10-11).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The first effect of the representation framework and the first power of representation are the effect and power of presence instead of absence and death; the second effect and second power are the effect of subject, that is, the power of institution, authorization, and legitimation as resulting from the functioning of the framework reflected onto itself. If, then, representation in general as indeed a double power— that of rendering anew and imaginarily present, not to say living, the absent and the dead and that of constituting its own legitimate and authorized subject by exhibiting qualifications, justification, and titles of the present and living to being— in other words if representation reproduces not only de fact but also de jure the conditions that make its reproduction possible, then we understand that it is in the interests of power to appropriate it for itself. Representation and power share the same nature (6).

In this sense, there is an inter-dependent relationship between the two kinds of representation: power's manifestation and the theatrical representation. By extension, Katherine Ibbett notes that the play hinges on the doubled meaning of execute, both in the sense of carrying out another's orders (to execute a plan) as well as the more obvious deadly execution. So in this respect, Félix, the man named to execute the Emperor's governance of Armenia, who holds the sovereign place ("dout vous tenez la place") has the power to represent authority, but hesitates in terms of the actual execution of Polyeucte and the spectacular representation of power that such an execution would entail.<sup>39</sup>

Analyzing Corneille's play in light of these concerns regarding the authority of a representative and represented government offers a means of investigating the relationship between sovereign power, temporality and temporal deviances more closely. For example, Félix tries to feign conversion to Christianity in order to soften Polyeucte's obstinate resolve to seek his martyred death. Félix ultimately admits that the ruse was only a trick in order to gain time: "Je voulais gagner temps pour ménager ta vie" (V, 2, 1575). Ibbett reads this "ménager" as an extension of the ruler's chronobiopolitical investment: "The attempt to gain time in order to manage a life is a succinct explanation of the task of the colonial governor, who must succeed in the proper management of the bodies under his control" (79). At the same time, translating "ménager" as merely management also ignores the temporal sense of "ménager" insofar as it could indicate, in an economic sense, to save/spare or to set aside—in which case, "ménager" would indicate the shoring up of life, and the time of life<sup>40</sup>, in order to extend the powers of governmentality. The stakes of claiming a mortal finitude against a sovereign-managed life span becomes the key terrain on which Polyeucte and Félix struggle—the former striving to cast off

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<sup>39</sup> See Ellen McClure's *Sunspots and the Sun King* (University of Illinois Press, 2006) for a further discussion of divine-right sovereignty and the perfected (spotless) image that Louis XIV wished to present, in relation to diplomacy and representational authority.

<sup>40</sup> See also Martin Hagglund's *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford University Press, 2008 for more on the notion of the cultivation of the time of life against the infinite temporality of *différance*.

the managerial control and to hasten the end his life on his own martyred terms, and the latter using strategies ranging from deception to pleading in order to extend (or execute).

If temporality is contested intradiegetically, it also informs the dramatic work as a whole, insofar as the play fails to adhere to the conventions of the unity of time. Corneille even admits in his *Examen* of his play *Polyeucte* that the pacing of the events of the drama does not quite fit with the conventions of the unity of time: “Il est hors de doute que si nous appliquons ce poème à nos coutumes, le sacrifice se fait trop tôt après la venue de Sévère, et cette précipitation sortira du vraisemblable par la nécessité d'obéir à la règle”(50).<sup>41</sup> Jacques Schérer notes, “La solution de Corneille... consiste à escamoter le problème: il suffira de ne pas préciser la durée assignée à l'action”(116).<sup>42</sup>

It is perhaps not coincidental that my reading of the play is informed by Corneille's *Trois discours sur le poème dramatique*, because there is a strain of heroic vanity in *Polyeucte* that also appears in the Corneille of the *Discours*. Katherine Ibbett writes:

Hélène Merlin-Kajman has described the heroes of Corneille's early plays such as *Le Cid* and *La place royale* as libertine figures who define themselves without recourse to the father figure, and whose self-mastery points both to the Sadian hero and the Kantian subject, the solipsistic being who is both self and sovereign. The Corneille of the *Discours* traces a quasi-autobiographical account of a similar kind of literary *libertinage* that takes pains to show its rejection of paternal authorities and that makes the writer the hero of his own work, in a similar vein to his 1637 “Excuse à Ariste” in which he insisted his success was won through his own efforts and owe nothing to a larger network of supporters (148-149)

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41 “Doubtlessly, if we hold the poem up to our standards, the sacrifice takes place too soon after the arrival of Sévère, and consequently this event diverges from verisimilitude due to the necessity of obeying the rule”

42 “Corneille's solution was simply to evade the problem itself: it sufficed simply not to mention the length of time assigned to the action.”

Corneille, in his *Trois discours*, discusses the unity but seems to only thinly veil his complaints against it. “La règle de l'unité de jour a son *fondament* sur ce mot d'Aristote” (137), and “ils nomment [cette règle] tyrannique, et auraient raison, si elle n'était *fondée* que sur l'autorité d'Aristote” (emphasis mine, 139).<sup>43</sup> Corneille implies a refusal to embrace the rule of the unity of time himself, which he implies is “tyrannique” and whenever structural logic requires him to defend it, he instead passes over his disavowal of the rule in favor of deferring to the “fondament” and the authority of Aristotle. What do we make of Corneille’s temporal failings, especially in regards to this play that centers the gaze on temporality itself: the dreamed-for future that the martyrs rush towards, the regretted past that haunts Pauline? In a sense, it may not be fair to relegate Corneille’s struggles with the temporal unity to “failure.”

This particular word emphasized frequently in Corneille's *Trois discours sur le poème dramatique*, “fondament”, played a curious role in early modern language. One meaning proper to the seventeenth century usage of the word, lost in the modern usage (both in French and English) is a synonym for anus.<sup>44</sup> A close examination of the word French *fondement* in early modern French dictionaries reveals a similarly sexualized definition which will prove useful for

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<sup>43</sup> “The rule of the unity of time has for its fundament (foundation) the word of Aristotle” and “Certain people would call this rule tyrannical, and would be right, if it weren't founded upon the authority of Aristotle”

<sup>44</sup> This reading is inspired by Jeffrey Masten’s work on the fundament. In his chapter, “Is the Fundament a Grave?” he points out:

One of *fundament's* meanings, in fact, is '[t]he foundation or base of a wall, building, etc.' Indeed, the word *fundament*, in its three primary meanings of 'foundation,' 'buttocks,' and 'anus,' seems to exist [in English] for a century before *foundation*, the word that, after several centuries of overlap, eventually takes its place... through the end of the seventeenth century, *fundament* means 'foundation' and *foundation* is used to refer to the body part. Not only can we not give *fundament* and *foundation* distinct histories... but the fundament seems always to be inseparably foundational (133).

For Masten, the multiplicity of these many *fundaments* generates a new paradigm for thinking about queer sexuality to enrich other analytics proposed by Parker's “preposterous” (*hysteron proteron*, or taking back for front, posterior for prior) and Goldberg “sodometric” (the “void” of confusion generated by a non-procreative sexual relation). In tension with these other models which can be read as horizontally-organized, Masten proposes: “The fundament lies productively in a strangely active-passive position: it is the ground but also the groundwork; the seat but also the offspring; the founding and the foundation. The fundamental is that which 'hath *or is* ground or foundation” (135). Masten’s analysis elaborates the doubled notion of “base” (another synonym for fundament, in the architectural sense), to mean both “origin, basis” in addition to its other connotations of being depraved or devoid of morals. Thus, the fundament, and the base, are useful analytics with which to investigate the nature of Polyeucte’s Christian conversion.

an analysis of unconventional desires in *Polyeucte*. The Richelet dictionary (1680) to give one example among a few period dictionaries,<sup>45</sup> provides the idea of an architectural *fondement* (“ce mot se dit entre quelques Architectes, & signifie *fondation* d'un edifice qu'on achève)<sup>46</sup> as well as a grounding *fondement*, in a sense akin to the modern one (“Principe. Base.”). We also, however, have *fondement* in the anal sense, actually listed *first* as a primary definition in the list: “partie du corps par où sortent les excréments du ventre”.<sup>47</sup>

Of the six definitions of *fondement* provided here, only two are marked as “sens non-figuré”: the architectural fundament and the anal, which underscores the fact that it was not taken as a euphemism but rather as a proper marker of the material body part. The anal fundament is illustrated by an example phrase: “Avoir le fondement tout écorché”.<sup>48</sup> This example seems totally out of character with the rest of the sample sentences given, but its fundamentality is even further underscored when one takes into account that it begs the question as to what one could possibly have been doing to “écorcher” one's fundament. The fact that the given usage aligns the *fondement* with violence (as opposed to, say, furnishing a more quotidian sentence which described excrementality or something medical) seems to allude to the fact that the *fondement*, at least in the French early modern context, was a site not only of exiting and excrement, but also of potential (sexualized?) violence.

While it may risk an overly simplistic analogous relationship between Corneille's self-styling against the authority of Aristotle and *Polyeucte*'s “heroism,” the hinge point between the two is the fundament. The “fondement” that Corneille most struggles against, the spectacle of regulated temporality as mandated by the *unité de temps* and Aristotle's authority, strings

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<sup>45</sup>While the 1680 dictionary's publication date postdates *Polyeucte* by a few decades, the dictionary had been commissioned much earlier and still provides a general representative snapshot of language and vocabulary usage in the period. Other definitions include “Intrigue pour quelque entreprise. Moien pour faire une chose”, “Fonds”, and “Raison, cause, sujet”

<sup>46</sup>“This word is used between some architects, and signifies “foundation” of an edifice that one is constructing.”

<sup>47</sup>“Part of the body through which the stomach's excrements exit”

<sup>48</sup>“To have the fundament completely flayed/ripped”

together certain types of normative logics: an economy of teleological progress within a frame of finitude that, in tragedy, enables anxieties about *gloire* (glory) and the lastingness of one's mortal imprint on both social and sexual spheres. The fundament is a trope that is linked to both beginnings (and a type of historical time) as well as perversions. These multiple definitions of the term furnish an apt perspective on Polyeucte's conversion to Christianity insofar as the act incites disgust in other characters while at the same time launching (and indeed founding) a dramatic shift in the religious and political structures by the end of the play. Jeffrey Masten suggests, "This is what is perhaps most striking about the rhetoric of the fundament, especially when juxtaposed with the more familiar Bakhtinian model of the bottom, the lower bodily strata; while the fundament, as foundation and seat, may participate in the rhetoric of the low, this is a lowliness with a positive valence" (134). Although Masten cautions against over-eagerly reading for fundamentality in literature, the figural and functional work that the fundament performs in relation to this chapter's treatment of Corneille's *Polyeucte* can reorient our reading of the queer intimacies which undergird and engender desire in the text.

Where I would depart from both Doubrovsky and Merlin-Kajman is that instead of reading Polyeucte's radical break as that with the emperor/father figure, I would contend that Polyeucte is instead staging a break with the gender and sexuality norms of the society that condition and structure the very existence of such hierarchies of power.<sup>49</sup> In other words, he

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<sup>49</sup> Doubrovsky himself writes that the play can be understood as an allegory of Cornelian heroism. "De même qu'il y a un sens 'racinien' d'*Athalie*, où les attributs de Dieu sont choisis et sa présence manifestée en fonction d'une optique de d'une dramaturgie raciniennes, il y a un sens *cornélien* de *Polyeucte*, qui récupère Dieu, pour ainsi dire, au profit de Corneille"(251), and this particular Christianity is one of heroic competition, in Doubrovsky's eyes. Polyeucte *a besoin* de Dieu pour assurer, en son lieu et place, l'authenticité de l'acte héroïque. Par une double contradiction, au moment où le héros se soumet à Dieu, il en est le secret rival; mais, au moment où il pose son désir d'indépendance absolue, il suppose sa dépendance totale. La cohabitation de l' "héroïsme" et de la 'sainteté' dont parlait Péguy, se résout donc par leur destruction mutuelle" (260). The looseness of this "sens cornélien" has invited "other" readings of Polyeucte's conversion and interest in overturning society than the Christian reading. Paul Scott sees it as a tale of heterosexualization of the main character, while Greenberg reads the play as the emergence of a powerful female voice/eroticism in the figure of Pauline.

Whatever it is in the text that invites such allegorical or figurative readings (always "other" than Christianity) I do

might be thought of as establishing a new fondement (foundation, or foundational authority) on the bases of the fundament (the anal/ the base, low and forgotten Christians). Here I take a cue from Greenberg's analysis of the play, in which he says:

As we know, after *Polyeucte*, something radically changes in the Cornelian universe. An inversion occurs in the roles that have, in the canonical plays, divided the Cornelian world in the fixed camps of masculinity and femininity. After *Polyeucte*, those roles are inverted: women... become the standard bearers of an almost Nietzschean will to power, while the men are reduced to an effeminization that effectively signals their political demise ("Review" 115-116).

While acknowledging *Polyeucte*'s reversal of the gender binary, I would take inversion a step further and argue that *Polyeucte*'s "break" destabilizes the very notion of "fixed camps" of masculinity and femininity itself.

In fact, I would hazard that while the play is a type of martyr tragedy, it tells the story of another type of sacrifice, other than *Polyeucte*'s life. The play depicts a chronobiopolitics that founds and feeds upon the power relations of gender dichotomy or such "fixed camps" of masculine and feminine. Against this societal structure stands the martyrdom of non-normative (queer) affective relations in the name of letting emerge another type of sexual-temporal governance. These affective relations and "personal" temporalities, forged between *Polyeucte* and *Néarque*, can not last and must be sacrificed in this society that privileges certain types of temporal governance.

As I noted in the Introduction, the relationship between representation and temporality installs a certain sense of authority, one that establishes the royal subject as the anchor of temporality and history and standing as history's origin. Marin writes:

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follow in this strong trend in literary criticism of re-interpreting the radical break



D’où cet autre paradoxe: que la réflexion de présence accuse toujours plus intensément, dans le sujet de représentation qui en est l’effet, le désir d’absolu comme un manque à remplir, comme ce lieu vide dont parle Pascal précisément à propos du roi: accomplissement toujours différé. Le roi est d’abord le mouvement d’une volonté, d’un désir, dans le divertissement de la guerre, de la chasse, du ballet. Le désir absolu du pouvoir, de la gloire *incomparable* du monarque, prendra la forme du temps. Le sujet de représentation, pour se réaliser sujet d’absolu pouvoir— le monarque absolu— sera produit comme effet de la représentation narrative, effet de récit, effet de récit d’histoire où est construit, dans le présent même de l’acte extraordinaire du prince, le mémoriale de la mémoire du roi, qui accomplit le temps dans un passé qui est un présent éternisé (13).<sup>50</sup>

The royal manifestation of power is linked to a perfected completion of temporality, a fulfillment of history and narrative, but such power is also always already marked by this *striving* for temporal mastery, a desire that only serves to produce such “glory” as an aftereffect. This royal desire to “fill” time with its accomplished plenitude means that the action of this filling (“le *mouvement* d’une volonté”) is that which must take place on stage. Therefore the temporality of the theater is one that has to foreground “ce lieu vide” waiting to be inscribed by sovereign fulfillment.

This notion of incompleteness as integral to authority and representation was even

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<sup>50</sup> Hence this other paradox: that the reflection of presence always accuses more intensely, in the subject of representation that is its effect, the desire for the absolute of being a lack to fill, of being that empty place Pascal speaks of precisely with respect to the king, which is satisfaction always deferred. The king is first of all the movement of will or desire in the diversions of war, hunting, and ballet. The desire for the absolute of power, for the *incomparable* glory of the monarch, will take the form of time. The subject of representation, to realize itself as the subject of absolute power— the absolute monarch— will be produced as the effect of narrative representation, of narrative, and of the narrative of history, where is constructed, in the present of the prince’s extraordinary act itself, the memorial of the memory of the king, a memorial that completes time in a past that is an eternalized present (8)

underscored in theater treatises of the time. Timothy Murray draws upon the Abbé d'Aubignac's treatise *La Pratique du théâtre* in order to emphasize the necessity of the incomplete dramatic representation. He writes:

A finished dramatic product best represents the picture of its incongruities and imperfections: 'Le Poëme Dramatique est comme une quinte essence de toutes les preceptes qui se lisent dans les Auteurs, qui nous ont enseigné l'art de bien dire en prose et en vers ; parce qu'il les y faut employer avec tant de jugement et de délicatesse, que bien souvent il paroisse qu'on en soit fort éloigné, et que même on les ait entièrement abandonnez ; et le genie du Theatre est tel, que d'ordinaire, ce qui ne paroist point, en est le plus grand art ; un Sentiment qu'on aura presque imperceptiblement jetté dans l'esprit des Auditeurs, une Avanture commencée en apparence sans dessein...' The genius of an effective poem, 'le genie du Theatre,' is said by d'Aubignac to portray the illusionary inadequacy and deficiency of its visible parts, rather than the visible potency of either author or patron...

d'Aubignac aligns this presentation of the genius of incomplete imagery with the art of rhetoric (181).

The theater then is a "riven space" as Weber calls it, but the particular presentation of such rivenness is unique to Corneille's work, and as Murray would underscore, the seventeenth century notion of "rivenness" particular to the socio-political function that theater held.

Far from being a mere extension of Aristotelian tyranny, the unity of time allows for the conditions to create within and, more importantly—against—such perfected images. Ubersfeld adds:

Il y a ainsi un réseau idéologique solide dans lequel s'inscrivent à la fois le mode de référence historique de la tragédie, l'unité de temps, unité spéculaire autour

d'un personnage, et la 'fatalité' (la permanence) qui détermine actions et sentiments. Ce n'est pas un hasard si Corneille, dont on sait les démêlés avec l'unité de temps... ne parvient pas à constituer totalement ce réseau signifiant. Et le côté fascinant de son théâtre vient de cette bataille entre deux vues de temps, celle où une créativité du héros et de l'histoire contraint le spectateur à construire le rapport entre le temps référentiel et le temps théâtral... et une vue 'classique' où rien ne se passe qui ne soit déjà passé, où la représentation est comme la reproduction d'un passé perpétuellement déjà là (155).<sup>51</sup>

Thus, the temporality in Corneille's theater is neither perfected plenitude nor total eschewal of "history" (le temps référentiel). It is the divergence from a perfect presentation that creates both the possibility for heroic representation (the authorial power to create) as well as that representation's failure.

Corneille's struggles with the unity of time manifests not only a struggle with a burdensome stylistic constraint but also one that grapples with tensions in the subject's and spectator's relation to history. It has become commonplace to consider that Racine was able to adhere effortlessly to this unity of time, in contrast to Corneille's fudging of the boundary lines. Greenberg takes up a schism which is formalized in the unity of time-- the division between the productive/possible and the pre-fixed-- and maps it internally in the early modern subject, noting the specific sexual resonances undergirding such a tension: "What Corneille first radically figures in his dramatic conflict is the contradiction? between a protagonist who wishes to be

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51 "There is thus a solid ideological network that combines the mode of historical reference in tragedy, the unity of time, the specular unity surrounding a given character, and the fatality (permanence) that determines actions and sentiments. It is no accident that Corneille, whose problems with the unity of time are well known (see his three *Discours* on the dramatic poem), never succeeds in totally reconstructing this signifying network. The fascination of his theatre stems from that very conflict between the two views of time: one in which the creativity of the hero and of history call upon the spectator to construct the relation between referential time and theatrical time [...] and the other classical view that nothing happens that has not already happened, that performance is like a reproduction of a past that is perpetually already there" (130)

absolute-- that is, in conformity to an ambient ideological drive... and at the same time the contradictory 'split within,' the internal fracture that makes Corneille's characters 'dramatis personae' as they struggle with what inheres in them that is irreconcilable with the exigencies of the absolute monarchy, their amorous and mortiferous desire" (CS, 91-92).

Thus, this fragmented temporality to which Ubersfeld alludes, the tension between perfected past and the possibilities of a "creative" hero to fill empty time in his (or her) own manner can also be viewed to correspond to the split that Greenberg diagnoses—the incompatibilities between absolute mastery and the "mortiferous desire." Corneille's temporal struggles are precisely *adequate* representations of this "split" rather than stylistic or aesthetic failures. And despite D'Aubignac and Corneille's quarrels and rivalries, D'Aubignac's intuition about an authorial feint is highly pertinent to Corneille's situation-- that although authors may appear to have "entirement abandonnez" the rules of the theatre, the true genius is the one who in this perceived failure actually lays the groundwork for a far more potent form of representation.

Given the stakes that *Polyeucte* offers for both temporality and representation, it is the nature of this "cut" (or Greenberg's "split within") that I take up in this chapter. If the nature of the unity of time is a "coupe nécessaire et brutale," according to Ubersfeld, the unity of time severs the time of theatrical representation from its historical embeddedness, illuminating the theatre's power to represent, or to engender forth. The forced splitting-off from chronological norms that is staged by the temporal unity claims a new, strange etiology, pointing to an origin bereft of the types of normative productivity, process, and progress in historical time. And thus, breaking away from the fixity of etiological norms allows for the open possibility of a different kind of future. At the same time, this foundational cut is one that intradiegetically undergirds most of the plot. When materialized and analogized in the play, physical cuts, from the executioner's cut to the "circumcise" one, echo the rupturing cut that Polyeucte hopes to

stage—the radical break with the previous forms of citizenship, belonging and identity.

## *II. Speeds of Seduction*

As Schérer rightly notes, Corneille doesn't mention the time that passes, he also uses rhetorical tropes that condense many meanings into a short space. The impression, then, is one of rushing-- a speed that jolts against the regular tempo that we would expect in a classical play.

The opening scene of Polyeucte's seduction to Christian conversion is characterized by a rushed intensity. Scene 1 of Act I, as Polyecute is on the brink of converting, closes with a staccato rapid-fire of short syllables which fracture the alexandrine line, as Néarque urges his friend to flee from his wife Pauline:

Polyeucte: Elle revient.

Néarque: Fuyez.

Polyeucte: Je ne puis.

Néarque: Il le faut. (I.1.103).<sup>52</sup>

Polyeucte and Néarque's repeated running and fleeing coheres intradiegetically with the notion that such a conversion necessarily had to take place in secret. Yet, in the excessive overperformance of speed, in the references to the need for rushing, the very velocity itself seems to accrue supplementary meaning, one which not only echoes the intensity of Néarque's desire to have Polyeucte converted, but also their awareness of the conditions of expression which limit the full articulation of their desires and rhetorical persuasions.

This perceived rushing has not gone unnoticed by subsequent critics, but has been

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52 P: She returns.

N: Flee.

P: I can not

N: You must.

interpreted differently. Paul Claudel notes in his *Journal*, “On voit une espèce d’énergumène qui se rue au baptême, puis à des actes ostentatoires que l’Eglise a toujours condamnés” (294), the haste of the “se ruer” in this sense only adds to Claudel’s evaluation of the illogical nature of Polyeucte’s temporality. In a similar vein, Voltaire famously criticized the eponymous character for being a fanatic:

Le fanatisme est à la superstition ce que le transport est à la fièvre, ce que la rage est à la colère. Celui qui a des extases, des visions, qui prend des songes pour des réalités, et ses imaginations pour des prophéties, est un enthousiaste; celui qui soutient sa folie par le meurtre est un fanatique... Polyeucte qui va au temple, dans un jour de solennité, renverser et casser les statues et les ornements, est un fanatique moins horrible que Diaz, mais non moins sot (176).<sup>53</sup>

Voltaire's denigration of Polyeucte for his excess of enthusiasm seems odd when taking into consideration any number of Corneillian heroes who are overwhelmed by their passion-- why not snub Horace's patriotic fanaticism and his murder of his sister, as well, for that matter? Is it possible that what Voltaire had sensed, and decried in this “maladie presque incurable” (177) was not the oblivious overcommitment to a cause, but the nature of “transports,” or the role that excesses of passion and emotion can actually produce motion and movement? Do the affective attachments that sway Polyeucte's conversion and subsequent martyrdom render him a more likely candidate for idiotic (“sot”) fanaticism, instead of laudable revolutionariness? What is dismissed as the haste of an idiot, a fanatic, or a nutcase may actually be gesturing toward other types of intimacies and attachments.

What is most interesting to my analysis is that these moments of rushing—to convert and

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<sup>53</sup>“Fanaticism is to superstition what hysterics are to fever, what rage is to anger. He who has ecstasies, visions, who takes dreams to be reality and his imagination for prophecy, is an overly enthusiastic person; he who holds firmly to his insanity through murder is a fanatic. Polyeucte who goes to the temple, on a religious day, to overturn and break the statues and the ornaments, is a fanatic, less horrible than Diaz, but no less idiotic”

to destroy the idols of the temple-- are usually aligned with moments when the play treats affective alliances and intimacies that can be considered queer, or at least non-normative and out of sync with a reproduction-driven temporalization of sexuality. I would argue that the play, in grasping for a language adequate to inarticulate desires, builds on such bursts of speed to put forth alternate means of expressing certain kinds of desire and intimacy. And here, I wish to consider “build” in both its figurative sense as well as its relation to the *fondement* -- re-thinking the nature of the fundamentals upon which deviance can be generated. Ultimately, in its divergence from the classical/Absolutist ideals of unified time, the play stages an intervention into the nature of a progress-oriented temporality, by problematizing norms of generation and reproduction (etiologies) through the overturning of diachronic, biologic filiation in favor of a synchronically swerving identity founded upon desire and seduction.

It is unsurprising that for historian John Boswell, the Polyeuct-Nearchos couple stand as one of three key early Christian queer martyr pairs. Drawing upon B. Aubé's account in *Polyeucte dans l'histoire* (Paris, 1882), Boswell reminds us that “St. Polyeuct and Nearchos, Roman soldiers of Greek ancestry in the Armenian city of Meitene, were described in their fourth-century biography as “brothers, not by birth, but by affection.” They enjoyed “the closest possible friendship, being both comrades and fellow-soldiers” (141). More than merely a fraternal affection, however, Boswell (citing Aubé) recounts an episode in which Nearchos and Polyeuct learn that all Christians are to be executed for their faith. While Polyeuct originally comforts his friend in the face of imminent death,

Nearchos replied, “But this, dearest [φίλτατε] is precisely what weighs on my soul. There is something worse than the death of humans: the separation that I fear might take place [...] for I had feared that I would lose you from my love [φιλίας] and that we would lose the unity of our soul [συνειδήσεως] [...]

Polyeucte then roused within himself the organ of his soul, and reaching for Nearchos with his bodily eyes, took his hand and asked, 'Is this then what you feared, Nearchos, and was this your suspicion about us from the beginning? Did you realize this about the bodily part of our love? (143).

According to Aubé, it is the strength of this love and the fear of being separated from one another that propels Polyeucte to convert. Corneille's version of the story foregrounds this notion. After Félix has Néarque executed, he asks, "Et notre Polyeucte a vu trancher sa vie?" ensuring (sadistically) that Polyeucte is made to watch his friend die. Albin responds, "Il l'a vu, mais hélas! Avec un oeil d'envie. / Il brûle de le suivre au lieu de reculer" (III, 4, 958-959). And thus Polyeucte's response of "burning desire" to seeing his friend's execution echoes the sentiment of the anecdote that Boswell emphasizes. The martyring cut that enacts "trancher sa vie" is not one that is resented or feared by Polyeucte; rather, Polyeucte's main concern is being separated from Néarque (not being allowed to "suivre" his dearest).

Although it is not my intention to "prove" Polyeucte and Néarque's queerness, or their same sex love, I will point out here that many other scholars have completely ignored or outright downplayed this relationship. For example, I would contest Paul Scott's characterization of the couple, in his article "The Heterosexualization of *Polyeucte*":

The passionate friendship shared by Polyeuct and Nearchos in Metaphrastes and other sources is diluted in the tragedy. While Néarque does encourage Polyeucte towards his conversion, it is his wife's dream that propels him to make the final, irrevocable commitment to faith. Polyeucte emerges as the dominant force of the pair, a portrayal that destroys any notion of equality, the essential cement of perfect friendship (329).

Scott's assertion is only thinly supported by the text. While Pauline's fears do drive the plot, I



would contend that “blindness” produced by a certain heteronormative perspective ignores the rich set of transformations, rhetorical pleadings and negotiations that take place between the two men. Such blindness to their relationship reflects the heteronormative privilege granted to relationships that are clearly articulable and cited. Furthermore, that the counterbalanced equality of the two men dissolves the “perfect friendship” is directly refuted by Boswell's observation that the inequality is what has historically enabled the relationship between the two: “In all three of the cases discussed here in detail there was some social inequity that might have been essential to same-sex pairings [...] Polyeuct was of grander social standing than Nearchos...” (Boswell, 158). This having been said, this chapter will leave aside the question of whether or not the two can be considered proto-gay (avoiding the “anticipatory” approach). While the play's resonances with historical (premodern) same-sex love as analyzed by Boswell and others seem to point to ways that the intensity of the relationship between Polyeucte and Néarque are more than a mere extension of their shared Christian love, what most interests me about their relationship is the ways that it opens up a larger questioning of the relationship between legibility, identity and sexualized desire.

This play produces its own set of slippages due to the precarious nature of “representation” (in terms of the represented governor as well as the imperfectly represented unity of time). In fact, the very nature of the word “seduction” in the seventeenth century reveals an indecidability about the term—the Richelet dictionary of 1680 scene defines “séduction” along the lines of a representational falseness or deception: “Tromperie dans des choses qui regardent la Religion, ou les moeurs.” In the definition of the verb “séduire,” however, the term contains a certain ambivalence with regard to a religious deception or a pleasurable (sexual?) one. The Furetière of 1690 notes this divide more clearly, “Séduire. Abuser quelqu'un, luy persuader de faire le mal, on luy mettre dans l'esprit quelque mauvaise doctrine. La femme

d'Adame dit pour excuse au Seigneur, que le Serpent l'avoit seduities... Les plaisirs nous seduisent & nous empeschent de songer à notre salut." Thus, when Stratonice complains that Néarque has seduced Polyeucte, in this sense, he could be thought of an agent of "tromperie" in which case the stakes of truthful representation are raised even higher in this already-precarious governance situation. Or, Néarque could have "seduced" Polyeucte not through lies and deception, but rather by planting the seeds of interest toward a competing set of values ("quelque mauvaise doctrine").

In the play, Félix is the only character in the play who actually does resort to deception and trickery. Néarque's "seduction" scene is far from the temptations of the serpent and Eve. Rather, he tries to convince Polyeucte to love God and only God, saying:

Nous pouvons tout aimer: il le souffre, il l'ordonne  
Mais à vous dire tout, ce seigneur des seigneurs  
Veut le premier amour et les premiers honneurs.  
Comme rien n'est égal à sa grandeur suprême  
Il faut ne rien aimer qu'après lui, qu'en lui-même,  
Négliger, pour lui plaire, et femme, et biens et rang.  
Exposer pour sa gloire et verser tout son sang.  
Mais que vous êtes loin de cette ardeur parfaite  
Qui vous est nécessaire, et que je vous souhaite (I, i, 70-79)

In this sliding discourse, we travel from generalities of loving all to a strange entreaty in which Néarque presses Polyeucte to accept a specific kind of "perfect ardor." Clearly there is some kind of desire animating the intensity with which Néarque exhorts Polyeucte to accept Christianity, but this "ardeur parfaite" that Néarque wishes for his friend goes unmentioned explicitly. At the same time, we can't help but wonder how we get from "we can love all things" to "you can only

have a specific kind of love and it's one that I wish for you ardently.”<sup>54</sup>

Néarque's line “Il faut ne rien aimer qu'après lui, qu'en lui-même” analeptically points back to the “seigneur” three verses prior, but the ambiguity wrought by the distance (the drawing-together of the far-fetched that the pronoun enacts) allows for the ambiguity that it is perhaps Néarque himself towards whom Polyeucte's attention and love ought to be directed. The singularity of this attachment is underscored in the following line: “Négliger, pour lui plaire, et femme, et biens et rang” which is an apophatic position clearly purged of normative attachments. While the rejection of “biens et rang” could feasibly fit with Biblical maxims of stoic refusal of worldly goods, the rejection of his wife seems to be out of place, and it is a rejection which could feasibly open up the space for substitution. Just as Néarque could ambiguously hold the place of the referent to whom the “lui” refers, it could also be imagined that Néarque is suggesting himself to take the place of “femme,” insofar as Polyeucte must undertake all of these things “pour lui plaire.” Additionally, refusing the normative marital attachment is put in the service of “plaire” or pleasing God, which seems to be a pale gesture, more resonant on the quotidian human social plane than on the schema of “sa grandeur suprême” of an omnipotent God who would “souffrir” or “ordonner” an all-encompassing affection. If the expansiveness of the “tout aimer” is punctured by the one sticking negation of loving one's wife, then the singular rejection of the marital role seems fairly curious. It seems, however, that when Néarque criticizes Polyeucte, saying “que vous êtes loin de cette ardeur parfaite,” it is Polyeucte's attachment to the bridal chamber that distances him not only from God but also from Néarque's love. The logic of loving so often clichéd in Biblical terms slips wildly-- from an all-encompassing universality to a

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<sup>54</sup> Greenberg also notes that Néarque's seduction speech is one that opposes a binary sexual system: “The new creed that Polyeucte ardently desires to embrace is just as ardently held beyond his grasp by his own sexual pleasure. Christianity, as it is represented by Néarque, takes on the coloration of an exclusively male community, or at least of a community which, must, in essence, oppose the contamination of heterosexual indulgence” (122).

specificity of singular love, to the apophatic (negatively defined love) that can only be based on exclusion, to a parallel type of love between Néarque and Polyeucte.

The figure at work in this speech is called “metalepsis:” a sliding chain of similitudes. Metalepsis was (and still is) less popular than its cousins, metonym and metaphor, and its status in early modern rhetoric was a confused one: many people did not know whether to laud or loathe this term for his destabilizing possibilities. For example, the phrase “angel wings on the mountain's back,” to signify a snow-covered mountain, requires a slippage of metonym to metonym: the snow is white and soft as like angel feathers, the mountain is covered with snow, the side of the mountain looks like a back. In the phrase “angel wings on the mountain's back,” however, “snow” as the prime animating figure, actually drops out. In Quintilian’s rhetorical treatise, he calls metalepsis “an intermediate step [...] signifying nothing in itself, but affording a passage to something. It is a trope that we give the impression of being acquainted with rather than one that we actually ever need” and later says “we need not waste any more time over it” (*Institutio* VIII.vi,37). We should note Quintilian's particular emphasis on rushing over (and effectively effacing) that trope which is, itself, self-effacing. Is the metalepsis insignificant because of its status as a less lofty and less refined rhetorical device? Or does Quintilian’s dismissal reveal the trope’s potential? This sudden propelling-forth happens invisibly: we are aware of the thrust of movement, but we don't necessarily see the linkages itself. Metalepsis ties together tropically, through links of likeness: the metonym of a metonym is a strange kinship indeed.

Metalepsis is the generating figure that knits together, but must also necessarily disappear, as the agent of the linking. “The peculiar power of metalepsis in Renaissance theory is precisely that it leaves certain steps in the exchange invisible,” notes Brian Cummings, an invisibility which, I argue, is animated by a type of speed. This trope “makes space for

imagination, for language as fiction or fantasy. In this figure we do not know how we have got to where we are, as if we have been transported by an unseen mechanism” (Cummings, 230). This sudden propelling-forth happens invisibly: we are aware of the thrust of movement, but we don't necessarily see the intermediary linkages itself. Metalepsis generates queer ties, enabling A and C to adjoin together, two terms which “ought not” normally be naturally twinned, but are able to be linked tropically, grammatically through ties that rush meaning's connections.<sup>55</sup>

Although metaphor is a rather conventional trope trading in likeness, in metalepsis, meaning is stretched beyond its clearly linked significance, possibly to the point of failure. If metaphor “transfers a name to something unlike but not so unlike itself” metalepsis is the trope that “stretches metaphor a little further than we want to go, perhaps even to the breaking point” (Cummings 222). In a sense, metalepsis itself figures the movement of the play's events, compressing too many things together under the unity of time. The drama slides over too many things, quickly, juxtaposing Pauline's two-week old marriage to Polyeucte with Sévère's return from being thought “dead.” This rapid cramming-together of events stretches the unity to its breaking point in order to express something that could not have been articulated, visualized on the stage. Through metalepsis as well, meaning is expressed through unpredictable and collapsed pathways of liaison and exchange.

We see this sliding chain of resemblances at work in Néarque's speech. Néarque spends a

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<sup>55</sup> I am deploying this sense of metalepsis carefully taking into consideration Valerie Traub's very solid argument against an overconflation of metalepsis' movements and erasures with “queer analysis.” She writes: “Metalepsis occurs when a present effect is attributed to a remote cause; it links A to D but only by eliding B and C.... Metalepsis can be rhetorically powerful, but it is vulnerable to critique as fuzzy logic... More interested in the status of metalepsis as a repressed or failed rhetorical device, Menon uses it to read absent sex scenes in Shakespearean drama, scenes of implied consummation that, despite their failure to be staged nonetheless link social cause to tragic effect... [yet] fails to translate into a cogent defense of metalepsis as a mode of queer argument”(31). However, what Traub critiques in the “fuzzy logic” of Menon's and Freccero's usage of the trope is the over-analogized generalization, extending metaleptic usage as “embody[ing] the spirit of queer analysis” (Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 2), as if queer analysis (as an entity) could be embodied in a single trope. What I wish to emphasize here is that metalepsis' rejection of order and sequence does not in and of itself defy a heteronormative teleology. However, what metalepsis does enact, especially and specifically in this instance in the play, is a type of rushing that cannot be merely dismissed as “fanaticism” or “fuzzy logic,” but is actively employed by the two characters to express that which lies outside of representation and the representable.

lot of time emphasizing the intensity and singularity of love required by God: “Il faut ne rien aimer qu'après lui, qu'en lui-même.” This is a singularity that slides into a rejection of marital love and norms of social identification: “Négliger, pour lui plaire, et femme, et biens et rang.” While the rejection of “biens et rang” could feasibly fit with Biblical maxims, the rejection of his wife seems to be out of place, and it is a refusal which could feasibly open up the space for substitution-- a reason why Stratonice's first complaint is that Néarque has torn Polyeucte from Pauline's arms. In fact, Néarque's primary insistence in the first scene of the play is dissolving the heteronormative ties that bind Polyeucte to his wife: he urges his friend to ignore his wife's tears and pleas. Left out of his speech is an invisible linking mechanism: the fact that for Néarque to urge Polyeucte to accept this “ardeur parfaite [...] que je vous souhaite,” there has to be a fundamental affection and intimacy propelling Néarque to urge Polyeucte to know, approach and explore Godly love. This is the affection born from “leur vieille amitié.” All of these descriptions of perfected love, the denigration of worldly love--all of his exhortations to Polyeucte are generated from an equivalently similar love between the two men.

