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Republicanism and Stoicism in Renaissance Neo-Senecan Drama

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Abstract

This study will focus upon the dramas of Mary Sidney, Samuel Daniel, Samuel Brandon, William Alexander, and Elizabeth Cary, as well as the Roman tragedies of Thomas Kyd and Ben Jonson, which are characterised, to varying degrees, by their appropriation of continental models of neo-classical tragedy practised by the French tragedian Robert Garnier. The idea, promulgated by several early twentieth century critics, that many of these plays are linked by a common anti-theatrical agenda has been roundly rejected by more recent critics. This thesis will offer a new perspective on these plays by arguing that the recent criticism which distances them from the anti-theatrical agenda has served to repress the intertextual affinities that exist between them. These are characterised by their common interests in such humanist outlooks as republicanism and stoicism. Classical authorities, including Seneca and Tacitus, as well as contemporary theorists, such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Justus Lipsius inform these discourses. This form of drama also offered the authors a space to interrogate the practical utility of a number of theories from a variety of perspectives, indicating that the plays are in dialogue with one another rather than offering a single uniform outlook. As a related issue, the study will consider the various ways that the engagement with these theories affects the representation of a number of features in these plays, such as the dramatisation of key historical events, the representation of exemplary figures like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and the plight of the individual in a tyrannical society, as well as their response to topical events such as the accession of James I. Such features, this study will argue, provide evidence of how this form of drama was appropriated to address the concerns of a politically disenfranchised group of writers during the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras, as well as revealing the commitment of the writers to a form of humanist dramatic authorship.

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Acknowledgments

This project has developed from interests in the early modern period, particularly neo-Senecan drama, that can be traced as far back as my undergraduate days; it is therefore fitting that this thesis should be the product of eight very happy years at Sheffield Hallam University for which I owe many thanks to a great many people. Firstly, I would like to thank Dr Matthew Steggle for the patience, enthusiasm, and generosity with which he carried out his duties as my Director of Studies. I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor, Professor Lisa Hopkins, who has always been on hand with encouragement and suggestions for profitable lines of enquiry. I am also grateful to Dr Tom Rutter, who read several chapters of the thesis and offered an abundance of incisive comments in the process, and to my internal examiner, Dr Annaliese Connolly, who also supervised my undergraduate dissertation which included a chapter on Mary Sidney's *Antonius*, and encouraged the interests that would eventually evolve into this project. I also thank my external examiner, Professor Alison Findlay, for her interest in my research and for all the helpful suggestions and encouragement she has given me.

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Finally, I would like to extend thanks to all my friends and family. My biggest thanks must be reserved for my mother and Malcolm, and, of course, for Kate; the unwavering support they have all offered me throughout the highs and lows of this project has provided me with first-hand evidence of exemplary stoicism.

Introduction

Towards a dramatic tradition

It was after Sidney's death that his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, tried to assemble a body of wits to compose drama in the proper Senecan style, to make head against the popular melodrama of the time. Great poetry should be both an art and a diversion; in a large and cultivated public like the Athenian it can be both; the shy recluses of Lady Pembroke's circle were bound to fail.¹

There was no dramatic circle surrounding the Countess of Pembroke, and the idea of reforming the English stage probably never entered her head. She would be amazed to read all the descriptions of her misguided idealism, and amazed that, for all her real literary endeavours, it is this one for which she is best remembered.²

Mary Sidney's *Antonius* (published in 1592) inaugurated a dramatic tradition.

The above extracts indicate the extent of the critical disagreements that that tradition has provoked. This study will engage with such debates and consider the ways in which the texts belonging to that tradition are connected by a common interest in certain political and philosophical axioms. This is contrary to the prevailing early twentieth century view that they were invested in an agenda to reform the public theatre. The plays in this study have frequently been grouped together under the label of 'closet drama', a term which suggests that they were written for the purpose of private reading or recital amongst an elite coterie of wits rather than performance in the commercial theatres. I will go on to suggest that this term is not an altogether accurate unifying label for these plays which are linked by more than a mere repudiation of the public theatres. The study confines itself to the texts which were composed within two decades of Mary Sidney's translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (1578), a play which was instrumental in introducing Continental neo-classical tragedy into

¹ T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber, 1963), p. 43.

² Mary Ellen Lamb, 'The Myth of the Countess of Pembroke: The Dramatic Circle', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 11 (1981), 194-202, 196.

Renaissance England.³ I will therefore focus upon the dramatic works of Mary Sidney, Samuel Daniel, Samuel Brandon, Fulke Greville, William Alexander, and Elizabeth Cary, along with Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1594) and the Roman tragedies of Ben Jonson, and emphasise the intertextual affinities between them. In this introductory chapter, I will provide an overview of the change in critical attitudes towards these plays, as well as commenting upon the origins of the dramatic tradition to which they belong and the resonance of stoicism and republicanism, theories which, this study argues, are the unifying factors for this group.

T. S. Eliot's dismissal of Mary Sidney and her fellow neo-Senecan dramatists as a group of 'shy recluses' is typical of the critical outlook that was to persist for much of the twentieth century, according to which, Sidney was spearheading a mobilised group of somewhat inept protestors at her Wilton estate who were attempting to reform the lapses in classical decorum of which the popular theatrical tragedies were allegedly guilty. Their artistic endeavour has therefore been widely regarded as a failure. The idea that these texts were united by a common anti-theatrical agenda can largely be attributed to the influence of Mary Sidney's brother, Sir Philip Sidney, whose *Apology for Poetry* (1582) has been regarded as a kind of aesthetic manifesto for the endeavours of her coterie, particularly in his criticism of the offerings of the commercial theatres which observe 'rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful Poetry' by failing to adhere to Aristotelian principles.⁴ Sidney does, however, offer qualified praise

³ The term 'closet drama' is sometimes used to denote a number of later dramas, including Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*, Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley's *The Concealed Fancies*, and the interregnum dramas of Margaret Cavendish and Thomas Killigrew, which do not fall within the scope of this study.

⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973, 1984 repr.), pp. 133-4.

for Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* (1561), a play which, in spite of being 'faulty both in place and time... is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca's style, and full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of Poesy'.⁵ Sidney's choice of *Gorboduc* is significant in relation to the dramas of Mary Sidney and those whose dramatic works she influenced. According to Andrew Hadfield, it is a part of 'a long court tradition of drama that was inherently political in seeking to advise the monarch either forcefully, or subtly'.⁶ *Gorboduc* had an explicit political interest in advising the queen to marry and produce an heir, thus providing a safeguard against the factionalism and civil discord provoked by a crisis of succession which was dramatised in the play. The idea that tragedy can be an effective means of engaging in political debate is also apparent in Mary Sidney's drama, as shown by Karen Raber's argument that by translating Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine*, she 'draws upon an emergent tradition of political writing in France'.⁷ It is not difficult to see why Sir Philip Sidney's praise of the 'notable morality' of *Gorboduc*, as well its 'well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca's style', has been aligned to the endeavours of Mary Sidney and her fellow neo-Senecan dramatists.

The apparently anti-theatrical nature of the coterie dramas has led to a tendency amongst many critics to link them through the apparent problems they pose in terms of performability. These plays have thus earned the label 'closet drama', a term which is suggestive of the private nature of any performances

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 4.

⁷ Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), p. 85.

that might have taken place within the estates of the authors and patrons of these dramas. It is therefore a form of drama that has generally been defined against the output of the commercial theatres.⁸ Karen Raber has been one of the few modern critics to preserve the idea of an antagonistic relationship between the dramas of the public theatre and the neo-Senecan coterie dramas on the grounds that Mary Sidney's *Antonie* must 'be understood to exploit a class-based repudiation of staged theatrical spectacle in order to negotiate the interest of making gender an important factor in discourses about national identity.'⁹ This is in contrast to the views of Lukas Erne who, with particular reference to Kyd's *Cornelia*, argues that the two forms of drama should be considered 'complementary rather than antagonistic in the influence they exerted.'¹⁰ Other recent critics, such as Alison Findlay, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, and Gweno Williams, have challenged the idea that many of these texts are unperformable through both theoretical and practical means, making the term 'closet drama' seem somewhat inadequate as an umbrella label for these plays.¹¹ Coburn Freer also expresses dissatisfaction with the term on the grounds that it 'suggests

⁸ The closet dramatic form is considered in relation to early modern playreading in Marta Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For more general comment upon the culture of early modern playreading, see the essays in Marta Straznicky (ed.), *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

⁹ Raber, p. 83.

¹⁰ Lukas Erne, *Beyond 'The Spanish Tragedy': A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 212.

¹¹ See, for example, Alison Findlay and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright with Gweno Williams, *Women and Dramatic Production 1550-1700* (London: Longman, 2000). For the practical approaches see the filmed productions of early modern women's plays in Alison Findlay, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright and Gweno Williams, *Women Dramatists 1550-1670: Plays in Performance* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Television, 1999) as well as Stephanie Hodgson-Wright's edition of Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2000) in which the editor is influenced by her practical experience of having directed a production of Cary's play.

willful obscurity and terminal stuffiness.’¹² It is therefore necessary to reconsider the idea that the coterie form of neo-Senecan tragedy was initiated in England as a means either of opposing the commercial theatre, or as an attempt at replacing it altogether, nor can it be defined by its failure to conform to the conventions of drama written for performance.

Some scholars have been particularly intrigued by Thomas Kyd’s apparent membership of the group after having played such a crucial role in popularising the form of tragedy which consistently appeared on the public stage with his influential play, *The Spanish Tragedy*.¹³ The presence of Kyd’s *Cornelia* in this corpus of work does provide a kind of intersection between the coterie and popular dramatic forms in early modern England, even if the significance of this work as a departure from the other items in Kyd’s oeuvre has been somewhat exaggerated.¹⁴ This intersection is also represented by Ben Jonson’s tragedies which, as I shall argue, attempt to appropriate and adapt many of the features and preoccupations of the coterie dramas to the demands of the commercial stage.

Mary Ellen Lamb’s article was one of the earliest pieces to challenge the prevailing early twentieth century view of these plays and fairly conclusively routed the notion that there was any such mobilised campaign against the commercial stage. In fact, it was more than likely that there was very little, if any, personal contact between many of the apparent participants in this ‘circle’.

¹² Coburn Freer, ‘Mary Sidney: Countess of Pembroke’ in Katharina M. Wilson (ed.), *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 481-521 (p. 484). Freer also goes on to speculate about the performativity of Mary Sidney’s *Antonius*, see pp. 485-6.

¹³ See, for example, F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p. 110 and Alexander Maclaren Witherspoon, *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1924, 1968 repr.), p. 92.

¹⁴ For a consideration of *Cornelia* in relation to Kyd’s other dramatic works and its affinities with these dramas, see Erne, pp. 203-16.

Any references to the Wilton or Pembroke circle in modern scholarship tend to be merely a convenient means of referring to the group of texts written in the neo-Senecan mode.¹⁵ As Timothy Raylor comments, we tend to ‘use an elegant geometric figure to explain a wide range of complex, often messy, social interactions. It is a useful shorthand that none of us, I suppose, takes too literally.’¹⁶ Recent critics have thus largely discounted the idea that the works in this study are the product of an organised and active literary circle. There does remain, however, some mileage in expressing the elite nature of the genre. While it is not necessarily a means of protesting against the popular theatre, the coterie status of the neo-Senecan tradition remains more apparent. This is not particularly surprising given the fact that many of the participants were either part of the aristocratic class or seeking some kind of patronage from that class. H. B. Charlton has also suggested that the form’s development from the Continental style of tragedy may account for this; he comments that the French Senecan tragic tradition from which the drama of Robert Garnier emerged was ‘almost exclusively the product of a small exclusive group, appealing to a narrow circle of scholars, without the safeguards of public will or traditional experience to hold it from the extremes of academic taste.’¹⁷ In common with the French Senecans, the English neo-Senecan tradition saw the production of a group of dramas relying upon an informed audience and thus having little need,

¹⁵ An example of this occurs in G. A. Wilkes (ed.), *The Complete Poems and Plays of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628) in Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), p. 1.

¹⁶ Timothy Raylor, ‘Newcastle’s Ghosts: Robert Payne, Ben Jonson, and the “Cavendish Circle”’ in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds), *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 92-114, p. 92. In the same volume, Judith Scherer Herz argues that “‘patronage machine” is a more apt description’ than ‘circle’ for Mary Sidney’s literary community at Wilton; see, ‘Of Circles, Friendship, and the Imperatives of Literary History’, pp. 10-23 (p. 17).

¹⁷ H. B. Charlton, *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1946, repr. by Norwood Editions, 1978), p. ciii.

or inclination, to tailor themselves to popular taste. The fact that this type of drama is influenced by classical or European sources means that it has a somewhat vexed relationship with received views of early modern popular culture. As Lamb points out, the term 'popular culture' has generally been characterised by one of at least three definitions: '(1) through an engagement in oppositional politics with mainstream groups, (2) as a simple majority of the population below the level of gentry, and (3) as participants in the traditional festive practices of an increasingly beleaguered "merrie England."'¹⁸ The fact that these dramas are largely the product of a literate and aristocratic class, and that they bypass the commercial theatre, means that they are at a remove from the popular culture of early modern England.

While Lamb's article on the Sidney 'circle' has been instrumental in rejecting the notion that these plays were the product of an anti-theatrical campaign, it has also had another effect. One of the key points in this study is that subsequent criticism has gone too far the other way and, in discounting the notion that these texts were the output of an organised circle, has largely ignored the intertextual affinities that exist between them and which emphasise the authors' engagement in a tradition of humanist dramatic authorship. This tradition is characterised by the influence of such political and philosophical axioms such as stoicism and republicanism – informed both by classical authorities, such as Seneca and Tacitus, and more contemporary theorists, such as Lipsius and Machiavelli – and the provision of a space in which to interrogate them. These plays are also

¹⁸ Mary Ellen Lamb, *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Jonson* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 1. See also, the essays in Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes (eds), *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006), Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (London: Blackwell, 1989), Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (third edition; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009) and Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (eds), *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

set during periods of political or constitutional crises and focus upon the plight of politically marginalised individuals who are forced to endure the events they are powerless to influence. These features are complemented by the influence of both the classical Senecan tradition and the more recent appropriation and adaptation of the form by Robert Garnier.

As a result of the dispersion of the texts which were previously viewed as constituting a coherent group, we now have the opportunity to reconsider its membership. If these texts are no longer united by the proposition that they are unperformable or anti-theatrical, then such performance texts as Daniel's *Philotas* and Jonson's Roman tragedies, *Sejanus His Fall* and *Catiline His Conspiracy*, can be included. The rejection of the idea that these texts are linked by their unperformability necessitates, in my view, a rejection of the term 'closet drama' as a means of grouping them together and a preference for the term 'neo-Senecan' dramas. In this study, I intend to adopt the term 'neo-Senecan' drama to denote the dramas written in this neo-classical tradition, exhibiting the influence of Garnier in particular, and offering a more decorous form of tragedy with a greater emphasis upon neo-classicist formal conventions than their counterparts on the public stage. For this reason, such theatrical dramas as *Philotas*, *Sejanus*, and *Catiline* will also be considered as neo-Senecan dramas due to their adherence to many of the neo-classical formal features and their alignment with the thematic features of the coterie dramas.

The purpose of this study is therefore to view the neo-Senecan texts as a group, an outlook rarely - if ever - adopted at any length since Witherspoon's *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama*, and argue that the intertextual affinities that exist between the texts are not, as has previously been

argued, rooted in any anti-theatrical agenda, but instead in a common desire to explore such prominent political and philosophical outlooks as republicanism and stoicism, in particular the utility of their application in the political sphere. This study does not, however, attempt to argue that there is a coherent and unified outlook in the various texts' engagement with these axioms, but rather that the engagement is in the spirit of debate, rather than endorsing a single viewpoint. In this sense, I will argue that stoicism and republicanism can be viewed as the major factors which allow these texts to be viewed as a coherent and intertextual group which developed in a tradition of humanist dramatic authorship.

Seneca in Renaissance Britain

In order to view this tradition of dramatic writings in their proper cultural context, it is necessary to consider the influence of Seneca's works upon the literary climate of the British Isles during the Renaissance era. Polonius's comment in *Hamlet* (1600) that, for the troupe of players, 'Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light'¹⁹ hints at the extent to which Seneca was considered a 'serious' and revered classical dramatist in the early modern period and metonymic of high or 'heavy' tragedy. This view is endorsed by T. S. Eliot, according to whom 'No author exercised a wider or deeper influence upon the Elizabethan mind or upon the Elizabethan form of tragedy than did Seneca' and 'no Latin author was more highly esteemed'.²⁰ The reverence with which

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (II.ii.396-7) ed. by Harold Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1989).

²⁰ Eliot, pp. 11-12. Several important, though increasingly dated, studies have assessed the influence of Seneca upon the tragic genre in Renaissance England; these include John W. Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1893); F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Haskell House, 1966); H. B. Charlton, *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1946,

Seneca's works were greeted is largely exemplified by his status as a staple of the classical curriculum. It is through the academic tradition that the Senecan influence permeated English culture during the mid 1500s. Various translations of Senecan plays appeared between 1559 and 1567 and were published together as *Tenne Tragedies* in 1581 edited by Thomas Newton.²¹ It is, however, important to note that the appearance of Seneca's tragedies in the vernacular does not necessarily mark the watershed moment for his reception in England that one might assume; the prominence of his work on the curriculum and the provision of lessons in Latin meant that there was little need for Seneca's works to appear in English. Joel Davis explains that Seneca's moral essays and epistles were the last of his works to be translated into English as 'there was simply no demand for translations of Seneca's moral philosophy because most educated Englishmen read Seneca's moral philosophy in the Latin in grammar school.'²²

The appearance of Senecan texts in the vernacular was accompanied by the emergence of a number of original plays written in the Senecan tradition; these included *Gorboduc* and the collaborative play, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587), both of which are indicative of the influence Seneca was beginning to exert upon Renaissance drama. These dramas also appeared alongside a number of Latin imitations of Seneca which emerged in England and Scotland, including George Buchanan's *Jepthes* (1578) and Thomas Legge's *Ricardus Tertius* (1579). A. J. Boyle argues that the appearance of the collected translations in 1581, shortly after the opening of the public theatres, 'were both index and

repr. by Norwood Editions, 1978); Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

²¹ *Seneca his Tenne Tragedies, translated into Englysh* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1581).

²² Joel Davis, *Renaissance Neostoicism and the Sidney Family Literary Discourse*, unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Oregon, August 1999), p. 15.

product of a theatrical ideology in which Seneca held a primary position.²³ By the 1580s, however, it seems that the Senecan influence had bypassed these academic precedents and had begun to assume a new incarnation on the popular stage rooted heavily in the Italianate style of Senecan drama which, according to Raber, 'was bloody, grandiloquent, complex in plot and as enthusiastic about action (if only reported at second hand) as about long didactic speeches' and 'reflected, in the eyes of Renaissance Englishmen, little or no concern for proper civility, compatible with English stereotypes of the Italian temperament.'²⁴ Nevertheless, its affront to 'proper civility' did not hinder the influence that the Italianate tradition would exercise over the tragedies of the popular theatre. The coterie dramas upon which this study focuses were, on the other hand, influenced by a form of dramatic writing which had emerged in France and was popularised, as we have already seen, by Robert Garnier. Eliot argues that there were three distinct routes through which Seneca's influence upon English drama manifested itself:

(1) the popular Elizabethan tragedy; (2) the 'Senecal' drama, pseudo-classical, composed by and for a small and select body of persons not closely in touch or in sympathy with the popular drama of the day, and composed largely in protest against the defects and monstrosities of that drama; (3) the two Roman tragedies of Ben Jonson, which appear to belong between the two opposed classes, to constitute an attempt, by an active practising playwright, to improve the form of popular drama by the example of Seneca; not by slavish imitation but by adaptation, to make of popular drama a finished work of art.²⁵

While one of the aims of this study is to argue that the distinctions applied by Eliot are not quite so clearly defined, it is necessary to note that the popular theatre and the so-called 'Senecals' can be distinguished by the differing

²³ A. J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 141.

²⁴ Raber, p. 81.

²⁵ Eliot, pp. 25-6.

European traditions they appropriate.

The typical features of the tradition inaugurated by Garnier include *sententiae*, long rhetorical speeches and apostrophe, practically no action, *stichomythia*, a chorus, and the appearance of a messenger, or *Nuntius*, in order to fill in the gaps left by the lack of action. This is therefore a type of drama that privileges the reactions of characters to the events that are taking place over the portrayal of the actual events themselves. The neo-Senecan dramas are thus the crystallisation of a series of crucial developments in the tragic form from the classical age through to the Renaissance era. However, the influence of classical culture is not manifested in formal features alone; the next two sections will discuss the development of the philosophies of stoicism and republicanism which, as I will go on to argue, exerted a profound influence upon this group of plays.

Stoicism

Then, each with one incision of the blade, he and his wife cut their arms. But Seneca's aged body, lean from austere living, released the blood too slowly. So he also severed the veins in his ankles and behind his knees. Exhausted by severe pain, he was afraid of weakening his wife's endurance by betraying his agony - or of losing his self-possession at the sight of her sufferings. So he asked to go into another bedroom. But even in his last moments his eloquence remained. Summoning secretaries, he dictated a dissertation...

Finally he was placed in a bath of warm water. He sprinkled a little of it on the attendant slaves, commenting that this was his libation to Jupiter. Then he was carried into a vapour-bath, where he suffocated. His cremation was without ceremony, in accordance with his own instructions about his death -- written at the height of his wealth and power.

(Tacitus, *Annals*, XV).²⁶

Bilioso: ... Marry, I remember one Seneca, Lucius Annaeus Seneca.

²⁶ Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, translated by Michael Grant (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956, repr. 1974), pp. 376-7.

Pietro: Out upon him! He writ of temperance and fortitude, yet lived like a voluptuous epicure and died like an effeminate coward.
(John Marston, *The Malcontent*, III.i.24-8).²⁷

Although approaching the subject from different points of view, both of the above extracts are evidence of the extent to which Seneca was identified with stoic philosophy and the varying degrees to which his outlook was endorsed. Tacitus' account of Seneca's suicide, acting upon the orders of Nero, served to cement his claims to exemplarity, particularly in the Renaissance era. It also emphasises his stoic fortitude and his wish that his followers should adhere to 'the pattern of my life'²⁸ reveals a self-conscious striving to become an exemplary stoic. However, the positive image of Seneca was not universally endorsed, as the extract from Marston's play shows. The origins of such views lie in the writings of Dio Cassius, whose critique of Seneca provoked Montaigne to actively refute the claims that he was 'avaricious, usurious, ambitious, cowardly, sensual, and a false pretender to the title of philosopher'.²⁹ We shall see later in this section that the philosophy of stoicism also received a mixed reception during the late Elizabethan and, in particular, the early Jacobean period when it had developed its vogue following amongst certain English courtiers.

Proponents of stoicism during the sixteenth century struggled with the question of how compatible this essentially pagan outlook was with Christianity. This problem was not new. Seneca, in particular, had become the lynchpin in many of these debates; in the fourteenth century, Petrarch had done much to promote

²⁷ John Marston, *'The Malcontent' and Other Plays*, ed. Keith Sturgess (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁸ Tacitus, XV, p. 376.

²⁹ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (II, 32), translated by J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 228.

the adaptability of a Senecan outlook with Christianity in his *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (1366), often misattributed to Seneca himself. There was also the case of the apparent correspondence between Seneca and St Paul which, as Gordon Braden comments, maintained a ‘tenacious hold on Christian credibility’ from the fourth century despite the fact that it turned out to be a forgery.³⁰ In spite of these attempts at asserting the affinities of Christianity and stoicism, the outlook was still greeted with a degree of ambivalence. As Sarah Hutton points out, an early modern observer could find much that was admirable in the teachings of the stoics, such as ‘their moral seriousness and apparent piety, their recommendation of forbearance in the face of adversity, their contempt of worldly goods, their asceticism’ and their observation of such virtues as ‘prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude’.³¹ Other elements, such as the acceptability of suicide and the tendencies of the stoics towards apathy and fatalism had to be ‘conveniently glossed over.’³² However, there were many who felt compelled to do more than simply ‘gloss over’ these details. James Hankins summarises some of the ways in which various figures confronted these problems:

Previous humanists, aware of the conflict between pagan and Christian values, try either (like Valla) to recast current Christianity in the light of pagan values; or (like Ficino) to minimize the differences between high pagan and Christian theology; or (like Bruni) to make a sharp distinction between political and religious values, assigning to each its proper space.³³

The need to reconcile the differences between traditional stoicism and

³⁰ Braden, p. 70.

³¹ Sarah Hutton, ‘Platonism, Stoicism, Scepticism, Classical Imitation’, in Michael Hattaway (ed.), *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000, 2003 reprint), pp. 44-57 (p. 53).

³² Ibid.

³³ James Hankins, ‘Humanism and the origins of modern political thought’ in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 118-41 (p. 134).

Christianity resulted, broadly speaking, in the development of neo-stoicism. Just as the Renaissance incarnation of republicanism was, as we shall see, influenced by contemporaries such as Niccolò Machiavelli as well as the traditional antique sources, neo-stoicism was also indebted to both classic and contemporary authorities. Arguably the most important figure in the development of Renaissance neo-stoicism was the Flemish philosopher Justus Lipsius, whose works exerted considerable influence upon the early modern exponents of stoicism, particularly through his efforts to make it palatable to a Christian audience.³⁴ Lipsius also had an important effect upon the rise of stoicism on the continent by influencing figures such as Hubert Languet and Philippe du Plessis-Mornay. Although Sidney had met Lipsius, it was most likely that his French mentors, Languet and Mornay, exerted the shaping influence upon the development of his stoic outlook.³⁵ Lipsius's brand of stoicism also set a precedent for the addition of a political edge to the neo-stoic outlook. *De Constantia*, a dialogue in which a character known as Lipsius is dissuaded from fleeing the troubles caused by the wars in the Low Countries, is firmly contextualised against the backdrop of the political events taking place. Similarly Mornay's *Discourse of Life and Death* presents a decidedly negative portrait of the court as a den of corruption. These examples tie in with the kind of explicit criticism in the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, in which the French royal family are denounced as the disciples of Machiavelli whose 'evil arts, vicious

³⁴ For a summary of the major works of Lipsius and their influence upon the development of neo-stoicism, see Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For comment upon Lipsius's influence in early modern England, see Adriana McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584-1650* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). For a more general overview of the influence of stoicism upon early modern literature see Gilles D. Monsarrat, *Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature* (Paris: Didier-Érudition, 1984).

³⁵ For Sidney's connection to Languet and Mornay see, for example, Robert Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

counsels, and false and pestiferous doctrines' are responsible for the 'calamities and destruction in Gaul'.³⁶ The anti-Machiavellian rhetoric also aligns it with the Huguenot Innocent Gentillet's *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner* (1576). Guillaume du Vair's *La Philosophie Morale des Stoïques* (translated into English as *The Moral Philosophy of the Stoicks* in 1598) also applied stoic philosophy to the political situation in France. In all these cases, stoicism is appropriated as a means of negotiating specifically Protestant interests with Lipsius and the continental figures he influenced using it to respond to the events they were witnessing in their countries which were being ravaged by religious wars.³⁷ It has even been suggested that there are specific links between the development of neo-stoicism and Protestantism. As Rudolph Kirk argues, the 'translation of stoic works seemed to accompany and follow the Reformation'.³⁸ This was no doubt part of its appeal to Sidney and his militant Protestant colleagues.

One of the major consequences of the emergence of neo-stoicism was the reassessment of certain classical sources resulting, most notably, in the rising popularity of Tacitus. This was due, in large part, to the influence of Lipsius who had not only extolled the virtues of Tacitus but had also prepared what had become the definitive edition of his works in 1574. There were also more practical reasons for Tacitus' rise to increased prominence. David Norbrook comments upon the shifts in alignment to certain classical sources:

Throughout Europe, in the later sixteenth century, writers were turning

³⁶ George Garnett (ed.), *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos or, Concerning the Legitimate Power of a Prince Over the People, and of the People Over a Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 8.

³⁷ It must be noted, however, that the appeal of stoicism was not exclusively Protestant; the recusant Thomas Lodge, for example, had undertaken the first English translation of Seneca's complete prose works.

³⁸ Rudolph Kirk (ed.), *Two Books of Constancie* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1939), p. 21.

away from the elaborate 'Ciceronian' style, a style associated with public debate and oratory, and turning to 'silver Latin' writers like Seneca and Tacitus. These men were writing at a time when the Senate had lost its real political power and important decisions were taken in private by the emperor and his associates. Thus the 'Tacitist' movement had marked, though ambiguous, political connotations.³⁹

The prominence of the Ciceronian style was thus replaced by that which Degory Wheare described as 'a new, concise and sententious way of Writing'.⁴⁰ From this point of view, Tacitus became particularly popular during the late sixteenth century, especially amongst courtiers like Sidney and those belonging to the Essexian faction.⁴¹ Gordon Braden argues that for his Roman contemporaries, Tacitus provides a vision of a 'specifically aristocratic hell, structured by the aristocratic assumption that individual character and fate are the basic components of history... The apocalypse that seems to impend is in part a very real history, but something more inward as well: a crisis of the aristocratic imagination.'⁴² For Braden, this suggests the somewhat limited scope of Tacitus' appeal, having been 'written from the perspective of a disenfranchised

³⁹ David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 171-2.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Alan T. Bradford 'Stuart Absolutism and the "Utility" of Tacitus', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46: 2 (1983), 127-55, 127.

⁴¹ Morris W. Croll argues that the "cult of Tacitus" lasted from 1575-1650, see Morris W. Croll, 'Muret and the History of "Attic Prose"', pp. 107-62 in J. Max Patrick et al (eds), *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm: Essays by Morris W. Croll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 151. For a useful summary of the popularity of Tacitus and other classical writers based upon the number of editions produced in fifty year periods, see Peter Burke, 'A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700', *History and Theory*, 5: 2 (1966), 135-52. Other important material on the rise of Tacitism during the Jacobean era can be found in J. M. H. Salmon, 'Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50: 2 (1989), 199-225; and Alan T. Bradford 'Stuart Absolutism and the "Utility" of Tacitus', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46: 2 (1983), 127-55. The influence of stoicism upon Elizabethan political writing is also considered in F. J. Levy, 'Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginning of Politic History in England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50: 1 (1987), 1-34. Colin Burrow, however, has warned against the dangers of over-generalising such affinities, arguing that there 'is a common tendency to assume that if a given person can be linked to a particular network or affinity, they therefore share the ideas or intellectual concerns of that network - that, as it were, all clients of the Earl of Essex read Tacitus by candlelight, or all the books dedicated to the Earl of Southampton had a Catholic colour'; see Colin Burrow, 'Reading Tudor Writing Politically: The case of 2 Henry IV', *Yearbook of English Studies* 38: 1/2 (2008), 234-50 (p. 238).

⁴² Braden, p. 9.

but still ambitious upper class.’⁴³ The appeal of Tacitus in early modern England was focused upon a similar niche audience. The militant Protestant faction held socially elevated, yet politically disenfranchised positions in the Elizabethan political hierarchy. Hopes that the situation would change with the accession of James I were soon to be dashed. Much optimism was provoked by such signs as James’s correspondence with Essex and his rehabilitation and redeployment into political life of former Essex supporters, including the Earl of Southampton. However, Cecil’s ability to secure the key position of influence in James’s government meant that the situation remained largely unchanged from how it had been during the final years of Elizabeth’s reign. This meant that the militant Protestants remained the politically disenfranchised class they had been during the previous reign. It is in this climate that the appeal of Tacitus became most apparent with its practical examples of how to survive as a politically powerless individual under a tyrannical system. This was also one of the criticisms levelled at neo-stoicism by its detractors: its proponents were not living in a tyrannical state meaning its relevance was somewhat doubtful. James himself had criticised the stoics in *Basilicon Doron* (1599), dismissing the ‘Stoicke insensible stupiditie, wherewith many in our dayes, preassing to winne honour, in imitating that ancient sect, by their inconstant behaviour in their owne lives, belie their profession.’⁴⁴ This official criticism of neo-stoicism further emphasised its status as a marginal political outlook.

Neo-stoicism had therefore gained a following from a niche group of courtiers in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras. Its popularity amongst members

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ James VI and I, *Basilicon Doron* in *Selected Writings*, p. 245. In the 1599 edition James’s attack took on a far more personal dimension with a reference to ‘that proud inconstant LIPSIUS’. A summary of some of the early Stuart attacks on the neo-stoics can be found in Salmon, 222-5.

of the Sidney and Essex circles ensures it would have been familiar to the writers of the neo-Senecan dramas. Although formally the tragedies are largely indebted to the dramatic writings of Seneca, their widespread interests in the plight of the individual in a corrupt political sphere shows that, politically and morally, their outlooks were more influenced by the writings of Tacitus. In his important article on the subject, J. M. H. Salmon has argued that the influences of Seneca and Tacitus were more far more complementary than had previously been acknowledged:

Tacitus politicized Senecan philosophy and gave it a cynical bent, while Seneca strengthened the lessons, already suggested in Tacitus's history of Roman tyranny and civil war, that private prudence and withdrawal were the best politics.⁴⁵

This shows the extent to which the outlooks of the two classical authorities could be blended to complementary effect. Joel Davis has, in fact, labelled Mary Sidney's *Antonius* a 'neo-Tacitean' tragedy.⁴⁶ To the extent that they scrutinise the efficacy of stoicism as a response to political tyranny, the majority of the plays in this study can also be regarded as Tacitean in this respect. However, this is also the source of some of the plays' ambivalence towards this political outlook. The stoic emphasis upon self-sovereignty emerges as little more than a compensatory achievement when compared to the political impotence of many of its practitioners. As Gordon Braden observes, 'Stoicism is not finally a philosophy of political resistance. The essential Stoic strategy for dealing with a tyrant is not interference but indifference.'⁴⁷ This leads many of the plays, with varying degrees of explicitness, to question the practical utility of the stoic outlook as a means of dealing with the harsh realities of political tyranny. In

⁴⁵ Salmon, 224.

⁴⁶ Davis, p. 179.

⁴⁷ Braden, p. 17.

Kyd's *Cornelia*, for example, the stoicism of such characters as Cornelia, Cicero, and even Caesar himself, is offset by the pro-active anti-tyrannical resistance advocated by Brutus and Cassius. This puts it somewhat at odds with that other branch of classical humanism that was beginning to exert influence upon the contemporary political discourse: republicanism.

Republicanism

If republicanism stood for any clear and coherent doctrine in late sixteenth-century England, it was the intellectual conviction that it was necessary to control the powers of the crown by establishing a means of ensuring that a coterie of virtuous advisers and servants would always have the constitutional right to counsel the monarch, and so influence and control his or her actions with the limits of the law.⁴⁸

As Andrew Hadfield's definition suggests, the term 'republicanism', if one were to literally interpret it in relation to its translation of the Latin *res publica* - a 'public thing' - is something of a misnomer when used to describe that particular strain of early modern political theory. The general public themselves were largely excluded from any kind of constitutional process the Renaissance republicans had in mind. This was therefore not a strain of republicanism which prioritised the provision of any scope for public participation in a democratic process. Christopher Hill has argued that if there was a coherent outlook in the period towards public involvement it was that 'democracy was a bad thing' and the public at large were perceived as 'fickle, unstable, incapable of rational thought'.⁴⁹ They were frequently realised as Hydra, the many-headed monster, and were thus an object of fear and derision, as is the case in Shakespeare's

⁴⁸ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 17. Hadfield's book provides a useful overview of republicanism in early modern England; see, in particular, pp. 17-95.

⁴⁹ Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in 17th Century England* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1974), p. 181.

Coriolanus. In his *Discourses*, Niccolò Machiavelli summed up many fears held by Renaissance observers that ‘*Democracy* is without difficulty converted into *Anarchy*.’⁵⁰ Such fears and reservations about allowing the public to influence the processes of government are underlined by the dilemma faced by Achmat, the virtuous courtier in Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha*, when he witnesses the popular revolt caused by the death of Mustapha. Initially he questions why he should ‘helpe to stay the Peoples rage’, before asking, ‘Shall man the damme, and grave of Crownes,/ With mutenie, pull sacred Sceptres downe?’⁵¹ Achmat’s dilemma is one shared by many Renaissance courtiers and political theorists; although he has some sympathy with the aims of the public, he cannot endorse the mentality and methods of the mob.

Patrick Cheney argues that the study of Renaissance republicanism is a relatively new area of scholarship which can be traced back only as far as the 1970s and that only within the last two decades has it significantly emerged in relation to Renaissance literature.⁵² However, as I have hinted above, republicanism as an early modern observer would understand it was a markedly different concept to that which a modern viewer would understand. Patrick Collinson applied the somewhat oxymoronic term, ‘monarchical republic’, to the Renaissance incarnation of this axiom and the form of government presiding over England.⁵³ Although Collinson argues against J. G. A. Pocock’s view that

⁵⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli *The Discourses*, ed. by Bernard Crick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 1.2, p. 106.

⁵¹ Fulke Greville, *Mustapha* (5.3.90-106) in G. A. Wilkes (ed.), *The Complete Poems and Plays of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628)*, 2 vols. vol. 1 (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), pp. 210-97.

⁵² Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 3-4.

⁵³ Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambleton Press, 1994), pp. 31-57. For further discussions of the issues raised by this essay, see John F. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Tudor England could not be described as ‘a *polis* or its inhabitants citizens’⁵⁴, it must be noted that the strain of republicanism that influences the dramas in this study sees no major policy-making role for the general public.⁵⁵ The population at large are frequently represented by the plays’ choruses, in particular those in Samuel Daniel’s *Philotas*, in which their exclusion from the political processes is advanced from their first appearance. The Chorus here relegate themselves to the status of passive ‘Spectators’, able to do little more than ‘censure’ the actions of the ‘great men’.⁵⁶ In this kind of context, republicanism refers more to a system of limited monarchy with increased participation from an elite intelligentsia of advisors curbing the absolute power of the monarch. The reaction to the prospect of Elizabeth I’s potential marriage to François, duc d’Alençon in 1579, is indicative of the way in which the printed text could be appropriated as a means of communicating the necessary advice to the monarch. The two most notable examples of this are John Stubbs’s text, *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*, and Sir Philip Sidney’s ‘Letter to Queen Elizabeth’. The impact of these texts is indicated by the punishments exacted upon the authors for their interventions in the affair; in the case of the former, this took the form of the public amputation of his right hand and in the case of the latter, the less severe punishment of short-term exile from the court. However, H. R. Woudhuysen points out that there may have been a voluntary element to his exile from the court; the fact that he was not punished for *A Letter* or his tussle with Oxford

⁵⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 354.

⁵⁵ In addition to Collinson and Pocock, the development of early modern republicanism is also discussed in Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) and Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁶ Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Philotas* (1.399-402) ed. by Laurence Michel. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949).

suggests he may have 'chosen to withdraw from public and political life and to pursue his writing career'.⁵⁷ That the neo-Senecan dramas in this study can be considered alongside such interventions in court politics is suggested even by a cursory consideration of some of the authors who adopted the form, including members of the aristocracy, such as Mary Sidney and Elizabeth Cary, and courtiers such as Fulke Greville and William Alexander - for both of whom a literary career would always be subordinate to their political roles. Also present in the group are those who frequently engaged their literary works for advisory and didactic purposes such as Samuel Daniel and Ben Jonson; the recognised topical resonance of these authors' works is suggested by the appearance of both of them before the Privy Council.

It is not just through these overtly political channels that the influence of republicanism manifests itself in Renaissance literature. In recent years, a number of critical works have focused upon the way in which theories of republicanism permeate many literary works, including book-length studies on such authors as Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson.⁵⁸ My approach to the authors in this study is strongly influenced by these recent studies, particularly the development of the idea of 'republican authorship', which Cheney defines as one in which an author's 'literary works vigorously engage classical Roman and early modern European republican writing, both historical and literary.'⁵⁹ Hadfield argues that literary republicanism would usually exhibit a number of distinct features, including

⁵⁷ H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Sidney, Sir Philip (1554–1586)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25522>>, accessed 8 April 2011.

⁵⁸ See, respectively, Hadfield (2005); Cheney (2009); and Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998).

⁵⁹ Cheney, p. 188.

concern for the establishment and maintenance of a civic culture; hatred of tyrannical rule; suspicion of hereditary succession; belief that the ruler is really a servant of the people, whatever he or she might think; interest in political assassination; an awareness of the key features of the history of the Roman republic and a desire to show that they have widespread significance and application.⁶⁰

The interest in republicanism exhibited by many of the neo-Senecan authors means that it is no coincidence that Rome should emerge as the most frequently used location; the choice of temporal setting during crucial stages of the progress of the Roman empire from republic to imperial rule, encompassing such events as the assassination of Julius Caesar and the collapse of the rule by the triumvirate and subsequent acquisition of absolute power by Octavius Caesar, also proves significant.

While, as I have previously pointed out and will later elaborate upon, many of the dramas in this study were not overly concerned about the ‘establishment and maintenance of a civic culture’, they do evidence many of the features listed by Hadfield. As I have already suggested, the use of the chorus device is a means of providing the view of the *vox populi*, a point represented by the frequently interchangeable composition of the chorus in some of the plays; in Mary Sidney’s *Antonius*, for example, the chorus of the fourth act changes from a chorus of citizens to one of Roman soldiers, while the chorus in Greville’s *Mustapha* changes at the end of each act as a means of encompassing as broad a view of the society as possible. Despite their prevalence in these texts, the general public still remain marginalised as disengaged observers, able to do little more than comment upon the events they witness. Their role of passive observer means that, although they have no part in the policy-making process, there is always some provision for their viewpoint to be voiced. Their emphasis, and

⁶⁰ Hadfield, p. 73.

that of many of the major characters, upon such premises as the defence of liberty suggests their interest in a kind of *realpolitik* rather than alignment to any individual political ethos.

The preoccupation with the defence of liberty coalesces closely with the anti-tyrannical rhetoric and outlook adopted by the plays in this study. The three Garnier plays – two of which were translated in Renaissance England, and the other, *Porcie*, projected by Kyd – are all set at crucial times during the development of the Roman empire. As Christine M. Hill and Mary G. Morrison point out, each of the plays in Garnier's Roman trilogy – *Cornélie* (1573), *Porcie* (1568), and *Marc Antoine* – 'revolve around three historic battles: Pharsalus, the defeat of Pompey in 48 B.C., Philippi, the defeat of Brutus and Cassius in 42 B.C., and Actium, the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C., and these are battles which decided the fate of the Roman world.'⁶¹ The battles of Pharsalus, Philippi, and Actium all moved Rome's republic another step closer to absolutism and therefore represent critical moments in Rome's history which signal dire consequences for those who uphold a republican outlook. In *Cornélie*, translated by Kyd as *Cornelia*, characters such as Cornelia, Cicero, Brutus, and Cassius all lament the loss of liberty they predict will occur as Julius Caesar advances the state closer to absolutism, while *Marc Antoine*, translated by Mary Sidney as *Antonius*, characterises Octavius as a rigorous ruler whose zealous ambition is to safeguard his power, to achieve which end he will clearly not be averse to using brutal measures.

The interest in tyranny is also evidenced through the ways many of the characters in the neo-Senecan dramas are forced to adapt in order to survive

⁶¹ Christine M. Hill and Mary G. Morrison, Introduction to Robert Garnier, *Two Tragedies: 'Hippolyte' and 'Marc Antoine'* (London: The Athlone Press, 1975), pp. 3-4.

under an oppressive regime. Such is the case in Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*, Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham*, and Ben Jonson's Roman tragedies. This feature also inaugurates an interest in tyrannicide and debates about the ethical dimensions of deposing, and even killing, an unfit ruler, as is seen in Kyd's *Cornelia* through the discourse between Brutus and Cassius. The preoccupation with tyranny is also coupled with a mistrust of monarchy and hereditary rule. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli explained the potential ways in which a 'Principality easily becomes Tyranny':

But when at a later stage they began to make the prince hereditary instead of electing him, his heirs soon began to degenerate as compared with their ancestors, and, forsaking virtuous deeds, considered that princes have nought else to do but to surpass other men in extravagance, lasciviousness, and every other form of licentiousness. With the result that the prince came to be hated, and, since he was hated, came to be afraid, and from fear soon passed to offensive action, which quickly brought about a tyranny.⁶²

Such premises are more than likely at the root of Brutus and Cassius' fear of Julius Caesar adopting monarchical titles. William Alexander's early tragedies, *Darius* and *Croesus*, also portray the kings falling prey to such vices as pride and extravagance respectively which prove to be their undoing in both cases.

While the plays of Greville and Alexander do not oppose the system of monarchy itself, they do expose many of the dangers associated with it and assert the necessity for monarchical rule to be tempered with the input of advisers. Greville's *Mustapha* and Jonson's *Sejanus*, in particular, are both interested in the role of counsellors and the potential for good and bad advisers to be locked in a conflict to gain the greater influence over the ruler. In the same way, William Alexander's *Croesus* sees the protagonist's fatal flaw as his refusal to listen to the advice of Solon. Greville's plays also expose one of the

⁶² Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 1.2, pp. 106-7.

key flaws in the system of hereditary monarchy. While *Mustapha* explores the dire consequences of allowing Soliman's fear of displacement by his son to develop, *Alaham* explores the realisation of it with the son's usurpation of his father's throne and his subsequent murder. William Alexander's *The Alexandraean Tragedy* also explores one of the major problems associated with the system of monarchy - the possibility that the monarch will die without leaving an heir.

That which Markku Peltonen argues is the 'limited but undoubted impact'⁶³ classical Republicanism had upon English culture therefore manifests itself significantly in the texts in this group. The subsequent chapters will explore the ways in which such features as the concentration upon key moments in the history of the Roman and Macedonian empires, as well as the dramatisation of numerous episodes from other cultures involving crises of statecraft, examine and interrogate many questions relating to ideas of kingship and authority. These include debates surrounding the ethics of political assassination and the potential ways in which important and influential citizens may function under a tyrant's rule. The portrayal of the consequences of rash and ill-advised ventures of rulers also serves to reflect the exasperation of a coterie of advisers who had begun to feel increasingly marginalised as a result of the power struggles and factional in-fighting in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean courts. I will also argue that the plays provide evidence of the reassessment of roles that members of this coterie were forced to undertake as a result of the accession of James I and the subsequent changes in court customs and practice. Widening the field to include Ben Jonson's tragedies, I will show how the neo-Senecan form was

⁶³ Peltonen, pp. 11-12.

appropriated to advance contrasting views on these issues and therefore emerge as a dramatic form which encouraged a dialogue on the subjects rather than providing a single and coherent outlook. It is in such ways that these dramas were influenced by, and contributed to, the emerging culture of republicanism.

The influence of republicanism upon these dramas also means that they emphasise the political consequences of the events taking place, which indicates a shift away from the idea of tragedy as a genre which is concerned primarily with the fall of a great individual. J. W. Lever argues that the neo-Senecan tragedies – particularly those of Daniel, Greville, and Alexander – can be grouped together with the trend of popular drama he identifies as the ‘tragedy of state.’ These plays represent ‘modes of tragedy unrelated to Aristotle’s familiar definitions’ and contain protagonists who

may have their faults of deficiency or excess; but the fundamental flaw is not in them but in the world they inhabit and the social order it upholds, and likewise, by projection, in the cosmic state of shifting arbitrary phenomena called ‘Fortune’. For the most part, indeed, we are not greatly concerned with the characters as individuals. Generally their emotional relationships and psychological make-up are sketched in broad outlines which hardly call for a close-range scrutiny. What really matters is the quality of their response to intolerable situations. This is a drama of adversity and stance, not of character and destiny.⁶⁴

This is not to say that these plays show no interest whatsoever in the plight of the individual; rather, the characters are defined by the position within the body politic and their actions are viewed in terms of their impact upon the state.

These plays therefore tend to focus upon either ambitious tyrants or ineffectual rulers and have amongst the supporting cast amoral counsellors, virtuous yet often ill-fated advisors, and the general public as represented by the chorus.

These plays thus present a range of characters with varying degrees of personal

⁶⁴ J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 10.

autonomy, usually relative to their place within the body politic. The fact that most of these plays were generally at a remove from the public theatres, coupled with the distinct probability that many of them were either performed or read aloud in the aristocratic households of the authors or their patrons, places them in relation to domestic as well as political drama. Karen Raber argues that this lends the plays an 'equivocal status', resulting in a genre that 'implicitly analyzes the relationship between public and private or domestically-based models of writing, between the court and the theater, between the aristocracy and the greater public – and, given the gendering of these categories, between women and men.'⁶⁵ The political and the domestic are both realms in which the early modern individual becomes a subject; in both spaces they are defined by their status within a strict hierarchy.

The analyses of power provided by these plays make it necessary to consider the positions of the authors within that hierarchy and in the relations between monarch and subject, particularly on a discursive level. It is now firmly established that the discursive nature of these power relations is embodied most explicitly by the culture of iconography.⁶⁶ Iconography has come to be defined as the process whereby a certain image (or images) of the monarch is promulgated over which the monarch may not always have had control, leading to what Susan Frye has revealed to be a culture of competition over the representation of the monarch. This process resulted in Elizabeth becoming a

⁶⁵ Raber, p. 14.

⁶⁶ Some of the most important studies on this subject include Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983).

‘discursive agent.’⁶⁷ Frye also argues that it is difficult to determine

whether Elizabeth was consciously a partner in the process of self-representation and competition, but she did believe in the unshakeable relation between the words of the monarch and the monarch herself. That is, she felt that monarchs created themselves through language and the images that language created in the audience.⁶⁸

Elizabeth was therefore caught up in a complex process in which her image as queen was advanced, making her, by turns, the authoritative centre and the passive object of discourse. Images of Elizabeth as Gloriana, the virgin queen, a phoenix, or as a virago may have strengthened Elizabeth’s power, but they could also be employed to serve the personal agenda of those who were communicating them. Like Elizabeth, James I was also, in the words of Jonathan Goldberg, the ‘articulate and visible center’ of a society in which the iconographic image of the monarch was promulgated in the writings of his subjects, resulting in the development of a strategy of ‘discursive imposition’ by James,⁶⁹ or, as Marcus has labelled it, ‘an absolutism of the text.’⁷⁰ This also means that James was reliant upon his propagandists circulating images of him as Apollo, Augustus, or Solomon, but was also vulnerable to them being refashioned or reworked by his subjects; the pithy remark made by Henry IV of France that he was ‘Solomon, the son of David’, which alludes to both his public image and his doubtful parentage, is a prime example of this.⁷¹ The authors studied in this thesis were writing in a culture in which discourse was of paramount importance to the power relations between author and subject; within such a framework, the appropriation of exemplary historical figures, often

⁶⁷ Frye, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. xi and 20.

⁷⁰ Marcus, p. 113.

⁷¹ Quoted in William L. McElwee, *The Wisest Fool in Christendom: The Reign of James I and VI* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 39.

associated with the monarch, gains increased significance and engages in the discursive iconography of the monarch.

I have thus outlined some of the key contexts which will emerge throughout this thesis and influence my readings of the individual plays. The first chapter will examine Mary's Sidney's *Antonius* and discuss how it establishes the precedent for the neo-Senecan genre as a means of interrogating the humanist axioms of republicanism and stoicism and the extent to which they can be considered as viable approaches to the problems faced by the characters in the play. *Antonius* is also notable for initiating many of the questions and debates which would be raised in the other neo-Senecan dramas such as the justification of resisting tyranny, the relative values of the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, and the problems encountered by a woman attempting to engage in politics.

Chapter Two focuses upon three plays which are directly influenced by Mary Sidney's translation. Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra* (1594) is a companion piece to Mary Sidney's play, Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1593-4) follows her precedent by translating Garnier, and Samuel Brandon's *Octavia* (1598) revisits the Antony and Cleopatra story from the perspective of Antony's spurned wife. The chapter will argue that the plays all advance models of female exemplarity which tie in with the kind of consolatory literature written by Brandon, Daniel, and Fulke Greville. I will contend that by doing so, the dramas by Daniel and Brandon avoid many of the awkward issues raised in Mary Sidney's play and that all three expose the difficulty in making stoicism a viable consolatory philosophy in the face of the vicissitudes of political and domestic life.

The third chapter examines Fulke Greville's two extant tragedies, *Mustapha*

and *Alaham* (1595-1600), both a departure from the emergent tradition due to their non-Roman setting. Instead, Greville dramatises two recent historical events taking place in the Ottoman Empire and the Persian Gulf respectively. Both these plays dramatise moments at which the state is beset by the problems caused by the plotting of politically ambitious individuals who precipitate a period of extreme instability. These moments of crisis allow Greville to interrogate his own political leanings as a cautious monarchist, and also to scrutinise the efficacy of his particular brand of stoicism as a means of responding to these situations.

Also departing from the Roman setting are the three plays which are the subject of Chapter Four, William Alexander's *Darius* (1603) and *The Alexandrian Tragedy* (1605), and Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* (1604). I shall argue that, taken together, these plays constitute a kind of mini-genre which focuses upon key points in the reign of Alexander the Great and immediately after his death. These plays also reflect the recent accession of James I, in particular its effects upon the political landscape of Britain.

The Monarchicke Tragedies of William Alexander also feature in the fifth chapter which looks at the remaining two dramatic works: *Croesus* (1603) and *Julius Caesar* (1607). In this chapter I argue that the two plays question the nature of exemplarity, particularly when applied to James I. Like *Darius*, *Croesus* presents two faces of exemplarity: the first is Cyrus, the stoic and restrained monarch who sets out to punish the excesses and obsessions with material goods that define Croesus, whose rule he has vanquished. The presentation of these two models allows the reader to question which can be more appropriately applied to the new king, as well as asserting the dangers of

the ruler allowing himself to succumb to the vices of Croesus. *Julius Caesar* represents Alexander's engagement with the debates over the justification of tyrannicide. This, along with its Roman setting, asserts the author's affinity with the earlier neo-Senecan dramas by Sidney, Kyd, Daniel, and Brandon.

Chapter Six examines *Sejanus* (1603-4) and *Catiline* (1608), Jonson's two Roman tragedies which are not often linked with the neo-Senecan dramas influenced by Mary Sidney's play. However, this chapter will argue that their classicism – as represented by such Senecan elements as the sententious political moralising, the conscious historical accuracy of the plays, the use of the Nuntius, and, in the case of *Catiline*, the inclusion of a chorus – shows how plays destined for the commercial stage could employ similar tactics to those of the coterie dramatists.

The final chapter focuses upon Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam* (1602-8), a play which crystallises many of the issues raised in the earlier plays. Its portrayal of a state that has been provided with a brief moment of respite from the tyranny of Herod the Great allows the play to raise a number of key questions regarding the resistance to tyrants, as well as the plight of the individual under a tyrannical regime. It can also be considered alongside the more explicitly topical plays by Alexander and Daniel through its portrayal of a ruler of different national origins who has been dependent upon a woman for his accession to the throne. This reading adds a much more immediate topical dimension to the play than has previously been acknowledged and allows it to engage with the other plays in this study on a number of levels. The affinities between these texts thus allow them to emerge as part of a coherent dramatic tradition and provide evidence of the development of a form of dramatic authorship which was eminently

Chapter One:

'The hurtful works of pleasure here behold': Mary Sidney's *Antonius*

The early 1590s were busy years for Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, at least in terms of her literary career. One of the most conspicuous products of these years was her translation of *Marc Antoine*, a work by the eminent French dramatist Robert Garnier, completed in 1590 and published in 1592 as *Antonius*. The fact this text is the first English drama in print to have been written by a woman is not the only way in which it sets an important precedent; it also represents the first attempt to naturalise the Continental form of neo-Senecan drama in English, an act that, as future chapters will show, numerous others would attempt to emulate. It is not only the formal features of Mary Sidney's play that exerted such an influence, but, as this chapter will argue, it also established the neo-Senecan dramatic form as one in which various aspects of Renaissance humanism, in particular stoicism and republicanism, could be interrogated. The representation of various forms of tyranny and their effect upon the people, as well as the warnings against civil strife and neglecting political duty, emphasise the play's firm interest in the political consequences of the actions of the protagonists. This goes alongside the portrayals of Antonius and Cleopatra, particularly their inclination towards suicide, in a way that allows readers to interrogate their respective brands of stoic philosophy.

It is a commonplace to note the influence of the Countess's late brother, Sir Philip Sidney, upon her writing during the 1590s. This influence, broadly speaking, manifests itself in two forms: firstly, through her role as a kind of executor to the literary legacy of her brother, particularly through her editorship

of the unfinished *Arcadia*;¹ secondly, she can be seen as taking on the role of completing, or extending, Sir Philip Sidney's existing corpus, as shown by her completion of the translation of the *Psalmes* and her translation of Philippe du Plessis-Mornay's *Discourse of Life and Death*. Her translation of Petrarch's *Triumph of Death* can also be related to Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* sequence, in this case providing the woman with a voice. Quite where her translation of Garnier's play fits in is, however, another matter. As we have seen in the introduction, Mary Sidney was, for much of the twentieth century, characterised as the ringleader of an attempted coup against the popular tragedy of the commercial theatres using Sir Philip Sidney's critique of their practices in his *Apology for Poetry* as a kind of aesthetic manifesto. However, there is evidence to suggest that in Mary Sidney's 1592 volume, it was the translation of Mornay which captured the attention of the wits towards whom her anti-theatrical campaign was alleged to appeal. Gabriel Harvey praised the 'divine' *Discourse* as a 'restorative Electuary of Gemmes' compared with the 'furious Tragedy *Antonius*', which represents 'a bloody chaire of Estate.'² As Joel Davis argues, Harvey here 'implies that the value of the countess's translations lay in their "comfortative or cordial," or "restorative" powers, rather than in the blood and fury of the story of Antony and Cleopatra.'³ Harvey's reference to the 'furious Tragedy *Antonius*' is somewhat puzzling as the play deals neither with *Antonius*' madness, nor temptation by the furies; nevertheless, for Harvey, the

¹ On Mary Sidney's editorship of the *Arcadia* see Gavin Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. pp. 84-5, 88-9, and Joel Davis, 'Multiple Arcadias and the Literary Quarrel Between Fulke Greville and Mary Sidney', *Studies in Philology*, 101:4 (2004), 401-30. The latter, especially, provides details of the tension between Mary Sidney and Fulke Greville.

² Gabriel Harvey, *A New Letter of Notable Contents With a straunge Sonet intituled Gorgon, or the Wonderfull Yeare* (London: John Wolfe, 1593), A4^r-B1.

³ Joel Davis, 'Multiple Arcadias and the Literary Quarrel Between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke', *Studies in Philology*, 101: 4 (2004), 401-30, 422.

emphasis is upon the value of the *Discourse* rather than the tragedy. This leaves open the question about what exactly Mary Sidney's motives were in translating Garnier's play if they were not anti-theatrical.

