The Tragicomic Moment: Republicanism in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*

Judy H. Park

Comparative Drama, Volume 49, Number 1, Spring 2015, pp. 23-47 (Article)

Published by Western Michigan University
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2015.0007*

The Tragicomic Moment: Republicanism in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*

Judy H. Park

Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher inaugurated their collaboration on a series of popular tragicomedies with their play, *Philaster, Or Love Lies a-Bleeding*, a success soon followed by *A King and No King*.[1] While their tragicomedies were remarkably popular with audiences and influential on other playwrights throughout the seventeenth century, the burgeoning genre of tragicomedy was also maligned as an aesthetically impure form of drama for its mingling of comedy and tragedy, seemingly against the decorum of neoclassical poetics. This prejudice against Fletcherian tragicomedy is visible in modern critical history as well, though for different reasons: the notion that the genre supports royalist politics has been a commonplace at least since Coleridge's lectures and notes on Shakespeare, in which he indicts Beaumont and Fletcher for their presumed "ultra-royalism," describing them as "the most servile *jure divino* royalist" in their political opinions, and as "high-flying, passive-obedience, Tories" whose royalist ideology contrasts badly with Shakespeare's serene adherence to the "permanent politics of human nature."[2] Coleridge's judgment on Beaumont and Fletcher is characteristic of critical discourse on tragicomedy, and Fletcherian drama in particular, that takes the conciliatory endings of the genre as support for its claims, since these endings seem to affirm, rather than to trouble, monarchical and absolutist authority.[3] Such critics as Franco Moretti have argued that early modern tragedy tends to subvert absolutist monarchy by staging the deaths of kings.[4] But can we find a similarly subversive undercurrent in

tragicomedy and in Beaumont and Fletcher? Specifically, can we identify a republican politics in a genre and among authors typically considered antithetical to republican concerns?

If we look at the theoretical formulations of Giovanni Battista Guarini in his 1601 *Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry*, which Fletcher almost certainly had read and taken as a model for his 1609 preface to *The Faithful Shepherdess* (itself indebted to Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*), we can locate surprising political possibilities for tragicomedy. In defending his own dramatic practice against critics who upheld the generic purity of tragedy and comedy as defined by Aristotle, Guarini argues for the superior modernity of tragicomedy. The norms of classical tragedy could no longer be binding, Guarini claims, for "the precepts of our most holy religion, which teaches us with the word of the gospel" had rendered the "horrible and savage spectacles" of tragedy "superfluous" for contemporary Christian audiences; meanwhile, comedy had been rendered "tedious" by the mediocrity of "mercenary and sordid persons," requiring tragicomic playwrights, "following the steps of Menander and Terence," to restore seriousness to comedy by combining "with the pleasing parts of comedy those parts of tragedy that can suitably accompany comic scenes to such an extent that they strive for the purgation of sadness."[5] To show that such a mingling of tragic and comic elements could produce a new form superior to either tragedy or comedy in their pure forms, Guarini cites examples of biological and chemical mixtures in nature and, more importantly, the political example of the republic in "human relations":[6]

> Does not Aristotle say that tragedy is made up of persons of high rank and comedy of men of the people? Let us give an example of men of rank and men of the people. The republic is such a thing. I do not say this in respect to its material, for every city is of necessity composed of nobles and those who are not noble, of rich and poor,… but I speak of the forms that spring from the diversity of these two, that is, the power of the few and the power of the masses. Are not these two species of government very different among themselves? If we believe Aristotle, or even pure reason, there is no doubt of it; yet the Philosopher puts them together and makes of them the mixture of the republic.… Is not tragedy an imitation of the great and comedy an imitation of the humble? Are not the humble opposite to the great? Why cannot poetry make the mixture if politics can do it?[7]

In answering critics who would use norms derived from Aristotle's *Poetics* to denigrate tragicomedy as a corrupt mixture of tragedy and comedy, Guarini draws on Aristotle's *Politics* to argue for the legitimacy of a mixed

form, in the dramatic form of tragicomedy as in the political form of the republic. Much as Aristotle had claimed that the mixed constitution could guard against the abuses of "extreme democracy or unmixed oligarchy, or a tyranny due to the excesses of either," Guarini defends tragicomedy as a form that mediates the harmful extremes of tragedy and comedy, taking "from tragedy its great persons but not its great action, its verisimilar plot but not its true one,... its pleasure but not its sadness, its danger but not its death; from comedy [tragicomedy] takes laughter that is not excessive, modest amusement, feigned difficulty, happy reversal, and above all the comic order."[8] Guarini's comparison of tragicomedy to republicanism, as a mixed form that avoids harmful extremes, resonates with contemporary English defenses of the mixed constitution by such figures as Thomas Smith, John Ponet, and Thomas Starkey, who argued in various ways that a "mixed state," joining the monarch, nobles, and commoners, was the best form of government and the surest bulwark against the emergence of tyranny.[9]

While Guarini's dramatic theory links the mixed aesthetic form of tragicomedy to the mixed-state form of the republic, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (1608–10) offers a unique perspective on monarchical sovereignty and its potential political alternatives. The following analysis will show how *Philaster* may be said to theorize the problems of republicanism or the mixed constitution, as framed by English humanists and proto-republican thinkers. In order to ascertain the nature of *Philaster*'s engagement with early seventeenth-century republican thought, it is necessary to describe what republicanism might have meant prior to 1642. Tragicomedy and early seventeenth-century republicanism present themselves to the critic and the historian, respectively, as ambiguous phenomena: many critics are disinclined to find elements of political subversion or resistance to monarchy in tragicomedy, and there is little consensus among historians as to how to define or detect republican impulses before the emergence of republicanism as an articulated political force during the English Civil War.[10]

In his survey of the forms of English republican discourse before and during the Civil War, Blair Worden provides a useful distinction between two key conceptions of republicanism, which he calls "constitutional republicanism," or "commitment to kingless government," and "civic republicanism," which denotes an ethos in which citizens actively pursue

the public good rather than passively submitting to sovereign authority.[11] Markku Peltonen notes that a number of Elizabethan humanists of the 1570s and 1580s argued, against the conventional prestige of the *vita contemplativa,* that the goal

> of human life was…the advancement of the common good which could only be attained by a relentless pursuit of a virtuous *vita activa*.… The underlying argument was that the common good could not materialize unless everyone was fully committed to promote this aim by exercising the full range of civic virtues.… The public good was, therefore, not totally dependent on the qualities and abilities of the prince, but also, and perhaps in particular, on the virtuous civic participation of the people as a whole.[12]

While military service was often commended as one form of virtuous service to the commonweal, humanist theorists such as Gabriel Harvey, Francesco Patrizi, Thomas Rogers, and others "argued, often with a direct reference to Cicero, that to take part in the political life of the commonwealth and to act as its governor was the way in which men could acquire the greatest amount of worldly glory." Participation in civic life could also take the privileged form of giving counsel to princes: "Traditionally, an area where this active participation in political life had materialized was in the role of counsellors," and the role of Parliament in governance was often defended in these terms.[13] A repeated trope in English humanist tracts was the insistence that "the chief ways in which a man could offer his services to the commonwealth were either to act as a counsellor or more indirectly to submit written advice."[14]