Metalepsis introduces into the play an invisible motor, hurrying the action along. It deliberately leaves out the crucial linking term, asking the reader or auditor to infer or provide the missing pieces, joining far-stretched concepts together themselves in order to articulate the pulsing energy which can only be seen by the traces it leaves behind. Metaleptic movement happens through *not* naming or not presenting it. In a sense, this is a hidden trope, the movement of an invisible “turn” that turns absence into sequence. The invisible motor competes against the visible propulsion, the temporal forward progress enabled by Absolutist authorization. And possibly, implicit in this Quintilian's denigration of the trope is an uneasiness in relation to metalepsis' subversive potential, a generative source of movement and action.

Such metaleptic collapses also create strangely gendered ties, frequent in the opening scene in which Néarque “seduces” Polyeucte to the Christian faith. Néarque mentions “Dieu qui tient votre âme et vos jours dans sa main” (I, i, 27),<sup>56</sup> insinuating a subtly eroticized “cupping” or “cradling” of Polyeucte’s self, and perhaps, by extension, proposing a cradling embrace from his friend. This “Dieu,” however, is rapidly switched out with “sa grace,” which enables Néarque to substitute the feminine “elle” for “sa grace” in the subsequent phrases. This subtle metonymic linkage coats the descriptions of God’s interactions with a feminine patina:

Il est toujours tout juste et tout bon, mais sa grâce

Ne descend pas toujours avec même efficace

Elle quitte ces traits qui pénètrent les cœurs,

Le nôtre s’endurci, la repousse, l’égare,

Le bras qui la versait en devient plus avare

Et cette sainte ardeur qui doit porter au bien

Tombe plus rarement ou n’opère plus rien (I, i, 29-35).<sup>57</sup>

Néarque’s iterations of God “queer” the gender of God. Not only do the feminine “grâce” and “ardeur” substitute themselves for the godly judgment, but this femininity is also imagined to have “penetrating” possibilities at the same time; once “sa grace” is pronominally referred to as “elle”, the line (31) is peppered with the punctuating rhythm of a repeated “t” sound. Néarque’s positing of the false grammatical hetero-relationality in religion may stem from his wager that Polyeucte would be likely to accept this sexualized caress from the cradling “hand” if it were

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56 “God, who holds your soul and your days in his hand”

57 “He is always ever good and righteous, but his grace  
Is not always bestowed with the same efficacy  
She (grace) that penetrated men’s hearts, now turns her back.  
Our heart, grown hardened, pushes her away and strays,  
The generous arms which once gave her (grace) to us become more avaricious  
And this holy zeal which should lead us to good  
Comes more and more rarely, or fails to move at all.”

dressed up in feminine accoutrements: “sa grace” or “sainte ardeur.” In response to this, however, Polyeucte responds: “Vous me connaissez mal: la meme ardeur me brûle/ Et le désir accroît quand l’effet se recule” (I, i, 41-42),<sup>58</sup> he is on one level responding to Néarque’s accusations of weak Christian faith, but on a more deeper level, he casts aside the false veil of feminine difference with which Néarque has cloaked his/God’s love, and insists upon the sameness of their passionate experiences.

### *III. Queer Etiologies*

In a sense, the play's plot, as outlined above, is also rather simple. Jacques Schérer speaks of the relatively straightforward nature of the play, noting that it lacks peripeteia, or sudden tragic reversals: “Même indifférence aux péripéties dans Polyeucte: une fois que le héros s'est proclamé chrétien, la tragédie ne résulte que des heurts de volontés naturelles des personnages”(89).<sup>59</sup> In Schérer's view, the main “change” or reversal is the declaration of the Christian conversion; everything else unfolds “naturally” from this main revelation. However, what animates the play, I believe, are not necessarily the “natural” reactions and gestures in response to the conversion. Rather, the action, instead of being propelled by a series of dilemmas, decisions, or complications, is generated by characters' reactions to the staged spectacle of an event: a loved one revealing himself to be swayed by forbidden desires, as a person entirely different from how they had presumed him to be. Thus the “tragic” stems not from plot complications typical to tragedy (being made to marry the murderer of one’s father, say) but rather the more ephemeral sentiments deriving from confusion and loss the face of an

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58 “You don't understand me: the very same ardor burns within me/ And desire only increases when the effect disappears”

59 “The same indifference of peripetetic reversals in *Polyeucte*: as soon as the hero announces himself as Christian, the tragedy is merely comprised of natural clashes between the characters.”



unstable system of intimacy and social identity.

The play interrogates the fixedness of desire-based identity due to the fact that Polyeucte must constantly “montrer qui nous sommes” (II.vi.646),<sup>60</sup> arguably the only “act” staged repeatedly in the play. There is no biologic, corporeal, or ideologically fixed referent for his identity, which is anchored in affective ties and belief. Indeed, the ambiguously fixed nature of his conversion-- the fact that this identity is a desire-founded structure, causes much epistemo-ontologic anxiety for the other characters. Who Polyeucte *is*, as husband, friend, son-in-law, or something else-- must constantly be read instantaneously, in the moment, or at least in *différance* to what he is *not*. Furthermore, the turn of the conversion does not open onto an additive structure of identity, one in which his relation to religion could be supplemented onto his former status: rather, it is a conversion which is read as an all-encompassing totalizing change.

When Stratonice comes back from the temple after having witnessed Néarque and Polyeucte's public display of their new faith, she struggles to name him, initially only able to define him negatively: “Tout votre songe est vrai, Polyeucte n'est plus...” (III.ii.775).<sup>61</sup> Pauline hastens to respond, hysterically, “Il est mort!”(III.ii.776), taking “n'est plus” euphemistically to mean “is no more.” Stratonice continues, launching into a stream of emasculating invectives: “Non, il vit ; mais, ô pleurs superflus ! /Ce courage si grand, cette âme si divine,/ N'est plus digne du jour, ni digne de Pauline./ Ce n'est plus cet époux si charmant à vos yeux” (III.ii.776-

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<sup>60</sup> Jean Starobinski, in his book *L'Oeil vivant* discusses this desire of the Cornelian hero to capitalize on the power and seduction of vision: “Dans les œuvres du début [de Corneille], le héros n'est qu'un personnage ébloui ; dans les œuvres de la maturité, il se voudra éblouissant, non plus spectateur d'une apparition éclatante, mais source même de l'éclat, se montrant, se donnant en spectacle, et contemplant lui-même sa propre gloire” (55). So in a sense Polyeucte's desire to display himself, his need to make a spectacle of himself, is typical of the heroic type that Starobinski analyzes.

<sup>61</sup> S: Your dream is entirely true, Polyeucte is no more.

P: He is dead!

S: No, he lives, but O, superfluous tears/ This courage so great, this soul so divine/ Is no longer worthy of the day, no longer worthy of Pauline/ This is no longer the husband so charming to your eyes.

779). Effectively Stratonice places him in a series of gendered lacks, constituting a negative relation to his masculine courage and his spousal position.

Jacques Schérer draws upon Pauline's moment of misunderstanding as an illustration of the *quiproquo*, which is “un faux obstacle que [le héros] prend pour un vrai”(73).<sup>62</sup> This term *quiproquo*, distinct from the logics of equitable exchange inherent in the anglicized usage *quidproquo*, indicates taking something for something else, but the exchangeability is always a misunderstanding and a mis-taking. Here, death is prematurely (mis)taken in the place of emasculation, but the interplay between death and gendered negativity is only possible through “l'extrême rapidité du quiproquo” or a “quiproquo-express,” as he terms this specific moment in the play (75). Indeed, although the brief flicker of shock is quickly dissipated, the presumed death exchanged for realized invectives, the lurching speed of misapprehension actually touches upon a deeper instability which troubles the rest of the play's action: Polyeucte's conversion wrests language of identity, intimacy and relation from its normative signifying function.

This confusion over Polyeucte's newly converted self is echoed by Stratonice's discourse. Unable to pin down precisely the nature of his crime, she resorts to a logic of accretion. In elaborating why Polyeucte is no longer the same kind of former spouse as he had been, she pulls together a dozen terms:

C'est l'ennemi commun de l'état et des dieux,  
Un méchant, un infâme, un rebelle, un perfide,  
Un traître, un scélérat, un lâche, un parricide,  
Une peste exécration à tous les gens de bien,  
Un sacrilège impie : en un mot, un chrétien (III, ii, 780-784).<sup>63</sup>

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62 “A false obstacle that the hero takes to be real”

63 “He is the common enemy of the State and the gods, A villain, an infamous one, a rebel, a perfidious man  
A traitor, a scoundrel, a coward, a parricide, A disgusting plague on all of the good people, An impious

Ultimately, however, none of these terms is able to fully answer the question of why he is no longer worthy of holding his spousal position; taken together, the insults comprise a general negative image, but it is unclear why Stratonice needs to resort to so many “injures” in order to prove her point. Pauline herself even says, weakly, in his defense: “Ce mot [chrétien] aurait suffi sans ce torrent d'injures” (III, 2, 785).<sup>64</sup> The “torrent” performs a type of grasping, a rapid avalanche of names barely hooked together by commas, unhinged from grammatical order, powering forth not through verbal linkages, but with one word slipping and sliding to the other. The phrase “en un mot,” set up by the colon promises some sort of logical justification anchoring the stream of invectives (“to sum up...”). The word is doubly insufficient, not only weakly topping off such a hyperbolic stream of insults, but also because Polyeucte has not “merely” converted. He has shattered his former bonds between himself and the State, his family, and more. Stratonice's discourse seems to be searching for another kind of word which could point to Polyeucte's conversion as being not only religious, but perhaps rooted in a second, sexualized turn, a turn that has unearthed new affective attachments and desires.

The characters' anxieties over the relationship between “fruit” and “séduit” reflect a paranoia over the origin of religious conversion—such investigation of the “origin” reveals another destabilizing “fondement,” in its definition as “raison, cause sujet” (*DF* 343): is locating the cause for something the same as providing a reason for its existence? These same questions haunt contemporary debates over queer etiologies. Valerie Rohy writes that homosexuality has figured, in the paranoid social imagination, either to be transmitted through genetic reproduction (which normative heterosexuality has claimed exclusively as its own) or through memetic reproduction, or transmission of a queer “meme”:

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blasphemer: in one word, a Christian”

64 “This word would have sufficed without this torrent of insults”

In this anxious etiology, homosexuality is a dangerous idea that persists like a biological trait, a barren desire that outpaces heterosexual reproduction. Same-sex desire, in other words, is construed as the expression not of a gene but of a meme...As a “unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation,” the successful meme shares the same qualities as the successful gene: “longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity” (Dawkins, *Selfish Gene*, 192, 194) [...] Queer genealogy reinvents human relationality, forging what Hocquenghem calls “non-limitative horizontal relations” instead of the vertical “hierarchical succession” of Oedipal genealogy (109). While genes pass vertically from parent to child, memes can move horizontally through culture; homosexual generation could therefore proceed metonymically, spreading rapidly *across* a population. Detached from the geometry of straight lineage, queer reproduction is not a vertical descent of man but a web of horizontal relations, offering tropes not of inheritance but of transmission, communication, and contagion. Like the straight gene, the gay meme would replicate itself, mutate, and find expression—but the meme, in this fantasy, *does it better* (108, 109-110).

Rohy notes that antigay groups have used both the gay “gene” and the gay “meme” to power anti-marriage and anti-adoption agendas, but fighting such homophobia on the same grounds of etiology is always doomed to fail; such efforts to correct and defend the “true” cause of queer reproducibility forget the fact that the point of antigay groups is to “sterilize” (both figuratively and literally) the spread of queerness altogether. Antigay groups, according to Rohy, fail to realize that heterosexuality is no less “unnatural” than homosexuality; that heterosexual desire is equally constantly bolstered up through culture, discourse, and other social ideological institutions: “It is the effort to obscure that unnatural form of heterosexual reproduction that

impels the association of homosexuality with unnatural (discursive or memetic) proliferation and heterosexuality with natural (sexual or genetic) increase” (123).

Ultimately, in the final conversion scene, however, the tropic logics that govern etiological paranoia fall short. Polyeucte's literal death coincides with the death of the generating metaphor itself. A temporality founded upon “natural” (sexual or genetic) generation is to be privileged through excessively staging its difference from “unnatural” (queer or memetic) transfer. In these paranoid imaginaries of reproduction, natural generation takes as its trope the metonym of blood, and memetic generation is imagined as occurring through synchronic, metaphorized “contagion.” Pauline's conversion describes a scene where blood refuses its traditional place as the metonymic condensation of diachronic generation and, instead, swerves to reproduce more of the same, synchronically and memetically through contagion. She says:

Son [Polyeucte's] sang, dont tes bourreaux viennent de me couvrir,

M'a dessillé les yeux, et me les vient d'ouvrir.

Je vois, je sais, je crois, je suis désabusée :

De ce bienheureux sang tu me vois baptisée (V, v, 1725-1728).<sup>65</sup>

Thus, in Pauline's conversion scene, blood (sang) is wrested from its function which enables heteronormative linkages (“Polyeucte a du nom, et sort du sang des rois” [II, 1, 420]) a role that secured and fixed a certain political hierarchy and was the origin of Pauline's urged/forced marriage to Polyeucte in the first place. Here, in the image of the blood-spattered Pauline, blood's dramatization collapses the justifying metonym (sang du rois) by “literalizing” it as its refused other/specter-- the deviance which could be memetically, contagiously transferred.

In *Polyeucte*, the anxiety over just *how* Polyeucte converted and left the arms of his wife for the “fruits” that Néarque offered occludes the fact that “properly” oriented heterosexual

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65 “His blood, with which your executioners have spattered me/ Has unblinded my eyes and opened them finally/ I see, I know, I believe, I am disillusioned/ In this glorious blood you see me now baptised”

marriage and heterosexual desire is itself forced and performatively installed. Pauline's relationship with Polyeucte was born out of reason and calculation (on the part of Pauline's father), and not from "natural" inclinations towards each other. She says: "Et moi, comme à son lit je me vis destinée, / Je donnai par devoir à son affection / Tout ce que l'autre avait par inclination" (I, iii, 214-216).<sup>66</sup> If heterosexuality is posited as "normal" and the intense homoerotic intimacy that Néarque and Polyeucte share might be viewed as "unnatural," the quotation reveals that "affection" can be contrived or constructed in order to please another person. In the case of Pauline, she rationalizes the development of her affection: "comme à son lit je me vis destiné." Her orientation (towards the bed) is guided and monitored by her father, Félix, in order that she orient herself properly: heterosexually, and within a biopolitical framework of producing class-acceptable children. Thus, the type of relationship that is normally posited as "natural"—heterosexual marriage—is actually more artificial and forced than the organically blossoming, flourishing affections between Néarque and Polyeucte. We see the same "forced naturalness" in the scene between Félix and Pauline, when she resists seeing Sévère upon his return. Félix scolds her for having followed his orders too perfectly, saying that he wished she had resisted her original marriage to Polyeucte:

Ah! Pauline, en effet, tu m'as trop obéi,  
 Ton courage était bon, ton devoir l'a trahi.  
 Que ta rébellion m'eut été favorable,  
 Qu'elle m'eut garanti d'un état déplorable ! (I, iv, 331-334)<sup>67</sup>

Within such a repeated training and taming of desire, heterosexuality appears fairly contrived

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66 "And I, seeing myself destined for his bed/ I gave in to his affection through duty/ but what I gave to Polyeucte the other had taken from me freely."

67 "Oh Pauline, actually, you have obeyed me too well/ Your spirit was right but your duty betrayed you/ How your rebellion would have been favorable to me/ And how it would have saved me from this deplorable state."

and only performed through manipulation and obedience. Even in this sense, Pauline's adherence to patriarchal decree by obeying her father and marrying Polyeucte still elicits his displeasure, underscoring the fact that what appears as “normative” alliances of love and marriage were always staged, and even rebellion (in whatever form it might be enacted) would still be ultimately re-conscripted for political ends.

Pauline attempts to use the existing heteronormative structures to her own advantage: by “taking on” the figure of the typical woman, she tries to resist her father’s wishes.

Mon père, je suis femme, et je sais ma faiblesse,  
Je sens déjà mon cœur qui pour lui s’intéresse,  
Et poussera sans doute, en dépit de ma foi,  
Quelque soupire indigne et de vous et de moi.  
Je ne le verrai point (I, iv, 341-344)<sup>68</sup>

Félix performs another “orientation” move : “Il faut le voir, ma fille/ Ou tu trahis ton père et toute ta famille” (I, iv, 249-250). Even through pressure and emotional blackmail, he insists orienting her in the correct (or presumably correct) direction, whether towards Polyeucte’s bed or face-to-face with Sévère. In this circulation of substitutions, just as Félix stands in for the emperor Décie, Pauline here stands in for her father’s will. This politicized seduction of Sévère in deference to the father’s/ King’s desire echoes a rather homoerotic economy of political favorites.<sup>69</sup> Such an economy depends upon women, in this case Pauline, serving as conduits to

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68 “Father, I am a woman, and I know my weakness/ I feel, already my heart begins to stir for him/ And it will emit, no doubt, in despite of myself/ Some amorous sigh unworthy of you and of me/ I will not see him.”

69 While I lack space to fully unpack this strange moment in the text, Albin recounts how Sévère, long thought dead, was actually rescued from the battlefield by the enemy king, who was so taken by his beauty and his heroism alone:

Le roi de Perse aussi l’avait fait enlever  
Témoin de ses hauts faits et de son grant courage,  
Ce monarque en voulut connaître le visage  
On le mit dans sa tente, où tout percé de coups,

advance power. At the same time, this circulation of metonymy is one that Polyeucte and Néarque refuse to participate in—just as Polyeucte casts off Néarque’s use of “sa grâce” and insists “Vous me connaissez mal—la même ardeur me brûle,” (I, 1, 41) they defy such a system of substitutions in favor of insisting, outright, on expressing their samenesses to one another, sans (female) conduit. And it is this sameness that not only serves a phatic function, to reaffirm that they have heard each other and are on the same page, but this mode of attunement takes on, itself, an eroticized nature.

#### *IV. Overtones, or the Attractions of Attunement*

*Polyeucte* in particular presents tropes of queer desire which do not signal marginality, but rather take center stage, hidden in plain sight, in its dazzling over-legibility. This gesture of over-legibility presents itself in such a way that it precludes the interrogation of, or even presentation of, gaps and margins. However, contrary to a superficial reading, over-legibility does not operate in a unilateral gesture, suppressing or covering over certain queer desires lurking at its core, but rather serves to iteratively engender such “deviant” intimacies and forging non-normative connections. This type of presentation resonates with Anne-Lise François’ “open secret” in which the open secret reveals without announcing itself as claiming a discrete type of knowledge; the revelation does not purport to have a teleologic weight but rather is unveiled merely to be revealed:

the 'secret' of the 'open secret' need not mean hidden or unstated, but simply

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Tout mort qu’il paraissait, il fit mille jaloux  
Là bientôt il montra quelque signe de vie :  
Ce prince généreux en eut l’âme ravie (I, 2, 288-294).

So while Polyeucte’s declaration of Christian faith is instigated by his desire to “suivre” his friend Néarque, such a male-male fascination leads to both of their martyred deaths. Here, while Sévère is meant to die on the battlefield, he is actually saved by the rival king’s male-male fascination, especially his interest in Sévères face and injured body. The two tales, one of a seduction into death and the other of a seduction into life, seem to mirror each other loosely.



unavailable, untouchable, nonpossessable, implying a relation to the beloved that neither appropriates nor denies. In a context where the norm for fulfillment remains sexual possession, it describes a chaste and chastening mode of interaction: chaste in the double sense of bearing little or no material consequences and of belonging to those who engage in the least possible intercourse, chastening in the sense of limiting anyone's power to do more than leave and be let alone. This chasteness also refers to the open secret's perfect economy of means: for both its revelation and concealment, it uses no more than already available channels of communication (81).<sup>70</sup>

Due to the nature of classical theatre, time, in some form (whether strictly adhering to the unities or not) must *pass in some way* on stage. The unity of time becomes both the “available channel of communication” as well as the restriction on the communication. Velocity, or strange bursts of speed or drag, becomes one of the only ways possible of using this “available channel,” of openly representing within the terms given, but staging a friction within this channel.

When presenting this work at a conference, I was approached by a horrified French professor who exclaimed: “I hope you aren’t implying that Néarque and Polyeucte were *secretly gay!*” At that time, I was at a loss as to how to respond to her indignation that I was “putting” gay feelings where they did not belong. The insistence that Polyeucte is absolutely in love with Pauline is prevalent and widely insisted upon in Corneillian scholarship. Dubrovsky, for example, acknowledges that Polyeucte avoids and repudiates Pauline, but he transforms this rejection into a “feint” to cover up Polyeucte’s amorous feelings for Pauline:

Car Polyeucte est, nous l’avons vu, épris de sa femme autant qu’on peut l’être,  
mais tout son effort, lorsque s’ouvra la pièce, va justement à se dépendre. Aussi

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<sup>70</sup> It may be of some interest, in terms of the question of chasteness, that Polyeucte is childless. Thus,

son attitude envers sa femme est-elle aimant, plutôt qu'amoureuse; son langage tendre, mais non attendri; poli, certes, mais point chevaleresque. Il peut même, au contraire, s'accommoder, par instants, d'une certaine brusquerie: "Un songe vous fait peur... Adieu: vos pleurs sur moi prennent trop de puissance" (I, 2, 119, 122) (234)<sup>71</sup>

What would it mean, however, to consider this "brusquerie" not as a cover for his true romantic feelings, but rather as a type of "open secret": Polyeucte's openly evident disdain for women in comparison to his burning ardor and zeal for Néarque's suggestions? At the same time, it would be anachronistic to diagnose this situation as "protogay."

Furthermore, like François's interpretation of the open secret, queer desires in Corneille's *Polyeucte* are openly present, but do not signal themselves as such or seek to gain purchase "in the name of" a certain type of sexual politic. Such desires, rather than residing in the marginal, are actually generated through their intensity of legibility and perfectly harmonized attunement. Hinging on an aesthetics of over-legibility, in which dazzling visibility enable types of articulation which proffer themselves as entirely *other* than queer but invoke queer desire through an apophatic turn: of indexing what cannot be mentioned by overtly unmentioning it. While François' analytic hinges on a communication of quietly persistent demurral or refusal, what I call "dazzling over-legibility" works through tropes which equally "uses already available channels of communication" but trades on tropes which appear to announce and put forth a claim about desire.

I wish to take seriously Judith Butler's question: "For how can one read a text for what does *not* appear within its own terms, but which nevertheless constitutes the illegible conditions

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<sup>71</sup> "For Polyeucte is, we have seen, as taken with his wife as much as one can be, but all of his efforts from the beginning of the play, are focused on ridding himself of her. His attitude towards his wife is caring, rather than loving, kind, rather than tender; polite, certainly, but hardly chivalrous. He can even manage, at times, a certain brusqueness: "A dream makes you afraid... goodbye, your tears are too much for me.'"

of its own legibility? Indeed, how can one read a text for the movement of that disappearing by which the textual ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are constituted?” (*Bodies that Matter*, 37). Sexuality, once consigned to the domain of the legible, participates in reiterating and reinforcing the structures that allow certain kinds of desires to be grouped together in graspable form (“gay” or “homoerotic”). But in the instance of such a declaration, such a making-legible, that action of condensation itself bears no marker of (and pays no debt to) the “illegible conditions” or the network of situations, structures, reading hermeneutics, and discourses that *make* something appear as legible.

In this case, the claim that the “open secret” makes, because so visible and perfectly legible, doubly marks the “movement of that disappearing” through which certain sexual desires are made to be not only unfulfilled but also impossibly unfulfillable. It “covers over” these illegible conditions because the “openness” of the claim presents *something* (a sexual desire, an erotic twinge, an inkling of intimacy). At the same time, its exaggerated, outright openness points to the falseness and the contingency upon which any act that could be termed “legible” is complicit. In my analysis, it is that movement itself which queers discourse, and perhaps it is through tracing that gesture of over-legibility that one can also find within, spectrally suppressed, the movement of that disappearance.

A paradigm for this might be the *overtone* or *harmonic* in music: sometimes, when two instruments play notes in perfect harmony, an unexpected, higher extra pitch is generated. Importantly, the harmonic tone is not actually played by the musicians, but produced as a supplementary product of the perfect matching-up of two notes. The overtone marks a type of over-legibility insofar as it is both the marker of this exact matching as well as its excess. The harmonic interests this study insofar as it suggests a way of conceiving of aberrant or non-normatively accessed pleasure (be it sonic or sexual) which can only be grasped through

perfected articulation-- instead of being sounded marginally or edged out, such desire is apparent, in plain sight, but only caught by the trained hear to the unexpected, lingering overtones. While I will indulge in a slight digression here to discuss the overtones, I believe that they will illuminate the dynamic between Polyeucte and Néarque in a way that clarifies the “overlegible” (and not “protogay”) intimacy between them.

Early modern scholars of music theory, physics, and mathematics suspected the presence of overtones, but could not fully account for or explain it. The puzzle was this: when a note was played, say on a vibrating string on a violin, if one listened closely, one could hear a few faint, specific, higher resonances at the same time. Another way of discerning these ghostly higher tones (or “upper partials”) was to play a stringed instrument and to watch or touch certain higher-pitched strings while the lower note (called the “fundamental”) was being played. And here the “base” of the fundamental appears once again.

This phenomenon was observed by Descartes in his “Abregé de la musique,” a little-studied treatise on music theory, pleasure, and taste which was filled with more musings than actual “cartesian” analysis. He notes rightly however that “j’ai reconnu par expérience dans les cordes de luth ou de quelque autre instrument que ce soit, que si vous en touchez une, la force du son ébranlera toutes les autres cordes qui seront plus aiguës d’une quinte ou d’un diton[...] Or cette force des accords ne peut venir sans doute que de leur perfection ou imperfection (460).<sup>72</sup> For Descartes, the sympathetic vibration of neighboring strings by certain intervals was enough to assert that there was a “natural” basis for certain notes to be harmoniously brought together. Such productive resonances, only effectuated through perfect attunement, provided poetic

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72 “I have seen through experience in the strings of the lute or whatever other instrument that it be, that if you touch one, the force of the sound will vibrate all of the other strings which are tuned higher by a fifth or a major third [...] however the force of this harmonization can only come, without a doubt, from their perfection or imperfection”

inspiration for seventeenth century dramatists. Even if the mechanics of such a phenomenon were beyond their grasp, this trope appears, for example, in Calderòn's *El Médico de su honra*:

Dicen que dos instrumentos  
Conformemente templados,  
Por los ecos dilatados  
Comunican los acentos :  
Tocan el uno, y los vientos  
Hiere el otro, sin que allí  
Nadie le toque; y en mí  
Esta experiencia se viera ;  
Pues si el golpe allá te hiriera,  
Muriera yo desde aquí. II. 1211-1220<sup>73</sup>

The physical and mathematical reason for this mutual vibration would not be discovered until the mid-eighteenth century. Thomas Christensen notes that Marin Mersenne touches upon the same problem and hazards a guess, but is unable to fully explain it: “Eventually the correct theory occurred to Mersenne, to wit: 'it seems it is entirely necessary that [the string] beat the air five, four, three, and two times at the same time.' But Mersenne rejected this idea as 'impossible to imagine' and 'against experience'” (136). Effectively, what Mersenne was puzzling over was this: hearing a higher pitched sound meant that the string had to vibrate more rapidly and frequently than the way the string would vibrate at a lower tone. But if only one string was being played, how could it vibrate both quickly and slowly at the same time?

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73 They say that two stringed instruments, when perfectly in tune, transmit the tones by echoing each other: play the one, and the other, though untouched, is moved by the whisper of the wind. And so it is with me: if a blow struck you there, I would die here.

These ghostly higher tones, simply put, were byproducts of the string vibrating many different ways *at once*. The string has a main speed, or frequency of vibration-- interestingly enough, called the “fundamental.” At the same time, the string vibrates in perfect integer multiples of this fundamental frequency, and the faster vibrations cause the string to be “split” or subdivided into perfect halves, thirds, etc., divided at places called “nodes.” These smaller subsections, because “shortened,” are the ones which produce the faint higher pitches of the overtones. Rameau grouped this whole system under something he called the “*corps sonore*” (sonorous/ vibrating body):

The *corps sonore*-- which I rightfully call the fundamental sound-- this single source, generator, and master of all music, this immediate cause of all its effects, the *corps sonore* I say, does not resonate without producing at the same time all of the continuous proportions from which are born harmony, melody, modes, and genres, and even the least rules necessary to practice (quoted in Christensen, 167).

Even if the intricacies of the physics of this musical phenomenon escaped these early modern theorists, they were touching upon some key concepts which serve as useful paradigmknos for illustrating the modes of queer expression in *Polyeucte*: 1) that the whole system of attunement, harmony, and complex supplementary higher pitches was governed by the “fundamental,” or the lowest, bottom note ; 2) what was at stake in the analysis of overtone was that the impossible seemed to be taking place-- that the higher speeds or frequencies of vibration were happening simultaneously with the fundamental, slower speed; 3) that notions of “natural” generation of harmony hinged on sectioning, sub-dividing, and splitting the fundamental into aliquot parts. In a later section, I will treat the multiple nature of this “fundamental” and its relationship to queer desire.

Such higher overtones (upper partials) become more readily apparent when two (or more) instruments play the same note in unison. A musician must make sure that the frequency of the vibrations of his or her instrument is perfectly in tune with (at the same pace as) the other's. Such an anxiety over sameness, over matching one's pace and speed the other other is apparent in Polyeucte and Néarque's dialogue. Both Néarque and Polyeucte exhibit an anxiety over their ability to *perfectly* match up the intensity of their desires. There are no stand-ins or go-betweens for them. Polyeucte's reassurance in the first act points to an emphasis on sameness, with “aussi que” and “la même”: “Vous me connaissez mal: la même ardeur me brûle/ Et le désir accroît quand l'effet se recule/ Ces pleurs, que je regarde avec un œil d'epoux/ Me laissent dans le cœur aussi chrétien que vous” (I, i, 41-44).<sup>74</sup> With “la même ardeur me brûle,” he insists upon the homogeneity of their burning passions. Polyeucte lays aside a description of his husbandly concern over Pauline's tears to in favor of focusing on an insistence upon the perfected sameness of affective intensity between himself and Néarque. The phrases “aussi que” and “la même” repeat throughout the play, indicating an attention not only to phatically confirming the other's sentiment, but also, and more importantly, attuning and adjusting one's emotion to equal the other's.

In the play, not only does desire need to be matched, but speed as well. In the first scene, Néarque urges Polyeucte to convert, saying “Hâtez-vous donc de l'être,” to which Polyeucte responds, “Oui, j'y cours, cher Néarque/ Je brûle d'en porter la glorieuse marque” (I, i, 93-94),<sup>75</sup> indicating a privileging of rushing and haste; later, however, once Polyeucte has converted and wants to over turn the idols in the temple, Néarque balks. Polyeucte says, “Mais loin de me

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74 “You don't understand me: the same ardor burns within me/ And the desire only increases when the effect is withdrawn/ These tears, which I see with a husband's eye/ Strike a heart just as Christian as yours”

75 “Yes, I run there, dear Néarque/ I burn to bear the glorious mark”

presser, il faut que je vous presse ! / D'où vient cette froideur ?” (II, vi, 681-682).<sup>76</sup> Thus, the metaleptic speed (“If you love (me) God, convert right away”) is as equally as important as attuning these speeds, as engendering a unison frequency, the exact same fundamental tone, which could possibly sympathetically resonate and generate the overtones, however faintly present, of their desire for one another. Such a matched frequency perfects and confirms the generative resonances of the sonorous body. For Rameau, Christensen notes, “the *corps sonore* assumed cosmic proportions in his writings as a veritable icon, the progenitor of all the arts, sciences, and even religion” (28).

This generative “corps sonore” is present again in the pivotal scene of Acte II, when the two men finally decide to present themselves as Christians (to come out and “montrer qui nous sommes”), while they do not actually speak in unison, they do the next closest thing: repeating and reciting each others' words *à la lettre*. Polyeucte says, in response to Néarque’s hesitation:

Il faut (je me souviens encore de vos paroles)  
 Négliger, pour lui plaire, et femme, et biens, et rang,  
 Exposer pour sa gloire et verser tout son sang.  
 Hélas ! Qu'avez-vous fait de cette amour parfaite  
 Que vous me souhaitiez, et que je vous souhaitez?  
 S'il vous en reste encore, n'êtes-vous point jaloux  
 Qu'à grand'peine chrétien, j'en montre plus que vous? (II, vi, 686-692)<sup>77</sup>

Polyeucte points to the unifying effect of the repetition by indicating that the words of one man are being passed exactly from Néarque's lips to his own. He draws upon this “unisson” device

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76 “But far from rushing myself, I must rush you/ Where does this coldness come from?”

77 “One must (I still remember your words)/ Reject, to please him, wife, goods, and rank/ Reveal yourself for his glory and pour forth your blood./ Alas, what have you done with this perfected love/ That you wished me, and that I wish you/ If there is any left in you, are you not ashamed/ That barely Christian, I show it more than you?”



because he is alarmed at the disaccord wrought by the “j'en montre plus que vous”-- an intensity that is out of sync with and in excess of Néarque's. Additionally, what is at stake in this performance of unifying repetition is to reassert the “amour parfaite,” ambiguously pointing to both Christian love as well as the love between the two men. Polyeucte's slid-in parenthetical remark underscores that what he says (or is about to say) are actually Néarque's words, preserved and memorized, and recited to draw his friend in to perfect attunement.

In contrast to the notion of this perfected unison, as exemplified by Doña Mencía in the earlier Calderón citation or in Néarque and Polyeucte's performance of unified speed and speech, Pauline, Polyeucte's wife, expresses her anxiety over feeling terribly disjointed from her husband. Her friend Stratonice comforts her, saying,

On n'a tous deux qu'un cœur qui sent mêmes traverses,  
Mais ce cœur a pourtant ses fonctions diverses,  
Et la loi de l'hymen qui vous tient assemblés  
N'ordonne pas qu'il tremble alors que vous tremblez,  
Ce qui fait vos frayeurs ne peut le mettre en peine :  
Il est Arménien, et vous êtes Romaine  
Et vous pouvez savoir que nos deux nations  
N'ont pas sur ce sujet mêmes impressions (I, iii, 145-152).<sup>78</sup>

Here we see an insistence upon diversity or difference that wasn't present in the scene between Néarque and Polyeucte. While the two men overflow with protestations of dedication and love, and employ the rhetoric of “sameness” to emphasize their passion (for God, but perhaps also for each other) Stratonice's description of Pauline's relationship emphasizes differences—

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78 “We all have hearts that feel sentiment/ but the heart, however, has diverse functions/ and the hymeneal law which ties you together/ Does not command that you tremble when he trembles./ That which makes you afraid doesn't need to affect him/ He is Armenian, and you are Roman/ And you should know that our two nations/ Don't have the same reactions to the same subject.”

differences between separate bodies that are divided by cultural and corporeal uniquenesses. By insisting on the separation between the bodies of husband and wife, Stratonice attempts to explain why the two bodies do not tremble in fear at the same time. Unlike the perfectly attuned instruments of Calderón's lovers or the perfectly unified speech between Néarque and Polyeucte, the relationship between Pauline and Polyeucte is defined by a non-attunement. If the two bodies are not attuned to the same frequency to tremble together in fear, perhaps neither do they tremble together in passion. Rather, Stratonice emphasizes “la loi de l’hymen” which unites Pauline and Polyeucte. Because their relationship has been effected in the (merely) legal domain, it does not merge their hearts (“qu’il tremble alors que vous tremblez”). Love here is presented as merely technical, legal, and must be intellectualized and rationalized in order to make sense.

Tropically, one way of indicating the harmonic-generating unison may lie in paronomasia, denoting perfected unity of sounds which are matched up in one word (sect/sex) but generate, as a function of this attunement, a supplementary sense which haunts the term sonically. Several times throughout the play Christianity is labeled a “secte”. More than merely euphemism or connotation, secte is not too far away from its paired paronomastic twin, “sex.” For Quintilian, there is something seductive about the trope of paronomasia, which is classified in a group of figures “which attracts and excites the attention of the hearer by some resemblance, equality, or opposition of words. Of these is the **παρονομασία** (*paronomasia*), which is called by the Latins *annominatio*.” (9.3.66). For Northrop Frye, paronomasia points to something secretive, private, a sort of sticking moment in the rhythm of conversation: “Paronomasia is one of the essential elements of verbal creation, but a pun introduced into a conversation turns its back on the sense of the conversation and sets up a self-contained verbal-sound-sense pattern in its place”( 276). The paronomasia of sect/sexe enacts a fleeting fleetness, in which one word and

its twinned other are heard simultaneously, almost too quickly to be caught, slipped in together in a unison pair. Thus, the trope of paranomasia, in the excesses of meaning produced by its own internal and hidden sameness, condenses and dramatizes the essential role that another kind of sameness—the identical matching-up of velocity—plays in undergirding, reinforcing, and expressing a certain kind of inarticulate erotics.