An answer to this question has been sought in Mary Sidney's coupling of her tragedy with her translation of Mornay's *Discourse*, a text which has a decidedly neo-stoic agenda in its attempt to champion stoic philosophy and make it compatible with Christian teaching. The essence of Mornay's argument is that death is not something to be resisted or feared; however, at the same time, it should not be sought or deliberately inflicted upon oneself. This is emphasised towards the end of the text:

Wee must seeke to mortifie our flesh in us, and to cast the world out of us: but to cast our selves out of the world is in no sort permitted us. The Christian ought willingly to depart out of life but not cowardly to runne away. The Christian is ordained by God to fight therein: and cannot leave his place without incurring reproch and infamie. But if it please the grand Captaine to recall him, let him take the retrait in good part, and with good will obey it.⁴

Here, Mornay advances the traditional stoic resignation to fate but hastens to add that this should not be interpreted as an approval of suicide. The advice against resisting the inevitable onset of death is emphasised by the negative description of life, particularly for a public servant having to face that concentrated sphere of corruption, the court. The courtier is particularly susceptible to many of the vicissitudes of life, having to deal with the sycophancy of subordinates and the whims of a tyrant. The text therefore recommends neo-stoic forbearance in the face of the problems one is likely to encounter, particularly one who is attempting to achieve the foolhardy venture of gaining advancement at court.

⁴ Mary Sidney, *A Discourse of Life and Death* (London: William Ponsonby, 1592), E2r-E2v.

Critics have often regarded Mary Sidney's decision to translate Mornay's treatise as a response either to a direct request from Sir Philip Sidney, or as one which follows the precedent set by Sidney beginning to translate Mornay's *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne*. Whatever its motivations, the translation of this text becomes aligned with a form of consolatory neo-stoicism advocated by the politically disenfranchised. The extent to which it can be linked with the politics of the Huguenot cause is debatable; the editors of the collected works of Mary Sidney, for example, argue that the *Discourse* is 'surprisingly non-sectarian; there is no reference to the doctrines of election, of the priesthood of all believers, of the perseverance of saints; God's grace is specifically mentioned only once... and salvation by faith rather than works is assumed rather than stated.'⁵ However, to choose an author with the kind of political resonances of Mornay can be seen as a means of aligning oneself with such politics. Mornay and Hubert Languet were both friends and correspondents to Sidney, exerting considerable influence upon his political and philosophical outlook. Either Languet or Mornay was also the author of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, in which much of the continental monarchomachist theory is embodied. It is not only the choice of author and material that suggests the political significance of the text; Mary Sidney's inclusion of specific dates and locations for both compositions at the end of each text is also significant. Because they were linked with the Sidneys and the Herberts, two of the most prominent families with Huguenot sympathies, Wilton and Ramsbury were, according to Victor Skretkowicz, locations which 'bristled with political

⁵ Margaret Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan (eds), *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke* (2 vols), vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 217.

significance to Elizabethan supporters of the French Huguenots.’⁶ The specificity of the locations thus has political resonances which would suggest an active attempt to link the two texts with the ideas of the Huguenots.

The emphasis on the corruption of the court and the problems it poses to a neo-stoic lifestyle has prompted Mary Ellen Lamb to comment that ‘Mornay’s treatise applied the Stoic ideal primarily to the life course led by men, not by women’ and that the ‘translation of *Marc Antoine* with its heroic portrait of a female protagonist, Cleopatra, is an attempt to apply Mornay’s philosophy to the situation of Renaissance women.’⁷ However, this suggestion is made problematic by the fact that the protagonists go against Mornay’s outlook by committing suicide which makes a play dramatising the suicides of the protagonists an odd choice for a companion piece for Mornay’s text. Garnier’s *Cornelia*, later translated by Kyd, with a stoic heroine who is dissuaded from committing suicide, at least until she has ensured that Pompey’s legacy to posterity is secure, would seem a more obvious choice. This chapter will propose that the juxtaposition of the *Discourse* with Garnier’s play invites the reader to consider the texts in dialogue with one another, rather than the *Discourse* simply providing a framework through which to read the dramatic text.

Mary Sidney’s choice of play to place alongside the *Discourse* is a significant one and shows a sustained interest in contemporary French culture. It is tempting to emphasise the inherent irony of Sidney’s appropriation of the dramatic work of a Catholic writer given the Sidney family’s support for the

⁶ Victor Skretkowicz, ‘Mary Sidney Herbert’s *Antonius*, English Philhellenism and the Protestant Cause’, *Women’s Writing*, 6: 1 (1999), 7-25, (p. 8).

⁷ Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 129.

French Huguenots. As a Catholic, and a one time member of the Catholic League of France, Garnier seems, on the surface, antithetical to the kind of political outlook with which the Sidneys had aligned themselves. However, Garnier's plays are hardly Catholic propaganda. If anything, his Roman plays are characterised by a common plea for moderation, fear of tyranny and civil strife, and concern for the ordinary people affected by the political manoeuvring of those who hold office. In this case, Skretkowicz's references to Garnier as a 'hardline Catholic', whose dedication of *Marc Antoine* to Huguenot sympathiser and one-time correspondent with Sir Philip Sidney, Sire de Pibrac, was the product of a 'more compromising mood',⁸ are somewhat misleading, especially as Pibrac was Garnier's friend and protector. The political content of Garnier's plays does not advance specific partisan interests but is a means of responding to the internecine conflicts taking place within his own country. The history of ancient Rome provided numerous incidents which could serve as fitting analogues for Garnier's concerns. Garnier himself was eager to emphasise this point. He described his *Cornélie* as a 'poeme à mon regret trop propre aux malheurs de nostre siècle',⁹ thereby advancing the events which take place in his text as analogous to those taking place in his own century. He also established his 1568 text, *Porcie*, in similar terms as the subtitle, '*tragedie françoise, représentant la cruelle et sanglante saison des guerres civiles de Rome: propre et convenable pour y voir depeincte la calamité de ce temps*',¹⁰ suggests. Garnier's subtitle implies that his representation of the cruel and bloody period of Roman civil wars can be appropriated as an effective commentary upon

⁸ Skretkowicz, 12.

⁹ Quoted in Hannay, Margaret P. 'Patronesse of the Muses', in S.P Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, pp. 142-155 (p. 148).

¹⁰ Ibid.

contemporary affairs in France.¹¹ In its interrogation of tyranny and the value and utility of stoicism, Mary Sidney found in *Marc Antoine* a means of advancing the kind of political and philosophical outlooks to which she and her family were aligned, and responding to issues that had generated a significant degree of interest in England.¹²

The fact that Mary Sidney translates a text so steeped in French politics twelve years after its original publication in France poses a number of problems for a political reading of the play. Garnier's own tendency to waver between political positions in different writings, expressing tentative royalism in his dedicatory verses and an anti-tyrannical outlook in his drama, complicates the politics of the work and serves to add ambiguity to any political messages that Sidney may have wished to convey.¹³ Skretkowicz proposes an allegorical reading of the play in which 'Antony, the kingdom of France, defeated by self-indulgent internal divisions, kills itself, leaving an abandoned Cleopatra, like the desperate French Huguenots, on the brink of annihilation by the new generation of Romans, the Spanish Catholics.'¹⁴ Whilst this reading shows how the play could be amenable to militant Protestant concerns, it does offer an overly allegorised and generalised view of the play's political engagement. In spite of the fact that

¹¹ The topicality of Garnier's work is discussed in Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). See also John Holyoake, *A Critical Study of the Tragedies of Robert Garnier (1545-90)* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

¹² Anne Lake Prescott has recently highlighted the significance of the appearance of Mary Sidney's translation at a time when a flurry of material concerning France, including pamphlets, ballads, and other polemical writing, was appearing in England. See Anne Lake Prescott, 'Mary Sidney's *Antonius* and the Ambiguities of French History', *Yearbook of English Studies* 38, 1 & 2 (2009), 216-33.

¹³ Two essays by Margaret P. Hannay argue that the case for intervention is addressed in her translations of the Psalms. See, "'Doo What Men May Sing': Mary Sidney and the Tradition of Admonitory Dedication' in Margaret P. Hannay (ed.), *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 149-65, and "'Princes You As Men Must Dy': Genevan Advice to Monarchs in the *Psalmes* of Mary Sidney', *English Literary Renaissance* 19, 1 (1989), 22-41.

¹⁴ Skretkowicz, 13. A political reading of *Marc Antoine* as an indictment of the excesses of Henri III, see Jondorf, pp. 35-7.

Mary Sidney remains faithful to Garnier's play in her translation, the text still interrogates political issues which were of considerable importance to a contemporary English readership. Paulina Kewes has recently argued that Mary Sidney's play engages with such topical issues as the threat of a Spanish invasion and Elizabeth's leadership of an increasingly beleaguered nation, resulting in a play that 'appears to combine a severe indictment of Spanish imperialism with a no less severe indictment of Elizabeth's failure to combat it.'¹⁵ The representation of Caesar, 'a bloodthirsty tyrant exulting in his sole rule over Rome and the world, effectively serves to denounce Philip II's design for a universal monarchy', whilst Cleopatra's political responsibility is viewed as a means of engaging with Protestant concerns that in 'the event of the queen's sudden death without a clearly designated Protestant heir, England... would succumb to conquest by Roman Catholic Spain, and, like Egypt, which lost its statehood to Rome after Cleopatra's death, would degenerate into a mere province of the Iberian empire.'¹⁶ Sidney's play, then, is not merely concerned with events in France; it also exhibits a clear awareness that Elizabeth's England is also a state which is ripe for the kind of devastation which tore apart ancient Egypt and was tearing apart contemporary France, as well as recognising the dangers of political irresponsibility. The calamitous events depicted in the play were ones which, it was feared, could take place in contemporary England.

As we have seen in the introduction, neo-Senecan dramas typically value discussion and reaction over narrative. Sidney's play is no exception, and its plot can therefore be summarised in the briefest of terms: the play opens in the

¹⁵ Paulina Kewes, "A Fit Memorial for the Times to Come...": Admonition and Topical Application in Mary Sidney's *Antonius* and Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra*, *The Review of English Studies* (advance access, 2011; forthcoming in print), 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 3-4.

aftermath of Antonius' defeat at Actium after which he regrets his decision to forsake Rome for Cleopatra and commits suicide; meanwhile, Cleopatra emphasises her fidelity to Antonius and when she hears of his death, she vows to follow suit, leaving Caesar to triumph safe in the knowledge that he will no longer be troubled by his enemies. The play opens with a soliloquy from Antonius, in which he laments the political consequences of his love for Cleopatra as well as the emasculating effect it has had upon him. He goes on to comment that his martial career has been marginalised in favour of the gratification of sensual desires:

Since then the bays, so well thy forehead knew,
To Venus' myrtles yielded have their place;
Trumpets to pipes; field tents to courtly bowers;
Lances and pikes to dances and to feasts. (1.67-70).¹⁷

The image of the laurel bays, a symbol of military achievement, being transformed into myrtles, representative of Venus, the goddess of love, indicates the extent to which Antonius' military virtues have been compromised.

Antonius' abandonment of his political duties, and the way in which he has led his forces into an ill-fated war with Caesar, suggest that Antonius is clearly a tyrant and, unlike Caesar, his inefficacy and weaknesses have a detrimental effect upon those he is governing. Sidney's Antonius conforms to two of the definitions offered by Rebecca W. Bushnell of the 'effeminate tyrant' who 'is represented as one who mimics the woman who is always confined to her house' or as one for whom 'it is the tyrant's enslavement by passion that leads him to hide in womanish fear.'¹⁸ The former definition imbues his comparisons

¹⁷ All textual citations to *The Tragedy of Antonie* are from eds. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 13-42.

¹⁸ Rebecca W. Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 20.

with Hercules as the captive of the queen of Lydia with added significance. A neo-stoic reading of the play would also tie in with the second of Bushnell's definitions as Antonius, by his own admission, represents one who has failed to conform to the stoic goal of self-rule:

Nay, as the fatted swine in filthy mire
With glutton heart I wallowed in delights,
All thought of honour trodden under foot.
So me I lost; for finding this sweet cup
Pleasing my taste, unwise I drunk my fill,
And through the sweetness of that poison's power
By steps I drove my former wits astray.
(3.292-8. My emphases).

Antonius admits that his failure to govern himself has left him prey to his excessive desires, losing sight of his political duties. In this manner, Antonius can be viewed as a traditionally Senecan hero who is forced to face the consequences of subordinating his reason to his passions. The character of Antonius thus dramatises the failure of stoicism in succumbing to passion and failing to exercise self-discipline. Whilst he conforms to the stoic beliefs in fate and determinism, his stoicism is undercut by his failure to control his own passionate impulses.

In the opening soliloquy, Antonius emphasises his fall from favour with the gods. He may suggest that his infatuation with Cleopatra is largely to blame for the civil wars but he is also keen to advance the view that his downfall has been the result of divine intervention. He asserts that 'cruel heaven's against me obstinate' (1.1) and that 'Air, earth, and sea, are all injurious' (1.4). Antonius' view that human action is dictated by the gods is suggestive of an extreme lack of autonomy for humans. His metaphorical reference to fortune as the 'round engine' (1.2), the popular realisation of the wheel of fortune, evokes a cyclical view of history. Antonius' view of human existence is ratified by the speeches

of the chorus and Philostratus. The first chorus lament that 'Nature made us not free / When first she made us live' (1.173-4), complementing Antonius' view that fate is in the hands of the gods. Philostratus' speech at the beginning of the second act is also in accordance with this view as well as the idea of history progressing as a constant cycle, as shown by his references to the Trojan War, indicating that the tribulation faced by Antonius and Cleopatra has happened to others in the past:

By this love, Priam, Hector, Troilus,
Memnon, Deiphobus, Glaucus, thousands mo
Whom red Scamander's armour-clogged streams
Rolled into seas, before their dates, are dead. (2.53-56).

The characters in Sidney's tragedy, it is suggested, are caught up in matters beyond their control and over which their actions will have no influence. Irene Burgess is correct in her view that in his opening soliloquy Antonius exhibits 'an unfortunate lack of responsibility for his rule [*sic*] in his defeat and blames it all on Cleopatra's wiles'¹⁹. Antonius is also adamant that he has inspired the wrath of the gods which is also suggestive of the irresponsibility Burgess finds in his view of Cleopatra's culpability. The same can be argued for the Chorus speakers and Philostratus whose emphasis upon divine intervention and historical fatalism blinds them to the actual cause of their country's problems: the political failures of its rulers. Sidney's text therefore provides two contrasting ways in which divine rhetoric is appropriated by the characters. The choices of classical allusions are also significant. Whereas Philostratus appropriates the Trojan War and laments the deaths of many noble warriors, Antonius likens himself to individuals: he comments that he has been burnt by

¹⁹ Irene Burgess, "'The Wreck of Order' in Early Modern Women's Drama". *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.3 (January, 2001): 6.1-24, <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/06-3/burgwrec.htm>>. Date accessed: 29th March 2008.

‘Orestes’ torch’ (1.57), a view partially supported by the Chorus likening him to Prometheus due to the way he has provoked the ire of the gods. The play thus provides three classical frames for the situation in which Antonius has now found himself. By claiming he has been burnt by Orestes’ torch, Antonius uses the passive voice to abstract his own influence from the process, whilst the Chorus’s Prometheus reference suggests that the gods, rather than the individual, are responsible for his fate. It is only Philostratus who attributes any culpability to the protagonists and suggests the far-reaching consequences of these actions. Antonius’ references to individual classical figures, as opposed to Philostratus’ exposition of the wider effects upon the people, suggest a sense of self-absorption, willingly abstracting himself from the wider consequences of his actions. The first act therefore offers two competing interpretations of the events with Antonius blaming Cleopatra for the apparently debilitating lust she inspired and the Chorus attributing the problems to the gods.

In spite of the play’s title, it is arguably Cleopatra who dominates the text. Her introduction in the second act initiates a third perspective on the events, which contradicts those of Antonius and the chorus. As Karen Raber points out, Cleopatra ‘asserts her constancy in love, denies any treachery at Actium, and generally insists that she is a faithful wife, not a seductress and destroyer of men.’²⁰ Similar views on Cleopatra are also expressed by Tina Krontiris, who argues that the play ‘purifies her by purging her love from political motives and thus dissociates her from the image of the political conniver found in Plutarch and other sources.’²¹ Cleopatra is introduced as she emphatically refutes

²⁰ Raber, p. 62.

²¹ Tina Krontiris, ‘Mary Herbert: Englishing a Purified Cleopatra’ in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Readings in Renaissance Women’s Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 156-66 (p. 159).

Antonius' claims:

That I have thee betrayed, my lord, my king?
That I would break my vowed-faith to thee?
Leave thee? Deceive thee? Yield thee to the rage
Of mighty foe? I ever had that heart?
Rather sharp lightning 'lighten on my head;
Rather may I to deepest mischief fall;
Rather the opened earth devour me;
Rather fierce tigers feed them on my flesh;
Rather, o rather let our Nilus send,
To swallow me quick, some weeping crocodile. (2.153-62)

It is clear from this speech that the Cleopatra with which the reader is now presented is a marked contrast to the traditional image of the exotic and emasculating temptress. As Raber argues, she 'offers conventional Renaissance stereotypes of women's behaviour in her own defense, characterizing herself as weak, wavering in battle, burning with jealousy, unbalanced in her willingness to sacrifice children and country for her obsessive love for Antony.'²² Cleopatra therefore fashions herself as a typical Renaissance aristocratic woman. It is only the reference to the crocodile, a creature appropriated by Spenser and Shakespeare as symbolic of Egypt, that gives any real clue to Cleopatra's supposed exoticism. In many ways, Sidney's Cleopatra is emptied of any recognisable racial identity. Eras comments that Cleopatra's skin is of 'fair alabaster' (2.185), while Diomedes refers to the 'coral colour' (2.478) of her lips, her 'beamy eyes' which are like 'two suns of this our world' (2.479) and, most surprisingly of all, her 'fine and flaming gold' hair (2.480). Diomedes's description owes more to the Petrarchan tradition than to the ethnic traits of Egyptians. Joyce Green MacDonald points out that the description contributes to a view of a Cleopatra who is 'sensual, energetic' but also, 'and emphatically,

²² Raber, p. 63.

white-skinned.’²³ This points to a fact which has been frequently overlooked by authors and critics alike. As Lisa Hopkins comments, ‘Cleopatra was not actually of indigenous Egyptian origin, but was descended from Ptolemy, the Greek general who had conquered Egypt in the time of Alexander.’²⁴ This suggests that representations of an exotic Cleopatra representative of racial otherness, such as Alexandra’s reference to the ‘brown Egyptian’²⁵ in Cary’s *Mariam*, are based upon an erroneous premise. Hopkins goes on to comment that these ethnic origins provide a link between Cleopatra and ‘the revered classical cultures from which many Renaissance ideas derived.’²⁶ Cleopatra’s ancestry also provides a much closer affinity with Antony who was reputedly a descendant of Hercules, a point Cleopatra affirms when she reminds her children ‘That this great Antonie your father was, / Hercules’ blood, and more than he in praise’ (5.63-4). This provides another reminder of the existence of a cyclical view of events and reiterates the trope of history repeating itself which recurs throughout the text.

Diomede’s speech also highlights Cleopatra’s multilingual talents:

her training speech,
Her grace, her majesty, and forcing voice,
Whether she it with fingers’ speech consort,
Or hearing sceptred kings’ ambassadors
Answer to each in his own language make.
(2.484-8).

These skills emphasise Cleopatra’s erudition and align her with contemporary aristocratic women. As Skretkowicz comments, ‘one of the practical goals of

²³ Joyce Green MacDonald, *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 37.

²⁴ Lisa Hopkins, *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 151.

²⁵ Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1.2.190) in Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (eds), *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland Her Life* (California: University of California Press, 1994).

²⁶ Hopkins, p. 151.

politically involved western Renaissance women, such as Queen Elizabeth or Mary Sidney Herbert, is the acquisition of languages'.²⁷ The emphasis upon Cleopatra's proficiency in languages thus places her in a position analogous to that of Mary Sidney as translator of Garnier. The emphasis upon Cleopatra's use of non-verbal gestures in order to communicate is also significant, especially as John Bulwer's *Chirologia* provides some idea about the importance of hand gestures as rhetorical devices. Abraham Fraunce also devoted a section of his *Arcadian Rhetorike* to a discussion of effective ways of using one's arms, hands, and fingers for such purposes.

Cleopatra's alignment with European culture can also be observed in her instructions to her servants in response to Antonius' death:

Martyr your breasts with multiplied blows,
With violent hands tear off your hanging hair,
Outrage your face. Alas why should we seek
(Since now we die) our beauties more to keep?
(5.195-8).

Katherine O. Acheson sees in these lines an evasion of the gaze, an affirmation of her 'modesty and faithfulness', and a rare revelation of the 'fullness of her body'.²⁸ There is, however, another possibility which emerges when these lines are compared to a passage in Lucan's *Civil War*, a comparison which has been hitherto overlooked:

Then their complaining they suppressed, and deep and voiceless
grief pervaded all. Just so at the moment of death
the stunned house falls silent - not yet is the body
laid out and bewailed, not yet does the mother with loosened hair
impel the slave-girls' arms to savage breast-beating -
the moment when she hugs limbs stiffening as life flees,

²⁷ Skretkowicz, p. 17.

²⁸ Katherine O. Acheson, "'Outrage your face': Anti-theatricality and Gender in Early Modern Closet Drama by Women", *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 6.3 (2001), <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/06-3/acheoutr.htm>>. Accessed October 29 2010.

the inanimate features, eyes swimming in death.²⁹

By echoing this passage, Cleopatra is aligned with received ideas about the conduct of Roman female mourners. Her hair, like that of her servants, is 'hanging', like the 'loosened' hair of the Roman mourner, and she commands her servants to beat their breasts in the same way as in Lucan; all of which suggests Cleopatra's awareness of the importance of a certain set of established practices to which a mourner should confirm. It also affirms her identity as a widow. Rather than emerging as simply a resistance to the public gaze, these lines can, when compared to Lucan's text, emerge as a very public statement of her awareness of, and alignment with, the expectations for Roman widows.

Cleopatra's assertion of her status as a widow complements the ways in which she had previously fashioned herself as Antonius' wife. This is evident in a stichomythic exchange with her maid, Charmion:

CH. Live for your sons. CL. Nay, for their father die.
CH. Hardhearted mother! CL. Wife, kindhearted, I.
(2.319-20).

In this exchange, Cleopatra is able to neutralise the objections registered by Charmion by appropriating a similar kind of rhetoric to her. Charmion attempts to persuade Cleopatra not to commit suicide in order to fulfil her domestic duty as a mother which Cleopatra counters by asserting that any other course of action would be a negation of her dynastic duty by asserting that Antonius is her husband. In the final act she also speaks of her 'holy marriage' (5.155) to Antonius and refers to their 'dear babes' as the 'knot of our amity' (5.156). This contributes to the play's reassessment of the character of Cleopatra by casting her as a faithful and constant wife rather than the more commonplace and

²⁹ Lucan, *Civil War* 2. 20-6. Translated by Susan H. Braund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

familiar adulterous temptress. Tina Krontiris comments that in such instances the play 'inadvertently annuls the marriage between Antony and Octavia and sets up the love relationship as the more authentic of the two.'³⁰ However, such an outlook is undercut by the fact that both of Antonius' uses of the word 'wife' are in relation to Octavia. In his opening soliloquy he refers to his 'wife Octavia and her tender babes' (1.122), and earlier in the speech distinguishes Octavia from Cleopatra by referring to them as 'wife' and 'queen' respectively (1.9-10), thus emphasising the subordinate position into which he believes Cleopatra has entrapped him. This would seem to suggest a fundamentally different outlook towards the 'marriage' is being conveyed by the two protagonists. The tension between the domestic and political demands upon Cleopatra manifests itself throughout the two scenes in which Cleopatra is present. Karen Raber has argued that the play interrogates the ways in which domesticity functioned as a frame for national and political identities and that the focus of the tragedy is the isolation caused by Cleopatra's attempt to be both a good wife and a good queen.³¹ Alison Findlay concurs, arguing that the play 'complicates the issue of female heroism by showing that Cleopatra's dedication to Antonie cannot be reconciled with her duties to her family, dynasty, and kingdom.'³²

There are various other instances in the text in which characters such as Charmion and Eras represent a means of initiating debate with Cleopatra and other major characters. One of the most effective ways in which this text conveys debate, as well as providing some compensation for the form's lack of action, is by utilising the dramatic device of stichomythia, a series of rapid, in some cases rhymed, single-line exchanges between characters. Such an

³⁰ Krontiris, p. 160.

³¹ Raber, p. 64.

³² Findlay, *Playing Spaces*, p. 28.

exchange takes place between Cleopatra and Eras in the second act:

CL: My evils are wholly unsupportable,
No human force can them withstand, but death.
ER: To him that strives, nought is impossible.
CL: In striving lies no hope of my mishaps.
ER: All things do yield to force of lovely face.
CL: My face too lovely caused my wretched case. (2.189-94).

This stichomythic discussion is indicative of the way in which the device is employed in order to represent the interaction between characters. As this example indicates, there is usually a privileged party in the discussion who is allowed, quite literally, to get the last word and neutralise the objections of the first speaker. Stichomythia is therefore an indicator of the course of action the characters will take and allows them to develop a certain logic for their actions which is difficult for the other characters to penetrate. The stichomythic discussions between Caesar and Agrippa in the fourth act, however, indicate that the device can be employed for much loftier purposes. The discussion between the two follows Caesar's announcement of his intention to consolidate his power through violent means:

We must with blood mark this our victory,
For just example to all memory.
Murder we must, until not one we leave,
Which may hereafter us of rest bereave. (4.152-5).

This speech epitomises the tough rhetoric of Caesar who advocates the disposal of potential enemies to his rule. It is also revealed, as Joel Davis points out, that Caesar 'proposes not that Antony be tried for treason, but rather that he be murdered, in order to exterminate all opposition to Caesar in the east'.³³ He thus removes any legal imperatives from his proposed course of action, implying that he is more concerned with purging opposition than seeing a guilty man brought

³³ Davis, p. 180.

to justice. This suggests a piece that is emphatically anti-Caesarean.

The speech initiates a stichomythic discussion with Agrippa in which the two debate the merits of such a means of maintaining power:

AG: Nothing so much as rigour doth displease.
CAES: Nothing so much doth make me live at ease.
AG: What ease to him that feared is of all?
CAES: Feared to be, and see, his foes to fall.
AG: Commonly fear doth breed and nourish hate.
CAES: Hate without power comes commonly too late.
AG: A feared prince hath oft his death desired.
CAES: A prince not feared hath oft his wrong conspired. (4.160-7).

While Agrippa cautions Caesar against the potential discontent such rigorous exercises in power could develop, Caesar is allowed to respond to, and neutralise, the views expressed by him. The discussion carries echoes of the political theorist Niccolò Machiavelli, who considers whether the prince should rule by inspiring compassion or fear among his subjects in his most famous work, *The Prince*. Caesar's conclusion is aligned to the outlook advanced by Machiavelli that 'whether men bear affection depends on themselves, but whether they are afraid will depend on what the ruler does. A wise ruler should rely on what is under his control, not on what is under the control of others'.³⁴ It is made clear from this discussion that Caesar intends to exercise power by inspiring fear rather than love among his subjects. The use of the device as a means of initiating debates can therefore be regarded as evidence of the form's potential for political comment. Despite their existence as implicit condemnation of Caesar's outlook, it is necessary to note that Agrippa's comments are neutralised, thus suggesting a conscious move away from any democratic or republican leanings, implying that oppositional thoughts are now the province of the politically disenfranchised.

³⁴ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 60-1.

Caesar's rhetoric also represents a marked contrast to that of Antonius and Cleopatra. Whilst they bewail the ways in which either Fortune or their own actions have precipitated their downfalls, Caesar invests his faith in fortune and boasts of the ways in which he has been favoured by Fortune in his triumph against Antonius at Actium:

All Asia's forces into one he drew,
And forth he set upon the azured waves
A thousand and a thousand ships, which filled
With soldiers, pikes, with targets, arrows, darts,
Made Neptune quake, and all the watery troops
Of Glaucos and Tritons lodged at Actium.
But mighty gods, who still the force withstand
Of him who causeless doth another wrong,
In less than moment's space reduced to nought
All that proud power by sea or land he brought. (4.41-50).

Caesar's description of Antony's forces, particularly the way in which they 'Made Neptune quake' (4.45), emphasises the apparently difficult odds against which he fought at Actium. This, according to Caesar's logic, is a signifier of divine approval for his rule. The notion of a divinely sanctioned victory bears similarities to the early modern belief in divine providence. The text's historical proximity to the English victory against the Spanish Armada is of particular resonance in Caesar's speech. The popular motto, *Afflavit Deus, et dissipantur* ('He blew His winds and they were scattered'),³⁵ which appeared on a medal commemorating the so-called 'Protestant wind' that forced a great many of the Spanish ships to run aground on the Irish coast evokes similarly providential rhetoric to Caesar's speech. The popularity of the motto shows that, like Caesar, the contemporary Protestant propagandists were eager to emphasise recent events as a sign of divine approval for their cause. The affinities of Caesar's words with this kind of post-Armada propaganda serve to complicate the text's

³⁵ Jon R. Stone, *The Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 135.

relationship with the contemporary militant Protestantism with which the Sidneys were aligned. However, Caesar's speeches also highlight his political pragmatism. He is willing to accept the boons delivered by Fortune, but is unwilling to be a slave to them. Octavius, then, may be a tyrant but, as opposed to Antonius and, to some extent, Cleopatra, he is not a weak tyrant. He is aware of the need for a proactive means of retaining one's power, as evidenced by the rigorous policies he intends to enact and his repudiation of clemency.

Karen Raber has argued that Caesar's all-consuming ambitions are a destabilising influence upon the empire:

By wanting all, he promises to internalize all, including that which should be other. Instead of the restoration of order, what Caesar thus enacts in Sidney's play is the internalization of chaos, which her play interprets as the consequence of his tyrannical and absolute will.³⁶

Caesar's ambitions, then, represent a danger to the stability of the boundaries between the genders and the states; in Raber's reading Caesar emerges as a 'dangerously effeminizing male tyrant.'³⁷ These aspects of Caesar's ambitions are important in relation to the play's political dimension, a view endorsed by Joel Davis's argument that the play's sexualisation of power in its representations of Antonius and Cleopatra contributes to its status as neo-Tacitean text:

In both the theatrical tradition of tyrant tragedies and in neo-Tacitean political and historical tracts, tyrannical power relations are often sexualized so that the lustful, shrewish woman often forms a mirror image of tyrannical rule, and the tyrannical prince is often portrayed as an effeminate man subject to whims of his own lust.³⁸

Both Antonius and Caesar, however, could qualify by definition as the 'effeminate man subject to the whims of his own lust.' Whereas, for Antonius,

³⁶ Raber, p. 92.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 55.

³⁸ Davis, p. 179.

the lust takes on an obvious, and sexual, realisation, Sidney's Caesar is consumed by his lust for power, an impulse which subordinates the needs of his subjects. In this way, Caesar's ambitions threaten the liberty of his people and serve to support Raber's view that the play 'participates in a tradition of resistance to the implications, if not the institution, of absolute monarchy.'³⁹ In this way, Mary Sidney's play can be viewed as republican in spirit, with its resistance to tyranny, as well as conforming to Sir Philip Sidney's vision of tragedy as a cautionary genre which warns monarchs of the dangers of tyranny. Caesar's providential rhetoric which, I have argued, has resonances of the post-Armada propaganda lends it a degree of topical application for readers in early modern England.

In spite of the implicit criticism of Caesar's tyranny, however; the play's provision of opportunities for all three of the major participants in the story to voice their opinions on the action taking place is evidence of the multivocality of the text. The expression of opinions on the action is not merely limited to the major characters. There are several occasions in which the play's lower characters are permitted to air their views. The provision of a public voice for the ordinary citizens in the text is achieved by using the chorus device. The first chorus lament that:

War and war's bitter cheer
Now long time with us stay,
And fear of hated foe
Still, still encreaseth sore;
Less yesterday they were
Than now, and will be more
Tomorrow than today. (1.229-36).

The presence of the chorus emphasises that the effects of the actions and

³⁹ Raber, p. 86.

political manoeuvres of the major characters are not merely confined to their microcosmic environment but have a significant impact upon the ordinary citizens. This view is further emphasised by the extraordinary conclusion to the fourth act. Caesar and Agrippa conclude their political discussion to make way for the appearance of a chorus of Roman soldiers who voice their discontent:

Shall ever civil bate
Gnaw and devour our state?
Shall never we this blade,
Our blood hath bloody made,
Lay down? These arms down lay
As robes we wear alway?
But as from age to age
So pass from rage to rage? (4.468-75).

As Margaret Hannay points out, this chorus speech allows the Roman soldiers to reveal that their 'case is little better than that of the Egyptians',⁴⁰ as both are subject to the whims of their rulers and have no choice but to comply with their wishes, even if they disagree with them.

I have therefore argued that Mary Sidney's text is of considerably greater value than critics such as Eliot would suggest. Far from being an anti-theatrical curio, the text acts as a significant vehicle for comment about political and domestic issues. The form of neo-Senecan drama allowed Sidney to engage in dramatic writing, a form in which her participation would have otherwise been prohibited. The text also provides evidence that the Herbert family estates at Wilton and Ramsbury can be considered as the nuclei of a great deal of political and cultural activity in early modern England. The existence of the Wilton estate as a classic example of a domestic space bearing great political significance can be seen to complement the play's examination of domestic and political issues. The text therefore acts as a significant means of bringing political issues and

⁴⁰ Hannay, p. 149.

debates about domestic politics to the attention of the text's elite first audience and alerting them to the broad range of contexts which it incorporates.

Mary Sidney's play also establishes a precedent for the interrogation of republicanism and stoicism in neo-Senecan drama and provides readers, and spectators, with the incentive to consider the practical application of these outlooks. The realisation of Cleopatra also provides a prototype for the politically disenfranchised figure facing the dilemma over whether to endure the consequences of retaining their personal ethical values or taking the easier option and compromising them, thus suggesting the development of a Tacitean framework for the political drama which would be incorporated in the other plays in this study. Cleopatra, caught between the actions of both a weak and a strong tyrant, finds herself in an untenable position in her struggle to be both a good queen and a good wife. In the next chapter, we shall see how subsequent neo-Senecan dramatists, namely Samuel Daniel, Thomas Kyd, and Samuel Brandon, attempted to resolve the issues that *Antonius* raises by placing an emphasis upon the exemplarity of their protagonists, thus indicating their plays to be in dialogue with Mary Sidney's text. The play thus establishes a precedent for the appropriation of the continental dramatic tradition influenced by Garnier in early modern England, not only from a formal point of view but also, as subsequent chapters will go on to show, through the exploitation of its potential to interrogate abstract political and philosophical concepts.

Chapter Two:

'Plurality of Caesars'¹: The Roman Plays of Thomas Kyd, Samuel Daniel, and Samuel Brandon

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the appearance of Mary Sidney's *Antoni* in 1592 introduced a niche dramatic form into the early modern English cultural landscape. Within two years of its appearance, it had most likely provoked Thomas Kyd to translate Garnier's earlier tragedy, *Cornélie* in late 1593 - whilst projecting another translation, this time of Garnier's *Porcie* - and Samuel Daniel to compose an original sequel, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* (1594). In addition, Samuel Brandon's companion piece to Daniel's *Cleopatra*, *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia*, appeared in print in 1598. This chapter will examine the three texts which appeared in the wake of Mary Sidney's tragedy and will consider the ways in which they respond not only to the formal influence of *Antoni*, but also to the way in which it marked a precedent for politically interrogative and non-theatrical drama in the neo-Senecan tradition. All three dramas, like *Antoni*, have the plight of women at their core, and in particular the ways in which they respond to the political manoeuvring they are powerless to influence. Octavia, the repudiated wife of *Antoni*, is at the centre of Brandon's play and, though she never appears, is very much in the background of Daniel's play, whilst Cornelia represents another model of domestic virtue. Both these figures are mentioned in Baldesar Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* as exemplary wives by the Magnifico Giuliano:

¹ Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* (3.1.576) in Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare. Volume V: The Roman Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 406-49. All subsequent references to Daniel's play are taken from this edition.

And if time were available, I would cite for my purpose the story of Octavia, wife of Mark Antony and sister of Augustus; of Portia, Cato's daughter and wife of Brutus; of Caia Caecilia, wife of Tarquinius Priscus; of Cornelia, Scipio's daughter, and of countless other remarkable women.²

This represents a significant precedent for the promotion of the status of Octavia and Cornelia as exemplars of feminine virtue. This chapter will argue that these plays, unlike *Antonius*, do not show a woman attempting to bridge the gulf between the domestic and the political, but instead emphasise the exemplary qualities of Cornelia and Octavia in order to marginalise their lack of political autonomy. I shall also argue that this leads them to interrogate the practical utility of stoic consolation and also question the extent to which it is compatible with a republican outlook.

Thomas Kyd, *Cornelia*

Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1593-4),³ a translation of Robert Garnier's *Cornélie*, can be regarded as traditionally republican from the point of view that it dramatises an episode from Roman history in which the constitutional framework of the empire was called into question and in which fears about the safeguarding of ancient civic liberties was provoked. Curtis Perry has already examined the ways in which Kyd's play appropriates various kinds of republican theory, giving us 'a snapshot of the way republican motifs operated in relation to other kinds of political thought during the waning years of Elizabeth's reign.'⁴ This section, influenced by Perry's approach and

² Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by George Bull (London: Penguin, 1967, repr. 1976), p. 226.

³ For the date of *Cornelia*, see Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 167-70 and Erne, pp. 202-6.

⁴ Curtis Perry, 'The Uneasy Republicanism of Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia*', *Criticism*, 48: 4 (2006), 535-555 (p. 536).

conclusions, will examine the way in which the theories of republicanism and stoicism are granted a kind of tense coexistence in the play and will argue that the importation of Continental outlooks, such as tyrannicide and resistance theory, complicate this relationship. Such debates would resonate in the political climate of the 1590s, particularly amongst the members of the frustrated militant Protestant faction of the Elizabethan court.

Scholarship on Kyd has focused almost exclusively upon *The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd's massively influential theatrical tragedy. When it comes to the other works of Kyd, the development of a coherent canon has been somewhat stunted by questions of authorship, authenticity, and, it must be noted, worthiness of study.⁵ This problem is exemplified by the way Peter B. Murray's study of Thomas Kyd confines itself to an examination of *The Spanish Tragedy* on the grounds that 'a book about Thomas Kyd turns out to be a book about *The Spanish Tragedy*. And this is as it should be'.⁶ It is therefore not surprising that when *Cornelia* is considered it is most frequently done under the shadow of *The Spanish Tragedy*, particularly the way in which it is thought to represent a significant departure from the earlier play. Nevertheless, it is important not to exaggerate the significance of Kyd's decision to follow in the footsteps of the Countess of Pembroke and translate a neo-Senecan tragedy by Robert Garnier. Many critics have succumbed to the temptation to view this action as a means for its author who was, according to Nancy Cotton, the 'chief exponent at the time of the blood-and-thunder action drama'⁷, to abandon the commercial

⁵ A recent and significant effort to rectify this can be seen in Lukas Erne, *Beyond The Spanish Tragedy: A study of the works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

⁶ Peter B. Murray, *Thomas Kyd* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), p. 5.

⁷ Nancy Cotton, 'Women Playwrights in England: Renaissance noblewomen', in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History and Performance 1594-1998* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 32-46 (p. 34).

theatre in favour of a more refined neo-classical style of dramatic writing. A. M. Witherspoon regards Kyd as ‘the Saul of the popular stage, among the prophets of the Wilton school’⁸ while F. L. Lucas sees Kyd’s authorship of *Cornelia* as evidence of Mary Sidney’s success in ‘bringing under her wing, of all wild birds, Kyd whose melodramatic *Spanish Tragedy* of 1585-7 had first really established tragedy on the popular stage.’⁹ There are a number of ways in which these views can be challenged. For a start, there is the simple fact that throughout 1593, during which time *Cornelia* was most likely written, Kyd could not have reached a commercial theatre audience even if that had been his intention due to the onset of a bout of plague in January 1593 which had forced the commercial theatres in London to close until after Christmas.¹⁰ The same period of closure had also prompted Shakespeare to turn to narrative poetry and produce such works as *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* before his return to the theatre with *Titus Andronicus* in 1594.

The emphasis upon the formal differences between Kyd’s two texts has also served to overshadow their notable thematic similarities. As Erne points out, *Cornelia*, in common with *The Spanish Tragedy*, ‘is basically a tragedy of grief.’¹¹ Even Murray’s cursory observations on the play highlight similar thematic affinities.¹² It is the contrasting responses of the protagonists and the differences in dramatic emphases that provide the key distinctions in Kyd’s examination of the theme. In *The Spanish Tragedy* Hieronimo is able to exercise his vengeance upon those responsible for his son’s death while *Cornelia*’s

⁸ Alexander Maclaren Witherspoon, *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1924, 1968 repr.), p. 92.

⁹ F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p. 110. The debates about the date and authorship of *The Spanish Tragedy* are discussed in Erne, pp. 47-59.

¹⁰ E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), IV, p. 313.

¹¹ Erne, p. 213.

¹² Murray, pp. 12-13.

response to the deaths of her husband and father is one of passivity. Rather than avenging the deaths of her loved ones, her reaction is to preserve their names for posterity and ‘To make your Tombes, and mourne vpon your hearses’ (5.457).¹³ The theatrical space of *The Spanish Tragedy* allows Hieronimo to implement his elaborate and proactive plan for revenge whereas the dramaturgical confines of Garnier’s style of drama allow Cornelia to do little more than mourn for Pompey and Scipio. Karen Raber’s comment that Cornelia is ‘defined by her passivity’¹⁴ confirms the opposing outlooks of Cornelia and Hieronimo. While Hieronimo destroys himself in the brutal revenge he exerts, Cornelia is persuaded against committing suicide and is left as the sole survivor of a male bloodbath.

It is not only the formal differences between *Cornelia* and *The Spanish Tragedy* that have served to alienate critics. Many have viewed the tone of the author’s dedication to the Countess of Sussex, in which the work is described as the product of ‘small endeouours’¹⁵, as Kyd’s own admission that *Cornelia* is a minor work. The reference to the ‘passing of a Winters weeke with desolate *Cornelia*’¹⁶ has often been misinterpreted by some critics, F. S. Boas included, as evidence that the translation took only a week to complete.¹⁷ It is necessary to point out, however, that *Cornelia* was entered in the Stationers’ Register on 26 January 1594, making it reasonable to assume that the ‘passing of a Winters weeke’ refers to the time, as well the part of the year, Kyd envisages his dedicatee will spend reading his translation. On this evidence, as Josephine A.

¹³ All references to *Cornelia* are from Frederick S. Boas, ed. *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 101-160.

¹⁴ Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), p. 250.

¹⁵ Kyd, p. 102.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Boas, p. lxxiv.

Roberts and James F. Gaines comment, 'there is no longer any reason to assume... that the *Cornelia* is a slapdash job produced in a week's time.'¹⁸ The reluctance of critics to expend critical ink on the play on the grounds that it was a minor and rushed work therefore seems decidedly misplaced.

The idea that the neo-classicism of the play marks a distinct departure from earlier work has also been exaggerated. While Kyd's translation of *Cornélie* is clearly hot on the heels of the vogue established by the publication of Mary Sidney's translation of *Marc Antoine*, it is necessary to point out that Kyd was most likely acquainted with Garnier some years before the appearance of Mary Sidney's tragedy. *The Spanish Tragedy*, as Lukas Erne has observed, alludes to *Cornélie* and echoes of Garnier's *Bradamante* have been found in Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*.¹⁹ These examples of allusions to Garnier in earlier texts indicate that *Cornelia* is merely a more overt crystallisation of his influence upon Kyd rather than evidence of the author's defection from one artistic campaign to another.

Critics have also been deterred by the lack of action in *Cornelia*, a feature which strongly identifies it with the Garnierean tradition's emphasis upon the characters and their reactions to events rather than the actual depiction of the events in question. It is difficult to fault Lucas's observation that 'nothing whatever happens' in the play and his summary of the plot in which 'Cornelia weeps profusely at the beginning; she weeps even more profusely at the end;

¹⁸ Josephine A. Roberts and Gaines, James F. 'Kyd and Garnier: The Art of Amendment', *Comparative Literature*, 31 (1979), 124-33 (p. 125).

¹⁹ For evidence of allusions to *Cornélie* in *The Spanish Tragedy* see Erne, p. 55 and for signs of the resonance of *Bradamante* in *Soliman and Perseda* see Marion Grubb, 'Kyd's Borrowings from Garnier's *Bradamante*', *MLN*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (March, 1935), 169-71 and T. W. Baldwin, 'Parallels Between *Soliman and Perseda* and Garnier's *Bradamante*', *MLN*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (April, 1936), 237-41.

other catastrophe there is none.’²⁰ While there is some truth in Lucas’s view, he makes the key error of approaching the play with the wrong kind of expectations. Viewing *Cornelia* in the context of other, more densely plotted tragedies such as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda* would seem to justify the view that it is little more than ‘a literary curiosity.’²¹ From the same point of view, Erne’s observation that ‘what is not dramatised seems more remarkable than what is’²² also seems reasonable. Yet the emphasis upon the reactions of the characters means that *Cornelia* emerges as a play set *in media res*, taking place after the defeat of Pompey the Great at the Battle of Pharsalus and anticipating, but never showing, the assassination of Julius Caesar. It is therefore necessary to discard any presuppositions about dramaturgy based upon contemporary professional drama in order to undertake a fair analysis of *Cornelia*. These premises go some way towards explaining the somewhat ironic fact that *Cornelia*, the play with which Kyd was most readily associated during the seventeenth century, and the one for which there is most evidence to support his authorship,²³ has now become so marginalised.

The personal circumstances surrounding the play’s composition also help to illuminate Kyd’s decision to adopt the neo-Senecan form of drama. In May 1593, Kyd was arrested by Privy Council investigators searching for those responsible for the circulation of a series of xenophobic libels targeted against Dutch immigrants living in London. While the investigators found no evidence to connect Kyd with these texts, a search of his rooms uncovered certain atheist

²⁰ Lucas, p. 110.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Erne, p. 207.

²³ See Emma Smith, ‘Author v. Character in Early Modern Authorship: The example of Thomas Kyd and *The Spanish Tragedy*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 11 (1999), 129-42, particularly 130-2.

documents in his possession. Despite his protests that he was innocent and that the documents actually belonged to Christopher Marlowe, with whom he had previously shared living quarters, and that they must have got mixed up with his own papers, Kyd was imprisoned and possibly tortured before the charges against him were dropped.²⁴ In spite of his name being cleared, Kyd's career and reputation were in tatters. It is for this reason that *Cornelia* has often been regarded as an attempt by Kyd to capitalise upon the newly established vogue for neo-classical drama in the tradition of Garnier in order to gain a new patron, or possibly to regain his old one.²⁵

It is not merely the biographical circumstances against which Kyd's play was composed that allow it to emerge as an eminently political text. We have seen in the previous chapter how Robert Garnier was eager to advance the consciously political and topical elements of his tragedies in the prefatory material. His works also exhibit a fear of civil strife reflective of the divided political climate of late sixteenth century France from which the plays emerged. Kyd's translation, like that of Mary Sidney, appears at a time after which reports of the darkest hour of the Wars of Religion, the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, had permeated English culture. This, along with subsequent events such as the assassination of William of Orange in 1584 and the attack by the Spanish Armada in 1588, provided further motivation for the cause of the militant Protestant faction in English politics who advocated military intervention in such places as France and the Netherlands in order to provide assistance to

²⁴ The view that Kyd was tortured has recently been challenged; see Rebekah Owens, 'Thomas Kyd and the Letters to Puckering', *Notes and Queries*, 53:4 (2006), 458-61.

²⁵ Freeman argues that Kyd's former patrons were the Radcliffe family, see pp. 33-7. Erne, on the other hand, argues that Kyd's patron was not the Earl of Sussex, but the Earl of Pembroke, pp. 227-30. However, he does acknowledge the possibility that Kyd may have been looking elsewhere for a patron after his arrest in 1593.

persecuted Protestants. In the light of this, Kyd's decision to make Bridget Fitzwalter, Countess of Sussex, his dedicatee can be viewed as a political choice. In the early 1590s, Robert Radcliffe, Lord Fitzwalter and his wife, Bridget, were the subjects of numerous textual dedications from a range of authors seeking textual patronage.²⁶ Their daughter was also the subject of Michael Drayton's *Matilda: the Faire and Chaste Daughter of the Lord Robert Fitzwater*. As well as being viewed as a potential source of patronage, Radcliffe was also, significantly, an Essex supporter. He was knighted for his contribution to the attack on Cadiz in 1596 and was briefly imprisoned in 1601 after being implicated in the Earl of Essex's rebellion.²⁷ Radcliffe was also related to the Sidney family through the marriage of his uncle, Thomas Radcliffe, to Frances Sidney, the aunt of Sir Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney. If, as Erne has argued, Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, was Kyd's former patron,²⁸ it seems that his attempt to court the Radcliffe family as patrons, if that was indeed his intention, was a means of finding aristocratic patrons with close family connections and a similar political outlook. The choice of dedicatee can therefore be seen as a means for Kyd to align himself with a figure who was connected to the militant Protestant faction of Elizabethan politics through both his family and his political connections.

As I have already noted, Kyd's *Cornelia* can be seen as part of a nascent

²⁶ These texts included Thomas Lodge's *Euphues Shadow*, Robert Greene's *Philomela*, also known as *The Lady Fitzwater's Nightingale*, and Emanuel Ford's *Parismus*. Other works to be dedicated to the family included a sonnet by Henry Lok that appeared in his *Sundry Christian Pleasures* and a music book, *The New Book of Tabliture*. See Victor Stater, 'Radcliffe, Robert, fifth earl of Sussex (1573–1629)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2008. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22992>, accessed 20 Oct 2009>.

²⁷ Details of Radcliffe's association with the Earl of Essex can be found in Paul E. J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 286, n. 101.

²⁸ Erne, pp. 227-30.

tradition of neo-classicism in English drama, inaugurated by the publication of Mary Sidney's translation of *Marc Antoine*. The fact that Kyd's *Cornelia* appeared after Mary Sidney's play, which details events which took place later chronologically and was written later in Garnier's career, means that for the play's English readership *Cornelia* acts as a kind of prequel to Sidney's play. The sequence would have become even more complex had Kyd been able to publish his projected translation of Garnier's earlier Roman play, *Porcie*, which he anticipated would be his 'next Sommers better trauell' in the dedication to *Cornelia*. The disjointed continuity of the two plays provides a significant moment of dramatic irony in the fourth act of Kyd's text. Any readers familiar with *The Tragedy of Antonie* would appreciate the irony of Antony's discussion with Caesar in the fourth act of *Cornelia* after the announcement of Pompey's death in Egypt where he had taken refuge after a failed rebellion against Caesar. Even if the translation of *Cornelia* had appeared before Mary Sidney's text, the ironic subtext would still be available to an informed readership, but the fact that this scene so closely parallels the fourth act of *Antonius* makes it all the more apparent. In comments such as 'I feare my foe, vntill he be interd' (4.2.124), Antony seems to advocate a rigorous policy similar to that advanced by Octavius Caesar in the parallel scene in *Antonius*, in which he voices his belief that 'A prince not feared hath oft his wrong conspired.'²⁹ Comparing these two scenes reveals that Octavius will treat Antonius with the same rigour which he advised Julius Caesar to exercise in *Cornelia*. The downfall of Pompey, whose demise takes place in Egypt where he has fled after a failed attempt to subdue

²⁹ Mary Sidney, *The Tragedy of Antonie*, 4.167, pp. 13-42 in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, London: Routledge, 1996. Garnier, Robert. *Marc Antoine* (4.1511) in Christine M. Hill and Mary G. Morrison (eds.), *Two Tragedies* (London: Athlone, 1975), pp. 105-66.

Caesar, acts as an eerie prediction of Antony's own fate and reveals that rebellion is an inevitable obstacle rulers must face. These two scenes therefore mark a significant moment of intertextuality between the texts of Sidney and Kyd.

That the translation of *Cornelia* should appear shortly after Kyd's arrest on charges of atheism is also significant, particularly when one considers some of the features of the opening soliloquy delivered by Cicero, a key figure in the development of the stoic and moral philosophical traditions that were eminently influential upon early modern English culture. Cicero opens his soliloquy with a plea to the gods:

Vouchsafe Immortals, and (aboue the rest)
Great *Iupiter*, our Citties sole Protector,
That if (prouok'd against vs by our euils)
You needs wil plague vs with your ceasles wroth,
At least to chuse those forth that are in fault,
And saue the rest in these tempestious broiles:
Els let the mischiefe that should them befall
Be pour'd on me, that one may die for all.
(1.1-8).

In Kyd's version, despite the fact that the words are spoken by a pre-Christian Roman citizen, the emphasis, particularly towards the end of this quotation, is very much upon such ideas as Christian salvation. Cicero's request 'that one may die for all' is evidence of the fact that he is fashioning himself as a kind of Christ-like redeemer, willing to sacrifice himself in order to save the sinful citizens of Rome from torment at the hands of vengeful gods. At one point, Cicero even paraphrases material from the gospels: 'Iudge others, as thou wouldst be iudg'd againe, / And do but as thou wouldst be done vnto.' (1.128-9). That Kyd should assign such Christian rhetoric to Cicero is significant and has major philosophical and political implications. The influence of French

political culture can be seen in the appropriation of Cicero; as Kristian Jensen observes, 'France, with its new claims to cultural and political supremacy, became a centre of Ciceronianism.'³⁰ Garnier can therefore be seen as capitalising upon a Continental vogue for the works of Cicero. Kyd's translation is therefore far more reverential and respectful towards this figure than later appropriations in English drama such as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, in which it is stated that he 'will never follow anything / That other men began' (II.1.151-2), and Ben Jonson's *Catiline*, in which he puts his principles on the line in order to achieve a short-term victory for the republic and in which it has been argued that there are numerous allusions to the negative, even comic, aspects of his character.³¹ The inclusion of Cicero and the assertion of his affinity with Christian teachings in Kyd's play can therefore be interpreted as the play's intervention in the neo-stoic endeavour to consolidate the apparently rival schools of Christianity and stoicism. The Christian rhetoric of Cicero follows the generally positive view of him that had been adopted by the Church, particularly in papal Rome during the early sixteenth century.³²

We have also seen that the development of neo-stoicism had heightened the appeal of Tacitus, particularly amongst politically marginalised aristocratic figures such as the Earl of Essex. Although Kyd's text focuses on events that take place before those depicted in the *Annals* of Tacitus, it shares the way in which such readings of Tacitus situate the individual in an atmosphere of

³⁰ Kristian Jensen, 'The humanist reform of Latin and Latin teaching', in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 63-81 (p. 76).

³¹ See, for example, Douglas Duncan, *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 221. For refutation of the apparently negative depiction of this character see, Blair Worden, 'Politics in *Catiline*: Jonson and his Sources' in Martin Butler (ed.), *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 159-71.

³² See J. F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1983), pp. 123-34.

corruption and violence and focus upon the possible ways they could respond to such a situation. This is achieved in both domestic and political dimensions with attention devoted to both the emotional sufferings of the bereaved Cornelia and the political frustrations of Brutus and Cassius. Cornelia's speeches consist of almost constant mourning for her late husband, Pompey. Her grief reaches such intensity that she even considers the prospect of suicide:

O heauens, what shall I doe? Alas, must I,
Must I my selfe be murderer of my selfe?
Must I my selfe be forc'd to ope the way
Whereat my soule in wounds may sally forth?
(2.210-13)

The second act consists of a dialogue between Cornelia and Cicero in which he advances a desirable stoical alternative to her mourning and her temptation towards suicide. Here, Cicero places himself in a similar position to Greville in his Tacitean influenced text, *A Letter to an Honorable Lady*.³³ In the *Letter*, Greville addresses an aristocratic lady who has been forced to suffer the indignities of her husband's inconstancy and numerous infidelities. John Gouws comments that the text attempts to persuade its addressee 'to a life of stoic, Christian patience'³⁴ with the traditional stoic motto, *nec spe nec metu* (neither in hope nor fear), at its core. The importance of this maxim is exemplified in a passage advising the recipient against the temptations offered by hope and fear:

I can not advise you either to complaine, or mutinie against the stronger; for the one discovers inconsiderate weaknesse, the other languishing errors: but rather as the vegetable thinges in the wisdome of nature doe; so advise your *Ladieship* to doe, which is, drawe all your sappe in this winter of thoughts downe to the roote; and be content to want leaves, till the sweet springe of time, or occasion come, to invite them up againe.³⁵

³³ The neo-stoic dimensions of this text are discussed in Joel B. Davis, "'Presidents to themselves': *A Letter to an Honorable Lady*, Merciful Commentary, and Ethical Discourse', *Sidney Journal*, 19, 1-2 (2001), 161-82.

³⁴ John Gouws, introduction to *The Prose Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. xxv.

³⁵ Fulke Greville, *A Letter to an Honorable Lady*, in John Gouws (ed.), *The Prose Works of*

Greville's metaphorical use of the passing of the seasons evokes the cyclical view of fate, with fortune at its lowest ebb eventually giving way to better fate. These words echo those of Cicero when he rebukes Cornelia's constant mourning:

' Then, as the Heavens (by whom our hopes are guided)
 ' Doe coast the Earth with an eternall course,
 ' We must not thinke a miserie betided
 ' Will never cease, but still grow worse and worse.
 ' When Isie Winter's past, then comes the spring,
 ' Whom Sommers pride (with sultrie heate) pursues,
 ' To whom mylde Autumne doth earths treasure bring,
 ' The sweetest season that the wise can chuse.
 (2.128-35)

The repudiation of suicide and the encouragement of forbearance in this difficult time make further connections between stoicism and Christianity. The use of the seasonal metaphors can also be applicable to Kyd's own situation when read against his references to the 'passing of a Winters weeke with desolate *Cornelia*' and the anticipation of his 'Sommers better travell'³⁶. *Cornelia* can, through Cicero's interventions, be read as a contributor to the genre of advice literature to which Greville's *Letter to an Honorable Lady* also contributed. Kyd's preservation of Garnier's use of gnomic pointing to precede lines of particular didactic importance suggests that Kyd had always intended his translation to fall into the category of advice literature. The use of the device in a number of theatrical works, including several of Ben Jonson's plays such as *Cynthia's Revels* and *Sejanus*, indicates the way in which the features of the neo-Senecan coterie drama could potentially be adapted for the needs of the commercial stage. The discourse between Cicero and Cornelia reveals that Cicero is a major proponent of the *nec spe nec metu* maxim:

Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 159.
³⁶ Kyd, p. 104.

