

Courtly Mirrors: The Politics of Chapman's Drama

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the drama of George Chapman (1559-1634) can be read in light of his deep ambivalence towards the political elite of the Jacobean court. It suggests that Chapman's lack of success in securing courtly patronage, and his constant battle with indebtedness (which resulted in several court appearances and two imprisonments) left him divided in attitude towards the system of courtly reward – he resented his lack of success but continued to struggle to fit in and gain the approval of the powerful figures of the era. I argue that this gave him a critical perspective on many of the important issues of the time. My work examines the configuration of English national identity in his plays, positing an idea of Englishness which is separate from, and often critical of, the monarchy, and which relies on a structural parallel with the French court in order to imagine English identity. It then considers the ways in which money and debt are dealt with in several plays, arguing that Chapman felt deeply concerned by the perennial indebtedness of Jacobean culture but was also aware of the necessity of maintaining his own credibility and supply of credit. It further examines the representation of patronage, suggesting that Chapman saw the soliciting of aristocratic patronage in distinctly sexual terms, almost as a form of artistic prostitution. It then considers the many situations in the plays where royal patronage towards a favourite breaks down, and argues that this often results in allegations of treason which Chapman shows to originate in the paranoia or suspicions of the monarch. Finally, it looks at the concept of virtue in the plays, arguing that Chapman viewed virtue as fundamentally unsustainable in a corrupt court setting, but that he saw some form of engagement in public life as being a moral obligation on the virtuous man. Throughout I argue that Chapman was deeply radical in his social outlook, critical of inherited privilege and government by personal or absolutist rule. The social tensions and political struggles presented in his plays were to find their full expression in the violence of the Civil War and in the trial and execution of Charles I.

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Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, and that all quotations from other people's research are clearly marked as such and fully referenced. I also declare that I have never submitted any of this work to this or any other institution in fulfilment of any academic qualifications.

Abbreviations

ELH	<i>English Literary History</i>
ELN	<i>English Language Notes</i>
ELR	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
JMEMS	<i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>
MP	<i>Modern Philology</i>
MRDE	<i>Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England</i>
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
MLQ	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
MLR	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
N.&Q.	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Society of America</i>
PQ	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
RS	<i>Renaissance Studies</i>
SEL	<i>Studies in English Literature 1500-1900</i>
SP	<i>Studies in Philology</i>

Chapter 1

‘Spirit to Dare and Power to Doe’: George Chapman at the Jacobean Court

I loth as much a deede of unjust death
 As law it selfe doth; and to Tyrannise,
 Because I have a little spirit to dare,
 And power to doe, as to be Tyranniz'd;
 This is a grace that (on my knees redoubled)
 I crave to double this my short lifes gift;
 And shall your royall bountie Centuple,
 That I may so make good what God and nature
 Have given mee for my good: since I am free,
 (Offending no just law) let no law make
 By any wrong it does, my life her slave:
 When I am wrong'd and that law fails to right me,
 Let me be a king my selfe (as man was made)
 And doe a justice that exceeds the law:
 If my wrong passe the power of single valour
 To right and expiate, then be you my King
 And doe a Right, exceeding Law and Nature:
 Who to himselfe is law, no law doth neede,
 Offends no Law and is a King indeede.¹

George Chapman's views on the relationship between subject, monarch and law are exemplified by these extraordinary lines, addressed by the hero of *Bussy D'Ambois* (printed 1607, written 1604) to his monarch, in defence of his

¹ George Chapman, *Bussy D'Ambois*, in *The Plays of George Chapman: The Tragedies with Sir Giles Goosecappe*, ed. by Allan Holaday (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 2.1.186-204. This edition prints the 1607 and 1641 Quarto texts in parallel. All further references to Chapman's plays are to the Holaday editions, and unless otherwise specified, all references to *Bussy* are to the 1607 text.

participation in a duel with five other courtiers in which all the other men were killed. They chime in many ways with a passage from another Chapman play, published the previous year, *The Gentleman Usher* (printed 1606, written 1603-4). The Lord Strozza, a character whose loyalty to the ruling dynasty has been thoroughly established by the preceding events, voices the opinion that kings only came into being because of man's propensity for disorder:

And whats a Prince? Had all beene vertuous men,
There never had been Prince upon the earth,
And so no subject; all men had been Princes:
A vertuous man is subject to no Prince,
But to his soule and honour.²

Charles W. Kennedy uses both passages to argue that Chapman sees government itself as 'made necessary by the inherent injustice of men, a necessity which is to be tolerated because men are not strong and upright enough to do without it'.³ The view seemingly outlined by these lines is indeed radical, but critics have perhaps overlooked the complexities of Bussy's speech. The main compromising factor to the individualistic thrust of the speech is the fact that, by his own admission, Bussy utters it whilst on his knees craving bounty from the very king he claims to have no need of.