Paranomasia points to the very “movement of disappearing” insofar as the enactment of the rushed language instantaneously creates an “inside” and “outside”, the presented word and its back-turned double. The fleetingness, in its rushed briefness, points to the very hurdles of inarticulacy that queer intimacies face in grasping for a discursive form. As a by product of this tenuousness, its flickering intensifies the very nature of that shared intimacy.

Throughout the play, although the term “secte” begins as a denigrative insult, when the sound of its aural double, “sex” is struck simultaneously, the notion of “hiding in plain sight” becomes more apparent. Stratonice says at the beginning, comforting Pauline's fears of the Christians: “Leur secte est insensée, impie, et sacrilège, /Et dans son sacrifice use de sortilège” (I, 3, 257-258)<sup>79</sup>, using the pejorative term “sortilège” to denigrate the Eucharistic transformation. Later, after Polyeucte has converted, Pauline begs her father to save Polyeucte, saying, “Ne l'abandonner pas aux fureurs de sa secte” (III, 3, 909),<sup>80</sup> emphasizing the potential force of the irrational passion within sects. In yet another example, the ever-compassionate Sévère, despite the fact that his rival Polyecute's death means that he himself could marry Pauline, tries to defend Christianity to his friend, saying “La secte des chrétiens n'est ce que l'on pense,/ On les hait, la raison je ne la connais point [...] / Par curiosité, j'ai voulu les connaître”

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79 “Their sect is crazed, impious, and sacriligious,/ and in their sacrifice, use sorcery”

80 “Don't abandon him to the furies of his sect”

(IV, 6, 1412-1413; 1415).<sup>81</sup> In all of these: denigration of a transformative process, crazed passion, and curious temptation, we see that the conceptual and cultural difference between sects and its homonym, sex, are not so far apart. Sévère's comment expresses a longing to mingle with Christians, perhaps to expose himself to the possibility that he too may be “seduced” into the faith as Néarque seduced Polyeucte, but in this context the religious transformation could occur only through “knowing” (connaître) which redoubles the sexual euphemistic quality and points to the anxieties over queer memetic “contagion.”

Far from being just a device of affirming sameness, the unison engenders a certain particular pleasure afforded by the unison, not only due to its overtone-generating properties, but also in its relation to temporality. Descartes proposes that

On se sert de ces syncopes dans les cadences, parce qu'on goûte mieux ce qu'on a désiré longtemps. Ainsi le son se repose et s'arrête plus doucement dans un accord parfait ou un unisson, lorsque quelque dissonance les précède ; les degrés même doivent être mis entre les dissonances : car tout ce qui n'est point un accord passe ici pour une dissonance. Il faut encore observer que l'oreille se plaît davantage à entendre finir les parties par une octave que par une quinte, et encore mieux par l'unisson ; non pas que la quinte ne soit le plus agréable de tous les accords, mais parcequ'à la fin on doit chercher le repos, qui est plus grand dans les sons entre lesquels il y a peu ou point de différence, comme dans l'unisson (499-500).<sup>82</sup>

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81 “The Christian sect is not as we think it is/ We hate them, but I have no idea for what reason/ Out of curiosity I wanted to know them”

82 “One uses syncopation in cadences, for we best savor what we have desired for a long time. In this way the sound rests and finishes more gently in a perfect chord or in a unison when some dissonance has preceded it; degrees must be placed between the dissonances, for everything that is not harmonized can be dissonant. One must also observe that the ear delights all the more by hearing the sequence completed by an octave than by a fifth, and even best by the unison. This is not because the fifth is the most pleasant of all the intervals, but because at the end one is driven to seek rest, and this rest is the greatest in the sounds between which there is

Pauline's character is one specifically associated with such delay and drag, serving not only as a foil to the perfected “unisson” between Polyeucte and Néarque but also pointing to certain eroticizations of temporality itself. Pauline represents an un-timeliness, an out of sync nature as indicated by her proleptic dreams, the fact that her former lover comes back two weeks too late to marry her, the fact that she converts only after witnessing Polyeucte's death. In a sense, then, the difference and delay that Pauline generates stands to render Polyeucte's perfected unison attunement with Néarque all the sweeter “parce qu'on goûte mieux ce qu'on a désiré longtemps.”

#### ***V. The Fundamentals of Sexual Difference***

In this interplay between the denigrated minority status of Christians and the surprising twists, excesses and harmonies that Néarque and Polyeucte are able to produce, this drama seems to echo Deleuze's rallying cry that I cited in the introduction: “Theater will surge forward as something representing nothing but what presents and creates a minority consciousness as a universal-becoming. It forges alliances here and there according to the circumstances, following the lines of transformation that exceed theater and take on another form, or else that transform themselves back into theater for another leap” (255-256). And in lieu of a conclusion to this chapter, I will risk a digression by taking Deleuze seriously and following a line of transformation with a flying leap. Just as Néarque and Polyeucte are able to make the pre-existing language of identity and nomenclature stutter (“en un mot.... Un chrétien,” Stratonice sums up weakly), I am interested in highlighting the fundamentals and sexual overtones of their radical break to consider how what Deleuze would call their “foreignness” is able to make the

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little or no difference, such as a unison.”

language of sexuality and sexual difference stutter.

The paronomasia of sex and sects are not only related sonically, but also somewhat etymologically, as Derrida mentions, in his text “Fourmis” where he takes up the unlikely figure of an ant to conceptualize sexual difference. Pausing for a moment over Derrida’s “Fourmis” is not a mere digression; in fact, it gets to the heart of the sexual economy that drives *Polyeucte* as well as many other Corneille plays. Greenberg, among others, have noticed the particular sexual dynamics that animate this play, significant even among the Cornelian canon insofar as the play begins with the marriage already having taken place: “*Polyeucte* is a play about “the already-there of marriage, the already-there of sexual union, whose realization in the other plays had only been ad istant, flickering mirage” (CS 128).<sup>83</sup> Sexual difference, in this play, is not only the structuring force of a hierarchy in which wives and daughters submit to fathers and husbands, but rather it is a sexual economy that is used and remarked upon openly, even used by certain characters to achieve one end or another.

In Derrida's analysis, the symbolic cut between the sexes is impossible, since one depends on the other, they are just as linked as they are distinctly separated—he illustrates this using the figure of the *ring*: that which physically serves to sever and separate, but also link, literally at the joint between the different bulbs of the ant's body. And this word, “fourmi” or “ant” is one that enters into his writing dreamily, or at least via a dream:

Fourmi est un mot tout neuf pour moi. Il me vient d'un rêve d'Hélène, un rêve qu'elle a fait et qu'elle m'a donc raconté ces jours-ci sans savoir jusqu'à cet instant comment ce “fourmi” cheminerait en moi... puisqu'il y eut épiphanie d'un fourmi dans le rêve, que d'une fourmi il est bien difficile de voir, sinon de savoir,

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<sup>83</sup> In a sense, *Le Cid* could be thought of as an inversion of *Polyeucte*. In *Polyeucte*, the marriage has already taken place and the father (in law) kills the son; and the pathos derives from the layering of dual and contradictory relationships: wife and widow, father-in-law and executioner. In *Le Cid*, the marriage is yet-to-take place and the son is made to kill the father (in law). The specific temporality of the marriage (to happen, and already taken place) is one that Corneille manipulates skillfully in order to increase a certain sublimity.

la différence sexuelle, et non seulement parce qu'elle est imperceptiblement noire, mais parce que le mot *fourmi*, dès lors que dans un rêve, par exemple, celui d'Hélène, il se masculinise, nous le voyons à la fois soustrait au voir, voué au noir de l'aveuglement mais promis par là même à la lecture (71-72).

By punning on "elle," which refers to either "la différence sexuelle" or the ant (la fourmi), Derrida points out that it (both the ant and sexual difference) is difficult to see. But how can sexual *difference* be invisible? What we "see" when we look at sexual difference is not the difference itself, but the already-condensed by-products: sexes, sorted into male and female. In a sense, Derrida is asking a similar question to Butler's: How to read for that movement of disappearing by which an "inside" and an "outside" are constituted?

The forced rendering-legible of this always-differed, always differentially located sexual difference is noted through a torsion of grammatical regularity, by introducing "le" fourmi-- an imposition of the masculine article on the (presumably natural/normal) feminine une fourmi. He writes:

(entre parenthèses, tous les mots sont des fourmis, et par là des insectes, il faudra en tirer toutes les conséquences pour la différence sexuelle: dès qu'ils sont partie prenant de la différence sexuelle, il y a des mots ou plutôt des traces à lire. Elle commence *par là*. Il peut y avoir de la trace sans différence sexuelle, par exemple pour du vivant asexué, mais il ne peut y avoir de différence sexuelle sans trace, et cela ne vaut pas seulement pour 'nous', pour le vivant que nous appelons humain. Mais, dès lors, la différence sexuelle reste à interpréter, à déchiffrer, à désencrypter, à lire et non à voir. Lisible, donc invisible, objet de témoignage et non de preuve-- et du même coup problématique, mobile, non assurée, elle passe,

elle est de passage, elle passe de l'un à l'autre, par l'un et l'autre, de l'une à l'autre  
comme une fourmi, un fourmi de rêve) (74-75).<sup>84</sup>

With “entre parentheses,” he imposes a cut already on the text, but points to the punctuation marks by textually writing it out: “entre parenthèses.” The redoubled superfluity indicates the parentheses' doubled status as both supplement and excess. If all words are fourmis, or insectes, it is because all words already are marked and cut, sectioned like the “sect” of the insect, but also because they instantiate a cut, a difference (legibility) which produces meaning, or what we consider to be meaning. The parenthesis also effect a passage: one could pass *over* such a text, or one could think of the parenthetical half moons as effectuating an insertion: “Elle passe, elle est de passage.” Such passages, or insertions echo vaginal connotations as well as a transportational metaphor, with “passage.” At the end of the text, with the oscillation of “une fourmi” to “un fourmi de rêve” indicates that both it stems from the dream but also that it is only dreamt, it cannot exist. The magical immediate transformation from “elle” (referring to “la différence sexuelle” but possibly also to femininity at large) is effectuated by the simplest cut, taking off the tiniest ant-sized letter “e” to make it from “l'un à l'autre” to “l'une à l'autre.” And yet this smallest, most impossible cut makes the greatest difference. For what is this “autre” that sexuated “un” and “une” can become? Is there any “other” besides male/female, un/une? And how can we dream of this “other”?

The fixed nature of sexual difference itself and its concomitant ideologies and structures of legibility drive much of the early scenes in the play. There is a certain uncontestible

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84 “(In parenthesis, all words are ants, and consequently [*par là*] insects, one must assume all of the consequences for sexual difference: as soon as there is participation in sexual difference, there are words or rather traces to be *read*. It begins *there* [*par là*]. There can be traces without sexual difference, for example for unsexed living things, but there can be no sexual difference without traces, and this goes not only for 'us,' the living thing we call human. But, thenceforth, sexual difference remains to be interpreted, deciphered, decrypted, to be read and not seen. Legible, and therefore invisible, object of testimony and not of proof-- and in the same way, problematic, mobile, unfixed, it [*elle*] passes by, it serves as passage, it passes from one to the other, by one and the other, from one [*l'une*] to the other like *une fourmi, un fourmi* of a dream)” (Prenowitz, 21, with some of my amendments).



fossilization of gender polarities that the characters draw upon to justify their actions earlier on in the text. Polyeucte telles Néarque “Mais vous ne savez pas ce que c’est qu’une femme/ Vous ignorez quels droits elle a sur toute l’âme” (I, 1, 9-10) as he explains why he still feels obligated toward his wife. Similarly, Pauline says “Mon père, je suis femme, et je sais ma faiblesse” (I, 4, 341) as a means of gesturing towards incontestible gender universals that allow her to shirk her daughterly duties.

It is the turn away from such normativizing gender ideologies that the play enacts, in Polyeucte and Néarque’s revolutionary turn.

For Polyeucte, the cut that “négliger, pour lui plaire” insists on, the cut that divides him from the generating structures of family and rank, must act like the separating cut of the insect--it divides, yet joins together. (Re)production is not wrought from heterosexual liaisons (the two of the male/female) but rather, produced from the unified ephemerality of speed that is made possible when unhinged (cut) from the temporal unity. There is something generative in the rushed attunement between himself and Néarque, a production which lies outside of queer memes or straight genes, wrought from the division that he insists on, in the difference that he performs in his affective/elective identity. So in this sense, the phrase “Négliger, pour lui plaire, et femme...” indicates Néarque and Polyeucte’s rejection not only of his wife, but also, more radically, *womanhood*, and the categories of gender and sexual difference that the previous political hierarchy was founded upon.<sup>85</sup>

The figure of the ring ties together sexuality and sociality in several important ways. Derrida also notes that the ring links, in specifically social and sexuated ways, through the

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<sup>85</sup> This relationship between sameness and difference and the ways that unique difference (the either/or of the sex binary, for example) can be reinscribed by power is addressed by Badiou: “Thought becomes universal only by addressing itself to all others, and it effectuates itself as power through this address. But the moment all, including the solitary militant, are counted according to the universal, it follows that what takes place is the subsumption of the Other by the Same. Paul demonstrates in detail how a universal thought, proceeding on the basis of the worldly proliferation of alterities (the Jew, the Greek, women, men, slaves, free men, and so on), *produces* a Sameness and an Equality (there is no longer either Jew, or Greek, and so on). The production of the equality and the casting off, in thought, of differences are the material signs of the universal” (109)

matrimonial ring and the circumcise cut:

Au fond la fourmi mérite le titre d'insecte: c'est un animal à anneaux. Son corps est marqué, scandé stricturé par une multiplicité annulaire de *rings*, qui viennent couper sans le couper...voilà de quoi on aimerait parler: du séparé/ non séparé du coupé/ non coupé – et du mot 'sexe', de la différence sexuelle dans son rapport au coupé (et) (mais) non coupé, au coupé qui ne s'oppose plus au non-coupé, entre le 'séparé' et le 'réparer'(76).<sup>86</sup>

Stratonice, as we noticed before, emphasizes the paradox in this ring-bound link, the inherent tenuousness of the together-separation elicited by the arbitrary bonds of marriage: “Et la loi de l'hymen qui vous tient assemblés / N'ordonne pas qu'il tremble, alors que vous tremblez” (I, 3, 148-149). Derrida, elsewhere, also uses “anneau de peau” to refer to the circumcise act, which is yet another cut that joins (a community), a binding cut that does not cut. The ring's status, in both cases, is a supplementative: without such a (bodily/ accessorial) marker of the ring, one's status as cut from or included in the social group is ambiguous, and yet the ceremonial (performative) bestowing of the ringly cut that links *is* the founding of this sexual-social identity. In both cases, whether in the temporality of marriage or the generational time of circumcision, the “ring” marks a socio-sexual time that is founded upon clear male and female differences. And just as Lupton argues that Paul's radical break with the Law installs a fallenness in the rite of circumcision, that is to say, the act becomes *mere* symbol instead of critical passage, here the transformation (perhaps, the radical transformation) that Polyeucte is advancing is a fallenness of sexual difference, for such foundational (fundamental) binaries to become “merely” symbolic.

Derrida brings together *la fourmi* and *le fourmi*-- the ant-as-animal and the fourmi as

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<sup>86</sup>“Fundamentally, the ant deserves the name of “insect”: it's a ringed animal. Its body is marked, divided, strictured by a ringed multiplicity(annulaire = ring finger), which cut without cutting it... look at what one would like to speak about : of separated/ non-separated, of cut/ uncut-- and of the word « sex » of sexual difference in its relation to the cut/ed (and) (but) not cut, of the cut/ed which opposes to the uncut/ed, between the « separated » and « repaired »” (34)

formed word, but puts them together in the “ring”, a term which he leaves in English for two reasons: one, in French, “ring” refers to the boxing ring, and therefore he hopes to allude to some struggle, or some impossibly constructed dichotomy between the “reality” of sexual difference and its figuration. Secondly, however, Derrida begins darting between English and French in his text here, as sparring partners in a match, while staging the impossibilities wrought by the spoken against the written:

Il y a là en vérité deux mots, deux adjectifs qualificatifs : l'un veut dire 'coupé', l'autre 'non coupé'. Le premier vient de *inseco*, il signifie 'coupé' ; l'autre est privatif ou négatif-- *in-sectus, a, um*-- il signifie 'non coupé'. Et c'est le *ring* de la fourmi et du fourmi quasiment circoncis : coupé-non-coupé, strictement, *stricturellement* resserré(e) par des anneaux parenthétiques. Ceux-ci compriment sans interrompre, ils interrompent sans interrompre (ce que j'appelle la différence avec un *a* : interruption ininterrompue, *continuum* et délai de l'hétérogène) (93).<sup>87</sup>

In the unified pronouncement of “insect” we cannot hear the two other mutually exclusive words that comprise it and feed into its meaning etymologically. The *inseco* from which insect derives, also acts like the harmonic insofar as the plucked string is subdivided, cut into higher frequencies, and yet continues in its perfected integrality, to generate and produce: the fundamental appears yet again as the base and basis for generation. Derrida requires this French-English confusion and interplay to introduce his biggest pun, “tous les deux” which is also his most important commentary on the legibility of sexual difference, a paronomasia between English and French (or between the aural and the written). Derrida begins by elaborating on the verb *inseco*, describing how both of the roots of the word related to the insect are related to

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<sup>87</sup>“There are two words here in truth, two qualifying adjectives: one means ‘cut’, the other ‘not cut’ The first comes from *inseco*, meaning ‘cut’; the other is privative or negative—*in-sectus, a, um*— meaning ‘not cut’. And it is the *ring* of *la fourmi* and of *le fourmi* practically circumcised: cut-un-cut, strictly, *stricturally* choked by parenthetical annulations. These compress without interrupting, they interrupt without interrupting (what I call différence with an *a*, uninterrupted interruption, *continuum* and delay of the heterogeneous)” (34).

production, historical time, and legibility:

L'une, *inseco* (*secui, sectum, secare*), signifie donc couper, sectionner, déchirer, tailler... l'autre *inseco* (*insequo*), *sequis*, plus archaïque, qui veut dire non pas écrire mais dire, raconter, enchaîner, *poursuivre* à la trace dans un récit ou dans une phrase. On a donc à la fois l'histoire et l'interruption, l'enchaînement, narratif et la coupure, la réparation et la séparation dans le rapport, entre eux deux, de ces deux verbes qui signifie justement la coupure et l'enchaînement, l'interruption et le récit : “tous les deux”(93).<sup>88</sup>

Here, “tous les deux” first appears to be a generic enough term to indicate the pair, both of them. But at second glance, the “tous” easily transforms aurally into “two,” its English paranomastic double, just as Derrida transforms the “fourmis” into “for/me”, dividing the word in two to make four, and also to make a “for”—a doubling and a splitting into a term has a perfectly understandable sense in English, but a nonsense meaning in French. Thus “tous les deux”, *la fourmi* and *du fourmi*, and *four/me* itself produce meaning through only a willful mishearing, or a misheard will and pointing to the frictive slippages between languages, between the twos, between difference and sexual difference. All of these twos, the paired languages, the sound and its written double, the ant and the fourmi, the two sexes-- all are embedded in and produce sequence (and perhaps, thus, temporality and history) are always already doomed to be unraveled. Paradoxically, however, this separation which does not separate (the coupé/ non-coupé), as *différance*, is actually a deeply productive and seminal tool ; in other words, instead of straining for the illusion of unity, they grasp for the generative division of *différance*.

Corneille's re-imagining of the original history/myth eliminates the fact that Polyeucte

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88 One, *inseco* (*secui, sectum, secare*), means to cut, to sever, to tear, to carve... the other, *inseco*, (*insequo*), *sequis*, is more archaic and means not to write but to say, to recount, to link up, to *pursue* traces in a narrative or in a sentence. So we have at once the story and the interruption, the narrative linking up and the cutting, the reparation and the separation in the relations, between the two of them, of these two verbs that signify precisely the cut and the link, the interruption and the narrative, « tous les deux » (34)

had children; instead, Stratonice, Pauline's confidente, says of Polyeucte, we recall; "Néarque l'a séduit : / De leur vieille amitié c'est là l'indigne fruit" (III, ii, 807-808). These fruits of seduction and reproduction deviate from normative teleologies, eschewing reproduction, sequence and succession in favor of temporal, queer swerving. But because there are two, "tous les deux" both of them, there has been, and can be, a "fruit" of seduction. Because they are two, they become, tous les deux, a figure for "tous les deux" – all of the twos, the pairs, the intimate relations which fail to figure properly, but still lingering, however metaleptically erased or preposterously reversed, in a strategic failure which could écorcher (flay) the norms of a fundament or a Ring which would restrict, constrain—or even link together.

In the middle of "Fourmis," Derrida slides in a parenthetical and cryptic comment about gender, one that he does not explain fully, but rather embeds it secretly and silently in the rest of his text. He writes about the feminine behind our image of God:

Je risquerai entre parenthèses une sorte de confiance naïve. La lecture de la différence sexuelle, cela commence avec Dieu. Je suis toujours à nouveau surpris quand [...] j'apprends ou je me vois rappelle que, dans la tradition juive, la *shekina*, à savoir la manifestation de la présence divine, garde les traits d'un visage féminin, et qu'il pense une certaine féminité du Dieu juif-- d'autre part transcendant, séparé, jaloux. À dessin, j'évite ici de tenir un discours trop élaboré et non primaire: je veux me contenter de marquer ceci: dans ce qui reste d'enfance primitive en mon rapport à ce Dieu plutôt juif, à ce vieil homme sévère et juste, un tutoiement s'adresse à lui qui joue en moi de la différence sexuelle: et ce jeu est une lecture, une critique, une discrimination qui choisit. Elle élit: c'est une élection et une sélection; le tutoiement qui s'adresse à lui en moi s'adresse alors aussi à *elle* en moi (86).

As a quiet foil to Derrida's grand gestures of deconstructing the sexual binary or punningly unraveling the etymologies of words that we associate with sexuality and gender, he points out a moment of surprise, and confession. He brings up the image of "Dieu," but not just any God, specifically the femininity within God. This "surprise" is one not of discovery, or of militant agonizing toward a revolutionized future—rather, as Derrida points out the nature of 'élection,' it is always already present. To trouble the patriarchal "vieil homme sévère" is not to declare oneself a martyr or a revolutionary. Rather, it is to simply be open to noticing a different type of fundament: instead of "ce Dieu," what of "cette DS?" We only have to be open to noticing this DS (déesse, or différence sexuelle), just as we might happen take notice of the tiny ant—not seeking a fabulous figure, but possibly the smallest thing lingering in insects or in sex. Or sects. Or, as in Polyeucte and Néarque's case, in the tiniest fleeting moments of perfect attunement and harmonization. *On goûte mieux ce qu'on a désiré longtemps.*

## CHAPTER 2

### ‘AUX CENDRES D’UN ÉPOUX’: TRAUMA AND THE ASHES OF DESIRE IN RACINE’S *ANDROMAQUE*

#### ***I. The Aftermath of Fire and Ash***

If *Polyeucte* is attempting to stage a radical break that enables a different type of sexual economy, this is a move that could be thought of as futurally-oriented. Corneille’s play figures a move from fixed sexual hierarchies to advancing forms of intimacy that are deracinated from the overriding ideologies of blood, rank, and male/female binaries. Jean Racine’s 1668 play *Andromaque* takes up these similar concerns regarding norms of sexuality and gender, but in this play, the radical break does not address imagined futural forms, but rather treats of possibility of staging a radical relationality to the past.

Everything is blanketed in ash in *Andromaque*, set in the post-apocalyptic aftermath of the Trojan War. The ashes of families and lovers lie amongst the burnt remains of the incinerated city. Haunted by the memories of burning Troy, the survivors of the war, the children of the Trojan War’s legendary heroes, try to make sense of the possibilities of loving and living. In this post-war context, the tale hovers between two extremes of trauma, “the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Caruth 7). In the aftermath of this war, “*cendres*” aptly figures both extremes of these unbearables: language can no longer sufficiently account for the trauma, but at the same time, the ruined materiality of “*cendres*” (and of language) can’t help but persist and attest to the destruction wreaked upon it. It is due to this doubled status of ash-- as both ruin and remainder—that it emerges as my prime analytic for considering possibilities of non-normative erotic attachments in this play, insofar as

“ash” inhabits a paradoxical temporality.

The play, which skyrocketed and secured young Jean Racine's career, depicts a fraught chain of love interests. The story centers on Andromaque and her infant son Astyanax, who have been taken captive by Pyrrhus, the king of Épirus. It is actually the captor, Pyrrhus, who is prisoner to his passionate, unrequited love for Andromaque. The king threatens Andromaque with a blackmail ultimatum: either marry him or he will surrender her child to Orestes and the Greeks, who will execute the infant for fear that he will grow up to become like his famed warrior father Hector. Orestes' diplomatic mission to retrieve Astyanax, however, is only a pretext to return to Épire to win the heart of Hermione. While Hermione is betrothed to Pyrrhus and loves him desperately, Pyrrhus continues to long for Andromaque. His advances go ignored, as she insists on remaining faithful to the memory of her beloved Hector. When faced with the choice to either remarry her captor Pyrrhus or to allow her son Astyanax to be executed, Andromaque responds with extreme deferral and delay. Waiting and suspense become the conditions of the ensuing deadlock which ensnares all four main characters: Hermione, who pines interminably for her fiancé Pyrrhus to forget Andromaque and to turn to her, Orestes, who longs for Hermione to finally reciprocate his love, and Pyrrhus who is torn between his passion for Andromaque and the mounting political pressures.

Andromaque's lagging delay to make a decision, extending over three acts of the play, has long puzzled scholars. It is this stalling that Barthes criticizes, writing: “Devant la contradiction de son devoir, ce n'est nullement sa maternité qu'Andromaque consulte (et si elle l'avait consultée, aurait-elle hésité un instant?)” (81).<sup>89</sup> Scholarship has traditionally classified Andromaque either as a poor mother or an overzealously attached widow: what mother in her right mind would hesitate to save the life of her son? However, against this dismissive logic and

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<sup>89</sup> “Faced with contradictory obligations, Andromaque fails to turn to her maternal side (and if she had thought maternally, would she have hesitated even for a moment?)” (78)



the myopia of limited gender roles, and instead of reading Andromaque's hesitation in reaction to what is it *not* doing (not moving forward with her life, not saving her son), I would like to consider Andromaque's hesitation as actively pointing to something else. I read her stillness as performing a type of resistance and gesturing toward a different type of erotic attachment, one that remains inarticulable and perhaps indecipherable if read through the sexual logics of chrononormativity.

Instead of Andromaque boldly counteropposing the Greeks' blackmail ultimatum or the political injunctions to "move on" post-war, she turns to the most fleeting and insignificant figure: of "cendres" or ashes in order to indicate a type of erotic attachment that animates her.<sup>90</sup> Andromaque appears to virtuously persist in her affection for her dead husband Hector, as she consistently refers to her husband as "ash" (cendres), engaging in a present-tense dialogue with his ashes and consulting him for advice. Céphise, her friend, asks her what she will do: if she will give herself to Pyrrhus in order to save her son Andromaque answers neither in the affirmative or the negative, instead plaintively exclaiming, "Ô cendres d'un époux! Ô Troyens! Ô mon père!/ Ô mon fils, que tes jours coûtent cher à ta mère" (III, 8, 1045-1046).<sup>91</sup> She cries out to her beloved dead first and then adds on her son, almost as an afterthought. While the list of people she invokes is not strange, what is odd is that instead of sighing for Hector, she calls out to his *ashes*. Every other person she names normally, but Hector alone is figured by and through the invocation of ash. And even stranger is that when Céphise presses her again as to what she will do, Andromaque replies, almost calmly, "Allons sur son tombeau consulter mon époux" (III,

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<sup>90</sup> Rei Terada suggests that we can understand this "other," in its refusal to accept the given not as transgression, but rather as "opting out" that points to a divergent form of gaging with the fixity of expression (what "counts" as a demurral or as an acceptance?). Rather, she, argues, "Further, the idea of that the recession or even 'refusal' of the phenomophile is transgressive in the first place adopts and slightly paranoid point of view, in which simply declining to participate is society's fantasy of an insult to itself [...] it isn't a new norm that's being sought here, only a vacation from orchestrated affirmation"(32).

<sup>91</sup> "O, the ashes of a husband! O Trojans! O my father/ O my child, how your days cost your mother dearly"

8, 1048).<sup>92</sup>

Foregrounding “cendres” allows Andromaque to preserve and mourn Hector in this strange dual temporality, as both ruin and remainder. To have an intimate relationship or at least an active dialogue with ash *qua* ash is an orientation that stands outside the bounds of the normally articulable. That is to say, the conditions of trauma as well as what I have termed “inarticulate erotics” both delineate a certain set of impossible difficulties in regards to the adequacy and inadequacies of language. If there is something in the traumatic event (of death, of war) that lies outside the grasp of dominant forms of discourse, how can this “outside” be re-conscripted in the service of gesturing toward these non-normative desires?

*Andromaque* is the only Racinian tragedy that can be said to take place in a truly post-war context, where imminent violence (as opposed to *La Thébaidé* or in *Iphigénie*) is not at stake, but rather the question of how to gather up the pieces of shattered lives in order to piece together the semblance of a new polis. So while “trauma” may seem to be a surprising (and some might argue, anachronistic) reading of the play, of all of Racine's tragedies, *Andromaque* may provide the richest source of investigating the twinned status of (in)articulacy and temporal divergences that trauma can beget. The preceding long, seemingly interminable years of the war color the “present” of the play, in which the characters, especially Oreste, Hermione, and Pyrrhus, all seem exasperated with having waited for some loving affirmation from the other. In this sense, the other characters' desires contribute to general “forward movement” of temporality, against which Andromaque's hesitation stands out all the more starkly. The preceding trauma of the war not only conditions the play temporally, but also stylistically.

One paradigmatic figure of the brokenness of the past is offered by Oreste in the first scene of the play. Upon his return to Épire, he tells his friend: “Tu vis mon désespoir, et tu m’as

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<sup>92</sup> “We’ll go to the tomb to consult my husband.”

vu depuis/ Trainer de mers en mers ma chaîne et mes ennuis” (I, i, 43-44).<sup>93</sup> Here the “désespoir” refers most immediately to his hopelessness and despair in seeing his beloved Hermione given in betrothal to Pyrrhus. But we may also imagine the word in a larger sense referring to a collective pain of the survivors’ losses. This particular “despair” itself signals a break in the verse which is cleaved into two hemistiches by the comma—much like the general structure of trauma itself, which signals a rupture in “normal” fluidly progressing time, a rupture in narrative cohesion or logics of ethos. The comma itself both breaks the alexandrine fluidity and unites the two halves; the verse is split, but pushes on. The tragedy of the situation for Orestes (as well as for the other characters) is that there *is* a “living on,” or a “depuis” enduring after the rupturing break of utter despair. Cathy Caruth asks rhetorically, “Is trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?”(7). Echoing this paradoxical paradigm, “depuis” and “ennuis” are fittingly a matched rhyming couplet, paired not only phonically but also thematically, as the temporality of the “since” (depuis) becomes both indebted to and shackled by the sorrow of survival.

This is the figure of the forced continuity past the discontinuous rupture. Orestes’ metaphoric “chaîne” is particularly apt: it is a chain that anchors him solidly nowhere, yet weighs upon him constantly during his voyages “de mers en mers”. The weight of the chain itself marks the past weight alluded to in the verb “traîner,” as well as the past’s own splintering. This paradox of both the forced continuity and the compressed pain of the past, then, becomes condensed in a breath, the lightness of the comma, which simultaneously ironizes and dramatizes the situation.

This double crisis of death and survival plays out most dramatically in the character of Andromaque, the character who is arguably most haunted by the past and the one person on

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<sup>93</sup> “You witnessed my despair, and you saw me thereafter/ Dragging my chain and my woes from sea to sea”

whom almost all decisions about the future hinge: her son's future, Pyrrhus' romantic future, and Hermione's engagement. Although all the characters in the play address this particular crisis of the "unbearable nature of survival" in various ways, it is Andromaque's particular ciphered telling that interests me the most and will serve as the focal point for this chapter's investigation of her queer velocities.

For Andromaque, this struggle to testify to her desire for ash takes place in particular on the rhetorical battlefield, staking out the terrain of the figurative power of language, which trauma has unmoored from its normative signifying function. Although Racine's particular interplay of figurative and literal language has been treated by other scholars, it remains to be seen the ways that trope intervenes, both as a bridge and as a hindrance, to the testimony and expression of trauma. Robert W. Hartle, analyzing the use of metaphor in Racine, proposes: "What is important to notice is the frequency with which Racine uses a dead metaphor to express the moral problem in a place, and then suddenly in the final scenes of the play he uses that metaphor quite literally and quite concretely as the instrument of catastrophe" (135). In my analysis, however, the opposite trajectory also takes place: the literal "instrument of catastrophe"—ash and fire, as markers of the violence of war, actually become re-metaphorized to function tropically. Ash and fire appear at key moments in the drama, deployed as strangely figural or else painfully literal. These moments of toggling between the literal and the figurative occur when Andromaque's "non-metric" and "personal" time, deeply imbued with mourning and testimony, clashes against Pyrrhus' future-oriented temporality. Because everything hinges on the articulation Andromaque's affection and love, the stakes of claiming temporal normativity, and this temporality's relationship to sexuality, run high.

Oreste presses Pyrrhus to hand over Astyanax, reminding Pyrrhus of Hector's violent past, a past which threatens to haunt the Greeks' and Astyanax's future. Oreste chooses an

appropriately fire-filled moment to insist on the risk:

Et qui sait ce qu'un jour ce fils peut entreprendre ?  
Peut-être dans nos ports nous le verrons descendre,  
Tel qu'on a vu son père, embraser nos vaisseaux  
Et, la flamme à la main, les suivre sur les eaux” (I, ii, 161-164).<sup>94</sup>

The image of the destructive Hector is only seen by torchlight, the very fire which destroyed the Greek ships: the possibility of memory is contingent upon the agent of destruction. This same fire, Oreste insists, may be taken up by Hector’s son; the uncertain future is illuminated only by the flickering destructive fires of the past.

As Pyrrhus recounts the Greeks’ demands to Andromaque, he depicts himself as still burning with phantom fires. Although Oreste attempts to warn by invoking the image spectralized fire, the fires which both catalyzed the traumatic destruction and inscribed the event, Pyrrhus takes up these traumatic flames, or the flames which foretell a vengeful future, and transforms them into unsatiated fires of his desire. Speaking to Andromaque of his unrequited love, he says:

De combien de remords m'ont-ils rendu la proie ?  
Je souffre tous les maux que j'ai faits devant Troie :  
Vaincu, chargé de fers, de regrets consumé,  
Brûlé de plus de feux que je n'en allumai,  
Tant de soins, tant de pleurs, tant d'ardeurs inquiètes...  
Hélas ! Fus-je jamais si cruel que vous l'êtes ? (I, iv, 317-322)<sup>95</sup>

Here, “fire” used metaphorically loosens the sign from the signified and allows a substitutive logic to unfold. When Pyrrhus was formerly the victor, warrior and captor, substitution allowed

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<sup>94</sup> “And who knows what this son might do one day? Perhaps we will see him sail upon our ports, just as we saw his father ignite our ships and drive them out to side, with fire in his hand.”

<sup>95</sup> “How much remorse have my victims given me? I’ve suffered, myself, the very pain I caused Troy. Destroyed, burdened with chains, and with regrets, and burning with more fires than I ever lit. So many woes, tears, and troubled passions—oh, was I ever as cruel to you as you are to me now?”

him to imagine and to depict himself as also suffering “tous les maux que j'ai faits.” Within the breadth of only a few lines, the excess of literal fires “que je n'en allumai” becomes the gnawing burning of guilt, “tant d'ardeurs inquiètes”; the unabsolved remorse which doggedly plagues him transforms, through a metonymic fire-figured chain, to burningly persistent lust and unrequited love: “fus-je jamais si cruel que vous l'êtes?” Rhetoric and figuration, then, become his means of erasing the trauma of the past, metaleptically exchanging the inconstestably destructive Trojan fires for the promise of a generative flame of desire.

We see an example of this strategic metaphorical euphemism in Pyrrhus' phrasing of his blackmail. Pyrrhus needs the literal image of “cendres” to mark the finality of the war. He offers Andromaque a deal: marry him and he will protect Hector's son only in exchange for Andromaque's consent to love him: “Animé d'un regard, je puis tout entreprendre;/ Votre Iliion encor peut sortir de sa cendre” (I, iv, 329-330).<sup>96</sup> Ashes continue to figure, for Pyrrhus, a type of futurity, a post-facto temporality in which renewal is possible and his burning desires have been satiated. To this end, the active verb, “entreprendre”, is crucially paired with “cendre” to emphasize the possibility of moving on, of taking action.

Pyrrhus' formerly future-pointing “cendres” become, in Andromaque's vocabulary, a testimony/testament to the past. In Andromaque's usage, the same word subsequently becomes “re-metaphorized”; “cendres” no longer alludes elliptically to the war, but rather it begins to take on generative meanings of its own.<sup>97</sup> In response to Pyrrhus' ultimatum (either marry him or surrender her child), Andromaque turns his language of fire and ash back upon him, responding by invoking the image of “cendres.” And yet, as we have noted before, it is not merely the ash of

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<sup>96</sup> “Galvanized by a sole glance from you, I could take on anything. Your Ilium may still rise from its ashes.”