The mixed constitution, which incorporated elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy into a single state, was generally endorsed by theorists such as Henry Wright on the basis of "the classical belief that the intrinsic and unavoidable decay of political authority could only be stopped by organizing the government as a mixture of the three elements—the one, the few and the many."[15] On the continent, the republics of Venice and the Netherlands provided striking models of the mixed constitutional state. Meanwhile, to such theorists as William Stoughton and William Loe, the English state could be considered a mixed republic, with the power of the monarch balanced by the influence of the aristocratic House of Lords and the democratic House of Commons.[16] Indeed, Peltonen argues, the combination of the ideal of the mixed constitution "with the notion of virtuous citizenship…enabled the English to promote an image of the

centrality of parliament for the English commonwealth."[17] The humanist celebration of the *vita activa* frequently took the counselor as a figure for the virtuous citizen's service to the commonwealth, and in turn, during the 1570s and 1580s, "the idea of counsel was often topically linked with parliament.… When Peter Wentworth was examined by the committee of the commons for his famous speech of 8 February 1576, which cost him his liberty for a month, he defended his speech declaring that as an MP he was 'no private person'; on the contrary he claimed to be 'publique and a councellor to the whole.'"[18] Such a stress on the collective participation of the English people in the pursuit of the common, civic good would be particularly urgent in the 1580s and 1590s in light of the instability of the English monarchy, given the problem of determining a successor to Elizabeth after the 1581 failure of her prospective marriage to Henry, Duke of Anjou, betokened the imminent end of the Tudor dynasty for lack of heirs.[19]

According to J. G. A. Pocock, the ideals of civic republicanism were largely derived from Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*, which argued that "a people is more prudent, more stable and of better judgement than a prince."[20] However, Pocock notes that these anti-monarchical arguments had to be adapted, in their English reception, to "an environment dominated by monarchical, legal, and theological concepts" resistant to "the definition of England as a polis or the Englishman as a citizen."[21] As a result, English civic republicanism did not necessitate opposition to the existence of monarchy as such, and did not entail the demand for regicide.[22] While Peltonen credits the force of Pocock's interpretation of early modern republicanism, he takes issue with Pocock's claim that "post-Elizabethan England lacked a fully developed civic consciousness, and was under the thralldom of a doctrine of double majesty," with the result that republicanism could gain ground in England only after the shock of the Civil War.[23] Peltonen criticizes Pocock for "treating the Civil War period as an absolute turning point," and for understating the importance of humanism as a discursive staging ground for proto-republican concerns in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[24] Peltonen argues that the "partial embracing and employment of republican themes in England was not entirely dependent on a complete and dramatic change in the political context. Nor was a fully fledged republican theory obligatory

for the development of civic consciousness."[25] Furthermore, Andrew Hadfield points out, because English republican discourse developed in an oblique and ambiguous manner before the Civil War, "some historians have been skeptical that the scraps and fragments of republican culture that undoubtedly exist in pre-Civil War England can be accorded any substance. But it is a mistake to argue that historical documents and evidence precede literary evidence, as if the latter were simply derived from the former as a supplementary discourse."[26] Hadfield rightly argues that republicanism should be approached as a cultural and "literary phenomenon" rather than merely a strictly defined political program.[27] Following from these analyses, one mode of historicizing republicanism in England would attempt to subsume the categories and phenomena of republican culture under a single unifying ideology. Having posited the unity of this ideology, such a mode of analysis would highlight those manifestations of republicanism that showed a defined trajectory, intervening in the immediate course of events preceding and following the English Civil War. By contrast, another mode of historicism would privilege the *longue durée,* tracing more ambiguous currents of republican discourse, diachronically, amid the stratification and disunity of political forces and in the heterogeneity of discourse and agency. Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* may be more amenable to the latter mode.

The play investigates problems of history and agency, politics and representation at the heart of these debates on seventeenth-century English republicanism vis-à-vis the republican concept of the mixed constitution and its principle of the *vita activa. Philaster* does so through its representation of individual virtue as the source of true nobility, of the figure of the counselor devoted to the good of the commonweal, and of the participation of the one, the few, and the many in the pursuit of the common good as a defense against the decline of the state into tyranny—even when this pursuit requires the insurgency of the people. Much as Hadfield argues for the literary nature of the politics of English republicanism, while Guarini affirms the political nature of dramatic literature, *Philaster* offers an important lens through which to examine tragicomedy and the mixed constitution. In its treatment of history and agency, the play presents the mixed constitution as the political analogue of a kind of linguistic dialogism and popular dissent as a form

of *heteroglossia* that intervenes in the construction of a teleological and monolithic history.[28] If absolute monarchy would promote a singular and inviolable account of continual succession and glorious conquests, the mixed constitution by contrast would integrate the polysemy of competing discourses and popular cultural forms into the purview of history, affirming the participation of multiple social strata as part of the proper functioning of the political domain and as a means to curb the abuses of power.

Throughout the play, time or "age" is figured in terms of change and decay, and this conception of time compels the characters to preserve themselves in memory, whether through the cultural means of physical monuments and textual chronicles, or through a line of heirs. It is in this sense that one can understand Philaster's unusual request to be changed by the gods into a stone monument to his own betrayal, so that future ages may remember Arethusa and Bellario's villainy: "Some good god look down / And shrink these veins up. Stick me here a stone, / Lasting to ages, in the memory / Of this damned act" (4.5.30–33).[29] For Arethusa, on the other hand, the mutability of opinion, which is arguably another aspect of the mutability of time, renders even noble monuments vulnerable to destruction. Arethusa laments the fact that not only the reputations of the living but also those of the dead are subject to the mutability of opinion in present discourse (3.2.35–45). If the power of present discourse to reshape the reputations of both the living and the dead (implied by the figure of "the monuments / Where noble names lie sleeping") carries the danger that opinions, errors, and dreams will be elevated to the level of truths, then it would be all the more urgent to control, as far as one can, the material traces by which one will be remembered (3.2.43–44). Much as physical monuments express the desire to prolong one's life by giving the memory of that life an enduring material form, so too are textual chronicles used to translate a life into an ideal order of retold historical events.