This paradox is typical of Chapman's political thought. The ideals and abstractions are always at odds with the context and real possibilities which the political system offers to both the playwright and his characters. At its most basic level this thesis argues that Chapman continually evinced hostility towards authority, as manifested through kings and other great men – patrons or otherwise powerful courtiers – and viewed political power as deeply corrupted and corrupting. But this hostility was complicated by his desire to be accepted and rewarded by the culture presided over by these great men. As his career progressed, his poverty deepened and he felt increasingly bitter about what he

² George Chapman, *The Gentleman Usher*, in *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies*, ed. by Allan Holaday (Urbana; Chicago; London: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 5.4.56-60.

³ Charles W. Kennedy, 'Political Theory in the Plays of George Chapman', in *Essays in Dramatic Literature: The Parrott Presentation Volume*, ed. by Hardin Craig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), pp.73-86 (p. 76).

perceived to be the injustice of his lack of success, but at the same time he grew more desperate for acceptance and material relief.

This is the fundamental tension at the heart of Chapman's writing, particularly his dramatic depiction of courts and their politics, and it is obvious in the paradox of Bussy's impassioned defence of his own autonomy. He says 'Who to himselfe no law doth need | Offends no law, and is a king indeed', a seemingly unequivocal assertion that the only appropriate ruler of his self is himself. His acceptance of the king as ruler is circumscribed by conditional language: '*If my wrong passe the power of single valour | To right and expiate; then be you my King*' (my italics). This goes beyond Kennedy's paraphrasing that government only entered the world through the weakness of man and actually supposes that even in the court of an early modern ruler like Henri III or James I, a virtuous man may be able to declare that he is not subject to laws or kings. In this formulation, the king only becomes a king in the exercise of justice, and even then, only if that justice cannot be achieved by the individual seeking it.

But to assume that Bussy here voices Chapman's own political opinion unproblematically would be rash. Bussy speaks these lines, a declaration of independence from the monarch, while 'on [his] knees redoubled', and asking for 'royal bountie' to 'Centuple' the original gift of self-government he claims. In dramatic terms, what Bussy is here asking for is an exemption from the law – he has killed the men he believed had wronged him (by mocking his position at court), and he retrospectively wants immunity from punishment for the crime. Despite his pretensions, all the cards here are in Henry's hand: as monarch he has the power to have Bussy carted off to await trial, or to pardon him and continue to shower him with royal favour. He chooses the latter course, and Bussy becomes, for a brief period, the king's favourite, rousing the ire of the other courtiers. Bussy is then, even at this point in the play, fully implicated in the court system of law and monarchy from which he would like to distance himself in this idealistic speech.

This is not merely an oversight, or a dramatic flaw on Chapman's part. Charlotte Spivack points to this when she argues that Bussy's assertion of autonomy differs from Strozza's because Bussy 'does not know himself well

enough to be his own law'.⁴ This can be developed by specifying that the crucial area in which Bussy lacks self-knowledge is in recognising his own involvement in the court world which he criticises whilst simultaneously enjoying its material and sexual rewards. Chapter 6 examines the contradictory aspect of Bussy's characterisation in more detail, but for now it is sufficient to note the disjunction between his words, which would render royalty irrelevant, and their context, which pleads for the king's mercy in a way that, contrary to appearances, admits the very real power of a king over his subjects, effected through his laws.

By having two characters make such similar assertions in very different circumstances, Chapman explores how the meaning of a proclaimed set of ideals can alter with the context in which they are being proclaimed. More specifically, he interrogates the extent to which one's integrity can be maintained whilst dependent on a corrupt system of political and material reward. Miller MacLure writes: 'Chapman, like other pious and unsocial contemplatives, was fascinated by *power*, whether in the grandiose tragic hero or in the masters of ceremonies at a comic feast of fools. Is power, he wondered, the gift of Fortune or Virtue?'⁵ This study uses a detailed reading of Chapman's plays to assess the complicated and often contradictory ways he responds to the basic paradox of his simultaneous desire for recognition from the cultural elite and his distrust of court values and behaviour.

While many critics have recognised the political import of some of Chapman's work, one of the ways in which previous analyses have been restricted is their tendency to divide the plays into two separate groups, comic and tragic, and then subdivide those groups and attempt to coherently interpret each individual play. This approach has the tendency to brush aside connections between the works, relegating observations of such connections to asides within the main argument, which is in each case an attempt to force the play to yield a moral lesson, or at least, a conventionally tidy narrative arc. This may be a useful way to work on some writers, but applied to Chapman it risks, as MacLure phrases it, making 'a falsely homogenous and sad hash of him' (p.9). My approach

⁴ Charlotte Spivack, *George Chapman*, (New York: Twayne, 1967), p.114.