<sup>97</sup> In regards to this loving, persistent spectrality, although Hector as a “ghost” does not appear, the enduring nature of his presence that Andromaque cultivates might be elucidated by the Derridean concept of “hauntology,” of which Colin Davis writes: “Hauntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinasian Other: a wholly irrecoverable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving” (373).

destruction and war that she invokes, but rather the specific ashes of Hector:

Et pourquoi vos soupirs seraient-ils repoussés ?

Aurait-elle oublié vos services passés ?

Troie, Hector, contre vous révoltent-ils son âme ?

Aux cendres d'un époux doit-elle enfin sa flamme ?

Et quel époux encore ! Ah ! Souvenir cruel !

Sa mort seule a rendu votre père immortel (I, iv, 355-360).<sup>98</sup>

The “cendres” that Pyrrhus has tried to use to represent the quenching of the fires and a moment of “moving on” emerges in Andromaque’s discourse to figure the absent/present body of Hector. Representing a person by a thing would seem, initially, to strip a person of his humanness, to *reduce* him to a thing, but here, the term “cendres” enacts multiple movements of (re)animating, testifying and mourning. Mis-metaphorizing the lost husband as an object, as *mere* ashes, testifies to the traumatic violence done against him and the Trojan people, in which they were treated as things. It also reflects Andromaque’s sense of the inadequacy of language to express her loss.

The perversity of Andromaque's attachment is anchored in the literalness of “cendres” and her relation to them. Through this figure, she expresses the longing for her husband not in a way that substitutes or memorializes, but rather is conveyed through and *as* loss (in the ashes). So in contrast to an incessant mourning that would ceaselessly cling to the ash as a memorial of the deceased Hector, her desire actually and actively reaches toward the ash *as* ash.<sup>99</sup> Hers is an

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<sup>98</sup> “And why would all of your advances be repulsed? Has Andromaque forgotten everything you’ve done? Do Troy and Hector turn her heart against you? Do her husband’s ashes demand her love still? And what a husband! Oh! What memories. His death gave your father immortal glory.”

<sup>99</sup> Freud’s depiction of mourning and of melancholia serves as a counterpoint to this image of loss and stasis that I am investigating. Freud writes: “In mourning we found that the inhibition and loss of interest are fully accounted for by the work of mourning in which the ego is absorbed. In melancholia, the unknown loss will result in a similar internal work and will therefore be responsible for the melancholic inhibition. The difference is that the inhibition of the melancholic seems puzzling to us because we cannot see what it is that is absorbing him so entirely. The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning—an extraordinary

intimacy that employs and is obfuscated by the screen of virtue. It is not a queer desire that signals itself as marginalized, but this desire is actually read as a non-confession: what appears to be a blatant attachment to a virtuous marriage vow, conceals, in the very same “open” language and orientation, a perverse attachment to the traumatic loss, and the material marker of such loss.<sup>100</sup> As François suggests, “the ‘secret’ of the ‘open secret’ need not mean hidden or unstated, but simply unavailable, untouchable, nonpossessable, implying a relation to the beloved that neither appropriates nor denies” (81). In a sense, this open reticence is only and specifically enabled by an attachment to the figure that not only marks the ruin but *is* actually the ruined and remains past the point of ruin itself: ash.<sup>101</sup>

Andromaque’s excessive attachment to her dead husband Hector is remarkable in its perverse persistence. Even her confidante, Céphise, urges, “Madame, à votre époux c’est être assez fidèle:/ Trop de vertu pourrait vous rendre criminelle.”(III, viii, 981-982)<sup>102</sup> Céphise’s comment, which reads Andromaque’s hesitation as “criminelle,” has been echoed by other scholarship of the play. As Mitchell Greenberg has argued, “Suffering from an inability or a

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diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (246).

<sup>100</sup> Murray suggests that “so Lacan and Laplanche would say, the stuff or ‘thing’ of tragic dialogue signifies *to* its spectator without the spectator knowing exactly *what* it signifies. The spectator leaves tragedy armed not so much with the truth of skepticism as with the enigma of the signifier gesturing so frantically to the trauma of fantasy, to the hole in the Real” (*DT* 32).

<sup>101</sup> François builds her analysis upon the famous “l’aveu sans suite” in Madame de Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves*, in which the Princess tries to stifle a life-long adulterous attraction to the Duc de Nemours and steadfastly clings to the virtues of her marriage vow, even past the moment of her husband’s death, a reticence and a non-expression of desire that is useful to our analysis. François summarizes it elegantly: “Through almost no fault of her own, things happen in such a way that she can hold herself responsible for the death that liberates her, and she is stopped from proceeding by the very thing that opens the door for her. Her husband profits so little from her faithfulness to him that, where he is concerned, she might as well have committed the physical act of adultery. As for the lover, he is no closer to possessing her for knowing himself loved or for seeing the husband dead. Her virtue is as free of effect as her passion is as innocent of consequence” (68). The Princess’s confession is almost a mirrored opposite pair to Andromaque’s. Andromaque divulges what can be considered a “non-aveu, malgré suite.” This “non-aveu” is “malgré suite” in that all of the consequences of her inaction unfold in such a way that *she could have not confessed at all*, in a mirrored similarity to the Princess’s situation. All of the hesitations, hand-wringing, and (zero velocity) declarations leading up to Andromaque’s announcement of her “innocent stratagème”-- not of her threatened suicide, but rather of her persistent ash-oriented love-- might as well not have happened at all, in that Pyrrhus’ murder and Andromaque’s crowning in Act V unfolds according to no one’s plan.

<sup>102</sup> “Madame, you’ve been faithful enough to your husband, too much virtue could become criminal.”



refusal to work through her mourning, [Andromaque] seem stymied in a melancholy that is, effectively, a dislocation from reality so radical that it threatens the very person she claims to want to save” (*Racine* 63), pinning the source of the “threat” to Astyanax's life in Andromaque's “refusal” to work through. “Inability” and “refusal” here point to different levels of volition, and indeed gesture toward varying levels of (un)ethical disregard for Andromaque's infant son. My project here, however, will re-examine an otherwise denigrated passivity in order discern a type of erotics that is simultaneously revealed and concealed.

Although on the surface, Céphise’s remark alludes to the fact that Andromaque’s delay to make a decision augments the probability that Astyanax will die, could it be that Andromaque’s love is “criminelle” in another sense? For example, what about types of loves, or desires that are denigrated as “criminelle” because they are considered "invalid" or "incomprehensible”, or “sexually divergent”?<sup>103</sup> This “dislocation from reality” is not only a by-product of her excessive mourning, but also indicates an affective and emotional position that is unmoored from any terms of traditional sexual logics. And, as mentioned before in the introduction, this divergence from normative discourse engenders a particular type of inarticulacy. In other words, taking seriously Andromaque's resistance to speak, or to choose, actually makes legible a trace of desire. This desire has been effaced by lenses of analysis limited to the temporality associated with normative concepts of “good” motherhood or wifedom that occlude other possibilities, tempos and speeds of attachment and other affective anchorings.

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<sup>103</sup> Much like Antigone, Andromaque chooses the tomb over the bridal chamber, saying, “Ma flamme par Hector fut jadis allumée ;/ Avec lui dans la tombe elle s'est enfermée.” (III, iv, 865-866). Judith Butler argues in *Antigone's Claim* that Antigone seems to take up a queer position apophatically (through negation): “Certainly, she [Antigone] does not achieve another sexuality, one that is not heterosexuality, but she does seem to deinstitutionalize heterosexuality by refusing to do what is necessary to stay alive for Haemon, by refusing to become a mother and a wife, [...] by embracing death as her bridal chamber and identifying her tomb as a 'deep dug home' (kataskaphes oikesis)” (76). While I don’t mean to over-equate the non-reproductive position with a queer one, it is useful and illuminating to consider the alternate forms of intimacy and desire, especially those patterned after the archetype of Antigone, in these plays. For further reading, in addition to Butler, Julia Reinhard Lupton in “Antigone in Vienna” (*Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology*) considers the ways that Antigone (as well as Isabella, in the *Merchant of Venice*) challenge the reproductive economies mandated by the *polis* in favor of a sibling-oriented eroticism, but this type of attachment in and of itself also challenges the norms of the *oikos*.

Andromaque's desire, and the loss inscribed therein, becomes dependent upon its ashes (the material marker of loss). Desire then *desires* ash, in its twinned status as both ruin and as remainder; the persistence of desire itself becomes a testimony to trauma. Timothy Murray, drawing upon Jean Laplanche, extends the latter's notion of "traumatophilia" in *Drama Trauma*, saying, "... loss, in contrast to lack, continually haunts the symbolic certainty of representation. *Loss functions as the death drive of implosive designation whose enigmatic dynamism is to be performed and enjoyed, not to be contained and feared, as the stuff of seduction*"(15). In this sense, Andromaque's longings cannot merely be brushed aside as the irrational disposition of the "melancholic lover" but rather, the desire for ash *as* ash opens up a different possibility—perhaps for the "stuff of seduction." Taking seriously Andromaque's attachment to ashes allows for an ethics of testimony to and of trauma. In the rhetoric of "ash" lies a testimony not only to the trauma of the experience but also to the unforgivable inadequacy of the language available.

As mentioned in the introduction, "cendres" has a bifurcated and paradoxical meaning insofar as it can either be thought of as a "ruin" or as a "remainder." By this I mean that ashes are the marker of destruction and irrevocable loss, but ash in and of itself also exists and persists as matter that endures and remains. In one word, the duality of two seemingly incompatible extremes, "absolute loss" and "absolute continuity" are condensed. By the "rhetoric of ash," I mean to suggest that ash takes on particular discursive and figural qualities that enable *both* of these possibilities, traditionally thought mutually exclusive, to be expressed. I follow both of these dual functions of ash—as ruin/loss and as remainder-- throughout this chapter. Firstly, in its status as ruin, the figure of ash functions as a cipher, or "zero," a powerful early modern concept that I employ to re-imagine Andromaque's supposed zero-action (passivity). In its capacity as a remainder (that which persists past the moment of destruction), ash functions as the "wrongful" metaphor known as catachresis, which I will discuss shortly.

## *II. Bearing (Zero) Witness: Catachresis and Testimony*

When Andromaque's radically passive desire is intertwined with testimony and trauma, however, her open reticence also complicates the ethics of bearing witness, moving from a concept of "bearing" as in "to give witness" to a notion of "bearing" as enduring. And this endurance is one that is not signaled or gestured toward, but can be considered as participating in what Anne-Lise François has termed a theory of recessive action. In her words, the reticent revelation, as a type of open secret, "wishes to make a claim lightly, not so as to be disbelieved or protected from its consequences but because lightness is part of the claim" (120). François' formulation is particularly useful here insofar as it illuminates the idea of a still velocity that is replete with intentionality. Instead of reading stasis and hesitation as a regression, or a refusal to opt for the velocity of movement, or to move *on* (in the context of a post-traumatic experience), considering it as a "velocity of stillness" indicates that this position takes its own proper speed. Like Miron V.'s impossibly slow gestures that make perfect sense in "non-metric" temporality, Andromaque's stillness does not need to be measured differentially against the velocity that it "lacks."

Taking up the figure of ash is more than a mere rhetorical embellishment; it also enacts as certain side-stepping of the real, phenomenal world in a turn to the most fleeting of figures. Rei Terada proposes that against an injunction to accept the world "as is," latching on to subtle moments of ephemerality embodies a type of technique she terms "looking away" that

turns toward these perceptions to deflect the other's invasion, by the reasoning-- the comically quick and amoral reasoning typical of the unconscious-- that if the other is inexorable once perceived, then obviously one should put off perceiving it or not look straight on. Weightless, merely phenomenal perception complements

the spectre as figure of the other: it is the *other* of the inexorability of the other, and of equal rank (31).

Andromaque's desires then, are retained in “stillness” *despite* injunctions to produce discourse, to give discernable shape to experience, but through its very stillness, is able to endure.<sup>104</sup> Lightness becomes a paradoxical counterweight to the burden (weight) of proof, of testimony. Such a revelation of stillness – both enveloped in stillness and enacted through stillness – blurs the boundaries of the articulable, insofar as it simply refuses outright divulgence. And yet, this type of “stillness” still manages to hint at an unfolding of expression, precisely by declining to engage with pre-existing discursive structures.

In this sense, Andromaque’s refusal to decide is not necessarily “criminelle” nor an outright extension of an overindulgence in mourning. Rather, her reticence signals this type of divergence from expectations of testifying, mourning, melancholia, and futurity. It also is a detour from the privilege accorded to articulateness and sexuality (the “anticipatory” and the “agnostic”) that I delineated in the introduction. Against those who would determine certain speeds of “moving” — characters who urge “moving on” in wake of the trauma and critics who seek “moving forward” in the action of the play — Andromaque's radical delay marks both a divergence from diegetic and affective temporal norms. Indeed, reading Andromaque's hesitation through temporal normativity (with certain expectations of gender, marriage, and attachment) means that she falls into predictable categories of failed motherhood or overzealous spousehood.

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<sup>104</sup> Claudia Brodsky fine article “The Impression of Movement” notes that reading for “movement” in Racine's texts becomes difficult due to the very structure of Racine's language:

Unsubordinated to the form of diachrony, Racine's tragedies attempt to constitute a moment out of the conceptual matter of words, endowing a predominantly abstract vocabulary with the still weight of things, the gravity of unified mass. It is this verbal combat, between the experience of an instant and its necessarily temporal articulation, between the moment of an impression and its dramatization, that defines the drama of the texts in turn (174).

Thus “movement” in Racine, instead of being neatly mapped onto a teleologic trajectory, emerges as static, statuesque, and still. For Brodsky, however, the “movement” generated from Racine is rooted in this very still quality, in opposition to the flow and dynamism of the baroque aesthetic, Racine's classical style holds its movement as potential energy, or restraint.

For Barthes the tomb becomes a condensation of Andromaque's eroticism: “Ce vide de la légalité troyenne est symbolisé par un objet qui détermine tous les mouvements offensifs: le tombeau d’Hector; il est pour Andromaque refuse, réconfort, espoir, oracle aussi, par une sorte d’erotisme funèbre, elle veut l’habiter, s’y enfermer avec son fils, vivre dans la mort une sorte de ménage à trois” (81).<sup>105</sup> Barthes's analysis pins Andromaque's erotic investment to the tomb as telos, but in so doing actually undermines the ciphered movement of her desire, which craves not necessarily death, but rather an active reaching toward the ashes. Temporal norms produce blinders that encourage us to align her hesitation with a certain kind of relationship to the past. Instead of understanding Andromaque as being stuck and mired in what *was*, or the death that is yet to come, Andromaque indicates an actively present engagement with Hector's ashes.

In the case of *Andromaque*, the torsion “against usage” of “ashes” alters the settledness of language in order to fashion the language to express her “personal time” not of waiting, but of stillness. The use of “cendres d'un époux” instead of Hector's proper name can be thought of as a type of catachresis. The trope called “catachresis” is generally thought of as a “wrongful” metaphor. In the *Institutes of Oratory*, Quintilian defines catachresis as a type of trope “which we properly call *abusio*, and which adapts, to whatever has no proper term, the term which is nearest... *catachresis* is used where a term is wanting; metaphor, for where another term is in use” (VIII.6.34). In its “abusive” figuration, catachresis simultaneously marks and un-marks—it reaches toward figuration, but in its impropriety, it also traces figure's “failure” in its improper substitution. As Derrida notes, catachresis is born from a lack in language, when language is missing the means to signify but is forced to do so nevertheless:

Ces 'idées' existaient déjà [...] étaient déjà dans l'esprit comme un trace sans mot;

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<sup>105</sup> “This lack of Trojan legality is symbolized by an object that determines all of the offensive gestures: Hector's tomb. It is, for Andromaque, refuse, comfort, hope, oracle as well, through a sort of funereal eroticism, she wants to occupy it, close herself within it with her son, live through death a type of ménage à trois” (76).

mais on n'aurait pu les retracer, les traquer, les tirer au jour sans le coup de force d'une torsion qui va *contre l'usage*, sans l'effraction d'une catachrèse. Celle-ci ne sort pas de la langue, elle ne crée pas de signes nouveaux, n'enrichit pas le code; et pourtant elle en transforme le fonctionnement, elle produit, avec le même matériau, de nouvelles règles d'échange de nouvelles valeurs (307).<sup>106</sup>

This catachrestic mourning “preserves” the alterity of the lost other (“avec le même matériau”) but at the same time attests to the necessity of a “new” language, for within this post-war, post-traumatic state the old referential language cannot justly represent the brokenness of the world. If Andromaque lacks a proper term to archive her loss of her beloved, to catalogue the enduring nature of both this remainder of memory, “cendres” becomes (through catachresis), “wrongly” adequate. The “wrongness” of the trope itself becomes the *proper* measure of at least three things: the linguistic lack (the insufficient language); the “wrongness” of Hector's death and the “misplacement” of erotic energy diverging from the proper in Andromaque's attachment.

Catachresis, as the “abusive” metaphor, acts as the metaphor that marks language's lack.

Parker reminds us of the underscored link between violence and catachresis:

The emphasis on place and transgression in the classical view of metaphor explains its obsession with catachresis, or the 'figure of abuse,' the 'forced' transfer which Fontanier, in *Les Figures du discours*, is so careful to distinguish from metaphor's 'freedom,' a figure whose condemnation by Locke as a merely verbal or monstrous joining [...] reminds us that the figures of catachresis in Dante-- the centaurs and the Minotaur-- are the emblems of the circles of *forza*, or violence (LFL 39).

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<sup>106</sup> “These ‘ideas’ already existed...were already in the mind like a grid without a word; but they could not have been retraced, tracked down, brought to daylight without the force of a twisting which goes against usage, without the infraction of a catachresis. The latter does not emerge from language, does not create new signs, does not enrich the code; and yet it transforms its functioning, producing, with the same material, new rules of exchange, new values” (Trans. Alan Bass, 256).

The trope of “torsion” further traces this violence, the “wresting” that conditions Andromaque's status as survivor and as captive. But also, we recall, if catachresis itself performs as certain violence on language, this reinforces the clash that I delineated earlier. Pyrrhus tries to re-metaphorize “fire” and “ash” in order to cultivate a temporality of “moving-on” in which Andromaque could love him, so “fires” becomes metaphorized as “flames of ardor.” In contrast to this “proper” poetic production, Andromaque insists on re-deploying these same terms catachrestically, tracing a certain violence against the normative use of language that preserves the nature of force, strangeness and violence that characterizes her impossible situation and her ultimatum.

Catachresis becomes a fitting means of expressing one of the two meanings of “ash” that I alluded to earlier-- the sense of ash as a remainder. Dumarsais, in *Les Tropes* aligns catachresis with extension, and therefore a type of excess generated from lack: “Les langues les plus riches n'ont point un assez grand nombre de mots pour exprimer chaque idée particulière, par un terme qui ne soit que le signe propre de cette idée; ainsi on est souvent obligé d'emprunter le mot propre de quelqu'autre idée, qui a le plus de rapport à celle qu'on veut exprimer” (52). Just as Hector does not actually, presently exist in the play, Andromaque needs the next closest idea to express and mark this present absence. Catachresis lasts and produces meaning, even though it is not supposed to-- thereby linking such an extension with the temporal extension of the “remainder” of ash. Dumarsais goes on to define catachresis similarly to Fontanier's (and Derrida's) gloss on the figure, but with the added notion of movement and displacement: “Ainsi la catachrèse est un écart que certains mots font de leur première signification, pour en prendre une autre qui y a quelque rapport, et c'est aussi ce qu'on apèle extension”(54).<sup>107</sup> Aligning movement with tropes, especially early modern rhetorical considerations of metaphor was not

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<sup>107</sup> “In this way, catachresis is a divergence that certain words take from their original meaning, to take on another that has a related meaning, and this is what we could also call extension”

uncommon, insofar as metaphor was frequently aligned with the idea of “transfer” (*transumptio* or *translatio*) of one word to another place.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, if we are investigating the limits of language and the ways that Andromaque re-appropriates expression (catachrestically), it is fitting that we also consider what such “movement” looks like and can do.

Andromaque's “velocity of stillness” shows the ways that the desire for “cendres” as such diverges from the temporal norms that condition a relation to the past (mourning, melancholia) as well as a future-oriented temporality that would demand moving-on. Velocity requires both speed and direction in order to be defined, and both definitional components taken together are necessarily in order to consider Andromaque's particular desire for the present absence (of ash) or absent presence. Understanding her use of the misplaced metaphor as expressing a “velocity” is not so far-fetched, insofar as Patricia Parker underscores the classical notion of metaphor as movement:

The development after Aristotle of the links between proper place, property, *sens propre* and 'propriety' may be perceived retrospectively *in nuce* in the famous Aristotelian definition: 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else [...]' The *phora* of the Aristotelian *epiphora* or 'transfer' is, as Paul Ricoeur remarks, 'a change in respect to location,' a crossing of predetermined boundaries (*LFL* 36).

In contrast to this image of metaphor moving (properly) from one place to another, catachresis, by contrast, could be imagined to move very little, or only slightly, insofar as it (after Quintilian) “takes the term which is nearest.” We could metaphorize this metaphorical trope's “small”

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<sup>108</sup> Peter France, in *Racine's Rhetoric* underscores the fact that Racine had exposed and in-depth training in rhetoric: “At the Petites Ecoles of Port-Royal and at the Collège de Beauvais Racine received a thorough training in rhetoric... There is in the Bibliothèque Nationale a manuscript in the hand of Racine containing numerous extracts from the *Institutio Oratoria*. We may assume that as school Racine read his Latin authors like all other schoolchildren of the seventeenth century (Arnauld cites Cicero, Tacitus, Virgil and Horace with particular approval) and his Greek authors perhaps more thoroughly than most of his contemporaries (37).



movement of the nearest or closest. In this imagined mapping, in this sense, if velocity has a “magnitude” or a number marking the greatness of its speed, we might imagine Andromaque's particular velocity, that which is expressed through her invocation of “cendres” as being zero, or close to it. The zero, here, brings us to the second quality of “ash” that I mentioned previously.

Early modern mathematical treatises express confusion about “the zero's singularity-- and its paradoxical connotations of a deadly absence that is nonetheless generative, potentially productive of multiplicities” (Raman 162). The zero was also called a “cipher,” a term which seems doubly fitting to Andromaque's desire insofar as it can be imagined as improperly (catachrestically) zero-- her desire comes to naught-- as well as the fact that her eroticism becomes ciphered or “encoded” in figurative language. Shankar Raman cites Thomas Blundeville's mathematical treatise *His Exercises* to demonstrate the paradoxical place of the zero:

“What belongeth to Numeration” asks Thomas Blundeville's *His Exercises*, and answers as follows: “Two things, to know the shape of the figures, and the signification of their places.” And how many figures are there? “These ten,” Blundeville informs us, “1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.0”, but he immediately qualifies his list by insisting upon the zero's exceptional status: “whereof the tenth made like a o. as you see here, is called a Cypher, which is no number of it selfe, but serveth only to fill up a number”(1613: 1). [...]The cipher operates via a principle quite different from that governing the so-called simple numbers: eschewing the monotonic repetition of a singular unity or sign [...], it relies on the emptiness of its signification to produce the fullness of its effects (167).

Just as François' “light claim” insists on the fact that lightness *is* part of the claim, the cipher of zero in Andromaque's velocity (in her radical passivity) reveals a certain emptiness which is

integral to her desire. Andromaque's attachment to the dead Hector, when figured as zero, simultaneously marks and produces both the *place* of its absence as well as points to absence qua loss itself. In addition to the ways that the zero of Andromaque's zero-velocity connotes ephemerality (fleeting non-enduringness) as well as traumatic loss, the zero also elicits question of foreignness and intrusion of place.

Raman's analysis of the zero and the one not only sets up two opposed figural concepts, but also “a tension between two different numbering systems, Arabic and Roman, to which the early modern era is heir” (168). Just as the zero marks both the disjunct and the tension between two conceptual measuring systems, Andromaque's passivity, her zero-response to the ultimatum, and her hesitation, also marks a fundamental incompatibility between two affective response systems. The zero-position marks an infinitesimal space poised between two tendencies of how to understand her actions; it signals a “neither-nor” refusal of both the injunction to “move on” and to marry Pyrrhus as well as swerving away from the commonplace of the zealously attached widow. In the face of ultimatums to which Andromaque can only “look away” or remain radically passive, the “zero” seems apropos to Andromaque's status as foreign captive. Her use of stillness, as zero velocity, marks her status as a *mere* captive but also serves as a cipher in that “beynge joyned with any of the other figures, increaseth their value”(Raman, citing Baker 167). In a sense, this use of “zerness” to discuss the limits of articulation under captivity, post-trauma, or queerly convoluted may only be metaphorically resonant.

Pyrrhus insists upon his rights as the captor of his Trojan victims. Andromaque and Astyanax become property, perhaps “properly” so according to the codes of war. Pyrrhus recalls the division of the captives like so many war goods between the victors: “Sur eux, sur leurs captifs, ai-je étendu mes droits?/ Ai-je enfin disposé du fruit de leurs exploits?”(I, ii, 191-2).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> “Did I extend my claims towards the other victors, their captives? / did I try to profit from their own rewards?”

According to this logic, however, Andromaque's survival is contingent on her placelessness, or her status as (beloved) captive, and thus survival becomes radically im-proper: lacking proper place and home,<sup>110</sup> usurping the place of Hermione as the betrothed, improperly extending the life of Hector's son, who should have died in the war. In a sense, Andromaque performs the “placeholdering” that the zero of the cipher does, but in holding a place, even as the “zero” that she is, she ultimately ends up generating supplementary value.

Andromaque's out-of-placeness is underscored by the strangeness of activating “cendres,” the intrusively improper term. Patricia Parker adds that “metaphor, as Ricoeur points out, is 'doubly alien': it is a name which belongs elsewhere and one which takes the place of the word which 'belongs.' *Allotrios* encompasses, in a single term, the notions of deviation, borrowing, and 'in the place of' of substitution” (*LFL* 36). Thus the zero's place even as metaphor, to destabilize order, to literally signify nothing, also becomes a means of ever-so-lightly claiming a “place” which is not proper to it, and in this act of placement, generating unexpected supplemental value. Parker also glosses the Ciceronian definition of metaphor, a type of alien intrusion of one word usurping the place of the original. In *The Arte of English Poesy*, Puttenham defines metaphor as “a kind of wresting,” plucking a word from its originary signification and put to work in another (alien) context. “The 'transfer' of metaphor seems inseparable from a kind of violence or violation,” (*LFL* 38) concludes Parker.

One might equally extend this analysis of the “violent transfer” that metaphor enacts to the very plot of *Andromaque*, in which the question of avenging past violence launches the action of the play. Although Pyrrhus attempts to rationally defend the proper and proprietorship of his captives, the image of ash—cendres—is that which “covers” and obscures his vision and subsequently his decision-making capacities. While he would like to loosely slide from actual

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<sup>110</sup> Parker reminds us that for Dumarsais in the *Traité des tropes*, his choice metaphor for metaphor is dwelling in “a borrowed home” (“*Il est, pour ainsi dire, dans une demeure empruntée,*”) (38).

murderous fires to flames of love, the “remainder” quality of ash cannot but serve as a “reminder” as well. His amorous metaphorizing comes to a halt. He loses his grasp on logics of ownership, as his mind fills with visions of horrific destruction:

[...]je regarde enfin  
Quel fut le sort de Troie, et quel est son destin.  
Je ne vois que des tours que la cendre a couvertes,  
Un fleuve teint de sang, des campagnes désertes,  
Un enfant dans les fers; et je ne puis songer  
Que Troie en cet état aspire à se venger (I, ii, 199-204).<sup>111</sup>

This vision of the ash-covered buildings, the mark of unaccountable loss and the excess/remainder of life precipitates his compassion. His “je ne vois que,” elicited by the image of the ash-blanketed city, can be paired syntactically with the “je ne puis”—the refusal of Troy’s and his vengeance. Pyrrhus affirms his commitment to the survivors, that he has, in a sense, inherited and accepted the burden of Andromaque and Astyanax’s survival. Although Pyrrhus argues, “L’Épire sauvera ce que Troie a sauvé” (I, ii, 220), what is at stake is the very transferability of survivor-dom.

Although Pyrrhus metaphorizes passion and a future-oriented desire through the figure of fire, Andromaque insists on literalizing the “instrument of catastrophe” by insisting on testimony of fire. In the famous incantatory summoning-up of a key traumatic moment, Andromaque’s vision of the horrors of war is illuminated by the very fires which annihilate her city and her loved ones. Thus, paradoxically the possibility of the archive, memory (and even ash) is indebted to that which destroys. During this nighttime pillage of her city, she can only see by and through the light of the burning flames:

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<sup>111</sup> “I strain to recall/ what Troy's fate was, and what is her destiny/ but I can only bring to mind ash-blanketed towers/ a river stained with blood, deserted fields/ and a child, held captive. I cannot make myself believe/ that Troy, in this state, would aspire to vengeance.”

Songe, songe, Céphise, à cette nuit cruelle  
 Qui fut pour tout un peuple une nuit éternelle.  
 Figure-toi Pyrrhus, les yeux étincelants,  
 Entrant à la lueur de nos palais brûlants,  
 Sur tous mes frères morts se faisant un passage,  
 Et de sang tout couvert échauffant le carnage.  
 Songe aux cris des vainqueurs, songe aux cris des mourants,  
 Dans la flamme étouffés, sous le fer expirants.  
 Peins-toi dans ces horreurs Andromaque éperdue :  
 Voilà comme Pyrrhus vint s'offrir à ma vue (III, viii, 997-1006).<sup>112</sup>

Indeed, in her telling of trauma, fire gradually grows and dominates the whole narrative, the glittering destructive spark in Pyrrhus' "yeux étincelants" bursts into a figured flame that consumes "nos palais brûlants"; the intensity of the fiery heat escalates, echoed in the increasing violence ("échauffant le carnage") until ultimately all perish in incendiary annihilation: "dans la flamme étouffés, sous le fer expirants." This fire-laced story culminates in the most traumatic image of all for Andromaque: "Voilà comme Pyrrhus vint s'offrir à ma vue" (1006)<sup>113</sup>

Thus, in a sense, literal vision and its uncontrollable speed of immediacy counterbalances the zero-velocity. Arguably the mirrored nature of the pair of speeds echoes the dual nature of

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<sup>112</sup> Think, think, Céphise, back to that cruel night, which doomed a nation to eternal night. Imagine Pyrrhus with his glittering eyes, entering by the glow of the burning Palace. Over the bodies of my brothers he trekked his path, caked with blood and thirsting for slaughter. Listen to the cries of the conquerers; hear the moans of the dying, by the extinguishing fires, perishing under the sword. Think of Andromaque, beside herself with horror. Now see how Pyrrhus first presented himself to me

<sup>113</sup> As Tim Murray argues, "Starobinski's emphasis on such a poetics of the glance foregrounds in Racine an inconstant visual vocabulary of moving imagery, speed, inhumanity, and even televisuality whose conceptual evocation can be said to have foreseen the growth of the new visual and conceptual machinery we now associate with the cinematic, the videomatic, and the digital" ('Animé', 13-14). So the sudden speed that Andromaque associates with the traumatic violence of the pillage scene also seems to gesture proleptically toward a strange, almost cyborgian future. In future study it might be useful to compare the prosthetic (im)material quality of Hector's ash that Andromaque's eroticism relies on with Murray's reading of the proleptic intrusion of something like Lyotard's inhuman.

trauma as per Caruth's definition: the unbearable nature of the event (and the missed encounter) can only be divulged with an excessively rapid velocity, while the unbearable nature of survival is revealed through the zero-velocity unfolding. The trauma of the flame-filled event spirals out from the immediate speed of the gaze and thus is divulged as such. One can't help *but* look, and yet in the very instant of the gaze, that very vision (the possibility of seeing) is predicated upon the very agent of destruction itself. The flames of war, which were the bursting apotheosis of her trauma narrative, transform through her rhetoric into flames of testimonial vision. Just as in Orestes' memory of Hector, fire becomes both the source of obliteration *and* the condition of possibility to remember; memories are only illuminated, seen, and re-envisioned by the light of fiery destruction.

### *III. Contingent and Queer Temporalities.*

As we continue to trace the two components of velocity, speed and direction, if we accept that the magnitude of Andromaque's velocity is zero (in a plurality of senses), the directionality of Andromaque's passivity becomes apparent when read in the context of queer theory's considerations of temporality.<sup>114</sup> We recall, from the introduction, that Edelman's claim for a queer temporal politics was one that stood resolutely against possibilities of against reproductive futurity. Leo Bersani has remarked on the relationship between Astyanax as figure and a future oriented temporality. He writes,

*Andromaque* gives us Racine's purest image of the liberating betrayal of the past; but the play brings us only to the threshold of a new order for which no content is

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<sup>114</sup> In line with this critique of reproductive futurity, queer theorists such as Edelman, Carolyn Dinshaw, Beth Freeman, Judith Halberstam, and Heather Love have all considered resistance to "straight" time by focusing on backwards glances, drag, and refusal. For Dinshaw, this queer embrace of the past takes up the "touching" implied by "contingent" in a reappropriation of nostalgia from its purely sentimental connotations to one of a feeling affectively "out-of-time"; she looks at the frictions and ruptures generated by the past rubbing up against the present. See the Introduction for more.

imagined... But who is Astyanax? In a sense, he is himself *no one* and everyone else's alibi. For the Greeks, he is a way of testing Pyrrhus's loyalty to the state and his respect for Ménélas (who gave him Hermione); for Andromaque, he has mostly been both a reminder of Hector and an obstacle to her fidelity to Hector; for Pyrrhus, he has often seemed to be nothing more than the commodity that will buy Andromaque's love... The survival of Astyanax is the only clear sign of a new order in *Andromaque*, and Pyrrhus and Andromaque finally identify themselves unreservedly with Astyanax's safety... he is the child, the future, the blank page of the play, the invisible character who finally replaces the oppressive Hector as the absent dominating force of the other characters' lives. Astyanax is nothing less and nothing more than the value of pure possibility (50).

Bersani's upholding of Astyanax as a figure for the future and of the new seems to echo the reproductive futurity that Edelman stands against. However, this future-oriented reading of Astyanax also alters our understanding of Andromaque's supposed indifference his impending doom. If Astyanax is constantly being upheld as a "blank slate" betokening a promising future replete with "pure possibility," then Andromaque's "Hélas ! Il mourra donc" (I, iv, 373) may not necessarily indicate maternal indifference but posits a stand against an incessantly optimistic future.

Andromaque's "dislocation from reality" (Greenberg, *Racine*, 63) is not only a by-product of her excessive melancholy, but also indicates a non-normative conception of marriage, unmoored from any logic borne from a "typical" marriage fidelity, or motherhood (because located in this contingent, other-time). Andromaque's resistance to decide on the question of saving Astyanax's life is not only a delay which is temporally significant insofar as she wavers for three acts of the play, but it can also be understood as performatively excessive in her

lingering demurral and deferral. In other words, a position of zero velocity not only intradiegetically heightens the suspense and drama of the play, but it also performatively critiques the very structures that demand “moving on” or decision-making. Just as the “wrongfulness” of the catechrestic trope was an appropriate adequation of language’s lacks, the excessive delay or the temporal “wrongness” also adequately marks the divergence from future-oriented temporal norms. Andromaque refuses to buy into the unquestioned good of the “after” that Edelman critiques, rejecting the libidinal fantasy of future-investment as condensed in the figure of the child.

Turning away from such norms, Andromaque’s desire actively opens up alternate possibilities of considering non-normative temporalities. Tom Boellstorff, for instance, suggests thinking of “a queer time of coincidence” as one possible alternative to the figurations of resistance: “a queer time in which time falls rather than passes, a queer meantime that embraces contamination and imbrication [...] a time that “falls” in coincidence with (and thus “queers”) straight time, in the sense that we say “May 23rd ‘falls’ on a Tuesday” (228). The concepts of “coincidental time” and contingent temporal speeds might help us understand Andromaque’s overly extreme attachment to her dead husband Hector as well as her resistance to make a decision about marrying Pyrrhus.

The move to resist remarriage has been identified by Barthes as an over-investment in tradition, a zealous valorization of the marriage vow: the “*ancienne Légalité*” as mandated by “*l’amant*” (82). Outright resistance to the New in favor of the “*ancienne Légalité*” would indicate dueling temporalities which can be graphed linearly, on a “straight” timeline (past versus future). What instead is at stake, in my reading, are the frictive tensions created when Andromaque’s “queer time” (spectralized, delayed, dragging out) contingently touches/falls on “straight time.”

These conflicting, contingent, falling temporalities manifest, for instance in Acte III. Just



as Pyrrhus seems ready to deliver Astyanax to the Greeks to die, Andromaque makes one last emboldened plea, but it is not a plea for life. Rather, she apostrophizes Hector, animating him not through memories but rather through the prosopopeiac image of ashes: “Ah ! S'il l'était assez pour nous laisser du moins/ Au tombeau qu'à ta cendre ont élevé mes soins,/ Et que, finissant là sa haine et nos misères,/ Il ne séparât point des dépouilles si chères ! ” (943-946).<sup>115</sup>

Andromaque's turn toward Hector, engaging him in conversation, effectively closes off the dialogue with Pyrrhus as interlocutor. Her pleas for the tomb, however, elicits a curious reaction from Pyrrhus: a detour from the logic of his plan, a turn, instead, to further waiting, deferral and demurrals. The zero-velocity, here, dislodges the forward progress: Pyrrhus tells his friend, Phoenix, “Va m'attendre, Phoenix,” (III, vi, 947) (“Go wait for me, Phoenix”). We cannot forget, as Louise Horowitz reminds us, that the mythological Phoenix is associated with rising up and rebirth from fire and ash, and the beginning of the play itself is driven by verbs which start with the “re” prefix, signaling an emphasis on repeating, the “second time around” (Horowitz), a possibility of moving on through and by revisiting the past.<sup>116</sup> Later, as Pyrrhus insists one last time to Andromaque that she must decide, it is “waiting” which he both dreads and uses to threaten:

Mon coeur, désespéré d'un an d'ingratitude.