But if perhaps some fierce, offended King
(To fright vs) sette pale death before our eyes,
To force vs doe that goes against our hart;
Twere more then base in vs to dread his dart.
But when, for feare of ensuing ill,
We seeke to shorten our appointed race,
Then tis (for feare) that we our selues doe kill,
So fond we are to feare the worlds disgrace.
(2.306-13).

Cicero's speech advises Cornelia, and indeed the readers of the text, to be resilient in the face of tyranny and corrupt government. It is implied that one should not let the forces of tyranny compromise one's integrity or one's principles.

Cornelia eventually defers to the instructions of Cicero and agrees not to commit suicide. Instead, she reaches the conclusion that she must live and dedicate her life to the memory of her dead father and husband, starting with the construction of their tombs. Karen Raber comments that the text suggests that 'aristocratic women who watch their husbands, brothers, and sons fight and die in war can fulfil their highest calling by observing and the memories of such deeds.'³⁷ Cornelia's submission of the memory of Pompey and Scipio to posterity places her in the position of an historian attempting to submit an account of the events which is free from propaganda. Cornelia is therefore responding to fears similar to those articulated by Shakespeare's Cleopatra who anticipates with dread a time when the 'quick comedians / Extemporally will stage us' (5.2.215-6)³⁸ and arrange to have 'Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I'th' posture of a whore' (5.2.219-20). She also reveals her fear that their marital home will be usurped by their enemies:

And must I liue to see great *Pompeys* house

³⁷ Raber, pp. 73-4.

³⁸ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, John Wilders (ed.) (London: Arden Shakespeare, Thomson Learning, 1995, 2004 reprint).

(A house of honour and antiquitie)
Vsurpt in wrong by lawlesse *Anthony*?
Shall I behold the sumptuous ornaments
(Which both the world and Fortune heapt on him)
Adorne and grace his graceles Enemy?
Or see the wealth that *Pompey* gain'd in warre,
Sold at a pike, and borne away by strangers?
(5.437-44).

Although the reference to '*Pompey's* house' can be interpreted as Pompey's dynasty as well as the domestic space, the emphasis upon the 'ornaments' and the reference to the auction would seem to suggest the preoccupation here is with the domestic territory. According to Cornelia's logic, it is in the interests of widows to safeguard the material legacy of their husbands as well as their reputations.

The focus upon the actions of the individual who is forced to endure tyrannical rule is therefore one of the major themes of the text and one which evidences an interest in contemporary republican theories. However, this is not the only way in which such an interest is conveyed, as shown by the appropriation of one of the key episodes championed by the republicans; the chorus that concludes the second act likens Cornelia to Lucretia, the Roman noblewoman whose rape and subsequent suicide prompted her brother, Lucius Junius Brutus, to lead the rebellion which resulted in the downfall of the ruling Tarquin family and its replacement with the republic in 509 BC. According to the chorus, the rise of Julius Caesar as absolute ruler of Rome after the civil wars has caused the empire to lapse back into its former position as a monarchy. They also observe the reappearance of '*vnjust Tarquins* frowne' (2.390) in the contemporary political climate as well as his threat to the '*Romaine valure*' (2.392). They conclude with the hope that a second Brutus will emerge to restore order:

And let another *Brutus* rise,

Brauely to fight in *Romes* defence,
To free our Townte from tyrannie,
And tyrannous proud insolence.
(2.406-9)

The figure of Lucius Junius Brutus re-emerges in the scene featuring Brutus and Cassius in the fourth act when Cassius pleads with Brutus to emulate the achievements of his ancestor:

Yet (as he were the semblance, not the sonne,
Of noble *Brutus*, hys great Grandfather):
As if he wanted hands, sence, sight, or hart,
He doth, deuise, sees, nor dareth ought,
That may exstrie or raze these tyrannies.
(4.1.172-8).

The invocation of Brutus' ancestor is comparable to a similar reference in the first scene between Brutus and Cassius in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

O, you and I have heard our fathers say,
There was a Brutus once who would have brooked
Th'eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king.
(1.2.157-60).³⁹

Once again Brutus is reminded that he is descended from a famous crusader against the tyranny of absolute rule, a fact he himself recognises, as shown by his comment that 'My ancestors did from the streets of Rome / The Tarquin drive, when he was called a king' (2.1.53-4).

As well as reminding Brutus of his ancestry, the allusions to Lucretia also allow the text to engage with a significant contemporary work on the subject of the downfall of the Tarquin regime. William Shakespeare's poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, was written around the same time as *Cornelia* during the period in which the commercial theatres were closed due to an outbreak of plague. Like *Cornelia*, *Lucrece* has an interest in civic liberties under threat and is dedicated

³⁹ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. Norman Sanders (London: Penguin, 1967, 2005 reprint).

to an aristocrat with significant Essexian connections.⁴⁰ The Earl of Southampton was part of a coterie by whom, according to Margot Heinemann, a 'variety of anti-absolutist ideas and oppositional views of history' were 'openly discussed as they could never have been at Court'.⁴¹ Jane O. Newman compares *Lucrece* to Ovid's version of the myth of Philomela, who was raped and mutilated before her tongue was removed by her attacker in order to ensure her silence. Newman argues that, as a contrast, 'Lucrece's continuing ability to speak the story of her shame and to name Tarquin as the rapist thus appears to give her access to a form of political agency that the legendary Philomela is initially and horribly denied.'⁴² Newman goes on to comment that this kind of political climate 'effectively casts Lucretia's suicide as the only form of political intervention available to women.'⁴³ Nevertheless, Katharine Eisaman Maus argues that the text forces its readers to speculate about what might have happened had Lucrece decided to take her revenge by murdering Tarquin rather than killing herself.⁴⁴ Unlike Lucrece, however, Cornelia does not adopt suicide as a means of political intervention; in fact she is repeatedly discouraged from doing so by Cicero. It is implied that such an action is not beneficial in the Rome of Julius Caesar's reign. Whereas Shakespeare's text emphasises 'Tarquin's foul offence'⁴⁵ and the violation of Lucretia's chastity, Kyd's

⁴⁰ For comment upon the text's association with republican traditions, see Hadfield, pp. 130-53. For a more general overview of the resonance of the myth of Lucretia, see Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucrece: A Myth and its Transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

⁴¹ Margot Heinemann, 'Rebel Lords, Popular Playwrights and Political Culture: Notes on the Jacobean Patronage of the Earl of Southampton', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 21 (1991), 63-86 (p. 64).

⁴² Jane O. Newman, "'And Let Mild Women to Him Lose Their Mildness": Philomela, Female Violence, and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45: 3 (1994), 304-26 (p. 308).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Katharine Eisaman Maus, 'Taking Tropes Seriously: Language and Violence in Violence in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37: 1 (1986), 66-82, 67.

⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece* (l. 1852) in Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (eds), *The Complete Works* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), pp. 2412-32.

appropriation of the myth focuses more upon the heroism of Brutus and his decisive response to the offence of Tarquin. In this way, the two texts can be seen as offering contrasting outlooks in their engagement with the same myth.

Cassius further likens the political scene to that of Rome under the Tarquin regime in his attempts to persuade Brutus that, through Julius Caesar, Rome has effectively become a monarchy again:

Brut. But, *Cassius*, *Caesar* is not yet a King.
Cass. No, but Dictator, in effect as much.
He doth what pleaseth hym (a princely thing),
And wherein differ they whose powre is such?
Brut. Hee is not bloody.
Cass. But by bloody iarres
He hath vnpeopled most part of the earth.
(4.1.101-6).

Through the invocation of Tarquin as an absolutist tyrant, and Lucretia and Lucius Junius Brutus as the victims of this tyranny, Cassius is attempting to justify the act he proposes they commit. Lucius Junius Brutus emerges as a figure of legitimate rebellion against a corrupt government. The apparent violence of Caesar's rule has been 'ouer-long endur'd' (4.1.182) and the time has come when they must 'kill out-right, this cause of our distresse' (4.1.185). The outlook of Brutus and Cassius can be likened to contemporary monarchomachist theory, particularly the way in which this political theory advocated tyrannicide, a view embodied in works such as George Buchanan's *De Regni Jure Apud Scotos* and the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* for which the author's pseudonym was, significantly, Junius Brutus. This places their outlook, which appears similar to the kinds of resistance theory circulating in Continental politics through such thinkers as Mornay and Languet, in contrast to the stoic fatalism advocated by Cicero. Cassius refuses to adhere passively to the progress of fate by choosing instead to be an agent of fate and prove himself to

be politically influential. In this way, the forms of republicanism advocated by Brutus and Cassius are placed in opposition to the stoic outlook of the other principal characters.

The chorus which accompanies the scene in which Brutus and Cassius appear seems to provide public approval for their proposed actions:

Who prodigally spends his blood,
Brauely to doe his country good,
And liueth to no other end,
But resolutely to attempt
What may the innocent defend,
And bloody Tyrants rage preuent
(4.1.186-91).

They also predict that the plotters will 'liue in endles memorie' (4.1.203) and envisage a time when 'All after ages shall adore, / And honor him with hymnes therefore' (4.1.204-5). This scene therefore suggests that the proposed assassination of Julius Caesar can be morally justifiable and will meet with public approval.

In the light of the opinions expressed by many of the characters, as well as the chorus figures, relating to Julius Caesar, it may come as something of a surprise to the reader when Caesar finally appears in the fourth act along with Antony and expresses a considerably different view of events to those which have already been advanced. In Garnier's original text, the opposing outlooks are well demonstrated by the contrast in the opening utterances to the first and second scenes of the fourth act with Cassius beginning his speech by referring to the 'Miserable Cité' (26) and Caesar begins with the address 'O superbe Cité' (30).⁴⁶ While Kyd translates Cassius' opening remark as 'Accursed Rome' (4.1.1), his rendering of the latter utterance as 'O Rome' (4.2.1) misses the

⁴⁶ References to Robert Garnier's original French text are from *Cornélie* (Paris: Robert Estienne, 1574).

oppositional nature of the two opening remarks which is present in Garnier. The scene featuring Caesar and Antony begins with a self-congratulatory speech about Caesar's achievements in which he comments that he has energised the empire through foreign conquests:

Are yee not stirred with a strange delight,
To see your *Caesars* matchles victories?
And how your Empire and your praise begins
Through fame, which hee of stranger Nations wins?
(4.2.10-13).

Caesar's emphasis upon the prestige he has gained through foreign conquests provides an active contrast with some of the rhetoric expressed in Lucan's *Civil War* in which the factional strife in Rome is said to be stunting the state's imperial ambitions:

Beneath our yoke already the Seres and barbarian Araxes could
have come and the race, if it exists, which knows Nile's birth.
If your love of an abominable war is so great, Rome,
only when you have brought the entire world beneath the laws of
Latinum,
turn your hand against yourself; not yet are you without an enemy.⁴⁷

Caesar's emphasis upon his foreign conquests thus allows him to distance his state from that represented in Lucan's narrative. For Caesar, as for Lucan, imperial conquests are also a sign of internal stability, a view that has been undermined by the representation of the discontented Brutus and Cassius. The discourse between Caesar and Antony moves towards the way in which such power should be exercised and prompts a stichomythic discussion on kingship in which Caesar, contrary to the image portrayed by other characters, emerges as the more restrained and measured of the two participants:

Caes: Who dares to contradict our Emporie?
Anth: Those whom thy rule hath rob'd of liberty.
Caes: I feare them not whose death is but deferd.

⁴⁷ Lucan, *Civil War* (1.19-23), trans. Susan H. Braund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Anth: I feare my foe, vntill he be interd.
Caes: A man may make his foe his friend, you know.
Anth: A man may easier make his friend his foe.
(4.2.121-6).

While Antony advises Caesar to adopt a rigorous means of exercising his power, Caesar is in favour of a far more benevolent approach. That he should appear as the more liberal voice in this discussion challenges the view of him as a ruthless dictator. In fact, it is even possible to view this incarnation of Caesar as a close parallel to an early modern neo-stoic ruler. While he is willing to accept the power and pomp that fortune has bestowed upon him, he also insists that he is prepared to face the difficulties a ruler must inevitably encounter. His belief, 'Better it is to die then be suspitious' (4.2.157), suggests his alignment with the stoic maxim, *nec spe nec metu*, and his resolve to passively accept events set forth by fate. There is also a reference in Caesar's discourse in which he seems to imply a proto-Christian view of the afterlife when he predicts he will 'Ascend to heauen vpon my winged deeds' (4.2.137). This realisation of the afterlife seems to be influenced by the Christian view rather than that of classical idea of the underworld which is suggested in Cornelia's comment that when she dies she will 'Encrease the number of the ghosts below' (5.465). However, Caesar's view that salvation is attainable through individual merit is at odds with the Protestant outlook of contemporary England. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that Caesar is appropriated, like Cicero, as a prototypical example of Christian stoicism and is also deployed in the play's attempts to negotiate the differences between Christianity and stoic philosophy. This links to Perry's argument in regard to the Christian vocabulary of Cicero:

At first glance, Kyd's tendency to Christianize might seem automatic - the rote transformation of an alien past into familiar Christian vocabulary - but I think there is more going on in the play's Christianizing tendency

than that. What is at stake in this subtext is an uneasy negotiation of the relationship between Roman political history - in which the coming of Caesarism implies the catastrophic loss of native liberties - and providential history - in which Caesarism implies the consolidation of the Roman empire, the coming of Augustus's *Pax Romana*, and ultimately the birth of Christ.⁴⁸

Kyd's text therefore exhibits an acute awareness of the relevance of the story to an English Christian audience. The fact that Caesar is allowed to emerge in this light is evident of the multivocality of Garnier's texts in which all the relevant participants in the action are allowed to express their own comments upon the events taking place.

This section has argued that Kyd's translation presents an awkward relationship between the premises of stoic endurance, which is seen as a positive consolatory outlook with limited political utility, and republican theories of tyrannicide and resistance, which offer approaches contrary to the view of stoic philosophers that one should endure a tyrant's reign with one's virtue intact. The engagement in debates about the potential for practical application of these theories, along with the Tacitean analysis of power and representations of the different courses of action available to politically disenfranchised figures, emphasises that this text is thematically, as well as formally, aligned with Mary Sidney's tragedy.

Samuel Daniel, *Cleopatra*

Like Kyd's translation of *Cornélie*, Samuel Daniel's first tragedy can be seen as a direct response to the Countess of Pembroke's *Antonius*. However, critical discussion of this play has been somewhat limited and has tended to be confined to the relationship between the two versions of the play and Shakespeare's

⁴⁸ Perry, p. 546.

Antony and Cleopatra.⁴⁹ In many ways it is possible to argue that Samuel Daniel is largely responsible for the image of Mary Sidney and her protégés as a humble group of somewhat inept protestors attempting, in the words of Eliot, to ‘make head against the popular melodrama of the time’.⁵⁰ In Daniel’s dedication of his *Cleopatra* (1594) he remarks upon the way his patron, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, has ensured that ‘so many pens, like spears, are charged / To chase away this tyrant of the north, / Gross Barbarism’.⁵¹ Daniel’s rhetoric seems to suggest the existence of a mobilised group of reformers attempting to rectify the transgressions of the popular theatre. However, it is necessary to note that Daniel adopts the usual overblown rhetoric that had become customary in such dedications, a fact that casts doubt over the veracity of much of the sentiment contained within such passages. Nevertheless, it is notable that his choice of vocabulary, particularly his reference to a ‘*tyrant* of the north’, appropriates the rhetoric of armed resistance to tyranny, thus engaging with the kinds of anti-tyrannical resistance theories circulating amongst the intelligentsia in Elizabethan England. Daniel also remarks that his work is one which his patron ‘did impose’⁵², as her ‘well graced *Anthony*... Required his *Cleopatra*’s company’.⁵³ There are also instances in which Daniel consciously emphasises the play’s continuity with *Antony*, in particular the references to Cleopatra’s

⁴⁹ See, for example, Ernest Schanzer, ‘Daniel’s Revision of his *Cleopatra*’, *Review of English Studies*, 8. 32 (1957), 375-81; Arthur M. Z. Norman, ‘Daniel’s *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* and *Antony and Cleopatra*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 9: 1 (1958), 11-18; Brents Stirling, ‘*Cleopatra*’s Scene with Seleucus: Plutarch, Daniel, and Shakespeare’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15: 2 (1964), 299-311. For more general comment on the relationship between Shakespeare’s play and the contemporary coterie drama, see Michael Shapiro, ‘Boying her Greatness: Shakespeare’s use of coterie drama in “*Antony and Cleopatra*”’, *Modern Language Review*, 77: 1 (1982), 1-15.

⁵⁰ T. S. Eliot, ‘Seneca in Elizabethan Translation’ in *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963; 1968 reprint), pp. 11-58 (p. 43).

⁵¹ Samuel Daniel, ‘To the Right Honourable, the Lady Mary, Countess of Pembroke’ in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Readings in Renaissance Women’s Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

‘martred brest’ (2.300) and her ‘untressed locks’ and ‘rent hair’ (3.719) which directly allude to the orders of Sidney’s Cleopatra to her maids to ‘martyr your breasts’ and ‘tear of your hanging hair’. This indicates that Daniel’s play is effectively a sequel to Mary Sidney’s play, at the end of which Cleopatra’s death is anticipated but not conveyed:

A thousand kisses, thousand, thousand more
Let you my mouth for honour’s farewell give,
That in this office weak my limbs may grow,
Fainting on you, and forth my soul may flow.
(5.205-8).

The sense of reluctance Daniel attempts to convey in the prefatory material is also translated in the play’s opening lines which continue from the point at which *Antonius* concludes:

Yet do I live, and yet doth breath extend
My life beyond my life? nor can my grave
Shut up my griefes, to make my end my end.
(1.1-3).

Cleopatra also goes on to ask if she has ‘out-liv’d’ herself (1.7). In this moment it is possible to trace a sense of awkwardness on Daniel’s part in awakening Mary Sidney’s apparently dead heroine, particularly in the observation that Cleopatra’s life has been extended ‘beyond my life’ (1.2). Whether or not this is the case, Daniel is alluding to Cleopatra’s consciousness of the fact that her survival represents a departure from the idea that her fate is pre-determined. This resembles the phenomenon Emily Wilson has labelled ‘tragic overliving’. Wilson’s observation of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, that he ‘disintegrates as a dramatic character’⁵⁴, can be applied just as relevantly to Daniel’s Cleopatra. Her lament that ‘th’honor, wonder, glory, pompe, and all / Of *Cleopatra*’ (1.5-6) is dead while she herself remains alive initiates an important moment of

⁵⁴ Emily R. Wilson, *Mocked with Death: Tragic Overliving from Sophocles to Milton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 114.

existential doubt after all that defined her as human has practically evaporated. Early stoics, most notably Seneca, were keen to comment upon the fact that the importance of life lies not in the length to which one can prolong it, but to how well one can live it.⁵⁵ If the qualities such as 'th'honor, wonder, glory, pompe' of Cleopatra have vanished then, in a stoic view, she is living a very superficial life, having been deprived of the features she prized in life, placing her in a kind of existential limbo.

The theme of deferring death is also developed in the discussion which takes place between the philosophers Philostratus and Arius in the third act. Philostratus had previously appeared in Mary Sidney's tragedy and Arius is also a character in Robert Garnier's *Porcie*; their acquaintanceship is also recorded in Plutarch. The debate between them is initiated by Philostratus' rhetorical question, 'Who doth not toile and labour to adorne / The day of death, by any meanes he can?' (3.499-500). This question comes directly before he rebukes himself for his 'base begging of a servile breath' (3.502) in his attempts 'shamefully to seeke t'avoide my death' (3.504). Attempts at prolonging one's life would most likely have been interpreted by stoics as contrary to their prime maxim of avoiding the temptations offered by hope and fear. However, Arius assures Philostratus that such apparent weaknesses 'Possesseth all alike' (3.506) and that 'Though we speake more then men, we are but men' (3.508). Here Daniel seems to advocate a far more sympathetic form of stoic philosophy which accepts the inevitable failings of men in the face of adversity. This could also be evidence of stoic ideals tempered by the influence of Christianity. In a traditional stoic outlook, suicide represents, as Wilson observes, 'a release from

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 93.

tyranny and torture'⁵⁶, a view that is not compatible with Christian thoughts on the subject. This dialogue also brings under scrutiny another element of Sidney's publication, her translation of Mornay's *Discourse of Life and Death*, in which the view that 'to ende wel this life, is onely to ende it willingly'⁵⁷, one which is rejected by Philostratus and Arius who sympathise with the human desire for self-preservation, and so questions the practical utility of Mornay's outlook and provides a direct contrast with the course of action favoured by Cleopatra.

As well as the belief in determinism, Arius also reaffirms the existence of the cyclical view of history marking a constant transition from moments of pomp and splendour towards a period of decline. He comments that 'the ever-changing course of things / Runne a perpetuall circle, ever turning' (3.549-50). This view is also voiced by Cleopatra in the first act through her reference to 'Summer Swallowes of felicitie' (1.44), appropriating the image of the migrating bird which will inevitably return the following summer. The example of the swallow, as representative of the fickle nature of fortune through the way in which it follows the summer heat, alludes to the stoic paradigm of the progress of the seasons which is evident in both the translations of Garnier by Sidney and Kyd along with Fulke Greville's *A Letter to an Honorable Lady*.

Cleopatra's emphasis upon the qualities of wonder, glory, and pomp align her more to the character Shakespeare would go on to present than to Mary Sidney's realisation of the figure. While Sidney presented a Cleopatra notable for the way in which she was purged of her exoticism and aligned to the ethnic and cultural characteristics of the early modern European aristocrat, Daniel shifts the focus

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 114.

⁵⁷ Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, *A Discourse of Life and Death* (London: William Ponsonby, 1592), E1v.

to emphasise her 'otherness'. As MacDonald observes, the text 'perceives Romans and Egyptians as having two separate and unalterably opposed identities.'⁵⁸ This feature of Daniel's text anticipates the polarisation of the Egyptian and Roman cultures that is apparent in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Rome connotes 'strictnesse' (1.65) while the chorus evoke a suitably exotic view of 'Misterious Egypt, wonder breeder' (4.1188). Cleopatra herself speaks of her 'lascivious Court' (1.159) and refers to her children by Antony as the 'lucklesse issue of a wofull mother, / The wretched pledges of a wanton bed' (1.83-4), thus characterising them as her illegitimate offspring. She also confesses that her 'vagabond desires no limites found' (1.163), clearly marking her as a lustful exotic alternative to the Roman imperatives of strictness and restraint Antony has been trained to follow. The chorus figure expresses the hope that Egypt's decadence will prove contagious to its Roman conquerors and corrupt the strict and rigorous virtues they prize:

That Egypts pleasures so delightfull,
 may breed them the like offences.
 And Romans learne our way of weakenes,
 be instructed in our vices:
 That our spoiles may spoile your greatnes,
 overcome with our devises.
 Fill full your hands, and carry home
 Enough from us to ruine Rome.
 (3.1250-1257).

Daniel's take on the story therefore refutes the revaluation of Cleopatra offered by Sidney's text and represses the cultural affinities between the two civilisations to which her text alludes. MacDonald comments that Cleopatra's sexuality is 'acculturated and racialized, just as the whiteness of Pembroke's Cleopatra occurs within the context of sexual guilt for having lured Antony

⁵⁸ Joyce Green MacDonald, *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 39.

away from his Roman obligations.’⁵⁹ Raber argues that Daniel’s rethink of Sidney’s Cleopatra represents something of a backward step, commenting that he presents a Cleopatra who is ‘in a sense emptied of gender’⁶⁰ and one who is reduced to ‘merely a pattern of universal and hence masculine individual sovereignty.’⁶¹ This notion is indicated by the references in a stichomythic exchange between Caesar and Proculeius, in which they refer to Cleopatra under the broadly generalised term of ‘prince’:

PRO: Can princes powre dispence with nature than?

CAES: To be a prince, is more then be a man.

PRO: There’s none but have in time perswaded beene.

CAES: And so might she too, were she not a Queene.

PRO: Divers respects will force her be reclaim’d.

CAES: Princes (like Lions) never will be tam’d.

(2.385-90)

Cleopatra is here made to conform to Caesar’s generalised and non gender specific models of kingship, thereby presenting her as, in the words of Raber, ‘the pattern of universal subjectivity’⁶². However, at the same time this attempt at enforcing this idea of ‘universal subjectivity’ suggests that Caesar has actually recognised Cleopatra’s monarchical authority by inserting her into this broad political framework. The use of the word ‘prince’, in particular, could allude to the way in which Elizabeth I would apply the term to herself.⁶³

Many of the minor characters in Mary Sidney’s text attempt to persuade Cleopatra not to go through with the suicide she proposes by reminding her of her political and maternal duties. Ultimately, Cleopatra rejects these demands on both these duties and asserts her identity primarily as Antony’s wife, thus

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 40.

⁶⁰ Raber, p. 106.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 107.

⁶² Ibid, p. 106.

⁶³ On Elizabeth’s adoption of the term ‘prince’, see Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 56-7.

subordinating her roles as queen and mother. In Daniel's text, the position is reversed with Cleopatra claiming, 'I must be a Queene, forget a mother, / Though mother would I be, were I not I; / And Queene would not be now, could I be other' (1.96-8). In the report by Caesar's adviser, Proculeius, of his encounter with Cleopatra, he relates her appeal that 'my poore *Caesario* may / Finde favour notwithstanding mine offences, / And *Caesars* bloud, may *Caesars* raging stay' (2.353-5). Here, one of Cleopatra's main concerns is that *Caesario*, her son by Julius Caesar, should be allowed to live safely. Rodon later describes *Caesario* as the 'best and deerest treasure of her bloud... whom she would should live / Free from the dangers wherein Egypt stoode' (4.860-2). Daniel can be seen actively shifting the focus of concern away from that of Mary Sidney's Cleopatra.

One major factor the plays share, however, is the attention they provide to the suffering of the people and the exhibition of the far-reaching consequences of the actions of the major characters. The first chorus laments that Antony and Cleopatra, 'by their doing ill, / Have wrought the worlds unrest' (1.199-200). The concentration upon the impact of the events upon the ordinary people is shown most clearly by the play's argument which states that, as a result of their actions, 'came the race of the *Ptolomies* to be wholly extinct, and the flourishing rich kingdome of Egypt utterly overthrown and subdued.' Daniel's play can therefore be read as a cautionary tale against political irresponsibility and a stark warning of the consequences of neglecting duties of state. The emphasis upon the far-reaching effects of the political manoeuvrings of the major characters acts as a significant reminder of the responsibilities of political leaders. This message is one that could easily be targeted at contemporary England; as

Paulina Kewes argues, Daniel emphasises ‘facets of Cleopatra’s character and conduct which might well have suggested affinities with England’s queen’⁶⁴ with the aim of preventing the fate that has befallen Egypt being realised in England.⁶⁵ The prospect of civil war and the representation of the loss of national identity and occupation by a foreign power resonate with contemporary concerns about the English response to the threat of Spanish expansion, marking it as a play with clear militant Protestant sympathies.

Daniel’s emphasis upon Cleopatra’s pre-occupation with the fate of her children, at the expense of the state, serves to undermine the image constructed by Sidney of a figure attempting to be both a good queen and a good mother, thus repressing many of the issues raised in that text. The plays are on more common ground, however, through their interests in stoic consolation and the constitutional issues provoked in the political sphere, providing further evidence of this dramatic form’s use as a means of interrogating humanist axioms and contemporary politics.

Samuel Brandon, *The vertuous Octavia*

Very little is known about the origins of Samuel Brandon’s play and the author is, according to Joseph Knight, a figure about whose life ‘no particulars whatever are preserved’.⁶⁶ The *Octavia* and a set of epistolary texts between Antony and Octavia which were published along with the drama in 1598 are his only known works. These texts have hardly enjoyed a favourable critical reception. Witherspoon dismissed the play as ‘a rather servile imitation of

⁶⁴ Paulina Kewes, “‘A Fit Memorial for the Times to Come...’: Admonition and Topical Application in Mary Sidney’s *Antonius* and Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*’, *Review of English Studies* (online preview, 2011; forthcoming in print), 14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Lamb, p. 199.

Daniel',⁶⁷ a point with which Joan Rees concurs.⁶⁸ While there is no solid evidence to suggest that Brandon had any contact with the Countess of Pembroke, the possibility of such an association cannot be ruled out. Mary Ellen Lamb suggests that his contact may have been through Daniel, whose *Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius* he may have seen in manuscript,⁶⁹ and points out that the play's dedicatee, Lucia, Lady Audelay, was a resident of Fonthill, less than twenty miles away from Mary Sidney's estate at Wilton.⁷⁰ Eve Rachele Sanders goes as far as to comment that in the dedication 'Brandon pointedly refers to Lady Lucia Audelay as "Rare Phoenix," an appellation which was associated with Mary Sidney and might well have been addressed to another noblewoman as a slight to Sidney.'⁷¹ Lamb deploys the rather tenuous nature of the connection between Sidney and Brandon as a means of expanding her argument that there was never a literary circle headed by Mary Sidney whose aim was to oppose the commercial theatre. Brandon's appropriation of the epilogue, in which he observes that 'claps crowne the Tragicke Pen' (I1)⁷² seems to suggest an imagined theatrical audience for whose applause he appeals, rather than the elite domestic audience of other neo-Senecan dramas.

Nevertheless, it remains quite clear that Brandon was influenced by the neo-Senecan form introduced into England by the Countess of Pembroke's *Antonius*.

It is possible to view the texts by Brandon, Daniel and the Countess of

⁶⁷ Witherspoon, p. 112.

⁶⁸ Joan Rees, *Samuel Daniel: A Critical and Biographical Study* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), pp. 78-81. Rees regards Brandon's two texts as Daniel's 'literary offspring' (p. 78).

⁶⁹ Rees, pp. 78-9, and Ruth Hughey (ed.), *The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry*, 2 vols, n. 383.

⁷⁰ Lamb, p. 199.

⁷¹ Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 123.

⁷² Samuel Brandon, *The Tragicomoedi of the vertuous Octauia. Done by Samuel Brandon* (London: William Ponsonby, 1598). All subsequent citations refer to this edition.

Pembroke as part of a loose thematic trilogy, or potentially a tetralogy if one were to count Fulke Greville's lost *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which events from roughly the same period of time are examined from different perspectives. While Sidney and Daniel concentrate upon the characters in the Egyptian camp, with occasional interludes featuring the Roman characters, Brandon's perspective is decidedly Roman. His protagonist does not appear in Sidney or Daniel's texts, yet her influence upon the events taking place is suggested. Antony's opening soliloquy in Mary Sidney's text has him observe that Caesar's campaign against him is a means of enacting 'just revenge of sister's wrong, my wife',⁷³ while Daniel's Cleopatra articulates her fear of the prospect of being placed on public display before Octavia, her Roman counterpart. But Brandon's text is unique in neo-Senecan drama, and largely unprecedented in English drama as a whole, for the attention it pays to her. Despite her absence from English drama, however, Octavia would still have emerged as a very resonant figure in Brandon's text, bringing with her a number of contexts. Fulke Greville had appropriated her in his *Letter to an Honorable Lady* as an example of stoic constancy, a trait which he advises the letter's recipient to emulate. Octavia, he argues, 'remayned still [Antony's] good Angell with *Octavius*'⁷⁴ and comments that in her 'course of moderation, she neither made the world her judge; nor the market her Theater; but contented her sweete minde with the triumphes of patience, and made solitarinesse the tombe of her fame'.⁷⁵ Greville therefore characterises Octavia as a virtuous counterpart to Cleopatra as well as an admirable exponent of stoic dignity, constancy, and morality.

Although it is estimated that *A Letter to an Honorable Lady* was not

⁷³ Sidney, *Antonius*, 1.9.

⁷⁴ Greville, *A Letter to an Honorable Lady*, in ed. John Gouws, p. 159.

⁷⁵ Greville, p. 167.

completed until 1601,⁷⁶ three years after the publication of Brandon's *Octavia*, it still provides an insight into some of the associations of the figure of Octavia that would have been available to Brandon while he was writing his text. Similar contexts are utilised in Daniel's epistolary verse, the *Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius*, which it is quite possible that Brandon saw in manuscript form before its entry in the Stationers' Register.⁷⁷ In Daniel's text Octavia refers to herself as Antony's 'wronged wife' (B2)⁷⁸ while Antony is the 'disloiall Lord' (B2) who has been dallying in 'th'armes of that incestuous Queene, / The staine of Ægypt, and the shame of Rome' (B2). Joyce Green MacDonald comments that the 'impious loue' (B2) which Octavia observes in Antony's dalliance with Cleopatra would, in the view of their Roman contemporaries, 'be one which violates the standards of the Roman *pietas*: devotion to the good name of one's family and the welfare of Rome, and submission to the will of the gods.'⁷⁹ It is therefore implied that Antony's affair with Cleopatra effaces his Roman heritage, a view which most likely informs Octavia's conclusion that Antony must 'despise his Children, *Rome* and me' (B3). Octavia characterises herself in opposition to that which she sees as the deviance of Antony and Cleopatra. She proclaims, 'ere lust this heart shall frame, / Earth swallow me aliue, Hell rap me hence:' (B4), thus prizing her virtues of constancy and fidelity which she views as quintessentially Roman in origin. It is therefore possible to find traces of intertextuality between Brandon's play and the texts by Daniel and Greville. Indeed, Karen Raber goes as far as to suggest that these

⁷⁶ John Gouws, 'Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554–1628)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11516>, accessed 5 July 2008].

⁷⁷ Hughey, p. 383.

⁷⁸ Samuel Daniel, *The Poeticall essayes of Sam. Danyell* (London: Simon Waterson, 1599).

⁷⁹ MacDonald, p. 40.

texts ‘comprise a mini-genre of literature after which a female readership might well have been expected to fashion its responses to domestic strife’.⁸⁰ One can argue that these texts are linked by the advancement of the virtues of a stoic outlook as a means of enduring a bad marriage. Sanders regards Brandon’s play as an attempt to reclaim such associations for the figure of Octavia as a contrast to Mary Sidney’s positive characterisation of Cleopatra: ‘Brandon implies that Sidney is unable to distinguish between ideal and anti-ideal and is, therefore, herself in need of correction.’⁸¹ The contrast between Brandon’s text and Sidney’s is also conveyed through Octavia likening herself to Prometheus, a comparison which Antonius had advanced in the earlier play:

O poore *Promethius*, now I feele thy paines,
 Greefes greedie vulture feedes vpon my heart:
 Vpon my head a shower of mischiefe raines,
 And all the heauens conclude to work my smart.
 (F4v).

Prometheus is thus appropriated as a frame for Octavia’s suffering rather than Antonius’ downfall. Octavia’s appropriation is similar to the use of the figure in Lipsius’s *De Constantia* as a motif to represent the internal suffering of the interlocutor. Here, the appropriation thus takes on specific resonance as an emblem of the pain caused by constancy.

Octavia therefore emerges as a paragon of stoic virtue in the face of the indignities inflicted upon her by her husband’s vices. Greville’s text suggests the ease with which she could be appropriated as an exemplary model to women suffering similar indignities. The lack of information about the marriage of Brandon’s dedicatee, Lucia Audelay, means it would be unsubstantiated conjecture to hypothesise that Brandon’s text had a similar consolatory agenda

⁸⁰ Raber, p. 110.

⁸¹ Sanders, p. 122.

towards his patron; however, there is evidence that Lucia Audelay and her family were in the midst of a domestic crisis during the period in which *The vertuous Octavia* was written and published due to the clandestine marriage of Lucia's daughter, Maria Touchet, to Thomas Thynne, a member of a family with whom the Touchets were bitter enemies.⁸² In terms of this reading, although Brandon's text does not emerge as a consolatory text in the sense of providing comfort to an abused wife, the concentration upon Octavia has distinct resonance. Octavia, like the play's dedicatee, is a passive observer who is powerless to influence the events surrounding an unauthorised conjugal union with political imperatives. However, unlike Octavia, it seems that Lucia Audelay had been in favour of the marriage. The play therefore emerges as a consolatory text through the way in which it upholds Octavia as an exemplar of stoic fortitude and forbearance against a situation which she has no power to influence. It also offers her a more desirable alternative to that which was most likely seen as an impulsive union in defiance of the interests of the others involved, thus subtly undermining her positive stance towards the union.

Brandon's Octavia continually asserts her stoic integrity in the face of Antony's infidelity throughout the play, repeatedly fashioning what is due to become her reputation as a paragon of stoic forbearance and a future role model for domestic constancy:

Octavia, liue, and shew thy selfe a Queene,
Tread thou my path, make constancy thy guide;
...*Antonius* fall, his owne disgrace procures,

⁸² A detailed examination of the marriage can be found in Alison Wall, 'For Love, Money, or Politics? A Clandestine Marriage and the Elizabethan Court of Arches', *Historical Journal*, 38: 3 (1995), 511-33. Correspondence between Joan and Maria Thynne is reproduced in A. D. Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611* (Wiltshire: Wiltshire Records Society, 1983). The representations of the Touchet family in literature are also considered in Lisa Hopkins, 'Touching Touchets: *Perkin Warbeck* and the Buggery Statute', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52: 2 (1999), 384-401.

His is the fault, and on his head shall fall,
The storme of mischiefes deep-reuenging showers:
When thine own worth, in heauen shal thee enstall.
His is the fault, but what? mine is the wronge.
(C1).

Octavia's resolve is to adhere to her stoic principles in spite of the provocation she faces and to retain her integrity. Her view is summed up by her response to Caesar's question, 'And is it vertue then to be misused?' (D2), that virtue lies in enduring such a situation and ensuring that one should 'give no cause why we should be abused' (D2). In order to legitimise her outlook, she makes extensive use of nuptial rhetoric:

Did not he sweare on that our nuptiall day,
By all the sacred rights we holy deeme,
By those immortall powers which we obaye,
By all things els which dearly we esteem.
By his right hand, by this our wedding ring,
By all that mought a perfect truthe entend:
One time, one day, one houre; should surely bring,
His life, and loue vnto a finall end.
(B8-B8v).

The use of marital language emphasises the contrast between Octavia's fidelity and Antony's dalliance with Cleopatra. Octavia's viewpoint is ratified by the observation by Camilla in the second act that 'A patient minde, must stand her grace instead, / Till time and wisdom, may his loue conuert' (C1v). Octavia's actions are also approved by the chorus, generally appropriated in neo-Senecan drama as metonymic of public opinion:

*She winnes immortall fame,
Whiles he who should excell:
Dishonour'd hath his name,
And by his weaknesse fell.
For double shame he dooth deserue,
Who being guide dooth soonest swarue.*
(B4v).

The chorus also dismiss Antony as a 'Thrice woman conquered man' (B5),

which provides added significance to Octavia's assertion of her monogamy.

Octavia's decision to pursue that which she sees as a virtuous existence in response to Antony's inconstancy is debated and contrasted in a short section of the second act in which three women discuss the events. Of particular resonance in this section is the view espoused by Sylvia, described in the *dramatis personae* as 'a licentious woman', whose outlook can be considered antithetical to that of Octavia:

Well, let them talke of vertue, those that list,
Of patience, iustice and of constancie;
For me, I thinke the Empresse sure hath mist,
The onely way to cure this maladie.
Buy liuing fame that list, with pinching paine,
And starue them selues with feeding fond conceipt:
Were I *Octauia* I would entertaine
His double dealing, with as fine a sleight.
(C2).

Sylvia's proposed hypothetical response to Antony's infidelity appears to be in binary opposition to the outlook of Octavia, a point reinforced by Octavia's repudiation of this proposed course of action in the third act:

Cruell to me, selfe-wronging *Antony*,
Thy follie shall not make *Octauia* sinne:
Ile be as true in vertuous constancie,
As thou art false and infamous therein.
Ile be as famous for a vertuous wife,
As thou notorious for so leawd a life.
(C8).

Octavia's insistence is that she will not stoop to the level of Antony's transgressions and adopt a similar position to that which Sylvia proposes. It is significant that Sylvia's rhetoric largely eschews the sense of propriety one would expect to find in a tragedy with pretensions towards neo-classical decorum, a move which is likely to contribute to the play's status as a tragic-comedy. However, rather than merely acting as a foil to the virtues represented

by Octavia, Sylvia in fact, as Yvonne Bruce argues, serves to complicate it, casting 'into doubt the morality expressed by the play's principals'.⁸³ This is particularly evident in Sylvia's speeches repudiating the idea of constancy, which, Bruce argues, was a somewhat vexed and slippery ideal.⁸⁴ Sylvia goes on to argue against this ideal:

Why constancie is that which marreth all.
A weake conceipt which cannot wrongs resist,
A chaine it is which bindes our selues in thrall,
And gives men scope to vse vs as they list
(C2v).

Sylvia's logic is difficult to dispute and serves to complicate the status of the play as a piece of consolatory advice literature, providing an alternative to the direction pursued by Octavia.

Octavia, as a woman who remains true to her marital vows in spite of the temptation to repudiate them and her inconstant husband, acts as a role model for the patriarchal view of the Renaissance aristocratic wife. However, according to Marta Straznicky, Sylvia represents a challenge to patriarchal expectations because she claims the kind of sexual liberty seemingly exclusive to men and is also prepared to compare her situation with that of an aristocratic male.⁸⁵ In spite of Camilla's view that 'Of straying, falling, and I wot not what,/ So many words hath *Syluia* spent in vaine:/ That time, and truth, and purpose are forgot' (C4), and that Sylvia's input has been little more than a mere digression, her presence still has a significant effect upon the play and imbues it with the kind of multi-vocality characteristic of Garnier's brand of drama, in which one viewpoint is not left unchallenged.

⁸³ Yvonne Bruce, "'That which marreth all': Constancy and Gender in *The Virtuous Octavia*", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 22 (2009), 42-59 (p. 53).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-6.

⁸⁵ Marta Straznicky, "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes': *The Tragedie of Mariam* and *Sidneian Closet Drama*", *English Literary Renaissance*, 24 (1994), 104-34 (p. 121).

Octavia also embodies the passive role of the state housewife whose position, in this case, is further compromised by the fact that her husband and brother are in opposition to one another, thus complicating the nature of family loyalty.

Octavia herself addresses this issue in the fourth act:

Since these two Emperours whose princely hands,
Doe sway the scepter of the *Romaine* state:
The one my brother, linkt in natures bands,
The other is my spouse and louing mate...
This *Roome*, my Lords and all the world beside,
Make me the obiect of their wondring eyes.
(D8v).⁸⁶

Octavia's situation therefore provides an extreme example of the plight of the noble aristocratic wife who is forced to remain powerless in the affairs in which her male relatives are obliged to intervene. The concentration upon Octavia who, as I have argued above, emerges as a virtuous yet politically impotent character, along with the text's status as an example of consolatory advice literature, effectively marginalises the political aspects. It is most probably for this reason that the play is described by its author as a tragi-comedy, due to the exclusion of its protagonist from the political manoeuvring of her brother and husband. Antony, the potential tragic hero, never appears but remains the subject of much comment. Even Caesar, the play's most politically powerful character, seems decidedly disengaged from the political process during the exchanges with his sister. In utterances such as his view that 'you and we in vaine haue done our best, / To stay his foote out of the sincke of sinne' (C8v), he emerges as little more than an arbiter of morality rather than Antony's political nemesis.

The marginalisation of politics and the departure from republican themes is

⁸⁶ There is an error in the 1598 edition of the text in which the subsequent page is marked 'D' instead of 'E'; the page after is correctly labelled 'E2'.

signalled in Octavia's opening speech in which she evokes a 'golden time' (A5), which, as Yvonne Bruce suggests, is 'neither exclusively pagan nor Christian.'⁸⁷

In this speech, which contains an abundance of pastoral tropes, Octavia addresses the 'pretty byrdes' as 'Free Cittizens' (A5) but comments that humanity is 'Still subiect to sorrowes tyranny;/ Slaues to mischance, vassals of fortunes power' (A5). According to the logic of Octavia's speech, nature is allowed to enjoy free citizenship of that which Octavia views as a golden world, whilst humanity is subject to sorrow, which Octavia regards as a tyrant, thus acting as a means of evoking the limited political freedom of the characters in the play. Republican citizenship, it is implied, is confined to the classical golden age and cannot be retrieved in the contemporary world, presided over by the tyrannical regime of Caesar. Such a view links with that expressed at the beginning of Fulke Greville's *A Treatise of Monarchy* in which he also evokes the golden age in which 'nature raig'n'd, in stead of lawes, or artes:/ And mortall Goddes with men made upp the glory/ Of one republique, by united heartes'.⁸⁸ Both texts seem to imply that a republic is only a viable option in a golden age uncontaminated by human passions.⁸⁹ This marks something of a divergence from the view espoused by the character of Seneca in the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, in which politics is defined as a decidedly post-lapsarian activity.⁹⁰

In spite of the lack of explicit political comment, *Octavia* can still be read as a text with political resonance. Although she is not a ruler, the plight of Octavia as a public figure caught in the middle of a political dispute between two powerful

⁸⁷ Bruce, p. 52.

⁸⁸ Fulke Greville, *A Treatise of Monarchy* (1.2-4).

⁸⁹ This trope is explored in Jean-Christophe Mayer, "'Bothe kinge, and people seem'd conjoyn'd in one": Fulke Greville and the Question of Political Power', *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 60 (2001), 43-52.

⁹⁰ *Octavia*, ll. 373-434 in E. F. Watling (ed.), *Four Tragedies and 'Octavia'* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

factions is similar to that of Elizabeth as a result of the polarisation of the advisors at her court. Octavia's engagement in the *vita activa* is both dependent upon and restricted by the male characters. Similarly, she is also dependent upon the male characters to promulgate her public image as a model of stoic virtue and constancy, both within the world of the play and in contemporary England. We have also seen the ways in which the evocation of Octavia could be politicised or used to advance a particular agenda, as is the case in Greville's *Letter to an Honorable Lady*. Octavia's lack of political agency can also be seen in relation to contemporary politics in a climate in which anxieties over the succession represented the negative consequences of the celebration of Elizabeth as a chaste and virginal ruler. During the late 1580s and 1590s this image of Elizabeth faced something of a backlash; as Leah Marcus points out, rumours about Elizabeth's sexual appetites 'had plagued the queen throughout her reign, but became particularly rife in the 1580s and early 1590s.'⁹¹ Paulina Kewes has also shown there was evidence that anxieties over the succession had provoked 'a fair amount of private discussion, gossip, and chatter at taverns and alehouses all of which gravely alarmed the authorities determined to scotch public scrutiny of matters of state.'⁹² Paul E. J. Hammer has also shown how the queen's reputation was severely dented by a series of sexual scandals at her court in the early 1590s.⁹³ The anxieties over the succession also manifested themselves in the form of rumours that Edward VI was still alive and in the appearance in 1587 of a young man claiming to be Arthur Dudley, the

⁹¹ Marcus, p. 70.

⁹² Kewes, 17-18.

⁹³ Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Sex and the Virgin Queen: Aristocratic Concupiscence and the Court of Elizabeth I', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 31: 1 (2000), 77-97.

illegitimate son of Elizabeth and Leicester.⁹⁴ The prevalence of such rumours at a time when anxieties over the succession were at their height suggests that they represented a concerted backlash against Elizabeth's public image, rather than simple commonplace tittle-tattle. The range of negative responses to Elizabeth's treatment of the question of the succession and the negative side of her image as the virgin queen suggest another dimension to Brandon's play. The representation of Octavia, a figure whose constancy and chastity are publicly celebrated and compared with the views of Sylvia, and her limited political agency reveal that the consolatory aspect of this text can be directed not just towards marginalised political groups and beleaguered aristocratic housewives, but also towards the queen herself.

With its emphases upon constancy in the face of overwhelming provocation and the importance of upholding one's virtue in the midst of a hostile political climate over which the individual has no control, Brandon's text taps into the culture of neo-stoicism. Octavia's resolve to retain her virtue and her refusal to approve of Caesar's plan to exact vengeance upon Antony is evidence of the play's attempt to assert the compatibility of the apparently rival outlooks of Christianity and stoicism which is in line with the development of neo-stoicism. The consolatory tone of the piece can therefore be seen as applicable not only to the troubled aristocratic wives as a means of helping them endure the effects of the vices of their wayward husbands, but also to the frustrated aristocratic advisors struggling to make their voices heard amidst the factionalism of the court in the 1590s. As other chapters will show, the attempt to appeal to such figures can already be seen in the work of Mary Sidney and will emerge as such

⁹⁴ For comment, see Marcus, p. 60.

in the tragedies of Fulke Greville and, to some extent, those of William Alexander. On these grounds, Brandon's text can therefore be considered in political alignment with the other plays in the neo-Senecan form which populate this study.

This chapter has examined three texts which provide evidence of the influence of Mary Sidney's *Antonius* as a precedent for the thematic as well as the formal features which would come to be associated with neo-Senecan drama. The works by Brandon and Daniel both focus upon the plight of a female protagonist caught in the middle of the political manoeuvring over which they have no control, whilst Kyd's play uses its range of characters to explore the different options available for responding to the actions of a tyrant. The examination of these problems is complemented by their attention to such matters as the effects of political actions upon the ordinary people, the dangers of civil strife, the scope for stoic consolation to alleviate these difficulties, and questions concerning political responsibility and the ethics of tyrannicide all show that these authors are able to use their plays as a space for the interrogation of pressing political and ethical issues. As we shall see, these points emphasise the alignment of these plays with the other neo-Senecan dramas in this study and are suggestive of a conscious engagement in an emerging dramatic tradition.

Chapter Three

Giving Tyrants Fame: Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham*

Now to return to the tragedies remaining, my purpose in them was not (with the ancient) to exemplify the disastrous miseries of man's life, where order, laws, doctrine and authority are unable to protect innocence from the exorbitant wickedness of power, and so, out of that melancholy vision, stir horror of murmur against divine providence, nor yet (with the modern) to point out God's revenging aspect upon every particular sin, to the despair or confusion of mortality; but rather to trace out the highways of ambitious governors, and to show in the practice of life that the more audacity, advantage and good success such sovereignties have, the more they hasten to their own desolation and ruin.¹

In his *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, Fulke Greville sought to distinguish his own dramatic works from both the ancient and the contemporary forms of tragedy by asserting their political relevance, particularly through his representations of the abuse of the unique autonomy possessed by governors and tyrants. This is a contrast to Greville's own lack of this level of personal autonomy, another factor which emerged in his writings.² The apparent intention for his dramatic writings to be construed as cautionary tales of the dangers of overarching ambition is also suggested in his account of his third, now lost, dramatic work. Greville's description of his motivation for destroying his *Antony and Cleopatra* play leaves scholars with a tantalising glimpse of the lost text and a means of speculating about its contents:

Lastly, concerning the tragedies themselves, they were in their first creation three, whereof *Antony and Cleopatra*, according to their irregular passions in foresaking empire to follow sensuality, were sacrificed in the fire; the executioner, the author himself, not that he conceived it to be a contemptible younger brother to the rest, but lest, while he seemed to look over-much upward, he might stumble into the

¹ Fulke Greville, *A Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney* in John Gouws (ed.), *The Prose Works of Fulke Greville Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 133.

² For the connections between Greville's political career and his literary works, see Ronald A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971) and Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628: A Critical Biography* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

astronomer's pit: many members in that creature (by the opinion of those eyes which saw it) having some childish wantonness in them apt enough to be construed or strained to a personating of vices in the present governors and government.³

This cautious act of self-censorship indicates Greville's awareness of the topicality of his work and the potential for it to pose awkward questions about the government which could have proved themselves injurious to his political career in the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. Although Greville's surviving dramas, *Mustapha* and *Alaham*, take place in the Ottoman empire and the Persian Gulf respectively, his account of the destruction of his Antony and Cleopatra play aligns him with his fellow neo-Senecan dramatists for whom, as we have seen in the previous chapters, Rome was the most frequently used location. However, Victor Skretkowicz argues that Greville here creates 'a new kind of drama, an erotic political anti-romance, in which mature and passionate world leaders fall in love, are torn apart and are destroyed.'⁴ He also points out that Greville departs from the precedent of both Mary Sidney and of Plutarch: 'blaming both Antony and Cleopatra for ignoring their political responsibilities goes well beyond Plutarch, whose criticism of sensual excess and dereliction of duty is aimed particularly at Antony.'⁵ However, as this chapter will argue, it is not only through these means that Greville engages with his contemporary neo-Senecans, but also through his use of the medium in order to address a number of key political issues and interrogate the values of both stoicism and republicanism.

The work of Fulke Greville has never enjoyed much more than cult appeal. F.

³ Ibid, p. 93.

⁴ Victor Skretkowicz, *European Erotic Romance: Philhellene Protestantism, Renaissance Translation and English Literary Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 247.

⁵ Ibid.

L. Lucas, rather unusually considering his views on the Renaissance neo-Senecan dramas, compliments Greville's tragedies for 'showing how a profound and highly original mind could accept the Senecan mould, wherein to cast in silence its own strange new alloys of thought.'⁶ T. S. Eliot also praised Greville for his 'gift for sententious declamation' but also commented on his 'dullness'.⁷ Similar ambivalence is provoked in Ivor Morris, who argues that in 'his ranging spirit of metaphysical inquiry and reference, Greville is the most Elizabethan of all Elizabethans' but goes on to remark that the view that he was 'the worst dramatist of them all needs no urging.'⁸ It is not only the apparent academic and untheatrical nature of Greville's dramas that has dogged scholarship; the image of Greville as an obscure poet constantly living under the shadow of his mentor, Sir Philip Sidney, has served to undermine his own achievements. Scholarship on Greville has therefore been somewhat limited. The nearest thing we have to a recent full-length study on Greville's works is a special double edition of the *Sidney Journal* from 2001. Notable studies of Greville's dramas have included Jonathan Dollimore's reading of *Mustapha* as a study of divine dislocation,⁹ David Norbrook's situation of the plays within the context of Greville's attitudes towards 'voluntary servitude',¹⁰ and Karen Raber's study of the use of

⁶ F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p. 114.

⁷ T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963; repr. 1968), p. 45. Eliot elsewhere suggests that Greville, because of the non-canonical nature of his work, 'has never received quite his due' (p. 166).

⁸ Ivor Morris, 'The Tragic Vision of Fulke Greville', *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1961), 66-75 (p.66).

⁹ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989, second edition), pp. 120-33.

¹⁰ David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 157-74.

the paradigm of the Renaissance family in *Mustapha*.¹¹ Other than the steady trickle of scholarship, then, Greville's dramas have received relatively little critical attention.

The major works of Greville are notable for the fact that none of them can be divorced from a political agenda. From the overtly didactic verse treatises, including the lengthy *Treatise of Monarchy*, to the seemingly incongruous debating ground of the *Caelica* sonnet sequence, his works emerge as vehicles for debating such important political topics as monarchy, service, and religion.¹² In the case of the tragedies, Greville outlines his purpose for them as didactic advice literature rather than popular entertainment in his *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*. He asserts that they were 'no plays for the stage' and invites the reader to use them to 'look on that stage whereon himself is an actor, even the state he lives in, and for every part he may perchance find a player, and for every line (it may be) an instance of life beyond the author's intention or application'.¹³ Greville therefore asserts that his dramas, in common with many other neo-Senecan dramas of the era, are political parables with historical events providing a precedent for many of the political manoeuvres of the contemporary English government. The view that history bears instructional value is one which was also asserted by fellow dramatist Samuel Daniel and was his key defence during his tussle with the authorities over his neo-Senecan tragedy *Philotas*, as we shall

¹¹ Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), pp. 111-48.

¹² For the political and religious comment contained in the *Caelica* sequence, see Donald Mackenzie, "'Divided and distinguished worlds': Greville's religious poetry" <<http://www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESL/STELLA/COMET/glasgrev/issue1/macken.htm>>; Elaine Y. L. Ho, 'Fulke Greville's *Caelica* and the Calvinist self', *Studies in English Literature*, 32, 1 (1992), 35-78; and Helen Vincent, "'Syon lies waste": Secularity, scepticism and religion in *Caelica*', *Sidney Journal*, 19, 1-2 (2001), 63-84.

¹³ Greville, *Prose Works*, pp. 134-5.

see in the fourth chapter below. This episode indicates the sensitive nature of literary connections with the Earl of Essex in the early years of the seventeenth century, a mood which was most likely to have prompted Greville to undertake the destruction of his Antony and Cleopatra play, fearing that, as was to be the case with *Philotas*, the historical example would be construed as rather too pertinent a precedent for controversial topical events. Karen Raber comments that Greville's caution over his Antony and Cleopatra play is motivated by the fact that, unlike Mary Sidney, he was entirely dependent upon his career at court and 'exists without Sidney's buffers', ¹⁴ such as the ability to displace any possible subversive rhetoric through the medium of translation.

Greville's dramas are also notable for the way in which they were circulated. Raber points out that his plays were '*direct*' and were 'given privately, passed hand-to-hand to an elite court coterie'. ¹⁵ Greville never envisaged a life for his plays outside of the carefully designated sphere of readers or in any kind of public performance or publication. ¹⁶ The majority of Greville's works, an early version of *Mustapha* in 1609 notwithstanding, did not receive the print circulation which the works of other neo-Senecan dramatists enjoyed until the posthumous printing of the *Certain Learned and Elegant Works* in 1633, the same year as the emergence in print of a number of other significant posthumously published texts including Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, George Herbert's *The Temple* and John Donne's

¹⁴ Raber, p. 112.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 115.

¹⁶ For comment upon the idea that Greville's texts were never intended for publication during his lifetime, see Gavin Alexander, 'Fulke Greville and the Afterlife', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 62: 3/4 (1999), 203-231.

Poems.¹⁷ The destruction of the Antony and Cleopatra play and the posthumous publication of the majority of works both indicate the extent to which Greville marginalized his literary career in favour of progression at court and the lengths to which he would go if he feared they might interfere with his political life.

Although it is unlikely that Greville was himself a republican, at least not in the basic sense of advocating the replacement of hereditary monarchy, it is very probable that he shared Sidney's awareness of the resistance theories of such continental monarchomachist thinkers as Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay and Hubert Languet, as well as the views expressed in the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*.¹⁸ Greville hints at his views on republicanism towards the beginning of his *Treatise of Monarchy*. In the opening stanza he considers one of his favourite paradigms, the Ovidian golden age:

There was a tyme before the tymes of story,
Where nature raign'd, in stead of lawes, or artes:
And mortall Goddes with men made upp the glory
Of one republique, by united heartes.
(*Monarchy*, 1, ll. 1-4).¹⁹

The fact that Greville describes this prelapsarian state as a 'republique' seems to suggest that he viewed the idea as an admirable one only in the abstract and that it was a system of government conducive only to a world which existed in a state of divine harmony. This idea is soon offset by the premise that humanity would soon lapse into a state which he called 'Declination' (24.1), thus creating

¹⁷ For a discussion of the publications of 1633 and their relation to ideas of national identity, see Lisa Hopkins, 'We were the Trojans: British national identities in 1633', *Renaissance Studies* 16 (2002), 36-51.

¹⁸ Rebholz, p. 148.