The King's rapid rise to power in Sicily and his success in unjustly breaking Philaster's line of succession makes him desperately anxious about the possibility that his own name will be erased from history almost as soon as it was established. His very success in overthrowing Philaster's father makes him acutely aware of the contingency of his own

reign. The King believes that the punishment for his deed will be his erasure from history, as evidenced by his response to accusations of his daughter's unchastity (2.4.49–54). Echoing these concerns, Pharamond promises the King, as he publicly consents to the arranged marriage with the King's daughter Arethusa, that he will act as a chronicle by preserving the King's name to future ages through begetting heirs (1.1.140–46). He assures the King that by fathering heirs with Arethusa, he will prevent the King's name and nascent dynasty from being eaten away by the course of time. Pharamond's flattery constructs an imagined continuity between past, present, and future ages in which he hopes to legitimate the King's reign and his own future rule over Sicily and Calabria. The King's anxiety about being forgotten by history also implies the vulnerability of the chronicle—as a means of transmitting an idealized representation of the continuity of royal power through time—to contestation by popular forms of representation. His fears are ultimately realized by the popular insurrection that counters his stated intention to execute Philaster. As the king retreats from the conflict, Dion exuberantly cheers on the rebels:

> Well, my dear countrymen what-ye-lacks, if you continue and fall not back upon the first broken shin, I'll have ye chronicled and chronicled, and cut and chronicled, and all-to-be-praised, and sung in sonnets, and bathed in new brave ballads, that all tongues shall troll you *in saecula saeculorum*, my kind can-carriers. (5.3.126–32)

Dion's speech suggests the alternative of a revolutionary form of the chronicle.[30] Whereas the traditional chronicle, as in Pharamond's flattery, creates an idealized continuity in the royal succession of kings, the revolutionary chronicle would disrupt and transverse that imagined teleology. While the conventional chronicle imagines historical progress as a homogenous and unmediated succession of temporal moments demarcated by the life and death of kings, the revolutionary chronicle opens history to unpredictable interventions by multiple social forces. The revolutionary chronicle, as Dion's speech projects it, would also be formally heteroglossic: Dion's rhetoric links the chronicle with forms associated with folk culture such as the ballad, forms associated with urban popular culture such as the woodcut, and forms associated with aristocratic culture such as the Petrarchan sonnet. It would thus express not only a formal dialogism but a social heterogeneity in that each of these forms of cultural production would denote a specific social or economic

determination and a specific stake in the historical process. By including conventionally non-historical modes of discourse, the revolutionary chronicle reveals the political intentions of social groups and social classes that would otherwise go unrepresented by official history. While the traditional chronicle would ensure the transmission of the history of the ruling class and thus act as an instrument to legitimate hegemonic forces, the revolutionary chronicle would allow the unrepresented classes to construct an alternate history "in new brave ballads" (5.3.130–31).[31] In this way, the revolutionary chronicle transforms the homogenous time of official history in *Philaster*, as the retreat to the pastoral in act 4, from the court to the forest, galvanizes the transformation of the social.

The challenge that the popular revolt poses to the King's regime and to the constructed continuity of the royal chronicle suggests a link between the play's persistent concern with temporal mutability and the republican discourse on the necessary historical finitude of sociopolitical orders. As Pocock has argued, the tradition of civic humanism in which Machiavelli participated could be understood as "an early form of historicism" insofar as its central concern with the republic as a temporally finite structure required speculation on the nature of time:

> The republic or Aristotelian polis, as that concept reemerged in the civic humanist thought of the fifteenth century, was at once universal, in the sense that it existed to realize for its citizens all the values which men were capable of realizing in this life, and particular, in the sense that it was finite and located in space and time. It had had a beginning and would consequently have an end; and this rendered crucial both the problem of showing how it had come into being and might maintain its existence, and that of reconciling its end of realizing universal values with the instability and circumstantial disorder of its temporal life.[32]

Indeed, in republican thought in the vein of Machiavelli, what Pocock calls "the Machiavellian moment" names "the moment in conceptualized time in which the republic was seen as confronting its own temporal finitude, as attempting to remain morally and politically stable in a stream of irrational events conceived as essentially destructive of all systems of secular stability."[33]

Nor was this notion foreign to English humanist thought. Peltonen points out that Richard Beacon's 1594 tract *Solon his Follie: or a politique discourse touching the reformation of common-weales conquered, declined, or corrupted* developed Machiavelli's discourse about corruption in the

Discourses on Livy to distinguish two primary forms of corruption: corruption "ad interitum," fatally leading to the dissolution of the social bond, and corruption "ad sanitatem," posing threats to the coherence of the social order that could be resolved through political contestation. The latter form of corruption, through its incitement to debate, could in fact contribute to the vitality of the political sphere, as had been the case at times for the Roman republic:

> The "contending for honours" between the senate and the people in Rome had not indicated the decline of civil concord, but on the contrary had given "occasions of most happy lawes, and more happy restitution of the declined state of that polliticke body." Beacon endorsed, to a degree, one of Machiavelli's most original contributions, that one way to sustain virtue in a citizenry was through the encouragement of conflict between different social groups.[34]

The conflict of powers in a mixed constitution could thus be one way to slow or reverse the inevitable corruption of the state. The republican Thomas Starkey was also "fully convinced that 'a myxte state' was not merely the best form of government and 'most convenyent to conserve the hole out of tyranny'; it was also the most suitable for curing the diseases of the English body politic."[35] The civic humanist discourse on the temporal finitude of the republic, and the efficacy of the mixed constitution in defending against the corruption of the state into tyranny, provides a republican context for Beaumont and Fletcher's representation of time and "age" throughout *Philaster* in terms of mutability and erasure.[36]

The Machiavellian notion of civic virtue fostered and maintained through the political contest among various social groups is apparent in the individual and collective forms of resistance throughout the play. In *Philaster*, the insubordination of the King's subjects is identified figuratively with the natural limits to the King's power. When the King finds his daughter Arethusa missing from the royal hunting party, he demands that his subjects find his daughter and bring her back. Cleremont and Dion both refuse to obey their king, neither of them knowing where Arethusa is, and Dion explains that the King can only "command things possible and honest" if he expects to be obeyed by his subjects (4.4.33). In his rage the King argues that his power is absolute: "Thou traitor, that dar'st confine thy king to things / Possible and honest: show her me, / Or let me perish if I cover not / All Sicily with blood!" (4.4.35–38). By his will alone,

the King claims, his "breath can still the winds, / Uncloud the sun, charm down the swelling sea / And stop the clouds of heaven" (4.4.43–45). The King's lament in the face of Dion's defiance reveals that nature, identified with the will of the gods, is indifferent to the power of kings, as the King comes to realize that "not a leaf shakes at our threatenings" (4.4.55). Thus nature forms a limit to the abuses of sovereign power, a view maintained by Dion's ironic allusion to the King's pretensions of divinity: "He articles with the gods; would somebody draw bonds for the performance of covenants betwixt them" (4.4.59–61).