Ne peut plus de son sort souffrir l'incertitude.

C'est craindre, menacer, et gémir trop longtemps.

Je meurs si je vous perds ; mais je meurs si j'attends

Songez-y : je vous laisse, et je viendrai vous prendre

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<sup>115</sup> “Oh, if it would suffice just to leave us alone at your tomb that my love and woes have built for your ashes. There, ending his hatred and our misery, we would never again be separated from your cherished corpse.”

<sup>116</sup> Other articles that address the redoubled, folded temporality in this play include Muratore, M.J. “The Pleasures of Re-Enactment in 'Andromaque'.” *Dalhousie French Studies*. Vol 24, 1993. pp. 57-70 and Racevskis, Roland. “Generational Transition in *Andromaque*.” *Dalhousie French Studies*. Vol 49, “Les épreuves du labyrinthe: Essais de poétique et d'herméneutique raciniennes Hommage tricentenaire (Winter 1999) pp 63-72.

Pour vous mener au temple où ce fils doit m'attendre ; (III, vii, 969-974).<sup>117</sup>

Instead of menacing her with violence, he insists on the ways that Andromaque's dragged-out time has totally destabilized the normative temporality of his political and amorous (marriage) structures with phrases like "souffrir l'incertitude" (endure uncertainty) and "gémir trop longtemps" (sighing for far too long). Although only one act prior he had made the sovereign decision to do away with Astyanax, saying, "Non, non, je l'ai juré ma vengeance est certaine: Il faut bien une fois justifier sa haine/j'abandonne son fils" (II, v, 693-695),<sup>118</sup> now his decisiveness seems uncertain and he is ready to renege on his choice. His ultimate threatening act of his speech is not one of violence, but rather that her son must *wait* for him at the temple ("où ce fils doit m'attendre"), perhaps extrapolating and externalizing his own conflicted struggle with her drawn-out delays.

These contingent temporalities can also be said to have initiated the very action of the play. In a move that invites both trauma theory and queer theory's analysis, Andromaque's very survival, and that of her son, is contingent on her having substituted the "improper" son for the proper, an ad-hoc kinship deviating from the "normal" temporality mapped by the nuclear family, by the usual bonds of mother and biologic son. Oreste recounts how Andromaque saved her son by holding a false Astyanax: "Seigneur, vous savez trop, avec quel artifice/ Un faux Astyanax fut offert au supplice,/ Où le seul fils d'Hector devait être conduit"(I, ii, 221-223).<sup>119</sup> Andromaque's improper place-holding, (holding the false child in the place of the proper son) arrests the violent wresting which would have killed her son. The son's survival, then, is founded upon the properly-improper substitution of one child for the other. A strangely forged,

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<sup>117</sup> My heart despairs—after a year of ingratitude, I can no longer endure this uncertainty. Fearing, threatening, sighing—this has gone on too long. I will die if I lose you, but I'll die if I wait. Remember that. I leave you now, but I'll come back to take you to the temple where your son must await.

<sup>118</sup> No, no, I've sworn my revenge. Her hatred ought to be justified. Her son shall die.

<sup>119</sup> "Sir, you know very well, through such artifice/ a false Astyanax was offered up to die/ where the proper son of Hector ought to have perished"

ephemerally performed kinship that was enacted by briefly holding the false son creates an odd “contingent” temporality, as a fleetingly performed adoptive genealogy. This contingent temporality touches on and enables the “normative” genealogical temporality to continue. Living-on, for Astyanax and for Andromaque, is only possible through the “alien” experience of substitution; such survival becomes, itself, alienating and destabilizing. Survival, as an excess of life (*sur/vivre*) or living-on marks a temporal excess that cannot be properly accounted for, lingering as an ash-like remainder. This gesture of over-reaching, over-extending the time of life, through a (questionably) criminal act is another, and perhaps truer sense in which Andromaque had been a “bad” mother. This “badness” in Andromaque’s generation of temporal excess (survival) at any cost creates a sublime irony in the sense that critics have diagnosed her as being “indifferent” to Astyanax’s survival.

#### ***IV. Motherhood and the Missed Encounter***

The question of Andromaque’s capabilities as a mother has long been a source of scholarly debate. William A. Mould summarizes:

Maternal Andromaque is generally considered from one of two points of view.

The most obvious interpretation holds that Andromaque is a “good” mother:

tender, loving, protective, concerned for her son's safety, entirely virtuous-“la

tendre mère du petit Astyanax,” in the words of Marcel Gutwirth .... An opposing

view typified by Roland Barthes in *Sur Racine*...emphasizes her love for Hector,

her coquetry, certain of her violent remarks, to the exclusion of any maternal

sentiment whatever: “Andromaque n'est pas une mère, mais une amante” (558).

If Andromaque’s stalled position swerves from the norm expected of her, perhaps it is because her story and survival itself is founded upon a mis-reading. Telling the survivors’ story is made

possible only with the re-writing of the past, specifically the writing-in of a lack, of a missed encounter. In Racine's preface, he admits that "Il est vrai que j'ai été obligé de faire vivre Astyanax un peu plus qu'il n'a vécu,"<sup>120</sup> referring to the fact that in his version of the mythology, Astyanax is made to survive the destruction of Troy, as I have discussed previously. The substitutive function that launches the action of the play (the placing of the wrong child for the proper child) is rhetorically encapsulated in the repetition and catachresis in the play-- in the interplay between the different valences of "fire" and "ash."

Just as the wrong child standing in for the "real" one enables the survival of the main characters and the possibility to live-on and to tell their story, the substitution of the "wrong" word (the abusive trope or false metaphor) for a proper one (i.e. "cendres" for "Hector") enables the language of trauma, mourning, and memory. Thus, both survival and the survival of testimony are generated by improper wresting. Andromaque's forced witnessing of her (false) child dashed to its death is played out in strange ways throughout the rest of the drama. As Abraham and Torok write:

Tous les mots qui n'auront pu être dits, toutes les scènes qui n'auront pu être remémorées, toutes les larmes qui n'auront pu être versés, seront avalés, en même temps que le traumatisme, cause de la perte. Avalés et *mis en conserve*. Le deuil indicible installe à l'intérieur du sujet un caveau secret (266).<sup>121</sup>

If we follow Abraham and Torok's figuration of the "crypt" as a type of internalized, sealed-off desire which is unspeakable, we find two instances of past traumas which are never alluded to in the play, yet which drive the play's action.

In the beginning of the play, as Oreste and Pylade reconnect, Pylade admits: "Surtout je

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<sup>120</sup> "It is true that I had to make Astyanax live for a bit longer than he actually did"

<sup>121</sup> "All the words which couldn't be spoken, all of the scenes that couldn't be recalled, all of the tears that one couldn't cry—all will be swallowed, at the same time as the trauma, scene of the loss. Swallowed and preserved. The unspeakable mourning takes hold in the interior of a secret cave within the subject." (136)

redoutais cette mélancolie/ Où j'ai vu si longtemps votre âme ensevelie" (I, i, 16-17).<sup>122</sup>

Greenberg remarks, "By his incisive use of the word *ensevelie* to rhyme with *mélancolie*, Racine immediately establishes, as Freud would do two hundred years later, the intimate relation of melancholia and death" (60). That which is buried, however, is not only Oreste's "âme" but also the secret of his crime. Prior to the play's action, Oreste has murdered his mother, Clytemnestra to avenge the fact that she had previously slain Oreste's father, Agamemnon. Clytemnestra viewed the murder of her spouse as just recompense for Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice their daughter Iphigénie in order to garner a favorable wind and launch ships toward Troy.

Although Oreste's past is never explicitly mentioned in the text, theatergoers in the seventeenth century would have surely been attuned to the mythological context.<sup>123</sup> Jean Apostolides' summary of Oreste's situation bears more than a passing similarity to the structure of the "open secret" as analyzed by François;<sup>124</sup> the murder remains buried, as knowledge of past crimes which remains known, but unsaid, and lingering without any pressing imperative to act upon this weighted knowledge: "Lorsque débute de la pièce, et bien que Racine laisse dans l'ombre tout cet aspect du personnage, Oreste a déjà vengé son père et Pylade était présent lors de l'assassinat de Clytemnestre"( 94).<sup>125</sup> This weightless knowledge may be enabled by the fact that "Oreste garde Pylade comme un témoin muet de son passé d'Atride" (Apostolides 95) (Orestes keeps Pylades as a mute witness of his Atrides past). Pylade's status as bystander to the crime enables a particular type of testimonial vision; Shoshana Felman, in *Testimony*, suggests that "the victims, the bystanders, and the perpetrators are here differentiated not so much by what they

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<sup>122</sup> "I was especially afraid of this melancholia which, for so long, enveloped your spirits."

<sup>123</sup> Mitchell Greenberg writes, "Nowhere in the text of *Andromaque* is any mention made of this most famous and most shocking of crimes attached to the Oreste legend. This does not prevent knowledge of his crime...like the Enrinyes who follow him everywhere from being inextricably attached to his persona, Oreste enters the play, whether acknowledged or not, with all the weight and opprobrium of his matricide" (*Racine* 61).

<sup>124</sup> François' work suggests "the ways in which the open secret as a gesture of self-canceling revelation permits a release from the ethical imperative to *act* upon knowledge"(3).

<sup>125</sup> "At the beginning of the piece, and even though Racine obscures the rest of his character, Orestes has already taking revenge on his father and Pylades was present at the murder of Clytemnestra."

actually see [...] as by how they *do not see*, by what and how they *fail to witness*” (208). To this end, Felman suggests that the position of the bystander, as exemplified by the Poles in the film *Shoah* (Lantzman 1985), is one of seeing-but-not seeing. This may be likened the ephemerality elicited by Terada's “looking away” or similar in structure to the abusive figuration of catachresis, of figuring, but failing to figure: “The Poles, unlike the Jews, *do see*, but, as bystanders, they do not quite *look*, they avoid looking directly, and thus they *overlook* at once their responsibility and their complicity as witnesses” (208). Thus when Pylade admits, “Surtout je redoutais cette mélancolie/ Où j'ai vu si longtemps votre âme ensevelie” (I, i, 16-17)<sup>126</sup>, the “mélancolie” that is seen (*vu*) condenses both the noted, superficial understanding of the performed melancholic affect as well as the over-looked traumatically-buried matricide.

Surely Oreste's diplomatic voyage to Épire carries not only the evident pretext of wooing Hermione, but also the hidden, encrypted acting-out of the weight(lessness) of his murder. By making the move that he does—demanding Astyanax on behalf of the Greeks—he puts pressure on Andromaque both as a mother and as a wife, replicating almost perversely, in reverse, the same dilemma with which his mother was faced: does her fidelity as a wife take precedence over her identity as a mother? Clytemnestra felt that Agamemnon's blow to her motherhood, killing her beloved daughter Iphigénie, assured her enough justification to murder her husband upon his arrival back home. The opening “chess move” performed by Orestes enacts and replicates an eerily similar re-iteration of the same questions his mother faced.

As previously analyzed, Andromaque's reaction to this particular “chess move” is released in a zero-velocity reaction. Indeed, her response to Pyrrhus' ultimatum is simply “Hélas ! Il mourra donc (I, iv, 373) (“Alas, he'll die, then”). Obscured in this decisive indecision is her encrypted trauma experienced from the war—her apparent passivity and acceptance that

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<sup>126</sup> “I especially feared the melancholia that I saw/ the melancholia in which your soul was buried for so long.”

Astyanax would die indicates a deeper, buried guilt over the too-ready sacrifice of the false Astyanax. Indeed, the second and only other time that “ensevelis” is mentioned in the text, the word is made to rhyme with “fils”: “Il élève en sa cour l'ennemi de la Grèce,/ Astyanax, d'Hector jeune et malheureux fils,/ Reste de tant de rois sous Troie ensevelis”(I, i, 70-73).<sup>127</sup> The child's living-on, his status as son/child-- the “reste” of Trojan kings, is predicated upon Andromaque's willing sacrifice of another child. The buried kings dictate the progress of futurity and lineage, but buried with these past kings are also the trauma and violent acts that make the apparently smooth transition of power possible, such as Andromaque's complicity in the deception. Thus Astyanax's very position as “son” (and that which makes Andromaque “mother”) is founded upon that which is buried and repudiated.

This “missed encounter”—the accident which was an enacted, fully carried-out threat, yet never touched Astyanax himself—is further traumatic because Andromaque was made to witness the horror of it, but it was an event whose horror to which she could never testify, because it would be a testimony filled with “almosts”—“I *almost* saw my son die/ I willingly let my *almost*-son die before my eyes”. This “almost” is enabled by a duplicitous doubling: the twinning of the false son and the real son. Andromaque condenses all three of Shoshana Felman's witnessing positions at once: she is the bystander (who insists on *overlooking* her complicity in the event), the perpetrator (by seizing the false child) and the victim (of the actual event).

In a sense, Orestes as foil to Andromaque's situation, with his twinned bystander Pylade, amplifies the inarticulable trauma of the slippages. Pylade's mother, Anaxibie “fait partie du clan de Atrides [...] elle est la tante d'Oreste et d'Hermione, qui sont cousins germains. Selon la tradition, Oreste et Pylade auraient été élevés conjointement à la cour de Strophios, leur lien de

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<sup>127</sup> “In this very court he is bringing up the enemy of Greece. Astyanax, Hector's young and woe-burdered son. The last of the line of kings now buried under Troy.”

parenté de doublant d'un lien d'amitié (Apostolidès, 94)<sup>128</sup>. Thus with the words “conjointement,” “doublant” and “cousins germains,” Apostolidès wishes to emphasize the very twinning of the two, but only in order to establish Pylade as the witnessing bystander. We can extend this doubling further, by crafting a more elaborated picture of mere foils and mirroring through Patricia Parker's exploration of the equivocation and wordplay in “cousins germains:”

But the Shakespearean canon also plays repeatedly on the tension between the sense of *german* as honest, genuine or true and the doubled sense of *cozen* both as relative and kin and as cheating or cozening. Shakespearean playing on *germane* and *german* in contexts that sometimes evoke its closeness in sound to *gemmen*, or twin, conveys just such a sense of the potentially duplicitous, treacherous, or cozening 'german' (*SM* 129).

Although drawing upon Shakespearean wordplay here, Parker's notion still seems particularly apt for this buried, traumatic event: the question at stake here is the honest swindle (*german* cozening) of the false son for the real son, honest because earnest, and well-intentioned. Or else it becomes a case where the “duplicitous doubling” (129) itself becomes *german*, it feels entirely real, and the slippery nature of the swapping means that the traumatic loss of the false son feels no less false than the real (proleptic) loss of the real son.

Through the layers of doubling, of the shifting in and out of focus between reality, loss, and bystander vision, this trauma remains unspoken, and must remain sealed, so thickly cemented over with obfuscating layers of guilt and haunting. As Caruth reminds us:

The accident, that is, as it emerges in Freud and is passed on through other trauma narratives, does not simply represent the violence of a collision but also conveys the impact of its very incomprehensibility. What returns to haunt the victim, these

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<sup>128</sup> “She is part of the Atrides clan [...] she is the aunt of Orestes and Hermione, who are *german* cousins. According to tradition, Orestes and Pylades had been conjointly raised at the court in Strophios, their familial ties redoubled with a link of friendship.”



stories tell us, is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known (6).

For *Andromaque*, this “missed encounter” with death, touched and yet not touched by it, literalizes the temporal delay/ unexpectedness of trauma. The death of her (false) son has already happened, which she is processing and understanding belatedly (or even not at all), but the death of the real son is still imminent, yet-to come. In the doubling of the false son and the real son, *Andromaque* is made to experience the “too soon” and “too late” simultaneously. Her own life, her own incomprehensible and unbearable survival, is based solely upon Astyanax’s living-on, a survival for which she is ultimately guilty and responsible.

### V. *Desire, Deixis and Temporality*

*Andromaque*’s traumas engender an out-of-jointness with time, a disengagement that is effected through her stalling, deferral, and hauntedness. In many respects, however, all of the characters in the play are “out of time”: they are all latecomers and view themselves as secondary en-actors of the cataclysmic event which has already happened. This point is emphasized by Roland Racevskis in *Tragic Passages*. He views *Andromaque* as embodying a generational transition and working through the throes of change in regards to a past which has both traumatized them (in the war) and overdetermined them (though their parents’ famed legacies).<sup>129</sup> The preceding generation, in a sense, hovers spectrally over their progeny who can only envision themselves as going through the motions of the grand gestures of their forefathers’ exploits. As Oreste says to Hermione: “Mettons encore un coup tout la Grèce en flamme;”

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<sup>129</sup> “The inheritors of the heroic deeds of Hector and Achilles, of Menelaus and Agamemnon, can only invoke the greatness of their parents, while struggling with the historically petty, amorous concerns of their own sparse present on the threshold to an unknown future. Latecomers, in a parasitically referential relationship to the accomplishments of those who preceded them, the characters in *Andromaque* stand on a void, the constantly vanishing temporality of their own lives, the slippage of their becoming” (Racevskis, 157)

Prenons, en signalant mon bras et votre nom,/ Vous, la place d'Hélène, et moi, d'Agamemnon” (IV, iii, 1158-1160).<sup>130</sup> For Oreste, there is no anxiety of influence here: he does not want to outdo his ancestors, but rather he hopes to re-enact *à la lettre* the exact scenes from their parents' exact positions. Oreste's call to take “la place” of their parents betokens a type of plot-less stagnation. I underscore this stagnation to compare such a position with Andromaque's passivity, to illustrate why I read her “zero velocity” as so radical. The second generation's desire for duplication is echoed in epithetical names: Pyrrhus is called “fils d'Achille” Hermione is “fille d'Hélène, Oreste “fils d'Agamemnon.” And impressively, Astyanax is called “fils d'Hector” (son of Hector) no less than six times in the play. This generational naming has the tautological effect of producing the child as both the product and the justification for the progress-oriented linearity of “straight time.” Significantly, Andromaque is the only character *not* epithetically attached to the preceding generation or parents. Instead, her appellation is the “veuve d'Hector,” a type of naming which appears, in contrast, as a type of a synchronic swerving against the force of the diachronic generational trajectories.

From her epithetical name to her actions, she does not follow the linear timeline of generationality, the “straight time.” An example in miniature of this type of temporality that she resists, and another moment of inarticulate clashing is grammatically presented in the first scene of Acte IV. Céphise, Andromaque's *confidante*, is relieved and elated that, apparently, Andromaque has acquiesced to marry Pyrrhus, thus securing both the structure of heteronormative marriage ties, royal lineage and the future of the child. Céphise says:

Ah ! Je n'en doute point ; c'est votre époux, Madame,

C'est Hector qui produit ce miracle en votre âme.

Il veut que Troie encor se puisse relever

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<sup>130</sup> “Let's set all of Greece aflame again, let's take the place of Helene and of Agamemnon”

Avec cet heureux fils qu'il vous fait conserver.

Pyrrhus vous l'a promis. Vous venez de l'entendre

Madame : il n'attendait qu'un mot pour vous le rendre (I, iv, 1049-1054).<sup>131</sup>

Céphise's speech opens with a flurry of cataphoric deixis: "c'est votre époux," "c'est Hector," "ce miracle," the deictic "ce" announcing the husband, the husband's role and the miracle as yet-to-be explained. Cataphoric deixis, defined as a "forward-pointing", indicates a type of presentness and immediacy which is still-to-be announced within the context of the phrase. For example, when Céphise says "ce miracle" it creates a tension between the extremely present-oriented indicative of "this" and the anticipatory promise of fulfilling this knowledge gap ("what is 'this' miracle?"). Céphise uses the grammatical mood elicited by this forward-pointing to hold up the future-oriented values of production ("produit"), saving the child ("cet heureux fils... conserver") and moving on ("relever"). She even enthuses later: " Quel plaisir d'élever un enfant qu'on voit crâître,/ Non plus comme un esclave élevé pour son maître,/ Mais pour voir avec lui renaître tant de rois !" (IV, i, 1069-1071).<sup>132</sup>

Against this optimistic futurity encapsulated affectively and grammatically by Céphise's discourse, Andromaque's "innocent stratageme" is her plan to marry Pyrrhus in order to secure Astynax's future and then to immediately kill herself.

Quoi donc ? as-tu pensé qu'Andromaque infidèle

Pût trahir un époux qui croit revivre en elle ;

Et que, de tant de morts réveillant la douleur

Le soin de mon repos me fît troubler le leur ?

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<sup>131</sup> "I have no doubt, my lady, it's your husband ! It's your husband who has produced this miracle in your heart. He wants Troy to rise up again, through this lucky child that he has helped you save. Pyrrhus promised—you've just heard it yourself, Madame: he just awaits a single word to give your son back to you."

<sup>132</sup> "What a joy to raise a child that one has seen grow—not as a slave, but rather as a master, and to see, through him, the rebirth of so many future kings."

Est-ce là cette ardeur tant promise à sa cendre ? (IV, i, 1077-1081).<sup>133</sup>

This strategy is one that is illegible and incomprehensible within Céphise's future-oriented vision. Andromaque corrects Céphise with the image of ashes, emphasizing that her decision is one which is intensely informed by her hauntedness and spectrality.

Indeed, for Andromaque, if survival (as opposed to mere 'existence') is to be conditioned upon love, or at least the possibility of love then we must also take into consideration the fact that loving may not take the form which makes the most sense in the context of a future-oriented, hetero-reproductive temporality. Perhaps the most telling component of Andromaque's haunted time is that she simply disappears from the stage after she announces her "innocent stratagème." Ultimately, we find out that the people of Épire murder Pyrrhus in a maddened fury and crown Andromaque queen, but this narrative is only recounted through others' words. This disappearance must be read *as such*—insofar as she continues to linger in the rest of the play's action but ceases to be a physical, speaking being on stage<sup>134</sup>. Andromaque herself figures a productivity (diegetic, mythologic, political) which is generated outside of the temporality of hetero-reproductive chronology, a figure, like ash, which persists in marking a desire, and longing even beyond the end.

This complex process, as we have seen, includes subtle gestures of re-metaphorization and catachresis in order to erase, to testify and to figure the past. It includes "working through"

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<sup>133</sup> "So you thought that an unfaithful Andromaque could possibly betray her husband, who lives through me? And that I would reawaken the grief of countless dead, the careless ease of my sleep haunting their eternal rest? Is this the love that I promised to his ashes?"

<sup>134</sup> In an earlier version of the play, Racine has Andromaque reappear briefly to give a speech ("Deux fois veuve et deux fois l'esclave de la Grèce") in which she confronts Hermione for her murderous plot and mourns Pyrrhus. Raymond Picard, in the Pléiade edition of the text, notes: "Cette longue variante comprend surtout un discours d'Andromaque qui rompt le rythme de l'action [...] Racine, attentif à maintenir la dureté inflexible du drame, l'a supprimée"(1089). While in the final (definitive) version, Andromaque's silence and disappearance supports my argument about the illegibility of contingent (passive/spectral) temporalities, the very history of the play's writing, with a long intrusive digression and spectralized re-appearance, could be interesting to extend in further analysis. For another take on the duality implicit in this speech and the poetics of non-closure, see Richard Goodkin's "A Choice of Andromache's", *Yale French Studies*, 67, 1984.

traumas of motherhood and violence which may lie encrypted and invisible, unapparent even to the protagonists. Addressing trauma, as Andromaque demonstrates, may necessitate a torsion within time's trajectory, a twist which arrests the insistent forward flow in order to bring to the fore the value of stillness, sorrow, and lingering over loss. The choices that Andromaque has made before the play's beginning and which she faces within the play's trajectory are not easy ones, and, through her use of "flamme" "tombeau" and "cendres" in multiple and surprising ways, she makes the spectator aware of her own particular crises of survival and of (not) "moving on."

## CHAPTER 3

### CIRCLING THE HYMEN: THE TEMPORALITY OF DILATION IN RACINE'S *BÉRÉNICE*

#### *I. Excess and Minimalism*

While Andromaque forestalls marriage to Pyrrhus in the name of preserving her catachrestic attachment to Hector, in *Bérénice*, delay is orchestrated in order to produce a different result: to defer saying goodbye. This simple act of delaying bidding adieu stands as the prime and sole action of the tragedy. Racine's dramas are characterized by a strict adherence to the minimalism privileged by classical aesthetics, and this tragedy is no exception. In fact, it may be considered the ultimate paradigm of the Racinian style. *Bérénice* is marked by simplicity in the extreme: nearly nothing "active" happens. There are no murders or suicides; indeed, there is no bloodshed at all in this drama. Abbé Villars, in his critique of the play, says "à peine y a-t-il une action ici, bien loin d'y en avoir plusieurs" (517).<sup>135</sup> He dismissively calls it nothing more than extended elegiacal fluff: "depuis le commencement jusqu'à la fin, n'est qu'un tissu galant de Madrigaux et d'Élégies" (516).<sup>136</sup>

The play's action is admittedly quite simple. Titus, who has recently been named the emperor of Rome, must bid farewell to his beloved mistress of five years, Bérénice, because Roman law forbids a stranger, and a royal queen, to share the imperial throne. At the same time, Titus' best friend Antiochus takes this opportunity to declare his long-smoldering love for Bérénice. Bérénice, despite her love for Titus and his love for her, must accept Titus' farewells and decline Antiochus's declarations of love. At the end of the play, the three part ways and renounce their love forever. According to tradition in literary history, apocryphal or not, the subject was selected as a type of competition with Pierre Corneille, organized by Henriette

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<sup>135</sup> "There is hardly a single action/story here, let alone several"

<sup>136</sup> "From the beginning to the end, it's nothing but a frivolous romance woven of madrigals and elegies"

d'Angleterre, who encouraged the reigning literary heavyweight to pen a play on the same material.<sup>137</sup> Literary history has tended to award the laurels to Racine.

However, while Corneille's version featured four characters who try to manipulate and coax each other into loving and committing to one another, leading to the ultimate plot climax of Bérénice's banishment, Racine's version can seem absurdly simple on the level of form as well as in its limitation of subject matter. As Racine says in the preface, "Il y avait longtemps que je voulais essayer si je pourrais faire une Tragédie avec cette simplicité d'Action qui a été si fort du gout des Ancients" (451).<sup>138</sup> Racine's version only features three main characters, and, more importantly in terms of the temporality of the action, Titus come onstage already knowing and already committed to sending Bérénice away. One does not wait with bated breath to see if Bérénice might stay; we know from the beginning that she must go. Critics have argued that the only "action" of the piece is mustering the courage to declare this to her. As Villars says, "Car toute cette pièce, si l'on y prend garde, n'est que la matière d'une Scène, où Titus voudrait quitter Bérénice" (517).<sup>139</sup>

Racine's inspiration for the piece derives from a single line of Suetonius' histories "*Titus reginam Berenicen, cui etiam nuptias pollicitus ferebatur, statim ab Urbe dimisit invitam, invitam,*" which Racine translates as: "Titus, qui aimait passionément Bérénice, et qui même, à ce qu'on croyait, lui avais promis de l'épouser, la renvoya de Rome, malgré lui, et malgré elle, dès les premiers jours de son Empire"(450)<sup>140</sup>. And yet, even in his preface, Racine seems overly

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<sup>137</sup> Mitchell Greenberg summarizes the myth of the play's origin "According to 'la petite histoire,' Henriette d'Angleterre supposedly suggested to both Racine and Corneille that they use the historical disguise [...] to represent an episode in Louis XIV's amorous career. As legend has it, Louis, when a young man, fell passionately in love with Marie Mancini, niece of his cardinal prime minister Mazarin. Despite their ardor, higher demands of the state worked inexorably against the match. A more politically motivated marriage awaited Louis, a marriage upon which the possibility of a generalized European peace depended (CS 139).

<sup>138</sup> "For a long time, I have wanted to see if I could craft a Tragedy with the same simplicity of action that was so cherished by the Ancients"

<sup>139</sup> "Since this whole play, if one is paying attention, is actually nothing more than a story worthy of one scene, in which Titus tries to leave Bérénice."

<sup>140</sup> "Titus, who passionately loved Bérénice, and she who believed that he would marry her, sent her away from

concerned with justifying the richness of this single line of material, asserting that Bérénice and Titus' story, like Dido and Aeneas' has largely sufficient poetic and dramatic matter with which to craft a tragedy: "Et qui doute, que ce qui a pu fournir assez de matière pour tout un Chant d'un Poème héroïque, où l'Action dure plusieurs jours et où la Narration occupe beaucoup de place, ne puisse suffire pour le sujet d'une Tragédie?"(450).<sup>141</sup> Racine insists on the temporal duration required to stage such rich material. So the same play is read as either scanty material "a peine... une action" or else an excessive action that lasts "plusieur jours" and whose narration "occupe beaucoup de place." How can such a tragedy be both "rien" as well as excess?

Despite the supposed simplicity of the tale, the classic story of lovers being separated, *invitus invitam*, resonated deeply with audiences. Villars himself reports that once he abandons "mes Demoiselles les règles [du Théâtre] à la porte" he is immediately drawn into the spectacle : "j'ai l'ai trouvée fort affligeante, et j'y ai pleuré comme un ignorant" (511).<sup>142</sup> And indeed it is the public's reponsive overflowing of tears that Racine holds up as evidence of his work's success: "Mais aussi je ne puis croire que le Public me sache mauvais gré de lui avoir donné une Tragédie qui a été honorée de tant de larmes, et dont la trentième représentation a été aussi survie que la première" (451).<sup>143</sup> From this (nearly) non-action of bidding adieu, and the overly simplistic classical restraint in terms of style and form, we have an excessive spilling over of tears and emotion.

At the same time that we are presented with this extremely spare dramatic material, critics have also targeted what appears to be excess. If the play's only substantive action consists of saying goodbye and mourning the loss of the beloved, why does it need to be repeated so many

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Rome, despite his will and despite her will, during the first days of his Empire"

<sup>141</sup> "And who would doubt that the material that could furnish enough storyline for an entire length of an Epic poem, in which the action extends for several days and the narration takes up a fair amount of space—that it could not equally and sufficiently serve as the subject of a tragedy?"

<sup>142</sup> "my darlings, the rules [of the theatre] at the door"/ "I found it powerfully sad, and I wept like a simpleton"

<sup>143</sup> "And yet I would not imagine that the Public would hold it against me that I gave them such a tragedy that was lauded by so many tears, and that the thirtieth show was just as well attended as the first"



times? Georges Forestier cites Racine who says “Toute l’invention consiste à faire quelque chose de rien” (1445).<sup>144</sup> In response to this aphorism, Forestier remarks, slightly sarcastically, “Étonnant (mais involontaire) rappel de la proximité des principes de la composition dramatique et de ceux de la composition rhétorique, comme si *Bérénice* avait été conçue sur le modèle de la *chrie*, exercice rhétorique qui précisément ‘consiste à faire quelque chose de rien!’” (1445).<sup>145146</sup> While this idea of repetition is teasingly reduced to pedagogic *copia*, I would like to reconsider this flourishing of synonymous repetition not as a mere rhetorical exercise—rather, such rhetorical practices such as the *copia* are never “merely” futile repetitions.<sup>147</sup> In this text, the repetition is a key to understanding the temporal and erotic dynamics of the piece.

Notably, the repetition produced by returning again and again to the same (sad, sorrowful, longing) affective sentiment is redoubled by a strangely circular temporality of the play. Titus says of *Bérénice*: “Depuis cinq ans entiers chaque jour je la vois, / Et crois toujours la voir pour la première fois” (II, 2, 545- 546),<sup>148</sup> putting forth a temporality of non-progress. The pleasurable, surprising *renouveau* begins again each day, a circular time that stands in contrast to the sovereign temporality of progress, decision-making and change. Such circular time delays the time of Titus’ sovereign decision-making, when he has to finally bid her farewell. In a sense, this chapter will analyze the ways that non-progressive temporality is

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<sup>144</sup> “All invention is making something out of nothing.”

<sup>145</sup> This “nothingness” also can remind us of another iteration of the cipher, or the zero-ness (nothingness) that can engender expansive and surprising meanings.

<sup>146</sup> “Surprising and yet involuntary reminder of the proximity of the principles of dramatic composition and rhetorical composition, as if *Bérénice* had been developed according to the model of the “*chrie*,” a rhetorical exercise that actually consists in making something out of nothing.”

<sup>147</sup> For more on the relationship between early modern pedagogy, including the types copying exercises that Forestier mentions, and the disciplining of the Humanist subject, please see Lynn Enterline’s *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. Ultimately, although Forestier means to lightly tease the way that *Bérénice* could be read as a schoolboy’s practice of writing “goodbye” a hundred different ways, Enterline’s work sheds a light on how such seemingly mundane repetitive practices actually constituted a powerful affective classroom scene of shame, emotion, mastery, imitation, and more. While Enterline’s work focuses on the English classroom, it would be interesting to extend her particular angle of analysis to France, particularly because Racine had an exception amount of training in Latin and Greek thanks to his schooling at Port Royal.

<sup>148</sup> “For five years I’ve seen her every day, and feel like I am seeing her for the first time.”

wrenched in sync with a sovereign progress characterized by futurity and the exclusion of “fruit illegitimate” or Bérénice’s royal blood. What stands in the way of such temporality is this delay, or dilation, which takes on various specifically spiral or circular figurations throughout the text.

In addition to the rhetorical (and gendered) dilation of the repetitive “chrie,” the other “excess” in the play that critics have flagged is the character of Antiochus. The introduction of Antiochus into the play has been critiqued as nothing but a means to expand the simple action of saying goodbye into a full five-act play: “Ses adieux (Antiochus) à Bérénice sont de l’invention du Poète pour gagner du temps, pour tricher et pour fournir un Acte” (Villars, 511).<sup>149</sup> However, more than merely adding a superfluous character to flesh out what would have otherwise been a ridiculously short tragedy, Racine seems to insist on Antiochus’ necessity in the drama; Antiochus is the character who speaks both the opening and closing lines of the play.<sup>150</sup> Leaving aside, however, these formal qualities highlighting his importance, in my reading Antiochus serves as necessary third figure in the play, acting as a prism or even an erotic conduit through which Titus’ and Bérénice’s love can be measured, articulated, and witnessed.

The supposed paucity of action and excess of rhetorical “chrie” intertwine to mark a certain inarticulate erotics. Far from being aesthetic faults of the drama, what critics have dismissed as non-action or as repetition derives from reading and understanding the play through normative temporal lenses: certain expectations of progress derive from fixed notions of what

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<sup>149</sup> « His goodbyes (Antiochus’) to Bérénice are the invented imaginings of the author to gain some time, to cheat and to stretch it out to an Act”

<sup>150</sup> “À côté de ce couple, le rôle d’Antiochus—personnage semi-historique rapproché d’un duo historique—n’a cessé de troubler la critique depuis trois siècles, au point que certains y voient la grande faiblesse de la pièce : au pire, on le traite de ‘confident monté en grade’, au mieux, on en fait un personnage purement fonctionnel... Autrement dit, sous le couvert de permettre à Titus d’esquiver le spectacle de la souffrance de Bérénice, il sert à retarder cette explication. Du coup, après la grande rencontre entre les amants du quatrième acte, son rôle semble terminé et il ne paraît plus que de manière intermittente... Comme le dit l’abbé de Villars, Antiochus serait donc le rôle qui permet de faire de la matière d’une scène une pièce tout entière. Et en effet, son apparition dans quatorze scènes (contres quinze à Titus et onze à Bérénice) et le fait que Racine lui prête trois cent cinquante vers (à peine cinquante vers de moins que Bérénice) ne paraissent se justifier que par ce souci d’extension d’une matière extrêmement ténue[...]Cependant, si ce personnage se réduit à n’être qu’un rôle purement fonctionnel, il rest à comprendre pourquoi il reparaît au quatrième acte après l’explication décisive entre les deux amants, pourquoi Racine insiste sur le pathétique de sa propre situation [...] et enfin pourquoi c’est à lui que revient d’exprimer le dernier soupir de la pièce”(Forestier, 1465).

tragic drama, or historical sovereignty “should” look like. There are certain hegemonies of intimacy and gender that govern these normative temporal lenses: one is the primacy of understanding the play through figure of the couple, or the duo, the exclusion of something more ambiguously polyamorous, fluid, and triadic.

The play is usually analyzed in terms of pairs, of the pathos of the *invitus invitam*—the sorrowfully departed male/female couple. Such readings erase Antiochus’ attachment to Titus, the ways that Titus relies upon Antiochus’ voice and witnessing eyes, and the manner in which Antiochus’ love for Bérénice is always presented in mirrored comparison to Titus’ love, which I will analyze in a later section. I argue that the eroticism ungirding the dynamics of this triad relies on a temporality that is “dilated”—undecided, repetitive, yet full of possibilities. Such an ambiguously erotic triangulation is especially enabled by the circular, non-linear temporality—a temporality that is only possible when the (sovereign) decision fails to take effect. And fittingly, it is not just any decision, but precisely the decision that must be made regarding the hymen, or impending possibility of marriage.

In addition to the exclusionary gesture that the primacy of the couple performs, another factor that creates “blindness” is the investment in depicting Bérénice as specifically Oriental, exoticized and otherized, a racial identity and gendered femininity that, in scholarship of the play, serves as both the justificatory principle for her banishment as well as the originary source of her seduction. It is my contention that such an overdetermined description of Bérénice acts as an overly simplified “red herring”—in other words, such an obvious “Other,” presented in excessive Orientalist splendor, distracts us from paying attention to subtler, less obvious “otherized” sexualities or gender positions, other inarticulate erotics.