¹⁹ All citations to Greville's dramas and verse treatises are from G. A. Wilkes (ed.), *The Complete Poems and Plays of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke*, 2 vols (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008). For comment upon Greville's use of the Golden Age and the birth of politics, see Jean-Christophe Mayer, "'Bothe kinge, and people seem'd conjoyn'd in one': Fulke Greville and the Question of Political Power", *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 60 (2001), 43-52.

an environment where such a form of government would be untenable. He then goes on to point out the inconsistencies of monarchy as a form of government by alluding to a biblical episode:

Man then repyne not at these boundlesse kinges,
Since yow endure the fate of your forefathers;
To whome God did foretell, on humane winges
How inequality once rais'd, still gathers;
 Their choice offended him, please you it must,
 Whose dregges still in you, on you make it just.
(*Monarchy*, 25).

The book of Samuel records the people of Israel going against Samuel's advice and adopting a system of monarchy before God orders him to defer to their wishes (1 Samuel 8. 4-24). Through the appropriation of this biblical story, Greville suggests that the rise of monarchy is a result of an inherent human need for absolutist government, as well as subtly undermining the concept of divine rights that was championed in the political writings of James VI and I. In spite of these reservations, Greville still goes on to emphasise the virtues of monarchy in comparison with those of aristocracy and democracy.²⁰

In this chapter I want to examine the ways in which Greville's tragedies engage with similar concepts to those interrogated in the verse treatises and emerge in the same tradition of advisory literature, thus making them republican in spirit. I will consider the extent to which Greville fulfils his intention for the tragedies to 'trace out the highways of ambitious governors, and to show in the practice that the more audacity, advantage and good success such sovereigns have, the more they hasten to their own desolation and ruin.' This, according to Jonathan Dollimore, can effectively be seen as Greville devoting himself to a

²⁰ For comment on the *Treatise of Monarchy*, see Rebholz, pp. 146-54, Rees, pp. 119-38, and Matthew Woodcock, "'The World is Made for Use': Theme and Form in Fulke Greville's Verse Treatises", *Sidney Journal*, 19, 1-2 (2001), 143-60.

kind of 'mimetic realism' in his dramas.²¹ Whilst previous Greville scholars have, generally speaking, examined the ways in which the plays can be related to Greville's own brand of politics and religion, I intend to focus specifically upon the ways in which they are influenced by developments of classical humanism, as well as the ways in which they question the potential for their practical application in the societies they represent. I argue that these premises, as well as formal affinities, align Greville's dramas with the development of the neo-Senecan form which provides an integral context for the composition of his tragedies.

Mustapha

A common theme in Greville's texts is the idea that one must negotiate one's way through an earthly labyrinth and find means of preserving personal morality and retaining powers of steadfast endurance in spite of the adversities one must face. In this sense, his world outlook has been regarded as a pessimistic vision of the frailties of human endeavour in a world vulnerable to the process of 'declination'. Rebholz, for example, observes in Greville's later writings 'a movement away from the hope for redeeming the world towards a despairing contempt for its institutions, and a corresponding diminution of the area in which man contributes to his union with God.'²² From first hand experience, Greville was also aware that the political sphere is also one that is blighted by self-interested personal agendas, failed ambitions, and factional polarisation. The topical significance of the revised version of *Mustapha* has been noted by

²¹ Dollimore, p. 122.

²² Rebholz, p. 312.

Albert Tricomi who sees it as a critique of Jacobean politics.²³ In this section, I intend to examine not only how Greville's first tragedy conveys these views, but also the ways in which it interrogates some of the consolations provided by classical humanism, particularly stoicism and republicanism, and analyses their efficacy as a means of helping the individual to negotiate this labyrinthine ground.

Greville's first tragedy was first published in an unauthorised edition in 1609 but was most probably completed in the mid 1590s. In spite of Greville's apparent antagonism towards the commercial theatres, his two surviving tragedies can be regarded in relation to the tragedies in the genre of the Turk play on the popular stage. Amongst the most notable examples of this genre are Robert Greene's *The Tragical Reign of Selimus* and, of most significance in relation to Greville's *Mustapha, The Tragedie of Soliman and Perseda*, usually attributed to Thomas Kyd.²⁴ The fact that Kyd's play also dramatises events involving Suleiman the Magnificent, although with less concern for historical accuracy, suggests it is a significant analogue to Greville's play. The development of this popular genre can easily be linked to the resonance that the Ottoman Empire had gained in contemporary England. Affairs involving the Ottoman Empire were of considerable significance due both to the fact that the

²³ Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-1642* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), pp. 66-71. For a similar line of enquiry, see Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabeth Literary Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 106-14.

²⁴ For discussions on the authorship of *Soliman and Perseda*, see Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 140-6, and Lukas Erne, *Beyond 'The Spanish Tragedy': A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 160-2. Recent studies of the Turk genre include Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatising Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579-1624* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005). In the former two, Greville is mentioned only fleetingly.

expansion of the empire and the frequent attacks on Christian territories, such as Rhodes and Malta, were major causes for concern for European states, and also to the fact that there was great potential for profitable trading with the empire, as suggested by the emergence of such organisations as the Turkey Company, the Barbary Company, the East India Company, and the Levant Company during the last two decades of the sixteenth century.

Unlike many other Turk plays, such as *Soliman and Perseda*, *Mustapha* does not directly address concerns surrounding the Ottoman expansion or the possibility of conversion to Islam. Only the chorus of 'Converts to Mahometism' hints at any such issue. Burton has gone as far as to suggest that Greville is simply 'not interested in the significance of his setting'²⁵ and many other critics have tended to see Greville's appropriation of his source material as being provoked by nothing more than the pertinence of the subject matter as a means of interrogating abstract political concepts. Another significant contrast to Kyd's play emerges in his realisation of Solyman.²⁶ Unlike the figure in Kyd's play, Greville's protagonist is not a hot-headed, impulsive, or bloodthirsty murderer, although he is guilty of the same crime of parricide as Kyd's character. Greville's Solyman spends the majority of the play deliberating about whether or not he should murder Mustapha and hears advice both in favour of and against that course of action. By characterising Suleiman the Magnificent in such a way, Greville is not only departing from the popular precedents for realisation of the 'great Turk' figure, but also ignoring a number of cues for characterisation contained within the play's source, Nicholas

²⁵ Burton, p. 189.

²⁶ In the interests of clarity, I have retained the variant spellings from both texts. Kyd's character is therefore identified as 'Soliman' and Greville's as 'Solyman'.

Moffan's history of Suleiman translated by Hugh Goughe as part of *The offspring of the house of Ottomanno* (1569), in which Suleiman is described as being 'drowned, passing all moderation, in an unbrideled desyre and lust for Rosa'.²⁷ This description is not unlike Soliman in Kyd's play, who makes a number of rash and impulsive decisions, most of which he very soon comes to regret, because his reason is affected by his all-consuming lust for Perseda. Greville resists such characterisation and presents an Ottoman court purged of its exoticism. Whilst Daniel Vitkus comments that *Soliman and Perseda* emerges as 'a typical English representation of the Ottoman royal house as a dysfunctional family that is power hungry and unnaturally murderous',²⁸ a feature that was no doubt part of its appeal, and that of the so-called 'Turk play' in contemporary England, Greville suggests that the events in *Mustapha* are provoked by far more complex political and moral issues and cannot simply be explained by ethnic characteristics.

Goughe's representation of Suleiman as a figure consumed by lust is significantly at odds with the character who emerges in Greville's play, to the extent that Jonathan Dollimore regards Greville's Solyman as embodying a kind of 'extreme relativism';²⁹ he clearly recognises the difficulty in negotiating his current position:

In what strange ballance are mans humors peased?
 Since each light change within us, or without,
 Turnes feare to hope, and hope againe to doubt.
 If thus it worcke in man, much more in Thrones,
 Whose tender heightes feelee all thinne ayres that move,
 And worcke that change belowe they use above.
 (1.2.18-23).

²⁷ Hugh Goughe, *The offspring of the house of Ottomanno* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1569).

²⁸ Vitkus, p. 121.

²⁹ Dollimore, p. 125.

Here Solyman shows that he is prey to a kind of internal division which is magnified for a man in his position as a ruler. As Albert Tricomi comments, Greville's Solyman is 'self-divided rather than evil'.³⁰ The fact that he refers to a 'ballance' of humours suggests that his emotions are held in a kind of awkward equilibrium. In this speech he dramatises the breakdown of stoicism by revealing that he has succumbed to both hope and fear, which will in turn give way to doubt. In a single line (1.2.20), Solyman alludes to both the philosophies of stoicism and classical scepticism, and indicates the failure of both as a personal *modus vivendi*. Greville's particular brand of stoicism is marked by an adherence to the motto *nec spe, nec metu* (neither in hope, nor in fear), two impulses he frequently condemned. In the *Letter to an Honorable Lady*, for example, he emphasised the dangers of succumbing to such impulses, which he described as two 'false rudders'³¹ and 'two cloudy pillars'³², and recommended that resisting them was the most profitable means of negotiating the labyrinth of human existence:

If you therefore stand firme against the temptations of Feare, and Hope; there remaynes an excellent end in your passage, to which all those necessities, and misfortunes are no other kindes of letts then raine, or stormes upon the land be; which cannot stay resolved passengers, though it moyle their cloathes, and make their way slipperie.³³

In his *Treatise of Humane Learninge*, Greville would also go on to suggest the negative effect such impulses could have upon one's faculties:

Hence our desires, feares, hopes, love, hate, and sorrow,
In fancie make us heare, feele, see impressions,
Such as out of our sense they doe not borrow;
And are the efficient cause, the true progression

³⁰ Tricomi, p. 70.

³¹ Greville, *Prose Works*, p. 154.

³² Ibid, p. 157.

³³ Ibid, p. 164.

Of sleepeing visions, ydle phantomes walkinge,
Life, dreames, and knowledge, apparitions makinge.
(*Humane Learninge*, 13).

The idea that such impulses can affect one's reason and judgement is particularly relevant when it comes to examining Solyman's paranoia, suggesting that it is caused by his failure to adhere to a stoic outlook which has in turn caused his vulnerability to the influence of negative emotions.

Solyman's view that the inconstancy of the world 'Turnes feare to hope, and hope againe to doubt' (1.2.20) suggests that he has failed to achieve the consolatory end of classical scepticism as well as stoicism. Various important works on both academic scepticism and Pyrrhonism were available in Renaissance England thanks to the circulation of works by, amongst others, Cicero and Sextus Empiricus, as well as the translations of Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*.³⁴ The aim of scepticism was to accept the inability of humankind to comprehend anything with absolute certainty and thus to achieve the condition of *ataraxia*, a state of mental harmony which was, according to Montaigne,

the condition of a quiet and settled life, exempted from the agitations, which we receive by the impression of the opinion and knowledge, we imagine to have of things; whence proceed, feare, avarice, envie, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, love of novelties, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacie, and the greatest number of corporall evils.³⁵

Although Solyman engages in doubt, he is unable to gain the state of *ataraxia*

³⁴ For the emergence of scepticism in Renaissance Europe, see Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and William Hamlin, *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). On the relationship between literature and scepticism see, in addition to Hamlin, Benjamin Bertram, *The Time is Out of Joint: Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2004) and Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).

³⁵ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays written in French by Michael Lord of Montaigne* (London: Edward Blount and William Barrett, 1613), p. 281.

promised by scepticism. From these points of view, then, Solyman's state of mind reveals the breakdown of such humanist philosophies as stoicism and scepticism as consolatory means of enduring Greville's vision of a labyrinthine existence. This is an idea evoked in *Mustapha* by Camena's rhetorical question, 'In what a *Laberinth* is Honor cast,/ Drawne diverse wayes with sexe, with time, with state?' (2.3.27).

Posing a similar affront to stoicism, though from a different point of view, is Rossa, Solyman's concubine, who seeks the death of Mustapha in order to secure the throne for her son Zanger. As was the case with Solyman, Greville again resists the opportunities for sensationalism provided in the source material, including the attempted murder of Mustapha using poisoned robes. However, she emerges in Greville's play quite differently. Her ironic description of the virtuous Achmat as one who possesses such features as 'witte, art, spite' (3.2.4), thus giving the impression of him as a manipulative Machiavellian courtier, provides some suggestion of her idea of the kind of qualities required for advancement in the political sphere. However, it is on another level that her transgression is really emphasised. Her proclamation that she is 'resolv'd to moove the wheeles of fate' (3.2.66) suggests that she is presenting a conscious affront to the stoic idea of determinism and that she is willing to subvert pre-determined actions. This premise is interrogated by the accompanying chorus, spoken by the allegorical figures of Time and Eternity, in which Rossa's over-reaching ambitions are emphasised:

What meane these mortall children of mine owne,
Ungratefullie, against me to complaine,
That all I builde is by me overthrowne?
Vices put under to rise up againe?
That on my wheeles both good, and ill doe move;

The one beneath, while th'other is above?
(3.Chorus.1-6).

The fact that this chorus immediately follows the scene in which Rossa finalises her plans suggests that her actions are transgressing divine and celestial, as well as earthly, authority. The recurrence of the image of the wheel also hints at the idea of stoic determinism, suggesting that Rossa is also attempting to overturn pre-determined fate. Time goes on to point out that 'For sonne, or father, to destroy each other, / Are bastard deedes, where *Time* is not the mother' (3. Chorus. 59-60). This also emphasises the fact that such scheming is the product of human autonomy rather than divine intervention, and that these unearthly influences would not countenance such acts.

Through his representation of Solyman and Rossa, Greville therefore presents two models of transgressors of stoic principles. In the case of Solyman, this is as a result of the way he has passively succumbed to the influences of hope and fear. In the case of Rossa, however, her transgression is of a far more consciously proactive nature and her actions, as well as those she has provoked in others, are regarded as an affront to the celestial powers of Time and Eternity. Nevertheless, these models of poor stoicism are offset by the appearance of Mustapha, who emerges as an exemplary stoic figure willing to submit to his fate and able to resist the negative impulses with which Solyman is afflicted. This is emphasised by his aversion to running away from his fate:

To flie hath scorne; it argues guiltinesse,
Inherites feare, weakly abandons frendes,
Gives Tyrantes fame, takes honor from distresse.
Death! doe thy worst. The greatest paines have ende.
(4.4.112-5).

Mustapha is thus unwilling to compromise his personal dignity and succumb to

fear, nor is he prepared to do the same for hope, as suggested by his view of the 'false, and wicked coulours of desire' (4.4.122). Mustapha therefore emerges as a clear proponent of the *nec spe, nec metu* motto endorsed by Greville. This is more explicitly suggested in Achmat's account of his submission to his fate in which he 'neither hop'd, nor fear'd' (5.2.31). Mustapha's stoic virtue is further emphasised in the account of his death in which he is described as aiding the faltering efforts of his executioners, and thus submitting to his fate, to the extent that he was 'in hast to be an Angell' (5.2.81). In this manner he emerges as a stoic martyr and the report of his final words have obvious Christian resonances:

His last words were: *O father! Nowe forgive me.
Forgive them too, that wrought my overthrowe:
Let my grave never minister offences.
For, since my father coveteth my death,
Behold, with joy, I offer him my breath.*
(5.2.84-8)

Like Mariam, the death of Mustapha, another non-Christian character, is linked to the passion of Christ, and has clear resonances of Christian martyrdom. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that Greville should appropriate the death of an Islamic prince as a means of emphasising the affinities between Christianity and stoicism which he had attempted to assert in his other works, most notably *A Letter to an Hororable Lady*. This vision of Mustapha is also suggestive of the process of de-exoticisation to which Greville subjects his source material.

Throughout her chapter on Greville's *Mustapha*, Raber argues that the play reveals that the monarchy is held together by the early modern idea of the family. While this certainly holds together the monarchy itself, the play also suggests that it is the public who consent to the authority of the monarchy and that various systems hold together this popular consent. This is suggested in the

fourth chorus, spoken by converts to Islam:

When anie breakes too much that poyse wherein they stooode,
To make his owne subsistence firme, with shew of common good;
By overacting, straight it breaks that well-built frame,
Wherein their being stooode entire, although they lost their name:
So in that noble worke of publique Government,
When Crownes, Church, souldiers, or the Lawes, doe over much dissent,
That frame, wherein they liv'd, is fatallie, dissolv'd
(4. Chorus. 99-105).

This demonstrates an awareness of the fact that systems such as the church, army, and the lawmakers all contribute to the 'well-built frame' upon which the monarchy is based and upon which Greville, in his role as a courtier in the Elizabethan government, depended. Indeed, these foundations of the monarchy are, in a manner that appropriates the idea of the body politic, likened to the 'fower complexions' (4. Chorus. 85) of the human body, and are thus subject to certain maladies. This play therefore exhibits an uneasy recognition of the instability of this basis and the constant potential for its erosion. This 'frame' is also dependent upon the public themselves, as recognised in the first chorus of *Bashas and Caddies*:

[Thus like the wood that yeldes helves for the axe,
Upon it selfe to lay an heavie taxe:
We sillie *Basshas* helpe Power to confound,
With our owne strength exhaustinge our owne ground.]³⁶
An art of Tyrannie; which workes with men,
To make them beastes, and high-rays'd Thrones their denne,
Where they, that mischiefe others, may retire
Safe with their pray, as lifting Tyrants higher.
(1. Chorus. 75-82).

In other words, the public at large are complicit in, and contribute to, their own oppression. This point supports Norbrook's argument that Greville's work betrays the influence of Étienne la Boétie's controversial *Discours sur la*

³⁶ The brackets are inserted by Wilkes to show that these lines were scored through, presumably for deletion, in the Warwick manuscript.

servitude volontaire (1548) which argued that the people are largely responsible for their servitude.³⁷

The fact that the people are responsible for the continuing rule of the government suggests that they can also contribute to its downfall. The murder of Mustapha proves to be the catalyst for the people to protest against the prevailing regime. This point is suggested by Rosten, the bad counsellor, in the final act, by which time the public have started to protest:

Achmat! The mysteries of Empire are dissolved.
Furie hath made the People knowe their forces.
Majestie (as but a myste) they breede, and spread.
Nothings, but things impossible will please.
Mustapha must live againe, or *Rosten* perish.
(5.3.7-11).

Rosten's comments also reveal the omnipresent potential for anarchy with which the regime will inevitably be faced. His reference to the 'mysteries of Empire' reveals the extent to which one event can force the system of the monarchy to undergo a process of desacrilisation and evokes a common trope in Greville's writing that the maintenance of state power is achieved through a kind of conjuring trick which is largely incomprehensible to the people. Rosten's comment that 'although my death be lawfull, / The judges, and the manner are unlawfull' (5.3.53-4) also indicates the possibility of anarchy and a fear of the mob which is engendered in those advising the government. His outlook hints that counsellors hold the constant fear that the public may take the law into their own hands.

Achmat also reveals that he is in a problematic position, not unlike that of Greville, as a counsellor who has had to witness the injustices of the regime he

³⁷ Norbrook, pp. 157-74.

has served, most likely embodied in the fall of Essex, while at the same time retaining his aversion to rebellion and anarchy. This fear of rebellion also sits uneasily alongside Greville's concern for the liberty of the people ensured by the principles of the Ancient Constitution which, Peter C. Herman argues, is evidenced in his *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*.³⁸ It is this sense of division that is responsible for the inconsistencies in Achmat's address to the crowd in the final act. His calls for the people to 'Question these thrones of Tyrantes' (5.3.92) and his command, 'Lend not your strengths to keepe you owne strengths vnder' (5.3.95) are contradicted by his fears of the consequences of rebellion. He expresses fear of the premise that the people will contentedly 'With mutenie, pull sacred Scepters downe' (5.3.103) and goes on to summarise his dilemma:

I yeld. But howe?
 Force is impossible; for that is theirs:
 Counsell shewes, like their enemy, Delay:
 Order turnes all desires into feares:
 Their art is violence: and Chance their end:
 What, but Occasion, there can be my friend?
 (5.3.115-20).

Achmat here reveals his inability to negotiate his sympathy with the aims of the people with his aversion to anarchy and his belief in the necessity for a strong and legitimate monarchy. Achmat's situation has therefore allowed Greville to dramatise the dilemma faced by many counsellors and courtiers like himself.

It is not only through Achmat that Greville articulates his anti-revolutionary stance; Mustapha is also given the opportunity to voice the folly of resisting the established order. In a stichomythic discussion with Heli the priest he voices his

³⁸ Peter C. Herman, "'Bastard Children of Tyranny': The Ancient Constitution and Fulke Greville's *A Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*", *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002), 969-1004.

opposition to the idea of resisting the sovereign:

Mus. Confusion followes where obedience leaves.

Pre. The Tyrant onely that event deceives.

Mus. And are the wayes of truth and honour such?

Pre. Weaknesse doth ever thincke it owes too much.

Mus. Hath fame her glorious colors out of feare?

Pre. What is the world to him that is not there?

Mus. Tempt me no more. Goodwill is then a paine,

When her wordes beat the hart, and cannot enter:

I constant in my consayle doe remayne,

And more lives, for my owne life will not venture.

(4.4.163-73).

It is significant that the second speaker in this series of stichomythic exchanges is the priest who is able to neutralise the initial utterances of Mustapha, clearly making him the more privileged party in this rhetorical debate. It is also significant that Mustapha ends the stichomythic discussion, returning the form of the discourse to longer speeches of blank verse. This suggests that Mustapha is unable to justify his anti-revolutionary stance in the same eloquent manner as Achmat goes on to do, but he will nevertheless adhere to his belief in stoic determinism all the same. The aversion to rebellion represented in both Mustapha and Achmat can also be likened to Greville's own stance on such matters; Albert Tricomi suggests that 'as a seventeenth-century Calvinist who saw in the present age an irreversible pattern of corruption, Greville had no conception of effective political protest; it offended his metaphysics.'³⁹ Through his representation of such characters as Achmat and Mustapha, we can see that although Greville can appreciate the arguments in favour of such resistance, he still believes that rebellion against the established order is not a viable course of action and is antithetical to his personal outlook.

I have therefore shown that *Mustapha* can be described in the same way as

³⁹ Tricomi, p. 70.

Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*, as a 'tragedy of state'. As well as portraying the disastrous consequences of allowing the 'mysteries of Empire' (5.3.7) to be exposed to the people, it also dramatises the failure of humanism as a means of enduring the pitfalls of the calamitous political sphere of the court. Through the fate of Mustapha, Greville forces his readers to confront the fact that exemplary stoicism cannot, other than in the abstract, outweigh the actions of corrupt individuals. The aversion to the armed uprising, and the reminder that public mobilisation will inevitably lead to anarchy, also serves to undermine the virtues of republicanism. *Mustapha* therefore provides an uncomfortable recognition of the failure of humanist values in a world inhabited by lapsed individuals and prone to the process of 'declination'. Whilst *Mustapha* may be pessimistic about the utility of humanist outlooks, its provision of a space for their interrogation, as well as its concerns with tyranny and rebellion, shows how it engages in the humanist drama of the neo-Senecan tradition.

Alaham

Greville's second tragedy, which was never published in Greville's lifetime but was most probably completed before the Essex rebellion in 1601, has received significantly less critical attention than *Mustapha*; the little critical response it has generated has usually placed it alongside *Mustapha* and, unlike the earlier play, it has not been considered on its own terms.⁴⁰ This may be because *Alaham* resists the kind of analysis from which *Mustapha* benefits. It lacks the overt political comment that was so prevalent in *Mustapha* and suggests that the

⁴⁰ The most sustained critical responses have been Rees, pp. 139-59 and Matthew C. Hansen, 'Gender, Power and Play: Fulke Greville's *Mustapha* and *Alaham*', *Sidney Journal*, 19, 1-2 (2001), 125-41.

political autonomy, whose abuse in the earlier play by those in power triggers the chain of events leading to its conclusion, is in fact illusory and the events are engineered by unearthly parties.

The absence of the political comment so prevalent in *Mustapha* is, in part, explained by Greville's liberal treatment of his sources. A source for *Alaham* was not identified until the early 1930s, before which it was assumed that the play's plot was merely a composite of various narratives with many of the principal characters' names, including that of the eponymous protagonist, being invented by the author. It was not until 1931 that Warner G. Rice argued that the source material for Greville's play was to be found in a narrative in the *Itinerario* by the Italian traveller, Ludovico di Varthema.⁴¹ Varthema's narrative was retold by François de Belleforest and in a collection of narratives by Matteo Bandello, which was translated into English by Robert Smythe as *Strange, Lamentable, and Tragicall Hystories* in 1577. There are therefore a number of means through which Greville could have ascertained the details of his plot. In many ways Greville's liberality with his sources is not altogether surprising as none of them provides any precedent for the names of Alaham, Zophi, or Celica, although the latter most likely alludes to the subject of Greville's *Caelica* sonnet sequence. Indeed, there was no historical record of anyone by the name of Alaham acceding to the throne of Ormus, let alone two in immediate succession. There is also one important area in which Greville digresses from his source. The subplot involving Alaham's incitement of the Basshas Caine and Mahomet to murder each other is informed by Greville's source; however, in Bandello's

⁴¹ See Warner G. Rice, 'The Sources of Fulke Greville's *Alaham*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 30 (1931), 179-87.

version of the story, Mahomet, whose death has been faked, returns to fight the usurper, who is then torn to pieces by an angry rabble, and claims the crown. In Greville's drama, however, there is no mention of the fate of Mahomet after the report of his death and it is Alaham's wife, Hala, who destroys Alaham by poisoning his cloak after killing her infant children by both Caine and Alaham, thus extinguishing any possible line of succession.

There are two possible reasons for Greville's departure from his source. The first, as examined by Wilkes, Rees, and Hansen, is that he was also influenced by the story of Medea and wished to move his aesthetic closer to traditional Senecanism, observing in his sources considerable potential to achieve this by including elements from the Medea story through the character he would go on to identify as Hala.⁴² The other explanation, suggested by Rebholz, is that the extant version of the play is a revised version of a much more overtly topical text which Greville, exercising the same caution he called upon when he destroyed his Antony and Cleopatra play, hastily revised in order to neutralise its topical resonance. The contents of the original play have been the subject for some speculation; it has been conjectured that in the original version Greville followed his source more closely and dramatised the return of Mahomet in order to exact revenge upon Alaham along the following lines proposed by Bullough:

It is tempting to equate the 'old King' with the old Queen, Alaham with the Government, Mahomet with Essex, and perhaps (even) Celica (Cælica) with Greville himself. One might speculate thus: Greville originally conceived this drama between 1598 and 1600 when Essex was absent from Court (either in Ireland or in his later disgrace), and intended it to represent, under the Varthema story of Mahomet's returning to purge the State, a course of action which he wished Essex to pursue. One might even suggest that a version of the play was written on

⁴² For an examination of the influence of the story of Medea, see Hansen, 125-42 and Rees, pp. 159-60.

these lines, and the latter part of it greatly rewritten after the sad results of its devil's counsel were apparent in 1601.⁴³

Bullough, however, goes on to dismiss this argument by claiming that 'Greville was always more the Queen's man than Essex's; he loathed rebellion for whatever cause, and once took part against his friend when the latter tried it.'⁴⁴

Yet if such an allegorisation of events was indeed Greville's intention, there is no reason to suppose he was necessarily advocating armed rebellion, a course of action which, as we have seen, was dismissed by Achmat in *Mustapha*.

Mahomet's 'purging' of the state could be a symbolic one, and the inclusion of Alaham could be a means of addressing concerns about the influence of Cecil and his faction at court, to the point where legitimate rule, as represented by the old king, had become marginalised.⁴⁵ The overt political agenda emphasised in his writings, and the circumstances of the destruction of the Antony and Cleopatra play, would seem to make the topical resonance of this play, and the possibility of revision, an eminent possibility.

In addition to the possibility that the fall of Essex prompted the revision of *Alaham* and the subsequent divergence from its source material, there is another potential explanation that has been hitherto overlooked. In the discussion of the *Arcadia* in his *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, Greville condemns the interim administration of Euarchus, who temporarily assumes control over the Arcadian state during the absence of Basilius, leaving him to sit on a 'cloudy seat of judgement'.⁴⁶ He then goes on to ask, 'who sees not that these dark webs of effeminate princes be dangerous fore-runners of innovation, even in a quiet and

⁴³ Bullough, ii, p. 44. For further comment, see Rebholz, pp. 341-3.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Wilkes also goes on to dismiss this possibility, I, p. 407.

⁴⁵ E. P. Kuhl, 'Contemporary Politics in Elizabethan Drama: Fulke Greville', *Philology Quarterly*, 7 (1928), 299-302.

⁴⁶ Greville, *A Dedication*, p. 9.

equally tempered people?’⁴⁷ In this instance, Greville reveals his contempt for temporary administrations, specifically the potentially corrupting effect they can have upon the interim ruler. In the sources for *Alaham*, the Alaham figure is killed, either slain by Mahomet or dismembered by an angry mob, leaving Mahomet in charge of the government until the end of the period of minority when the son of Hala and Caine will come of age. In the same way that *Mustapha* does not follow its source and end with Achmat assuming power, *Alaham* also shows Greville’s seeming uneasiness with the prospect of an interim rule.⁴⁸ This anxiety can also be linked to the possibility of Elizabeth’s reign being followed by a period of temporary rule before a successor could be decided upon. Greville seems unable to endorse such a course of action on principle, as shown by his condemnation of Euarchus in the *Arcadia*, but perhaps also because such a turn of events could have served as a means for Cecil to enhance his influence over the court. The possible representation of an interim government would therefore place Greville in something of a double bind, especially if Mahomet was to have been allegorically equated with Essex and appropriated in order to address concerns over the influence of Cecil. For whatever reason Greville chose to depart from his source, the result is the same; at the play’s conclusion Greville seems to turn his back on his initial intention ‘to trace out the highways of ambitious governors’. In this section, I shall examine the ways in which Greville’s dramatic methodology on display here differs from that which characterises *Mustapha*, and consider the effects this has upon the play’s political outlook.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For Greville’s aversion to the idea of interim rule by popular acclaim see Wilkes, pp. 301 and 407.

Greville's second tragedy is perhaps far more Senecan in the traditional sense than any of the other coterie dramas of his contemporaries. Wilkes has observed allusions to, and affinities with, a number of Senecan tragedies including *Hercules Furens*, *Hercules Oetaeus*, *Agamemnon*, and, as mentioned above, *Medea*.⁴⁹ The stichomythic discourse between Alaham and the priest, Heli, in the first act also seems to be influenced by the dynamic of the advisor attempting to dissuade his master from carrying out some rash action, as evidenced by the characters of Nero and Seneca in the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*. However, the most obvious example of the Senecan influence occurs at the very beginning of the play in which the prologue is delivered from the afterlife by an old king of Ormus who occupies a similar role to that of Tantalus in Seneca's *Thyestes*.

In the prologue Greville presents what is possibly one of the period's most evocative visions of Hell prior to *Paradise Lost*.⁵⁰ The old king dismisses the 'lothsome puddle *Acheron*', 'whose filthie dampes / Feede *Lethe*'s sincke' (Prol. 8-10) and goes on to assert that 'These be but bodies plagues, the skirtes of hell: / I come from whence deathes seate doth deat excell' (13-14). In Greville's vision, the traditional landmarks with which one generally associates Hell are the mere outskirts and act as little more than a prelude. The ghost goes on to describe Hell in similar terms:

A place there is upon no centre placed,
 Deepe under depthes, as farre as is the skie
 Above the earth; darcke, infinitely spaced:
Pluto the Kinge, the kingdome Miserie.
 The Chrystall may Gods glorious seate resemble;

⁴⁹ Wilkes, I, p. 302. For other parallels with Seneca, see Lucas, pp. 113-4.

⁵⁰ For Renaissance ideas of Hell, see C. A. Patrides, 'Renaissance and Modern Views on Hell', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 57: 3 (1964), 217-36.

Horror it selfe theise horrors but dissemble.
(Prol. 15-20).

The ghost thus implies that mortals have no means of imagining this infernal territory as there is no possible frame of reference for it, a point which suggests Greville is using the non-theatrical nature of this play to his advantage.

The prologue also has an important dramaturgical function. It is made clear that it is the old king who initiates the action and induces the furies at the very outset:

Crafte! Goe thou forth, worcke honor into lust.
Malice! Sowe in self-love unworthinesse.
Feare! Make it safe for no man to be just.
Wronge! Be thou cloth'd in powers comelinesse.
Witte! Play with faith; take glorie in mistrust;
Let dutie, and religion goe by guesse.
Furies! Stirre you up warre; which followe must
When all thinges are corrupt with doublenesse.
From vice to vice let error multiplie.
(Prol. 142-50).

Although this clearly has a Senecan precedent it also serves to introduce elements from another tradition which Greville appropriates, that of the morality tradition. Whereas the choruses in *Mustapha*, with the exception of the third chorus spoken by the figures of Time and Eternity, were composed of representatives from the political and religious establishment, those in *Alaham* are often represented by allegorical figures such as the good and evil spirits in the third act, and the furies in the second. Although the influence of the morality tradition is occasionally apparent in *Mustapha*, it is in *Alaham* that such features have the most notable role and have the most significant effect upon the action, as shown the notable presence of furies, spirits, ghosts, and the view of the hell provided in the prologue. The most obvious contemporary theatrical exponent of the influence of the morality play is Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* with its good

and bad angels and the allegorical realisation of the seven deadly sins. However, whereas Robert Potter argues that the development of *Doctor Faustus* is 'based on the theoretical concept of the human predicament as a sequence of innocence, fall, and redemption', a schema which follows the precedent set by *The Castle of Perseverance*,⁵¹ the development of Greville's play is quite different. In the light of his views on the idea of declination, the world is in a hopelessly post-lapsarian state and the prospect of redemption is dubious.

Mustapha can also be seen to loosely follow the simple structure of the morality play, with the protagonist being torn between the counsel of good and evil influences; in fact Rossa is actually referred to as an 'evill Angell' (2.3.135) during the course of the play. Whereas Solyman, as we have already seen, emerges as a divided character, Alaham seems to have decided upon his course of action from the very outset and the attempts made by Heli to dissuade him prove futile. The moral choice is therefore marginalised in the case of *Alaham*. Similarly, the prospect of redemption is undermined in the prologue in which it is made clear that all the characters are tainted in some way, and will therefore face the infernal torments of hell after the play has concluded. This view is influenced by Greville's Calvinist leanings and the idea that the eternal fate of man is predetermined and that one's earthly actions will therefore have no bearing upon one's fate.

In the light of the influence of the morality tradition, the play's conclusion can be seen as providential in a number of ways, with the fate of the characters emerging as a punishment for their various vices. According to the prologue,

⁵¹ Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History, and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 126.

none of the characters, even the apparently virtuous ones, can be considered untainted by vice. Alaham's father is 'weake both in good, and ill' (Prol. 83) and it is implied that he is too eager to invest misplaced trust in his son, thus making his fate the 'destinie of well-beleevinge witte, / That hath not strength of judgement joyn'd with it' (87-8). Alaham's fate will prove to be a moral lesson in how ambition will lead to one's downfall, leading the perpetrator to 'perish in his crafte unnaturall' (94). A similar fate is due to befall the equally ambitious and devious Hala, who 'In prides vainglorious Martyrdome shall burne' (98). In the ghost's view, Zophi will become 'the pray of factions craftie witte' (103), Caine will be punished for his wavering naivety, Mahomet will be ensnared by the political manoeuvring and exemplify how 'good men catch'd in nettes of dutie are' (118), and Heli the priest emblematises 'corrupted faith' (127).

Interestingly, the ghost is most uncharitable towards the seemingly virtuous Celica:

Celica (because in flesh no seedes are sowne
Of heavenlie grace, but they must bringe up weedes)
Death in her fathers murther she affectes,
Seduc'd by glorie, whose excesse still feedes
It selfe, upon the barraine steepes of mone.
For humane witte wantes power to divide,
Whereby affections into error slide.
(119-25).

The old king undermines her virtue and provides the reader with words of caution against the potential to view her as a sentimental and noble heroine. The fact that she is apparently 'Seduc'd by glorie' (121) aligns her with the 'vainglorious Martyrdome' (90) of Hala and emphasises the irony that the term 'Martyrdome' should be applied to her, rather than to the pious Celica. A probable reason for the inclusion of the ghost's negative comments about this

character is that she represents an affront to the brand of stoic thought of which Greville was a notable proponent. In his *Letter to an Honorable Lady*, Greville advances a form of Tacitean neo-stoicism which attempts to negotiate the apparently opposed perspectives of Christianity and stoicism.⁵² Greville's advocacy of steadfast endurance and submission to fortune is at the centre of the *Letter*. It is as a contrast to this kind of example that Celica emerges as a bad model of stoicism. The chief objection of the prologue is the way in which she apparently 'affectes', or actively seeks her own death. This is evident in her rhetoric against Alaham:

He was, unhappie, cause that thou art now;
Thou art, ah wicked! cause that he is not;
And fear'st thou *Parricide* can be forgotte?
Bear witnesse; thou Almighty God on high!
And you blacke powers inhabitinge belowe!
That for his life my selfe would yeld to die.
(4.3.46-51).

This willingness to die in place of her father, and thus 'affecting' her own death, is the source of the ghost's objections to her. The apparently erroneous nature of her outlook is underlined by the fact that her religious and monotheistic view of the afterlife is at odds with the realisation of the classical pagan underworld with which the reader was presented in the opening scene of the play. Rather than adhering to any kind of passive acceptance of her fate, Celica actively advocates resistance to the malign forces:

No: No: Our God lefte dutie, for a lawe;
Pittie, at large; Love, in authoritie;
Despaire, in bondes; feare, of it selfe in awe:
That rage of time, and powers strange libertie
Oppressinge good men, might resistance finde:

⁵² For analysis of the *Letter*, see Joel B. Davis, "'Presidents to themselves': A *Letter to an Honorable Lady*, Merciful Commentary, and Ethical Discourse", *Sidney Journal*, 19: 1-2 (2001), 161-82.

Nor can I to a brother be lesse kinde.
(4.2.34-42).

In the light of the ghost's comments, Celica's appropriation of such features as pity, divine duty, and law appear as cynical justifications of her own stoic outlook which contradicting the kinds of Tacitean ideas, such as private endurance and passive reaction to the calamities of the world, championed by Greville. He was also opposed to the kind of mobilised resistance to the established order which Celica proposes.

Celica also aspires to exemplarity, suggesting that she seeks an immortal legacy of posthumous fame, an ambition Greville condemned in his *Inquisition upon Fame, and Honor*:

Who worshippe Fame, commit Idolatrie;
Make men their God; fortune, and time their worth;
Forme, but reforme not; mere hypocrisie,
By shaddowes onely shaddowes bringinge forth;
Which must, as blossomes, fade ere true fruit springes,
Like voice, and *Echo* joynd, yet diverse thinges.
(*Fame and Honor*, 86).

Greville's negative view of Celica can therefore partially be explained by this outlook. Although the ghost's view may be tainted by his infernal environment, the fact that Celica is, in spite of her apparent virtues, doomed to damnation would suggest a view of the afterlife in line with the Calvinist outlook. Although Rebholz finds evidence in the *Letter to an Honourable Lady* of Greville's belief in the possibility of actions 'which, while not salutary because not graced by God, were naturally good',⁵³ Celica's pretensions to piety are undermined by the fact that her actions will not ultimately help her to achieve salvation. There is the pessimistic implication that the human capacity for goodness cannot extend

⁵³ Rebholz, p. 25.

beyond man's earthly existence. Thanks to the views of the ghost in the prologue, the play offers no redemptive or untainted figure and casts a somewhat cynical light on the idea of stoic exemplarity which contributes to an overriding mood of pessimism that characterises the play.

The motif of tainted virtue is also reflected in the dialogue between good and evil spirits, another feature of the morality play. Greville structures his choruses to allow the good spirits to close the first act, the evil spirits and the furies to append the second, a dialogue between the forces of good and evil to close the third act, with the chorus of people concluding the fourth act, thus ensuring there is a balanced debate between the forces of good and evil. In the first chorus, which is composed of good spirits, the idea of man as a divided force caught between good and evil is articulated:

And what is that but man? A crazed soule, unfixt;
Made good, yet fall'n; not to extremes, but to a meane betwixt;
Where (like a cloud) with windes he toss'd is here, and there,
We kindlinge good hope in his fleshe; they quenchinge it with feare.
(1. Chorus. 21-4).

The spirits therefore propel the image of the morality hero; however, Greville implies that both the evil and the good spirits can be construed as negative influences because, as the last line affirms, both engender the anti-stoic impulses of hope and fear in man. The use of the image of the cloud is also significant and is a trope which recurs throughout the play. As the first chorus suggests, Greville appropriates clouds as a metaphor for inconstancy, particularly in relation to the character of Caine, who is likened in the prologue to 'the clowdes who live in ayre,/ Th'orbe of Natures constant inconstancie' (Prol. 105-6), a view Caine himself endorses later on when he describes himself as being 'like a clowde / Before a winters storme' (2.3.91-2).

The kind of values that inform the negative view of Celica can thus be extended as far as the good spirits. It is also implied that in a world that has been susceptible to the process of declination, the good spirits can be viewed as a spent force. This is suggested by the assertion that the evil, fallen, spirits have one clear advantage over the good, as shown in their view that 'We, that were as you are, knowe well what you can be; / Where you, that never were like us, what can you in us see?' (3. Chorus. 13-14). Unlike the good spirits, the evil have experienced the opposite of their own state, and can thus empathise with fallen humanity. Although the good spirits are periodically allowed to voice their outlook, their influence is undermined by the words of the prologue in which a negative view of all the characters, even those aspiring to virtue, is articulated. Greville's play therefore suggests that in a world that has undergone the process of declination the plight of mankind cannot be regarded simply as a battle between good and evil. Although Greville appropriates a number of the features of the morality tradition, such tensions mean that his play resists the simple didacticism and unambiguous morality of that genre.

The influence of the morality tradition is also suggested by the appearance of the furies who, as we have already seen, are invoked by the prologue at the outset of the play. The former king's invocation takes on a literal realisation at the end of the second act when the chorus becomes composed of the allegorical figures of the furies which are in no way related to the Eumenides of Greek mythology and identified as Malice, Craft, Pride, and Corrupt Reason, accompanied by the evil spirits. This conceit is reminiscent of the pageant of the seven deadly sins in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and is possibly influenced by the chorus of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* which consists of the

allegorical figures of Death, Love, and Fortune, who all spend their time on stage debating which of the figures has had the most profound influence upon the tragedy taking place from their vantage point in the underworld. Greville even allows the furies to highlight what they perceive as the faults of the play. This is evidenced in the allegorical figure, Pride, who complains of the actions Craft has apparently implemented:

You even in *Hala* sometimes breed remorse,
At least a doubt, that evill hath no force.
Thou makest *Caine* in undertaking slowe,
Who must, to serve thy turne, like goodnesse showe.
Those Scenes still tedious are, those Actes too longe,
Where thy unresolute images be stronge.
(2. Chorus. 51-6).

In this section, Greville permits his characters to comment upon that which they perceive as the slow pace of the tragedy and the unrealistic characterisation of the key protagonists. The chorus are therefore presented as a similar collective to the audiences who attend public theatrical performances and expect to be presented with sensationalised spectacles. The inclusion of such a Chorus thus provides some affinities with such popular dramas as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Every Man Out of His Humour*, both of which contain choric figures who complain about the content of the main play. This suggests that the practices of the commercial theatre act as a far more integral frame of reference in *Alaham* than is the case in *Mustapha*, due in no small part to the way in which Greville appropriates features of the morality tradition which adds an extra dramaturgical dimension.

As mentioned above, *Alaham* does not share the ‘tragedy of state’ label which one could use to describe *Mustapha*. Wilkes correctly points out that this play ‘lacks the political edge of *Mustapha*’ and goes on to suggest that the topics

which were prevalent in the earlier play, such as ‘the right by which a monarch rules, or might be deposed, are left dormant.’⁵⁴ The only time the play really becomes overtly political is in the fourth chorus, which shares its rhyme scheme and composition of stanzas with that of the verse treatises, the development of which was probably concurrent with the tragedies, which, as Andrew Hadfield comments, resembles but does not emulate rhyme royal.⁵⁵ Even here, however, the people offer no explicit comment upon the events taking place, instead offering only abstract political views warning monarchs against the abuse of authority:

Howe shall the *People* hope? Howe stay their feare,
When olde foundations daylie are made newe?
Uncertaine, is a heavie loade to beare;
What is not constant sure was never true.
Excesse in one makes all indefinite:
Where nothinge is our owne, there what delight?

Kinges then take heed! Men are the bookes of fate,
Wherein your vices deepe engraven lie,
To shewe our God the grieve of everie state.
And though great bodies doe not straightwayes die;
Yet knowe your errors have this proper doome,
Even in our ruine, to prepare your tombe.
(4. Chorus. 67-78).

Although the chorus ends on a somewhat ominous note, it must be emphasised that the passive agency in this speech would seem not to suggest any direct action from the people. There seems to be very little logical progression of cause and effect in the words of the people; although the kings are warned that they must ‘governe *People*; over-racke them not’ (4. Chorus. 25), and that they must not ‘clippe us to the quicke’ (26), the only real consequence is that ‘Woundes

⁵⁴ Wilkes, I, p. 302.

⁵⁵ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 92.

that are heal'd for ever leave a scarre' (30). Nowhere in this speech is there a real threat of any kind of popular uprising, thus undermining the warnings they offer for the monarchs. This lack of agency therefore serves to emphasise the passivity of the people, who remain little more than the 'glasse of power, and doe reflect / That Image backe, which it to us presentes' (43-4). This provides a further contrast to *Mustapha*, as the spectre of rebellion never materialises in *Alaham*, and the punishment bestowed upon the various miscreants in the play is achieved through divine intervention, rather than political manoeuvring. The passivity of the people also serves to emphasise Greville's departure from his sources in which the conclusion consists of the Alaham character being either slain by Mahomet or being handed over to an angry mob who tear him to pieces.

The lack of public mobilisation goes to show that Ormus is not a civic culture and that the outcome of the play is not influenced by the public mood, as it is in *Mustapha*, but rather by the actions of otherworldly parties who bring about a providential conclusion to the play. *Alaham* is therefore uninterested in the plight of the general public, who are, as suggested above, defined by their passivity. The play opens up very little space for republican comment and the negative glosses on the character of Celica serve to undermine the virtues of stoicism. Whilst *Mustapha* provides a scenario in which the actions of those in power lead to the interrogation of the practical utility of the outlooks of the proponents of humanist axioms, *Alaham* presents a world where such outlooks are rendered futile by the actions of those engineering events in the underworld which, as I have argued, is a result of Greville's appropriation of the morality tradition. In Greville's realisation of Ormus, the prevalence of spirits, furies, and ghosts serves to foreground the idea that earthly political and philosophical

endeavours are of little help in overturning events which are following a cosmically pre-determined progression.

Greville's dramas therefore represent a much more pessimistic engagement with the debates which are central to the plays in this study. In his outlook, the extent of the state of 'declination' into which humanity has fallen means that such earthly outlooks as stoicism and republicanism can achieve little in a post-lapsarian world and will do little to help individuals endure the results of human vices. Whilst Greville may be sceptical about the value of these axioms in such an environment, his plays can be seen to be in alignment with the other dramas in this study through their provision of space to interrogate the potential utility of these axioms in a tyrannical regime. In spite of his concentration upon more recent events in the Ottoman empire and the Persian gulf rather than ancient Rome, Greville's plays dramatise moments of political crisis in which ideals and abstract concepts are called into question.

Chapter Four:

William Alexander's *Darius* and *The Alexandræan Tragedy*, and Samuel

Daniel's *Philotas*

The accession of James I in 1603, which signalled the onset of a new dynasty and a new kind of ruler after 44 years of Elizabethan rule, brought about major changes in the English political landscape. The people were forced by necessity to adjust to the differences between the personalities of their new ruler and his predecessor, and the different kinds of political ideas he wished to put into practice. As Curtis Perry comments,

the contrasts between the two monarchs are particularly sharp. The transition from Elizabeth to James was also the transition from a woman ruler to a man, from a Tudor to a Stuart, from a charismatic performer to a more aloof public personality, from a revered national heroine to a foreigner, and so on.¹

In spite of this change of personalities, the general reception was, in public at least, a favourable one. Much hope was invested in the new king by Catholics and Puritans alike, both of whom had great expectations that James would act in their interests and, as Glenn Burgess, Jason Lawrence, and Rowland Wymer observe, the 'miseries of the 1590s, during which an aging queen ruled over a country suffering from famine, disease, and growing problems of crime and vagrancy, while living under the threat of Spanish invasion, only increased the anticipation of the new Jacobean age.'² James's accession to the throne was therefore greeted with a variety of high expectations.

Such attitudes are also reflected in the literature on the subject from both sides

¹ Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.

² Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer and Jason Lawrence (eds), *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. xiii.

of the border, particularly in the panegyric culture.³ Other texts, such as Samuel Daniel's *Panegyrike Congratulatory*, are tempered by a concern about whether or not the new king will preserve the liberty of the people:

We shall continue one, and be the same
In Law, in Justice, Magistrate, and forme,
Thou wilt not touch the fundamentall frame
Of this Estate thy Ancestors did forme,
But with a reverence of their glorious fame
Seeke onely the corruptions to reforme,
Knowing that course is best to be observ'de
Whereby a State hath longest beene preserv'd.
(Stanza 30).⁴

While Daniel's tone is, on the whole, reverential towards the new king, it is also conscious of the prospect that a change of regime also presents the potential danger that the government of the country could lapse into tyranny. Daniel's work therefore offers a middle course between the positive outlook of many of the accession poems and the less respectful responses to the prospect of Jacobean rule, such as the irreverent imitation of the Scottish dialect in such dramatic texts as *Edward III*, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston's play *Eastward Ho!*, and Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*.

That the transition from the reign of Elizabeth to that of James should have been as relatively unproblematic as it proved to be was hardly a foregone conclusion; the tense diplomatic relationship between England and Scotland raised doubts over the viability of a Stuart accession to the English throne. Such issues as the question of how to deal with Mary, Queen of Scots and James's decision to execute the former regent, James Douglas, earl of Morton, for his part in the murder of his father, Lord Darnley, against the advice of Elizabeth, in 1581 proved to be sources of tension between the two countries. The fact that

³ For comment upon the panegyric culture, see Perry, pp. 15-49.

⁴ Samuel Daniel, *A Panegyrike Congratulatory* (London: Edward Blount, 1603). I have standardised all uses of 'u' and 'v' in this quotation.

the English crown also offered its support to a number of the coups directed against James, including the Ruthven raid of 1582, provides some idea of the suspicion and hostility that existed between the neighbouring states. It was not until the mid-1580s that a diplomatic resolution to the tensions emerged in the form of the Anglo-Scottish alliance which James signed in July 1586. The English government were prompted towards this treaty as a result of fears about the increasing influence of the Spanish and the possibility of war developing with them. Mayer argues that the assassination of the Dutch Protestant leader William the Silent in 1584 acted as a catalyst for diplomatic relations with England as 'war between England and Spain seemed suddenly more likely, and England needed Scotland to remain a friendly neighbour in the event of conflict.'⁵ This added to the existing fears that the predominantly Catholic Ireland would act as a back door for a Spanish invasion of England. The last thing the English government wanted was another neighbouring state to fall within the Spanish sphere of influence. While the alliance represented diplomatic efforts towards a thawing of hostilities between England and Scotland, it also proved to be uneasy in practice as the English government held a crucial bargaining tool. In 1585, a year before the signing of the alliance, Parliament passed the 'acte for provision to be made for the suertie of the Queenes Majesties most Royal person', also known as the Act of Association, which stated that anyone who had plotted against the Queen, or anyone related or associated with any such person, 'shall bee excluded and disabled for ever to have or clayme, or to pretend to have any clayme the Crowne of this Realme, or

⁵ Jean-Christophe Mayer, 'Introduction' to Mayer (ed.), *The Struggle for the Succession in Late Elizabethan England: Politics, Polemics and Cultural Representations* (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, 2003), pp. 1-20 (p. 5).

of any her Majesties Dominions'.⁶ For James the new alliance was therefore something of a mixed blessing. While it provided him with some assurance that the English would not attempt to interfere with his rule in Scotland, or attempt to contest his claim to the English throne following Elizabeth's death, the act passed by Parliament placed him in a difficult position and could potentially have allowed the English government to thwart James's ambitions towards the English throne. At around the same time that James signed the Anglo-Scottish alliance, Francis Walsingham and his agents were gathering the final pieces of evidence they needed to round up the conspirators in the Babington Plot, a conspiracy in which Mary, Queen of Scots was implicated. The arrest and conviction of the plotters, including Mary, provided an area of ambiguity in James's claim to the throne. The Act of Association also meant that otherwise trivial events were granted added significance. Such was the case with the arrest of Valentine Thomas, a petty criminal and Catholic agent, in 1598 who claimed that he had been hired by James to assassinate the queen. While his assertions were never taken seriously by the English government James still sought to be publicly assured that the Act of Association was not applicable to either his mother's involvement in the Babington Plot or his own alleged involvement in the Thomas affair. Elizabeth, in a very shrewd political move, would only provide James with private assurances that his claim to the throne was unaffected and declined from publicly dissociating him from the Thomas incident.⁷

The process of James's succession to the English throne was hardly smooth or inevitable. One contemporary account of James's accession tellingly observes

⁶ *Anno xxvii. reginae Elizabethae at the Parliament begunne and holden at Westminster, the xxvii. day of November* (London: Christopher Barker, 1585) sig. A2v.

⁷ For comment upon this incident, see Mayer, pp. 6-7.

that 'King James entered King in England more peaceably nor him self or any other could have expected'.⁸ Similar sentiments are implied in a rather telling aside in the recollections of the celebrations of James's accession at Cheapside by Lady Anne Clifford in which she comments that the 'peaceable coming-in of the King was unexpected of all sorts of people'.⁹ All in all, James's accession to the throne seems to have been interpreted as a rather anti-climactic affair.

This chapter will argue that it is the debates surrounding the accession of James VI that inform the political outlook of *Darius* and *The Alexandrian Tragedy* by William Alexander and *Philotas* by Samuel Daniel. It will also focus specifically on the way in which the three texts, which can be regarded as a loose trilogy, are linked by their appropriations of the figure of Alexander the Great as a means of commenting upon James I's accession to the English throne and the different implications this would pose from the perspective of Samuel Daniel, as a native of England who must adjust to a new regime, and William Alexander, as a member of the Jacobean court in Scotland who, like many of his peers, was looking ahead to a potentially bright future when the centre of power would shift to London, but also aware of the possible corrupting influence this change in fortunes may have upon the king. This approach intersects with the arguments of critics writing in the tradition of the so-called 'Atlantic archipelago' influenced J. G. A. Pocock's call for a 'new British history' emphasising that British history should focus upon the developments of several separate nations rather than one individual nation.¹⁰ John Kerrigan argues that

⁸ Cited in Robert Ashton (ed.), *James I by his Contemporaries* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1969), p. 61.

⁹ Ibid, p. 231.

¹⁰ J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47: 4 (1975), 601-21. For examples and evaluation of the 'Atlantic archipelago' context as an approach to the study of early modern literature, see the essays in Philip Schwyzer and Simon

this tradition recognises that ‘early modern England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales were in different degrees and for a variety of reasons, but sometimes to crucial effect, interactive entities’ and that ‘the islands of the North-West Atlantic constituted, culturally as well as politically, a linked and divided *archipelago*.’¹¹ The chapter also considers how the plays respond to the impact of James’s accession upon various constitutional issues and the effect of the representation of Alexander the Great’s ultimately ambivalent relationship with stoic philosophy, thereby showing how these tragedies can be seen to address similar concerns to the other dramas in the neo-Senecan tradition.

All the plays in the following two chapters interrogate the nature of exemplarity in their appropriations of various historical figures in ways that compare with the iconographic strategies employed by James and his propagandists. James’s iconographic public image was promulgated by a range of authors who advanced comparisons between the new king and a range of figures from classical mythology, ancient history, and the bible. The range of these comparisons is evidenced in a dedicatory verse, written by an author known only as ‘R. H.’, which prefaces James’s *The Essayes of a Prentise, in the Divine Art of Poesie* (1584):

The glorious *Grekis* in stately style do blaise
The lawde, the conqurour gave their *Homer* olde:
The verses *Caesar* song in *Maroes* praise,
The *Romanis* in remembrance depe have rolde.
Ye *Thespian Nymphes*, that suppe the *Nectar* colde,
That from *Parnassis* forked top doth fall,
What *Alexander* or *Augustus* bolde,
May sound his fame, whose vertewes pass them all?
O *Phoebus*, for thy help, heir might I call,
And on *Minerve*, and *Maias* learned sonne:

Mealor (eds), *Archipelagic Identities: Literature and Identity in the Atlantic Archipelago, 1550-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

¹¹ John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. vii.

But since I know, none was, none is, nor shall,
Can rightly ring the fame that he hath wonne,
Then stay your travels, lay your pennis adowne,
For *Caesars* works, shall justly *Caesar* crowne.¹²

Although the author's emphasis is on the extent to which James surpasses his precedents, it is still notable that he should be figured as a Caesar. This dedication is also indicative of an important respect in which James's iconography differed from that of Elizabeth. Curtis Perry argues that under Elizabeth, the panegyrists were part of a reciprocal system which would call for praise and recognise that such praise was 'necessarily endless', James's image as writer 'violates this reciprocity' and forces the poets to 'alternatively ally themselves with the king's authorial power, and express their unworthiness or inability to do so.'¹³ James's status as poet king also effectively set the agenda for the panegyrists; as Leah Marcus points out, he 'provided would-be panegyrists with a wealth of which could be mimetically recapitulated in entertainments at court.'¹⁴ Marcus also argues that James also 'demanded that the Jacobean symbology of power be elaborately specific to himself and his own most cherished projects in a way that it had not been under Elizabeth.'¹⁵ This can be seen shortly after his accession when his lavish entry into London saw his procession pass by a set of specially constructed triumphal arches, evoking, as Jonathan Goldberg observes, 'a Roman style, imperial', heralding a new epoch of Augustan grandeur.¹⁶ However, in spite of James's apparent authority over his public image, there were moments when his iconography provoked

¹² R. W., 'Sonnet' in James VI, *The Essayes of a Prentise, in the Divine Art of Poesie* (Edinburgh: Thomas Vautroullier, 1584), A2v.

¹³ Perry, p. 17.

¹⁴ Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 112.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 114.