The topical dimension of the King's exchange with Dion would lie in its echoes of the legal controversy initiated by King James I's assertion that kings, since they govern their subjects as the human deputies of God, should have absolute power within their kingdoms. In "The Trew Law of Free Monarchies," first published in 1598 and republished in London in April 1603, weeks after he had ascended to the English throne, James I argued that although a contract exists between a legitimate king and his subjects, they are not equally bound. Against the claim that a king could be rightfully overthrown if he were to break his contract with his subjects by neglecting their welfare, James I countered that

> *the question is, who should bee iudge of the breake*…. Now in this contract (I say) betwixt the king and his people, God is doubtles the only Iudge, both because to him onely the king must make count of his administration (as is oft said before) as likewise by the oath in the coronation, God is made iudge and reuenger of the breakers: For in his presence, as only iudge of oaths, all oaths ought to be made. Then since God is the onely Iudge betwixt the two parties contractors, the cognition and reuenge must onely appertaine to him: It followes therefore of necessitie, that *God must first giue sentence vpon the King that breaketh, before the people can thinke themselues freed of their oath*.[37]

James I argues on behalf of a non-reciprocal contract between the king and his subjects, under which the king is responsible only to God's judgment, not to the people's. In *Philaster*, the King's speech implies a similar belief. In fact, the King cannot comprehend Dion's insubordination as a direct political challenge: to preserve his fiction of his divine election to rule, he addresses the gods, crying "I have sinned, 'tis true, and here stand to be punished, / Yet would not thus be punished. Let me choose / My way, and lay it on" (4.4.56–58). The play, however, refutes the King's claims when he is overthrown by the will of the people, not the will of the gods.[38]

While Dion asserts that the King's power to command is limited by what is "possible and honest" (4.4.33), we would misunderstand his defiance if we took it to imply programmatic opposition to monarchy as such. While Dion resists the King's apparent absolutism in favor of the view that even monarchs are subject to law (here figured by nature), it would be too hasty to assume that their conflict represents the opposition between absolutism and constitutionalism, such as is often thought to have informed the growing mutual alienation of Parliament and the Stuart kings on the path to civil war. Glenn Burgess has objected that "early Stuart history has often been written as if it *were* late Stuart history," and argues that historians have overstated the supposed rift between absolutist and constitutionalist factions in the early Stuart period: "Most men appealed to a legalistic consensus, even many who have been called 'absolutists'; and the few genuine absolutists were a marginal group, whose ideas were often quickly repudiated by those whom they tried argumentatively to support."[39] Conrad Russell explains that "divine right was difficult to use as a basis of absolute power, since, as James himself conceded, it was not only the king who enjoyed divine right: it was enjoyed by 'all superior powers.' Because it was enjoyed by all powers, and because powers conflict, it could not be absolute: it could only be enjoyed in its proper sphere, once that had been defined.… It was not only offices that could enjoy divine right: in the eyes of many, the law could enjoy it also."[40] Accordingly, as Russell argues, the "independence of the judiciary" from the royal will would become the central "political theory issue of James's reign."[41]

Evoking the humanist notion of "true nobility" to chastise Pharamond for the slavish nature expressed in his actions, Dion indicts the present age for its corruption, cursing the King for his insult to the people "that should be free men" in denying Philaster, their desired ruler, his rightful throne. By contrast with the servility of the Spanish populace, who "please to let" Pharamond "be a prince," despite his inability to rule his desires, Dion praises the courage of the Sicilian people, who agitate for Philaster to rise on presumption of his virtues (3.1.1–14).[42] In response, Cleremont's courtly cynicism leads him to claim that the people's near-unanimous support for Philaster is "against their nature" as fickle and malleable, and his comparison of the people to a field of corn swayed by a strong wind underlines his conviction of their passivity (3.1.19–22). Yet the play

undercuts Cleremont by showing Philaster and Pharamond, princely by birth, to be far more susceptible to their delusions and desires than the people, who eventually act decisively against the abusive rule of the King. Much as Cleremont conceives of the people as a single, passive body, Pharamond assumes the people incapable of exercising political thought (5.4.25). However, when Philaster is threatened with execution for his assaults on Arethusa and Bellario, a popular revolution rather than an intervention by the nobles ultimately restores Philaster to power. When Pharamond is cornered by a group of armed citizens, his confrontation with the Captain makes clear the conscious nature of the people's defiance (5.4.26–33). Pharamond attempts to defend himself by reasserting his hereditary superiority over the rebels, addressing the Captain as a "rude slave," and accuses the Captain of acting unthinkingly in attacking his social better. The Captain, however, meets his challenge with a collective voice ("we do know"), indicating the people's conscious exercise of reason (5.4.25–26). Responding to Pharamond's dismissal of the revolt as the product of blind fanaticism, the Captain charges the prince with the artificiality of his claim to power ("that soldered," or manufactured, "crown / Shall be scratched with a musket") and mocks his princely hauteur as an excess that must be curbed ("down with your noble blood, or as I live / I'll have you coddled"; 5.4.30–31).

Philaster resonates with the conditions of James's reign not because its plot challenges the legitimacy of the monarchy (after all, the play ends with Philaster gaining control of the throne through marriage to Arethusa) or because it programmatically endorses monarchy (since even the rightful ruler, Philaster, has to be brought to reason by external intervention). Rather, its political resonance lies in its republican affirmation of the participation of the people in the maintenance of the public good—in its implicit support for the mixed constitution, the cooperation of monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic forces in the name of the commonweal. If we look to the progress of the plot, this implicit political stance is coupled with the assumption that virtue can be realized by the collective action of the people.

The tragicomic resolution of the play depends on the ability of the people to challenge the excesses and abuses of the monarchy and aristocracy, and this affirmation of the principles of a mixed constitution

is joined to the suggestion that the privileges of the aristocracy and the legitimacy of the monarchy depend upon the participation and consent of the people. As we have seen, the challenges to monarchy appear in several forms, through individual and collective agency, culminating in the overthrow of Pharamond and the King through popular revolt, an event that is signaled by the play's turn from court to country in the confrontation between the Country Fellow and Philaster. The crucial role of popular consent in maintaining a legitimate state, in turn, is explicitly at issue in the earlier debate between Dion and Cleremont over the contending claims of Pharamond and Philaster to the Sicilian throne.

Beaumont and Fletcher prefigure the turn to the public space of the uprising, in which the King's abuses are finally checked and the planned execution of Philaster is forestalled, by the spatial turn in act 4 from the court to the forest, where the tensions between the King and his court, and within the triangle of Philaster, Arethusa, and Bellario, can be openly expressed. Philaster's melancholic jealousy is cured through the series of literal and symbolic acts of blood-letting he enacts and undergoes with Arethusa and Bellario, who are stabbed for their alleged sexual betrayal, but later shown to be innocent; in the tragicomic turn of the plot, the characters are brought near death without being killed.[43] When Philaster confronts Arethusa and challenges her to kill him to end his suffering, she resolves to die instead in order to escape the accusations of her unchastity. Philaster wounds Arethusa, but is wounded in turn and driven away by the Country Fellow, a good-hearted commoner who witnesses the attack on Arethusa and intervenes to save her life. The Country Fellow goes one step further than Dion, who hopes only to limit the King's demands to those that are "possible and honest" (4.4.33), by dismissing distinctions in social classes as no more profound than differences in dress: "I can see nothing but people better horsed than myself that outride me. I can hear nothing but shouting. These Kings had need of good brains: this whooping is able to put a mean man out of his wits" (4.5.78–81). Though aware of the signs of social prestige, the Country Fellow reduces the discourse of the approaching nobles to mere cacophonous sound ("I can hear nothing but shouting").