## *II. Dilation, Delay, Desire*

Racine's play so strictly follows the classical ideals that blood and death are both eliminated from the stage that it effaces the traces of the body itself. Mitchell Greenberg also takes up the Racine citation "Toute l'invention consiste à faire quelque chose de rien" but suggests that the site of this "rien" points to something else:

By eliminating death as a necessity for his tragedy, Racine shifts the locus of tragic intensity from a culpable body, a body that is the site of sin, and places it in a noncernable 'other space.' The trace scenario shifts from the palpable, the tactile, the manipulable, from the thing, the body itself, and becomes rather a purely undefinable, ungraspable, absence: a no/thing, a *rien*. It is precisely this 'no/thing' that Racine tells us, in his preface, that *Bérénice* represents (CS, 136).

However, instead of thinking of the "rien" as an allegorical placeholder for the body's banishment on the French neo-classical stage, or as a zero-basis on which "chrie" or repetitive fluff could be embroidered, we need to consider the rhetorical strategies by which this "rien" is produced itself, taking the generation of *rien* seriously. To reappropriate an oft-repeated Shakespeare pun stemming from a different play, instead of a no/thing, we could read "nothing" as an 'O' thing — by reconsidering the "rien" of open space specifically in relation to language, gender and sexuality.

In Patricia Parker's article "Deferral, Dilation, Différance" and in her seminal study *Literary Fat Ladies*, she argues that the relationships between delay, gender and rhetorical excess coincide in the Renaissance figure of dilation:

Derrida's punning 'différance' is silent on this third term from that single Latin root, that of *dilatatio* or dilation, which in Renaissance usage in its verbal form meant not only to expand, disperse, or spread abroad, but also to put off,

postpone, prolong, or protract— meanings that still linger in the modern English ‘dilatatory.’” But it is, as we shall see, this particular term for the combination of temporal deferral and spatial extension which crucially defines the self-reflexive strategies of a wide range of Renaissance texts, in which ‘dilation’ as delay functions as a kind of semantic crossroads, a complex in which constructs rhetorical and narrative, philosophical and theological, judicial and erotic overlap as figures for the space and time of the text itself (*LFL* 182-183).

Parker’s work highlights the spatial and sexual dimension of the Latin *differe*, which she relates to but distinguishes from Derrida’s *différance*. Parker reads the Renaissance concerns with dilation and delay as “finally caught within the horizon of a telos or ending, however tentatively or self-consciously construed” whereas she reads Derrida’s *différance* as being unlimited (“Deferral” 204). The renaissance context in which Parker reads dilation requires some sort of eschatological horizon, or an end, against which or in sight of which renaissance writings struggle, desire, and turn away.<sup>151</sup>

If Parker’s analysis of dilation adds a gendered (third) supplement to the spatial and temporal “spacing” inherent in *différance*, Derrida’s own analysis of the forked meanings of *differe* also complements Parker’s work by underscoring the necessity of temporization. Derrida insists on *différance* being neither a word nor a concept; instead of providing a definition, he traces the movement of *différance* by way of semantic analysis, to bring to light an amalgam and plurality of meanings that *différance* enacts.

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<sup>151</sup> The infinity that *différance* can enact is well summarized by Martin Hägglund in his book *Radical Atheism*; “In contrast, *différance* articulates the negative infinity of time. No moment is given in itself but is superseded by another moment in its very event and can never be consummated in a positive infinity. The negative infinity of time is an infinite finitude, since it entails that finitude cannot ever be eliminated or overcome. The infinite finitude of *différance* is at work before, within, and beyond anything one may circumscribe as being. *Différance* is thus without being but not because it is something ineffable that transcends time and space. On the contrary, *différance* is nothing in itself because it designates the spacing of time that makes it impossible for anything to be in itself” (3).

[Il y a] deux motifs du *differre* latin, à savoir l'action de remettre à plus tard, de tenir compte, de tenir le compte du temps et des forces dans une opération qui implique un calcul économique, un détour, un délai, un retard, une réserve, une représentation, tous concepts que je résumerai ici d'un mot dont je ne me suis jamais servi mais qu'on pourrait inscrire dans cette chaîne : la *temporisation*. Différer en ce sens, c'est temporiser, c'est recourir, consciemment ou inconsciemment, à la médiation temporelle et temporasatrice d'un détour suspendant l'accomplissement ou le remplissement du 'désir' ou de la 'volonté', l'effectuant aussi bien sur un mode qui en annule ou en tempère l'effet. cette temporisation est aussi temporalisation et espacement, devenir-temps de l'espace et devenir-espace du temps, 'constitution originaire' (DF 80)<sup>152</sup>

We are familiar with *différance*'s role in structuralist meaning- how the sign signifies insofar as it indicates its difference from what it is not (what is not-there, but what is not-it). *Différance* also works temporally, insofar as it defers meaning's presence. But what is interesting here that Derrida highlights is the necessity of mediation (temporizing). And we can't forget that "to temper" also has the connotations of adding something in order to moderate, dilute, or even neutralize what would otherwise have been extreme. This additional moderation, or neutrality, as embodied in the figure of Antiochus, we shall see, is key to the temporal dilation's spiraling increase. There is a way in which the addition of the neutral, to moderate or mediate, is indeed the operative key that opens and incites the whole dilatory operation.

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<sup>152</sup> This word combines the two motifs of the Latin *differre*, to wit, the action of putting off until later, of taking account of time and of the forces of an operation that implies an economical calculation, a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve, a representation—concepts that I would summarize here in a word I have never used but that could be inscribed in this chain: *temporization*. *Différer* in this sense is the temporize, to take recourse, consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfilment of 'desire' or 'will,' and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect [...] this temporization is also a temporalization and spacing, the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time, the "originary constitution" of time and space ("La Différance" 8)

Dilation can help us understand the particular gendered ways that temporality and rhetoric are intertwined. Parker associates the figure of dilation with the “literary fat lady.” While not necessarily physically “large,” this “fat lady” highlights the role that feminine excess plays in renaissance texts-- whether in terms of swelling bodies or generational increase, temporal dilations or delays, to excessive female speech or even the unfillable space of unsatiated feminine desire. Of Parker’s “literary fat ladies” that serve as several different key organizing tropes in Renaissance literature, I have drawn on four main paradigms that thread through my reading of *Bérénice*. The first is one akin to what Forestier calls the *chrie*. Parker remarks on the gendered and geographical associations of excessive speech:

This tradition of rhetorical *dilatatio* – with references to the ‘swelling’ style or its relation to the verbal ‘interlarding’ produced through an excessive application of the principle of ‘increase’ [...] Ascham’s *Schoolmaster* treats of the use of ‘epitome’ in reducing the inflated bulk of an oration through the example of the need to put an ‘overfat’ and ‘fleshy’ style on a diet. Though fat is not gendered as female in this passage from Scham, it most definitely is in anti-Ciceronian contrastings of a more effeminate Ciceronian or Asiatic style—linked with ‘bignesse’ as well as prodigality—to the more virile Attic [...] A similar contrast, with the appropriate shift of symbolic locus, informs the opposition of fat and effeminating Egypt to lean and virile Rome in Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (14).

The supposed “pithiness” of Ascham’s epitome, or example, stands as a “point” to which a meandering, repetitive discourse could close. Inflation, in regards to hyperbole as well as to repetition characterizes the speeches the characters give at the end of the play: Bérénice threatens suicide faced with Titus’ abandon, Antiochus also entertains the thought of ending his

life, and Titus offers to give up the empire in order to love her. In this final act, Titus gives a speech that reveals his indecision. While he had previously confirmed to others that he would send Bérénice away, here he tries to take back his declaration:

Oui, Madame. Et je dois moins encore vous dire  
Que je suis prêt pour vous abandonner l'empire,  
De vous suivre, et d'aller trop content de mes fers  
Soupirer avec vous au bout de l'univers.  
Vous-même rougiriez de ma lâche conduite  
Vous verriez à regret marcher à votre suite  
Un indigne empereur sans empire, sans cour  
Vil spectacle aux humains des faiblesses d'amour (V, 6, 1399-1406)<sup>153</sup>

The gendered overtones of restraint compared to indulgence cannot be overlooked. In this instance Titus not only paints himself as weak and felled by emotion, but he also uses this “fat” style of over-repetition, fixating at length on the fact that he is ready to give up his empire simply to trail after Bérénice forever (this is only a seven line sample of a sixty-line monologue in which he expresses much the same sentiment). Just as such rhetorical dilation is linked to geographical place (East versus West) in Parker’s argument, it is significant that Titus imagines himself in “no place,” or rather hopes to be in “any place” that is not the Roman empire, intending to simply follow Bérénice wherever she goes. This excess, overall, proves to be too much for Bérénice:

Arrêtez. Arrêtez. Princes trop généreux

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<sup>153</sup> Yes, Madame. And I should not tell you  
that I am ready to abandon my Empire for you  
To follow you, and to go, quite happy with my chains  
To sigh, next to you, even to the ends of the universe.  
You yourself will blush at my cowardly choice  
You will regret to see, walking by your side  
A shameful emperor without empire, without a court  
Ugly spectacle to others, of the weaknesses of love.



En quelle extrémité me jetez-vous tous deux !  
 Soit que je vous regarde, ou que je l'envisage,  
 Partout du désespoir je rencontre l'image.  
 Je ne vois que des pleurs. Et je n'entends parler  
 Que de trouble, d'horreurs, de sang prêt à couler (V, 7, 1469-1474)<sup>154</sup>

Significantly, Bérénice draws upon the figures of liquidity in tears and blood—markers of bodily excess --to reject the nature of this repetitive, fat *copia*. If Ascham prescribes a lean and spare epitome or example to cut the “fat” of overly repetitive style; similarly, with the word “example” itself the drama comes almost abruptly to a close. Bérénice’s final speech, punctured by the brusque “Arrêtez” is given in a comparatively shorter, cleaner style than that of Titus’ romantic ramblings. Later, she summarizes:

Je l'aime, je le fuis. Titus m'aime, il me quitte.  
 Portez loin de mes yeux vos soupirs, et vos fers.  
 Adieu, servons tous trois d'exemple à l'univers  
 De l'amour la plus tendre, et la plus malheureuse,  
 Dont il puisse garder l'histoire douloureuse (V, 7, 1500-1504).<sup>155</sup>

Example, here, condenses the circular or repetitive temporality to a pithy point, a kernel that is to be imitated by future generations to come. Plotted as such on a linear, pedagogically progressive trajectory, it marks a definitive exit from the dilatory temporality of love, delay, and sorrow that

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<sup>154</sup> Stop. Stop. You overkind princes  
 Both of you thrust me in such an extreme position  
 Everywhere I look, or what I imagine ahead  
 I only see the image of despair.  
 I see nothing but tears. And I only hear of

Trouble, horrors, and blood ready to be spilt.  
<sup>155</sup> I love him, I flee him. Titus loves me, he leaves me.  
 Take away, far from me, your sighs and your chains  
 Goodbye, let's serve, the three of us, as an example to the universe.  
 Of the most tender and woeful love  
 So that the sorrowful story can be preserved.

the three had indulged in earlier.

If dilation in the text is characterized as feminine excess in *copia*, or what Parker calls the “effeminate Ciceronian... ‘bignesse’” (14), we might also consider a second sense of dilation in terms of the narrative structure as a whole, “the dilatory meandering of plot or romance” and the “narrative topos of overcoming a female enchantress or obstacle en route to completion and ending” (Parker, 11). Racine drew upon the tale of Dido and Aeneas analogously to justify his take of Bérénice, and it is this same tale that Parker employs to highlight the importance of delay in light of narration itself “such indulgence in romance was a form of dilatoriness or dalliance, preventing all such latter-day Aeneases from getting on with business more proper to them” (11). In this sense, delay not only furnishes “assez de matière” but it also points to a discord between temporal economies: one of sovereign progress pitted against one of seductive dalliance. Paulin, Titus’ advisor, draws upon a similar history of romances to illustrate his point that Titus can no longer put off Bérénice’s repudiation:

Jules, qui le premier la soumit à ses armes,  
Qui fit taire les lois dans le bruit des alarmes,  
Brûla pour Cléopâtre, et sans se déclarer,  
Seule dans l’Orient la laissa soupirer  
Antoine qui l’aima jusqu’à l’idolâtrie  
Oublia dans son sein sa gloire et sa patrie  
Sans oser toutefois se nommer son époux  
Rome l’alla chercher jusques à ses genoux  
Et ne désarma point sa fureur vengeresse  
Qu’elle n’eût accablé l’amant et la maîtresse (II, 2, 387-397)<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Julius who first submitted Rome to his arms  
who silenced the law under the noise of alarm

Paulin here points to the dangers of such romantic delay, insofar as it numbs and neuters the force of sovereignty, whether through the silencing of laws or the forgetting of obligations. Parker proposes that we can contrast the “resolutely teleological drive of epic in its repeated injunctions to ‘break off delay’ (*rumpe moras*)” with the narrative drive itself, with the “romance delaying tactics [...] which disrupt or postpone the end promised from the beginning” (13). And indeed, what is staged, possibly most blatantly, is precisely this delay, and the affective impact of such delay in the face of such female “enchantresses”.<sup>157</sup> So when the play’s first line, “Arrêtons un moment” (I, 1, 1) (“Wait a moment”) is spoken by Antiochus, we are launched into a paradoxical temporality, where the beginning is that of stasis, or rather the beginning of an extended, staged paralysis.

Narrative delay, in this play, is condensed in not only the historical specter of the distracting Aenean dalliance, but also in the recurring figure of silence, and the weighty effort required to speak. Titus says that despite the fact that he has made his decision, he cannot find the language or even the force to abide by the rules of sovereign conduct expected of him and to send her away:

Résolu d’accomplir ce cruel sacrifice  
J’y voulus préparer la triste Bérénice.

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Burned for Cleopatra, but never confessed it  
And left her, sighing in the Orient.  
Antony who loved her to the point of idolatry  
Forgot his glory and his nation  
and still avoided taking her as his wife.  
Rome brought him to his knees  
And was unceasing in such vengeful fury  
that both the lover and the mistress were brought down.

<sup>157</sup> Roland Racevskis writes, “The atmosphere of tense anticipation and unrealized activity manifests itself physically, as Maskell points out: ‘The gap between potential and actual bodily contact can generate theatrical tension. Suspense is created when an arrest is anticipated, because the spectator has a visual image of actual arrest, conditioned by his previous experience. The same kind of tension can be generated in the case of embraces, which may be seen on stage of may be the focus of expectant anticipation.’ The corporeal tensions that can be elucidated in the theatrical subdiscipline of proxemics find in their verbal analogue in the interplay between utterance and silence in interrogative dialogue, another significant source of dramatic tension”(TP 33).

Mais par où commencer ? Vingt fois depuis huit jours,  
 J'ai voulu devant elle en ouvrir le discours,  
 Et dès le premier mot ma langue embarrassée  
 Dans ma bouche vingt fois a demeuré glacée (II, 2, 471-476)<sup>158</sup>

In this sense “opening” the dialogue (“ouvrir le discours), another form of dilation, is impeded by Titus’ “langue embarrassée.” The sexualized double-entendre of the tongue’s impotence is underscored by the organ’s inability to “open” discourse due to its frozen immobility. And such a delay is internal to the plot itself, insofar as Titus refuses to tell Bérénice himself, but asks Antiochus send her away on his behalf, not aware that Antiochus is also in love with Bérénice and has just confessed this secret to her.

As an extension of this emplotted delay, dilation can also be linked to the temporality of sexual pleasure, bringing us to the third sense of dilation, “an erotic one within a specific masculinist tradition—the putting off of coitus or consummation which Andreas Capellanus describes as a feminine strategy in the art of love, a purportedly female plot in which holding a suitor at a distance creates the tension of a space as well as an intervening time” (Parker 16). Consummation in this play, however, is not literal, but rather allegorized as speech or as a declaration. Barthes remarks, “l’on sait combine la voix est sexualisée dans le théâtre racinien, et singulièrement dans *Bérénice*, tragédie de l’aphasie” (96).<sup>159</sup> The erotics of such a struggling-to-speak is most dramatized by Antiochus, who is silenced by Bérénice for five years before finally breaking the silence and expressing his love:

Votre bouche à la mienne ordonna de se taire

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<sup>158</sup> Resolved to undertake this cruel sacrifice,  
 I wanted to forewarn sad Bérénice  
 But where to begin? Twenty times in eight day  
 I wanted to speak to her

But my tongue was stuck even on the very first word  
 And in my mouth, twenty times, my tongue lay there frozen.

<sup>159</sup> We know how much the voice is sexualized in Racinian theater, and particularly in *Bérénice*, tragedy of aphasia.

Je disputai longtemps, je fis parler mes yeux.  
 Mes pleurs et mes soupirs vous suivaient en tous lieux.  
 Enfin votre rigueur emporta la balance,  
 Vous sîtes m'imposer l'exil, ou le silence (I, 4, 200-204).<sup>160</sup>

Whereas Titus attempts to 'open' discourse by dilating his frozen-shut mouth, Antiochus gives an account of mouths being silenced by pressed-together lips (with all of the erotic implications of the proximity of "votre bouche à la mienne.") In response to this closure, Antiochus struggles against the excess leakages of tears, sighs, and gazes that he cannot contain.

Even though Bérénice has already left for Rome, Antiochus' suspended state of desire, unspeakable and unfulfillable, means that he can only retrace again and again their same circular path: "Je demeurai longtemps errant dans Césarée./ Lieux charmants, où mon coeur vous avait adorée/ Je vous demandais à vos tristes États, / Je cherchais en pleurant les traces de vos pas" (I, 4, 235-239).<sup>161</sup> The putting-off of erotic fulfilment only heightens his desire to see, speak, and to be either reciprocated or rejected. At the same time, the lengthy wait time only seems to increase his desire for the time of desire: "Exemple infortune d'une longue constance/ Après cinq ans d'amour, et d'espoir superflus/ Je pars, fidèle encore quand je n'espère plus" (I, 2, 44-46).<sup>162</sup> Barthes argues that Antiochus' function in the play is to serve as a foil of constancy and waiting in contrast to Titus' repudiation: "On le sait, il y a chez Racine un vertige de la fidélité. Ce

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<sup>160</sup> Your mouth ordered my mouth to silence  
 I struggled for a long time, I willed my eyes to speak  
 My tears and my sighs trailed after you always  
 Finally your rigor tipped the scales  
 You threatened me with either exile or silence.

<sup>161</sup> I lingered for a long time in Cesarea  
 Beautiful places, where my heart had worshipped you  
 I asked after you, always

I sought, weeping, the traces of your footsteps

<sup>162</sup> "Unlucky example of a long-drawn fidelity/ after five years of love, and superfluous hope/ I leave, yet still committed to her though I can hope no more"

déchirement, attesté dans toutes les tragédies de Racine, trouve dans *Bérénice* son expression la plus claire du fait que l'infidèle Titus est pourvu d'un double fidèle: Antiochus" (95).<sup>163</sup>

At the same time, I would suggest that Barthes has mis-diagnosed the doubling at stake here; Titus is not straightforwardly "infidèle," in fact, it is his faithful attachment to Bérénice that causes him to renege on his decision and waver back and forth between promising marriage and promising to send her away. Antiochus and Titus are, in fact, doubled in another way: their desire for dilation. Both struggle against but also depend on silence, and speaking, in a way that eroticizes the delay itself. Both seek to "open" (mouths, discourse) but it is not actual speech that they seek but rather the anticipatory temporality of waiting to puncture this silence that they cultivate and develop. So while Titus, on the surface seems to regret the delay that such silence engenders, "Ma bouche, et mes regards muets depuis huit jours/ L'auront pu préparer à ce triste discours" (III, 1, 737-738), he still talks about his silence with references to his tongue, his mouth, giving an almost sexual corporeality to his experience of this silent delay. Similarly, in the scene in which Antiochus is meant to reveal to Bérénice the cause of Titus' silence, her demands ring with desperation, and yet there is still a similitude between a sexual and aural craving here: "Et vos refus cruels, loin d'épargner ma peine/ Excitent ma douleur, ma colère, ma haine. (III, 3, 875-6). Antiochus' silence, delaying the moment of truth, does not neutralize or numb, but rather arouses her emotions. Finally, when Antiochus agrees to divulge Titus' news, he says: "Madame, après cela je ne puis plus me taire/ Hé bien, vous le voulez, il faut vous satisfaire/ [...] Je connais votre cœur. Vous devez vous attendre/ Que je vais le frapper par l'endroit le plus tendre" (III, 3, 887-888 ; 891-892), the innuendo of "satisfying" Bérénice's desire to know, and the revelation of knowledge (the end of the delay) is couched in terms of striking a tender spot, the sexual overtones of which cannot be ignored.

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<sup>163</sup> "We know that in Racine's work there is a vertigo of fidelity. This cleaving, apparent in all of Racine's tragedies, finds its clearest expression in *Bérénice* in the fact that the unfaithful Titus is given a faithful double: Antiochus" (91)

A final dilation or womanly “bignesse” (Parker, 14) is, of course, that of pregnancy, one that is not touched on explicitly in the play, but the proleptic specter of which is used as justification for Bérénice’s departure. Fear of foreignness is further exacerbated by wariness of feminine procreative powers when Paulin, Titus’ advisor, implies that children born of the union between Titus and Bérénice would never be acceptable to Rome: “Rome, par une loi, qui ne se peut changer,/ N'admet avec son sang aucun sang étranger,/ Et ne reconnaît point les fruits illégitimes” (II, 2, 377-379) (Rome, by a law that can never be changed/ Will not allow mixed with its blood any foreign blood/ and will never recognize such illegitimate offspring). So part of what is at stake here is controlling dilation and generational progeny. In order to control an illegitimate dilation, and to wrest this delayed time to one of acceptable sovereign progress, Bérénice must go. Parker writes, “Dilation as the ‘opening’ of a closed text to make it ‘increase and multiply’ and to transform its brevity into discourse ‘at large,’ then, joins dilation as both sexual and obstretical ‘opening’ and the production of generational increase” (15).

The importance of dilation in *Bérénice* also brings out two interrelated figures: the “point”—as in the end-point of the long dilatory delays or the pithy kernel puncturing the fattened rhetoric, and the “wall” or partition which paradoxically subdivides the text (multiplying it into ‘members’) while also controlling increase. And such a puncturing “point” and dividing wall, the temporality of romantic completion, or the time of erotic delay, the relationship to the dilatory female body-- all converge in the figure of the hymen.

### ***III. Enter the Hymen, Between***

From *différance*, Derrida suggests, we are not far from the hymen, since it is a figure that inscribes *différance* within itself. Derrida reminds us of the double sense of the word “hymen” in French: the nuptial union as well as the virginal membrane that is torn. It is, in fact “entre”

(between two, the two spouses, but also the two vaginal walls) and in the sound of the word one can also hear the word “antre,” which in archaic French means “Cavene, lieu vide, concave, en forme de voûte, est le terme générique” (261) (Cavern, empty space, concave, in the form of a vault, is the generic term) The 1680 Richelet dictionary defines it as “caverne [Un antre obscure, noir, profond]”(34), resonating with the “bignesse” of the dilatory space.” And fittingly, the play takes place in an antechamber, a waiting space or a non-space between the queen’s bedroom and Titus’s:

Souvent ce cabinet superbe et solitaire  
Des secrets de Titus est le dépositaire  
C’est ici quelquefois qu’il se cache à sa cour,  
Lorsqu’il vient à la reine expliquer son amour.  
De son appartement cette porte est prochaine  
Et cette autre conduit dans celui de la reine (I, 1, 3-8)

The “entre” of the space of the play itself literalizes and redoubles the “entre” ambiguity of the hymen. Such a room, un “lieu vide” like Derrida’s “antre,” is critical because it is a neutral, apolitical space separated from the goings-on of the court. Neither political, nor sexual, such a “cabinet” is the passage, or conduit between Titus’ and Bérénice’s rooms while remaining distinct from (and prior to) the bedroom. Such a tense division is highlighted in a scene where Bérénice is threatening suicide, once confronted with Titus’ rejection, but the Senate is demanding to speak to Titus. The bifurcation of Titus’s sovereign duties pulling him between the lover’s desires and the Senate’s demands is evidenced in the line split:

PAULIN: Venez, Seigneur, passons dans la chambre prochaine

Allons voir le Sénat

ANTIOCHUS : Ah ! courez chez la reine. (IV, 8, 1247-1248)



This “entre/antre” of the “cabinet superbe” carves out a zone that is neither public nor private, and yet can’t help but gesture toward the sexualization or politicization of space.

As such, the “hymen” stands as the marker of the *convergence* of two distinct bodies (the collapsing of difference between man and wife, or the unified membrane linking together of two distinct walls/selves/entities) as well as the marker of *difference* (the mark of hymenal rupture, or even the unpunctured division between the inside [*antre*] and outside). In other words, one could think of the hymen as materializing and temporalizing *différance* itself. Derrida writes that the hymen itself plays on the “entre,” verbalizing the noun and effectively performing an “entre” of being “between” dialectically opposed meanings:

L’hymen, consommation des différents, continuité et confusion du coït, mariage se confond avec ce dont il parait dériver: l’hymen comme écran protecteur, écrin de la virginité, paroi vaginale, voile très fin et invisible, qui, devant l’hystère, se tient *entre* le dedans et le dehors de la femme, par conséquent entre le désir et l’accomplissement. Il n’est ni désire ni le plaisir mais entre les deux. Ni l’avenir ni le présent, mais entre les deux (*DS* 262).<sup>164</sup>

The hymen figures in multiple instances throughout the play, and while it is used most specifically, and literally, to mean “marriage,” the characters still balance a plurality of significations that the word holds. It is the reason why Antiochus, in the first scene, will either flee or linger: “Sur son hymen j’attends qu’elle s’explique” (I, 3, 127).<sup>165</sup> It is the “point” in which Titus’ and Bérénice’s five-year dilatory relationship will hopefully culminate: “Il est donc vrai, Madame? Et selon ce discours/ L’hymen va succéder à vos longues amours” (I, 4, 149-

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<sup>164</sup> “The hymen, the consummation of differends, the continuity and confusion of the coitus, merges with what it seems to be derived from: the hymen as a protective screen, the jewel box of virginity, vaginal partition, the fine, invisible veil which, in front of the hystera, stands *between* the inside and the outside of the woman, consequently between desire and desire’s fulfillment. It is neither desire nor pleasure, but between the two. Neither future nor present, but between the two” (Trans. Barbara Johnson 223)

<sup>165</sup> I wait for her clarification about her hymen/marriage.

150)<sup>166</sup> The hymen, and the law preventing mixed marriages, stands as a symbolic law of Roman order. Paulin points out that even Caligula and Nero “Foulèrent à leurs pieds toutes les lois de Rome,/ Ont craint cette loi seule, et n’ont point à nos yeux/ Allumé le flambeau d’un hymen odieux” (II, 2, 400-403).<sup>167</sup> In a sense, the horrific excesses of these tyrants, stopping just short of overstepping this arbitrary line, amplifies the law’s importance. As Mitchell Greenberg notes, “...there is a rhetorical difference between empire as something quintessentially Roman, and furthermore, quintessentially Roman precisely because ‘kings’ have been historically eliminated from the Roman political sphere, as well as queens” (CS 83). Titus himself notes that he has been raised on an ideology against royalty: “...N’est-tu pas dans ces lieux/ Où la haine des Rois avec le lait sucée,/ Par crainte, ou par amour, ne peut être efface?” (IV, iv, 1014-5). This prejudice against royalty seems to be ingrained in Roman upbringing, and thus any infusion of another type of culture, such as a tradition of royal power that Bérénice represents (as opposed to Roman imperial power) could potentially dilute and taint the integrity of Roman culture that requires this supplement to subtend itself. Paulin, Titus’ advisor says, approvingly, once Titus affirms that he will send Bérénice away:

Je n’attendais pas moins de cet amour de gloire

Qui partout après vous attacha la victoire.

La Judée asservie, et ses remparts fumants,

De cette noble ardeur éternels monuments

[...]

Et qu’un héros vainqueur de tant de nations

Saurait bien, tôt ou tard, vaincre ses passions (II, 2, 491-494 ; 497-498)<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> “Is it thus true, Madame ? And according to this talk/ Your marriage will cap off your lengthy romance.”

<sup>167</sup> Dashed the laws of Rome to the ground/ yet feared this law alone, and would never, in front of the Roman people/ light the ceremonial flame of such an abhorrent marriage

<sup>168</sup> I expected nothing less than this glory to come from your love/ Glory that would forever link you to victory/

At the same time, Paulin's speech underscores the supplementary nature of such a decision. If Titus were truly "un héros vainqueur" and if his military exploits were enough to secure his status as sovereign, why would he need this additional (seemingly arbitrary) gesture of sending away Bérénice?

The membranous quality of the hymen, in its veiled indecidability (visible, and yet obscuring), will be key to this close analysis of ambiguous eroticism and competing temporal economies in Bérénice. The word "voile" itself straddles connotations of both sexual economies at stake in the play: the absolutely otherized, exoticized Orientalism as well as the intimacy of the "voile d'amitié" that Antiochus refers to repeatedly in order to indicate the neutral (and neutered) cover of friendship that he uses to be close to both Bérénice and Titus. In his opening monologue, he says, "Je me suis tu cinq ans. Et jusques à ce jour/ D'un voile d'amitié j'ai couvert mon amour" (I, 1, 25-26).<sup>169</sup> And it is this veiling that makes the dynamics of substitution, sublimation, and circulation between the three possible in the first place.<sup>170</sup>

In the ambiguity of the word "hymen", which marks both inside and outside, the hymen poses both a temporal and spatial confusion. And it is a betweenness that is not innocent; in fact it is the evidence of (non) violence, of pending rupture (insofar as the hymen is torn in the marital union). Derrida writes:

C'est l'hymen que le désire rêve de percer de crever dans une violence qui est (à la fois ou entre) l'amour et le meurtre. Si l'un ou l'autre avait lieu, il n'y aurait pas d'hymen. Mais non plus simplement dans le non-lieu. Avec tout

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Judea in chains, its ramparts in ruins/ serve as monuments to your noble strength/ [...] and a conquering hero of so many nations/ Should know, sooner or later, how to master his passions.

<sup>169</sup> I have been silenced for five years, and up to this day/ I have concealed my love under a veil of friendship"

<sup>170</sup> The name Bérénice, deriving from the Greek Βερενίκη (Berenike) has also been Latinized as Veronike, or Veronica. Saint Veronica, sharing not only a homeland (Judée) and a name with Bérénice, is inextricably linked miracle of the veil. According to legend, Veronica offered her veil as a sweat-cloth to Jesus during his suffering on the Via Dolorosa. As Jesus wiped his face with the veil, the exact image of his face remained on the cloth. And the cloth itself, thus marked with the image of Jesus' face, was purported to possess healing qualities.

l'indécidabilité de son sens, l'hymen n'a lieu que quand il y a consommation sans violence, ou violence sans coup, ou coup sans marque, marque sans marque (marge), etc., quand le voile est déchiré *sans l'être* " (DS, 262)<sup>171</sup>

It seems that *Bérénice* offers the tragic version of the same--the bloodless rupture, or the "consummation sans violence, où violence sans coup." Bérénice herself must depart, in a kind of rupture, before the actual rupture/link of the hymen as marriage can take place. Sedgwick has joked about Austin's text on performativity: "The marriage ceremony is, indeed, so central to the origins of "performativity" (given the strange, disavowed but unattenuated persistence of the exemplary in this work) that a more accurate name for *How to Do Things with Words* might have been *How to say (or write) "I do" hundreds of times without winding up any more married than you started out*" (TF 70). The hymen, in this play, is more like an un-marriage ceremony, a study in the performatives necessary to unravel ties and the sovereign failure for that unraveling to ever be fully enacted.

What is strange about the hymen is that it stands as both *pli* and *accomplissement*. The hymen, as broken-off marriage stands as the prosthetic affirmation of Titus' glory and place as sovereign—his ability to sacrifice his desiring, mortal body to the law of the State. The hymen as crowning years of love is the apotheosis of a long relation between the two. For Antiochus, the hymen puts a definitive end to years of yearning for Bérénice and watching Titus from afar. At the same time, paradoxically, the hymen also promises its own unraveling/ erasing qualities. Later in the play, even after Titus has already told Bérénice she must leave, he is so stricken by the sight of her tears that he promises her, "Par un heureux hymen je tarisse vos larmes" (V, 6,

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<sup>171</sup> "It's the hymen that desire dreams of piercing, of bursting, in an act of violence that is (at the same time or somewhere between) love and murder. If one or the other *did* take place, there would be no hymen. But neither would there simply be a hymen in (case events go) *no* place. With all the undecidability of its meaning, the hymen only takes place when it doesn't take place, when nothing *really* happens, when there is an all-consuming consummation without violence, or violence without blows, or a blow without marks, a mark without a mark (a margin), etc., when the veil is, *without* being torn.... "(223)

1392)<sup>172</sup> hoping to hold out the hymen as the possibility of erasure, or circling back to the prelapsarian moment when the ambiguous, dilatory eroticism could be sustained.

Obviously not all of these approaches to the hymen can co-exist with each other, and yet what the play performs so beautifully is the multiply enfolded meanings in the word itself—that it could be both rupture and jouissance, economic payback and token of sovereign glory. In all of the hymen’s meanings, from mundane to sublime, what is staged is not the sovereign decision of repudiation, but rather the tragedy of indecidability.

#### ***IV. The Impossible Threesome and the Veil of Friendship***

This indecidability comes to the fore because Titus is in a position where he *must* decide. Since Titus’ father’s death and the subsequent ascension to the imperial throne, Titus has been in mourning for eight days, but he still refuses to make a pronouncement in regards to his marriage to Bérénice. Given this waiting period and ambiguous silence from Titus, we actually enter the story from Antiochus’ perspective. Antiochus wants to see Bérénice intending only to confess his love to her, and then leave immediately after, saying “Sur son hymen j’attends qu’elle s’explique.”<sup>173</sup> His friend and confidant Arsace is surprised by Antiochus’ desire to flee. Arsace says:

Je suis surpris sans doute, et c'est avec justice.

Quoi depuis si longtemps la Reine Bérénice

Vous arrache, Seigneur, du sein de vos États,

Depuis trois ans dans Rome elle arrête vos pas,

Et lorsque cette reine assurant sa conquête

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<sup>172</sup> “With a happy marriage I will silence your tears.”

<sup>173</sup> “I wait for her to explain her hymen/marriage”.

Vous attend pour témoin de cette illustre fête,  
Quand l' amoureux Titus devenant son époux,  
Lui prépare un éclat qui rejaillit sur vous... (I, 3, 79-86)<sup>174</sup>

In a sense, Arsace points to the dilatory time that Antiochus has spent, lingering in Rome away from his own kingdom. At the same time, it is this specific “dilated” temporality that allows the dynamic between the three of them to flourish in a strange way; Bérénice and Titus can’t simply be together, and Antiochus, as the superfluous third, can’t simply depart. She needs Antiochus to be the “témoin” to her union, and Antiochus’ necessary presence at the marriage erupts in an “éclat qui rejaillit sur vous” (glory that will gush forth on you); the erotic connotations of which cannot be ignored.

One might ask why Antiochus, Roi de Comagène, would ignore his own kingdom for so long (and we might compare his situation here to that of Polixenes in *The Winter’s Tale*). And his long-enduring love for Bérénice seems to be one component of that. But another bond may be his friendship, rivalry, and admiration for Titus, magnetic affects that leave him lingering in Rome. Antiochus recounts how he was shoved aside in favor of Titus although whereas Antiochus was initially the main contender for Bérénice’s hand,

Madame, il vous souvient que mon coeur en ces lieux  
Reçut le premier trait qui partit de vos yeux  
J'aimai, j'obtins l'aveu d'Agrippa votre frère.  
Il vous parla pour moi. Peut-être sans colère  
Alliez-vous de mon coeur recevoir le tribut (I, 4, 189-193)<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> I am shocked, doubtlessly, and with reason  
For so long, the Queen Bérénice  
Has grabbed you from the heart of your own State  
For three years, in Rome, she has held you transfixed  
And just as she is ready to secure her conquest  
And waits for you, as witness, to this glorious ceremony  
When the love-struck Titus will become her husband  
He will offer a burst of glory that will spill forth onto you

Antiochus participates in the “traditionally” homosocial pathways of exchange, and one that is particularly specific to her country, by asking Bérénice’s brother for her hand. In a sense, mapping such a romantic alliance (asking permission, requiring a familial go-between, receiving the bride, etc.) posits a certain kind of normative temporality to that desire, one that would progress by certain steps and finally come to fruition with Bérénice’s receipt of Antiochus’ “tribut.” Titus’ arrival marks a swerve from the previously standing system by which women were given and received, but more importantly, sets into motion a different type of affective temporality. Antiochus reminisces:

Titus, pour mon malheur, vint, vous vit, et vous plut.

Il parut devant vous dans tout l’éclat d’un homme

Qui porte entre ses mains la vengeance de Rome.

La Judée en pâlit. Le triste Antiochus

Se compta le premier au nombre des vaincus (I, 4, 194-198)<sup>176</sup>

What is interesting here, however, is that Antiochus is neither resentful, nor bitter. Titus is presented in terms of glorious, virile masculinity, underscored by the plurality of vibrating “v” in the first line, and in the phrase “dans tout l’éclat d’un homme”. And in the repetition of the “v”, marking the first entrance of Titus into this triad, the spectacle of virility transforms, in the following line, into the dilatory openness of “ou” vowels (“parut,” “vous,” “tout”). Although Titus bears the virile “v” of “vengeance” between his hands, it is the doubled sense of “entre” that also opens and flags the possibility for the ambiguity, transforming the preposition into

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<sup>175</sup> Madame, it might be recalled that my heart  
Was pierced by the first arrow that sprang from your eyes  
I loved, I obtained the promise from Agrippa your brother  
He spoke to you on my behalf. Perhaps without anger  
You were going to accept my heart’s tribute

<sup>176</sup> Titus, to my dismay, arrived, saw you, and pleased you  
He, who brought Rome’s vengeance to rain down...  
Judea paled in fear. The woeful Antiochus  
Counted himself among the first of Titus’ vanquished.