¹⁶ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 32.

ambiguity. As James Doelman points out,

few historical figures were without blemish: King David had sinned with Bathsheba and in the death of Uriah, Constantine murdered his own son. Solomon for all his wisdom and the building of the Temple, had been attracted to magic, and had fallen into pagan worship at the end of his life. Most writers who invoked the biblical king as a prototype for James overlooked these things, but in a biblically literate society, they might come to a reader's mind unbidden, and in non-analogical discussions they might arise in a way that commented upon the present.¹⁷

There were also occasions when pageantry had the potential to convey the wrong message; as Paulina Kewes has argued, the fact that James's entry into London took place on 15 March 'is bound to have reminded those classically attuned of Julius Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March.'¹⁸ The timing of the occasion obviously made Ben Jonson compelled to encounter it in his *Magnificent Entertainment*: 'And may these *Ides* as fortunate appeare / To thee, as they to *Caesar* fatall were.'¹⁹ Although, on the face of it, James's entry into London evoked imperial grandeur, his propagandists still had to tackle the resonance of the last gasps of Rome's republicanism. The ambiguities inherent in many of the figures appropriated in Jacobean iconography meant not only that its audience would have to overlook certain elements in order to appreciate the positive associations, but also, as the following two chapters will show, that authors who appropriated exemplary historical figures also had scope to use them as vehicles for criticism of the monarch.

Each of the plays in this chapter appropriate the figure of Alexander the Great who had previously been realised or discussed in a number of important literary

¹⁷ James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), p. 75.

¹⁸ Paulina Kewes, 'Julius Caesar in Jacobean England', *The Seventeenth Century*, 17: 2 (2002), 155-86 (p. 162).

¹⁹ Ben Jonson, *B. Ion: his part of King James his royall and magnificent entertainment through his honorable cittie of London, Thurseday the 15. of March. 1603* (London: Edward Blount, 1604), D2v.

texts of the period. The variety of such works and their contrasting realisations of the figure contributed to a generally ambivalent view of him. On the one hand, he was a benevolent and enlightened ruler; on the other, he was an uncompromisingly ruthless tyrant. One of the most notable appropriations, and one that was clearly informed by the former view, is John Lyly's court comedy *Campaspe* (1584) in which Alexander commissions the painter Apelles to produce a portrait of his Theban prisoner with whom he is infatuated. Apelles, who has also fallen in love with his sitter, deliberately ruins his portrait of Campaspe so he will be forced to repeat the process and spend more time with his beloved. Alexander discovers Apelles' ruse but allows Campaspe and Apelles to go free before returning to his military duties. From the outset of this text it is asserted by Clitus that Alexander is a merciful and virtuous ruler who exercises a benevolent attitude towards those he has conquered:

I cannot tell whether I should more commend in Alexander's victories courage or courtesy, in the one being a resolution without fear, in the other a liberality above custom: Thebes is razed, the people not racked, towers thrown down, bodies not thrust aside, a conquest without conflict, and a cruel war in a mild peace.²⁰

As Andrew Hadfield points out, this view of Alexander's victories is clearly a whitewash, a point that would have been familiar to an audience who had some knowledge of Plutarch's account of Alexander's life. In actual fact, 'the city had been destroyed, six thousand of its citizens killed, and thirty thousand sold into slavery.'²¹ The view of Alexander as a benevolent ruler is therefore problematic. Lyly also highlights Alexander as a model of stoic self-discipline, particularly in his assertion that 'It were a shame Alexander should desire to command the

²⁰ John Lyly, *Campaspe* (I. v.1-7), in G. K. Hunter and David Bevington (eds), *Campaspe; Sappho and Phao* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, 2007 repr.).

²¹ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 81.

world if he could not command himself' (V. iv. 168-9). Hadfield goes on to comment upon the inconsistencies in the characterisation of Alexander and the ambivalence he provoked:

On the one hand, Alexander was a man of god-like virtue, lucky enough to have been expertly schooled by Aristotle, who always taught him to listen to counsel, and helped make him into a great leader able to inspire his men; but on the other, he betrayed an unseemly lust for glory, could not bear to hear ill spoken of him, and often indulged in excessive, cruel revenge on his defeated enemies.²²

Alexander is therefore a figure whose reputation offers the potential for a number of varied interpretations. This is also shown in an exchange between Cordus and Sabinus in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* about whether or not the comparison between Alexander and the revered Germanicus is, in fact, a favourable one:

Cordus. I thought once,
Considering their forms, age, manner of deaths,
The nearness of the places where they fell,
T'have paralleled him with great Alexander:
For both were of best feature, of high race,
Yeared but to thirty, and in foreign lands,
By their own people, alike made away.
Sabinus. I know not, for his death, how you might wrest it;
But, for his life, it did as much disdain
Comparison with that voluptuous, rash,
Giddy, and drunken Macedon's, as mine
Doth with my bondsman's.²³

Jonson's provision of an alternative view of Alexander the Great reveals some of the less favourable aspects of the figure that Lyly represses. These examples provide evidence of the ways in which Alexander the Great could be appropriated as both an enlightened, stoic ruler and as a licentious tyrant with an appetite for violence. That William Alexander should write two plays centred on a figure also called Alexander is significant. David Allan argues that 'the

²² Ibid.

²³ Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall*, 1.136-47, ed. by Philip J. Ayres (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990, repr. 2007).

autobiographical dimension to this work is striking' and that 'the ties between dramatist and protagonist are very much more than nominal. Sir William Alexander can only have found the topsy-turvy career of his namesake hypnotic... for it contained pertinent lessons both for himself and his monarch.'²⁴ Daniel, meanwhile, appropriates him in order to address concerns about the potentially corrupting influence of the acquisition of a far more bounteous realm than that over which he previously presided. In each case, Alexander the Great represents a significant means of commenting upon the actions of the new king. The intertextuality of these plays is also suggested by the fact that Daniel was clearly aware of William Alexander's dramatic work, as shown by the praise bestowed upon him in the epistle to Prince Henry which prefaces *Philotas*:

And though you have a Swannet of your owne,
Which on the bankes of Douen meditates
Sweet notes to you, and vnto your renowne
The glory of his Musicke dedicates,
And in a lofty tune is set to sound
The deepe reports of sullen Tragedies²⁵

This dedication therefore situates the play firmly in the context of the didactic political style that characterizes Alexander's dramas. This chapter will thus focus upon the intertextual connections between these three plays and their status as a thematic trilogy centred around the reign of Alexander the Great.

William Alexander's *Darius*

The Monarchic Tragedies of Alexander, Earl of Stirling, are the last on our list, composed under the auspices of the scholarly King James I.

²⁴ David Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland: Neo-Stoicism, Culture and Ideology in an Age of Crisis, 1540-1690* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 101.

²⁵ Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Philotas* ('To the Prince', ll. 53-8) ed. by Laurence Michel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949). All subsequent textual references are taken from this text and will be cited parenthetically.

They are poor stuff: I imagine that they are more important in the history of the Union than in the history of the Drama, since they represent the choice, by a Scotsman of accidental eminence, to write verse in English instead of in Scots. Their faults are the faults of the other plays of the group; but they have not the virtues of the others.²⁶

Posterity has not been kind to William Alexander's dramatic works and T. S. Eliot's assessment view remained largely unchallenged. Criticism of Alexander's plays - such as it is - either concurs with Eliot's view or adopts an even more caustic viewpoint, as is the case with F. L. Lucas who finds them 'consumedly dull' and complains that they are filled with 'Philosophisings on the blessings of the humble, or feeble rant... alternate with dismal choruses on the mutability and vanity of all things - queer products for the pen of a Scotsman who feathered his nest extremely well under the first Scottish King of England.'²⁷ The fact that these views have remained unchallenged means that Alexander is arguably the coterie dramatist who has benefited the least from the revaluation of the form which has steadily taken place since the 1980s. Alexander remains more well known for his political career as a member of King James VI and I's court, especially for his part in Scotland's empire building campaign in Nova Scotia for which he earned the title Viscount Canada. The relatively recent reassessment of certain neo-Senecan dramas means that the time is right for a modest reappraisal of his dramatic work.

The first two tragedies in the sequence, *Darius* and *Croesus*, emerged around the time of James's accession to the throne in England and, fittingly, share the common theme of the effect of a union of states, as does Samuel Daniel's *Philotas*. Alexander's situation as a dramatist in Scotland is one that raises a number of issues about national cultural identity. This, as evidenced by the

²⁶ T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 44.

²⁷ F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969), pp. 114-15.

views of Eliot and Lucas above, has not gone unnoticed. His decision to adopt a form of drama which was characteristic of the English aristocratic classes means that his plays are, according to Sarah Carpenter, ‘only nominally related to the drama of Scotland.’²⁸ It seems that the implications of Alexander’s dramatic works pertaining to their contribution to Scottish national literature were apparent even at the time. James VI and I criticised Alexander’s tendency to write ‘harshe verses after the Inglish fashion’.²⁹ It would therefore be wrong to argue that Alexander’s tragedies represent a development in the history of a Scottish national literature. This, however, was not initially to have been the case; Alexander’s original version of *Darius* was far more abundant in Scottish variations on English words than subsequent revisions. Alexander discusses this in his preface “To the Reader” in which he admits that the language is ‘mixt of the English and Scottish Dialects’ and expresses his hope that the English readers will forgive him for preserving a ‘badge of mine owne countrie’ and that the Scots will also indulge him ‘if for the more parte I vse the English phrase, as worthie to be preferred before our owne for the elegance and perfection thereof’.³⁰ The fact that his adoption of a hybrid dialect is a product of the political climate surrounding James VI’s accession is suggested in his anticipation that such a project will contribute to a ‘straiter union and conjunction as well in language, as in other respects’.³¹ Alexander’s adoption of the Scottish dialect is emphasised in John Murray’s commendatory sonnet to *Darius* in which he favourably compares Alexander’s play to the works of

²⁸ Sarah Carpenter, ‘Early Scottish Drama’, pp. 199-211 in R. D. S. Jack (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature* (vol. 1) (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p. 209.

²⁹ Quoted in Jenny Wormald, ‘The Happier Marriage Partner: The Impact of the Union of the Crowns in Scotland’ pp. 69-87 in Glenn Burgess et al (eds.) *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 83.

³⁰ Quoted in L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton (eds), *The Poetical Works of William Alexander* (2 vols.) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921), 1, p. cxcvi.

³¹ Ibid.

Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus, stating these authors had achieved the same heights as ‘matchlesse *Menstrie* in his native tongue’.³² The reference to the ‘native tongue’, in this context, gains added significance. Subsequent developments would seem to suggest that the early edition of *Darius*, with its abundance of Scottish variations, was merely a means of appeasing any potential voices of dissent from the more nationalistic-minded Scots. The view that Alexander’s appropriation of the Scottish dialect was little more than a temporary measure is also suggested by Kastner and Charlton’s comment that *Darius* is ‘written in an Anglo-Scottish language by a Scot who declares himself more enamoured of English than of his native speech; and in fact the main purport of his later revisions is the destruction of the Scottish element in his language’.³³ Alexander’s choice of vocabulary is therefore a reflection of a number of questions about national identity raised by James’s accession. It is also reflective of that which Roderick J. Lyall describes as the ‘commonplace of Scottish literary historiography that the accession of James VI to the English throne marked an irreversible turning point, that the departure of the king and his court created a cultural vacuum’ in early modern Scotland.³⁴ Alexander’s alignment with English tradition is therefore symptomatic of a wider trend in the Scottish literary climate. The imminent movement of James’s court from Scotland to England left contemporary Scottish writers facing the decision about whether to remain in Scotland or to follow the progress of the court south.

Alexander’s utilisation of the neo-Senecan dramatic form therefore marks him

³² Murray, l. 12.

³³ Kastner and Charlton, p. cxcvi. For details of the effect of the subsequent revisions upon the Scottish vocabulary in the edition of *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, see Kastner and Charlton, pp. cxcv-cc.

³⁴ Roderick J. Lyall, ‘London or the World? The Paradox of Culture in (post-) Jacobean Scotland’, pp. 88-100 in Glenn Burgess et al (eds.) *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 83.

as something of an outsider, failing to fit in with either the Scottish cultural scene, due to the incongruous style of the works, or with the English coterie dramatists due to his geographical removal from them during the 1590s. Mary Ellen Lamb has suggested that Alexander may have been introduced to the standards of continental drama by George Buchanan, whose brother was Alexander's former tutor, rather than through the output of the Wilton writers.³⁵ Nevertheless, as I intend to argue in this section, Alexander's participation in Jacobean politics, both before and after the accession of James VI and I in 1603, provides a new focus for the kind of political commentary contained within neo-Senecan dramas written by the likes of Mary Sidney and her peers. I also wish, both here and in the following chapter, to counter the claims made by some commentators that Alexander's plays exist merely as rather servile political parables designed to echo the views advanced by James VI in such works as the *Basilikon Doron* and *The True Laws of Free Monarchies*. I shall argue that in *Darius*, Alexander provides a precedent for appropriating Alexander the Great as a means of commenting upon certain aspects of James's character, as well as subtly inviting his readers to decide whether it is Alexander or the hubristic Darius with whom the king most closely compares. I will also examine, in both chapters, the ways in which Alexander draws upon events from James's Scottish rule throughout *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, including episodes that evidence some of James's character flaws that would provoke some of the most serious crises of his reign in England.

However overt and unsubtle their tendencies towards political didacticism may be, *The Monarchicke Tragedies* remain interesting for the way in which they

³⁵ Mary Ellen Lamb, 'The Myth of the Countess of Pembroke: The Dramatic Circle', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 11 (1981), 194-202 (p. 200).

attempt to illustrate certain political points and offer situations in which certain political perspectives can be applied practically. The self-consciously didactic nature of these texts is illustrated by Alexander's policy of using gnomic pointing, which was a staple feature of Garnier's work preserved in Kyd's translation of *Cornélie*, as well as featuring in Jonsonian drama. *Darius* also emphasises its alignment with neo-classical principles of neo-Senecan drama by condensing a number of key events leading to the downfall of its protagonist into a twenty-four hour period, thereby observing the Aristotelian unity of time. The plot draws heavily on material from Quintus Curtius which had been translated by John Brende in 1553 and reissued in 1602, shortly before the probable composition of Alexander's play.³⁶ The play begins shortly after Darius's defeat against Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus in 333, during which his mother, wife and daughter were taken as prisoners of war by Alexander, and concludes with a Nuntio relating how, in the aftermath of Darius's last stand at the Battle of Gaugamela (which, in actual fact, took place two years later in 331 BC), he found the dying Darius in a chariot after he had been betrayed by two of his advisers.

Alexander's argument of the play establishes that Darius's principal tragic flaw is his arrogance, his overarching pride, and his attempts to establish his greatness, a feature which motivates him to make the inflammatory demand that Philip of Macedon pay him a tribute. In his opening soliloquy Darius himself suspects that the events troubling him at that moment are the work of some 'thund'ring pow'r grown jealous of my state' (1.1).³⁷ He later expresses his view

³⁶ Kastner and Charlton, p. 459.

³⁷ All textual references to *The Monarchicke Tragedies* are from L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton (eds.), *The Poetical Works of William Alexander* (2 vols.) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921), vol. 1.

that 'I scorne to grant a greater man then I' (1.48). Alexander's play therefore adopts as its initial premise a warning of the dangers faced by a monarch succumbing to pride, a danger against which James had cautioned his son in *Basilikon Doron*, in which he advised Henry to 'maintaine peace in your Court, bannish envie, cherish modestie, bannish deboshed insolence, foster humilitie, and repress pride'.³⁸ Darius continues his opening soliloquy by describing himself in godlike terms as the 'Idoll of the world' (1.10). The religious undertones of this title are complemented by a reference to a phoenix (1.14), a traditional symbol of resurrection appropriated in both political and religious discourse throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Darius therefore interprets his rise to power as a mark of divine approval and a sign of his own sublime greatness. This hubristic attitude is condemned by the chorus who expose the shortcomings of his supposed glory when placed in a global context:

*A mighty man who is respected,
And by his Subjects thought a God,
Thinkes as his name on high erected,
Hath what he list at home effected,
It may like wonders worke abroad,
O, how this folly is detected!
For, though he sit in Royall seate,
And as he list his vassals lode
Yet others who are great,
Live not by his conceit,
Nor weigh what he doth threat,
But plague his pride oft ere he feare the rod;
There are rare qualities requir'd in Kings,
"A naked name can never work great things."
(1.191-204).*

They assert that a King's vision of his own greatness will not necessarily be shared by other rulers and that this pride needs to be earned as a result of one's

³⁸ James VI and I, *Selected Writings*, p. 235.

deeds. The words of the chorus can be regarded as subtly undermining the outlook of James's *Basilikon Doron*, the first book of which constitutes a spirited defence of the premise that kings are appointed by divine right and have been augmented by God to the status of a 'little GOD to sit on his Throne and rule over other men.' The operative word in the first speech by the chorus is that the king is '*thought*' a god by his people, rather than being appointed a demigod by divine power. The chorus speech therefore represents an instance in which Alexander's text diverges from the outlook of James's political writings and his views of the status of the monarch.

Darius' hubris is punished by nemesis in the form of Alexander the Great who is charged with avenging the perceived insult to his deceased father, Philip of Macedon. However, there are occasions when he seems to exhibit the same flaws Darius had exhibited in the previous act, as shown by his resolve to strive for absolute power:

No, I will raigne, and I will raigne alone,
Disdaining to admit of more Commanders:
For (as the Heavens can hold no Sunne but one)
The Earth cannot contain two *Alexanders*;
The spacious circuit of this peopled Round
Seemes not sufficient to confine my thought,
And, O, would God there could moe worlds be found,
That many might to grace our deeds be brought
(2.417-24).

This kind of rhetoric, which capitalises upon the popular belief that Alexander wept when he believed there were no more worlds left to conquer, implies that he engages in the same vices that proved to be Darius' downfall. While this flaw makes it clear that Alexander does not exist in diametric opposition to Darius, he is nevertheless cast as a favourable alternative. The emphasis upon the fair and merciful treatment of Darius' mother, wife, and daughter - all of whom he

has captured as hostages - points towards an image of Alexander as an enlightened and civilised ruler. This point is reinforced by Alexander's regret that Darius' death has 'rob'd the glory / Which I (by giving him his life) had gain'd' (5.1.1869-70). It is implied that he sought a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the conflict in order to enforce his clemency and thus contribute to the fashioning of himself as a merciful and honourable leader. Even Darius acknowledges Alexander's honourable reputation:

Of *Alexander* those who hope for gaine
By trait'rous meanes do but themselves deceive,
Since none in earth doth Traitors more disdaine,
Nor treason can in greater horreur have.
(4.2.1503-5).

While the first three acts spend a considerable amount of time asserting that Darius' pride is his fatal flaw, the focus of the tragedy shifts towards the end of the third act. This change in tone is precipitated by the appearance of Bessus and Narbazanes, two treacherous advisers at the court of Darius who plan to hand over their ruler as a prisoner to Alexander or, failing that, to assassinate him and seize power for themselves. Their plans are, as Bessus suggests, rooted in Machiavellian theories of the use of power:

"A crowne may cover any kinde of wrong;
"What hainous thing so odious is by nature,
"Which for a Kingdome not committed is?
"To be a King, let me be call'd a traitour,
"Faith (if for ought) may broke be for this.
"Those are but feeble braines which fancies loade,
"With timorous dreams which bare surmising brings;
"Who feare vaine shadowes, must not walke abroad,
"Too warie wits dare never worke great things.
(3.3.1038-46).

The plotters are therefore unusually open about the Machiavellian self-interest at the heart of their plot. Unlike, for example, Brutus and Cassius in Thomas Kyd's translation of *Cornelia* and Alexander's *Julius Caesar*, Bessus and Narbazanes

do not attempt to justify their proposed course of action by attempting to assert that it is a means of removing an unfit ruler or negotiating it with Republican theories of tyrannicide. Indeed the assertion that 'A Crowne may cover any kinde of wrong' shows that they support the idea that a ruler should exercise absolute power and should not be accountable to any of their subjects. This point of view goes against Darius' later comment, 'I live too long if they my death desire' (4.2.1490). The discourse between the conspirators therefore gives the reader an idea of how they would exercise power if their plan were successful.

The plot of Narbazanes and Bessus is revealed by Narbazanes who proposes to Darius that Bessus take his place as ruler until the problems he is facing have subsided, an act which Darius interprets as treason. He is, however, advised by Artabazus to adopt a lenient course of action in response to the treachery:

It may be this from ignorance proceeds,
"In thought, and not in word, consists a crime;
Since that against your enemies you goe,
Be not severe in cens'ring Subjects parts,
But tolerate your owne, to grieve your foe,
Now must we strive to gaine, not lose mens hearts.
(4.2.1412-18).

This plea and a protest of innocence from Narbazanes persuade Darius to overlook the affair and hold the two 'in the same degree of grace, / That you enjoy'd, before those words chanc'd out' (4.2.1449-50). Darius adopts his lenient course of action in spite of the warning issued by Patron, a Greek captain, that Narbazanes and Bessus merely 'faine repentance for the forme, / Till every thing be for the fact prepar'd' (4.2.1479-80). Patron's interjection makes it clear that the potential consequences of Darius' decision not to punish the miscreants were hardly unforeseen.

It is arguable that the successful persuasion of Darius to adopt a lenient course

of action against the plotters would have been viewed with some misgivings by the text's initial readership, particularly in the aftermath of two particular events in recent Stuart history. Even before his accession to the English throne in 1603 James VI of Scotland had been no stranger to assassination plots and conspiracies to limit his authority. According to one reading of events, James's life was endangered even before he was born. In early March 1566, the palace of Holyroodhouse was raided by Mary's husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, and a number of his supporters, resulting in the murder of David Rizzio, who was rumoured to be Mary's lover and the father of her child. Mary escaped this incident unharmed but she still maintained that it was a plot to take her life and that of her unborn child. This view is, as Jenny Wormald comments, unlikely to have been the case as 'no one was stupid enough to endanger the succession.'³⁹ Nevertheless, this event indicates that conspiracies would become a regular occurrence throughout James's life.

The recurrence of this trend is exemplified by the event now known as the Ruthven raid of 1582. This incident can be viewed as an attempt by William Ruthven, first earl of Gowrie, and a group of his Presbyterian followers to counter the independence of the young king whose minority was coming to an end. The king was abducted and placed under house arrest at Ruthven Castle where he remained for nearly ten months during which time the Presbyterian conspirators asserted their authority over the country. Instead of curbing the king's independence, the principal result of the Ruthven raid was to help end the

³⁹ Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I (1566–1625)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14592>, accessed 25 Oct 2008]. Elaine Finnie Greig, however, argues that 'it may have been hoped that [Mary] would miscarry, so killing both the child and Mary herself.' See, 'Stewart, Henry, duke of Albany [Lord Darnley] (1545/6–1567)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26473>, accessed 7 Oct 2011].

king's minority. After having escaped from Ruthven Castle, James responded to the raid by exiling many of the main participants and arranging William Ruthven's execution in May 1584.

A similar crisis to James's rule in Scotland came in August 1600 in an incident which is still puzzling historians to this day. The principal participants in this alleged plot, the existence of which is still debated by some historians, were John Ruthven, third earl of Gowrie, and his brother Alexander, both the sons of William Ruthven who had been executed sixteen years previously due to his key role in the King's imprisonment. The official version of events stated that the King was persuaded by Alexander Ruthven to visit his brother's estate in Perth where there was a substantial amount of treasure which he had intercepted. After the king had dined at the estate he, Alexander Ruthven, and Andrew Henderson, Ruthven's chamberlain, retired to a study where a dagger was allegedly drawn on James with Ruthven stating his intention to avenge the death of his father. James managed to shout out of a window for help and attract the attention of a number of courtiers below who rushed to his aid. Both Alexander and William Ruthven were killed instantly for their part in the affair. Some historians read this event as an elaborate ruse by James to rid himself of the troublesome Ruthven faction and to ensure that further attempts to curb his royal authority were prevented. Either way, the official version of events, promulgated in a posthumous trial of the plotters and in various tracts, was eager to assert that the incident was a diabolical attempt upon the King's life.⁴⁰ It is quite possible that this is the version of events with which the readers of Alexander's text were presented. That the incident permeated the popular

⁴⁰ Studies of the Gowrie conspiracy include Andrew Lang, *James VI and the Gowrie Mystery* (London: Longman, 1902) and W. F. Arbuckle's two-part article, 'The Gowrie Conspiracy', *Scottish Historical Review*, 36 (1957), 1-24 and 89-110.

English consciousness is evidenced by the performance of a play entitled *The Tragedy of Gowrie* by Shakespeare's company in 1604. The fact that this remained a sensitive subject is suggested by the swift suppression of the play which means it is no longer extant today. Neil Rhodes comments that despite the censorship of the play, 'the sense James had of his own life as public theatre remains suggestive'.⁴¹ The appearance of *The Tragedy of Gowrie* provides an overt example of the way in which such events informed the dramas of the public stage and demonstrates its potential for dramatising events from recent history. A. R. Braunmuller has also shown how the event highlights the ways in which the dramatisation of events involving living monarchs were often regarded as a cause for concern and provides an example of how the authorities could react to potentially subversive material.⁴² It is safe to say that knowledge about the conspiracy would certainly have been available for the initial readership of *Darius*, as demonstrated by the way in which the author of *The Tragedy of Gowrie* would have presupposed that their audience at the public theatre would have been conscious of the significance of the event which informs its plot.

William Alexander himself may also have produced material that provided explicit commentary on the incident through his possible authorship of a pamphlet entitled *A short discourse of the good ends of higher providence, in the late attemptat against his maiesties person*, which appeared in 1600.⁴³ This

⁴¹ Neil Rhodes, 'Wrapped in the strong arms of the Union' in Willy Maley and Andrew Murphy (eds.), *Shakespeare and Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 37-52 (p. 39).

⁴² See A. R. Braunmuller (ed.), *Macbeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; reprinted 2008), pp. 2-4.

⁴³ This is suggested in T. H. McGrail, *Sir William Alexander, First Earl of Stirling: A Biographical Study* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1940), pp. 21-2 and David Reid 'Alexander, William, first earl of Stirling (1577-1640)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2006.

pamphlet, in a manner that is 'declamatory rather than forensic',⁴⁴ dismisses the public objections of several leading ministers in Edinburgh who refused to acknowledge James's official version of events relating to the apparent attempt upon James's life. The tract also takes consolation from the prospect that, now that the plotters have been uncovered and punished, the king will be more wary of the potential for future acts by ungrateful courtiers and thus achieve a 'paterne and measure of trew Kingly ordour, whereby the ground-worke of sick mischiefe and infection, may be ryped out'⁴⁵ The king is thus, theoretically at least, armed with the wariness with which Darius was lacking. If Alexander is indeed the author of this text, it provides a precedent for his less explicit engagement in debates about regicide that are articulated in the incidents that take place in *Darius*.

The implications of the presence of the plotters in Alexander's text would therefore have been apparent to a readership who were conscious of these events and their serious potential consequences. The chorus in the play's final scene are emblematic of the political naivety that caused the downfall of Darius, as suggested when they comment upon the way in which Darius is persuaded of the plotters' good faith that 'A mind sincere is ever least suspitious: / These think all faultie, who themselves are vitious' (5.2.1963-4). The final image of Darius is that of the usurped ruler chained up and left for dead in the back of a chariot by the conspirators.

The circumstances of Darius' tragic demise can, it is implied, be traced back to two root causes. The first of these is the hubristic pride and arrogance he

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/335>, accessed 9 Oct 2008].

⁴⁴ Reid, 'Alexander, William, first earl of Stirling (1577–1640)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴⁵ *A short discourse of the good ends of the higher providence, in the late attemptat against his Maiesties person* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1600), pp. 3-4.

exhibited at the beginning of the play and in the way in which he incurred the wrath of a rival power. While this attitude sets in motion the action of the play, the eventual cause of Darius' downfall is soon attributed to the conspiracy initiated by Bessus and Narbazanes and the poor advice he accepts in dealing with it. In the political climate of Jacobean England in which the tragedy appeared in 1603 this incident would have resonated strongly. It was the same environment in which James's evasion of the Gowrie conspiracy would be interpreted as an act of providential deliverance which would be commemorated with thanksgiving sermons every Tuesday.⁴⁶ Alexander's tragedy can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to show the dire consequences of leniency against political dissension and conspiracies at court. It also emerges as a subtle critique of the monarch's over-reliance on the fact that their subjects will view them as a god, as James himself had suggested in *Basilikon Doron*. The potential consequences of the folly of allowing such an outlook to leave one open to conspiracies by one's subjects is dramatised by the fate of Darius. This critique therefore provides evidence that Alexander's play is more than the servile political parable as which critics have regarded it, nor does it necessarily conform to the conservative ethos perceived by Hadfield.⁴⁷ In fact, the play is a work that emerges in an advisory capacity rather than as means of simply echoing James's own views. Darius' pride also represents a loss of stoic self-discipline, elements of which are becoming apparent in Alexander the Great; we shall see that the examination of this fault is developed at greater depth in the other *Monarchicke Tragedies*. The representation of one monarch who has failed in the stoic endeavour to exercise self-discipline and another who appears

⁴⁶ Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 207.

⁴⁷ Hadfield, p. 75.

to exhibit similar faults betrays an interest in the value of stoicism in the political sphere and the potential consequences of failing to adhere to its principles. This is indicative of the way in which the interests of Alexander's plays coalesce with those of the group of neo-Senecan plays as a whole.

Samuel Daniel's *Philotas*

The theme of the assumption of godlike status is also prevalent in Samuel Daniel's tragedy, *Philotas* (1604), and, as I shall argue in this section, informs a political aspect which has hitherto been largely overlooked. Thanks to the wave of interest in the licensing and censorship of early modern literature which flourished in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the controversy surrounding Samuel Daniel's play and the circumstances of its author's appearance before the Privy Council are now familiar;⁴⁸ the reading of the play as an allegorical representation of the downfall of the Earl of Essex has also become something of a critical commonplace.⁴⁹ Attempts to situate the play in a Jacobean context have generally focused upon the ways that the play comments upon the kinds of factional difficulties left over from the fallout of the Essex affair and the continued influence of Cecil, as suggested by Curtis Perry's argument that

⁴⁸ See, for example, Janet Clare, 'Art made tongue-tied by authority': *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 127-31, Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 165-71, and Christina Alt, 'Directed Readings: Paratext in *A Game at Chess* and *The Tragedie of Philotas*', *Philological Quarterly*, 83.2 (2004), 127-46.

⁴⁹ For one of the earliest and most sustained examinations of the Essex connection see the introduction to Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Philotas*, ed. Laurence Michel (Yale: Yale University Press, 1949, 1970 reprint), pp. 36-66. See also Brents Stirling, 'Daniel's *Philotas* and the Essex Case', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 3 (1942), 583-94, and Hugh Gazzard, "'Those graue presentments of antiquitie": Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* and the Earl of Essex', *Review of English Studies*, 51: 203 (2000), 423-50. For voices of dissent see the introduction to Samuel Daniel, *The Complete Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 5 vols. (London: 1885-96), vol. 1, p. xxii, as well as the introduction to Samuel Daniel, *Poems and 'A Defence of Rhyme'*, ed. A. C. Sprague (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. xxvi. A lengthier reconsideration of the Essexian subtext can be found in G. A. Wilkes, 'Daniel's *Philotas* and the Essex Case: A Reconsideration', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 23: 3 (1962), 233-42.

‘Concerns with the mechanisms of counsel, forged around the Essex crisis, could only be sharpened by Cecil’s ongoing dominance.’⁵⁰ This section will argue not only that the Essex reading aligns this text with the other neo-Senecan plays influenced by Mary Sidney’s translation of Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*, but also that such features as the characterisation of Alexander the Great and the inclusion of a multi-vocal chorus commenting upon the events taking place would have been viewed as topically significant to the play’s initial audience and readership, suggesting a political context to this work beyond the Essex affair.

Daniel’s *Philotas* takes place around the time of Alexander the Great’s decisive victory over Darius and charts the fall of the eponymous officer in the army of Alexander and favourite at his court. Philotas’ physical prowess and martial skill are offset by his pride and perceived arrogance which have given rise to resentment and bitterness among his fellow officers and courtiers. Philotas’ failure to convey to Alexander the details of a conspiracy to make an attempt upon the king’s life proves to be his fatal downfall. His enemies at court leap upon the opportunity to convince Alexander that his silence is proof of his involvement in the affair. Philotas is given the opportunity to defend himself, albeit in the absence of the king, but is eventually forced to fabricate a story of his treachery and that of his father, Parmenio, after being unable to withstand the physical torture to which he is subjected. The play also acknowledges that at the same time as these events take place, the people have received confirmation from the oracle that Alexander is in fact the son of Jove, and refers on numerous occasions to Alexander’s elevation to the status of a deity. It is not difficult to

⁵⁰ Perry, p. 85. See also Tricomi, pp. 63-71.

appreciate how a contemporary audience could have found striking similarities between the circumstances of Philotas' fall from favour and the downfall of the Earl of Essex amidst the factionalism and bruised egos which were characteristic of English politics during the last decade of Elizabeth's reign.

Although no proceedings from any council meetings from the period of the *Philotas* controversy are known to exist, it has been possible to piece together the events surrounding Daniel's trouble with the authorities. *Philotas* was one of three plays, along with John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* and *Eastward Ho!*, of which public performances had landed the Children of the Queen's Revels company in trouble after having been approved for performance by Daniel, then the company's Licenser. Hugh Gazzard argues that the persistence of Daniel's clashes with the authorities during his time in the role 'suggests not a series of errors perpetrated from stupidity or naivety, but something like a concerted effort to smuggle more or less outspoken criticism of the dominant political grouping into its very stronghold.'⁵¹ Gazzard goes on to suggest that Daniel had overestimated the extent to which he could rely on the protection of his patron, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy.⁵² John Pitcher also points out that many of the former associates of Essex, including Mountjoy and Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton, now held prominent positions in the new Jacobean government and had profited from the circle's 'reformation and realignment at the Jacobean court.'⁵³ Pitcher goes on to suggest that this redistribution of power had possibly left Daniel 'unsure - and as it turned out, mistaken - about what he could and could not say safely about the Essex trial in the changed circumstances of power

⁵¹ Hugh Gazzard, "'Those graue presentments of antiquitie": Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* and the Earl of Essex', *Review of English Studies* 51, 203 (2000), 423-50 (p. 428).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ John Pitcher, 'Samuel Daniel and the Authorities', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 10 (1998) 113-48, (p. 119).

brokering at the new court, and when his old patrons had new alliances to protect.⁵⁴ This suggests that Daniel had miscalculated the freedom with which he was able to talk about the recent past in the new political climate and misinterpreted the message given out by the promotion of his former patrons who, with personal interests in self-advancement at court, were not likely to want their former association with rebellion being thrust into the limelight again.

Unlike the majority of the neo-Senecan plays being written in the early modern period, there is substantial evidence that Daniel's *Philotas* was performed at court by the Children of the Queen's Revels in early January, 1605. In the 'Apology' he appended to the printed edition of the text, Daniel himself admitted that the stage had acted as 'the mouth of my lines, which before were neuer heard to speake but in silence'.⁵⁵ He also insisted that the piece was written specifically for an amateur performance to be 'presented in Bath by certaine Gentlemens sonnes, as a priuate recreation'.⁵⁶ Daniel had previously made no secret of his apparent disdain for the type of play which was likely to appear in the public theatre. In the dedicatory verses to the Countess of Pembroke which prefaced his *Cleopatra*, he dismissed such plays as examples of 'Gross Barbarism'.⁵⁷ For this reason, *Philotas* emerges as a rather odd addition to the corpus of Daniel's literary works. In the apology, he confided that the decision to submit his work for public performance was motivated by personal financial difficulties and asserted that he never intended the work to have received a public performance.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Samuel Daniel, 'The Apology' in *The Tragedy of Philotas*, ed. by Laurence Michel (Yale: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 156. All subsequent references to *Philotas* and its prefatory material will be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Samuel Daniel, 'To the Right Honourable, the Lady Mary, Countess of Pembroke' in S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds.), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 11.

It is such an anti-theatrical outlook, as well as Daniel's adoption of the elite neo-Senecan dramatic form, that informs Janet Clare's comment that *Philotas* is 'an untheatrical piece'.⁵⁸ This view clearly overlooks some of the theatrical features Daniel appropriates and the way in which, on a number of occasions, he takes advantage of the possibilities offered by theatrical performance that would not have been available in a text intended for direct transmission to print. Daniel does, however, retain many of the features which characterised the contemporary coterie drama. As Lucy Munro comments, the Children of the Queen's Revels company here 'appropriates the elite mode of closet drama, adapting it to the requirements of the commercial stage'.⁵⁹ *Philotas*, like its fellow neo-Senecan dramas, is more interested in analysing the events taking place and conveying their implications than actually showing them take place. This is evidenced by the appearance of the Nuncius, a traditional staple of the neo-Senecan drama, in the fifth act who describes to the chorus the torture of Philotas. In this case, Daniel presents a clear instance in which a violent occurrence, which could pose a potential problem in terms of decorum, is deliberately bypassed and related to the audience by an eyewitness.⁶⁰ This is one of the typical instances that frequently occur in neo-Senecan drama in which one of the play's key events, in this case its denouement, takes place off-stage and is merely described to the audience. The presence of the chorus is another feature which Daniel's play has inherited from the neo-Senecan tradition. In the play's argument, Daniel specifies the composition of the chorus and its significance:

⁵⁸ Clare, p. 127.

⁵⁹ Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 138.

⁶⁰ This convention is also appropriated in, among others, Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*, William Alexander's *Darius*, *Croesus* and *Julius Caesar* and Daniel's *Cleopatra*. For Cary's use of the Nuntius see Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), pp. 175-8.

The Chorus consisting of three *Graecians* (as of the three estates of a Kingdome) and one *Persian*, representing the multitude and body of a People who vulgarly (according to their affections, carried rather with compassion on Great-mens misfortunes, then with the consideration of the cause) frame their imaginations by that square, and censure what is done.⁶¹

The chorus is therefore intended to be a metonymic representation of the demographic proportion of the population of the Macedonian empire. Daniel also implies that their status as representatives of the ‘vulgar’ means that their interest in the events taking place is rooted more in their desire for scandal than in any interest the important political manoeuvring taking place. This point is reinforced by their initial appearance which also provides a metatheatrical framework with which the theatre audience can engage:

*WE as the Chorus of the vulgar, stand
Spectators heere to see these great men play
Their parts both of obedience and command,
And censure all they do, and all they say.
(1.2.399-402).*

Ironically, Daniel here uses the Chorus, a feature rooted in the closet dramatic mode, to emphasise the theatrical nature of his work with the chorus placing themselves in the same position as the audience. They are able, at this point in the text at least, to remain disengaged from the action taking place and to express their views upon it. Their description of themselves as ‘Spectators’ emphasises this premise in the same way as their acknowledgment that they are witnessing ‘these great men play’. The use of this metatheatrical device is comparable to similar conceits in such popular dramas as Francis Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), as well as the induction scene in John Marston’s *The Malcontent* (1603) and the use of the Grex in Jonson’s *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1599). The use of the Chorus in this instance typifies

⁶¹ ‘Argument’ in Michel, pp. 101-2.

the resultant hybridity of Daniel's play.

Whereas closet drama is by its nature a static medium, a number of instances in *Philotas* suggest that the author is acutely aware of the greater flexibility and opportunities for visual effect which theatrical performance can offer. Daniel jettisons the traditional soliloquy with which plays in the neo-Senecan framework would usually begin and replaces it with a discussion between Philotas and Chalisthenes. The most notable indicator of Daniel's awareness of the potential for visual effect, however, is through the emphasis upon the figure of Dymnus, the principal plotter who is assigned no dialogue and does not even appear in the *dramatis personae* but nevertheless remains a significant presence on the stage. There are no stage directions to qualify the appearance of Dymnus, yet his presence can clearly be inferred from the dialogue in the scenes. As a guard enters, Alexander comments that 'they bring vs *Dymnus*, in whose face / I see is guilt, despaire, horror, and death' (3.1.818-9). This line clearly indicates his presence in this scene, and the subsequent exchange of dialogue shows Daniel using the figure to significant visual effect:

Guar. Yea, death indeed, for ere he could b' attached
He stabb'd himselfe so deadly to the heart,
As tis impossible that he should liue.

Alex. Say *Dymnus*, what haue I deserud of thee,
That thou should'st thinke worthier to be thy King,
Philotas, than our selfe? hold, hold, he sinks;
Guard keepe him vp, get him to answer vs.

Guar. H'hath spoke his last, h'wil neuer answer more.
(3.1.820-7).

The image of the plotter dying, having stabbed himself, before the eyes of his captors, and the audience, shows Daniel's willingness to experiment with the way in which visual set pieces could be constructed in public performance. It also gives the audience a taste of the violent fate which will soon befall Philotas,

visual representation of which will be eschewed. The dead body of Dymnus is also present throughout the trial scene, as specified by the opening stage direction and Alexander's utterance, 'This *Dymnus*, whose body you behold' (4.2.1258), which would obviously require one of the boy actors in the company to lie motionless throughout the scene.⁶² These particular details suggest that Daniel's text is not quite the 'untheatrical piece'⁶³ which Clare had pronounced it to be and that it can be viewed as a hybrid form taking advantage of features from both coterie and theatrical drama.

The great frequency with which Daniel's play is associated with the fall of the Earl of Essex has meant that the text's more immediate topical relevance has been overlooked. This can be seen as an example of the way in which, as Leah Marcus argues, state censorship could often serve as a means of 'stabilizing meaning' in contrast to the tendency for plays to be 'caught up in a whirl of intense if nebulous topical speculation in which meaning was multiple' and 'radically unfixed'.⁶⁴ While the Essex rebellion is a significant context, it must also be emphasised that *Philotas* is a Jacobean play which was performed at an important stage in the transition from the Elizabethan era to the rule of the country by a whole new dynasty. This important change in the government is, as I intend to argue, alluded to in the events that can be said to constitute the play's subplot, the rise of Alexander the Great, a premise which aligns Daniel's play with the two *Monarchicke Tragedies* of William Alexander, as well as placing it in the same tradition as such precedents as Lyly's *Campaspe*, as I discussed

⁶² For an examination of the representations of the corpse on the Renaissance stage, see Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

⁶³ Clare, p. 127.

⁶⁴ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 28.

above.

The accession of James is also treated in the subplot's theme of the acquisition of new territories. This is suggested, in a manner which also forges an intertextual link with Alexander's *Darius*, by the presence of various Persian characters who are being assimilated into Macedonian society and by the premise that Persian customs are being adopted in this society. This is shown in Philotas' announcement that he has decided to defend himself in the Persian language at his trial:

For that, beside the Macedonians, here
Are many that will better vnderstand,
If I shall vse the speech your grace hath vs'd;
Which was, I hold, vnto no other end,
But that the most men here might vnderstand.
(4.2.1375-9).

Philotas' conviction that he intends to use the language in order to communicate his defence to the largest number of people indicates the extent to which Persians are beginning to influence the workings of Macedonian society. This could also be a reflection of Daniel's concerns about the apparent impenetrability of the legal system. Such views are articulated in his poem dedicated to the Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton:

If it be wisdom, and not cunning, this
Which so imbroyles the state of truth with brawles,
And wrappes it up in strange confusednesse
As if it liv'd immur'd within the walls,
Of hideous termes fram'd out of barbarousnesse
And forraine Customes, the memorials
Of our subjection, and could never be
Deliv' red but by wrangling subtiltie.⁶⁵

Philotas' use of a foreign language in order to participate in the legal process reflects such fears about the potential alienation of the individual that can be

⁶⁵ Samuel Daniel, 'To Sir Thomas Egerton Knight' in *A Panegyrike Congratulatory* (London: Edward Blount, 1603).

caused by the legal system. This moment also represents a precedent for key moments in which the issue of language in other early modern dramas including Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *All is True*, as well as John Webster's *The White Devil*. The recurrence of this trope on the commercial stage, along with the views expressed in the poem to Sir Thomas Egerton, shows that *Philotas* is engaging with concerns that were becoming increasingly prominent during the first decade of James's reign in England about the possible threat to individual liberty posed by various institutions including the law.

The most notable Persian character in the text is Antigona, Philotas' lover and a former concubine of the defeated Darius. The apparent gulf between the two societies is suggested in Antigona's admission that '*Philotas* hath but me as I do know, / Nor none els will he haue, and so he swore' (1.2.277-8), while Darius, on the other hand, 'had thousands more' (1.2.276). Philotas is apparently capable of a faithful and monogamous relationship, whereas Darius indulged in luxury and promiscuity with 'thousands' of lovers. The annexation of Darius' Persian kingdom is also suggested by the composition of the Chorus which, according to the *dramatis personae*, consists of 'Three *Graecians* and a *Persian*.' The fact that the Chorus is intended to represent the multitude of society suggests that Persians are being gradually assimilated into Greek society. Daniel himself suggests the metonymic nature of the Chorus in his argument to the play, in which he comments that the 'Chorus consisting of three *Graecians* and one *Persian*,' represents 'the multitude and body of a People' (Argument, 39-41). While the Chorus appears as a single unified voice throughout most of the play, the different ethnic groups represented of which they are composed separate and debate with each other about the action which

has taken place in the final act. The Persian representative in the Chorus opens the act by offering a critique of the apparent differences between the Greek and Persian governments:

*Well, then I see there is small difference now
Betwixt your state and ours, you ciuill Greeks,
You great contriuers of free gouernments,
Whose skill the world for out all countries seeks.
Those whom you call your Kings, are but the same
As our Souereigne tyrants of the East;
I see they only differ but in name,
The effects they shew, agree, or neere at least.
(5.Chorus.1767-74).*

Here, the Persian Chorus member acknowledges the traditional view of Greece as the ancient seat of democracy only to subvert and neutralise it by asserting that their methods are essentially no different from those practised by the Persians. Democracy, the Persian goes on to assert, is merely a cover behind which a ruler can exercise power as they please while appeasing the public:

*Only herein they differ, That your Prince
Proceeds by forme of law t'effect his end;
Our Persian Monarch makes his frowne conuince
The strongest truth: his sword the processe ends
With present death, and makes no more ado:
He neuer stands to giue a glosse vnto
His violence, to make it to appeare
In other hew than that it ought to beare,
With plaine dealing best his course commends
(5.Chorus.1779-87).*

The Persian Chorus member then expresses perplexity at the fact that Alexander should hide behind these legal and democratic maxims when he is able to exercise power in the way he chooses. The Greek Chorus members comment that 'it satisfies the world, and we / Thinke that well done which done by law we see.' (1797-8). The Chorus are therefore intended to constitute and condense the views of the general public. This, however, is somewhat problematic. The play's twentieth century editor, Laurence Michel, comments upon 'Daniel's indecision

about the value of the *vox populi*'⁶⁶ which, to some extent emerges in his portrayal of the Chorus. As I have noted above, there is a class issue which emerges when the Chorus are likened to the theatre audience and subtly accused of voyeurism. Their recognition of themselves as 'the Chorus of the vulgar' (1.2.399) asserts their social status. Lucy Munro comments upon the instability of the Chorus and recognises that as it 'becomes dialogic, the potential unreliability of the observers who comment upon political situations is underlined.'⁶⁷ The schism in the chorus is reminiscent of the tradition of the semi-chorus which was prevalent in ancient Greek tragedy. By splitting up the formerly unified Chorus into two groups, Daniel represses the idea he had established in the previous acts that they represent a single united representation of the political views of the masses. The dispersion and subsequent multivocality of the views being expressed thus hint at the potential factionalism and divisive nature of the actions of the influential characters upon the ordinary citizens, and provides a vision that is thus antithetical to the Jacobean desire to produce a united British nation. It also indicates that which Michel recognized as Daniel's ambivalence about the validity of public opinion. The diffusion of the Chorus also suggests the fundamentally contrasting outlooks of the two cultures. This resonates with the kind of suspicious and often derisive attitudes with which the English and Scots view each other. Such attitudes are summarised by Jenny Wormald:

In 1603, the brutal fact was that the Scots and English disliked one another intensely; forty years of the veneer of friendship imposed by a common cause in religion – itself a veneer, given the profound differences between the two churches – was certainly not enough to offset three centuries of hostility, and if anything the union increased

⁶⁶ Michel, Introduction to *Philotas*, p. 36.

⁶⁷ Munro, p. 140.

rather than diminished that hostility.⁶⁸

The derisive attitudes towards the Scots are also suggested by the essayist Francis Osborne, one of the most scathing of James's contemporary critics. Osborne suggests that many of James's English subjects were alienated by 'his partiality towards the Scots, which hung like horseliches on him, till they could get no more, falling then off by retiring into their owne country, or living at ease, leaving all chargeable attendance to the English.'⁶⁹ Wormald also comments upon English anxieties about the ways in which the Scots were perceived to be trying 'to muscle in on English jobs, at court and in government, in the church and the universities. When there was already an English employment problem, Scotsmen on the make were truly appalling.'⁷⁰ Philotas' decision to defend himself at his trial by speaking in the Persian language, on the grounds that 'beside the Macedonians, here/ Are many that will better vnderstand,/ If I shall use the speech your grace hath vs'd' (4.2.1375-7), can be construed as a comment upon the realignment of certain influential civic roles in order to accommodate the newly assimilated group of people, thus resonating with concerns about the ways in which the Scots were working their way into these positions.

The composition of the Chorus also addresses a number of topical concerns about James's liberality in issuing honours and titles during the early period of his reign, a point illustrated by Lawrence Stone's suggestion that James had

⁶⁸ Jenny Wormald, 'O Brave New World? The Union of England and Scotland in 1603' in T. C. Smout (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 13-35 (p. 22).

⁶⁹ Quoted in Robert Ashton (ed.), *James I by his Contemporaries* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp. 232-3.

⁷⁰ Wormald, p. 26.

knighted as many as 906 men during the first four months of his reign alone.⁷¹

Such misgivings are also evoked, in a far more controversial manner, in

Eastward Ho!, particularly in an exchange between two gentlemen:

1 Gentleman. I ken the man weel; he's one of my thirty-pound knights.

2 Gentleman. No, no, this is he that stole his knighthood o' the grand day for four pound, giving to a page all the money in's purse, I wot well.⁷²

The imitation of the Scottish dialect ensures that the target of the satirical gibe is

decidedly explicit and indicates the way in which James's early liberality was

represented on the popular stage. This can be read alongside Philotas's

condemnation of a culture of honours in the opening scene:

Nor can I patiently endure this fond
And strange proceeding of authoritie,
That hath ingrost vp all into their hand
By idolizing feeble Maiestie,
And impiously doe labour all they can
To make the King forget he is a man,
Whilst they diuide the spoyles, and pray of powre,
And none at all respect the publike good
(1.1.67-74).

Here Philotas objects to the climate of flattery which leads to certain

undeserving individuals being left to 'diuide the spoyles and pray of powre'

whilst neglecting the 'publike good', and goes on to lament that the 'poore

soules consum'd with tedious toile,/ Remaine neglected' (1.1.79-80). This

relates to some of the objections raised by Osborne about James's advancement

of certain individuals:

The harvest of love and honour he reaped being suitable to the ill
husbandry he used in the unadvised distribution of his favours: For a
number of empty vessels he filled to compleat the measure of our
infelicity, few proved of use to him, unlesse such as, by reason of their
vast runnings out, had daily need of a new supply.⁷³

⁷¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 41.

⁷² Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, *Eastward Ho!* (4.1.167-71), ed. by C. G. Petter (London: A&C Black, 1994).

⁷³ Osborne in Ashton (ed.), p. 232.

The endowment of rewards to the unworthy, to the disadvantage of the deserving, would resonate with concerns and discontent provoked by James's extravagant liberality with honours during the first year of his reign and by the advancement of a number of his Scottish subjects. There is also an implication of the culture of favouritism that would come to be a major sticking point for many English observers. This emerges through the presence of Ephestion who is mentioned alongside a number of historical figures who are representative of the culture of favouritism in Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*:

The mightiest kings have had their minions;
Great Alexander lov'd Hephaestion,
The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept,
And for Patroclus stern Achilles droop'd.
And not kings only, but the wisest men;
The Roman Tully lov'd Octavius,
Grave Socrates wild Alcibiades.⁷⁴

As this reference shows, Ephestion was synonymous with royal favour. Such a culture of favouritism is also suggested in Alexander's first lines in Daniel's play:

Ephestion, thou dost *Alexander* loue
And *Craterus*, thou the King
(2.1.433-4).

The fact that Alexander refers to himself by his name when addressing Ephestion, and as 'the King' when speaking to Craterus, suggests a hierarchy of intimacy amongst his courtiers with Ephestion occupying a much more privileged position than his peers. Although the effects of James's favouritism were yet to reach their most extreme culmination in the Overbury affair, there were still hints of what was to become a recurring feature of his reign. His partiality towards Esmé Stewart during his Scottish rule had been a cause for

⁷⁴ Marlowe, Christopher. *Edward the Second* (1.4.393-9) in J. B. Steane (ed.), *The Complete Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, repr. 1986), pp. 431-533.

concern amongst some of his nobles, whilst the popularity of James Hay, later Earl of Carlisle, had provoked the condemnation of figures such as Francis Osborne.⁷⁵

Similar concerns about the increasing influence of the Scots are also reflected through the composition of the Chorus, in which the Persian presence suggests concerns about the way in which society will ultimately be represented. The Chorus, therefore, not only features as another example of the way in which Persians are beginning to occupy the cultural and ethnic composition of the Macedonian empire but also, through their musings upon the use of power, subtly indicates the way those which the Greeks perceive as quintessentially Persian customs are being adopted. The idea of the adoption of Persian customs is made apparent through a number of other suggestions contained within the play. The opening scene partially consists of a debate between Philotas and Chalcisthenes.⁷⁶ The historical Callisthenes is most notable for his ever increasing misgivings about Alexander's adoption of customs inherited from the Persians he had conquered. Particularly objectionable to him was Alexander's growing approval of the Persian practice of proskynesis which involved subjects lying prostrate in front of someone of significantly higher social rank to themselves in recognition of their authority. The practice is described by Herodotus in his *Histories*:

When Persians meet in the streets one can always tell by their mode of greeting whether or not they are of the same rank; for they do not speak but kiss - their equals upon the mouth, those somewhat superior on the cheeks. A man of greatly inferior rank prostrates himself in profound reverence.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Osborne in Ashton, p. 232.

⁷⁶ I have retained the variations in spelling in order to differentiate between the historical figure (Callisthenes) and Daniel's character (Chalcisthenes).

⁷⁷ Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.134, Aubrey de Sélincourt (trans.), (London: Penguin, 1954, revised 2003), p. 62.

Although there is no direct reference to the practice in Daniel's text, Gazzard points out that none of Daniel's sources for *Philotas* 'provide any warrant for the interview between Philotas and Chalcisthenes, nor indeed for any contact between them at all - yet Daniel's scene presupposes their intimacy.'⁷⁸ The presence of this character therefore raises a number of issues about court customs which remain implicit in Daniel's play.

Chalcisthenes would eventually share a similar fate to Philotas and be linked with a conspiracy against Alexander. As a result he was thrown in prison where he died. The presence of Chalcisthenes in this text is significant and, it seems, a deliberate authorial choice. Gazzard goes on to point out that the historical Chalcisthenes was notable for his view that 'Alexander's pretensions to godhead reduced the conquering Macedonians to Persian servility' and suggests a link between this outlook and Essex's rejection of the divine rights of monarchs.⁷⁹ These hints at the new customs being adopted by the court can also be viewed alongside the different style of kingship which James had adopted to that of his predecessor. Jenny Wormald argues that many English MPs and courtiers 'found offensive and outrageous the boldness and familiarity with which the Scots treated their king, the numbers crowding into his presence; they thought it dangerous' and that James initially 'reacted against an English formality which he found excessive.'⁸⁰ The extent of the changes in court customs was recorded in the diary of Lady Anne Clifford who remarked that 'we all saw a great change between the fashion of the Court as it is now and of that in the Queen's

⁷⁸ Gazzard, p. 439.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 440.

⁸⁰ Wormald, p. 26.

time.’⁸¹ The appearance of the chorus can thus be seen as a means of interrogating English concerns about the new composition of both the court and the country in the wake of James’s accession. The repeated articulation of the dangers of absorbing the customs of an alien culture can, however, be viewed as analogous to contemporary concerns, particularly regarding the accession to the English throne of a new monarch from Scotland, an apparently barbarous domain which England had throughout the centuries made frequent attempts to subdue. Such fears are addressed in Daniel’s *Panegyrike* to James I in which he identifies the ‘forraine sinnes’, such as ‘Luxuriousnesse’ and ‘Gluttony’⁸² as major obstacles to good government, the effects of which he hopes James will counter. *Philotas*, conversely, dramatizes the exact opposite scenario in which such vices could be intensified under the reign of the new monarch.

The conquest of Persia is also important as far as the characterisation of Alexander in Daniel’s play is concerned. In William Alexander’s *Darius*, Alexander the Great is characterised as a *deus ex machina* punishing the vastly inflated pride of the play’s principal protagonist. The subplot of *Philotas*, as well as dramatising the aftermath of Alexander’s defeat of Darius and conquest of Persia, continually alludes to Alexander’s assumption of God-like status after the oracle has confirmed that he is the son of Jove, thereby making himself culpable of the same overbearing pride that caused Darius to fall. The presence of Chalisthenes in the text provides a subtle rejection of the divine rights of monarchs that is line with the view it is suggested that Philotas holds. This is also suggested in the second act in which Alexander criticises Philotas for his failure to recognise his recent deification:

⁸¹ Quoted in Ashton (ed.), p. 232.

⁸² Samuel Daniel, *A Panegyrike Congratulatory Delivered to the Kings most excellent majesty at Burleigh Harrington in Rutlandshire*, 54-5 (London: Edward Blount, 1603).

And one day to our selfe he dares to write,
(Seeming our stile and title to vpbraid,
Which th'oracles themselues held requisite,
And which not I, but men on me haue laid)
And sayd he pitied those who vnder him should liue,
Who held himselfe the sonne of *Iupiter*.
(2.1.457-62).

Philotas is later forced to confirm his views on Alexander's adoption of god-like status during his trial:

I do confesse indeed I wrote something
Against the title of the sonne of *Ioue*,
And that not the King, but to the King
I freely vs'd these words out of my loue
(4.2.1577-80).

Philotas has therefore attempted to neutralise the offence he caused Alexander and place himself in a similar political position to the Essexian republican faction in Elizabethan politics who challenged the divine rights of monarchs and believed that key advisors in the court should monitor their use of power. Such an outlook is contrary to the rhetoric of James's political writings, including *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilicon Doron*; in the latter, in particular, he advised his son, Prince Henry, that he must 'learne to know and love that God, whom-to ye have a double obligation; first, for that he made you a man; and next, for that he made you a little GOD to sit on his Throne, and rule over other men.'⁸³ James's defence of the divine rights of monarchs also manifested itself in the first speech he delivered to parliament in March 1604, in which he characterized himself as the divinely appointed head of the state with parliament as the body of government, a state of affairs which, James argued, 'GOD by my Birthright and lineall descent had in the fulnesse of time prouided for me.'⁸⁴

⁸³ James VI and I, *Basilicon Doron* in Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards and Joseph Marshall (eds), *King James VI and I: Selected Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 199-258 (p. 211).