The Country Fellow's refusal to recognize the rhetoric of the court indicates a broader suspension of the force of courtly conventions in the pastoral setting of the forest, and the opening of the closed society

of the court to be affected by the actions of ordinary subjects. While the Country Fellow intervenes to protect Arethusa from Philaster's attack, she reproves him for his impolite intrusion: "What ill-bred man art thou to intrude thyself / Upon our private sports, our recreations?" (4.5.91–92). Philaster joins Arethusa's rebuke: "Pursue thy own affairs. It will be ill / To multiply blood upon my head, which thou / Wilt force me to" (4.5.95–97). What Arethusa euphemizes as a private sport, the Country Fellow takes at its literal meaning: "I understand you not, but I know the rogue has hurt you" (4.5.93–94). Similarly, he dismisses Philaster's threat as merely rhetorical: "I know not your rhetoric, but I can lay it on if you touch the woman" (4.5.97–98). As Nicholas F. Radel notes, the Country Fellow's incomprehension draws attention to and undermines the scene's literalization of the Petrarchan conceit of the wounded heart: "Beaumont and Fletcher undercut the world of the court at the same time that they exploit its values for maximum theatrical effect. They create a world of Petrarchan rhetoric in which the metaphor of love's wounds becomes real, and then they expose as ridiculous and hollow that world of courtly convention."[44] This should not be taken as merely a metatheatrical flourish, since it reinforces the political implications of the play's use of pastoral in destabilizing the values of the court.[45] The intervention of the Country Fellow anticipates the popular uprising against the King's plans to execute Philaster, and suggests that in the world of the play the common good can be pursued by virtuous citizens regardless of inherited position.

The Philaster-Arethusa-Bellario triangle and the play's anxieties about androgyny and female insubordination have been read as an analogue for political anxieties concerning Jacobean absolutism and the abuses of sovereign power. As Walter Cohen has shown, gender and royal prerogative presented homologous areas of conflict as political treatises elaborated on the overlapping and hierarchical organization of power from the site of the family and the relation between husband and wife to the princely realm of king and subject.[46] Given the ideological links between the household, the state, and divine right, ambivalence about gender and sexuality in Jacobean society can therefore be understood as a proxy for political skepticism about sovereign power and its conceptual underpinnings. Peter Berek argues that ambiguous gender identities in Beaumont and Fletcher likewise point to broader social apprehensions about royal authority in the early decades of the seventeenth century—

tensions that in turn speak to the emerging genre of tragicomedy so closely associated with the playwrights.[47] Referencing the work of Eugene M. Waith, Berek draws a connection between the genre's preference for "sequentially defined narrative closure" over the "more hierarchial resolution of comedy and tragedy" and its consequent erosion of meaning; in tragicomedy "absence of meaning, or ambiguity of meaning, pleases audiences by offering them the delights of conflicting ideas without any necessity for a conceptual resolution. And that irresolution may be much to the taste of a culture ready to displace conflicts rather than resolve them."[48]

Within the family-state paradigm of sovereignty whereby the husband's mastery of wife and household signifies a link in a larger chain of equivalence from one domain of power to another, Bellario's revelation that she is a woman yet will admit no man as her husband, even as the King offers her the choice of any man in the kingdom, contests both the power relations of the family-state paradigm and the normative constructions of gender and sexuality that affirm those relations. In a play concerned with forms of defiance to tyranny, Bellario's resistance may be the most challenging, given the discursive legitimation of kingly authority by analogy to the supposedly natural rule of husband over wife. Bellario's disdain for the conventions of gender and sexual identity figures political anxieties about absolute monarchy and the dangers of princely rule unhinged from the interests and desires of its various subjects. If, as Paula Berggren argues, Bellario "resolves the pains of passionate attachment… by transcending the claims of the flesh," her renunciation also achieves a more dangerous effect.[49] Bellario's sacrifice secures her self-possession: though subject to the mores of gender and its social conventions, Bellario's act implies a woman's right to self-definition, and the revelation of her disguise points to the constructed nature of identity itself, a discovery all the more extraordinary in that the fact of Bellario's true identity is concealed even from the audience (contrary to Shakespeare's practice) until the final moments of the play.[50] Though the play's tragicomic impulse reconciles Bellario to the social order in her promise of continued faithful service to Philaster and Arethusa, her steadfast claim to self-determination asserts a woman's right to fashion her own identity, however limited the options, as well as the subject's right to claim an inviolable space, the

sovereign domain of one's mind and conscience, immune from the abuses of the body and from which princes may elicit only allegiance. While the nobles whom she serves yield recklessly to their passions, undermining the ideological bases of their authority, Bellario emerges as a loyal servant, who in her unerring service and Stoic indifference to personal gain embodies the King's dictate that concludes the play's action: "Let princes learn / By this to rule the passions of their blood" (5.5.215–16).

Comparing the three principal female characters in *Philaster*, Jo Miller articulates the ways in which Arethusa and Megra, signifying opposing forms of female identity (virgin or whore), fall victim to the sexual economy of patriarchy that would ascribe either woman value solely on the grounds of her chastity or her lack thereof and their consequent appraisal in the realms of commerce or exchange, whether in marriage or sexual bargain. Miller argues that Megra and Arethusa, "by daring to be active agents in the sexual exchange that objectifies them…have devalued themselves and made possible the kinds of punishments they both encounter through the rest of the play: Megra's public shaming, and Arathusa's [*sic*] nearly fatal encounter with Philaster in the forest."[51] By contrast, Bellario offers a radical alternative, a "third way" by defining her identity as a person independent of her status as a woman: "Bellario's claim on others, then, depends more upon her own expression of loyalty, resourcefulness, and service, than upon others' perceptions of her sexuality."[52] Bellario's way, her dedication to service and self-sacrifice for the common good, offers at once the way of the mixed constitution and the possibilities of the ideal republic. More than the King's official counsel, Bellario consummately embodies the republican principal of the *vita activa* and the figure of the advisor who labors tirelessly to incline princes to virtuous conduct—proving, moreover, to be an important female counterpart to her own father, Dion, who despite his opposition to the King as courtier is spared the rigors and physical costs of princely service assumed by his daughter.

Tragicomedies are rife with violations of received notions of gender and sexuality, whether through sexual violence, incestuous desire, female misrule, or cross-dressing; indeed, the social transgressions of tragicomedy characterize its dramatic form as much as its narrative impulses.[53] *Philaster* dramatizes the conflict among opposing conceptions of identity and

authority, yet it presents these elements of subversion and difference as the very means through which to resolve the internal divisions within the state and in the drama itself. The play's tragicomic resolution relies upon the participation of "the one, the few, and the many," in accordance with the ideal of the mixed constitution, and thus implies that the successful maintenance of the state and the preservation of monarchy rely on the active involvement of the forms of social heterogeneity and conflict among their attendant differences that absolutist power would keep at bay. Critics have noted that Beaumont and Fletcher subordinate complex characterization to the demands of plot and dramatic form, and exhibit conflicts and contradictions rather than resolve them.[54] Yet it is telling that in *Philaster* any drive toward formalization and narrative development is undercut by forces within the play that resist incorporation; paradoxically, ambiguity and contradiction, however uneasy, are the only means of resolution the play offers, much in keeping with the forms of difference elicited by the mixed constitution. Social contradictions and political ferment invite transgression onto the tragicomic stage; the indecision and ineptitude of princes and the mediocrity of princely authority demand the politicization of social ranks conventionally excluded or obscured from the workings of sovereignty. What *Philaster* accomplishes, without relying on the resolutions of comedy and tragedy, is no less subversive than what those genres allow: the erosion of social distinction and the contestation of political hierarchy that murmurs of a world turned upside down, a curtain raised on a multitude of political agents and their potential to make history in heteroglossia.