⁵ Miller MacLure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p.84.

throughout this study will instead focus on the moments of tension or paradox within Chapman's works and consider how such tensions contribute to the richness and intricacy of his political thought. By examining the plays thematically, rather than dividing them up on grounds of genre or offering a series of stand-alone readings of individual plays, I hope to show how the same concerns and anxieties crop up again and again in his writing, and to demonstrate how his thought evolves throughout his career. Only this type of approach can break free of the restrictive and narrow patterns which previous critics have followed in their work on Chapman.

Much of the established criticism on Chapman's drama has been of a distinctly conservative bent. This is in large part due to an entrenched habit of discussing Chapman primarily as a moralist who happened to write plays, an approach which was typical of literary criticism in the early twentieth century, but which seems to have been harder for Chapman critics to shake off than for critics of, say, Shakespeare or Jonson, who have been the subject of much impassioned debate amongst New Historicists and Cultural Materialists. The same theoretical movement largely passed Chapman by without paying him very much attention, with Jonathan Goldberg seeing Bussy D'Ambois as 'a hero of absolutism' who embodies 'Chapman's fantasies of appropriating royal power'.⁶ Although Jonathan Dollimore views *Bussy* as an example of 'radical tragedy', primarily because, he argues, 'identity is shown to be constituted not essentially but socially', his discussion of the play revolves around two isolated passages and is too brief to do justice to the complexities of Chapman's play. Furthermore, Dollimore misreads one of the scenes he discusses, asserting for some reason that Bussy 'declines the pardon' the king offers him in Act 2, Scene 1.⁷ There is no textual justification for this reading, given that the passage in question begins with Bussy saying to his patron, Monsieur: 'Performe it Princely, and obtaine my pardon' (2.1.138-9), and continues, as discussed in the opening to this piece, with Bussy on his knees before the king, soliciting for mercy.

⁶ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p.155.

⁷ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2004), p. 186.

However, this is not to say that no insightful political readings of Chapman have emerged from the theoretical advances of cultural materialism. Some of the most exciting recent work on Chapman's political perspective in the drama comes from Albert H. Tricomi, whose many detailed, meticulously researched articles and book chapters have greatly influenced this study. Tricomi insists on Chapman's opposition to court values and monarchical power, a perspective most powerfully voiced in *Anti-Court Drama in England 1603-43*. Here, he places Chapman's tragedies in the context of intellectual but radical closet drama such as Daniel's *Philotas* and Greville's *Mustapha*, arguing that Chapman's main concern was with 'questions of personal integrity and right as against one's loyalty to one's sovereign'.⁸ Another exceptionally useful recent study of Chapman's work is John Huntington's *Ambition, Rank and Power in 1590s England*, which is mostly concerned with Chapman's verse, although it does have a lengthy discussion of *Bussy*. Huntington writes:

The Chapman whom we discover when we tease out the social agenda is strikingly different from the stolid moralist of common criticism. He is witty, angry, and ingenious, and he takes pleasure in speaking in an entirely ambiguous way that requires us to use what he calls our 'light-bearing intellect' and our sympathy with his social situation to find his meaning.⁹

It is exactly this picture of Chapman which the present study seeks to build on in reading his drama. Huntington argues that Chapman subverted the traditional view of nobility as defined by birth by instead suggesting that it was primarily a feature earned by noble behaviour. For Huntington, Chapman departs from the traditional humanist line on the importance of virtue to nobility because in previous writers 'one often finds criticism of lineage and wealth as the sole criteria for nobility, but seldom denunciations of them' (p.67). He also finds in Chapman's work a deliberate strategy to increase the cultural value of poetry in order to accrue status as a poet. But what Huntington does not really take into account is the fact that, particularly in the period 1604-1612, Chapman's authorial output was dominated not by poetry but by plays, and his social role was not simply that of a

⁸ Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-42*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p.80.

⁹ John Huntington, *Ambition, Rank and Poetry in 1590s England* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p.15.

poet-translator, but included the vocation of playwright for a successful private theatre company. How then was the social ambition Huntington so skilfully unearths in Chapman's poetry manifested in his drama? This thesis builds on the work of Tricomi and Huntington to assess Chapman's place in Jacobean culture, but it has also been influenced by the body of criticism which arguably begins with the Victorian poet A.C. Swinburne. Although my work is often in opposition to the prevailing consensus of that critical tradition, it nonetheless speaks to and takes inspiration from it, so an analysis of previous work is necessary before progressing further with the argument.