⁸⁴ James I, 'A Speech as it was Delivered in the Vpper Hovse of the Parliament to the Lords Spirtvall and Temporall, and to the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses there Assambled' in

James's promotion of divine rights goes against much of the contemporary political thought which influenced many militant Protestants during the latter part of Elizabeth's reign. This tradition owed much to the resistance theories of the monarchomachs and radical Huguenots such as Hubert Languet and Philippe du Plessis-Mornay. Another major influence upon this strain of thought was James's former tutor, George Buchanan, whose controversial work, *De jure regni apud Scotus: Dialogus*, had defended the deposition of Mary, Queen of Scots.⁸⁵ In many ways, the development of James's views on divine rights can be seen as direct reaction to Buchanan's outlook. Roger Lockyer has suggested that James's 'need to assert his independence against this overbearing advocate of popular sovereignty was one of the major impulses driving James to develop his own political theory and ensuring that he would move in a very different direction.'⁸⁶ James even went so far in asserting his resistance to Buchanan's theories as to make the Scottish Parliament formally renounce them in 1584.

Anxieties about the possible consequences of the assumption of divine rights are reflected in the final scene in which the Nuncius relates the words of Hegelochus, one of Alexander's generals, which expresses concern at the prospect of Alexander being recognised as the son of Jove:

*He that aboue the state of man will straine
His stile, and will not be that which we are,
Not only vs contemnes but doth disdain
The gods themselues, with whom he would compare.*

William McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1918), pp. 269-80 (p. 269).

⁸⁵ On Buchanan's response to the deposition of Mary, Queen of Scots, see John D. Staines, *The Tragic Histories of Mary Queen of Scots, 1560-1690* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 27-50. On Buchanan's place within the context of a tradition of radical political writing in Scotland, see Arthur Williamson, 'Radical Britain: David Hume of Godscroft and the Challenge to the Jacobean British Vision' in Glenn Burgess, Jason Lawrence and Rowland Wymer (eds), *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 48-68.

⁸⁶ Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England, 1603-1642* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 37.

*We have lost Alexander, lost (said he)
The King, and fall'n on pride and vanity;
And we have made a god of our owne blood,
That glorifies himselfe, neglects our good.
Intolerable is this impious deed
To gods, whom he would match, to men he would exceed.*
(5.2.2055-64).

This speech, which, appropriately enough, contains an Alexandrine, emphasises the discontent engendered by Alexander's self-proclaimed status amongst his commanders. These words echo those of the Chorus in the previous scene who make the explicit connection between Alexander's corruption and his acquisition of new territory:

*For by th'accession of these mighty States
Which Alexander wonderously hath got
He hath forgot himself and vs, and rates
His state aboue mankind, and ours at nought.*
(5.1.1821-4).

In a manner similar to the wish of Daniel's Cleopatra that the Roman invaders will be corrupted by the exoticism of Egypt, the Greek Chorus argue that the 'base adorings' of the new Asian territory 'hath transformed the King / Into that shape of pride, as he is brought / Out of his wits' (5.1.1826-8). The significance of Daniel's portrayal of the apparently corrupting influence of Alexander's sudden acquisition of more dominions would therefore have been striking for a contemporary audience shortly after the accession to the throne of James I.

The play expresses concern not only about the mere fact that the monarch has claimed that his authority is divinely sanctioned, but also about the possible effects that this could have upon certain constitutional imperatives. Such anxieties become apparent when returning briefly to the Persian Chorus member's cynical commentary on the similar methods of the Greek and Persian sovereigns in which he states that the only difference in their rule is that 'your

Prince/ Proceeds by forme of law t'effect his end' (5.Chorus.1779-80). This can be viewed as a cynical gloss upon a view expressed by James in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* that 'a good King, although hee be above the Law, will subject and frame his actions thereto, for examples sake to his subjects, and of his owne free-will, but not as subject or bound thereto.'⁸⁷ In James's eyes, then, a king's adherence to the law is a mere formality and should not restrict his actions as he is ultimately above the law. In view of the Persian chorus member's commentary upon the affair, the trial of Philotas shows the potential for abuse inherent in James's attitudes towards the law and exposes the possible ways in which such a position can endanger the constitutional rights of the subjects.

While *Philotas* has attracted special attention for the circumstances surrounding its censorship, I have argued that the play can in fact be considered a part of the same intertextual group as the contemporary neo-Senecan dramas. The fact that it was performed may seem to set Daniel's play apart from the works of his fellow neo-Senecan dramatists; however, the play still retains many essential features of coterie drama and shares the political agenda and concerns about contemporary issues highlighted in the dramas of Daniel's peers as well as the pre-occupation with philosophical and constitutional issues which characterises this form of drama.

William Alexander's *The Alexandraean Tragedy*

As I have shown in the above section on *Darius*, and will go on to emphasise in the next chapter, a common theme for William Alexander's first two tragedies is

⁸⁷ James VI and I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* in *Selected Writings*, p. 271.

that of the union of kingdoms. *Darius* and *Croesus* also have the juxtaposition of alternative rulers, with Alexander the Great in *Darius* and Cyrus in *Croesus*, as a means of comparing differing outlooks on kingship and monarchical responsibility as a common feature. Both *The Alexandræan Tragedy* and *Julius Caesar* were late additions to the subsequent editions of *The Monarchicke Tragedies* and thus have the potential to evaluate the effect of James's accession to the English throne and the union of the crowns which was set to follow.

I have already described above the often tense diplomatic relationship between England and Scotland and some of the incidents that threatened to destabilise James's accession to the English throne. It is in this political climate that *The Alexandræan Tragedy* (1605) was written. The play focuses upon the aftermath of the untimely death of Alexander the Great, who died without naming a successor, and upon the civil war and complex factional power struggle that ensued. Unlike *Darius*, in which William Alexander merges events that took place over a period of two years and condenses them into a twenty-four hour period in order to conform to classical unity, the plot of *The Alexandræan Tragedy* takes place over several years and in a variety of locations. Kastner and Charlton comment upon Alexander's departure from the classical unities:

The incidents depicted stretch over wide expanses of place which no convention could possibly reduce to one. In time, too, the plot includes incidents covering at least seventeen years (323-306 B.C.); and they are too divergent in nature to allow of the convenient arrangement employed in *Darius*, in which the unbroken continuity is secured by the merging of two battles into one although in reality divided by a considerable period of time.⁸⁸

The scope of the play therefore precludes the overall unity of the earlier tragedy and is lent a far looser and much more episodic structure. The play begins with a

⁸⁸ Kastner and Charlton, p. 466.

series of debates about who should succeed Alexander. These disputes result in a civil war between a coalition of Alexander's former captains and a group of forces assembled by Alexander's mother, Olympia. During the course of these conflicts, all Alexander's former captains are either killed in battle or assassinated. The eventual outcome of these conflicts was the rise to prominence of Cassander, the ambitious son of Antipater, the man suspected of Alexander's murder. Cassander gradually sets about disposing of the Alexandrian line, including Olympia, whom he defeats in battle, along with Roxana and her son, Alexander IV.

The Senecan influence upon the play is very much apparent from the outset with the prologue delivered by the ghost of Alexander the Great from the underworld. He observes that his death has caused increased factionalism and disputes between various claimants:

O how I burst to thinke how some above,
Who for their glory did my steps attend,
My off-springs title proudly do disprove,
And to my Chaire by violence ascend:
"Ingratitude doth grieve a generous sprite
(1.45-9).

He also foresees a time when his 'Lieutenants through that pride of theirs,/ With Armes unkinde huge streames of blood do shed,/ By murdering of my heires, to be my heires' (1.210-2). Alexander's death has therefore left a vacuum of imperial power into which his former colleagues and advisors seek to place someone who will represent their own interests. *The Alexandrian Tragedy* can therefore be read as a kind of dystopian fantasy which considers the potential state of early seventeenth century England had it fallen into a similar crisis of succession. The absence of the strong ruler has left the great empire he accumulated in a state of instability. The appearance of the ghost of Alexander

also invites a consideration of the play's representation of stoicism. We have already seen how the Alexander who appeared in the earlier *Darius* was showing signs of the kinds of vices which precipitated the downfall of the Persian king; in the opening to the later play, Alexander's opening speech seems to imply that such hints were finally realised:

Yet I have found it a more easie thing,
To conquer all whereon the sun ere shin'd,
Then mine owne selfe, and (of my passions King)
To calme the tumults of a stormy minde.
(1. 177-80)

With regards to stoicism, Alexander has committed the cardinal sin of failing to exercise self-government, and has confirmed the fears sown in *Darius* that he would become corrupted as a result of his conquests. Through this opening soliloquy, it is revealed that William Alexander's appropriation of the character is antithetical to the incarnation in Lyly's *Campaspe*. This admission also highlights the fact that stoic self-government and political or military success are fundamentally incompatible. The addition of *The Alexandraean Tragedy* to *The Monarchicke Tragedies* has a similar effect to the inclusion of the Epilogue in Shakespeare's *Henry V* by reminding the audience that the victories which have been presented will be decidedly fleeting and that the premature death of the monarch will result in an internecine power struggle.

The dramatic focus shifts from the ghost of Alexander to concentrate upon the affairs of his former advisors and the in-fighting caused by his death. The debate scene that follows is effectively a means of placing the relative values of different political systems under scrutiny. Firstly, Perdiccas insists that the key to effective use of power is through a strong monarch at the head of the state. His comment that a 'soveraigne head this States huge body needs,/ That might

make us securely to repose' (2.1.360-1) advances contemporary ideas about the body politic.⁸⁹ The need for a strong absolute ruler is echoed later in this scene by Eumenes, who also exposes the potential for factionalism in its absence:

And when so many Kings were in one Court,
One Court would then have many humours too,
With fostring factions for each light report,
Would make them jarre as neighbouring Princes doe;
No, let this strange designe be quite suppress,
Whilst equall all, all would unequall be,
So that their mindes (by jealousie possest)
From pale suspition never could be free.
(2.1.450-7).

With the need for a legitimate ruler in mind, Perdiccas proposes a regency government with the as yet unborn son of Alexander as minority ruler until he comes of age:

If heavens enrich *Roxane* with a Sonne,
That long'd-for birth a lawfull Soveraigne brings,
And till that course of doubtfull hopes be runne,
Let some be name'd who manage may all things.
(2.1.366-9).

The idea of adopting an interim minority government alludes to an unfortunate tradition in contemporary Scottish politics. The minority rule had become a regular feature of the Scottish throne with all the Scottish monarchs from 1406 onwards coming to the throne as minors. This is compounded by the fact that James was the third consecutive monarch to succeed as an infant. As a result of his father's death at the Battle of Flodden, James V succeeded at the age of seventeen months in 1513. James V's death at Falkland in 1542 meant that his daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, was only a week old when she came to the throne, while her son James was thirteen months old when she abdicated in 1567. Scotland had therefore endured a lengthy succession of minority rule

⁸⁹ For consideration of this paradigm in early modern culture, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

which had placed a great deal of power in the hands of the nobility who had effectively been ruling the land for the most part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Ruthven Raid of 1582 can be viewed as a last desperate effort by the Presbyterian nobility to retain the power they had enjoyed throughout the minority rule of James VI. Antigonus voices his objection to the proposal of such a form of minority rule:

The Macedonians (swolne with wrath) would scorne,
That to their King a stranger should succeed:
Can men obey a Babe, a Babe not borne?
What fancies strange would this confusion breed?
(2.1.370-3).

As an alternative to the solution proposed by Perdiccas, Antigonus suggests that Alexander's illegitimate son Hercules should take over, a suggestion which meets with disapproval from Ptolomie:

To think of this, it makes my soule asham'd,
That we should serve a base Barbarians brood,
What? should we beare the yoke that we have fram'd?
To buy disgrace, have we bestow'd our bloud?
(2.1.386-9).

This could well be a satirical comment upon the English perceptions of their throne being taken over by one of the apparently barbarous neighbours they had been trying for centuries to subdue. Frauke Reitemeier has commented that 'the accession of James I to the English throne had virtually no impact on English descriptions of Scotland' and that 'the image of the Scots as a superstitious and barbarous people sticks especially in the back of everybody's head'⁹⁰.

Reitemeier also comments that 'the majority of the English seems to have been happy with it, irrespective of its correctness.'⁹¹ The ironic nature of Ptolomie's

⁹⁰ Frauke Reitemeier, "There are verie few Englishmen that know, bicause we want the books": On English Descriptions of Scotland Before and After 1603', *Renaissance Forum*, 7 (2004). URL: <<http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v7/reitemei.htm>>. Date accessed: 2nd December, 2008.

⁹¹ Ibid.

comments is complemented by the fact that his descriptions relate to a figure named Hercules, a name with classical resonance and synonymous with virtues of nobility and martial prowess. Meleager instead suggests that Perdiccas, to whom Alexander had bequeathed his ring, should take over as king, a suggestion that prompts a dismissal of the idea of elevating someone of such a status to the throne:

“To those who o’re their equals raise their state,
“Advancement envy breeds, and envy hate;
“If such with all would rest familiar still,
“This in contempt the Sovereigne title brings:
“And if they second not their subjects will,
“Men cannot beare with them, as with borne Kings.
(2.1.534-9).

Meleager’s dismissal of the premise of Perdiccas’ accession to the throne thus emerges as a dismissal of certain republican principles and, in particular, the fear that one of apparently lowly status should achieve the authority of a king.

Meleager’s alternative suggestion that Alexander’s young nephew should take over is met with an equally lukewarm response with Ptolomie objecting that ‘in state he never hath been school’d’ (2.1.568) and therefore ‘His ignorance would racke him still with feares’ (2.1.569), making him prey to self-interested flatterers and sycophants. The various arguments which had hitherto been advanced are rendered irrelevant by the report that the footmen have proclaimed Arideus as king, an act supported by the multitude, who are ‘soone chang’d’ (2.1.618). Eumenes goes on to condemn these acts:

They soone forget their Prince (excepting spoiles)
That dare revolt from what we all advis’d:
“Thus too much liberty breeds many broiles,
“And makes the giver still to be despis’d.
“The want of discipline all things confounds.
Their deed wants order, and their pride all bounds.
(2.1.624-9).

Thus Eumenes effectively dismisses the concept of democracy by repudiating the popular choice for a ruler and emphasising the fickle nature of the multitude. He also suggests that their choice is influenced by popular fervour rather than an informed process of decision making. It is thus implied that such an important decision should not be influenced by a wavering multitude who are incapable of making a rational choice. This scene therefore provides a number of alternatives to hereditary monarchy, including the prospect of regency rule and a democratic appointment; however, the scene also points out the inconsistencies in each of these alternatives and implies that hereditary monarchy represents the most stable form of government. The subsequent power struggles caused by the lack of a successor seem to confirm these objections and highlight the importance of naming a successor.

The result of the power struggle that takes place after Alexander's death is the elevation of Cassander, as the Nuntio observes in the final act:

By treason he (as all his deeds are done)
Caus'd *Hercules* his brothers steppes to trace,
Who was great *Alexanders* bastard sonne,
And th' onely remnant of that great mans race,
Loe, thus *Cassander* , enemy to all good,
Whose soule so much for *Macedonie* longs:
Hath to the Scepter swim'd through Seas of bloud,
Yet, O weake right, since builded but on wrongs!
(5.2.3346-53).

In many ways, the only real aspect of the tragedy that relates to Alexander is that his heirs and family have been completely wiped out as a result of his failure to name a successor to his empire, a failing which has allowed the ambitious and violent Cassander to seize power. The play's strange conclusion consists of the philosopher Philastrus delivering a prophetic vision of the far-reaching circumstances of Alexander's error and Cassander's imperial ambition:

That false *Cassander* who betraid his Lord,
 And spoil'd the princely race, in mischiefe chiefe,
 (A traitour both of heaven and earth abhorr'd)
 Shall live but with disgrace, and dye with griefe.
 His sonnes (in wickednesse himselfe t'exceed)
 Shall make the woman dye who made them live;
 Then both (when drunke with bloud) to death shall bleed,
 And none of theirs their funerals shall survive:
 When rash ambition should be cool'd by age,
Lysimachus shall by *Seleucus* dye;
 Nor shall *Seleucus* long enjoy the Stage,
 But by like violence shall breathlesse lye;
 And subtile *Ptolomies* degener'd race,
 (Long onely famous for infamous things)
 Shall end and to the pride of foes give place,
 Whilst a lascivious Queene confusion brings
 (5.2.3378-3401).

Philastrus' prophetic vision exposes the futility of Cassander's ambitious endeavour by charting the deaths of the various participants in it. Most significantly the speech includes references to Ptolemy, the Greek general most famous for successfully conquering Egypt and from whom the ancient royal line of Egypt was descended. The reference to the 'lascivious Queene' alludes, of course, to Cleopatra in a move that aligns the play with the products of Mary Sidney and those she influenced in England. The implication is that the events which have taken place in *The Alexandraean Tragedy* have laid the foundations for the events which were dramatised in the Antony and Cleopatra plays written by Mary Sidney, Samuel Daniel and Samuel Brandon. This final speech thus asserts an intertextual affinity with the other plays written in the neo-Senecan dramatic form.

In spite of the play's title, Alexander the Great has very little to do with the play's action. Indeed, the author acknowledges as much in the play's argument in which he comments that it is in fact Cassander who is 'the subject of this Polytragicke Tragedie' (Argument), suggesting that, because of the extended

period of time the play covers, there are numerous levels to its tragic subjects. The sole appearance of Alexander the Great in the text is as the disengaged ghost unable to exert any influence over the events taking place on earth. The play, as I have argued, is more interested in the aftermath of the king's death and the political instability it signifies. The ghost's opening soliloquy suggests that Alexander's downfall can be attributed to the same flaw he had punished as a *deus ex machina* in *Darius*, the first of William Alexander's *Monarchicke Tragedies*. Alexander's ghost hints that he was guilty of the same fatal pride that led to the fall of Darius:

By many meanes I all mens mindes did move,
For Altars (as a God) with off'rings stor'd,
Till of his glory *Love* did jealous prove:
"All kings should reverenc'd be, but not ador'd."
(1.101-5).

The play's argument also emphasises the corrupting nature of the king's newly acquired power:

after all his Conquests (shining with the glory of innumerable victories was returned backe to Babylon, where the Ambassadors of the whole world did attend his coming, as one who was expected to command over all there, being admired by the Grecians, adored by the Barbarians, and as it were drunk with the delights of an extraordinary prosperity, he suffered himselfe to be transported with an inundation of pleasure
(Argument).

This, along with the ghost's own admission that his downfall can be attributed to his lack of stoic self-discipline, places him in direct opposition to the views expressed by James. Alexander's behaviour has been contrary to the advice offered in *Basilicon Doron* in which he advised his son to adopt a course of

wise moderation, that first commaunding your selfe, shall as a Queene, command all the affections and passions of your minde, and as a Phisician, wisely mixe all your actions according thereto. Therefore, not onely in all your affections and passions, but even in your most vertuous

actions, make ever moderation be the chiefe ruler⁹².

It is therefore implied that Alexander's failure as a monarch can be linked to his failure to maintain either his self-discipline or any kind of control over his passions. The ghost of Alexander also alludes to the famous incident in which he reputedly 'wept, and wish'd more worlds t'have been wonne' (1.167), but he also exposes the fleeting nature of imperial glory:

And must I then so great a trouble have
(To whom the Earth did all belong before)
For some few foots of Earth to be a grave,
Which meane men get, and great men get no more.
(1.73-6).

Alexander's territory, which previously encompassed the known world, has now been reduced to a small plot to serve for his grave. The image exposes the ultimately futile nature of imperial ambition.

The Alexandraean Tragedy therefore provides a vision of a once great empire divided by internal strife and power struggles. The dramatisation of a crisis of succession also acts as a kind of dystopian vision of what might have happened had England been allowed to degenerate into the stage for a lengthy and bloody dispute over the succession of the crown. The tragedy can thus be seen as a means of expressing relief that James acceded to the throne of England peacefully and without encountering the various obstacles it was anticipated he would have to overcome along the way. In relation to the humanist approaches of republicanism and stoicism, the opening soliloquy provides a frame for the play which implies that Alexander's failure to achieve the stoic goal of ruling oneself sets in motion the chain of events which is dramatised in the play. The failure of Alexander's counsellors to settle upon a suitable successor is also

⁹² James VI and I, *Basilicon Doron* in *Selected Writings*, p. 240.

evidence of the consequences of failing to resolve the tensions between the various constitutional outlooks which are being voiced, thus suggesting the play is dramatising the dire consequences of the failure to uphold both stoicism and republicanism.

This chapter has illustrated the ways in which the accession of James I impacted upon the neo-Senecan tradition and provoked new aspects of the advice literature tradition in which such dramas were written. The event also added new dimensions to the republican rhetoric of the dramatists, influencing them to explore such issues as the divine rights of monarchs and the politics of succession as well as retaining the traditional concerns about the roles of counsellors. The representations of Alexander the Great also reveal, as is the case in Greville's plays, a sense of scepticism about the nature of exemplarity, as well as exposing some of its more problematic dimensions. These plays offer further evidence of how the neo-Senecan form can be used to debate issues from a variety of viewpoints and to interrogate constitutional issues, such as the liberty of the sovereign subject and the potential for an overly proud ruler to allow their state to descend into tyranny. They also have a particular interest in how a ruler's lapses in stoic discipline can affect their leadership and result in the establishment of a tyrannical regime. The emphases upon liberty and self-sovereignty are indicative of the influence of stoicism and republicanism upon the representation of these themes. It is through these political concerns, rather than just common aesthetic practices, that the tragedies of *Daniel* and *Alexander* can be aligned to those in the Renaissance neo-Senecan tradition.

Chapter Five

'The losse of that which fortune lends': William Alexander's *Croesus* and

Julius Caesar

Despite dramatising events that take place in locations as diverse as ancient Rome, Macedonia, Lydia, and Persia, and using material from a variety of sources, there is a certain intertextual cohesion to *The Monarchicke Tragedies* of William Alexander, as partly suggested in another work by Alexander. In the *Parænesis to Prince Henry* (1604), a work of advice literature originally intended for Prince Henry but dedicated to the future Charles I in editions following Henry's death, Alexander considers the influence of various historical figures and lists a number of rulers who tried to emulate a precedent set by a notable historical leader:

No, study like some one thy selfe to render,
Who to the height of glory hath been rais'd;
So *Scipio*, *Cyrus*, *Caesar*, *Alexander*,
And that great Prince chos'd him whom *Homer* prais'd,
Or make (as which is recent, and best knowne)
Thy fathers life a patterne for thine owne.¹

This extract shows that Alexander's use of these rulers and locations reveals that a common theme in his tragedies is the idea of historical example. It would appear that the source for this passage is the section in *The Prince* in which Machiavelli discusses the importance of the prince being prepared for war, and how he can learn from his historical forebears:

As for mental exercise, a ruler should read historical works, especially for the light they shed on the actions of eminent men: to find out how they waged war, to discover the reasons for their victories and defeats, in order to avoid reverses and achieve conquests; and above all, to imitate

¹ William Alexander, *A Parænesis to Prince Henry*, 11.83-8, in L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton (eds.), *The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1929).

some eminent man, who himself set out to imitate some predecessor of his who was considered worthy of praise and glory, always taking his deeds and actions as a model for himself, as it is said that Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, Caesar imitated Alexander, and Scipio imitated Cyrus. And anyone who reads the life of Cyrus, written by Xenophon, will realize, when he considers Scipio's life and career, how greatly Scipio's imitation of Cyrus helped him to attain glory, and how much Scipio's sexual restraint, affability, humanity and generosity, derived from his imitating the qualities of Cyrus, as recorded in the work by Xenophon.²

This notion of emulating exemplary historical figures therefore has its precedents, and it seems to have been an idea in which William Alexander himself was interested. David Allan comments upon the author's use of a hero with the same name as him in *The Alexandræan Tragedy* and argues that the 'autobiographical dimension to this work is striking'.³ This connection was also established in some of the commendatory verses to *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, including one by John Murray which imagines that '*Darius* Ghost seemes glad now to be so,/ Triumphant on twise by *Alexanders* two'.⁴ The idea of historical precedent is clearly one which shaped the writing of *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, particularly as Alexander was influenced by his namesake and Julius Caesar was, in turn, influenced by Alexander the Great. James I also envisaged himself as a kind of spiritual successor to both Julius Caesar and Augustus. James's coronation medal, for instance, depicts him wearing a laurel wreath with the Latin inscription declaring him Britain's Augustus and the heir to the Caesars.⁵ Such comparisons were also promulgated in the panegyric culture surrounding James's accession. The two Caesars also represented two sides of

² Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, XIV, Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 53-4.

³ David Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland: Neo-Stoicism, Culture and Ideology in an Age of Crisis* (East Lothian: Tuckwell, 2000), p. 101.

⁴ John Murray, 'In praise of the Author, and his Tragedy of *Darius*' (ll.13-14) in Kastner and Charlton, I, p. ccv.

⁵ An image of this medal can be seen at http://www.petitioncrown.com/CORONATION_JAMES_1.html accessed October 4 2011. The Latin inscription reads: 'IAC : I : BRIT : CAE : AVG : HAE : CEASARVM CAE. D. D.'

James's character he was keen to advance: firstly, as we shall see, Julius Caesar represented a precedent for ruling a united Britain; and secondly, Augustus was associated with the foundation of *pax Romana*, another fitting precedent for the identification of James as *rex pacificus*. With *Julius Caesar* (1607), Alexander places his series of political tragedies in more familiar neo-Senecan territory. Rome, or the Roman Empire was at the time the most frequently used location for plays written in this dramatic mode. His references to Cyrus and Alexander in relation to Scipio and Julius Caesar in the *Parænesis* also allow his previous *Monarchicke Tragedies* to fall into the same intertextual framework.

The subjects of *The Monarchicke Tragedies* are also linked by the fact that they represent the four great monarchies which had been prophesied in the book of Daniel. Margreta de Grazia observes that '[f]rom the days of the early church [sic], exegetes schematized history into a series of four monarchies, kingdoms, or empires, each one rising from the ashes of its predecessor until all would be subsumed by a fifth.'⁶ In the Bible, the prophet Daniel is instructed to interpret a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, who has had a vision of a giant statue with a head of gold, a breast of silver, a belly of brass, and legs and feet composed of a mixture of iron and clay. The statue is then shattered into pieces by an enormous stone that becomes a mountain that fills the entire earth. Daniel explains that this refers to a succession of empires with Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom as one of gold, which will be followed by a succession of other kingdoms of silver, brass, and iron, before being subdued by a final, everlasting kingdom.⁷ The four kingdoms in question came to be identified as Babylon under Ninus, Persia

⁶ Margreta De Grazia, *'Hamlet' without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 48.

⁷ Daniel, 2: 31-45. For comment on the prevalence of the idea of the four monarchies, see De Grazia, pp. 46-50.

under Cyrus, Greece under Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar's Rome.

This schema gained significant prominence during the Renaissance era and was a shaping influence upon a number of historical texts, including Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*. The idea that four fallen empires would pave the way for a fifth and much more glorious empire was also to become a key element in interregnum propaganda, particularly in material produced by the Fifth Monarchy Men, who saw the execution of Charles I as a watershed moment marking the beginning of the fifth empire in Daniel's prophecy.

Although Alexander does not attempt to dramatise the story of Ninus, the schema still provides an intertextual framework for these dramas. In *Croesus*, Alexander has his protagonist comment that he 'should raigne where famous *Ninus* raign'd' (4.2.1844), thus showing the author's recognition of the fact that his characters are caught up in this schematised progress of history and that the empire built by Ninus is doomed to be overrun by Cyrus. *The Monarchicke Tragedies* therefore follow two patterns: one is the Machiavellian idea that the prince should follow exemplary historical predecessors, the other is based upon a view of historical continuity.

In this chapter, I will argue that Alexander uses these plays not only to interrogate the worthiness of figures such as Cyrus and Julius Caesar - both of whom, as I shall show, were held up by James I as exemplary rulers - but also to question the extent to which his own monarch lives up to them, as well as showing the ways in which they could be appropriated to comment upon contemporary affairs. In this way, William Alexander emerges in an advisory capacity in line with the early modern incarnation of republican theories.

Croesus

Alexander's second tragedy was published along with *Darius* as *The Monarchicke Tragedies* in 1603. Taking as his source the narrative which appears in Herodotus' *Histories*, as well as Plutarch's biography of Solon and Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, Alexander dramatises the story of the king of Lydia infamous for his wealth. The play begins with the visit to the king by the philosopher Solon who, unimpressed at the spectacle of luxury he witnesses, warns Croesus of the dangers of pursuing material wealth, a warning which Croesus ignores. After Solon's visit, Croesus is faced with a series of disasters including the death of his son which he had foreseen in a nightmare and the successful invasion of his kingdom by Cyrus, the ruler of Persia who sentences him to death by immolation. After the pyre has been lit, Croesus is heard to intone Solon's name which prompts Cyrus to relent and attempt to extinguish the flames when he realises the significance of Croesus's repentance. It is, however, an act of divine intervention which saves Croesus from the flames.

The play opens with a soliloquy from Solon, delivered shortly before he is due to visit Croesus, in which he condemns the king for his cupidity:

“Their seeming blisse, who trust in frothy showes,
“Whose course with moments fickle fortune dates,
“As to a height, so to confusion growes:
“A secret fate doth manage mighty states.
(1.73-6).⁸

Solon goes on to proudly assert ‘I scorne fortune, and was ever free / From that dead wealth, depending on her power’ (1.77-8), thus regarding the pursuit of wealth as futile and a source of some emotional strain through one's dependence upon it as well as an effacement of the Platonic principle that one's passions

⁸ All references to *The Monarchicke Tragedies* are from L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton (eds), *The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling*, 2 vols, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1921), vol. 1.

should always be subject to reason. Solon confronts Croesus directly with his views after having observed the display of wealth with which he has been presented:

“I saw but sencelesse heapes of melting things;
“A waving wealth, expos’d to many windes:
“This but the body serving to decore,
“As foolish owners it, it th’ owners spends,
“Where mindes more circumspect seek better store
“Of wealth from danger free that never ends.
(2.1.317-22).

Croesus ignores Solon’s advice and expresses his disappointment in the apparently renowned philosopher with an allusion to Horace by stating that ‘all my expectations are betray’d, / I thinke a Mountaine hath brought forth a Mouse’ (2.1.433-4). This incident highlights the necessity for unpopular but correct advice and gives the impression of Croesus as a ruler whose sound judgement is threatened by his cupidity.

The image of Croesus as a king driven by his lust for material wealth would have borne some significance to its contemporary readership, particularly as it seems that James I’s attitude towards money was beginning to be called into question not long after his accession to the English throne. He was beginning to gain the reputation as, by turns, both an uncompromising miser and a reckless spendthrift, particularly towards his favourites. The contemporary essayist Francis Osborne circulated an anecdote in around 1608 which, whether it is apocryphal or not, provides evidence of exactly the kind of reputation it seems the king was beginning to acquire. Osborne’s anecdote concerns the King’s favourite, Sir Robert Carr, to whom he had given the gift of £20,000. Sir Robert Cecil, then the Lord Treasurer, was so shocked at the scale of the King’s gift that he laid out exactly that sum

upon the ground in a roome through which his majesty was to passe: who, amazed at the quantity, as a sight not unpossibly his eyes never saw before, asked the treasurer whose money it was, who answered, 'Yours, before you gave it away;' whereupon the king fell into a passion, protesting he was abused, never intending any such gift: And casting himselfe upon the heap, scrambled out the quantity of two or three hundred poundes, and swore he should have no more. However, it being the king's minion, Cecil durst not provoke him farther than by permitting him only the moiety.⁹

Andrew Hadfield comments that this anecdote 'reduces James to a greedy miser, scrabbling in the pile to save his wealth from disappearing' and sees him forsake 'the regal dignity of the monarch, something he was obsessed with protecting in his writings.'¹⁰ Another departure from the image of the ideal monarch James attempted to portray in writings such as *Basilikon Doron* suggested by this incident is the way in which James encouraged favourites and flatterers, a trait which he advised his son to avoid. With the benefit of hindsight, Osborne's anecdote also has a more sinister side. Sir Robert Carr would eventually become implicated in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, an event which, according to Curtis Perry, demonstrates how 'Jacobean favouritism can be said to have damaged the crown's prestige.'¹¹ The impact of the Overbury scandal is suggestive of the potentially damaging consequences of the culture of favouritism in Jacobean England.¹²

Croesus' repudiation of Solon's views therefore carries with it a significant contemporary resonance. This topicality is further enhanced by Solon's statement that "'They who doe freely speake, no treason thinke, / "One cannot

⁹ Quoted in Ashton (ed.), p. 114.

¹⁰ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), pp. 205-6.

¹¹ Curtis Perry, '1603 and the Discourse of Favouritism' in Glenn Burgess et al (eds.) *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 155-76 (p. 156).

¹² For a full examination of the impact and resonance of the Overbury affair see Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

both your friend and flatterer be' (2.1.381-2). His words are echoed in the following in which he asks rhetorically, 'Should I his poys'nous Sycophants resemble, / Whose silken words their Sovereigne doe o'rethrow?' (2.2.483-4). The references to flattery and sycophancy would, as I have suggested, have carried particular weight, especially in view of the culture of favouritism at James's court which was perceived to be damaging to the prestige of the crown. Solon's verdicts also suggest that occasionally unpopular advice is beneficial to the working of the state. Croesus comes to acknowledge the relevance of Solon's advice, as suggested by the way in which he calls out the name when imprisoned before the pyre as well as the remorseful tone he adopts in his final soliloquy:

For pompe and pow'r, farre passing other Kings,
Whil'st too secure with drowsie thoughts I slumbred,
My coffers still were full of pretious things,
Of which (as wealth least weigh'd) gold scarce was numbred;
I rear'd rare buildings, all embost with gold;
Made ponds for fishes, forrests for wilde beasts;
And with vain thoughts which could not be controll'd,
Oft spent the day in sport, the night in feasts.
(5.2.2813-20).

The fate of Croesus represents the dangers of falling prey to the lure of wealth and luxury, a fate to which many contemporary observers feared their king might succumb.

Croesus's reference to his creation of 'forrests for wilde beasts' and to the way in which he would 'Oft spend the day in sport' provide another parallel with James I, a figure well known for his passion for hunting, as evidenced by the abundance of references to this trait in contemporary literature. Examples of this include John Donne's 'The Sun Rising', in which the speaker instructs the sun

to 'tell court-huntsmen, that the king will ride',¹³ and in Ben Jonson's 'To Penshurst': 'That found King James, when, hunting late this way / With his brave son, the prince, they saw thy fires.'¹⁴ The connection with hunting would also have been significant in relation to Prince Henry. A portrait of Henry by Robert Peake shows the eleven year old prince as part of a hunting party standing over the kill and brandishing his sword. According to Roy Strong, this portrait represents 'a quite unprecedented innovation in royal portraiture, the placing of the sitter into a landscape setting'.¹⁵ Andrew Hadfield comments that this particular portrait 'indicates how significant hunting was as the official sport of James's court, and as a symbolic activity denoting many achievement, physical prowess and power over nature.'¹⁶ This point is also suggested by Atis, who is eager to assert his mettle as a successor to Croesus rather than simply claiming his hereditary right, when he asks 'What glory give those titles unto me, / Which by succession fall, not by desert?' (3.2.1151-2). The hunt is therefore seen as a symbolic process through which the successor to the throne can assert his suitability for the role.¹⁷

In this play, Alexander provides two contrasting political points of view and, as in the earlier *Darius*, two opposing models of kingship. On the one hand, the reader is provided with images of avarice and sensual and material excess, as represented by Croesus, and on the other by such virtues as self discipline and restraint embodied by Solon and Cyrus. By providing such a contrast to

¹³ John Donne, 'The Sun Rising' (l. 7) in A. J. Smith (ed.), *The Complete English Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 80-1.

¹⁴ Ben Jonson, 'To Penshurst' (ll. 76-7) in Ian Donaldson (ed.), *Selected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 66-9.

¹⁵ Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p.114.

¹⁶ Hadfield, p. 201.

¹⁷ For a study of the significance of the hunt in early modern England see Edward Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt: A Cultural and Social Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Croesus, Solon and Cyrus have the same dramatic function; however, in the case of Cyrus this is seen through his military and administrative skills, whereas Solon sees Croesus' obsession with wealth as an effacement of the Platonic idea that human impulses should be subordinate to reason, as shown by his frequent utterances of *sententiae*:

“This world a field is, whereas each man fights,
“And arm'd with reason, resolutely goes
“To warre, (till death close up the bodies lights)
“Both with externall, and internall foes;
“And how can he the Victors title gaine,
“Who yet is busied with a doubtfull fight?
“Or he be happy who doth still remaine
“In fortunes danger for a small delight?
(2.1.411-18).

Solon thus regards Croesus' pursuit of wealth as an effacement of the Platonic values he has developed. While Solon objects to Croesus' outlook on philosophical grounds, Alexander also presents his readers with the figure of Cyrus who, in contrast to the contemplative life embodied by Solon, emerges as a possessor of superior martial prowess and administrative skill to the protagonist. However, the representation of these two characters is in fact more complex than their embodiment of the two constituents of the dichotomy of the contemplative philosopher and the skilled military leader. In the play's argument, Alexander likens Solon to a 'provident Bee, gathering honey over many fields, learning knowledge over many Countries' (Argument, 3-4), indicating that Solon is thus engaged in imperialism of a sort; while Cyrus is concerned with the conquest of new nations, Solon is engaged in a colonial enterprise which is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge. Both these acquisitive impulses are viewed as admirable ones in comparison with the kind in which Croesus has become involved. Solon's exemplary nature, however,

comes at a cost. In order to achieve his status as an elevated stoic, he has been forced to withdraw from public affairs and relinquish his engagement in the *vita activa*:

I might (a tyrant) still have rul'd in state,
But my cleare minde could no such clouds conceive,
But gladly left what others urge of late,
"If I may rule my selfe, no more I crave
(1.135-8).

Solon had therefore sacrificed his power once he felt that his duty to the state had been fulfilled in the belief that to do otherwise would be a form of tyranny. This dogmatic extreme of stoicism thus exposes the limits of the compatibility of stoic self-sovereignty with political ambition.

Alexander's dramatisation of Solon and the nature of his objections to Croesus' wealth are drawn from his principal sources, Plutarch and Herodotus; however, alternative grounds for Solon's outlook are presented in Machiavelli's reflection upon the incident in his *Discourses*, in a chapter entitled 'Money is not the Sinews of War, as it is commonly supposed to be':

Among the other things that Croesus, king of Lydia, showed to Solon, the Athenian, was a treasure too great to count. Solon was then asked what opinion he had formed of the king's power, to which he replied that he did not think him more powerful on this account, for war is made with steel, not with gold, and if anyone came along who had more steel than he had, he could deprive him of his power.¹⁸

Here, Solon's objections are on decidedly practical, rather than moral, grounds with a clear martial outlook. This shows a clear precedent for viewing Solon as a figure who is well versed in military imperatives and further asserts the similarity in outlooks between him and Cyrus. However, Alexander's account of Solon's visit to Croesus differs in one key respect from other sources. The chief aim for Alexander's Solon is the stoic goal of self-sovereignty; however, for

¹⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, II. 10, edited by Bernard Crick (London: Penguin, 1970, repr. 2003), p. 301.

many other authorities the emphasis for Solon was upon dying well, as paraphrased by William Rankins in his *Seaven Satyres*:

Croesus said wealth was chiefe felicity,
Onely authority deserv'd a throne,
That war for kingdomes was tranquility,
And to be honor'd was heaven alone,
But when by traldome all this pompe was gone:
Solon (quoth he) my soule must needes confesse,
In dying well is onely happines.¹⁹

This kind of outlook was condemned by Cato, as paraphrased in Cicero's *De Finibus*:

The wise do not have to wait any time at all before it can be determined whether they are happy; and they certainly have no need to wait until death crowns the last day of their life, as Solon, one of the Seven Wise Men, unwisely advised Croesus. If Croesus had ever been happy, he would have carried his happy life right through to the funeral pyre that Cyrus built.²⁰

The emphasis for Solon's objections to Croesus' folly is therefore shifted from one based upon the *ars moriendi* tradition to one rooted in the stoic preoccupation with self-discipline, signalling a conscious departure from earlier appropriations of the encounter between Croesus and Solon.

As in the earlier play, *Darius*, Alexander presents the reader with two different types of ruler. In *Croesus*, Alexander presents a proud and deluded monarch whose folly is exposed and punished by Cyrus, who fulfils the role of *deus ex machina* in a manner similar to that of Alexander the Great in William Alexander's previous work. In *Croesus*, Cyrus appears fully aware of his role as a kind of moral agent:

Behold how *Croesus* with his riches blinde,
Durst even encounter with my warre-like band;
And whil'st a prosperous course betray'd his mind,

¹⁹ William Rankins, *Seaven Satyres applyed to the weeke* (London: Edward Allde, 1598), pp. 19-20.

²⁰ Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, edited by Julia Annas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 89.

Did not suspect what pow'r was in my hand;
But he and his confederates have seene
How victory doth still my troupes attend,
And *Persia* must be once all *Asia's* Queene,
On whom for servants Princes shall depend;
Now *Croesus* is o'recome, this Towne surpris'd,
And *Lydia* charg'd with gold, doth yeeld rich spoyles;
The League unprosp'rous, *Ægypt* hath despised,
This is the happy end of all our toiles.
(5.1.2371-82).

Cyrus' conquest is therefore viewed as a direct result of the folly of Croesus who has allowed the pursuit of wealth to become the overriding impulse of his court, leaving his country vulnerable to conquest.

As I have previously indicated above, Cyrus was viewed as one of the exemplary figures who was frequently held up as an example for young princes to emulate. Sir Philip Sidney appropriated Xenophon's fictionalised account of Cyrus' life in his *Apology for Poetry* in his arguments about the didactic potential of poetry:

But even in the most excellent determination of goodness, what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct a prince, as the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon; or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as Aeneas in Virgil; or a whole commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*?²¹

In spite of his pseudo-historical status, then, Xenophon's Cyrus was still held up as an exemplary figure for a number of early modern rulers. The Jacobean court was no exception to this tendency, as exemplified by James VI and I's *Basilikon Doron*:

I remit you to *Xenophon*, an olde and famous writer, who had no mind of flattering you or me in this purpose: and who setteth down a faire patterne, for the education of a young king, under the supposed name of *Cyrus*.²²

The example of Cyrus was therefore one which James was keen to promote.

²¹ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), p. 108, ll. 19-23.

²² James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* in *Selected Writings*, p. 253.

This is also indicated by the fact that James commissioned Philemon Holland to produce a translation of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* for the benefit of Prince Henry which, despite not being published until 1630, was circulating around the Jacobean court in manuscript form during Henry's lifetime and is regarded by the editors of the selected writings of James as a companion piece to the *Basilikon Doron*.²³

The appearance of Cyrus, and the emphasis upon his status as Croesus' nemesis, provides added significance to Croesus' references to the creation of forests and ponds (5.2.2818), particularly when related to the fact that Cyrus was, according to Robert Stillman, 'one of the legendary gardeners of antiquity'.²⁴ Stillman goes on to comment that the 'praise of the good king as the good gardener, one who tends to his trees and to his state by his own hands, is a traditional topos that descends... from Xenophon.'²⁵ In Shakespeare's plays, this trope famously finds its antithesis in such instances as the gardener scene in *Richard II* and in Hamlet's likening of the state of Denmark to 'an unweeded garden' (1.2.135). Whilst the reference to Croesus' forests does not seem to suggest that he has allowed his state to go to ruin, it is still reflective of a form of neglect; he has ruled through self-interest and refers to forests maintained for his own pleasure, rather than any pastoral inclinations. The garden is also a recurring motif in humanist literature, as evidenced by the episode at the beginning of the second book of Lipsius's *De Constantia* which takes place in the garden of Langius and provokes a discussion between the interlocutors on

²³ Ibid, p. 253, n. 160.

²⁴ Robert Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 233. For William Alexander's association with gardens, see David Allan, "'A Commendation of the Private Countrey Life': Philosophy and the Garden in Seventeenth Century Scotland", *Garden History* 25: 1 (1997), 59-80.

²⁵ Stillman, p. 234.

notable examples of the cultivation of gardens by both good and bad exemplars. Another example is Francis Bacon's essay, 'Of Gardens', which, Adriana McCrea argues, is most likely influenced by the material in *De Constantia*.²⁶ Alexander's inclusion of Croesus' reference to his grounds, and the appropriation of a figure synonymous with gardening in Cyrus, suggest his appropriation of a recurring paradigm in humanist literature.

Like *Darius*, then, *Croesus* offers two visions of monarchy and statecraft. The cupidity of Croesus is opposed by the restraint and martial prowess of his nemesis, Cyrus. Alexander appropriates this exemplary figure who was regarded with considerable reverence by James and his contemporaries – as shown by James's view in the *Basilicon Doron* that Xenophon had written 'a faire patterne, for the education of a yong king, under the supposed name of *Cyrus*'²⁷ – and holds him up as a desirable alternative to the folly of Croesus. However, the inclusion of Croesus as a contrast makes the idea that Cyrus emerges as an analogue to James a problematic one. As I have shown above, the representation of an acquisitive king obsessed with material wealth would have carried clear resonance for a Jacobean readership. It is also notable that Alexander's representation of the hunt, an activity in which James participated and one which he argued was practised by Cyrus,²⁸ is in fact associated with Croesus. Rather than presenting Cyrus as a favourable portrait of James, I would argue that Alexander in fact invites his readers to observe various analogous character traits between James and his representation of Croesus and to question whether or not the vices embodied by the one character are absolved by the virtues of the

²⁶ Adriana McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584-1650* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 100.

²⁷ James VI and I, *Selected Writings*, p. 253.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

other. An engagement in debates about kingship and the representation of the stoic Solon also mark this as a text with a clear humanist agenda and evidences its affinities with the other neo-Senecan dramas in this study.

Julius Caesar

In the final instalment of *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, Alexander writes a Roman tragedy, making him more closely aligned with the endeavours of his fellow neo-Senecan dramatists. In *Julius Caesar* (1607), Alexander focuses upon the assassination of the protagonist and, as Kastner and Charlton point out, draws for the first time on dramatic material, such as Garnier's *Cornélie* and Muret's *Julius Caesar*, to inform his plot alongside the lives of Julius Caesar and Marcus Brutus in Plutarch.²⁹ There were also a variety of different views of Julius Caesar available to William Alexander. Like Alexander the Great before him, Caesar is a figure who divided opinions and seemed to offer vices and virtues in equal proportion. Whilst he was celebrated in some quarters as an agent of Christian providence (the shared initials, J. C., had not gone unnoticed) and frequently viewed as one of the Nine Worthies (although this status was often interchangeable with Pompey the Great, as suggested in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*), he was also viewed as a tyrant whose actions had corrupted the republican values upon which Rome was built.³⁰ Alexander's play coalesces with one of the key premises of Shakespeare's play, that his protagonist is more potent as a symbol than as a corporeal entity. Shakespeare makes much of the contradiction that this man who can 'bestride the narrow

²⁹ Kastner and Charlton, p. 474.

³⁰ For a useful summary of Renaissance attitudes towards Caesar, see Clifford Ronan, 'Caesar On and Off the Renaissance English Stage' in Horst Zander (ed.), *'Julius Caesar': New Critical Essays* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 71-90.

world / Like a Colossus' (1.2.134-5) should be in danger of drowning and be afflicted with 'the falling sickness' (1.2.252).³¹ The idea of Caesar is therefore far more powerful than the substance. Similarly, in Alexander's play, as Clifford Ronan observes, 'the protagonist is talked about rather than portrayed',³²

Alexander's play also provides a sense of multivocality through the ways in which both the positive and negative aspects of Julius Caesar's character are voiced. This is particularly evident in the second act, during which there is a scene in which Cicero and Decius Brutus debate Caesar's merits. Decius Brutus plays the devil's advocate by stressing that he has stabilised the empire, rescuing the Platonic ship of state from 'tempestuous windes' (2.2.683) and thus emerging as 'A Pilot meet to calme tumultuous mindes, / A fit Physitian for an aguish State' (2.2.685-6). Decius also asserts that Caesar was 'forc'd to fight' in the war against Pompey and goes on to emphasise his qualities of clemency, exemplified by his 'liberall' (2.2.805) treatment of those who fought for Pompey as well as stating that 'When he securely might have us'd the sword, / He both did spare all th'enemies that would yeeld, / And them to rents and dignities restor'd' (2.2.808-10). Cicero, however, counters Decius' views by insisting that Caesar's 'Physick' is 'worse then the Disease' (2.2.690). Cicero also hints at Caesar's possible involvement in the conspiracy of Catiline which he thwarted and comments that 'By re-erecting Tyrants statues so, / His thoughts all bent to tyranny were view'd' (2.2.729-30). He is even willing to engage in lurid sensationalism when he alludes to an incident in which 'he first in a prodigious dreame, / His mother seem'd incestuously to use' (2.2.767-8).

This dream is recorded in Plutarch in which it is stated that 'he dreamed a

³¹ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, edited by Norman Sanders (London: Penguin, 1967, repr. 2005).

³² Ronan, p. 79.

damnable dreame, that he carnally knew his mother' before crossing the river Rubicon.³³ Cicero's implication, particularly in his utterance that the incident 'might have shown to his eternall shame, / How of his birth the bounds he did abuse' (2.2.769-70), is that it appears as a grim portent of the way in which Caesar is set to defile the mother state of Rome. Alexander's play can therefore be seen to be exemplifying the various strengths and virtues of Caesar from both personal and political points of view.

The play also emphasises the significance of Julius Caesar's role in subduing ancient Britain, a fact that was acknowledged by the popular myth that he was responsible for the construction of the Tower of London; however, many historians were also beginning to question his skill as a conqueror.³⁴ In his first appearance in Alexander's play, Caesar boasts of his victories over the Gauls and, significantly, the Britons, and claims that these conquests have solidified his reputation:

From dangers past, my comfort now proceeds,
Since all who durst gaine-stand I did o're-come:
And, in few words to comprehend my deeds,
Rome conquer'd all the world, and *Caesar, Rome*.
(2.1.363-6).

Caesar's boast that he has subdued the 'world-divided *Britains*' (2.1.350) is thus significant in relation to James's union project; as well as invoking the recently revived name of Britain, Caesar implies that this 'world-divided' place is an isolated and self-contained, yet united, nation.

The relevance of the events taking place in the play to contemporary Britain is

³³ 'Julius Caesar' from *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, translated by Sir Thomas North in Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare: Volume V, The Roman Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 58-89 (p. 69).

³⁴ For comment upon this, see John E. Curran Jr., *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530-1660* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2002), pp. 148-78.

also addressed in the opening soliloquy delivered by the Roman goddess Juno who, as goddess of marriage, seems a fitting figure to comment upon a nation undergoing a process of unification. James himself had characterised the Union of Crowns in similar terms in a speech to Parliament in March 1603:

What God hath conjoyned then, let no man separate. I am the husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the head and it is the body; I am the Shepherd, and it is my flocke: I hope therefore no man will be so unreasonable as to thinke that I that am a Christian King under the Gospel, should be a Polygamist and husband to two wives.³⁵

Although historians such as Polydore Vergil had dismissed the myths about British origins evoked by commentators such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, the idea that the British people were descended from the Trojans and the Romans still carried resonance in many contemporary texts. As the great-grandfather of Brutus, the legendary founder of Britain, Aeneas is a crucial figure in the development of the British people. Aeneas is also, however, a figure whose heroic status was doubted by some. In Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Dido asks Aeneas to tell her his account of the fall of Troy and notes the abundance of varied versions of the story:

May I entreat thee to discourse at large,
And truly too, how Troy was overcome?
For many tales go of that city's fall,
And scarcely do agree upon one point.
Some say Antenor did betray the town;
Others report 'twas Sinon's perjury;
But in all this, that Troy is overcome,
And Priam dead; yet how, we hear no news.
(2.1.106-13).³⁶

One of the 'many tales' of Troy's sack that Dido neglects to mention is a version in which Aeneas himself had betrayed his fellow citizens. In her account of the fall of Troy, Juno blames the intervention of 'two traitors who betrayd the

³⁵ James VI and I in *Selected Writings*, p. 297.

³⁶ Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in J. B. Steane (ed.) *The Complete Plays* (London: Penguin, 1986).

rest' (1.113), one of which was Antenor, the other, 'false *Aeneas*' (1.125). As Lisa Hopkins observes, Alexander's play 'unequivocally presents Aeneas as villain rather than hero.'³⁷ Alexander therefore allows Juno to attack one of the key traditions relating to the foundation of the British state. Aeneas' status as the progenitor of the British race and as great-grandfather of Brutus, James's key precedent as a figure forging a united Britain, means that such a negative portrait is not merely an attack on Aeneas himself, but also upon the key mythical precedent for James's campaign of unification.

The Roman location is also significant due to the contemporary debates over the place of Roman Catholicism in England, an issue which had become all the more prominent due to the attempted assassination of James I in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, yet a reading of this play in the light of contemporary religious politics proves problematic. John Curran has argued that there existed an elision between Rome, particularly Julius Caesar, and Catholicism. He also points out that proponents of Caesar's accounts of the barbarism of ancient Britain were predominantly Catholic, a view evidenced most emphatically by the Catholic historian Edmund Bolton who 'equated Caesar with divine monarchy, a magnificent benevolent force spreading civility "at his celestiall pleasure," whose invasion... brought barbarous Britain all manner of happy outcomes.'³⁸ The reputation of Julius Caesar in the Renaissance was therefore subject to a number of changing historiographical attitudes, largely based upon religious tensions. Alexander's play seems to recognise this tension, a point evidenced particularly by Cicero's comment,

proud *Scilla* said,

³⁷ Lisa Hopkins, *The Cultural Uses of the Caesars on the English Renaissance Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 118.

³⁸ Curran, pp. 153-4.

That there in *Caesar* many Marians were,
And *Rome* in time was warn'd to be afraid
Of that evill-girded youth
(2.2.723-6).

Lisa Hopkins comments that the allusion to 'Marians' 'actually refers to supporters of Marius, but its resonance for an early modern audience would be very different, evoking the name of the Virgin Mary.'³⁹ The connection between the Romans and Catholicism is also suggested by the fact that James is said to have remarked upon the 'Roman resolution' of the conspirator Guy Fawkes.⁴⁰ The implication, therefore, is that the development of Roman civilisation is inextricably linked to that of the Catholic faith, and it is in the light of this paradigm that Alexander writes his *Julius Caesar*. The elision between Caesar and Catholicism therefore complicates the status of this play as a straightforward allegory about the Gunpowder Plot and instead contributes to a generally ambivalent attitude towards the protagonist. This means that he can be seen simultaneously as a precedent for ideal monarchical rule over a united Britain or a dangerously ambitious Catholic absolutist.

It is not just through his significance in Britain's historical past that Caesar resonates in Jacobean Britain. James I acceded to the English throne at a crucial time in the religious climate of England. The new king's policy relating to the religious question was one of the most critical issues of the accession, particularly as England was still officially at war with the Catholic Spain. Roger Lockyer comments that the English government had previously regarded its Catholic subjects 'as potential traitors and treated them accordingly.'⁴¹ Those

³⁹ Hopkins, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605* (London: Arrow, 1999), p.174.

⁴¹ Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A political history of England 1603-1642* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 281.

who had resisted the spread of Protestantism in England were optimistic that James's accession would herald a new era of tolerance. However, the failure of the Hampton Court Conference of January 1604 to reconcile the various Christian faiths in England, as well as James's public announcement of his 'utter detestation'⁴² of the Catholic faith in February of the same year, served to deflate such high expectations. This, and the peace settlement with Philip III of Spain which failed to provide the guarantees for the safety and religious freedom which Roman Catholics in England had hoped would be a part of the settlement, engendered a major sense of pessimism in the Roman Catholic community. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 is therefore an extreme example of how the condition of Catholics in England, and the government's failure to provide the concessions they expected, had enflamed counter-Reformationist attitudes.

Paulina Kewes has pointed out that the 'assassination of Julius Caesar was seen as the obvious historical precedent for the recent Catholic attempt to blow up the king and his Parliament.'⁴³ The superficial similarities, consisting of a group of Romans attempting to assassinate their absolute ruler, are striking, especially since James had fashioned himself as a successor to the Caesars, as shown on his coronation medal described above. Andrew Hadfield has argued that, broadly speaking, Jacobean texts which dealt with the assassination of Caesar tended to fall into two categories. Some, he argues, 'emphasised the horror of the assassination of Caesar and adopted a conservative position in favour of monarchy in line with James's views on kingship; others supported the actions of the republican faction, and explored issues of political authority and

⁴² Quoted in Fraser, p. 85.

⁴³ Paulina Kewes, 'Julius Caesar in Jacobean England', *The Seventeenth Century*, 17: 2 (2002), 155-86 (p. 156).

representation.’⁴⁴ While Alexander’s play veers more towards the former position, there are a number of issues which make such stark distinctions problematic. Kewes argues that one of the chief effects of the Gunpowder Plot upon subsequent appropriations of Julius Caesar was to raise the question over whether his assassination could be regarded as an act of tyrannicide or regicide.⁴⁵ In the climate in which *Julius Caesar* was written, the representation of a regicide would have been particularly provocative, particularly when coupled with James’s aversion to being represented in contemporary drama, as exemplified by the hasty censorship of the anonymous stage play, *The Tragedy of Gowrie*, discussed in Chapter Four above. The question of whether or not Julius Caesar can be considered as a monarch is therefore a crucial one. While I do not intend to argue that Alexander’s play advocates regicide - writing a play of this nature would most certainly not be a wise thing for an ambitious Jacobean courtier to do - I would argue that the play does not provide any easy answer to this question and can thus be considered as an interrogative drama on the subject. While Kewes argues that Alexander is ‘keen to establish a systemic difference between them [ancient Rome and Jacobean Britain]’ and that ‘legally, Rome is a republic and England a hereditary monarchy’⁴⁶, the answer to the question is, in fact, far more elusive. At certain points various characters offer their own views. Marcus Brutus, for example, makes it clear that he does not envisage himself as a subject to a hereditary monarch:

If *Cæsar* had been born, or chus’d our Prince,
Then those who durst attempt to take his life,
The world of treason justly might convince.

⁴⁴ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 75.

⁴⁵ Kewes, 156-60.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 159. Kewes does, however, acknowledge the problematic nature of the play’s inclusion in a group of texts entitled *The Monarchicke Tragedies* (p. 159).

Let still the states which flourish for the time,
By subjects be inviolable thought,
And those (no doubt) commit a monstrous crime,
Who lawfull Sovereignty prophane in ought:
And we must thinke (though now thus brought to bow)
The Senate King; a subject *Cæsar* is;
The Sovereignty whom violating now,
The world must damne, as having done amisse.
(3.1.1280-90).