Loyola Marymount University

Notes

[1] John Dryden, in his "An Essay on Dramatic Poesy," correctly identifies *Philaster* as the play that put Beaumont and Fletcher on the map. Dryden also praises Beaumont and Fletcher more broadly: "I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection: what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous than ornamental"; and he remarks on their popularity on the Restoration stage: "Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Johnson's." John Dryden, *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 1:81. Richard Kroll discusses "the preeminence of Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration stage" and

the political significance of tragicomedy on notions of commerce and political economy. Richard Kroll, *Restoration Drama and "The Circle of Commerce": Tragicomedy, Politics, and Trade in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 229.

[2] Samuel T. Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere and Other English Poets*, ed. T. Ashe (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 260, 429, 437. For a summary and discussion of critical comparisons made between Beaumont and Fletcher and Shakespeare see Lee Bliss, "Tragicomic Romance for the King's Men, 1609–1611: Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher," in *Comedy from Shakespeare to Sheridan: Change and Continuity in the English and European Dramatic Tradition*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and J. C. Bulman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 148–64. For a discussion of conventional critical assumptions about tragicomedy see Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope, introduction to *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992).

[3] Over the last century several critics have attempted to reappraise Fletcherian drama, defending Beaumont and Fletcher against the conventional wisdom that their works are politically conservative and excessively artificial. Contrary to pervasive accusations of Beaumont and Fletcher's categorical support for absolute monarchy, Lawrence Bergmann Wallis has argued that the playwrights demonstrate instead a critical stance against the principles of absolutism. Wallis notes that the pervasiveness of "vile despots and contemptible favorites" in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher suggests the playwrights' apparent "distaste for the theory and practice of absolutism." Lawrence Bergmann Wallis, *Fletcher, Beaumont and Company, Entertainers to the Jacobean Gentry* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 136. Similarly, Arthur C. Kirsch identifies critical possibilities in Fletcherian tragicomedy. Kirsch praises the "deliberate self-consciousness" of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramaturgy, describing how the playwrights draw attention to the artificiality of their works, what Kirsch calls a "balance of engagement and detachment" that elicits both the affective and critical responses of an audience. Kirsch argues that in "Beaumont and Fletcher the balance of engagement and detachment leads to a consciousness of artifice and fiction which exists for its own sake." Arthur C. Kirsch, "Cymbeline and Coterie Dramaturgy," *ELH* 34 (Sept 1967): 285–306 (286, 293n7). Cf. Eugene M. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952). Waith suggests who suggests that Fletcherian tragicomedy borrows from dramatic satire, both an engagement with and an ironic distance from the improbable actions depicted in its plays. Ashley Thorndike goes further, suggesting the primacy of Beaumont and Fletcher over Shakespeare (a position that is largely rejected, as Bliss notes). Ashley Thorndike, *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare* (New York: AMS Press, 1966). See also Bliss, "Tragicomic Romance," 149. More recently, Sandra Clark provides a careful analysis of the assumptions that underlie Coleridge's disdain for Beaumont and Fletcher and the enduring prejudices against the playwrights. According to Clark, these prejudices include the notion that collaboration is subordinate to individual genius, and the tendency to dismiss Beaumont and Fletcher's works as aesthetically inferior on the basis of their perceived moral corruption. Sandra Clark, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 4–6, 9, 10.

[4] Franco Moretti, "The Great Eclipse: Tragic Form as the Deconsecration of Sovereignty," in *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. David Miller (London: Verso, 1983), 42–82.

[5] Giambattista Guarini, "The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry," in *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940), 523–24.

[6] Ibid., 511.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), Book 4: 1296a, 268. Guarini, "Compendium," 511.

[9] Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9.

[10] Anthony DiMatteo writes that one faces "notorious difficulty" in attempting to define the term "republicanism." Anthony DiMatteo, "Was Shakespeare a Republican? A Review Essay," *College Literature* 34 (2007): 196–212 (198).

[11] Blair Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience," in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1:307, 308. Worden associates the theory of constitutional republicanism with the research of Quentin Skinner, and the theory of civic republicanism with the research of J. G. A. Pocock. See Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[12] Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 39.

[13] Ibid., 43, 44–45.

[14] Ibid., 10.

[15] Ibid., 189.

[16] Ibid., 178–79, 182–83.

[17] Ibid., 309.

[18] Ibid., 45.

[19] Andrew Hadfield, "Shakespeare and Republicanism: History and Cultural Materialism," *Textual Practice* 17 (2003): 461–83 (465). Cf. Anne McLaren, "Rethinking Republicanism: *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos* in Context," *Historical Journal* 49 (2006): 23–52 (25–26).

[20] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Julia C. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 143.

[21] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 334.

[22] Zachary Lesser argues that in the early 1600s, when Beaumont and Fletcher collaborated on their successful tragicomedies, kingless government in England was inconceivable. Zachary Lesser, "Mixed Government and Mixed Marriage in *A King and No King*: Sir Henry Neville Reads Beaumont and Fletcher," *ELH* 69 (2002): 947–77 (948). Lesser's research on Beaumont and Fletcher and tragicomedy has tended, like my present argument, to deemphasize the question of whether the playwrights were in any simple sense royalist or anti-royalist, and to recontextualize their work within broader economic and political frames. See also Zachary Lesser, "Tragical-Comical-Pastoral-Colonial: Economic Sovereignty, Globalization, and the Form of Tragicomedy," *ELH* 74 (2007): 881–908. Similarly, Blair Worden notes that "before 1649 few people argued for kingless rule" (Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide, and Republic," 319).

[23] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 348.

[24] Peltonen, *Classical Humanism,* 6.

[25] Ibid., 7.

[26] Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54.

[27] Ibid. Similarly, Kevin Sharpe argues that historians concerned with the relationship between early seventeenth-century religious and political life and the English Civil War in the mid-century should give serious consideration to the literary works of the period. Sharpe suggests that literary critics should likewise consider the influence of religion on literary culture. See Kevin Sharpe, "Religion, Rhetoric, and Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 57 (1994): 255–99 (265).

[28] Mikhail Bakhtin's classic development of the concept of "heteroglossia," or internally differentiated and dialogic discourse, can be found in M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259–300.

[29] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Philaster, Or Love Lies A-Bleeding*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2009). All subsequent citations refer to this edition.