Derrida's playfully open term. Is vengeance death to the Judean rebels, or does the virile "v" portend "la petite" mort for Antiochus? Struck by the magnificence of this vision, "La Judée en pâlit," taking the synecdochal country, also coincidentally gendered feminine, to condense both the country's colonized submission with Bérénice's romantic ravishment/seduction. So far, this narrative seems to be adhere to the stereotype of an exoticized feminine other falling prey to the virile spectacle of the masculine dominating country. However, what is most intriguing about this tale is that Antiochus inserts himself into the story of seduction: "Le triste Antiochus," shares the alexandrine line with "La Judée en pâlit," the two halves completing the unified line, and he puts himself "au nombre des vaincus," merging with strange equivalences (via the doubled "v" of "vaincus" and "vengeance") the scene of seduction, vainquishment and domination.

As Antiochus narrates his experience watching Titus seduce Bérénice, his memories are less about his own emotions than his mixed (jealous) admiration and triangulated desire observing Titus. And it is indeed his affection for Titus that tempers what would have been jealous anger: "Inutiles périls ! Quelle était mon erreur !/ La valeur de Titus surpassait ma fureur./Il faut qu'à sa vertu mon estime réponde " (I, 4, 217-219).<sup>177</sup> A dynamic of simple rivalry is transformed into an odd triangulation through this tempering, moderating the excesses of Titus' glory and Antiochus' sadness with esteem, or affection for Titus.

ANTIOCHUS: Chéri de l'Univers, enfin aimé de vous

Il semblait à lui seul appeler tous les coups

Tandis que sans espoir, haï, lassé de vivre

Son malheureux Rival ne semblait que le suivre

[...]

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<sup>177</sup> Fruitless perils! How I was wrong  
 Titus' glory exceeded my anger  
 My esteem for him had to equal his virtue/courage



Il dompta les Mutins, reste pâle et sanglant

Des flammes, de la faim, des fureurs intestines

Et laissa leurs Remparts cachés sous leurs ruines (I, 4, 217-218 ; 230-233)<sup>178</sup>

His whole narrative is mostly about Titus and Titus' exploits. After he upholds Titus' "vertu," Antiochus places himself in the position of "suivre" which has the doubled connotation of coming in second place, trailing behind, but also closely following and observing. And this mixed vision of jealous admiration is highlighted in the narrative, where he takes on Bérénice's perspective and vision, imagining how bold, brave and glorious Titus must appear in her eyes as he quelled the Judean uprising.<sup>179</sup> In fact, the majority of his speech that is supposed to be the moment of declaring his true feelings for Bérénice actually centers on Titus' actions; very little of it expresses Bérénice's own qualities.

Eve Sedgwick, of course, has drawn upon René Girard to suggest that there are powerful homo-social and even homo-erotic dynamics that undergird the triangle of rivalry:

... in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent (*BM*, 21).

One of Sedgwick's main points is that any erotic triangle hinges on the necessary presentation of symmetry between the three main players, a symmetry that covers over imbalanced power relations (between male-male or between male-female dynamics). And the key that reveals such

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<sup>178</sup> Treasured by the universe, or at least loved by you  
He seemed to direct everything himself  
Meanwhile, hopeless, hated, tired of living  
Titus' unfortunate Rival only seemed to follow how  
[...]  
He dominated the rebels, pale and bloodied  
Fire, hunger and a roiling fury  
and crumpled their fortress walls beneath ruins

a necessary symmetry tends to be the more ambiguously gendered figure in the triad. Sedgwick writes:

An erotic triangle is likely to be experienced in terms of an explicit or implicit assertion of symmetry between genders and between homo- and hetero-social or – sexual bonds [...] The assertion of symmetry will be made possible by a suppression of effectual gender differences or by a translation of them into factitiously comparable spatial and/or temporal rhetorical figures; the ‘comparable’ figures will bear the mark of their asymmetrical origins but not in a way that will permit them to be retranslated into an intelligible version of their original condition [...] The figure of a person who can be ‘halfway between’ male and female will recur as an important topos for the fiction of gender symmetry, but in a form that finally reveals the tendentiousness of the assertion of symmetry (*BM*, 47-48).

Fittingly, then, Antiochus’ vision of a conquering, virile Titus not only aligns his vision and admiration with that of Bérénice, but also underscores his necessary position as neutral, or the “halfway between,” the “entre” that enables such triangulation. His jealous anger was tempered, but he himself becomes a figure of tempering, muting and neutrality that allows this triadic dynamic to persist for five years. The assertion of symmetry (lover/loved, male/female) is almost overly stated, and this neutrality is enacted, even performed, as a symbolic castration when Antiochus is ordered by Bérénice to silence his love: “Votre bouche à la mienne ordonna de se taire” (I, 4, 200). Antiochus’ position as a necessary third, then, underscores his capacity as *neutre* (which, we recall, in French means both neutral and neutered), deprived of voice and speech, which has been sacrificed toward the (futile) goal of eventually winning Bérénice’s love. The dilatory time of delay and silence, necessary to the composition of the triad, incites his desire even more to speak/fulfil his long harbored passions.

Just as Bérénice’s silencing of Antiochus was necessary to neutralize his love to “amitié” (and thus enabling the dilation of triadic dynamics) Titus also needs Antiochus to be a neutral (neutered) conduit of expression, both giving and receiving love, farewells, explanations and more. “Et je veux seulement emprunter votre voix.” (III, 1, 694) (And I only wish to borrow your voice). This silencing both tempers (moderates) and temporalizes Antiochus’ desire, insofar as is absolutely key to Antiochus’ ability to appear under the *voile d’amitié*, a veil that allows an ambiguously indefinite circulation of emotion, replacement and substitution. If we associate such imposed silence with the *voile*, or the hymen, it is in silence’s opposite, speech, that such a veil/hymen can be ripped apart.<sup>180</sup> In fact, it is the interplay between silence and speaking, between the remaining-inarticulate and the pointing-indication that stages the pathos and the sexualized “violence” of this tragedy.

And as Antiochus describes his desolation upon Bérénice’s departure, we must not forget that it is not only Bérénice who has left, but also Titus. Antiochus speaks of an empty loneliness but it is sufficiently ambiguous if he is mourning Bérénice’s absence, or rather the absence of both of them—including Titus, the rival whom he used to *suivre*:

Rome vous vit, Madame, arriver avec lui  
 Dans l’Orient désert quel devint mon ennui  
 Je demeurai longtemps errant dans Césarée

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<sup>180</sup> Lyotard’s remarks on silence specifically relate the breaking of silence with a “déchirement,” underscoring the violent and sexual dynamics of the hymen:

Le silence est le contraire du discours, il est la violence en même temps que la beauté ; mais il en est la condition puis qu’il est du côté de choses *dont* il y a à parler et *qu’il* faut exprimer. Pas de discours, sans cette opacité à tenter de défaire et de restituer, cette épaisseur intarissable. Le silence résulte du déchirement à partir duquel un discours et son objet se placent en vis-à-vis, et commence le travail de signifier ; et il résulte du déchirement incorporé à la parole, où le travail d’exprimer s’effectue. (14)

“Silence is the opposite of discourse, simultaneously violence and beauty; but silence is the very condition of discourse since it is also on the side of things of *which* one must speak *that* one must express. There can be no discourse without this opacity in trying to undo and restore this inexhaustible thickness. Silence is the result of the ripping-apart that allows discourse and its object to stand vis-à-vis each other, and the work of signification to begin; it is the result of the tear, integral to language, where the work of expression occurs”(Hudek and Lydon 8)

Lieux charmants, où mon cœur vous avait adorée.  
 Je vous redemandais à vos tristes États,  
 Je cherchais en pleurant les traces de vos pas  
 Mais enfin succombant à ma mélancolie,  
 Mon désespoir tourna mes pas vers l'Italie.  
 Le Sort m'y réservait le dernier de ses coups.  
 Titus en m'embrassant m'amena devant vous.  
 Un voile d'amitié vous trompa l'un et l'autre ;  
 Et mon amour devient le confident du vôtre (I, 4, 233-244).<sup>181</sup>

In this narrative, the “vous” is, on the surface addressed to Bérénice, but there are strange doublings in which the “vous” might refer to the both of them. Antiochus refers to the “vous” in the plural : “vous trompa l'un et l'autre” and “mon amour deviant le confident du vôtre.” While there may or may not be sufficient matter to argue that he is seeking both of them in the doubled “vous,” what is interesting is that after so much waiting, seeking, and following, upon Antiochus’ arrival in Italy, the first recounted action is ‘Titus en m’embrassant...’. And the three of them are able to be united together, and to express their affection for one another because of this “voile d’amitié.” When Antiochus says, “mon amour devient le confident du vôtre,” he might be speaking just of Bérénice’s love, or also the love of Titus (as Titus has confided in him).

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<sup>181</sup> Rome saw you, Madame, arrive with him  
 How woeful I was, in the deserted Orient  
 I lingered for a long time, wandering in Caesaria  
 Beautiful places, where my heart had worshipped you  
 I asked after you, always  
 I sought, weeping, the traces of your footsteps  
 But finally, crumbling to my melancholia  
 My despair turned my footsteps towards Italy  
 Fate had saved its final blows for me  
 Titus, embracing me, brought me in front of you  
 A veil of friendship fooled both of you  
 and my love became merely a listening ear to yours

After Antiochus' confession, Bérénice's refusal of his love also takes on a strange rhetoric, instead of outright rejecting him, she begins to intertwine her feelings for him with her feelings for Titus:

[...] À regret je reçois vos adieux.  
Le ciel sait, qu'au milieu des honneurs qu'il m'envoie,  
Je n'attendais que vous pour témoin de ma joie.  
Avec tout l'Univers j'honorais vos vertus,  
Titus vous chérissait, vous admiriez Titus.  
Cent fois je me suis fait une douceur extrême  
D'entretenir Titus dans un autre lui-même (I, 4, 266-272).<sup>182</sup>

It is strange that on the brink of what she imagines will be her wedding day, she expresses her wish ("je n'attendais que vous") that he serve as witness to her happiness. However, this witnessing is not merely a position of a voyeuristic outsider, for as her speech continues, she braids together their three affections for each other (honorais, chérissait, admiriez) culminating in a strange substitution: "Titus dans un autre lui-même." These nebulous dynamics are only possible under the cover of the voilé d'amitié: a veil of supposedly neutral interest that allows substitutions, close admiration, embraces and more to flourish. And after Antiochus' departure, Bérénice admits, "cette prompt retraite/ me laisse, je l'avoue, une douleur secrète" (I, 5, 287-288).<sup>183</sup> It is unclear, however, why this sorrow must be "secret," or hidden. Perhaps Bérénice is alluding to a more obscure source of sadness, insofar as that which has been lost, the ambiguously erotic three-way dynamic, is itself inarticulable. Thus, Bérénice's mourning is one

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<sup>182</sup> "With great regret I accept your goodbyes  
Heaven knows, that out of the thousands of blessings I have received  
I only wanted you, as witness to my happiness.  
I, along with the whole universe, was awed by your virtues  
Titus adored you, you admired Titus  
A hundred times I have given myself the pleasure  
of imagining, in you, a second Titus."

<sup>183</sup> "This hasty departure/ I confess, wounds me with a secret pain"

for a lost desire that could never have been fully formally expressed: a “douleur secrète” seems apt here.<sup>184</sup>

Not only does Bérénice imagine Titus in Antiochus’ place, but before Antiochus can leave, Titus actually *asks* Antiochus to stand in for him. Titus begins by asserting the strength of their three-way bond : “Elle ne voit dans Rome et n’écoute que vous. / Vous ne faites qu’un cœur et qu’une âme avec nous” (III, 1, 697- 698).<sup>185</sup> Because of this unified heart and soul that Titus believe it is feasible to have Antiochus serve as his double. Between the Barthesian diagnosis of sexualized speaking and the controlled dynamics of ordered silence, speaking, and the intimacy of serving as a “porte-parole” becomes imbricated with an eroticized economy:

Allez, expliquez-lui mon trouble, et mon silence

Surtout qu’elle me laisse éviter sa présence

Soyez le seul témoin de ses pleurs, et des miens

Portez-lui mes Adieux, et recevez les siens (III, 1, 742-746)<sup>186</sup>

And, in a further extension of Antiochus’ necessity as a neutral veil (of amitié), as a prize or reward for this conduit action, Titus promises Antiochus more land, but land that is, significantly between (entre) Antiochus’ kingdom and Bérénice’s:

Pour rendre vos États plus voisins l’un de l’autre

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<sup>184</sup> Mitchell Greenberg has also suggested that the dynamics of unmournable loss undergird this play. However, in contrast to Greenberg’s analysis, I propose that it is the inarticulate erotics of the threesome, or the triad, that is mourned; not necessarily the body’s banishment from the stage. : “In the place of actual (represented) death we are given a world that, although beyond death, is nevertheless entirely inscribed within the space of an impossible loss, within a continuous mourning for a loss that it could only articulate only with the greatest difficulty. We know, of course, since Freud, that all melancholia, rather than representing the loss of a particular ‘object,’ represents something indefinable that has been lost in the object [...] Finally, rather than attempt to decipher the psychological state of the protagonists, we must look beyond this representation, must see this representation as but the allegory of a more profound loss that the play, rather like the *Trauerspiel* in Benjamin’s analysis, mourns in ways that are perhaps forever incomprehensible to itself but that nevertheless succeed (the proof of the tears, the only sign, and an exterior one at that, of the body’s presence) in establishing a mortiferous bond with its audience.” (138)

<sup>185</sup> In all of Rome she only sees and listens to you/ You make one heart and one soul with the three of us

<sup>186</sup> “ Go on then, please explain to her my troubles and my silence

Above all I need her to let me avoid her presence

Be the sole witness to her tears, and to mine

Bring her my farewells, and receive hers.

L'Euphrate bornera son Empire et le vôtre  
 Je sais que le Sénat tout plein de votre nom,  
 D'une commune voix confirmera ce don.  
 Je joins la Cilicie à votre Comagène (III, 1, 764-767)<sup>187</sup>

Thus, the gift of territory “entre” materializes and literalizes the role of “entre” that Antiochus must serve, a betweenness that is *only* possible under the veil, or cover, of neutral friendship. This neutrality, I argue, is what allows Antiochus to be “evacuated” and to take on the role of Titus’ voice, Titus’ stand-in, reporting Bérénice’s farewells, etc. This evacuation can be thought of as representing another form of “antre” – the cavernous hollow. However Antiochus is not merely a convenient scapegoat for the dirty work that Titus doesn’t want to do; there is a real dynamic and interdependency intertwining them, “entre”. As Arsace notes: “Trois Sceptres, que son bras ne peut seul soutenir/ Vos deux États voisins, qui cherchent à s’unir./ L’intérêt, la raison, l’amitié, tout vous lie” (III, 2, 825-827).<sup>188</sup>

Both Titus and Bérénice rely on Antiochus’ presence to witness, speak, and substitute. Titus, before going into make his final declaration of love to Bérénice, requires Antiochus’ presence: “Venez, Prince, venez, je vous ai fait chercher./ Soyez ici témoin de toute ma faiblesse./ Voyez si c'est aimer avec peu de tendresse./ Jugez nous ” (V, 7, 1426- 1429).<sup>189</sup> And this witnessing is also demanded by Bérénice, when she is disappointed by the fact that Antiochus is leaving: “Je n’attendais que vous pour témoin de ma joie.” (I, 4, 268) (I only wanted you, as witness to my joys). However, it’s not as if Bérénice and Titus require just *any*

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<sup>187</sup> To make your countries neighbor one another  
 The Euphrates will border her Empire and yours  
 I know that the Senate, abuzz with your renown  
 Will confirm this gift unanimously  
 I join Cilesia to your Commagene. ”

<sup>188</sup> His arms alone cannot hold three Sceptres/ your neighboring States that seek to unite/ Interest, reason, friendship—everything links you three”

<sup>189</sup> Come, Prince, Come, I have brought you here/ Be the witness to my weakness/ See if this is what it means to love unlovingly/ judge us

person to witness their declarations of love (or repudiations). Titus, when asking Antiochus to speak on his behalf, begs him, “Soyez le seul témoin de ses pleurs, et des miens” (III, 1, 744), a position of witnessing that, we recall, Bérénice hoped to place him in as well. “Témoin” Derrida reminds us, derives from *testis*, which gives us both “testimony” but also, in its root, indicates both “the third” (le tiers) as well as testes.<sup>190</sup> There is a sense in which witnessing, or watching, or being made to watch becomes eroticized here, especially insofar as Antiochus serves as the necessary, neutralized and neutered third.

This triadic dynamic, however, is erased with the assertion of symmetry or outright asymmetry: the imposition of binary lenses on the relationship. Almost all readings of the play either ignore Antiochus entirely or else attempt to feminize Antiochus, and thus reducing *Bérénice* a simple story about a dyad-- the repudiation of the Feminine Orient in favor of the Masculine Occident. Longino says, for example

He [Antiochus] has allowed himself to be guided by his impossible love for Bérénice and his tortured fascination with Titus’s power greater than his own, so that he has contributed to sow destruction in the very part of the world that would have been his to minister and protect. Expectations for a man are greater than for a woman, but a man from this part of the world, it is clear, is hardly a man by Western standards. Not only his hopeless love for Bérénice, but his compromised status as a man, make of him doubly a woman, and as such a strong signifier of the East for the West (168).

In other words, by casting Antiochus as feminized and weak, Longino is easily able to sort the triad into another reincarnation of a duo.

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<sup>190</sup> Derrida writes, «... nous ne tarderons pas, en effet, à buter sur ce motif du tiers dans la scène du témoignage possible-impossible, du témoignage possible *comme* impossible. Dans son étymologie latine, le témoin (*testis*), c’est celui qui assiste en tiers (*terstis*). Nous aurions à y regarder de très près pour comprendre ce que cela pourrait impliquer. *Testis* a un homonyme en latin. On l’utilise le plus souvent au pluriel pour dire ‘testicule.’ » [...] *Testitrahus* veut dire à la fois entier et mâle, masculine. (*PPT*, 526)



For other scholars, the Titus- Bérénice pair is consistently held up the primary analytic. For example, Greenberg's analyses of the play drop Antiochus from the equation. He reads the repudiation as allegorical of the problematic of the king's two bodies, and sees the rejection of the feminine (allegorized in the figure of Bérénice) as the victory of the king's body politic over the (desiring, lustful) body mortal. This allegory hinges on a male-female binary, by underscoring the "maternal" aspect of Bérénice and Titus's relationship as well as the feminine Orient to which Bérénice is tied:

Behind Titus' military prowess and magnanimity stands the image of Bérénice. She leads him away from the easy road of sensual pleasure, away from the monstrous sexuality that reigned at Nero's court and down the thorny path of moral rectitude. She certainly appears to occupy a maternal rather than a passionate role in Titus' description of her. This maternal, in the sense of nonsexual, and wise pedagogue leads the child-man still captive of his senses out of the prison of his body's pleasure and into the light of mature, that is, sublimated, humanitarianism. At the same time she is presented as the embodiment of a conventional allegorical representation of the Orient: Bérénice is here garbed as Sophia, a traditional figure of Oriental wisdom whose historic abode was in the East (in Egypt)[...]It is precisely because of this doubling, of this combination of the love-object as maternal and Oriental, that Bérénice is doomed (*Racine*, 127).

Strangely enough, it is this notion of maternal nurturing and guidance that undergirds Titus' repeated notions of considering the hymen as a type of payment for Bérénice's efforts. And in Titus' eyes, payment, or the dynamic of indebted and debtor, is another binary relation. Being (un)able to pay off debts is still a type of decidability that closes off the openness of the

“entre.” He says:

Je lui dois tout, Paulin. Récompense cruelle!  
Tout ce que je lui dois va retomber sur elle  
Pour prix de tant de gloire et de tant de vertus,  
Je lui dirai, partez, et ne me voyez plus (II, 2, 519-522)

Maintenant que je puis couronner tant d'attraits,  
Maintenant que je l'aime encor plus que jamais,  
Lorsqu'un heureux hymen joignant nos destinées  
Peut payer en un jour les vœux de cinq années (II, 2, 441-444)

And yet all of these binaries of indebted and debtor, mother and child, conquerer and conquered are not incorrect in their analysis. But it is striking all the same the ways that forgetting the third of Antiochus or collapsing him on to the side of femininity is necessary for such a narrative binaristic duality to be enacted. All of these readings ignore the ways that Antiochus is, in fact *actively instrumentalized* not only by Titus, but also by Bérénice. In terms of the play's action, he literally relays messages for and speaks on the behalf of one and the other. But more than his merely mechanized function in the play, Antiochus' position as tempering third, or neutral/neutered middle, or even as a necessary (sexualized) witness, impedes the possibility of Titus to make a clean cut or to announce a definitive decision. It is through the ever-shifting dynamics of this neutralized threesome that a circular, dilatory temporality is made possible.

#### ***V. Deictic Presents and the Joug of Sovereign Conjuality***

The primacy of the “two” in previous analyses of the play means that extra weight is put on the supposed necessary unity of sovereignty. If the only options are either between the one and

the two, between the absolute unity and the fragmented division, then this overattention paid to the implications of “sharing” sovereign power itself obscures other possibilities outside the one and the two (such as, I would argue, the polyamorous triad or something more openly, “entre”).

At the same time, considering the place that the hymen held in early modern political thought may help us understand the dilatory temporality of indecidability that Titus, Bérénice and Antiochus create, as a way of sidestepping and subverting the focus on the one-against-two. In a real historical example of a key sovereign indecision with regards to marriage, Drew Daniel analyzes the stakes of the so-called “French match” between the Duc d’Alençon and Queen Elizabeth. While such debates surrounding the indivisibility of sovereignty took place nearly a century prior to Racine’s *Bérénice*, there are similar echoes between the two non-marriages. Daniel writes:

The political/ amorous event of a royal marriage marks the creation of a new family which ideologically models the institution itself for the families of the sovereign’s royal subjects, ripples across civil society with affective disturbance and excitation in the form of national “moods” of celebration or anxiety, and, at least in the case of the marriage of two sovereigns of different nationalities, royal marriage forces the ligature of their corresponding states into a tentative and temporary alliance whose terminal reversibility trumps idealized metaphors of “one flesh” in favor of a strategic pact between new kindred who remain potential rivals-to-be (242)

Daniel’s point touches on the fact that sovereign marriages set the tone for certain norms and ideologies of sexuality, or a rhetoric underscored by Titus’ remark: “...N’est-tu pas dans ces lieux/ Où la haine des Rois avec le lait sucée,/ Par crainte, ou par amour, ne peut être effacé?” (IV, iv, 1014-5). Marriage itself held a complicated place in relation to an absolute and

indivisible sovereign, especially a marriage that joined together divergent nations. Jean Bodin underscores the absolute nature of sovereignty, saying,

Que dirons nous donc de celuy qui a du peuple la puissance absoluë, tant et si longuement qu'il vivra : En ce cas il faut distinguer : si la puissance absoluë lui est donnee purement et simplement, sans qualité de magistrat, ni de commaissaire, ni forme de precaire, il est bien certain que celuy-là est, et se peut dire monarque souverain : car le peuple s'est dessaisi et despouillé de sa puissance souveraine, pour ensaisiner et inverstir : et à luy, et en luy transporté tout son pouvoir, auctorités, prerogatives, et souveraineté : comme celuy qui a donné la possession et propriété de ce qui luy appartenoit (185-186)

One context that is frequently overlooked in scholarship of *Bérénice* is that Titus' seduction of Bérénice was enacted partially through his military glory, stemming, perversely enough, from the Roman defeat of Judean rebels—her people. Arsace reminds Antiochus how he helped Titus crush Judea: “Un prince qui jadis témoin de vos combats/ Vous vit chercher la gloire et la mort sur ses pas,/ Et de qui la valeur par vos soins secondée/ Mit enfin sous le joug la rebelle Judée” (I, 1, 101-104).<sup>191</sup> Thus, if in Bodin's theory, sovereign glory depends on denuding the people of their own individual power in order to invest in an overarching figurehead, in *Bérénice* such bowing down is depicted as submission under a “joug” or yoke. The “joug” is useful to our analysis here insofar as the term “conjugal,” or the marital unison, stems from the same root as the yoke—in fact, the marital term literally means, to be yoked together. The yoke combines multiple connotations—mastery and submission, labor and productivity, etc. The displacement of the metaphor covers over the rather violent spectacle of imperial domination that Antiochus alludes to in his memory of Titus's acts, to give one

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<sup>191</sup> “A prince [Titus] formerly witness to your fighting/ Saw you seek glory and death, following close on his heels/ and whose valor was reinforced by your efforts/ Finally made rebellious Judea succumb to the yoke.”

example: “Enfin après un siege aussi cruel que lent/ Il dompta les mutins, reste pale et sanglant/ Des flames, de la faim, des fureurs intestines/ Et laissa leurs remparts caches sous leurs ruines” (I, 2, 229-232). And it is easy to forget that these are Bérénice’s people whom Antiochus is dominating and quelling. Thus to elevate Bérénice to the status of a companion, or conjugal equal, becomes complicated insofar as she is of the race and nationality of people whom he has submitted beneath an imperial ‘joug.’”

Significantly, for Bodin, to be yoked together means that the power of both is diluted, “sous le joug,” insofar as this absolute nature of the sovereign is not shareable, and it is specifically companionship, or marriage, that threatens the unity of such power. The only “joug” that is acceptable to the sovereign is a divine one, but submission to God also includes submission to divine and natural laws, according to Bodin:

Mais quant aux loix divines et naturelles tous les Princes de la terre y sont subjects et n’est pas en leur puissance d’y contrevenir, s’ils ne veulent estre coupables de leze majesté divine, faisant guerre à Dieu, sous la grandeur duquel tous les Monarques du monde doyvent faire joug, et baisser a teste en tout crainte et reverence (193)<sup>192</sup>

The institute of marriage itself, however, straddles the secular and the divine, conflating bending one’s head to the “joug” of God with bending one’s head to the joug of conjugality. Yet it is unclear if marrying Bérénice would constitute a sexual crime “against nature,” otherwise known as “sodomie” insofar as it would engender a disruption of order and a diminishment of Titus’ sovereign grandeur—a type of treasonous vampirization of sovereign unity, by splitting the throne with her. In this sense, the conjugal union between Titus and Bérénice, the pending

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<sup>192</sup> But as for the natural and divine laws, all of the Princes of the earth are subject, and it is not in their power to go against these laws, if they do not wish to find themselves guilty of committing lese-majesty against the divine, waging war against God, under whose glory all of the Monarchs of the world should submit (faire joug) and bow their heads to the yoke of fear and reverence”.

hymen, is also threatening not only because of the possible inclusion of non-Roman blood, but also because it complicates the unity of sovereign power, risking dilution of the absolute that is supposed to cohere in one single body. Of this impossible reciprocity, Paulin says:

Et vous croiriez pouvoir, sans blesser nos regards  
Faire entrer une reine au lit de nos Césars,  
Tandis que l'Orient dans le lit de ses reines  
Voit passer un esclave au sortir de nos chaînes ?  
C'est ce que les Romains pensent de votre amour.<sup>193</sup>

For Bodin, once a companion is introduced into the equation, the absolute nature of sovereignty is diminished, an unfortunate effect that is further exaggerated if this companion is of a former conquered territory. Paulin's speech indicates that such a union would diminish both Titus' and Bérénice's sovereign status itself.

While Titus needs the analogic (substitutive) capacities that Antiochus can yield him, the transfer "fails" because Antiochus cannot be a perfectly empty receptacle for Titus' words. As a sovereign himself, le roi de Comagène cannot help but infuse the declarations that they has been sent to convey to Bérénice with traces of his own desires and his own confessions. The nature of this failed analogous relationship interests us insofar as Daniel reminds us that Schmitt "insists upon an optic of similitude, an aspectual seeing of one thing under the terms set by another" (250). Daniel cites Schmitt's famous, "The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries" (36). And while Schmitt goes on to explain and analyze this transfer of authority from a theological instance to a post-secularized state, he neglects to analyze the very mode of transfer itself, through the rhetorical

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<sup>193</sup> "And you would presume that, without causing offense/ that you could bring a queen into the bed of the Caesars/ While, what the Orient sees is a slave [Titus] entering the bed of one of their queens? / That is what the Romans think of your love"

figure of analogy. Daniel suggests that

Sublunary political matters are made in the image of divinity ('as above, so below'), but only if we can maintain our focus upon this double vision, suggesting that the critic must squint slightly to see the family resemblance across the centuries. Exceptional to this temporal form, marriage is thereby critically transformative in the work it performs upon Schmitt's structure: instead of seeing one thing as "like" another thing, the simultaneity of marriage's inclusion in both the sphere of theology and the sphere of politics becomes the origin point of the theologico-political idea's gradual metamorphosis from coextension to metaphor to simile (251).

In a sense, the sovereignty that rides on the state of exception also necessitates the rhetorical structure of analogy as a conduit through which the structures of belief and performativity inherent in the theological miracle could be translated to the secular/political sphere. However, problematically, the status of marriage traditionally summons up both structures, simultaneously, and the looseness of analogy threatens a slippery slope from rejecting the *joug* of conjugality (in order to preserve the unity of the absolute) to rejecting a *joug* of divine authority and natural law.

If Schmitt's sovereign, as read through Hans Blumenberg, is merely the master of rhetoric, then the problem with sovereignty that *Bérénice* points to is the slipperiness of both rhetorical instantiation and the proliferation of a post-secular sovereignty, both condensed in the sovereign-forming capacities in relation to deixis. Blumenberg latches onto the fact that Schmitt ignores rhetoric as itself revelatory of rhetoric's hidden potential. Instead of criticizing Schmitt for using metaphor as a blanket cover for a sleight-of-hand transfer from the theologic to the political, Blumenberg actually touches on something more significant: that metaphor itself is not necessarily an 'abuse' or a "medium," but rather that the act of using rhetoric in and of itself is

worth of analysis and study:

This understanding of rhetoric as a metaphorical practice allows Blumenberg to revise key terms from Schmitt's writings— namely, the state of exception and the sovereign decision— in order to argue that rhetoric is a uniquely modern form of political life [...] Schmitt can persuasively manipulate theological figures and make them seem to have real effects because of the general role that metaphor plays in the constitution of the modern age (84).

No longer the allegorical/ analogical performer of miracles, nor the decider of the exception, the sovereign in this play only stands as the decider of rhetoric. The particular pathos in *Bérénice*, then, is the redoubled fallenness of the sovereign: indecisive Titus stands as both the symptom of this shifted, disenchanted sovereignty and the limit case that reveals the rhetorical foundations of such sovereignty to be “mere” rhetoric.

The pathos of this diminished sovereign function underscores what Leo Spitzer has called Racine's classical *piano*, in which emotion reaches the apotheosis of its expression not through exaggeration or stress, but paradoxically through that which is blurred, softened or dulled. Spitzer suggests that Racine's power and strength derives from his use of “distinguished restraint, of self-enclosure” akin to the dampening or “piano” pedal of the pianoforte. Spitzer draws upon the tiniest slips of words, such as the use of the indefinite article, the third person reference, the demonstrative “ce” to suggest that “unsaid emotion takes its revenge by energising its verbal expression, by exercising a counterpression on the words that repress it. So we have a *piano* strung with tension” (5). Thus, Titus' crisis is not necessarily dramatized according to a spectacularly glorious action or decision, but rather it is presented in the most minimal, even most dampened *piano* terms. His only action, or decision, is to decide on the deictic present, the “now” that would cleanly cleave Bérénice from Titus, marking the point of departure and



separation. Titus attempts to declare such a deixis, using anaphora to evoke a ritualist rhythm: “Maintenant que je puis couronner tant d’attraits, / Maintenant que je l’aime encor plus que jamais” ( II, 2, 441-442) but ultimately he is crippled by indecision and the line, like his resolve, crumbles: “Je vais, Paulin... O Ciel! Puis-je le déclarer?” (II, 2, 445). Even posing that very question, bringing forth his doubts, troubles his sovereign status as the master of rhetoric.

It is his failure to announce the “now” that highlights the tragedy of the sovereign. If Bérénice, Antiochus and even Titus himself are all anxious about the deictic present, it’s because this deixis especially in relation to the sovereign declaration of “en ce moment’ or “aujourd’hui” represents—allegorizes—several things. First it marks the transition from the dilatory, nebulous time to one that is marked, represented, and measured. But secondly, the repeated deictic now stages the sovereign’s (in)ability to conjure an ontologic “now” a “real” present, one that actually does instantiate the law (of repudiation, of Bérénice’s excision) and performs Titus’ decision making.

## ***VI. The Hymen’s Deixis***

In its insistence on dilation in face of the demands of sovereign deixis, the hymen collapses temporality. Derrida writes that the hymen confuses the temporality of desire with the temporality of desire’s accomplishment. It confounds the will-have-been (the future anterior of marital union) with the yet-to-be (the still-untouched virginity), for the in fulfillment (*accomplissement*) of the hymen (marriage), the hymen (membrane) ceases to exist, but the existence of hymen confuses before and after, prior and posterior. It is for this reason that Derrida links the hymen with the *pli* (the fold).<sup>194</sup> And I would argue that this folded time is one

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<sup>194</sup> “Sur la ligne introuvable de ce pli, l’hymen ne se présente jamais, il n’est jamais—au présent--, il n’a pas de sens propre, il ne relève plus du sens comme tel, c’est-à-dire, en dernière instance, comme sens de l’être. Le pli (se)

that specifically circular, spiraling and curling back upon itself. This inarticulate love is possible when *le temps se love*.

The hymen, in its unreadable status of “entre”, in its undecidability, most troubles the nature of the present, of the givenness of the deictic “now.” Derrida writes that:

L’entr’acte ou l’entre-temps de l’hymen ne donne pas le temps: ni le temps comme existence du concept (Hegel), ni le temps perdu ni le temps retrouvé, encore moins l’instant ou l’éternité. Aucun présent en vérité ne s’y présente, fût-ce pour s’y dissimuler. Ce que l’hymen déjoue, sous l’espèce du présent (temporel ou éternel), c’est l’assurance de maîtrise (*DS* 282).<sup>195</sup>

The hymen in its manifold figural incarnations repeats through the play, whether in the necessary impossibility of marriage/separation, or in the neutral status of “entre” that its undecidability performs.

While time was measured ambiguously prior, as the moment of deciding on the hymen’s accomplishment/rupture draws nearer, the ways that the characters talk about temporality changes. In the idyllic, circular, triadic eroticism, time discussed in the vague multiplicity of “cent fois,” a temporal (non) measure that is invoked when the characters wish to allude to the pleasurably undecided, dilated dynamic.

TITUS:

J’ai même souhaité la place de mon père,

Moi, Paulin, qui cent fois, si le sort moins sévère

Eût voulu de sa vie étendre les liens,

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multiplie mais (n’est) pas (un) (*Dissémination* 281).

<sup>195</sup> The intermission or between-time of the hymen does not give time: neither the temporality as existing concept (Hegel) nor the lost time or the found time, and even less the instant or eternity. No present or truth presents itself, be that as it may a dissimulation. What the hymen thwarts, under the space of the present (temporal or eternal) is the assurance of mastery.

Aurais donné mes jours pour prolonger les siens. (II, 2, 431-444)<sup>196</sup>

BÉRÉNICE :

Il craint peut-être, il craint d'épouser une reine

Hélas ! s'il était vrai... Mais non, il a cent fois

Rassuré mon amour contre leurs dures lois.

Cent fois... Ah ! qu'il m'explique un silence si rude (II, 5, 640-643)<sup>197</sup>

Spitzer suggests that “the use of exaggerated round numbers looks at first glance like an expression of affectivity, but when one has got used to the constantly recurring thousands, hundreds and scores, the figures have more the effect of a dull formula, corresponding to the Latin *sescenti* (‘six hundreds’= ‘a large number.’)” (93). As such, the “cent fois” repeated have the “dampening” effect so prized by Spitzer. “The thousands and hundreds are obviously exaggerated numbers, but in as much as they are round numbers they serve to spread a mood of calm and lucid orderliness” (94). So if the strength of their oft-repeated expressions of love is overwhelmingly powerful and ordered through such repeated multiplicity, this “softened” illusion of control comes to a breaking point in the necessity of choosing just *one* moment, in singularity of the deictic now.

As the reality of the broken-off marriage approaches (“Cet hymen et rompu,” says Arsace, underscoring both the legalistic sense of “called off” as well as the sexualized sense of “broken or split”), the characters shatter this undecided vaguely dilatory, multiplied time of “cent fois” to a fragmented sense of “moments.” After Bérénice has been informed that Titus will send her away, that the possibility of marriage/hymen is broken, she sends her friend

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<sup>196</sup> I have wished to take the place of my father (now dead)  
Me, Paulin, who, a hundred times, if the fates were kindly  
and had wanted to extend the days of her life  
I would gladly have given my time to extend hers.

<sup>197</sup> He fears, possibly, he fears marrying a queen  
Alas! If it were true... but not, he has, a hundred times  
Reassured my love against the harsh Roman laws.  
A hundred times.... Oh! If only he would explain such a brusque silence

Phénice to see if Titus will come and clarify the situation himself. As she waits, Bérénice gives a monologue that is mostly about her experience of time itself: “Phénice ne vient point? Moments trop rigoureux,/ Que vous paraissent lents à mes rapides vœux! / Je m’agite, je cours, languissante, abattue,/ La force m’abandonne, et le repos me tue” (IV, 1, 953-956).<sup>198</sup> In this period of waiting and unknowing, before the decision has been announced, Bérénice remarks on the jarring effect that these competing temporalities have on her: the infinitely dilated, pleasureably repeated time must finally come to a “point,” or a moment of decision, and the struggle between these incompatible temporal economies ends up feeling “trop rigoureux.”