Brutus therefore dismisses regicide as a ‘monstrous crime’ and asserts that such an act would be impossible to justify. This would seem to suggest that Brutus and his followers are opposed to regicide and view their proposed action as an act of tyrannicide. Caesar himself also offers what appears to be a simple solution to this problem when he argues that ‘To be a *Cæsar* is above a king’ (2.1.330). In these instances, both Brutus and Caesar himself reject the idea that he has assumed a monarchical role. This ties in with the emphasis in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* upon Caesar’s rejection of the crown of Rome. However, the views upon Caesar’s status are inconsistent. Decius asserts that he would ‘rather as a God adore him dead, / Then as a King obey him whil’st he lives’ (4.1.1863-4) and the chorus express their distaste at attending ‘an abject Tyrants Throne’ (3.2.1683), thus conflating the regal and the tyrannical.

The problem is further intensified by the inclusion of republican imagery. In the same way as the characters in Thomas Kyd’s *Cornelia*, Brutus and Cassius also evoke the rape of Lucretia and the overthrow of the Tarquin dynasty as a precedent for their proposed assassination of Caesar. Cassius once again reminds Brutus to consider the example of his great-grandfather, Lucius Junius Brutus, the leader of the rebellion against the Tarquins:

He (*Rome* redeeming) *Tarquin* did o’rethrow,
Though from his birth obey’d, and without strife;
A rising tyrant then bring boldly low,
To what extinguish’d was, who would give life.

(3.1.1123-6).

In the following scene, Brutus evokes the same period when he comments to Portia that Caesar is attempting to 're-erect detested *Tarquins* throne'

(3.2.1494). Caesar is therefore seen as a potential absolutist tyrant who is set to cast Rome back into the days of the corrupt Tarquin regime. Likening Caesar to the Tarquins therefore suggests that he has assumed monarchical power and that the distinction between the king and the tyrant becomes increasingly blurred.

Alexander's play therefore highlights the political complexity of the assassination of Caesar and while, as Andrew Hadfield argues, it may not 'open up space for oppositional political thought',⁴⁷ it does emerge as an interrogative drama which exposes some of the flaws and inconsistencies in the arguments for and against Caesar's assassination. Hadfield also argues that Alexander's tragedies 'demonstrated that a powerful monarchy was the best form of government and that nations were plunged into chaos when this most desirable political form was undermined, either by the actions of subjects, or by the failings of monarchs.'⁴⁸ *Julius Caesar*, however, does not quite fit this specification. Unlike Garnier's play, Alexander extends the dramatic action slightly beyond Caesar's assassination in order to show the short term effects and the reaction of his widow, Calphurnia. The play's conclusion is therefore decidedly anti-climactic and offers no indication of the civil strife that will follow Caesar's death. The reader would have to refer back to the opening soliloquy of Juno who sets in motion a chain of events that will lead to a civil war which, in her view, would be the most effective means of punishing the Roman people for their affront to the deities:

⁴⁷ Hadfield, 2005, p. 76.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 75.

But they by forraine force cannot be mov'd:
 By Romans, Romans onely may be match'd.
 And I at last have kindled civill warre,
 That from their thoughts (which now no reason bounds)
 Not onely laws, but Natures laws doth barre;
 The Sonne the Syre, the brother brother wounds;
 Whil'st th'Eagles are opposed to th'Eagles so,
 O what contentment doth my minde attaine!
 (1.179-86)

The use of repetition and parallelism in this speech most likely alludes to the opening of Lucan's *Civil Wars*:

Of wars across Emathian plains, worse than civil wars,
 and of legality conferred on crime we sing, and of a mighty people
 attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand,
 of kin facing kin, and, once the pact of tyranny was broken,
 of conflict waged with all the forces of the shaken world
 for universal guilt, and of standards ranged in enmity against
 standards, of eagles matched and javelins threatening javelins.⁴⁹

These allusions in Juno's speech thus anticipate yet another civil conflict arising as a result of the events that Alexander dramatises and also sees him engage in a tradition of literary republicanism. Juno also asserts that civil strife is inherent in the Roman way of life, dating back to the murder of Remus by his brother Romulus, the 'builder first bath'd with his brothers bloud' (1.139).⁵⁰ While it is revealed from the outset that civil war will be the ultimate product of the events taking place, it becomes implicit in the final scene, in which the emphasis is upon Calphurnia's mourning.

The conclusion, however, does have a certain logic if it is considered alongside Kyd's translation of Garnier's *Cornélie*. Cornelia concludes the play by announcing that she has adopted a new identity as mourner for her fallen husband and father, stating that she 'must liue (though life she hateth) / To make

⁴⁹ Lucan, 1.1-7.

⁵⁰ The recurrence of the theme of the murder of Remus in the early modern period is discussed in Janet Adelman, 'Shakespeare's Romulus and Remus: Who does the wolf love?' in Maria del Sapio Garbero (ed.), *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 19-34. For consideration of Alexander's play, see p. 25.

your Tombes, and mourne vpon your hearse' (5.456-7). Only then would she be willing to 'Surrender my surcharged life' (5.463). Similarly, Alexander's Calphurnia spends the final act receiving news of her husband's assassination and having to adjust to her new identity as a widow. She states that she will 'retyre my selfe to waile alone' and

Will spurne at pleasures as empyson'd baits;
No second guest shall presse great *Cæsars* bed,
Warm'd by the flames to which he first gave life;
I thinke there may be greater honour had,
When *Cæsars* widow, then anothers wife.
(5.2.3110-14).

Like Cornelia, Calphurnia is able to assert herself as a stoic widow whose principal duty will be to honour the memory of her dead husband. Comparing this treatment to that of the protagonist in Garnier's play therefore reveals a certain logic to the conclusion; the emphasis upon the importance of stoicism, rather than the progression of narrative, provides closure to the play and suggests it cannot simply be construed as an anti-climax.

In these two plays William Alexander interrogates the extent to which the exemplary figures he appropriates can be considered fitting analogues for James I. By setting up the contrasting figures of Cyrus and Croesus – both figures with whom there is some scope to link James – he can be seen as inviting his readership to consider whether their monarch can be aligned more closely with the virtues of Cyrus or the vices of Croesus. In *Julius Caesar*, Alexander scrutinises the suitability of the protagonist as a role model and, by providing coherent voices for the likes of Brutus and Cassius, warns of the dangers in a ruler alienating his counsellors and of the discontent that claims to absolute power can engender. Through these means, Alexander's texts emerge as both

advisory and interrogative, thus aligning them with the emphasis upon the role of counsellors in contemporary republican theory, as well as challenging the reputation of the plays as servile and conservative political parables. They can therefore be seen to engage with the other plays in this study through their multivocality, their evaluation of stoicism and republicanism, and their comment upon contemporary political events. Alexander's use of Rome, a location which facilitates the interrogation of stoic outlooks engagement in debates about good government and the ethics of tyrannicide, also aligns his play with the earlier works of Sidney, Daniel, Kyd, and Brandon. We shall see in the next chapter how Ben Jonson also found Rome to be a suitable location for his plays to address similar issues.

Chapter Six:

'Insolent fictions of the tragic scene': Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and *Catiline*

In his essay, 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translation', T. S. Eliot argued that when it came to the influence of the Senecan tradition in English drama, Ben Jonson's Roman plays were situated between the output of the commercial theatre and the coterie or 'Senecal' drama of those influenced by Garnier. According to Eliot, the influence of Seneca is apparent in Jonson's plays, 'not through slavish imitation but by adaptation, to make of popular drama a finished work of art.'¹ This chapter, however, aims to argue that Jonson's Roman tragedies cannot be considered in a class entirely their own and should be viewed alongside the endeavours of the other neo-Senecan dramatists in this study.

Much scholarship on Jonsonian drama has sought to emphasise the contrasts between his two Roman tragedies, *Sejanus His Fall* and *Catiline His Conspiracy*, and the comedies with which he is more readily associated. It is not only the relation of the tragedies to Jonson's own work which has provoked comment, but also their relationship with popular theatrical tragedy in general. In common with Eliot, George Steiner also distinguished the tragedies of Jonson, as well as those of George Chapman, from other stage tragedies due to that which he regards as the authors' endeavour 'to combine the rival conceptions of learned and popular drama'.² H. B. Charlton also sees Jonson's plays as representative of an 'attempted reform of tragedy' through 'his preference for themes taken from the authentic history of Rome in its most

¹ T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber, 1963), pp. 25-6.

² George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber, 1961), p. 27.

Roman days.’³ However, the view that Jonson had deployed his tragedies as a means of reforming the commercial stage and restoring the classical conventions of the genre which had apparently been jettisoned in the interests of popular appeal is just as questionable as the similar sets of values which, as we have seen in previous chapters, have been projected onto the other neo-Senecan dramatists in this study. More recently, Julie Sanders has suggested that for Jonson the theatre was an institution which was republican in spirit as it facilitated the ‘mobilisation of audiences’ and encouraged a range of citizens to engage in the debates provoked by the plays.⁴ Richard Dutton argues along similar lines by commenting that Jonson’s concentration of much of the action of his two Roman tragedies in the Senate House effectively makes ‘the audience additional ranks of senators, responsibly involved in the issues that are debated there.’⁵ The conscious neo-classicism of Jonson’s tragedies and the way in which they were repackaged for publication and accompanied by copious marginal notes has led to them being dismissed as anti-theatrical and elitist. However, I intend to show in this chapter that Jonson’s Roman plays engage in similar debates to those with which the contemporary neo-Senecans were concerned, thus suggesting that these tragedies encouraged a wider and more socially diverse audience to engage in the issues they raised, most notably through the interrogation of the merits of stoicism and republicanism, and that their appearance on the popular stage suggests that the scrutiny of these issues was not the sole province of an elite aristocratic intelligentsia.

In spite of the somewhat incongruous appearance of the tragedies in the

³ H. B., Charlton, *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1946), p. clxxiii.

⁴ Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998) p. 31.

⁵ Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: To the Folio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 61.

Jonsonian canon, Tom Cain has recently argued that for the early part of his career 'Jonson was best known, and probably saw himself, as primarily a writer of tragedies.'⁶ As well as *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, Jonson's intervention in the tragic genre is also represented by his additions to Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the fragmentary *Mortimer His Fall*. In the conclusion to *Poetaster*, Jonson also hinted that his abandonment of the comical satire genre in favour of the tragic was a bid for commercial success after the 'Comic Muse / Hath proved so ominous to me, I will try / If Tragedy have a more kind aspect.'⁷ Whilst Jonson presented this switch in genres as a moment of transition, there are a number of affinities between the comical satires and the tragedies. Broadly speaking, the comical satires conclude with the restoration of order and good government by a benevolent ruler after an attempt has been made to disrupt the established order. The tragedies are also concerned with the spectre of disorder; however, there is either no provision of a restorative influence whatsoever or, if there is, it is of a questionable sort.

Jonson's appropriation of the neo-classical Senecan form is not confined to his Roman tragedies. Judging by the little that has survived of the fragmentary *Mortimer His Fall* (a detailed argument and two scenes from the first act), it seems that this later play followed the conventions of Senecan drama even more closely than his Roman tragedies. Each act, with the exception of the fifth, is accompanied by a chorus, a feature which Jonson expressed regret at excluding from *Sejanus*, which is composed on various occasions of ladies, knights and squires, and country justices. The *dramatis personae* also follows the precedent

⁶ Tom Cain, 'Jonson's humanist tragedies' in A. D. Cousins and Alison V. Scott (eds.), *Ben Jonson and the Politics of Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 162-89 (p. 162).

⁷ Ben Jonson, *Poetaster* (Apologetical Dialogue, ll. 209-11), ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

set by Senecan drama by restricting the number of speaking roles to nine plus the chorus. The play also includes the appearance of a Nuncius who would presumably furnish the audience with details of elements of the plot that had taken place offstage. Herford and Simpson argue that the ‘medley of ladies, courtiers, country justices and their wives is far from being Senecan, and before the fourth act its leader, reporting the fall of Mortimer, appears to become the “Nuncius” of the cast.’⁸ In spite of these inconsistencies, the features of *Mortimer* still represent a concerted effort to appropriate the features of Senecan drama on the public stage, showing that Jonson had not altogether abandoned the idea of writing a theatrical tragedy attuned to classical conventions. In this chapter, I shall go on to discuss the ways in which Jonson engages in the neo-Senecan dramatic form in his Roman tragedies and argue that they can be viewed as engaging in debate with some of the ideas advanced in other neo-Senecan tragedies by the likes of Sidney, Daniel, Brandon, and Kyd.

Sejanus

Critics seem to agree on very little when it comes to *Sejanus* (1603-4) other than its importance in the Jonsonian canon in spite of its relative obscurity in terms of performance. As Robert C. Evans rightly comments, ‘Anyone interested in Ben Jonson’s politics must necessarily be interested in *Sejanus*’,⁹ representing as it does a detailed meditation on political matters at a time when a crucial development in English politics was taking place, the accession of James I. Jonson’s first tragedy has thus provoked a wide range of varied readings which

⁸ Herford and Simpson, x, p. 383.

⁹ Robert C. Evans, ‘*Sejanus*: Ethics and Politics in the Early Reign of James’, in Julie Sanders et al (eds), *Refashioning Ben Jonson: Gender, Politics and the Jonsonian Canon* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 71-92 (p. 72).

have reached markedly different conclusions. This is shown most obviously in the various historicist approaches to the play in which it has been read both as an indictment of Elizabeth's *ancien regime*¹⁰ and as a critique of the type of politics which were expected to be at the heart of the new Jacobean administration. One does not have to look far for potential reasons why *Sejanus* has provoked so many topical readings. In the prologue to its immediate predecessor, *Poetaster* (1601), the allegorical figure of Envy expresses frustration at the fact that the play is set in Rome and asks, 'How might I force this to the present state?' (Prol. 34). Here the prologue establishes that this play is more concerned with contemporary issues than those relating to ancient Rome and also establishes a precedent in Jonson's plays for the appropriation of Rome as a means of commenting upon contemporary affairs. There is also the matter of the play provoking that which was becoming a commonplace for Jonson, a tussle with the censor. *Sejanus*, along with several other Jonson plays, including *Poetaster*, *The Devil is an Ass*, *The Magnetic Lady*, and the collaborative works including *The Isle of Dogs* and *Eastward Ho!*, had led to its author either being imprisoned or having to account for the content of his work before the Privy Council.¹¹ It is unclear exactly why *Sejanus* attracted such attention. In his *Conversations with Drummond*, Jonson revealed that Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, 'his mortall enimie', had instigated the process, accusing him 'both of popperie and treason'.¹² However, it has also been advanced that the

¹⁰ Evans, for example, has suggested that it 'may have been intended (and perceived) as a dark meditation on the reign just ended', *ibid*, p. 75.

¹¹ For comment upon the censorship of *Sejanus*, see Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 10-14 and Janet Clare, 'Art made tongue-tied by authority': *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 111-14.

¹² *Conversations with Drummond*, ll. 325-7 in Herford and Simpson, I, pp. 128-77.

play was interpreted as a *drame à clef* relating to the Essex affair¹³ and, more recently, the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh.¹⁴ Jonathan Goldberg has suggested that the anxieties surrounding *Sejanus* were on the part of the monarch: 'Because Jonson's royalism stopped short of James's absolutism, the picture of absolutism in *Sejanus* troubled James.'¹⁵ In this section, I do not intend to advance a topical reading of the play, rather I intend to concentrate upon the ways in which *Sejanus* appropriates such classical axioms as stoicism and republicanism and the ways Jonson uses his subject matter to interrogate their potential utility in the harsh political environment in which the action takes place. My reading will thus focus especially upon the representation of three characters, or groups of characters - namely Tiberius, Sejanus, and the Germanican faction - in order to evaluate the extent to which it is implied that such political and philosophical outlooks can be realised in such an environment.

In *Sejanus*, Jonson compresses into a short space of time a series of events which took place over a period of several years from the death of Drusus in A. D. 23 covering the reign of terror under Tiberius and concluding with the fall and death of Sejanus which took place in A. D. 31. For this reason Jonson conceded in his opening address to the readers that it 'is no true poem in the

¹³ See, for example, Matthew H. Wikander, "'Queasy To Be Touched': The World of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 78 (1979), 345-57 and Annabel Patterson, "'Roman-Cast Similitude': Ben Jonson and the English Use of Roman History", in Paul A. Ramsay (ed.), *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and Myth* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982). Tom Cain has proposed that the Essex affair is a more pertinent context to the earlier *Poetaster* in "'Satyres, That Gird and Fart at the Time": *Poetaster* and the Essex Rebellion' in Sanders et al (eds), *Refashioning Ben Jonson*, pp. 48-70.

¹⁴ For the resonance of the trial of Raleigh, see Philip J. Ayres (ed.), *Sejanus His Fall* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1990; reprinted 2007), pp. 16-22.

¹⁵ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 177. This view, however, has been dismissed by Sanders (pp. 22-3).

strict laws of time' and was also in 'want of a proper chorus.'¹⁶ In spite of these apparent lapses, the play still has many claims to classical erudition. Jonson went to considerable effort to present the stage version of his play as a tragedy in print when it came to its publication in the quarto edition of 1605. Such measures undertaken by Jonson included a heavy process of revision, which necessitated the removal of the contributions of a 'second pen' which, he admits, 'had good share' in the writing,¹⁷ as well as including gnomic pointing and appending detailed marginalia in which he provides references to the classical sources he appropriates; these include, among others, Tacitus, both in Justus Lipsius's edition and in a vernacular translation, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, Lucan, and both the prose and dramatic writings of Seneca. Jonson thus consciously acknowledges his debt to classical sources and highlights the fact that this is an informed and erudite tragedy.¹⁸

In his painstaking research, and his provision of detailed references to the sources that inform the plot, Jonson can be seen to be adhering to the view that history and poetry existed in a close symbiotic relationship. As Blair Worden points out, history and poetry 'were intimately connected in Jonson's mind, and not in his alone. The duty of historians and poets alike, he thought, was to excite

¹⁶ Jonson, 'To the Readers', ll. 5-7. For comment on the extent of Jonson's adherence to neo-classical rules, see David Farley-Hills, 'Jonson and the Neo-Classical Rules in *Sejanus* and *Volpone*', *Review of English Studies*, 46: 182 (1995), 153-73.

¹⁷ Ibid, l. 40. The 'second pen' to which Jonson refers was most likely George Chapman's; for comment see Ayres, pp. 16 and 52 n. 40.

¹⁸ On Jonson's use of classical sources in *Sejanus* see, Ayres, pp. 10-16; Daniel C. Boughner, 'Juvenal, Horace and *Sejanus*', *Modern Language Notes*, 75: 7 (1960), 545-50; A. Richard Dutton, 'The Sources, Text, and Readers of *Sejanus*: Jonson's "Integrity in the Story"', *Studies in Philology*, 75: 2 (1978), 181-98; Ellen M. T. Duffy, 'Ben Jonson's Debt to Renaissance Scholarship in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*', *Modern Language Review*, 42: 1 (1947), 24-30; Blair Worden, 'Ben Jonson Among the Historians', in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 67-90. For comment upon the influence of Roman culture upon Jonson, see Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). On Jonson's debt to Lipsius's *Six Books of Politics*, see Evans.

their readers to imitate virtue and renounce vice.’¹⁹ Such imperatives are clearly brought to the fore when one considers Jonson’s choice of the *Annals* of Tacitus as the principal source for the play. Jonson had previously satirised the popularity of Tacitus among statesmen in his poem, ‘The New Cry’:

They carry in their pockets Tacitus,
And the gazetti, or *Gallo Belgicus*:
And talk reserv’d, lock’d up, and full of fear,
Nay, ask you, how the day goes, in your ear.²⁰

In spite of satirising its popularity as part of the ‘uniform’ for contemporary statesmen, Jonson still recognises the benefits of Tacitean analysis. W. David Kay has commented upon the contentiousness of reading Tacitus, suggesting that it could be interpreted either as ‘manual of state intrigue or as a warning against tyranny.’²¹ The writing of Tacitus also, as we have seen, originated at a time when the senate had lost its power as a decision-making body; for this reason, it became a favourite amongst the politically disempowered in early modern England. Evans has suggested that *Sejanus* can be read as a ‘warning against tyranny’ rather than an explicit criticism of any individual or group;²² Jonson’s tragedy can therefore be regarded as Tacitean in spirit, or at least in a similar spirit to the ways in which it was appropriated by the politically disenfranchised. In the *Conversations with Drummond*, Jonson reveals the identity of the author of the preface to Henry Savile’s translation of Tacitus, known only as “A. B.”, as the Earl of Essex.²³ If this is true, it serves to illustrate the extent to which Tacitus could be appropriated as a consolatory text by those with frustrated political ambitions. This idea emerges in the play through the use

¹⁹ Worden, p. 68.

²⁰ Ben Jonson, ‘The New Cry’, ll. 15-18 in Ian Donaldson (ed.), *Selected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 37-8.

²¹ W. David Kay, *Ben Jonson: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 71.

²² Evans, p. 76.

²³ *Conversations with Drummond* (ll. 368-70) in Herford and Simpson, I, pp. 128-77.

of Arruntius as a kind of choric figure who provides a commentary, not unlike the moralising asides in Tacitus' writing, from the point of view of the politically marginalised Germanican faction.

Jonson's view that history was an essential model for poetic writing was not universally accepted. In the dedicatory epistle to his tragedy *Sophonisba*, John Marston dismisses this premise and suggests his adherence to a more simplified model of tragedy in what is most likely a response to the publication of the quarto version of *Sejanus His Fall*:

Know that I have not laboured in this poem to tie myself to relate anything as an historian but to enlarge everything as a poet; to transcribe authors, quote authorities and translate Latin prose orations into English blank verse hath in this subject been the least aim of my studies.²⁴

Whilst Marston implies that this methodology for tragedy is a kind of slavish pedantry, Jonson clearly regarded such methods as essential parts of the process. It is therefore fitting that the play contains an examination of the interpretation and reception of history, and the dangers therein, in the form of the arraignment of the historian Cordus. Jonson's use of Cordus, who is accused of treason after having written an account of the assassination of Julius Caesar in which he apparently praises Brutus and Cassius, indicates his awareness of the potential for historical writing to be interpreted as a means of commenting upon the present and the possible dangers this may hold. The issue of recording history and its possible relevance to contemporary affairs is revealed when Cordus is introduced in the discussion between Natta and Latiaris in the first act:

<i>Latiaris.</i>	'Tis one Cordus, A gentleman of Rome; one that has writ Annals of late, they say, and very well.
<i>Natta.</i>	Annals? Of what times?
<i>Latiaris.</i>	I think of Pompey's

²⁴ John Marston, 'To the General Reader' from *Sophonisba*, in Keith Sturgess (ed.), *The Malcontent' and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 372.

Natta. And Caius Caesar's; and so down to these.
 How stands h'affected to the present state?
 Is he or Drusian? or Germanican?
 Or ours? or neutral?
Latiaris. I know him not so far.
Natta. Those times are somewhat queasy to be touched.
 (1.74-82).²⁵

This discourse shows the coalescence of the historical narrative with contemporary political imperatives. This is shown most clearly in Natta's enquiry of Cordus' outlook on the 'present state' after his discovery that he is a professional historian. This subtly exposes the way in which historical precedent is inextricably linked to the contemporary events which are unfolding for the characters to view. Views of history, it is implied, will inevitably be affected by the political outlook of the historian and the way in which they respond to contemporary events. Natta's dialogue also reveals the idea of the contemporary reception of historical events, as suggested by his view that the events involving Caesar and Pompey are 'somewhat queasy to be touched', especially in the light of the factionalism at court he had suggested in his enquiry as to the party with which Latiaris considers Cordus to be aligned. This piece of dialogue therefore reveals Jonson's awareness that the use of historical example will inevitably lead to comparisons with events taking place in the present and to a number of conclusions being reached about where exactly the political sympathies of the historian lie, as shown by Natta's concern about the extent of Cordus' partisanship.

In the third act Cordus is called before the Senate to account for the apparent anti-Romanism contained in his works. Julie Sanders argues that the 'central scene in *Sejanus* which witnesses the historian Cordus defending authorial state

²⁵ All quotations from Jonson's play are from Philip J. Ayres (ed.), *Sejanus His Fall* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990; 2007 reprint).

freedoms could be seen as a direct plea for tolerance from the incoming monarch: the present James VI of Scotland and future James I of England.²⁶ Cordus is given the opportunity to eloquently defend himself against the charges which have been levelled against him while at the same time defending the creative freedom of the writer:

But in my work,
What could be aimed more free, or farther off
From the time's scandal, than to write of those
Whom death from grace or hatred had exempted?
Did I, with Brutus and with Cassius,
Armed, and possessed of the Philippi fields,
Incense the people in the civil cause
With dangerous speeches? Or do they, being slain
Seventy years since, as by their images -
Which not the conqueror hath defaced - appears,
Retain the guilty memory with writers?
Posterity pays every man his honour.
(3.445-56).

This again indicates the dangers of appropriating history, and the ways in which it can be interpreted, but it also provides a safety net for the historian; the premise that the historian's art is a process of objective recording provides a defence against the apparent topical resonances of the material. Tacitus himself was aware of the potential for historical writing to be received in such a manner and makes this awareness apparent from the very outset of the *Annals*:

Famous writers have recorded Rome's early glories and disasters. The Augustan Age, too, had its distinguished historians. But then the rising tide of flattery exercised a deterrent effect. The reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero were described during their lifetimes in fictitious terms, for fears of the consequences; whereas the accounts written after their deaths were influenced by still raging animosities... I shall write without indignation or partisanship: in my case the customary incentives to these are lacking.²⁷

Tacitus therefore anticipates the kinds of problems Cordus has to face in

²⁶ Sanders, p. 15.

²⁷ Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, translated by Michael Grant (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956, repr. 1974), pp. 31-2.

Jonson's play, showing that the apparently objective medium of history is open, justly or otherwise, to charge of partisanship and implicitly suggests that, as Cordus will discover, the historian has little or no control over the circumstances of the reception of their material.

In *Sejanus*, Jonson presents Rome in a manner that is at a considerable remove from its earlier realisation in *Poetaster* under the absolute, yet benevolent, rule of Augustus. In this case, it is effectively a police state which is characterised by espionage, intrigue, censorship, and entrapment. It is also presided over by a single ruler, Tiberius, and has become inextricably alienated from the republican principles upon which it was founded. It is also a state in which people are defined by their political functions or allegiances. This is suggested by Douglas Duncan who notes 'Jonson's refusal to play on the emotions' in the representations of his characters, Tiberius in particular.²⁸ Whilst I would argue that his characters do undergo a process of abstraction, I will go on to suggest that they are not merely political ciphers; I intend to show that this abstraction is the principal effect upon those who enter into the arena of Roman politics, allowing their personal lives, along with any discernible characteristics or idiosyncrasies, other than those of a political nature, to be marginalised. In this manner, there is little evidence of the notorious perversions of Tiberius, Sejanus' past career as a catamite, or the apparently 'riotous' nature of Drusus who offers little hope for the future (1.106-7). The most potent symbol of this kind of abstraction comes in the form of the memory of the deceased Germanicus, whose followers represent the equivalent of an opposition party to Tiberius. This is reflected in the nostalgic rhetoric of the Germanican faction:

²⁸ Douglas Duncan, *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 139-40.

Arruntius. His name was, while he lived, above all envy;
And being dead, without it. O, that man!
If there were seeds of the old virtue left,
They lived in him.

Silius. He had the fruits, Arruntius,
More than the seeds. Sabinus and myself
Had means to know 'him, within, and can report him.
We were his followers (he would call us friends).
He was a man most like to virtue'; in all,
And every action, nearer to the gods,
Than men, in nature; of a body 'as fair
As was his mind; and no less reverend
In face than fame.

(1. 117-28).

Like Tiberius in the later acts, the resonance of Germanicus appears to have profited from his absence. Unlike Arruntius, Sabinus and Silius had 'means to know 'him', hinting that they are amongst the few of his acolytes who had any personal acquaintance with him and had any sense of him as a corporeal entity. This suggests that the legacy of Germanicus is almost entirely dependent upon the kind of abstraction which affects the rest of the characters. His legacy, at best, is based upon a hagiographic myth, or is illusory at worst.

This sense of abstraction is given a metaphorical realisation in the scene which takes place in Livia's bedchamber. In spite of being frequently dismissed as an extraneous comic piece which seems incongruous in this political tragedy and does little to advance the plot, it still makes an important point about the nature of the representation of the characters which takes place in the play. The subject of the exchanges between Livia and the physician, Eudemus, fluctuates between the virtues of Sejanus and the uses of various beauty treatments, the latter being representative of the preparations made by Roman women in order to enter the public sphere, as shown in the comments of Eudemus:

I like this study to preserve the love
Of such a man, that comes not every hour
To greet the world – 'Tis now well lady, you should

Use of the dentifrice I prescribed you, too,
To clear your teeth, and the prepared pomatum,
To smooth the skin. - A lady cannot be
Too curious of her form, that still would hold
The heart of such a person, made her captive,
As you have his.
(2.76-84).

Through the persistent references to make-up in the early part of the second act, Jonson provides an active realisation of the premise that people entering the political core of Rome are, either by choice or through necessity, masking aspects of themselves from other people.

This premise is also represented in Tiberius, who is able to make cynical and profitable use of this trend towards abstraction throughout the play and present whatever kind of image of himself he wishes. Jonathan Goldberg comments upon the way in which Tiberius harnesses this trend:

Being *princelike*, Tiberius re-presents himself, doubles himself. He offers a lifelike show, not life in some simple, natural sense. The prince plays the prince, and the full wonder of his rare performance is... that if what he says could be believed, one could want nothing more.²⁹

Tiberius' ability to play upon the differences between public shows and private preferences is evoked from his first appearance in which he reprimands one of the statesmen for kneeling to him:

We do not endure these flatteries. Let him stand.
Our empire, ensigns, axes, rods, and state
Take not away our human nature from us:
Look up, on us, and fall before the gods.
(1.375-8).

However, the inconsistencies and disingenuousness of this reproach are revealed on a number of levels. Firstly, as I shall go on to show, Tiberius' ways of exercising his power depend upon a process whereby his 'human nature' is taken away. Secondly, his aversion to flattery is clearly artificial, as shown by

²⁹ Goldberg, p. 177.

Sejanus' response to his speech: 'How like a god speaks Caesar' (1.379).

Paradoxically, by Sejanus' logic, it is the public repudiation of attempts at deification that ensure his god-like status. This incident shows Tiberius' ability to fashion himself in whatever manner he sees fit, safe in the assurance that his flatterers are able to infer his true feelings towards sycophancy.

It is, however, in the final two acts when the process of abstraction as it relates to Tiberius becomes most apparent. By absenting himself from Rome and retreating to Capri, Tiberius is able to shun the public gaze and further deflect attention away from his 'human nature'. Julie Sanders comments that by persuading Tiberius to retreat from the arena of power, 'Sejanus creates a more powerful symbol than he ever had to constrain when Tiberius was present in Rome; as with the Caesar of Shakespeare's play, the spirit proves more potent than the man'.³⁰ Sejanus has thus unwittingly allowed Tiberius to benefit in the most extreme sense from a process of abstraction. Tiberius' absence means that he is able to benefit from the potency of Caesar as a symbol of power in a way that is not undercut by human frailty, thus undermining Arruntius' view that the emperor is 'retired / From all regard of his own fame' (4.375-6). Douglas Duncan comments that in his portrayal of Tiberius, Jonson lays 'more emphasis on the craft than on the vice and debauchery, he refrains from exploiting sensational materials lavishly provided by history.'³¹ Whilst he may avoid exploiting the full potential for sensationalism in his depiction of Tiberius, Jonson does not completely gloss over the vices Tiberius enacts of the isle of Capri:

He hath his slaughterhouse at Caprae,
Where he doth study murder as an art;

³⁰ Sanders, p. 25.

³¹ Duncan, pp.139-40.

And they are dearest in his grace that can
Devise the deepest tortures. Thither, too,
He hath his boys and beauteous girls ta'en up
Out of our noblest houses, the best formed,
Best nurtured, and most modest. What's their good
Serves to provoke his bad.
(4.388-95).

Only in Capri, at a safe remove from Rome, is Tiberius able to indulge in these vices. He gratifies such impulses in a space where they will have no bearing upon the Roman state, thus allowing him to benefit from a process of abstraction and keep his 'human nature' shrouded from the political arena.

Unsavory elements of Sejanus' biography are also marginalised. In the same manner as Tiberius' vices on Capri, Sejanus' former career as a male prostitute is described by Arruntius:

A serving boy.
I knew him at Caius's trencher, when for hire
He prostituted his abused body
To that great gourmand, fat Apicius,
And was the noted pathic of the time.
(1.212-7).

Again, Jonson acknowledges the more sensational aspects of the character but does not exploit them to their full potential or allow them to exert any significant bearing on the character. The seeds of Sejanus' fall are sown when he requests Tiberius' permission to marry his daughter, Livia. This nuptial union would fundamentally alter the dynamic between the two men and provoke more intimate relations than Tiberius would perhaps wish, thus damaging the abstract remove at which Tiberius can view him. This is suggested in Tiberius' soliloquy in which he justifies his refusal:

'Tis then a part of supreme skill to grace
No man too much, but hold a certain space
Between th'ascender's rise and thine own flat,
Lest, when all rounds be reached, his aim be that.
(3.643-6).

Tiberius is thus in need of some distance to exist between them; Sejanus' wish to marry Livia would be an affront to the delicate impersonality of Rome as it is represented in Jonson's play.

Sejanus' fall can also be attributed to his repudiation of the idea of fortune, an outlook that can be interpreted as anti-stoic in his refusal to passively endure the positive and negative aspects of fortune. In the final act, Sejanus explicitly slights fortune, asserting that he has risen above it:

I, the slave
And mock of fools, scorn on my worthy head,
That have been titled and adored a god,
Yea, sacrificed unto, myself, in Rome,
No less than Jove - and I be brought to do
A peevish giglot rites? Perhaps the thought
And shame of that made Fortune turn her face,
Knowing herself the lesser deity,
And but my servant. Bashful queen, if so,
Sejanus thanks thy modesty.
(5.201-10).

Here Sejanus dismisses the influence of fortune and ironically subverts the image of Fortune turning away her face, generally interpreted as a sign of one's fall from favour, as recognition of his superiority. Sejanus' refusal to recognise the prevalent influence of fortune is offset by his downfall and by Arruntius' view that men's 'bulks and souls were bound on Fortune's wheel, / And must act only with her motion' (5.713-14). The causes of Sejanus' fall can thus be traced both to his affront to the careful remove at which Tiberius keeps his subjects, and to his over-reaching ambitions provoked by his anti-stoic views on fortune.

Whilst Sejanus' actions can be viewed as anti-stoic in his failure to recognise the fickleness of fortune, the play does not present an overly positive view of the alternative either. The Germanican faction espouses the humanist axioms of

stoicism and republicanism, to an extent at least, and forms the only significant opposition to Tiberius' rule. As I have noted above, there is much talk in the play of the legacy of Germanicus, who had previously opposed Tiberius and who represents a symbol of nostalgia for a time of lost virtue for the faction of those who support him. This point is even recognised by the enemies of this faction, as revealed by Sejanus' comment that 'Germanicus / Lives in their looks, their gait, their form, t'upbraid us / With his close death, if not revenge the same' (2.192-4). Germanicus begins to occupy the same role as that of a religious martyr in whose name his supporters continue to oppose the oppressive regime. In this way, like Tiberius, the abstract bears more resonance than the concrete. In his dramatic final lines which he speaks before the Senate, Silius himself seems to aspire to a similar kind of martyrdom:

It is not life whereof I stand enamoured;
Nor shall my end make me accuse my fate.
The coward and the valiant man must fall;
Only the cause, and manner how, discerns them,
Which then are gladdest, when they cost us dearest.
Romans, if any here be in this Senate,
Would know to mock Tiberius' tyranny,
Look upon Silius, and so learn to die. [*Stabs himself.*]
(3.332-9).

Silius characterises his very public suicide as a means of protesting against the oppressive nature of Tiberius' government while preserving his own integrity. He distances himself from the 'frown of Caesar, proud Sejanus' hatred, / Base Varro's spleen, and Afer's bloodying tongue' (3.327-8) as well as absenting himself from the 'Senate's servile flattery' (3.329). He also asserts that his death should act as an example to others who 'Would know to mock Tiberius' tyranny'. Therefore, by using his death to highlight and to allow others to celebrate his cause as well as making a bold statement of defiance against his

oppressors, Silius can be seen to be aspiring to a kind of stoic martyrdom. Silius thus works himself into an untenable position. He adheres to his stoic principles by committing suicide and absenting himself from the earthly injustices and recognises that, like Germanicus, he is likely to become a more powerful symbol in death than in life; however, he is also playing into the hands of his enemies by allowing Sejanus and Tiberius to get one step closer to their goal of eliminating the Germanican faction. In this scene Jonson's play questions the practical utility of stoicism; although it is commendable as an abstract concept and a means of preserving one's virtue, the play provides little scope for its effective use as a means of enduring the tyranny of Tiberius, thus exposing its limitations.

It is towards the end of the play, however, that the dramatisation of the breakdown of abstract concepts takes place most vividly. This is conveyed in Terentius' description of the dismemberment of the body of Sejanus after his beheading:

Sentence, by the Senate,
To lose his head - which was no sooner off,
But that and th'unfortunate trunk was seized
By the rude multitude; who, not content
With what the forward justice of the state
Officiously had done, with violent rage
Have rent it limb from limb. A thousand heads,
A thousand hands, ten thousand tongues and voices,
Employed at once in several acts of malice!
(5.815-23).

In a somewhat perverse way, it is possible to view the mutilation of Sejanus' corpse in a positive light. Acts of dismemberment and fragmentation are enacted by the people upon the dead body of Sejanus rather than allowing the fragmentation of the state; it is an act of civic cooperation, of sorts. This view, however, is undermined when considered in the context of the rest of the play

and taken as an emblem for one of its key themes. As Christopher Ricks argues, 'not only is Sejanus dismembered, but the play shows the tragic dislocation of Roman life, the dismemberment of the body politic.'³² Anthony Miller, meanwhile, argues the dismemberment of Sejanus represents 'the impossibility of placing such power and authority in one man.'³³ The audience has also been reminded of the presence of Macro, who is set to take the place and influence of Sejanus, pursuing a course that will secure his own influence in the future. One public enemy has, effectively, been replaced with another, making the downfall of Sejanus a temporary, probably artificial, triumph.

Julie Sanders has argued that the dismemberment of Sejanus can be seen as 'a quasi-Foucauldian release of populace-based energies that reinstates the mainstream'³⁴; it is an authorised venting of public discontent which does not ultimately challenge, and perhaps strengthens, the status quo. The idea that it is an officially sanctioned release of public energies is suggested earlier in Terentius' account of Sejanus' fall:

The whilst the Senate, at the temple of Concord,
Make haste to meet again, and thronging cry,
'Let us condemn him, tread him down in water,
While he doth lie upon the bank. Away!'
Where some, more tardy, cry unto their bearers,
'He will be censured ere we come. Run, knaves!'

Considering this passage, Douglas Duncan argues that in the final scenes of the play the premise that the 'unthinking multitude' is a term which 'is not to be applied merely to the *plebs* is made clear when Terentius pointedly links the

³² Christopher Ricks, 'Sejanus and Dismemberment', *Modern Language Notes*, 76: 4 (1961), 301-8, 301.

³³ Anthony Miller, 'The Roman State in *Julius Caesar* and *Sejanus*' in Ian Donaldson (ed.), *Jonson and Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 179-201, (p. 194).

³⁴ Sanders, p. 29.

behaviour of the shifty senators to that of the murderous rabble.’³⁵ In fact, Terentius’ account makes it clear that it is the demands of the multitude that set the tone for the kind of violent rhetoric voiced by the senators. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli, using the example of Coriolanus, advocated a pragmatic response to civil unrest:

indignation against Coriolanus grew so intense that, as he was leaving the senate, he would have been killed in the tumult if the tribunes had not cited him to appear in his own defence. One notes in this incident what has been said above, namely, how useful and necessary it is for republics to provide a legal outlet for the anger which the general public has conceived against a particular citizen, because when no such normal means are available, recourse is had to abnormal means, which unquestionably has a worse effect than does the normal method.³⁶

A similar process takes place in the anger against Sejanus. Although the senators do not instigate that popular anger, their intervention still gives it a sense of legitimacy, allowing the senators to exploit the popular discontent to their advantage.

In this instance, the ‘multitude’ do not appear onstage, and are thus still abstracted to an extent, yet the description of their horrific treatment of Sejanus’ corpse denies them of the kind of abstraction they are often granted in republican discourse. In the introduction, I considered Christopher Hill’s view that the majority of political writers before 1640 ‘agreed that democracy was a bad thing’.³⁷ Whilst Hill is perhaps open to a charge of over-generalisation here, it still seems an appropriate outlook in relation to this incident in *Sejanus*. The views expressed by the Nuntius clearly fit into this outlook observed by Hill. The Nuntius goes on to state that after they performed this reprehensible act, ‘Their gall is gone, and now they ’gin to weep / The mischief they have done’

³⁵ Duncan, p. 141.

³⁶ Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 1. 7, p. 125.

³⁷ Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in 17th Century England* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1974), p. 181.

(5.891-2), thus implying the fickle and wavering nature of the ‘multitude’, a view which he goes on to reinforce:

Part are so stupid, or so flexible,
As they believe him innocent. All grieve.
And some, whose hands yet reek with his warm blood,
And gripe the part which they did tear of him,
Wish him collected, and created new.
(5.893-7).

This speech effectively sums up the problems relating to the play’s conclusion from a republican point of view. Republican sentiment is undercut by the representation of the mob who emerge to the play’s auditors as an object of fear and derision. The premise that republicanism, in its true sense, must necessarily involve the populace who have committed such a barbaric act is an alarming prospect to the remaining opponents of Tiberius. As Sanders comments, Arruntius and his comrades, ‘whilst vocal in the play in criticizing present corruption, are clearly far from envisaging a republican alternative: their aim is to preserve and protect the conservative and aristocratic status quo.’³⁸ In this episode, and through the conduct of the Germanican faction, Jonson’s play implies that stoicism and republicanism cannot exist in anything more than an abstract sense in the harsh political environment he represents in *Sejanus*. His play can thus be seen to engage in the same debate as the other neo-Senecan plays in this study about the practical utility of such theories against the realities of the ways in which power was exercised in the early modern period.

This section has argued that whilst Eliot is correct in hinting that the endeavour of Jonson’s play was quite different from that of other contemporary tragedies on the commercial stage, it cannot be entirely separated from the neo-Senecan dramas of Mary Sidney and the other continental-style dramas she influenced.

³⁸ Sanders, p. 29.

Such elements in *Sejanus* as the clear Senecan influence, the privileging of dialogue over action, the use of gnomic pointing to emphasise the more didactic passages, and the interrogation of the political relevancies of stoicism all provide means to intertextually align this play to the neo-Senecan tradition in Renaissance England and evidence Jonson's participation in a coherent dramatic tradition in which common themes are explored.

Catiline

Ben Jonson's second extant tragedy, *Catiline His Conspiracy*, despite its enjoyment of some popularity during the mid to late seventeenth century when it was proclaimed Jonson's 'best lov'd' tragedy by Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset,³⁹ is frequently marginalised in discussions of Jonson's work. Whereas *Sejanus* takes place long after the establishment of Rome as an imperial and absolutist state, *Catiline* is set during the reign of Julius Caesar with Rome still, nominally at least, a republican state. Viewing the two plays alongside each other reveals the contrast in the prevailing classical influences upon them.

Sejanus can be regarded as Tacitean, whereas *Catiline* is essentially a Ciceronian play, to the extent that he is one of the principal characters. I have commented above on the way that Tacitus is conducive to the plight of the politically marginalised Germanicans in Tiberius' Rome; *Catiline*, on the other hand, is set in an era when Rome was much closer to observing its original republican principles and has much of its action revolve around instances in which scenes of oratory and public debate prevail to the extent that the central

³⁹ D. H. Craig, (ed.), *Ben Jonson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 228. For a discussion of the appeal and resonance of Jonson's *Catiline* during the Civil War era, see Susan Wiseman, "'The Eccho of Uncertaintie': Jonson, Classical Drama and the English Civil War", in Julie Sanders, Kate Chedgzoy and Susan Wiseman (eds), *Refashioning Ben Jonson: Gender, Politics and the Jonsonian Canon* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) pp. 208-229.

scenes of the play are made up of direct translations of Cicero's orations against Catiline.

The play focuses upon a conspiracy by the former statesman, Catiline, and his followers to create unrest in Rome and provide an opportunity for them to seize control. They plan to start a series of fires simultaneously at key points in the city and to attack the fleeing inhabitants. The first half of the play dramatises the clandestine meetings of the plotters and the formulation of their plans, as well as their attempt to dispose of Cicero, whom they perceive to be the greatest threat to their scheme. The second half, on the other hand, focuses upon the very public revelation of the plot and the exposure of Catiline by Cicero in the Senate, and the subsequent negotiation with the hostile Allobroges. Cicero is hailed as the saviour of Rome thanks to his brave public denouncement of Catiline and his confederates. There remains, however, the rather troubling premise that Cicero has stopped short of revealing the involvement of Caesar and Crassus in the conspiracy due to the lack of concrete evidence and his unwillingness to confront such powerful figures. This course of action, as this piece will show, will prove to have grave implications for the future of Rome as a republican power.

Catiline appeared eight years after *Sejanus* and, although it did not attract the attention of the Privy Council as the earlier work had done, it seems to have faced an even worse reception during its performances on the stage. Herford and Simpson label the play a 'disaster' which managed to alienate both the regular theatre-goer and the more high-brow educated audience towards whom it was apparently pitched.⁴⁰ While there is no evidence to suggest that *Catiline*

⁴⁰ Herford and Simpson, 1, pp. 46-7.

underwent any serious revision before it was published, as seems to be the case with *Sejanus*, there are clear indications that Jonson had consciously packaged the play as a tragedy in print after it had been performed in the commercial theatre. This is most clearly indicated by the fact that the published version of the text bears a dedication and a pair of addresses to the reader 'In Ordinarie' and the reader 'extraordinary'. Barbara de Luna comments that Jonson was writing for the 'initiate few', 'a small minority discriminating enough to appreciate allusions and subtle analogues.'⁴¹ Joseph Loewenstein argues that the prefatory material goes some way towards representing the way in which 'the distinction between theater and press, spectatorship and reading, become illustrative, a *figure* for the most important distinction between good and bad reading.'⁴² Jonson's addresses to his readers thus become active assertions of the play's divergence from the popular theatrical tradition to which his comedies belong. The play is in fact much more attuned to the tastes of the elite coterie readership towards whom the neo-Senecan Garnier-influenced tragedies were aimed. This point is reinforced by the dedication to William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke, son of Mary Sidney. The dedication therefore aligns this text to the cultural endeavours of the Countess of Pembroke and the dramatists whose work was influenced by her translation. Loewenstein argues that the dedication exemplifies Jonson's regard for the 'ideal reader as a super-patron'.⁴³ The prefatory material therefore indicates that Jonson sought an audience for his tragedy to whom the neo-classical formalism of the play would appeal and is suggestive of a means of actively aligning the play to the English neo-Senecan

⁴¹ Barbara De Luna, *Jonson's Romish Plot: A Study of Catiline and its Historical Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 33.

⁴² Joseph Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 161.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 163.

tradition influenced by the work of Garnier and the British dramatists writing in that tradition. However, the view that Jonson is writing for the tastes of the educated elite is complicated by the fact that the play was originally presented on the commercial stage for the benefit of a diverse audience, again showing the ways in which the political concerns and aesthetic features which have been regarded as the preoccupation of the aristocratic elite were transferred to a wider audience encompassing a variety of classes.

Comparison with *Sejanus* also suggests that Jonson is working within a much more deeply entrenched strict neo-classical framework in *Catiline*. This is suggested most clearly by the appropriation of a chorus in his later tragedy compared to the omission of such a device in *Sejanus* which is explained in his opening address 'To the Readers':

First, if it be objected that what I publish is no true poem in the strict laws of time, I confess it; as also in want of a proper chorus, whose habits and moods are such, and so difficult, as not any whom I have seen since the ancients - no, not they who have most presently affected laws - have yet come in the way of. Nor is it needful, or almost possible, in these our times, and to such auditors as commonly things are presented, to observe the old state and splendour of dramatic poems, with preservation of popular delight. But of this I shall take more seasonable cause to speak, in my observations upon Horace his *Art of Poetry*, which, with the text translated, I intend shortly to publish.⁴⁴

The omission of a chorus in *Sejanus* can therefore be seen as an effacement of the classical precepts as dictated by Horace, who emerged as one of the principal influences from antiquity upon Jonson, and thus a fault in his progress as a tragedian which its inclusion in *Catiline* can be seen as correcting. The use of the chorus in *Catiline* therefore aligns it much more closely with Horace's views, as expressed in his *Ars Poetica*.

The classical influence upon Jonson's play is apparent from the very outset.

⁴⁴ Jonson, 'To the Readers' in Ayres, p. 50.

The play begins with a prologue delivered from the classical underworld by the ghost of Sylla. The device, as well as Sylla's rhetoric, is strongly reminiscent of the opening act of Seneca's *Thyestes* in which the ghost of Tantalus is given brief respite from his infernal torment in the underworld in order to observe the earthly occurrences involving Thyestes and the other characters in the play. The ghost of Tantalus observes on earth 'A generation whose iniquities, / Whose crimes, of horror never known till now, / Make all their predecessors sins look small / And me an innocent.'⁴⁵ Similar parallels are made between the vices of the ghost of Sylla and those of the mortal Catiline in the opening speech:

Pluto be at they counsels, and into
Thy darker bosom enter Sylla's spirit:
All that was mine, and bad, thy breast inherit.
Alas, how weak is that, for Catiline!
(1.16-19).⁴⁶

In both cases the miscreant who is doomed to observe the plot unfolding at a remove in the underworld asserts that the actions of the earthly protagonist will make their transgressions appear moderate by comparison. This opening device is a clear example of the influence of Senecan texts upon the play. The Senecan influence is made even more explicit by Curius' likening of the dark forebodings of Longinus and Lecca to 'Atreus' feast' (1.313) which alludes to the eponymous protagonist of Seneca's *Thyestes* being force-fed the flesh of his sons by his brother Atreus. This utterance can therefore be construed as a metatheatrical recognition by one of the play's characters that they are all inextricably involved in the development of a Senecan-style tragedy. These allusions to both classical and contemporary dramas demonstrate a clear

⁴⁵ Seneca, *Thyestes*, Act 1, ll. 17-20 in trans. E. F. Watling, *Four Tragedies and Octavia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, repr. 1970).

⁴⁶ References to *Catiline* are from W. F. Bolton and Jane F. Gardner (eds), *Catiline* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1973).

understanding on Jonson's part that he is acutely aware of the influence of the classical tradition of Senecan drama as well as the more recent incarnation of this form in the contemporary neo-Senecan coterie dramas.

As well as the Senecan influence, the play's opening also suggests the resonance of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. David Norbrook argues that Lucan's epic 'offered a gory flashback to the carnage and savagery of the civil tumults in Rome under Marius and Sulla, only to prepare for a narrative of an even more gory conflict.'⁴⁷ Through the inclusion of Sulla⁴⁸, or Sylla as he is known in *Catiline*, Jonson's play can be seen to be following a similar trajectory, with Sylla serving as a historical precedent for the carnage Catiline is set to inflict upon Rome; even Sylla himself asserts that his transgressions will pale in comparison with those of Catiline:

Pluto be at thy counsels, and into
Thy darker bosom enter Sylla's spirit:
All that was mine, and bad, thy breast inherit.
Alas, how weak is that for Catiline!
Did I but say - vain voice! - all that was mine?
All that the Gracchi, Cinna, Marius would;
What now, had I a body again, I could,
Coming from hell; what fiends would wish should be,
And Hannibal could not have wish'd to see;
Think thou, and practice.
(1.16-25).

This is also implied by the abundance of references to Marius and Sulla, whose conflict dominates much of the second book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, suggesting that they frame the narrative focusing on Cicero and Catiline. Various studies have pointed to the way in which Lucan represented a means of instigated the

⁴⁷ David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 23.

⁴⁸ I retain the variant spellings of this name to distinguish the historical figure (Sulla) from Jonson's character (Sylla).

discourse of classical republicanism in the early modern era.⁴⁹ The fact that Jonson's text is following a Lucanic framework indicates that it is one that is influenced by, and prepared to engage in, republican discourse.

The central focus of *Catiline* is upon the rivalry between Cicero and Catiline. Douglas Duncan argues that the earlier *Sejanus* is 'nominally tragic in the usual Elizabethan sense of reporting a fall from power and a revolution of Fortune's wheel.'⁵⁰ The same can be said of *Catiline*, in which the eponymous protagonist invests his faith and ambition entirely upon the whims of Fortuna, as shown by his attempt to rouse his followers in the first act:

Wake, wake brave friends,
And meet the liberty you oft have wish'd for.
Behold, renown, riches, and glory court you.
Fortune holds out these to you, as rewards.
Methinks though I were dumb th'affair itself,
The opportunity, your needs, and dangers,
With the brave spoil the war brings, should invite you.
(1.463-9).

Catiline therefore actively encourages his followers to place their faith in the rotation of Fortune's wheel. Blair Worden comments that the conspirators in *Catiline*, 'like Sejanus in the earlier play, allow themselves to depend on fortune, which turned on him, exposing their lack of ethical resources'.⁵¹ The early scenes which feature Catiline and his conspirators also reveal the inconsistencies which lie at the root of their plot. As we have seen in the above speech, Catiline uses the promise of riches as an incentive for his conspirators; however, later in the scene he goes on to scorn Roman society for its uneven

⁴⁹ See for example, Norbrook, pp. 23-62; Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 103-29; and Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 24-49.

⁵⁰ Duncan, p. 138.

⁵¹ Blair Worden, 'Politics in *Catiline*: Jonson and his Sources' in Martin Butler (ed.), *Re-presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 163.

distribution of wealth:

when we see
The Commonwealth engross'd so by a few,
The giants of our state that do, by turns,
Enjoy her and defile her. All the earth,
Her kings and tetrarchs, are their tributaries;
People and nations pay them hourly stipends;
The riches of the world flows to their coffers,
And not to Rome's. While – but those few – the rest,
However great we are, honest, and valiant,
Are herded with the vulgar, and so kept
As we were only bred to consume corn
Or wear out wool, to drink the city's water
(1.346-57).

He also talks of the need to 'redeem ourselves to liberty' and 'break the iron yoke forg'd for our neck' (1.344-5). This kind of rhetoric is undermined by Catiline's talk of riches and the carnage he intends to enact and can thus be regarded as a cynical appropriation of oppositional rhetoric to serve his own ends. In fact, Catiline is frequently realised in anti-republican terms, bearing intense antagonism towards the prospect of establishing any civic-based republican culture. This is suggested in his instructions to Lentulus:

And Lentulus, begirt you Pompey's house
To seize his sons alive, for they are they
Must make our peace with him. All else cut off
As Tarquin did the poppy heads, or mowers
A field of thistles, or else up, as plows
Do barren lands
(3.3.153-8).

His instructions to his conspirators for dealing with their opponents contains an allusion to an incident recorded in Livy in which Tarquin leads a messenger into a garden where he begins knocking off poppy-heads in order to indicate his wish to dispose of the influential men in the town of Gabii. Catiline thus aligns himself with the actions of the ancient enemy of the republic, Tarquin, suggesting his animosity towards Rome's existence as a republic. The

antagonism of the plotters towards the idea of establishing a populace-based culture is also suggested in a somewhat roundabout way. It is proposed that the plot should be enacted on the Saturnals, a public holiday and brief period of licence in which masters would wait on their slaves representing, as Herford and Simpson comment, 'a symbolic return to a primeval time when class distinctions did not exist.'⁵² Vargunteius suggests that there 'cannot be a time found out / More apt and natural' (3.3.123-4) for their plans, suggesting a revolutionary aspect to their plot, bringing with it an inversion of the prevailing social order. However, it is soon made clear that this holiday would merely act as means for them to capitalise upon the licence taking place in the city in order for them to create more chaos, destroying more people in the confusion. Here the conspirators undermine any potentially revolutionary slant to their conspiracy and subvert the spirit of the Saturnalian festivities, thus precluding any engagement from the audience towards them.

While Catiline is the eponymous tragic hero of the play, it is Cicero who arguably emerges as the protagonist by the end of the play. Unlike Catiline, Cicero is acutely aware of the constantly changing nature of fortune and the need to live by more solid principles. As he points out towards the end of the fourth act, 'My fortune may forsake me, not my virtue' (4.6.41). As Worden goes on to point out, Cicero, 'like Jonson's Stoic sufferers, has inner "guards" and "arm[s]" of virtue, the "fortitude" for which they equip him is active, not passive'⁵³. Unlike the Germanican faction in *Sejanus*, Cicero is virtuous, yet proactive; he is prepared to take action against the threat to the state, thus showing his ability to combine virtue with practicality unlike those in *Sejanus*.

⁵² Herford and Simpson, x, p. 140.

⁵³ Ibid.

Jonson's Cicero is also endowed with a certain pragmatism that contrasts with his incarnation in Kyd's *Cornelia* in which he laments the state into which Rome has fallen after the defeat of Pompey the Great and spends much of the play attempting to dissuade Cornelia from suicide and excessive mourning by repeatedly intoning paradigms of stoic fortitude. He is most notable in his opening soliloquy for offering himself as a sacrifice to the gods in order to atone for the sins of the city so that the innocents may be spared from divine vengeance and 'that one may die for all' (1.8). Jonson's Cicero, on the other hand, realises that such a course of action would not be beneficial to the state:

For me, I am but one, and this poor life
So lately aim'd at, not an hour yet since,
They cannot with more eagerness pursue
Than I with gladness would lay down and lose
To buy Rome's peace, if that would purchase it.
But when I see they'd make it but the step
To more and greater, unto yours, Rome's, all,
I would with those preserve it, or then fall.
(4.84-91).

When compared with Kyd's realisation of the character, the pragmatism of Jonson's version is made clear. Unlike Kyd's Cicero, as well as Silius in *Sejanus*, Jonson's character realises that the features such as the spirit of self-sacrifice and the possession of values of stoic fortitude alone are not enough to endure the political realities of the Roman state.