[30] It should be noted that Andrew Gurr and Mary Adkins interpret Dion's general stance toward the multitude as being cynical and condescending, contrary to my reading. Gurr describes Dion as "a leader of the common opinion; he is genially contemptuous of the City folk…but has no hesitation in applauding their action in rising to rescue their Prince Philaster to see justice done." Andrew Gurr, introduction to *Philaster*, *Or Love Lies A-Bleeding*, ed. Andrew Gurr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), lvii. While Adkins identifies the citizens as the principal force in the political action of the play and implies that Dion's function as an interpreter of the people is a further indication of their importance, she argues that Dion, in fact, views the people with "the usual aristocratic contempt for the character and the intelligence of the common people." Mary Grace Muse Adkins, "The Citizens in 'Philaster': Their Function and Significance," *Studies in Philology* 43 (1946): 203–12 (207). Adkins indicates Dion's response to the nobleman Thrasiline at the opening of act 1 as a defining instance of this fundamental disdain: "Faith, sir, the multitude, that seldom know anything but their own opinions, speak that they would have. But the Prince, before his own approach, received so many confident messages from the state that I think she's resolved to be ruled" (1.1.11–15). The context in which Dion's response appears, Adkins argues, makes evident that his comments are intended to portray the people "as ignorant, uninformed, emotionally unstable," although she does allow that Dion later extols the people in act 5 for their role in restoring Philaster to power (Adkins, "The Citizens in 'Philaster,'" 207). Contrary to Adkins's interpretation of the scene, the context of Dion's response to Thrasiline in act 1 shows that the people can know only what is possible for them to know. Dion's use of the word "opinions" must be interpreted in its larger context, namely in its relationship to the "confident messages" of the state. The contrast between these two forms of information ("opinions" and "confident messages") in Dion's response suggests that the people "seldom know anything but their own opinions" since they can hardly be expected to know the clandestine correspondences of the state, the facts, as it were, precisely because of their secret nature.

[31] Scholarly editions of *Philaster* take Q2 (1622) rather than the earlier Q1 (1620) as their copy text. Q1 and Q2 differ significantly in the first and last scenes of the play. A variant speech in Q1 is relevant to the present discussion. After Pharamond's engagement to the now-married Arethusa has been broken, Bellario has revealed herself as a woman, and Megra has been banished from the court, Pharamond makes his exit with the lines: "Here's such an age of transformation that I do not know how to trust myself. I'll get me gone, too. [*to the King*] Sir, the disparagement you have done must be called in question. I have power to right myself, and will" (Q1: 5.5.81–86). Pharamond's view of the moment as "an age of transformation" supports the idea of a revolutionary chronicle (throughout the Q2 text) as a form of alternate history that transverses the undifferentiated time of the official chronicle that is seen, for example, in the king's use of the word "age." See Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, "The Variant Sections of Q1," in Gurr, ed., *Philaster,* 123–31.

[32] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 3.

[33] Ibid., viii.

[34] Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 80–81.

[35] Ibid., 9.

[36] Cf. the argument of the anonymous tract *Organon republicae* (1605) that, "with a view to facing the challenge of the perils caused by the fluctuations of time, a commonwealth had to employ the abilities of its own members" (Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 155).

[37] King James VI and I, "The Trew Law of Free Monarchies: Or The Reciprock And Mvtuall Dvetie Betwist A Free King, And His Naturall Subiects," in *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81. (My italics.)

[38] Several critics, such as Peter Davison and Andrew Gurr, have noted the similarities in the idea of monarchical authority espoused by the King in Beaumont and Fletcher's play and by James I. Davison was among the first critics to comment on the political topicality of *Philaster*, arguing that Beaumont and Fletcher's social concerns were expressed in their attempt to imaginatively reconcile the competing claims of king and parliament during James's reign, especially over James's doctrine of divine right. Davison argues that Beaumont and Fletcher were concerned to reconcile divisions in the government of James I, a concern which he suggests was borne out of a supposed "urge for order in Elizabethan society." Peter Davison, "The Serious Concerns of *Philaster*," *ELH* 30 (1963): 1–15 (15). Gurr identifies more particular resonances between Dion and the King's dispute in *Philaster* and that of the jurist Sir Edward Coke and James over the issue of law and prerogative on November 13, 1608. In the course of a conference held to negotiate the authority of common law judges, Coke provoked James by claiming (in Sir Julius Caesar's account) that "The comon lawe protecteth the king,… which the King said was a traitorous speech: for the King protecteth the lawe and not the lawe the King" (cited in Gurr, introduction to *Philaster*, lv). Coke's assertion of the priority of common law, in defiance of James's absolutist stance, brought the king to such a pitch of anger that Coke was compelled to prostrate himself before the sovereign, and the Lord Treasurer had to kneel and plead for James to spare Coke imprisonment or worse. The resulting controversy as Coke continued to defend his position helped sway the lawyers among the House of Commons in support of common law, and forced James to somewhat moderate his stance on prerogative in 1609–10, before he dissolved Parliament in frustration in 1611. See Gurr, introduction to *Philaster*, lv, lvi. Interestingly, Suzanne Gossett tells us that Coke's son, Sir Robert Coke, planned a private performance of *Philaster*, likely in the early 1640s while the theaters were closed and the Civil War was in progress: "both the undertaking and the hypothetical suppression are likely to have been political," given the play's probable evocation of the conflict between James and Edward Coke over the issue of royal prerogative and the rule of common law. Suzanne Gossett, introduction to *Philaster, Or Love Lies A-Bleeding*, 63.

[39] Glenn Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 2, 13.

[40] Conrad Russell, *King James VI and I and His English Parliaments: The Trevelyan Lectures Delivered at the University of Cambridge 1995*, ed. Richard Cust and Andrew Thrush (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 145.

[41] Ibid., 143.

[42] Philip J. Finkelpearl rightly observes the contradiction between the virtues attributed to Philaster by the courtiers and the people and Philaster's actions: "He attracts the undying loyalty and love of both his page and the king's daughter. Yet one cannot fail to notice fundamental weaknesses in Philaster's character and, what is more, the commission by him of acts that would normally be considered the work of a madman." Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 152.

[43] Several critics, including Ashley Thorndike and Clifford Leech, have noted *Philaster*'s intertextual affinities to *Cymbeline* and to *Hamlet*. Thorndike points out the numerous plot devices held in common by *Philaster* and *Cymbeline*: for example, each play presents a pair of lovers—Philaster and Arethusa in *Philaster*, and Imogen and Posthumous in *Cymbeline*—whose union is threatened by the king's support for an unworthy suitor and by slanderous accusations against the woman's chastity. Thorndike concludes that *Philaster* may have influenced Shakespeare's tragicomedy (Thorndike, *Influence*, 152, 160). The dating of the plays lends support to Thorndike's thesis; Martin Butler notes that *Philaster* was most likely composed in 1609 and *Cymbeline* in May/June 1610. See Martin Butler, introduction to *Cymbeline*, ed. Martin Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5, 6. Leech suggests that Beaumont and Fletcher may have intended to develop in *Philaster* "the logic of the situation" in *Hamlet*, and perhaps sought in their work "a neatness that did not belong" in Shakespeare's play. The parallels between *Hamlet* and *Philaster* include the protagonist's displacement from his throne by a usurping king, in whose court he remains, as well as his brooding, melancholic nature. See Clifford Leech, *The John Fletcher Plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 84.