Puncturing this undecidable temporality, the temporal “now” gives the illusion of “maîtrise,” or rather, maps the desire for mastery over this dilatory time. Roland Racevskis has touched on the treatment of temporality in *Bérénice*.

In its singular and plural forms combined, the word ‘moment(s)’ occurs 40 times in *Bérénice* [...] the prevalence in this play of the term “moments(s)” constitutes evidence that Racine sought to develop the representation of intimate, individual experiences of time into its smallest manifestations as a way of ornamenting and internally fragmenting the minimalistic action of the story chosen for this play.

What results from the multiple references to the moments of characters’ lives is a diversity of subjective temporalities (“Time of Tragedy” 115).

Bérénice’s monologue does present such a minimalized time, as well as the jarring discord experienced from her temporality of waiting. However, Racevskis has drawn upon the Batson Concordance that enumerates the lines in Racine with “moment (s),” but he forgets to note that the concordance ignores the collocation “en ce moment” (“now”) and simply analyzes the use of

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<sup>198</sup> Phénice isn’t coming? Such strenuous moments  
 How slow you seem in comparison to my pressing needs  
 I am agitated, I run, I languish, defeated  
 Strength abandons me, but rest kills me.

the word “moment.” Therefore while many of Racevskis’ assertions about temporality in *Bérénice* are on the right track, they do not go far enough because they do not account for the necessity of the “now.” The puncturing status of the “now” forces a decision on the ambiguous eroticism of the triad, or the undecidable hymen. “Now” becomes the “point” that destabilizes the dilation of time in the play.

Antiochus says, “Aujourd'hui qu'il peut tout, que votre hymen s'avance” (I, 1, 43)<sup>199</sup> in his monologue of imagined speech to Bérénice, linking Titus’ all-powerful sovereign capacities (“il peut tout”) with the impending marriage. However taking on this mantle of sovereignty is explicitly linked to a different kind of linear temporality, one that, as we have seen, resists the dilatational increase of pregnancy that would result from a “hymen odieux”. Later, Titus confesses to Antiochus, “Mes transports aujourd'hui s'attendaient d'éclater./ Cependant aujourd'hui, Prince il faut la quitter” (III, 1, 713-714),<sup>200</sup> and in the folded doubling of “aujourd’hui,” the pathos of the most joyously anticipated day turning into the most sorrowfully dreaded one is highlighted. And if we are to take the notion of the repetition (la chrie) seriously, in the repeated invocations of “en ce moment,” “ce jour,” or “aujourd’hui,” there is not only an anxiety expressed over the marriage or the separation (the hymen) but also a focus on the conjuring power of the deictic now itself, and its very undecidability. This aujourd’hui, as deixis, marks a temporal threshold between the continuity of previous’ emperors’ pasts and an acceptable sovereign future. For Spitzer, the “close linkage of this sort imposes patterning of great compression” (62), and such “twinning is especially tightly drawn when the sentence forks, as it were, from a common verb in the ‘trunk’ clause (the rhetorical term for this is isocolon)” (64). Thus, the distance between the text’s forking and separation stands as a foil to Titus’ inability to actually split away, or to definitively announce the scission of the “aujourd’hui.”

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<sup>199</sup> “Now he can do anything, since your hymen/marriage approaches”

<sup>200</sup> “My passionate love waited for this day, to burst in joy/ However, this day, Prince, I must leave her”

When Bérénice confronts Titus after hearing that he plans to send her away, she acknowledges that he is following the Roman law and tradition. However, her main argument is “why now? Why today?” : “Ignoriez-vous vos Lois/ Quand je vous l’avouez pour la première fois?/ À quel excès d’amour m’avez-vous amenée” (IV, 5, 1065-1067)<sup>201</sup>; and “Tout l’Empire a vingt fois conspiré contre nous./ Il était temps encor. Que ne me quittiez-vous ?”<sup>202</sup>(IV, 5, 1073-1074). She effectively criticizes him for not having accepted earlier that they could never be together, and begrudges his indulgence in the amatory delay. At the same time, she insists that the logic of the separation taking place *that day* does not make sense, underscoring the arbitrary nature of his decision: “Hé bien, Seigneur, hé bien, qu’en peut-il arriver ? / Voyez-vous les Romains prêts à se soulever ?” (IV, 5, 1137-1138).<sup>203</sup> In other words, she insists that there is no “state of emergency,” actual or pending, and therefore her repudiation does not adhere to any kind of logic, except for one that invests in a certain kind of Roman-only future. Such a separation could have taken place earlier, or even deferred for years. They could still, for example, live in the dilatory temporality of the deferred, future “hymen.” In a rather contemporary gesture, Bérénice even argues against the institution of marriage: “Ah Seigneur! S’il est vrai, pourquoi nous séparer? / Je ne vous parle point d’une heureux hyménée” (IV, 5, 1126-1127).<sup>204</sup> There is not any logical, or real reason that either the separation or the marriage has to happen today, right now, if at all.

Titus himself remarks on the absurdity of the necessary “present” bringing to the fore the violence of the hymen’s rupture with “percer”:

Je viens percer un coeur que j’adore, qui m’aime  
Et pourquoi le percer ? Qui l’ordonne ? Moi-même.

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<sup>201</sup> Did you ignore your laws, when I revealed my love for the first time? / To what degree of infatuation did your deception seduce me to?

<sup>202</sup> The entire empire conspired against us twenty times/ There was still time. Why did you not leave me earlier?

<sup>203</sup> All right, all right, sir, what would happen then? / Do you see the Romans rising up against you right now?

<sup>204</sup> Oh sir, then if this is true, why the separation? / I am not talking about marriage

Car enfin Rome a-t-elle expliqué ses souhaits ?

L'entendons-nous crier autour de ce Palais ?

Vois-je l'État penchant au bord du précipice ?

Ne le puis-je sauver que par ce sacrifice ?

Tout se tait (IV, 4, 999-1005).<sup>205</sup>

As he seeks to find the organizing logic behind his sorrow, he ends up tumbling into a mise-en-abîme. The villain orchestrating this cruel separation is who? He himself. Who or what is forcing him to do this, what thumb of duress presses him on? His ultimate conclusion is nothing, silence: "Tout se tait."

The play plots a trajectory from a nebulous temporality of "cent fois" or a circular repetition, to one that is broken down, measured and fragmented. Before, the dilatory temporality was structured by the possibility of an end point, or hymen. It was this possibility that lends itself to Bérénice waiting five years, or to Antiochus languishing in silence for three years. However, once the hymen is "rompu," then the dilation of time, in its inflational increase, feels overwhelming and threatening, as Bérénice mentions in her "Moments trop rigoureux" monologue. In this moment of indecisive decision (or, perhaps, decisive indecision), the clash of the two temporalities, circular and linear, means that Bérénice tries to grasp at some measures of temporality, but even the common temporal markers seem absurd and ridiculous.

Dans un mois, dans un an, comment souffrirons-nous,

Seigneur, que tant de Mers me séparent de vous ?

Que le jour recommence et que le jour finisse

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<sup>205</sup> I have pierced a heart that I love, that loves me  
And why pierce it? Who orders it? Me myself.  
Because Rome has finally expressed its wishes?  
Do we hear mobs crying around the Palace?  
Do I see the State on the edge of a precipice  
and I can only save it by this sacrifice?  
Everything is silent.

Sans que Titus puisse voir Bérénice ?

Sans que de tout le jour je puisse voir Titus ? (IV, 5, 1113-1117)<sup>206</sup>

With the enjambment, another marker of textual excess or interlarding, Bérénice marks a dual position in affect. As we read/hear the line originally, we hear “souffrirons” normally, believing that Bérénice may hysterically build to a final complaint of her suffering: “And how (much) shall we suffer...” but with the “que” in the next line, she draws herself together, quietly, like the queen she is, and it becomes modified to mean “and how will we endure”. It is not accidental that the “Seigneur” comes before “que”-- Sptizer calls *seigneur* “the switchpoint between narration and emotional outburst... on the border between the two, for it is both a social form of address and a discharge of contained emotion” (87). Here, the reversion back to the language of title and politeness triggers the “que,” reminding both of their duty to “endure” and not to “suffer,” but the tragedy consists of this very restraint: as sovereigns, to “endure”. Bérénice conjures images of extended time and distance (“tant de mers”), but with the ambiguous hinge “que” and the cold formality of “Seigneur,” she creates infinitely greater *emotional* distance than can be alluded to in markers of time and space. It is because their sensation of temporality itself is shifting, moving from an ambiguous circularity (one in which “Titus sees Bérénice and Bérénice sees Titus”) to a temporality of acceptable sovereign progress. It is for this reason, then, that their questions regarding the deictic present—“why now? Why today?” actually take on greater rhetorical and even political import.

### ***VII. No Eschatology (Not Now)***

Indecisive sovereigns populate many of Racine’s plays. For example, Racine’s *Iphigénie*

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<sup>206</sup> In a month, in a year how will we endure/suffer  
Sir, that so many seas separate you from me?  
That the day begins and ends  
Without Titus seeing Bérénice?  
The whole day goes by without me seeing you?



is largely about Agamemnon's indecision: whether to sacrifice his daughter or not, whether to tell Clytemnestra or not, etc. This indecision is highlighted in the very way Agamemnon speaks of himself, opening the play: "Oui, c'est Agamemnon, c'est ton Roi qui t'éveille/ Viens, reconnais la voix qui frappe ton oreille" (I, 1, 1).<sup>207</sup> The "ce" of the phrase, however subtle, elicits enormous pathos: what king has to use the deictic "ce" to point to himself? Is the state of sovereignty not self-evident? The use of "ce" and the third person reference underscores that at this point of the play, Agamemnon is utterly confused and unsure. He names himself (Agamemnon) before correcting it with his sovereign title "ton Roi" but even in this divide, in this mis-naming, he expresses deep hesitation over his competing roles of father and sovereign.

Similarly, such indecision is redoubled in *Bérénice* when Titus wants to point a finger at the source of his impending misery only to turn back to himself, the sovereign: "qui l'ordonne? Moi-même." Racine's depiction of indecisive kings anticipates Benjamin's analysis that such indecision may be characteristic of the baroque tragic drama: "The antithesis between the power of the ruler and his capacity to rule led to a feature peculiar to the *Trauerspiel* which is, however, only apparently a generic feature and which can be illuminated only against the background of the theory of sovereignty. This is the indecisiveness of the tyrant. 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" (Benjamin 71). And yet while *Iphigénie* and *Bérénice* both point to the tragedy of the sovereign's indecision, *Iphigénie* nevertheless culminates in a spectacular moment of self-sacrifice (painted in almost orgasmic, orgiastic tones) that affirms and lays the groundwork for the future glories of the Trojan War:

À peine son sang coule et fait rougir la terre,

Les dieux font sur l'autel entendre le tonnerre,

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<sup>207</sup> "Yes, it's Agamemnon, it's your King who wakes you, come, recognize the voice that strikes your ear"

Les vents agitent l'aire d'heureux frémissements,  
 Et la mer leur répond par ses mugissements.  
 La rive au loin gémit blanchissante d'écume.  
 La flamme du bûcher d'elle-même s'allume.  
 Le ciel brille d'éclairs, s'entr'ouvre, et parmi nous  
 Jette une sainte horreur, qui nous rassure tous (V, 6, 1773-1780).<sup>208</sup>

In comparison to *Iphigénie's* sublime synthesis of death and nature, moaning and foaming and a lightning-streaked future opening up before the spectators, *Bérénice*, in contrast, ends almost anticlimactically. “Adieu, servons tous trois d'exemple à l'univers/ De l'amour la plus tendre, et la plus malheureuse,/ Dont il puisse garder l'histoire douloureuse ” (V, 7, 1502-1504).<sup>209</sup> All of their suffering, heartbreak, and loss surely had to go to some greater purpose, we would imagine. But the entirety of the play comes to an ambiguous close, when their sacrifice of one another is merely an “example.” The inscription in the proper sovereign history, eschewing the excesses of Antony and Julius, obeying the very same law that even Caligula and Nero bowed their heads under—this example marks a proscription guiding sovereign and also civic behavior. And yet this sadly unglorious ending to the drama seems almost fitting with Benjamin’s diagnosis of *trauerspiel*:

The baroque knows no eschatology, and for that very reason it possesses no mechanism by which all earthly things are gathered in together and exalted before being consigned to their end. The hereafter is emptied of everything which contains the slightest breath of this world, and from it the baroque extracts a

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<sup>208</sup> “Her blood had barely begun to flow and redden the earth/ The gods shook the altar with thunder/ The winds whipped up the air with happy tremblings/ And the sea responded with her howls/ the far away river moaned, whitening with foam/ the flame of the altar alighted itself/ the sky scintillated with lightning, opened itself, and among us/ Gushed forth a holy terror, that reassured us all”

<sup>209</sup> “Goodbye, let us all three of us serve as an example to the universe/ Of the most tender and sad love/ whose sorrowful history will be preserved”

profusion of things which customarily escaped the grasp of artistic formulation and, at its high point, brings them violently into the light of day, in order to clear an ultimate heaven, enabling it, as a vacuum, one day to destroy the world with catastrophic violence (66).<sup>210</sup>

However, this catastrophe, as emblemized in Bérénice's departure, is one that is particularly softened, or to use Spitzer's term, "dampened." Instead of a gloriously redemptive or tragic end, as in *Iphigénie*, the play ends on the softest of *piano* endings. This softness is emphasized in Agamben's notion of a "white eschatology," an ending that refuses the triumphant, redemptive completion. To cite Agamben at length:

It is this "white eschatology"-which does not lead the earth to a redeemed hereafter, but consigns it to an absolutely empty sky-that configures the baroque state of exception as catastrophe. And it is again this white eschatology that shatters the correspondence between sovereignty and transcendence, between the monarch and God, that defined the Schmittian theologico-political. While in Schmitt "the sovereign is identified with God and occupies a position in the state exactly analogous to that attributed in the world to the God of the Cartesian system" (Schmitt 1922) 43/46), in Benjamin the sovereign is "confined to the world of creation; he is the lord of creatures, but he remains a creature" (Benjamin 1928) 264/85). This drastic redefinition of the sovereign function implies a different situation of the state of exception. It no longer appears as the threshold

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<sup>210</sup> Agamben clarifies that this translation is slightly faulty, but the error is actually closer to what Benjamin intended to say: "An unfortunate emendation in the text of the *Gesammelte Schriften* has prevented all the implications of this shift from being assessed. Where Benjamin's text read, *Es gibt eine barocke Eschatologie*, 'there is a baroque eschatology,' the editors, with a singular disregard for all philological care, have corrected it to read: *Es gibt keine ...*, 'there is no baroque eschatology' (Benjamin 1928, 246/66). And yet the passage that follows is logically and syntactically consistent with the original reading: 'and for that very reason [there is] a mechanism that gathers and exalts all earthly creatures before consigning them to the end [dem Ende].' The baroque knows an eskhaton, an end of time; but, as Benjamin immediately makes clear, this eskhaton is empty. It knows neither redemption nor a hereafter and remains immanent to this world"

that guarantees the articulation between an inside and an outside, or between anomie and the juridical context, by virtue of a law that is in force in its suspension: it is, rather, a zone of absolute indeterminacy between anomie and law, in which the sphere of creatures and the juridical order are caught up in a single catastrophe (*State*, 57)

Schmitt's sovereign is able to both declare and decide on the state of emergency and the exception, just like the miracle in theology, the very rhetoric and language of the miracle, the ability to deictically point and say "this is," and then have that moment *become* exceptional.

In contrast, Titus needs to pathetically repeat (over and over again) the necessity of deciding on Bérénice's fate and sending her away: "Si le Peuple demain ne voit partir la Reine, / Demain elle entendra ce Peuple furieux/ me venir demander son départ à ses yeux" (III, 1, 732-733).<sup>211</sup> His redoubled declaration of "demain" attempts to sound resolute, but the supposedly sovereign phrase ends up timidly retreating behind the excuse of "ce Peuple furieux." And later he points out that if he allows Bérénice to stay, he would be breaking the very laws that he himself is responsible for upholding: "Maintiendrai-je des Lois que je ne puis garder?" (IV, 5, 1146).<sup>212</sup> At the same time, he is absolutely unable to decide whether to break the law for personal gain, to make an exception for himself, or to stick to one declaration. Bérénice points out that he is making this sacrifice in order to uphold laws—but laws that he himself is capable of changing: "Quoi, pour d'injustes Lois que vous pouvez changer/ En d'éternels chagrins vous-mêmes vous plonger ?/ Rome as ses droits, Seigneur. N'avez-vous pas les vôtres ?" (IV, 5, 1149-1151).<sup>213</sup>

Derrida notes that even the possibility of taking a decision hinges upon the fact that there

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<sup>211</sup> "If the people do not see the Queen leave tomorrow/ Tomorrow she will hear the furious people/ Demanding me, in front of her eyes, to force her to leave"

<sup>212</sup> "Shall I maintain laws that I myself cannot obey?"

<sup>213</sup> "What, in the name of unfair laws that you yourself could change/ You would throw yourself into eternal woe/? Rome has its rights, Sir. Do you not have yours?"

is no clear, “rational” consequence of the law, and therefore in the fractional moment between the sovereign’s logical “programmable” decision (for the good of the state, to keep chaos at bay) and not-deciding, there is a movement from the realm of the impossibly illogical to the absolutely necessary. However, this movement always presupposes a flicker of indecision, a moment prior to the decision being taken. Just Agamben analyzed the creaturely nature of Benjamin’s fallen sovereign, Derrida suggests that the mark of this unexalted state resides in the sovereign’s own relationship to decision-making:

Toute décision (par essence une décision est exceptionnelle et souveraine) devant échapper à l’ordre du possible, du déjà possible et programmable pour le sujet supposé de la décision, toute décision passive ou d’une décision de l’autre alors la différence entre la décision décidante et la décision indécise devient elle-même indécidable, et alors la décision supposée, la décision exceptionnellement souveraine ressemble, comme une goutte d’eau, à une indécision, à une non-volonté, à une non-liberté, à une non-intention, à une in-conscience et à une irrationalité, etc. ; et alors le supposé sujet souverain commence, par une invincible attraction, à ressembler à la bête qu’il est supposé s’assujettir (et l’on sait désormais, nous l’avons souvent vérifié et encore la dernière fois, qu’à la place de la bête on peut mettre, dans cette même hiérarchie, l’esclave, la femme, l’enfant) (*Bête* 60).<sup>214</sup>

Titus’ indecision reduces him to a mere shadow of his former glorious self, the one that was

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<sup>214</sup> “Because every decision (by its essence every decision is exceptional and sovereign) must escape the order of the possible, of what is already possible, of what is already possible and programmable for the supposed subject of the decision, because every decision worthy of the name must be this exceptional scandal of a passive decision or decision of the other, the difference between the deciding decision and the undecided decision itself becomes undecidable, and then the supposed decision, the exceptionally sovereign decision looks, like two peas in a pod, just like an indecision, an unwilling, a nonliberty, a nonintention, an unconsciousness and an irrationality, etcand then the supposed sovereign subject begins, by an invincible attraction, to look like the beast that he is supposed to subject to himself (and we already know, having often—last time too- verified it, that in place of th beast one can put, in the same hierarchy, the slave, the woman, the child ” (33).

heralded by “ces flambeaux, ce bûcher, cette nuit enflammée,/ Ces aigles ces faisceaux, ce people, cette armée,/ cette foule de rois, ces consuls, ce Sénat/ Qui tous de mon amant empruntaient leur éclat” (I, 5, 303-306). All of these prostheses of glory reveal the supplementary relation between and sovereign and the state that Derrida, inspired by Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, underscores. Sovereignty as an institution serves as a prosthetic for the State, which needs supplements and prostheses in order to proliferate itself:

L’État est donc une sorte de robot, de monstre animal qui, dans la figure de l’homme ou d’homme dans la figure du monstre animal, est plus fort, etc. que l’homme naturel. C’est comme une prothèse gigantesque destinée à amplifier, en l’objectivant hors de l’homme naturel, le pouvoir du vivant, de l’homme vivant qu’elle protège, qu’elle sert, mais comme une machine morte, voire une machine de mort, une machine qui n’est que le masque du vivant, comme une machine de mort peut servir le vivant. Mais cette machine étatique et prothétique, disons prothétatique, cette *prothétatique* doit à la fois prolonger, mimer, imiter, reproduire même jusque dans le détail le vivant qui la produit (*Bête*, 53)<sup>215</sup>

Thus, in a sense, the precarity of Titus’ sovereignty is further underscored by the arbitrariness with which it is reproduced—through the valuation of certain kinds of (Roman) lives and supplement of a xenophobic exclusion—all in the vein of promoting and prolonging the Roman-only heritage. And yet sovereignty is figured here as a “machine” which is both pro-statist and prosthetic, that Derrida merges together in a portmanteau hybrid of “prothétatique.” The temporality of this prosthetic pro-State is one that is both ephemeral and eternal: as a machine, it

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<sup>215</sup> “So the state is a sort of robot, an animal monster, which, in the figure of man, or of man in the figure of the animal monster, is stronger, etc. than natural man. Like a gigantic prosthesis designed to amplify, by objectifying it outside natural man, to amplify the power of the living, the living man that it protects, that it serves, but like a dead machine, or even a machine of death, a machine which is only the mask of the living, like a machine of death can serve the living. But this state and prosthetic machine, let’s say prosthstatic, this *prosthstate* must also extend, mime, imitate, even reproduce down to the details the living creature that produces it”(53).

is of course eternal, but as a prosthetic in the service of life (preserving the quality of life, of precarious lives) it trades in fear and uses fear of life's fleetingness to extend and subtend itself. The duration of a proper sovereignty, following the trajectory of history that Paulin has laid out, is one that depends upon this duality of the necessity of (infinite) sovereign continuity as well as the specter of life's fragility (that the sovereign alone can control and protect). Thus, the *prothématique* nature of the sovereign resides, itself, in a monstrous temporality that wavers between, and in this wavering covers over, the threat of death and the threat of a biopolitically controlled life/future.

The baroque sans eschatology, since it has "no mechanism by which it gathers all earthly things in together and exalts them before consigning them to their end" (Benjamin 66), places the tragedy in an ephemeral-eternal temporality akin to Derrida's *prothématique*. Whereas the eschatological mechanism could formerly be counted on as a meaning-making cap to the tragic present, the numbing quality of the *prothématique* state indicates an incessant sovereignty that will—and must—continue on, but since the sovereignty prolongates its reign of power through the prosthetic and machinic, there is almost no glorious end point. Graham Hammill points out that the attention shifts from a belief in a victorious theologic temporality to an investment in the "atemporal" quality of rhetoric, tying together rhetoric's role in both spectacularization (the secular substitute of the glorious eschatological display) as well as Derrida's prosthesis.

Hammill says of this foregrounding of rhetoric:

In Blumenberg's account, the modern age is inscribed through a kind of *translatio imperii* in which the subject's capacity to make history is understood and often denied through the archive of metaphors that the modern age inherits. The emphasis here should go to *imperii* or force as much as it should to *translatio*. The rhetorical subject's capacity to translate herself into a new history is accompanied

by the force of theological metaphors that restrain and impel this translation at almost the same time.

Given this sense of a (non) end, then, the play's own ending dramatizes the ways that propulsion through history occurs rhetorically, passed down not through grand sacrifice or sovereign declarations, but rather, passively through "example: "Adieu, servons tous trois d'exemple à l'univers / De l'amour la plus tendre, et la plus malheureuse,/ Dont il puisse garder l'histoire douloureuse," (V, 8, 1502-1504), says Bérénice. Example, of its course, related to a type of opening or clearing. To add another layer to the dilatory opening, John Lyons reminds us that "Exemplum, in medieval Latin, meant 'a clearing in the woods.'" This sense of the term, often forgotten, sheds light on many characteristics of the rhetorical figure, example [...] the clearing, the exemplum, posits an inside and an outside— in fact, the clearing creates an outside by its existence" (3). At the same time, exemplum's clear status, the marked exclusion and inclusion, is able to sort the acceptable from the unacceptable. The play stages the shift from a dilatory ambiguity, of possible/ pending exclusion, of possible hymen/marital union, to the clearly pedagogic and ascertainable clearing of the exemplum, one that is properly inscribed in a history to be imitated, by the universe to come.

And yet it is Bérénice and not Titus who utters these lines, setting a poor example indeed for sovereign decision and leadership. At the same time, their history is singularly inimitable. Lyons points out that one characteristic of example is its rarity: "One face of this concept is the notion that certain individuals act in a way far above or far below average achievement. The 'hero' is someone who is stronger, smarter, or more devoted than most people [...] Examples and the category or paradigm from which they are selected [...] can therefore be considered in terms of abundance and lack, or of frequency and infrequency of occurrence"( 32). So if one of the palliatives to the story, according to Bérénice's logic, is that they will serve as an example,



the problem becomes, an example of what? And to whom? Immediately after, Bérénice says: “Tout est prêt. On m'attend. Ne suivez point mes pas” (V, 8, 1505), offering yet another ambiguity in the doubled meanings of “suivre” and “pas.” Although the phrase indicates that she does not wish to be physically followed, “suivre” is, of course, the verb that one would use in a figurative sense, to “follow” an example. At the same time, we might also imagine in the word “pas” not only the idea of “steps” or “path,” but also “pas” in its negative sense. And thus the second meaning haunting one of her final lines is also not to follow (the example of) her negation, or decisive repudiation. Is she erasing the gesture of her own capping “example”? Does she mean to tell Antiochus and Titus not to split from each other? There is a decisiveness in this final line, but also a doubled ambiguity that reverses, or cycles back onto the beginning.

If Parker suggests that Renaissance dilation differs from *différance* insofar as dilation is “finally caught within the horizon of a telos or ending” (204), this is an ending that is dampened, in a Spitzerian *piano*: to serve as an “example” is neither glorious, nor clearly beneficial or necessary. And yet it is in the smallness of such telos that renders the wrenching difficulties of the drama all the more poignant. The excesses of waiting, of laboring over speech, of confessing love—all of it is reduced to a mere point, or an example, exerting what Spitzer would analyze as an equal-and-opposite counterpressure against the spiraling amplification of emotion. The measure of that emotion’s sorrow is, then, in the very force it takes to condense and minimize it to nothing more than a brief mark in the book of history, a small example to be noted. If Racine attempted to “faire quelque chose de rien,” the rhetorical effect of the “exemple” is to “faire rien de quelque chose.”

Perhaps what makes the tragedy draw out such an excess of tears (to “pleurer comme un ignorant,” as Villars did) is in fact touching on the types of desires, intimacies and relationship that can only be mourned as a “douleur secrète.” Titus’ “langue embarrassée” seems to denote

both his inability to speak as well as language's (la langue) inability to be adequate to any type of expression that he might need. In this sense, it is a tragedy both of the loss of the beloved(s), but also of the inability to speak of the dynamics of such a love, whether it be strangely triangulated and polyamorous, full of substitutions, fantasies and voyeuristic "witnessing." The "langue embarrassée" may also point to the impossibility of speaking of the loss of the pleasurably-renewed, circular temporality in favor of the properly progressive sovereign time. It is fitting that Bérénice's announcement of their exemplarity is one that is future-oriented, forward-thinking; but at the same time, it seems to proleptically imagine their emotions and sorrows as being neatly condensed into a few lines of history to come: just as Paulin devotes an alexandrine or two to Antony and Cleopatra, this repudiation will become another small example in a long list. And perhaps poignantly enough, the line in Suetonius' history is precisely nothing but a tiny fragment of this story, the *invitus invitam* (malgré lui, malgré elle) to which this entire tale is softened, dampened, and reduced.

## CODA

This project has outlined the stakes for considering inarticulate erotics through the paradigm of velocity. In *Andromaque*, *Bérénice* and *Polyeucte*, certain deviant desires challenged developing notions of temporal norms and governance in the seventeenth century, displaying and marking this divergence through unexpected tempos. In the previous chapters, I illustrated that this chrononormativity conditioned and structured expectations of gender and sexuality, and vice versa. For example, while waiting can appear as cruel maternal disinterest (*Andromaque*) or as impotent sovereignty (*Titus*), this denigration of their non-behavior ignores the possibility that chronobiopolitics can act as a sieve. So what comes to the fore are the clear-cut failures and successes according to temporal norms: a mother *should* act according to a certain speed, otherwise she is heartless.

Making tangible this invisible chronobiopolitical sieve that shapes gendered ideologies and expectations was the first prong of my analysis. The second was to consider that waiting itself, while not “criminelle,” is not *neutral* either. The particular temporalities associated with waiting (or rushing, or incessantly repeating) can also be experienced as erotic. In other words, *Titus*’s inability to send away *Bérénice* is not necessarily a sovereign failing or a lack of masculine valor. Rather, integral to their relationship, and what he has enjoyed the most, is the fixed-stasis of a perpetually renewing temporality (“Depuis cinq ans entiers chaque jour je la vois/ et crois toujours la voir pour la première fois”) (I, 2, 545-546). Even within the couplet, the “ou” sounds (“jour”, “tou/ jours”, “pour”), and the “ois” (“vois,” “crois,” “voir,” “fois”) keep bubbling up again and again in pleasurable recursive eddies. Relying too closely on values of “metric” clock time and the concomitant values of progress and teleology means that other forms of affective attachments that amount to “nothing” go unnoticed. Such blinders obscure, for example, the eroticism experienced in waiting for five years, remaining silenced, that ultimately

comes to absolutely naught, as in Antiochus' case.

In my study of these non-normative desires that lie outside the available field of expression, rhetoric and figure have come up repeatedly. Whether in Andromaque's catachrestic attachment to Hector's ashes or in Polyeucte and Néarque's rushed metaleptic intimacy, a plethora of rhetoric and figures have animated my analysis of inarticulate erotics on the stage. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, both metaphor and catachresis, for example, were considered, in the early modern imaginary, to enact a type of velocity. Writers such as Dumarsais and Fontanier imagined that the *translatio* creates "movement" and displacement of one word to a "new home." And while there is a likeness and kinship between these imagined movements and displacements of metaphor on the one hand and Andromaque's catachrestic stillness and Titus' spiraling dilation on the other, the explicit link between trope and these velocities still remains to be discussed. One could still ask the question, why rhetoric at all? If my archive hinges on the theater genre and the spectacularity of this emerging chrononormativity, does rhetoric even have a place in this study?

My preliminary answer to this question, and a direction that I hope to follow in future research takes a cue from Timothy Murray's *Theatrical Legitimizations*. His analysis of the force and function of rhetoric in the theater centers on Abbe d'Aubignac's *La Pratique du théâtre*. In this treatise, d'Aubignac writes: "En un mot, si la Poësie est l'Empire de Figures, le Theatre en est le Thrône : c'est le lieu où par les agitations apparentes de celui qui parle et qui se plaint, elles font passer dans l'ame de ceux qui le regardent, et qui l'écoutent des sentimens qu'il n'a point" (347-348). In the early modern period, rhetoric occupied an odd place. Critics seemed uncertain whether to malign the dangers of rhetoric's seductive (mere) ornamentation or to applaud rhetoric for its powers of representation, eloquence and delight. As Jacqueline

Lichtenstein notes, rhetorical ornament was aligned with cosmetic makeup—a seductive falseness that dazzles in the reader/spectator in such a way that the spectator forgets to seek the truth beneath the gloss. And this seductive ornamentation was one that was specifically presented in gendered and sexual terms:

The innumerable critics of rhetoric, in fact, have generally condemned such Asiatic stylistic figures in a vocabulary borrowed from the lexicon of the prostituted body, from the indecent attire and the profligate sexuality of women, as if every manifestation of an excessive taste for images could only be thought through the aesthetic-moral category of perversity, of a culpable seduction that originates in a certain femininity.... *Coloring*, when applied to painting—the preeminent and essential cosmetic art, consisting of both "staining" (*teindre*) and "feigning" (*feindre*)... The seductive artifice of the coloring praised by the colorists partook of the courtesan's and prostitute's allures. Here, love is not very different from art; in both cases, cosmetic illusion must be seen as a promise of illicit pleasures (79-80)

This nature of coloration, then, does seem fitting to an analysis of “illicit pleasures” of non-normative erotics. This critique of rhetoric’s ornamental and cosmetic qualities could arguably also pertain to the theater, a genre in which the practice of feigning and dazzling was at stake.

However, this is exactly the opposite reason for why d’Aubignac proposes that theater is the “throne” of rhetoric’s empire. Murray writes,

The fabric of rhetorical theatricality consists of ruses, disguises, and illusions that heighten the agitated and violent imaginative experience of spectacle. The effect of this kind of rhetoric is to dis-place the representation of theatrical imagery from

the stage to the *parterre*. Underlying the ornamental unity and illusionary wholeness of the dramatic image, then, is the *force* of rhetoric. It obliges the theatregoer, who is otherwise comfortable with either the passive observation or absorptive contemplation of a colorful ‘object’ (*le vrai*), to recognize the incompleteness or invisibility of the dramatic image (*le semblable*) (186).

Rather than the figures penetrating the spectators’ “souls” directly, figures operate through a jarring inadequacy. Thus, paying attention to the rhetorical twists and gaps on stage is key. Skillful use of rhetoric marks both the conventions of fine humanist training as well as the incompleteness that incite the spectators’ desire to fill the gaps with imagination.

If rhetoric straddles a dual capacity to both conceal and to evoke, then perhaps it seems almost natural that certain desires characterized by deviance and insignificance might employ this doubled obfuscation and presentation to their advantage. We recall that François proposed that “the ‘secret’ of the ‘open secret’ need not mean hidden or unstated, but simply unavailable, untouchable, nonpossessable, implying a relation to the beloved that neither appropriates nor denies[...] This chasteness also refers to the open secret’s perfect economy of means: for both its revelation and concealment, it uses no more than already available channels of communication” (81). For inarticulate erotics, using the available channels of communication means, in this case, hijacking such available discursive practices, and being attuned to the possibilities of this “hijacking” move has been the third prong of my analysis. So as I discussed in chapter 3, for example, Titus’s inability to decide “looks like” sovereign impotence; it could also, however, be a gesture of staving off the end point of departure. Resting on a puncturing “now,” a temporal finality, would bring the previously open circulation of triangulated desire and substitutive longings between himself, Antiochus, and Bérénice to a close.

Rhetoric allows a shifting between the dazzling plenitude of the “cosmetic” and the

forceful incompleteness of the dramatic image that generates a type of motion and emotion in the spectator. Murray cites d'Aubignac, who describes how figures “Laissant toujours le Spectateur dans l'attente de quelque nouveauté [les couleurs] échauffent son desir, et l'entretiennent dans une agréable impatience” (297). Thus, rhetoric itself creates its own temporality, a temporality of pleasurable waiting and the incitement of desire. Or, as Murray puts it in a more psychoanalytically inflected sense: “Obscuring the pleasure and pain of the dramatic object with the spectators' own experiences of unfulfilled desires, such a doubling of desire casts d'Aubignac's theatrical colors in a psychologically energetic light. The spectators... re-act to the coloration of their own libidinal mechanisms of representation through condensation, displacement, negation and substitution” (187).

Although “colore” and “disegno” have traditionally been the key dividing lines animating the debate about the use of figure, I would contend however, that instead of analyzing the rhetoric debates according to the stakes of representational qualities (le vrai vs le semblable) of the image, rhetoric in the theater allows for a multiplicity of temporalities to emerge. By this I do not only mean the diegetic temporality on stage, but also the ways that figures (and their incompletenesses) generate an acute sense of what Sacks calls “personal” time in the spectators—the temporality of anticipation, desire, disappointment *as well as* the experience of a split temporality. My introduction addressed the ways that “velocity” pertains to this study in relation to this period where bodies were increasingly choreographed to a chrono-normative, centralized temporality. While much of my argumentation about rhetoric's role in generating velocities in the face of inarticulate erotics hinged on intradiegetic velocity—the stalling, dilations, and rushings that Racine's and Corneille's characters orchestrate through figure and trope—I would, in a further study, be curious to think about a larger relationship to the *parterre* and the cultivation of such divergent, splintered time internal to spectators and readers.

Ultimately, however, rhetoric has allowed me, throughout this project, to consider inarticulate erotics in a different way. Rather than viewing inarticulacy as a failure, or considering non-normative erotics to be marginalized, hidden, or unknowable, by taking rhetorical expression seriously, I was able to focus on types of desires that may not even seem to be sexual or erotic—Andromaque’s attachment to ash, for example, or Polyeucte’s repetition and harmonic attunement with Néarque. Rhetoric allowed me a way to let emerge these sexualities in a way that navigated the binary between the “agnostic” and the “anticipatory” that Coviello delineated. In its inadequacies, figure is always somewhat agnostic, inviting the spectator/reader to interpret, substitute and seek. But in its ornamental quality, figure can also be mistaken for “anticipatory”—marking euphemisms, analogies and metaphors that pre-date a type of futural gay identity. The beauty of rhetoric, here, is that it can inhabit both and neither category. Whether marking movement as metaphor’s “change in respect to location” (Parker 36), allowing for intradiegetic rushing, or inciting a spectator’s temporal desire, figure functions in a spectacular and failed way that manages to yoke together velocity with inarticulate erotics. Thus in the face of the emerging chrononormativity of the seventeenth century, rhetoric becomes both a symptom of Absolutism’s increasing control over the discursive and the proper (*les bienséances*) while at the same time standing to intervene in temporal and affective dimensions particular to certain kinds of inarticulate erotics.



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