It is this pragmatism that is the main reason why the characterisation of Cicero in Jonson's text has provoked much debate, as shown by the somewhat ethically dubious methods he uses in order to gather the evidence he needs to expose Catiline's plot. These methods include bribing Antony with the promise of land, as well as espionage, flattery, and, through his use of the information he received from Fulvia gained from a sexual liaison with Curius, tactics which a

modern audience would probably label a honey-trap. Cicero's treatment of Fulvia in this situation proves particularly noteworthy. Fulvia attempts to resist the advances of Curius by drawing a knife, an action which is greeted with Curius' rhetorical question, 'Will Lais turn a Lucrece?' (2.283). Fulvia resolves not to stab herself but her reference to Curius as 'sweet Tarquin' (2.286) seems to suggest she is adhering to this precedent and that she views this sexual encounter, like the rape of Lucrece, as a necessary sacrifice in order to score a victory for Roman republicanism. Cicero indulges Fulvia's apparent status as a second Lucrece by launching into a lengthy and overblown apostrophic speech listing her virtues. He praises her for her 'piety', 'virtue' and 'honor' (3.2.108-10) and envisages a time when her virtuous act will be 'rooted in the minds / Of all posterity' (3.2.119-20), imagining her as 'our common mother' (3.2.132). It is only after she has departed that Cicero's real views relating to Fulvia's act are revealed. He laments that Rome should have to depend upon 'a base / And common strumpet, worthless to be nam'd / A hair, or part of thee' (3.2.216-18). Blair Worden comments that Cicero's 'tribute to Fulvia in Act III has been judged ponderously maladroit. His words, however, are perfectly calculated to appeal to two traits of Fulvia that were established during her first appearance: her vanity, and her need to see herself and the world in terms of the very philosophy of virtue that her conduct traduces'.⁵⁴ This episode therefore exemplifies Cicero's pragmatism and his recognition of the need to resort to methods such as flattery in order to safeguard the interests of the state. Cicero's view of Antony also reveals him to be not only a shrewd judge of character but also a consummate politician in his recognition that they shall require if not his

⁵⁴ Worden, p. 160.

allegiance then some assurance that he will not pose a threat to their plans:

He is a man, 'gainst whom I must provide,
That (as he'll do no good) he do no harm.
He, though he be not of the plot, will like it
And wish it should proceed, for unto men,
Press'd with their wants, all change is ever welcome.
I must with offices and patience win him,
Make him by art that which he is not born,
A friend unto the public; and bestow
The province on him; which is by the Senate
Decreed to me; that benefit will bind him.
(3.2.235-44).

Cicero's resort to bribery in order to secure Antony's support indicates that he is aware of how to deal with certain influential people throughout the city of Rome. This incident, along with his flattery of Fulvia and his use of the information she gained - a move which, while it may not suggest approval of the means by which the information was obtained, effectively endorses her behaviour - shows that Cicero is aware of the necessity to occasionally forfeit one's moral objections in order to ensure the ultimate survival of the system of government in which he believes. Cicero recognises that his chosen career is not conducive to, in the words of Worden, 'moral squeamishness'.⁵⁵

The ultimate question posed by Jonson's play is not, therefore, whether or not the ends justify the means; Cicero's tactics may be construed as ethically dubious but the play never offers a voice that seems to condemn them. Douglas Duncan provides an overall assessment of Cicero's tactics:

Cicero obtains evidence for exposing the conspiracy by playing his adversaries' game, exploiting (as Catiline also does) the greed and ambition of worthless tools. His conscious use of politic means to achieve a good end represents the 'middle' response to the threat... He is flanked on his right by Cato... who shuns base tactics and half-measures, and on his left by the cynical trimmers, Caesar and Crassus, who are deeper Machiavels than Catiline and thus themselves constitute a more serious long-term threat to the republic.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 169.

⁵⁶ Duncan, pp. 219-20.

While the play does not condemn Cicero's tactics, it is important to acknowledge, as Duncan himself goes on to do, that Jonson's depiction of Cicero is by no means a white-wash. Duncan argues that the play continually alludes to the personal flaws and negative aspects of this character, pointing out that the premises that 'he was physically a coward, bullied by his wife, paranoid in imagining dangers, are examples of traditional gibes which in Jonson's day "every schoolboy knew" and which Jonson takes pains to build into his text'.⁵⁷ However, Worden argues that the emphasis certain critics have placed upon these flaws in their readings of the text have been somewhat exaggerated.⁵⁸ The text provides little evidence of Cicero's cowardice and his apparent paranoia is vindicated by an attempt instigated by Catiline's followers to assassinate him in the third act. Worden also comments that the extent to which critics have argued that Jonson alludes to Cicero being hen-pecked by his wife by stating that 'Only an over-solemn reading of Cicero's sole allusion to his wife Terentia will support the view that he allows himself to be bullied by her.'⁵⁹ It must, however, be noted that this sole reference takes place in the midst of the rhetorical apostrophe to Fulvia for whom, he comments, 'I could almost turn lover again, but that / Terentia would be jealous' (3.392-3). It seems incongruous that Cicero should foreground his marriage in the midst of this elevated and highly artificial speech. Cicero's qualification of his marriage in this speech appears as a hasty afterthought, a premise that provides a comic allusion to the overbearing influence of his wife. This is reinforced in the fourth act by Caesar's speculation that the purpose of the appearance of Quintus Cicero will be to deliver 'Some

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 221.

⁵⁸ Worden, pp. 159-70.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 159.

cautions from his wife, how to behave him' (4.2.46).

It is therefore not through exploitation of received wisdom about Cicero's character flaws or moral scrutiny of the methods through which he acquired the necessary information to prevent Catiline's conspiracy that Jonson attempts to interrogate Cicero's actions. It is his decision to stop short at revealing the culpability of Caesar and Crassus that proves to be the play's key unresolved dilemma. Cicero cites the lack of evidence against them as his reason for not exposing their involvement:

I will not be wrought to it, brother Quintus.
There's no mans private enmity shall make
Me violate the dignity of another.
If there were proof 'gainst Caesar, or whoever,
To speak him guilty, I would so declare him,
But Quintus Catalus and Piso both
Shall know the Consul will not for their grudge
Have any man accus'd or named falsely.
(5.93-100).

Cicero's assertion that his private misgivings about Caesar should not motivate levelling accusations at him for which there is a lack of evidence is contradicted somewhat as the scene progresses. There are two occasions on which he actively prevents other individuals providing evidence of the involvement of Caesar and Crassus. He dismisses Tarquinius, who names Crassus as one of Catiline's conspirators, as a 'lying varlet' who 'durst slander / So great, and good a citizen' (5.4.238-43) and intervenes before an incriminating letter can be read aloud to the public (5.6.154-63). Tom Cain points out that 'Jonson goes out of his way to emphasize the misguidedness of Cicero's inaction by placing the scene in which he refuses to move against Caesar without proof immediately after that in which Caesar and Crassus have a conversation which stresses both their guilt and their

political cunning.’⁶⁰ This deliberate juxtaposition of scenes alerts the audience to the culpability of Caesar and Crassus and prompts them to question whether or not Cicero is justified in sparing them from public judgement. This question is given added resonance by the fact that Cicero’s adopted course of action will eventually allow Caesar to form the first triumvirate and thus end the period of republicanism in Rome.

The fact that Jonson is dealing with events which took place whilst Rome was still a republic is suggested by the fact that, unlike *Sejanus*, he has furnished *Catiline* with a chorus and thus allowed representatives of the public to appear onstage, unlike the violent multitude in the earlier tragedy. In spite of their appearance, there is in fact relatively little scope for their involvement in the events taking place. The fact that they take on the role of the chorus effectively confirms their status as passive observers. For much of their time onstage, they offer little more than objective commonplace judgements. This is suggested by the fact that the contents of their final appearance at the end of the fourth act is effectively a paraphrase of Felicius’ history of Catiline’s conspiracy, indicating the premise that their comment upon the affairs of state is little more than prescribed rhetoric. There is also an occasion in the scenes which take place in the senate in which they assert that the ‘voice of Cato is the voice of Rome’ (3.1.60), effectively relinquishing their status as representatives of public opinion. Strictly speaking, then, the Rome Jonson presents in this play is not a republic in the manner that a literal translation of the Latin *res publica* might suggest. The public’s interests are instead represented by an elected senatorial elite. However, the behind-the-scenes deal-brokering by figures such as Catiline

⁶⁰ Cain, p. 183.

and Cicero to which Jonson exposes his audience suggests that the senators have agendas of their own which are likely to conflict with the interests of those they represent. The public, as represented by the chorus, are voluntarily disengaged from the politic process, and it is hinted that they can only offer commonplace political outlooks rather than any major independent insight.

I have therefore argued that the Roman tragedies of Ben Jonson can be regarded as means for him to debate the merits of stoicism and republicanism in two different political environments. The incidents his plays enact emerge as important test cases through which the potential for the practical application of these axioms, and the extent to which they can go beyond the status of abstract concepts, can be interrogated. In this way, Jonson can be seen to be in dialogue with the endeavours of the other dramatists in this study and following the general turn towards a less idealistic and more interrogatory representation of humanist outlooks which takes place after the accession of James I. His tragedies present two distinct incarnations of Rome, one as a republic and another as the centre of absolutist imperial state. Two strategies are put forth as means of enduring the various problems and vicissitudes which a citizen is likely to encounter: dogmatic stoic endurance, or a more pragmatic and proactive attempt to influence the course of events. The outcomes of these plays reveal that both are flawed strategies and the apparent triumphs secured by the characters are either short term or illusory. This, by implication, reveals limited scope for the practical application of either stoic or republican theories in the political environment of Rome. However, Jonson's willingness to interrogate these concepts emphasises the fact that he is writing in a tradition of humanist

dramatic authorship promulgated by the coterie dramatists in this study. The examination of statecraft and tyranny, and the means through which citizens can endure them, places his plays within the tradition of the tragedy of state. The next chapter, on Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*, will reveal how Cary's work engages in similar debates about whether one should actively resist a tyrant or privately endure these hardships whilst preserving one's integrity which figure so prominently in Jonson's Roman plays.

Chapter Seven:

'The news we heard did tell the tyrant's end': Elizabeth Cary's *The*

Tragedy of Mariam

Much of the most influential criticism on Elizabeth Cary's sole extant dramatic work has been largely dominated by three approaches to the play: firstly, the premise that the text is an allegorical *drame à clef* about the marriage of Ann Boleyn and Henry VIII;¹ secondly, the recognition of the play's protagonist as a proto-Christian martyr;² and thirdly, approaches from a feminist point of view, examining the representation of a woman seeking a 'public voice' in a patriarchal society, many of which are influenced by the biographical context of Cary's text.³ Whilst this chapter has been influenced by these approaches, its emphases will instead be upon situating the play in the context of both the neo-Senecan tradition and the emergent political culture in Jacobean England. The chapter's goal of relating the play to the other neo-Senecan dramas in this study builds upon Marta Straznicky's view that the play's relationship to these other dramas reveals Cary as 'a woman author who is anything but domesticated, a woman author who in fact shares a politically charged cultural literacy with the

¹ This is explored in Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson (eds), *The Tragedy of Mariam: The Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland Her Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 30-5 and Lisa Hopkins, *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). This context has been rejected by Jeanne Addison Roberts who argues that other more recent high profile divorces, such as those of Frances Howard and Penelope Rich, are more likely to form the contextual backdrop to the play, see 'Marriage and Divorce in 1613: Elizabeth Cary, Frances Howard, and Others' in Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger (eds), *Textual Formations and Reformations* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 161-78.

² See Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 151-76.

³ See, for example Nancy A. Gutierrez, 'Valuing *Mariam*: Genre Study and Feminist Analysis', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 10 (1991), 233-51; Laurie J. Shannon, 'The Tragedy of *Mariam*: Cary's Critique of the Terms of Founding Social Discourses', *English Literary Renaissance*, 24 (1994), 135-53; Meredith Skura, 'The Reproduction of Mothering in *Mariam: Queen of Jewry*: A Defense of "Biographical Criticism"', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 16 (1997), 27-56.

intellectual aristocracy of her day.’⁴ I also intend to argue that it represents the crystallisation of many of the issues raised in the other neo-Senecan dramas with many of the same questions recurring: Is it possible for a woman to engage successfully in the *vita activa*? Can resistance to a tyrant be justified? Can stoicism be practically applied in a morally corrupt world? I will argue that, like the other dramas in previous chapters, Cary’s play offers no easy answers to any of these questions; in this sense it is, like the other dramas, an interrogative play which seeks to provoke its audience, or more likely readership, into considering the various issues it raises rather than presenting them with any prescribed answers. This chapter will also focus upon the ways in which Cary’s play can also be viewed as an accession play, particularly through its emphasis upon the accession of a seemingly alien king in the form of Herod, facing the prejudices of the dominant order, and failing to reconcile the cultural differences between the two factions of his populace. This approach thus suggests that the play has a much more immediate topical agenda than much previous criticism has acknowledged.

The existence of a full length biography, or hagiography, of Elizabeth Cary written by one of her daughters means, as Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson point out, that ‘we know more about Elizabeth Cary’s life than we do about Shakespeare’s’.⁵ However, the existence of the biography also raises a number of problematic issues. The usual debates about the validity of biographical criticism aside, it must be acknowledged that *The Lady Falkland: Her Life* was written by one of Elizabeth Cary’s daughters, someone who had a

⁴ Marta Straznicky, “‘Profane Stoical Paradoxes’: *The Tragedie of Mariam* and Sidneian Closet Drama”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 24 (1994), 104-34 (p. 109).

⁵ Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (eds.), *The Tragedy of Mariam the Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland: Her Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 2.

vested interest in presenting a positive portrait of the subject. This means that charges of adopting a biased view and constructing a hagiography are both inevitable and plausible. Alison Shell comments that, despite an obvious authorial agenda, 'such texts can provide potentially excellent evidence of the moral and religious ideals most valued by their subjects - in this case, the high standards of marital duty that Cary set for herself - and the distinctive ways in which they set about achieving them'.⁶ In spite of any questions about the possible bias of the work, the *Life* still forms an interesting companion piece to *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1602-8). Of particular interest are the earlier passages which describe Elizabeth's adolescence and the early years of her marriage to Henry Cary, through much of which he was absent as a prisoner of war after his capture by the Spanish in the Netherlands. The most notable feature of these passages is the way in which she overcame various obstacles to her early passion: reading. At a young age she tended to spend the entire night reading books to the extent that it prompted her mother to 'forbid her servants to let her have candles, which command they turned to their own profit, and let themselves be hired by her to let her have them, selling them to her at half a crown apiece, so was she bent to reading'.⁷ This same spirit of indomitability is also embodied in the central character of Cary's tragedy early on when she remarks that it was Herod who, 'by barring me from liberty, / To shun my ranging, taught me first to range' (1.1.25-6).⁸ There are therefore certain

⁶ Alison Shell, 'Elizabeth Cary's Historical Conscience: *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Thomas Lodge's Josephus', pp. 53-68 in Heather Wolfe (ed.), *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 57.

⁷ *The Lady Falkland: Her Life by one of her Daughters*, pp. 183-275 in Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (eds.), *The Tragedy of Mariam the Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland: Her Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 187-8.

⁸ All references to *The Tragedy of Mariam* are from Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (eds.), *The Tragedy of Mariam the Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland: Her Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

affinities between Cary, or at least her persona that emerges in the *Life*, and Mariam. As Andrew Hiscock comments, the *Life* charts the ‘sustained operations of her mother-in-law, husband and, indeed, the wider pressures of early Stuart patriarchy to deny this female subject access to a textual culture and, therefore, to the authority of a potential speaking position’.⁹ Mariam also has to tackle similar odds to achieve her personal goal of attaining a ‘public voice’, encountering opposition from Herod, Salome, the chorus figures and even her own mother who censures her on the way to her execution. The extent to which the play’s heroine shares the pragmatism attributed to her author is, however, debatable.

If Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson’s estimate is correct, *The Tragedy of Mariam* was written at some point between the years 1602 and 1608, shortly after the author’s marriage to Henry Cary and before the birth of her first child, Catherine, in 1609.¹⁰ In her text Cary taps into the tradition established by Mary Sidney with her translation of Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*; however, Rosemary Kegl has argued that Cary’s text represents a ‘crisis in genre’ through its appropriation of features more conducive to dramas of the public stage.¹¹ The fact that the *Life* notes that Cary loved plays ‘extremely’¹² suggests that she was well aware of the conventions of the public theatre. This viewpoint is actually somewhat exaggerated, particularly when one considers Cary’s efforts to

⁹ Andrew Hiscock, *The Uses of this World: Thinking Space in Shakespeare, Marlowe, Cary and Jonson* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 114.

¹⁰ Weller and Ferguson, p. 179. Some critics have opted for a narrower range of dates. A. C. Dunstan, for example argues for a range of dates between 1602-5, between the publication of Lodge’s translation of Josephus’ *Antiquities*, and the knighting of Sir Henry Cary; see, A. C. Dunstan (ed.), *The Tragedy of Mariam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Malone Society Reprints, 1992).

¹¹ Rosemary Kegl, ‘Theaters, Households and a “Kind of History” in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*’, in Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (eds.), *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 135-53.

¹² *Life*, p. 224.

condense events from her source material, Thomas Lodge's translation of Josephus' *Antiquities*, which describes events which took place over several years and outside the city of Jerusalem, into a unified temporal and spatial setting in order to adhere to the neo-classical conventions of the neo-Senecan genre. This is emphasised in the final chorus, in which they comment upon the 'strange events of this one only day' (5.1.260). Alison Findlay has pointed out that the compression of the source material, both temporally and geographically, exemplifies Stanley Vincent Longman's idea of the 'floating stage' in which the text is conscious of the limitations of the stage space and makes them 'correspond to a generalized locale'.¹³ In the nearest theatrical counterpart to Cary's play - Gervase Markham and William Sampson's *Herod and Antipater* (1622) - the action takes place over a number of years, allowing the events at the core of Cary's play to fulfil only a subsidiary role. This shows a significant contrast between the methods applied by Cary and those by authors writing for the commercial stage. Cary also conforms to the generic expectations of the closet dramatic form by appropriating such features as the chorus, the nuntio, the reactions to events taking place offstage, and the inclusion of sententious moralising.

The location and the historical moment dramatised by the text also have a bearing upon the play's generic classification. This is suggested in Mariam's oft-quoted opening soliloquy:

How oft have I with public voice run on
 To censure Rome's last hero for deceit:
 Because he wept when Pompey's life was gone,
 Yet when he liv'd, he thought his name too great.
 (1.1.1-4).

¹³ Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 31.

The reference to Julius Caesar is one of the ways in which Cary situates the events of the play in the context of developments in the more familiar Roman settings of the dramas of Mary Sidney, Thomas Kyd, Samuel Brandon, Samuel Daniel, and Ben Jonson, thus ensuring its intertextual relationship with these plays. Clifford Ronan observes that, despite the lack of Roman characters in the text, there is still 'a bustle about how Rome has changed Judaea's history - and how Judaea might have changed Rome's if a Jewish princess had slept with Antony'.¹⁴ This, as well as the play's references to Cleopatra, the 'brown Egyptian' (1.2.190), exhibits the play's consciousness of the significance of events in Rome and its empire. Lisa Hopkins goes as far as to comment that Antony and Cleopatra 'virtually frame the events of *The Tragedy of Mariam*.'¹⁵ Cary's text therefore occupies a significant intertextual space when considered alongside the subject matter of the other contemporary coterie dramatists. However, the providential significance of the fates of Antony and Cleopatra is emphasised considerably more than in the other texts. Their demise is all part of the same providential scheme that unfolded with the death of Pompey, the assassination of Julius Caesar, the rise of Octavius Caesar and, ultimately, the coming of Christ, all events to which the text alludes at various points. Babas' second son,¹⁶ in particular, recognises Octavius' importance in world events, evidenced by his recollection of his first sight of the future emperor:

I bent mine eye to mark, mine ears to hear,

¹⁴ Clifford Ronan, "*Antike Roman*": *Power symbology and the Roman play in early modern England, 1585-1635* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 173.

¹⁵ Lisa Hopkins, *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 153.

¹⁶ There are a number of various spellings available for the name 'Babas' (including 'Baba', 'Babas', and 'Babus') meaning that the name appears differently in a number of editions. Weller and Ferguson opt for 'Babas' on the basis that this is the form used in Lodge's English translation of Josephus; see p. 158.

Where I did see Octavius, then a page,
 When first he did Julius' sight appear:
 Methought I saw such mildness in his face,
 And such a sweetness in his looks did grow,
 With, commix'd with so majestic grace,
 His [phys' nomy] his fortune did foreshow:
 For this I was indebted to mine eye,
 But mine ear receiv'd more evidence,
 By that I knew his love to clemency,
 How he with hottest choler could dispense.
 (2.2.182-92).

This recognition of the potential of the young Octavius emphasises the play's interest in the development of events which would continue to shape western European culture for centuries to come. Similar links between the emergence of Octavius and the development of Christianity are evident in other texts focusing upon the same era, and have as their precedent the fourth of Virgil's *Eclogues*, often known as the 'messianic' eclogue. William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* also recognises the way in which the destinies of Octavius and the onset of Christianity are irrevocably linked. In the first act Charmian demands of the soothsayer

some excellent fortune! Let me be married to three kings in a forenoon
 and widow them all. Let me have a child at fifty to whom Herod of
 Jewry may do homage. Find me to marry me with Octavius Caesar and
 companion me with my mistress.
 (1.2.27-31).¹⁷

The mingling of three kings, an obvious allusion to the magi who attended Christ's epiphany, Herod of Jewry and Octavius Caesar emphasises the extent to which these figures are all participants in the Christian providential scheme. This view is reinforced by Octavius' observation that the 'time of universal peace is near' (4.6.5), an utterance which can be interpreted both as a fulfilment of the *pax Romana* it was hoped Augustus would bring to the world as well as a

¹⁷ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, John Wilders (ed.) (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1995; 2004 reprint).

recognition of the coming of Christianity. The emphasis upon Augustus also has a contemporary resonance, particularly as James I was attempting to fashion himself as a new Augustan figure.

The Judean setting for the events also serves to emphasise the significance of this providential scheme in terms of the development of Christianity. As Alison Findlay comments, Jerusalem is a location that ‘carries powerful metaphorical resonance’ and one which ‘evokes images of a promised land ruled over by a patriarchal dynasty.’¹⁸ Findlay goes on to observe that the text’s ‘numerous references to David’s city and dynasty are to a lost, irrecoverable, and not altogether attractive homeland from which the characters have moved away.’¹⁹ The considerable resonance Jerusalem bears in relation to the development of Christianity marks it as a kind of frontier between the worlds of the Old Testament and the New. This point is particularly evident in Lodge’s translation of Josephus’ *Antiquities* in which there is a year by year countdown to the Christian nativity in the text’s margins.²⁰ *The Tragedy of Mariam* evokes a similar consciousness of the proximity of the onset of Christianity. The significance of this liminality is embodied in the play’s heroine. Erin E. Kelly stresses the importance of the fact that Mariam is descended from the Maccabean dynasty and comments that she was ‘linked to the mother and sons described in 2 Maccabees 7 who willingly died under torture rather than violate the precepts of the Jewish faith by eating pork and sacrificing to idols.’²¹ As well as forming a precedent for religious martyrdom, Mariam’s ancestry is also

¹⁸ Findlay, pp. 31-2.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 32.

²⁰ See Weller and Ferguson pp. 277-82 in which the passages from Lodge’s translation which informed the events in Cary’s play are reproduced.

²¹ Erin E. Kelly, ‘Mariam and Early Modern Discourses of Martyrdom’ pp. 35-52 in Heather Wolfe (ed.), *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 36.

important in terms of the development of Christianity. Kelly goes on to point out that a 'number of early modern texts concerned with Christian historiography identify the transition from the Maccabean reign over the Jewish people to Herod's rule as the period when Jews ceased to be God's chosen people and the way was cleared for the Christ's coming.'²² It is therefore implied that the characters in the play are, albeit unwittingly, caught up in a chain of divinely sanctioned events over which they have no control and from which, as non-Christians, they will be unable to benefit in terms of salvation.

Just as Octavius proves himself to be a providential figure, the appearance of Herod in the text achieves a similar effect but for different reasons. The inclusion of the same Herod who, according to the Gospel of Matthew, was responsible for the slaughter of the innocents points directly towards the Christian nativity. Herod was therefore a figure Cary's readers would most likely have associated with the beginnings of Christianity. The allusive qualities of the play thus serve to make its generic status problematic, touching as it does upon elements of the Roman play and the biblical play, without conforming fully to either.

It is not only the choices of setting and historical era which have a bearing upon the genre of this play; Cary's choice of source is also significant. Alison Shell comments upon the significance of appropriating Lodge's translation of Josephus as the principal source by arguing that 'Lodge gives voice to a common Renaissance preoccupation, the moral utility of history, and - more unusually - stresses his readers' obligation to interrogate their own lives by actively reflecting upon relevant historical exemplars, both good and bad'²³, as

²² Ibid, p. 37.

²³ Shell, p. 52.

well as being a means through which readers could 'interrogate their own pasts and avoid pitfalls in their own futures.'²⁴ This premise is affirmed in Cary's text by the final chorus who conclude their speech by observing 'This day alone, our sagest Hebrews shall / In after times the school of wisdom call' (5.1.293-4).

Cary therefore exhibits similar consciousness of the text's political didacticism as Lodge evokes in his preface to the translation of Josephus in which he claims that such events allow people 'to sit and learne preuention by other mens perils'.²⁵ This indicates the extent to which the *Mirrors for Magistrates* tradition is consciously evoked in the play, lending it a clear didactic dimension and thus adding an extra level to its appropriations of genres.

I have indicated above that the play's historical setting, and the relation of the political environment to that of ancient Rome, provide a number of instances for the play's intertextual relation to the story of Antony and Cleopatra, who, as I shall go on to show, provide a significant frame of reference for many of the events which take place. The resonance of Cleopatra is most apparent in the character of Mariam whose fate, in common with that Mary Sidney's realisation of the figure, exposes the problems faced by a woman who attempts to engage in the *vita activa* in a patriarchal society. This is suggested from the very outset of the play in the much quoted opening soliloquy:

How oft have I with public voice run on
To censure Rome's last hero for deceit:
Because he wept when Pompey's life was gone,
Yet when he liv'd, he thought his name too great.
But now I do recant, and, Roman lord,
Excuse too rash a judgement in a woman:
My sex pleads pardon, pardon then afford,
Mistaking is with us but too too common.
(1.1.1-8).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Thomas Lodge, *The Famous and Memorable Works of Josephus* (London: Peter Short, 1602), sig. iij.

The reference to Mariam's 'public voice' alludes to the existence of an oppositional political culture in which dissenting voices are permitted. This notion is reinforced by the inclusion of the word 'censure', which would seem to suggest that Mariam has engaged in outspoken criticism of the imperial and patriarchal hegemony of the Romans as well as Herod's government. However, the reference to 'Rome's last hero', Julius Caesar, serves to undercut this apparently radical rhetoric. The reference to Caesar, the figure who set in motion the chain of events which brought about the end of the Roman republic and its beginnings as an absolutist imperial force, provides a broad historical frame for the curbing of public dissent within Judea. Mariam goes on to acknowledge Caesar as her 'Roman lord' and asks him to overlook 'too rash a judgement in a woman', effectively imposing upon herself a form of self-censorship. This suggests that Mariam's engagement in the *vita activa* was received as a rash course of action which she has felt obliged to recant. Ilona Bell comments that through the 'historical displacement' achieved by the reference to Julius Caesar, Cary emphasises 'not only how inadequate being a woman makes Mariam (and Cary) feel, but also that English literary tradition does not provide a ready form for female self-expression'²⁶. A culture of self-censorship, and its implied necessity for female public speech, is therefore initiated at exactly the same time as the political rhetoric, suggesting any potentially subversive comment on Mariam's part should not be taken seriously. At least this is the impression conveyed by the opening lines. *The Tragedy of Mariam* occupies a significant place in the history of English literature as the

²⁶ Ilona Bell, 'Private Lyrics in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*', pp. 17-34 in Heather Wolfe (ed.), *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 20.

first original drama to be written for publication by an Englishwoman.²⁷ On the face of it, this appears to be something of an important development in women's writing, particularly the way in which Cary engages in dramatic writing, a form of literature from which women's participation was prohibited in the public theatres. With this in mind, the significance of Mariam's marginalisation of any potential subversion becomes apparent.

In spite of the elements of political containment and self-censorship therein, Mariam's opening speech foregrounds the potential of the 'public voice' to be a vehicle for dangerous and subversive political arguments. This is recognised all too clearly when Sohemus observes that 'Unbridled speech is Mariam's worst disgrace, / And will endanger her without desert' (3.3.183-4). For the prevailing patriarchal attitudes held by many of the characters, as well as the chorus, Mariam's frequent engagement in political debate represents a dangerous breach of social decorum. Her willingness to exercise her 'public voice' is contrasted by the appearance of Graphina, a character for whom there is no corresponding figure in the translation of Josephus, at the beginning of the second act. Margaret Ferguson argues that this figure represents a more acceptable model of women's speech, appearing as a character 'strongly associated with the feminine virtue of modest silence'.²⁸ She remains silent throughout the beginning of this scene and allows Pheroras to speak for a clear forty four lines before she adheres to his request, 'Move thy tongue / For silence is a sign of discontent' (2.1.41-2).

²⁷ I use the term "original" advisedly. Cary's *Mariam* was preceded by Mary Sidney's translation of Garnier's *Marc Antoine*. The extent to which a translation can be considered an original work is a matter for some debate. In relation to early modern closet drama see Josephine A. Roberts and James F. Gaines, 'Kyd and Garnier: The Art of Amendment', *Comparative Literature*, 31 (1979), 124-33.

²⁸ Margaret W. Ferguson, 'The Spectre of Resistance: *The Tragedy of Mariam*', in eds. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594-1998* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 182-193 (p. 184).

Her participation in the discussion is therefore suspended until it is deemed acceptable by her male companion. However, Graphina's silence is motivated not by fears of subversion, but rather by her fear that 'I should say too little when I speak' (2.1.50). This character therefore presents the male protagonists with a more palatable form of intervention in male dominated discussions. The significance of the name Graphina, most probably drawn from the Greek verb *graphein* ('to write'), becomes apparent if one were to consider her as representative of a form of licensed participation in a male dominated discourse as well as suggesting that writing was an acceptable feminine activity. Ilona Bell has commented that Graphina has frequently been 'dismissed as a conventional, subordinate woman, a one-dimensional character whose dutiful silence serves as a foil to Mariam's outspoken independence' but that her secret betrothal to Pheroras is a sign of 'courageous boldness, not of subservience'²⁹. It must, however, be noted that this plan is only initiated during the absence, and presumed death, of Herod, the conservative patriarch, and therefore fails to directly challenge his rule. It is also instigated primarily by a male character, thus suggesting that, even in these potentially subversive actions, her independence is still undermined.

The representation of Graphina as a benign form of political intervention exists in contrast to the way in which other female protagonists are characterised as politically deviant. This is indicated by Constabarus who, in his tirade against women, observes that they are 'the wreck of order, breach of laws' (4.6.332). This viewpoint hints at the existence of an almost institutionalised fear of the feminisation and decay of patriarchal society. Such paranoia is also evident in

²⁹ Bell, p. 22.

Constabarus' retort to Salome's announcement of her intention to divorce him, a privilege which had traditionally been reserved for men in Hebrew society:

Are Hebrew women now transformed to men?
Why do you not as well our battles fight,
And wear our armour? Suffer this, and then
Let all the world be topsy-turvèd quite.
Let fishes graze, beasts [swim], and birds descend,
Let fire burn downwards whilst the earth aspires:
Let winter's heat and summer's cold offend,
Let thistles grow on vines, and grapes on briars,
Set us to spin or sew, or at the best
Make us wood-hewers, water bearing wights:
For sacred service let us take no rest,
Use us as Joshua did the Gibonites.
(1.6.421-32).

Constabarus evokes a number of incongruous images to illustrate his point that allowing women greater freedom will result in the world being turned 'topsy-turvèd'. The fact that he appropriates natural imagery emphasises the extent of these transgressions. The potential for emasculation is also underlined in this speech, particularly the way in which he imagines himself and his male peers being set to 'spin or sew'. This comment evokes the myth of Hercules being taken captive by the queen of Lydia and being made to spin at distaff, an incident which is alluded to in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* texts and Mary Sidney's *Antonius*. Salome's transgressive behaviour prompts Constabarus to envisage a future populated by emasculated men condemned to eternal servitude, as the Gibeonites were as a result of Joshua's actions. Given the apparent extent of Salome's transgression, Irene Burgess comments that an 'important interpretative mystery in this play is why Salome remains alive at the conclusion of the play. Her very nature would seem[sic] to suggest that she be killed at the end; all theatrical conventions demand that the parasitical Vice

figure lose her life at the end.’³⁰ However, Burgess goes on to note that her survival is down to the fact that, ‘unlike Mariam, she accepts the rules of the societal game as a given, but she recognizes she can use the rules to her own advantage.’³¹

Another factor which has a bearing upon Mariam’s attempts to overcome the vicissitudes of the patriarchal society in Judea is her lineage. As we have seen above, Mariam is part of the Maccabean dynasty and, unlike Herod, she is descended from Jacob and is thus part of an elevated social class. One of the premises which recurs throughout the text is the importance of the caste system in Hebrew society. From the first reference to Herod in the play’s argument, in which he is described as ‘Herod, the son of Antipater (an Idumean)’, Herod’s racial origins are made clear. The Idumean faction of Jewish society were descended from Esau rather than Jacob, and were continually dogged by the fact that their ancestor sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.³² These events are alluded to by Alexandra who dismisses Herod as a ‘Base Edomite, the damnèd Esau’s heir’ (1.2.84) and questions his right to accede to the throne that has previously been graced by David and Solomon:

What kingdom’s right could cruel Herod claim,
Was he not Esau’s issue, heir of hell?
Then what succession can he have but shame?
Did not his ancestor his birth-right sell?
(1.2.99-102).

Alexandra’s dismissal of Herod also highlights the political nature of Herod’s marriage to Mariam, a descendant of Jacob, and therefore perceived as belonging to a more elevated social class. This can also be seen to link to

³⁰ Irene Burgess, “‘The Wreck of Order’ in Early Modern Women’s Drama”, *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.3 (January, 2001): 6.1-24 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/06-3/burgwrec.htm>>. Date accessed: 25/09/2008.

³¹ Ibid.

³² These events are related in Genesis 25:29-34.

James's own concerns about the possibility that the Stuart bloodline was tainted due to its Catholic associations, a view that was in fact held by many English observers. It is not only Alexandra who directs verbal abuse at the Idumean characters in the play; Mariam herself abuses Salome on the grounds of her lower position in the caste system:

Though I thy brother's face had never seen,
My birth thy baser birth so far excell'd,
I had to both of you the princess been.
Thou parti-Jew, and parti-Edomite,
Thou mongrel: issu'd from rejected race,
Thy ancestors against the Heavens did fight,
And thou like them wilt heavenly birth disgrace.
(1.3.232-8).

This, coupled with her cursing of Doris in the fourth act (4.8.625-8), complicates the portrayal of Mariam and contributes to the way in which the play provokes an overall attitude of ambivalence towards all of the characters. Mary Beth Rose has argued that such instances serve to complicate and undermine Mariam's status as a proto-Christian martyr towards the end of the play.³³ They also show that her resistance to the patriarchal society is tempered by her status within it. Unlike Doris and Salome, Mariam is not an entirely disenfranchised figure; she holds a somewhat elevated position within the Judean hierarchy through her descent from the Maccabeans. It is only when she has endured Herod's tyranny that the need to be politically proactive is realised; as she observes, it was Herod who, 'by barring me from liberty,/ To shun my ranging, taught me first to range' (1.1.25-6). It is only after Mariam's endurance of Herod's tyranny, and the loss of her formerly elevated status that she is provoked into actively resisting the patriarchal society that holds its influence over Judea.

³³ Rose, p. 217.

In addition to the similarities between Mariam and Cleopatra mentioned above, Mariam also has to play the problematic role of a second wife. Whilst Herod's first wife, Doris, does not make the same kinds of claims to wifely exemplarity as Octavia does, it is difficult not to see her point of view. She asserts that Mariam is an adulteress whose 'soul is black and spotted, full of sin:/ You in adultery liv'd nine year together,/ And Heav'n will never let adult'ry in' (4.8.576-8). Doris' position, like that of Octavia in the Cleopatra plays of Samuel Daniel and Samuel Brandon, has been usurped by the allurements of a seemingly wanton second wife. Mariam herself appropriates Cleopatra as a kind of frame of reference for her own situation:

That face and person that in Asia late
For beauty's goddess, Paphos' queen, was ta'en:
That face did captive great Julius' fate,
That very face that was Anthonius' bane,
That face that to be Egypt's pride was born,
That face that all the world eseem'd so rare:
Did Herod hate, despise, neglect, and scorn,
When with the same, he Mariam's did compare.
(4.8.545-52).

Mariam thus self-consciously evokes the comparisons between herself and Cleopatra which, as I have shown, provide a means of scrutinising a number of the important issues the play provokes, such as the position of women in a patriarchal society, the problems a woman entering into public life can face, and the prejudices which a second wife must overcome.

However, the principal dilemma faced by Daniel's Cleopatra is one also faced by Mariam: whether to submit herself to the prospect of becoming a trophy to emblematised a tyrant's triumphant return to his homeland, or to die resisting this outcome. This is one of the issues which is raised by the presence of Herod in the text. The figure of Herod the Great would have been a familiar figure to

Cary's readers for a number of reasons. Aside from his representation in the Bible, he was also a familiar dramatic figure from a number of biblical dramas and mystery plays. Just as Fulke Greville's appropriation of the Great Turk in his characterisation of Solyman purges him of his extravagant behaviour and turns him into a wavering and divided figure, so Cary makes Herod an indecisive and easily manipulated character. However, unlike Greville, Cary does not eschew the ranting and bombastic qualities which cemented his reputation on stage and informs Hamlet's condemnation of the kind of performances in which one can witness 'a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings'; such a performance, Hamlet argues, 'out-Herods Herod'.³⁴ Cary's Herod is also subject to the same kinds of rages and bombastic behaviour, as typified by his indecision over whether or not he should execute Mariam:

Herod: Here, take her to her death. Come back, come back,
 What meant I to deprive the world of light:
 To muffle Jewry in the foulest black,
 That ever was an opposite to white?
 Why, whither would you carry her?
Soldier: You bade
 We should conduct her to her death, my lord.
Herod: Why, sure I did not, Herod was not mad.
 Why should she feel the fury of the sword?
 Oh, now the grief returns into my heart,
 And pulls me piecemeal: love and hate do fight:
 And now hath love acquir'd the greater part,
 Yet now hath hate affection conquer'd quite.
 (4.4.235-46).

Here, Herod can be seen wavering over the fate of Mariam and in so doing he reveals himself to be an unstable and impulsive presence, clearly indebted to the kind of performances with which he was more traditionally associated on the public stage and in the mystery play tradition, suggesting Cary's realisation of

³⁴ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet* (3.2.9-14), ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1989).

the character has an ambivalent relationship with the received ideas about Herod the Great.³⁵

It is through the inclusion of Herod that the play poses one of its central questions: How can a tyrant re-establish power over his subjects after they have been provided with a tantalising glimpse of liberty? Reports of Herod's death, which turn out to be greatly exaggerated, prove to be a catalyst for a number of events which Herod's tyrannical oppression had hitherto prevented from happening. Herod's brother, Pheroras, takes advantage of the situation in order to marry Graphina, rather than the juvenile girl Herod had intended for him; Constabarus releases the sons of Babas, whom Herod had ordered to be executed; and Mariam ambivalently muses upon her new-found freedom. These events show the effects of Herod's power in containing various forces relating to both the domestic and the political arenas. The reports of Herod's death also draw attention to, and subvert, the ways in which the neo-Senecan dramas are based upon the reactions of the characters to a certain event, rather than actually conveying the action to the audience. In this sense, the plot of *The Tragedy of Mariam* works on a metatextual level, basing itself upon a false premise and thus drawing attention to the way the genre allows its plots to unfold.

There is a sense that Mariam's fate is effectively sealed upon Herod's return. Her new-found political activism and her tendency to provide outspoken critiques of Herod's rule would seem to preclude the return to an ordinary marital relationship. Alison Findlay suggests that this notion is most clearly expressed by Mariam's appearance in widow's apparel which represents, 'in

³⁵ For comment upon the importance of fame, reputations, and notoriety in early modern drama see Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), particularly the introduction, pp. 1-20.

effect, a declaration of divorce'.³⁶ There is also the potential for Herod's execution of Mariam to be a politically expedient act. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli recounts the actions of Cesare Borgia, and his treatment of his deputy, Remirro de Orco:

After the Duke had conquered the Romagna, he found that it had been controlled by violent lords, who were more disposed to despoil their subjects than to rule them properly, thus being a source of disorder rather than of order; consequently, that region was full of thefts, quarrels and outrages of every kind. He considered it necessary to introduce efficient government, because he wanted the region to be peaceful and its inhabitants obedient to his monarchical authority. He therefore sent there messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and energetic man, giving him full powers. Remirro quickly restored order and peace, and acquired a very formidable reputation. Later, the Duke considered that such power was undesirable, because he was afraid it would incur hatred; and he set up a civil tribunal under a distinguished president, in the centre of the region, to which each city sent a lawyer... And availing himself of an appropriate opportunity, one morning the Duke had Remirro placed in two pieces in the square at Cesena, with a block of wood and a blood stained sword at his side. This terrible spectacle left the people both satisfied and amazed.³⁷

This incident shows Machiavelli's recognition of the exemplary public punishment as a means of restoring one's authority in a disaffected society.

Although Herod does not set out to consciously achieve similar ends in his execution of Mariam, it remains one of the potential benefits he could reap from the incident. This anecdote has often been linked to Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*,³⁸ with the Duke using an occasion to publicly censure, though not execute, his deputy as a means of strengthening his power. Similar effects of the use of the public execution are scrutinised by Michel Foucault who comments upon its 'juridico-political function':

³⁶ Findlay, p. 35.

³⁷ Machiavelli, p. 26.

³⁸ See Norman Holland, 'Measure for Measure: The Duke and The Prince', *Comparative Literature*, 11 (1959), pp. 16-20. For a more recent example of this, see Andrew Majeske, 'Equity's Absence: The Extremity of Claudio's Prosecution and Barnardine's Pardon in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*', *Law and Literature*, 21: 2 (2009), 169-84. N. W. Bawcutt has recently argued that the resonance of this anecdote has been exaggerated in 'Shakespeare and Machiavelli: A Caveat', *Shakespeare Survey*, 63 (2010), 237-48, see especially 247-8.

It is a ceremonial by which a momentarily injured sovereignty is reconstituted. It restores that sovereignty by manifesting it at its most spectacular. The public execution, however hasty and everyday, belongs to a whole series of great rituals in which power is eclipsed and restored (coronation, entry of king into a conquered city, the submission of rebellious subjects); over and above the crime that has placed the sovereign in contempt, it deploys before all eyes an invincible force. Its aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, at its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength.³⁹

Mariam's public execution certainly seems to have the necessary effect upon her mother, Alexandra who, according to the Nuntio, 'did upon her daughter loudly rail' (5.1.36). Alexandra's reaction shows, in a microcosmic sense, the potential effect of the public execution upon the populace and its potential to exploit their social disaffection and use it as a means of bolstering the authority of a tyrant. Such is the case in Jonson's *Sejanus* in which Tiberius benefits from harnessing the social energy of the mob who attack Sejanus' corpse. The effect of the public display of exemplary punishment in *Mariam* is quite different; it does not ultimately strengthen the authority of Herod, nor does it provoke the kind of public revolt caused by the assassination of Mustapha in Greville's play. The spectators of the event are described as a 'curious gazing troop' (5.1.21), who witness the event impassively. In this manner, the emphasis upon Mariam's status as a martyr serves to undercut the political consequences of her death. This mood is best summed up by Herod who seems surprised at the lack of popular unrest after Mariam's death:

Judea, how canst thou the wretches brook,
That robb'd from thee the fairest of the crew?
You dwellers in the now deprived land,
Wherein the matchless Mariam was bred:

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp. 48-9. These issues are also considered in relation to *The Tragedy of Mariam* in Frances E. Dolan, "'Gentlemen, I have one thing more to say': Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563-1680", *Modern Philology*, 92: 2 (1994), 157-78, especially 162-8.

Why grasp not each of you a sword in hand,
To aim at me your cruel sovereign's head?
(5.1.169-74).

Herod's response to the news of Mariam's death lends a somewhat anticlimactic quality to the play's conclusion. Unlike such plays as *Mustapha* and *Cornelia*, for example, it does not attempt to grapple with the ethics of tyrannicide, shifting its emphasis instead towards Mariam's elevation to the status of a proto-Christian martyr.

The inclusion of Herod also has significant relevance when situating this play in relation to its historical moment. As we have seen above, it has long been established that Cary's play was probably written at some point during the first decade of James's reign, or at least towards the very end of Elizabeth's reign; however, relatively little has been said about the topical resonances of *Mariam*. It will be argued here that Cary's text is in effect an accession play which probes many of the issues that were raised at the onset of James's reign in England. One of the key ways in which the contemporary resonances of *Mariam* is conveyed is through the references to the ancient past, such as Mariam's comments about her children by Herod:

My children only for his will he deem'd,
These boys that did descend from royal line.
These did he style his heirs to David's throne;
My Alexander, if he live, shall sit
In the majestic seat of Solomon;
To will it so, did Herod think it fit.
(1.2.137-42).

The use of such figures as Solomon and David in this speech is particularly significant, especially as a means of legitimising the claim to a throne. Both these figures, particularly Solomon, were appropriated by James, and his status

as a second Solomon was voiced throughout his life.⁴⁰ Such rhetoric was also appropriated in a more pejorative sense in contemporary gossip, as exemplified by the quip made by King Henry IV of France that James was ‘Solomon, the son of David’, alluding to the rumours about his parentage by David Rizzio, a musician serving Mary, Queen of Scots.⁴¹ Herod’s accession to the throne of Solomon can thus be related to the iconography of James I who consciously styled himself as a successor to Solomon.

The contemporary significance of Cary’s play is also conveyed through the status of Herod who, like James, is effectively a ruler from another nation towards which there has been a history of antagonism amongst his new subjects. We have already seen the prejudices faced by characters such as Herod, Doris, and Salome because of their status as Edomites, particularly Mariam’s abusive dismissal of Salome, from which the discussion will profit by revisiting:

Thou parti-Jew, and parti-Edomite,
Thou mongrel: issu’d from rejected race,
Thy ancestors against the Heavens did fight,
And thou like them wilt heavenly birth disgrace.
(1.3.235-8).

Here Mariam asserts the superiority of her bloodline and the baseness of the Idumean culture from which Herod had emerged. This contempt for the Edomites has echoes of some of the negative views of the Scots held by certain English observers. One of the most vitriolic was Francis Osborne who was particularly scathing about that which he perceived as the degrading influence of the Scots upon the English court. He argued that one of the principal reasons for James’s lack of popularity amongst the English courtiers was his ‘partiality used

⁴⁰ On the appropriations of such figures in Jacobean iconography, see James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp. 73-101.

⁴¹ Quoted in William L. McElwee, *The Wisest Fool in Christendom: The Reign of James I and VI* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 39.

towards the Scots', and his account of an incident at one of James's banquets

depicts the Scots as uncouth and practically barbaric:

I cannot forget one of the attendants of the king, that at a feast, made by this monster in excesse, eate to his single share a whole pye, reckoned to my lord at ten pounds, being composed of amber-greece, magisteriall of perle, musk, &c. yet was so far (as he told me) from being sweet in the morning, that he almost poysoned his whole family, flying himselfe like the satyr from his owne stinck... I am cloyd with the repetition of this excesse, not lesse then scandalized at the continuance of it...⁴²

This is not to say that Cary endorses such views, but rather that they illustrate the ways in which the Scots, like Cary's Herod, were viewed with suspicion and derision. The caustic outlook of Osborne, however, was probably not a representative view; Frauke Reitemeier has argued that even after the accession of James I, the attitudes held by the English towards the Scots remained largely indifferent:

Few authors seem to have thought it necessary to re-evaluate Scotland in their books, and even if authors chose to enlarge their accounts, they did so in rather a token fashion, not really interested in actively discovering anything new. All this points to a widespread indifference. The image of the Scots as a superstitious and barbarous people sticks especially in the back of everybody's head, and at least the majority of the English seems to have been happy with it, irrespective of its correctness. This is the more surprising as England had in the minds of many Englishmen been, in effect, enlarged by Scotland, instead of combining to form that new political entity called Great Britain; it could have been expected that there would at least have been a curiosity on their part.⁴³

In spite of the indifference towards their image, there was still widespread resentment about the Scots following James south and allegedly encroaching upon English jobs; all this was on top of decades of mutual suspicion and animosity under a thin veil of peace.⁴⁴

⁴² Ashton, pp. 232-3.

⁴³ Frauke Reitemeier, "'There are verie few Englishmen that know, bicause we want the books': On English Descriptions of Scotland Before and After 1603", *Renaissance Forum*, 7 (2004).

⁴⁴ Jenny Wormald, 'O Brave New World? The Union of England and Scotland in 1603' in T. C. Smout (ed.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 13-35.

There is also the sense that Herod's references to Rome reflect some of the anxieties explored in previous chapters that a new king from another culture could be corrupted by the acquisition of a rich new realm or, in this case, at least getting a glimpse at it. His description of Rome focuses emphatically upon the material aspects of the culture:

You world-commanding city, Europe's grace,
Twice hath my curious eye your streets survey'd
I have seen the statue-filled place,
That once if not for grief had been betray'd.
I all your Roman beauties have beheld,
And seen the shows your ediles did prepare;
I saw the sum of what in you excell'd,
Yet saw no miracle like Mariam rare.
(4.1.21-8).

Herod's experience of the material excesses of Rome thus provides a frame for his return to Judea. Such experiences of a new culture are given a particularly negative gloss when considered alongside the play's various references to Antony and Cleopatra who embody the extreme consequences of a clash of cultures.

The tensions between the two factions of Hebrew society can be also be seen to echo the religious strife between Catholics and Protestants in contemporary England, particularly after the failure of the Hampton Court Conference to settle these differences.⁴⁵ Margaret W. Ferguson has also suggested that the play also alludes to the Gunpowder Plot, a direct result of the failure to reconcile these religious differences.⁴⁶ In this context, the fact that Mariam is executed by beheading, a point which is emphasised by the Nuntius's blunt declaration that

⁴⁵ This context is suggested fleetingly in Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Not kissing the (He)rod: Marian Moments in *The Tragedy of Mariam*' in Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (eds), *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 161-74 (p. 161).

⁴⁶ Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 298-301.

Mariam's 'body is divided from her head' (5.1.90), becomes significant. Before 1613, the *terminus ad quem* for the composition of *Mariam*, the two most notable recent public executions had been those of the Earl of Essex in 1601 and Guy Fawkes in 1606, the former by beheading. Both figures were of great significance for many English Catholics: Fawkes for obvious reasons, whilst much hope was invested in Essex as a figure who could potentially usher in a new era of tolerance for English Catholics. Paul E. J. Hammer has suggested that the zeal with which he prosecuted such military campaigns as the attack on Cadiz was rooted more in an aversion to the possibility of the Spanish expanding their influence, rather than a specifically anti-Catholic outlook.⁴⁷

Hammer goes on to summarise Essex's relationship with English Catholics:

Essex's semi-public support for toleration drew a variety of responses from Catholics... Many English Catholics who rejected association with Spain, both at home and abroad, came to see Essex as a friendly figure. Some moderate Catholics believed that Essex might actually be able to do them some concrete good.⁴⁸

Essex was therefore an important figure for English Catholics and one in whom much hope had been invested. Reactions to the downfall of Essex also serve to provide an active link between him and Cary's play. In November 1599, a false report of Essex's death circulated through London provoking a public outcry from many clergymen, including one who prayed that God would 'in good time restore him to his former health', to the 'grief and discomfort of all wicked Edomites that bear ill-will to him.'⁴⁹ The fact that the enemies of Essex, presumably Cecil and his associates, are linked with the Edomites adds another topical dimension to Cary's play, resonating particularly with her appropriation

⁴⁷ Paul E. J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 175.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 176.

⁴⁹ Quoted in James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 360.

of these historical events in order to comment upon religious tensions in contemporary England. The moderation for which Essex stood had been exacerbated by the accession of James who, in spite of some association with Essex in the past, had disappointed many former Essexians by allowing Cecil to maintain much of the influence he had enjoyed during Elizabeth's reign.⁵⁰ The downfall of Essex can thus be seen as another event leading to the failure to secure tolerance for English Catholics, leading to that which Stephanie Hodgson-Wright describes as 'the threat of Protestant tyranny which had newly emerged since the failure of the Hampton Court Conference in 1604'.⁵¹

Another linked context which emerges in this play is the prominence of the figure of James's cousin Arbella Stuart who was often seen as an alternative candidate to James in debates about the succession, particularly amongst Catholics and former supporters of Essex. As Barbara Kiefer Lewalski observes, during 'two reigns Roman Catholic conspirators and agitators made her a focal point for their plots to displace the Protestant line, though Arbella remained a Protestant all her life and not a party to these schemes.'⁵² The most notable of these schemes was the "Main" plot led by Henry Brooke, Lord Cobham, in July 1603 which aimed to overthrow James and replace him with Arbella Stuart. In this context, the representation of events in Cary's play becomes significant, particularly in debates over the legitimacy of Arbella over James. According to Lewalski, Arbella Stuart had one clear advantage in that she 'was born in England, whereas James's "alien birth" in Scotland might be invoked as a bar to

⁵⁰ For comment upon James's relationship with Essex and his resonance throughout the Jacobean era, see Maureen King, 'The Essex Myth in Jacobean England' in Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer and Jason Lawrence (eds), *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 177-86.

⁵¹ Hodgson-Wright, p. 167.

⁵² Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 68.

succession.’⁵³ We have already seen the extent to which emphasis is placed upon the “alien blood” of Herod and his followers compared with that of Mariam. The circumstances of the punishment of the plotters also provides added resonance for the incidents depicted in *Mariam*, particularly the last-minute reprieve granted to the plotters as they were appearing on the scaffold. As we have seen, Herod is similarly indecisive about how Mariam should be punished for her actions.

Cary’s play thus addresses a number of concerns shared by the contemporary neo-Senecan dramatists. As well as establishing intertextual links with the other plays in this study through the interests in stoicism and constitutional imperatives, the play also exploits the potential for the form of neo-Senecan drama to be appropriated as a vehicle for political comment which is highlighted by the other plays. As well as the allusions to events involving Anne Boleyn, the play also highlights contemporary concerns relating to the accession of James I. The image of Herod as a king from an apparently inferior culture taking over after a period of female rule would thus engage with contemporary events, particularly surrounding the accession of James I. In a similar manner, the tensions between the two castes of Hebrew society can be seen as analogous with the polarisation of religions in contemporary England, suggesting that Cary’s play has a much more immediate political agenda than previous criticism has often acknowledged. The fate of the play’s protagonist, a casualty in the transition from one political regime to another, is also deployed in a critique of the new ruler, particularly his failure to settle the religious tensions which had been blighting the country. We have also seen the ways in which Cary’s play

⁵³ Ibid.

raises many of the key issues which occupy the plays in this study including, amongst others, questions over the political autonomy of women, the value stoicism, and the ethics of tyrannicide. Cary's play thus crystallises the concerns of the plays which comprise the early modern neo-Senecan dramatic tradition.

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, it would perhaps be appropriate to revisit some of its key objectives. This study has had three principal aims: firstly, to re-establish the idea that the dramatic texts which have been discussed can be viewed as a coherent group; secondly, to contribute to the developments in the critical re-appraisal of neo-Senecan drama and the re-assessment of its relationship with the popular theatrical drama of the era; and thirdly, to argue that these texts can be seen to contribute to the revival of classical humanism in the early modern era and to engage in a tradition of political and philosophical writing in which stoicism and republicanism were key constituents.

The first of these objectives may, upon initial consideration, seem like something of a backward step, especially as the majority of criticism to have emerged since Mary Ellen Lamb's influential article on Mary Sidney's literary 'circle' has generally been aligned with her rejection of the premise that these dramatists were members of a clearly defined coterie. However, as I have shown from the outset, my intention has never been to revive the arguments of T. S. Eliot or Alexander Maclaren Witherspoon; instead, I have argued that the criticism which has emerged in the wake of Lamb's article has had a kind of pendulum effect and has served to marginalise the intertextual affinities which exist between the texts in this group. Although they were clearly not the product of a literary circle whose main objective was the reform of the popular theatre, I have shown that their common interests in certain strains of Renaissance humanism, and their willingness to interrogate the potential for their practical application in certain types of political regime, provides the means of linking

these texts together as a group. This approach has provided the opportunity for readings of a number of texts by dramatists whose works have not benefited from the more recent scholarship – for example, Samuel Daniel, Samuel Brandon, and William Alexander – alongside those such as Mary Sidney and Elizabeth Cary, whose works have generated a relatively robust and diverse range of critical responses in recent years. This study has therefore aimed to show how considering these texts as a intertextual group can illuminate our understanding of the frequently studied works, as well as those which have yet to receive a critical reappraisal, as sustained responses to the early modern culture of humanism.

The composition of the group of texts has also been affected by the second of this study's key objectives. We have seen how many of the recent critics have sought to reconsider the relationship of the so-called 'closet dramas' with their counterparts on the commercial stage, rejecting the notion of an antagonistic relationship between them. These texts can no longer be defined simply as antithetical to the endeavours of the popular stage. In the light of this, I have proposed that 'neo-Senecan drama' is arguably a more appropriate label for these texts than 'closet drama'. This has also meant that a number of other texts which were publicly performed, including Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* and Ben Jonson's Roman tragedies, can be appropriated into the group which is defined by the engagement with developments in Renaissance humanism rather than the repudiation of the commercial stage.

I have also shown the extent to which these texts were influenced by, and contributed to, the discourse of early modern and classical humanism, particularly through their engagement with such theories as stoicism and

republicanism. Many of the authors whose texts I have considered – such as Mary Sidney, Elizabeth Cary, and Fulke Greville – were part of an aristocratic, yet politically disenfranchised, social class and found much consolation in the republican and neo-stoic thought influenced by figures such as Tacitus and Justus Lipsius. Others, such as Samuel Daniel and Ben Jonson, relied upon the protection offered by their patrons if they were to engage in political debate. The censorship of plays such as *Philotas* and *Sejanus* highlights the fine line they were treading when it came to writing dramas with a clear political agenda. The dependence upon their patrons shows the extent to which their disenfranchisement was far more acute than that of the aristocratic classes. We have also seen the effect of the accession of James I upon the application of these axioms, in particular the effects of his dismissal of Lipsian and Tacitean neo-stoicism, and his championing of absolutist principles. The influence exerted upon these texts by various strains of humanism, in both their classical and contemporary incarnations, emphasises the importance of these dramas as contributors to a neo-classical cultural tradition and evidences their engagement in that which can be labelled a tradition of humanist dramatic authorship. I have argued that taking this into account not only informs the intertextual unity of this group, but is also key to the understanding of these plays.

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