[44] Nicholas F. Radel, "'Then thus I turne my language to you': The Transformation of Theatrical Language in *Philaster*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 3 (1986): 129–47 (129). Finkelpearl, in turn, takes the intervention of the Country Fellow to expose "the heart of the politics of the play, the difference between 'court' and 'country' values (which in this case also includes the city). The court uses real swords for 'bloody' recreations that the country quite sensibly finds incomprehensible and pernicious. Just as the city's citizens protect Philaster's throne from a usurper and a Spaniard, so the Country Fellow protects Arathusa [*sic*] when Philaster acts like the two other intemperate princes" (Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics*, 159). While Finkelpearl's book is devoted to showing that "political criticism of court and king was a central urge in the most important plays of Beaumont and Fletcher"(7), I argue that *Philaster* can also be understood as a defense of the mixed constitution.

[45] Gordon McMullan focuses, in his discussion of the Country Fellow, on the curious frontispiece illustration of the 1620 quarto (Q1) of *Philaster*, which portrays the wounded Arethusa being protected from Philaster by a figure in aristocratic dress captioned as "A Cuntrie Gentellman" and is similarly referenced as a "a Countrey Gallant" in the directions. McMullen speculates that the 1620 illustration in Q1, which shows a country aristocrat defending a princess from a villainous prince, could allude to the disaffection of English Protestants with James's unwillingness to challenge Spain directly after James's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, and her husband, Frederick, King of Bohemia, had been driven into exile by Spanish Hapsburg troops in July 1620. The implication of the image, McMullan explains, would then be that "it is only in the country that the excesses and errors of the court could be put right," and that *Philaster*'s publisher, Thomas Walkley, would have been willing to reemphasize the anti-Spanish undertones of the play (composed c. 1609) in the new political context of 1620. Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 111, 113. Zachary Lesser, as with McMullan, notes the contraction between "the man, who in the text appears as a rude rustic," and the fashionably dressed "Cuntrie Gentellman" depicted in the title-page of Q1. However, Lesser arrives at a different conclusion, arguing that in the illustration, Thomas Walkley (the publisher of both the Q1 and Q2 editions of Philaster) demonstrates an interest in the play's potential "political application to his readers" vis-à-vis King James I's negotiations to secure a Spanish match for his son Charles "even as the Spanish army was invading his daughter's lands." Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 194, 196. Similarly, Janet Clare indicates that *Philaster* would have acquired greater topical relevance in the 1620s as anti-Spanish sentiments flared amidst the negotiations for marriage. Clare suggests that *Philaster* may have been censored as early as 1609, the approximate date of the play's composition, and in the political context of the 1620s as the play was performed at Court in 1619–20. Janet Clare, *"Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority": Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 208.

[46] Walter Cohen, "Prerevolutionary Drama," in *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London: Routledge, 1992), 122–50. Similarly, Jonathan Goldberg argues that the family in early modern England "was understood as part of the larger world, both as the smallest social unit from which the larger world was composed and as the essential link between persons.… The family functioned in the Renaissance to reproduce society." Jonathan Goldberg, "Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 8. Lawrence Stone notes the contiguous development of patriarchy and the state in early modern England on the grounds of the figuration of kingly authority and the subordination of subjects as an extension of the authority of the head of household and the submission of the family. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 152.

[47] Peter Berek, "Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Absolutism in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 44 (2004): 359–377 (361–62). Clark also examines the ways in which Beaumont and Fletcher's plays address absolutist ideology through the medium of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, Clark notes the gendered specificity of the resistance to tyranny in Beaumont and Fletcher: "In the Beaumont and Fletcher plays…the form and nature of the subject's resistance to tyrannous oppression is central; and it is commonly offered by a woman" (Clark, *Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, 103). Joyce Boro notes the feminization of seventeenth-century tragicomedy: "By the early seventeenth century, romance had achieved the status of a derided, popular, and decisively female literary form.… The genre was feminized through a variety of textual and paratextual strategies including prefatory dedications and narratorial asides to female readers, the popularity of female eponymous characters, and moral attacks and satires of female readers of the genre." Joyce Boro, "John Fletcher's *Women Pleased* and the Pedagogy of Reading Romance," in *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne (London: Routledge, 2008), 189.

[48] Berek, "Cross-Dressing," 371.

[49] Paula Berggren discusses the ways in which the convention of cross-dressing in Jacobean drama invites the disavowal of "personal and private emotions." Berggren suggests that by forgoing sexual fulfillment, "no other character achieves the heights of Bellario's disinterest." Paula Berggren, "'A Prodigious Thing': The Jacobean Heroine in Male Disguise," *Philological Quarterly* 62 (1983): 383–402 (389).

[50] In her treatment of the relationship between dress and authority, Lisa Jardine argues that "for a woman to adopt male dress was correspondingly to shift position in the social hierarchy; to move from subordination into equality with men." Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Harvester Press, 1983), 158. Adopting a related view, some critics see cross-dressing on the Renaissance stage as a practice that empowers its female characters. Marie H. Loughlin notes that these interpretations rely on the audience's knowledge of the play's use of the convention from the outset; since *Philaster* withholds this fact the play resists these critical assumptions; Loughlin proposes that "in *Philaster*, cross-dressing encodes issues of inheritance and monarchical legitimacy in sexual and vestimentary terms." Marie H. Loughlin, "Cross-Dressing and the Politics of Dismemberment in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Philaster*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 21, no. 2 (1997): 23–44 (25, 27).

[51] Jo E. Miller, "'And All This Passion for a Boy?': Cross-dressing and the Sexual Economy of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*," *English Literary Renaissance* 27 (1997): 129–50 (139).

[52] Ibid., 140. Miller draws her notion of the "third way" from Marjorie Garber, who defines the concept as "a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility" (quoted in Miller, "Passion," 140). See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[53] Critics have noted the prevalence of sexual themes on the Jacobean stage, and theatrical practices of the time barring female performers would have only reinforced social conventions of gender and sexuality. Nonetheless, it is "the special province of tragicomedy," Verna A. Foster argues, "to explore the anxieties and fantasies that exist between desire and its fulfillment…. The psychological complexity and the fascination of Fletcher's explorations of the more difficult areas of human sexuality derive from the requirements of the tragicomic genre he has chosen to write in. Quite simply, this is because tragicomedy, by its defining dramatic requirements, effectively connects sex with both death and laughter." Verna A. Foster, "Sex Averted or Converted: Sexuality and Tragicomic Genre in the Plays of Fletcher," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 32 (1992): 311–22 (312).

[54] Berek argues that "tragicomic dramaturgy lends itself to the social function of embodying rather than resolving contradictions" (Berek, "Cross-Dressing," 371). Writing mid-century, Waith has argued that Fletcherian tragicomedy must be understood and appreciated according to the standards of its own design: "A sober revaluation of the Beaumont and Fletcher plays must begin with a description of what they are—with an analysis of the distinct version of tragicomedy which takes shape in them" (Waith, *Pattern of Tragicomedy,* 2).