Modern Literary Criticism and George Chapman's Drama

General Studies of Chapman's Drama

The two towering figures of early Chapman criticism are A.C. Swinburne and T. M. Parrott. Although very different in their approaches, Swinburne and Parrott share a tendency to damn Chapman with faint praise, often detailing at length their perceptions of his failings. In Swinburne's case, it is Chapman's obscure style which comes in for the most criticism. Showing himself a Victorian to the core, Swinburne often imagines Chapman's work as a sort of savage ocean or landscape through which he alone, the critic as an intrepid David Livingstone figure, can guide the puzzled reader. He aligns Chapman with Greville, and writes of both that they are 'of all English poets the two most genuinely obscure in style whose works I have ever adventured to embark in search of treasure hidden beneath the dark gulfs and crossing currents of their rocky and weedy waters, at some risk of my understanding being swept away by a groundswell'.¹⁰ He complains of Chapman's 'crabbed and bombastic verbiage, the tortuous and pedantic obscurity, the rigidity and laxity of a style which moves as if it were a stiff shuffle, at once formal and shambling' (p.36). Even when he compliments Chapman, it is always qualified with reference to his failings. For instance, he writes of *Caesar and Pompey* 'those only who read the whole work will know all its merit as well as all its demerit; they will find fresh treasures of fine thought and high expression

¹⁰ A.C. Swinburne, *George Chapman : A Critical Essay* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), p.16.

embedded among dense layers of crabbed and confused rhetoric, wedged in between rocky strata of thick and turgid verse' (p.119). Swinburne's constant focus on Chapman's style, and his insistence on constantly evaluating the quality of the verse lead him to overlook the complexities of the playwright's thought, nowhere more unjustifiably than in his assertion that the *Byron* plays lack any complexity of detail, because 'Chapman is always least happy when he tries his prentice hand at analysis' (p.96). This is a gross misrepresentation of a writer who, on the contrary, particularly in his tragedies, is dedicated to careful analysis of situation, if perhaps not of character in a psychological sense.

Parrott, whose editions of Chapman's *Tragedies* and *Comedies* (1910-1914) have now been superseded by Holaday's editions as the standard scholarly texts, is not as voluminous as Swinburne in his criticisms of the playwright, but he is nonetheless forthright about various flaws in the plays. His two volumes of Chapman's texts contain introductions to each play and extensive critical commentary which is hugely useful (and unparalleled in Holaday's edition, which only gives perfunctory textual commentary and notes on variant readings). He accused Chapman of having 'less of this genuinely creative power [of characterisation] than many a meaner poet', finding his characters unconvincing; calls the *Byron* plays 'a dramatic poem rather than [...] a drama proper'; and complains of a lack of 'artistic unity' in *Caesar and Pompey* which, he believes, leaves the character of Pompey as 'a stop-gap of the playwright hastily caught up to fill a dramatic void'.¹¹ However, despite being occasionally harsh on Chapman's dramatic skills, Parrott is an insightful critic and was the first to assert what has since become a critical commonplace: 'the peculiar tragic theme of Chapman is the conflict of the individual with his environment and the inevitable issue of that conflict in the individual's defeat' (*Tragedies*, p.598). His scholarly researches into Chapman's sources and the dates of the plays have also been invaluable for all subsequent criticism; the introductions to the tragedies summarise the real historical events on which they are based; and the textual notes provide an illuminating guide to Chapman's sometimes obscure classical references, and

¹¹ T.M. Parrott, ed., *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Tragedies* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1910), p.545; p.594; p.661. See also *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Comedies* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1914).

suggest paraphrases for difficult passages of verse. Parrott is owed a great debt by every scholar (even every reader) of Chapman since his pioneering work.

Una Ellis-Fermor devotes a chapter of her study *The Jacobean Drama* (1936) to Chapman's work. Interestingly, she sees in Chapman an optimistic outlook, a 'world order of harmony and goodness', opposed to 'the rising tide of despondency and spiritual negation in the drama as a whole' in this period.¹² She gives an overview of Chapman's comedies and tragedies, but her view of Chapman as an idealist misreads his works and does not allow for a satisfying assessment of his social vision.

Peter Ure's 1960 article on 'Chapman's Tragedies' remains one of the most astute analyses of these plays.¹³ It is especially incisive on the incoherence of *Bussy D'Ambois*, and argues that although it *could* be reduced to a coherent interpretation, this can only be achieved by ignoring the subtleties of the work. However, Ure does not extend this interpretation to Chapman's other plays, finding in them 'an unquestioned source of moral authority' which *Bussy* lacks (p.237). As the final chapter of this study will make clear, in fact, all of Chapman's work should be seen as incoherent by design: Chapman is a writer who revels in paradoxical formulations and uses them to radical social effect.

Miller MacLure's *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (1966) was the first monograph to study Chapman's work in its entirety, with chapters on his Homer, his comedies, and his tragedies. It argues that Chapman's temperament is fundamentally divided and that previous criticism had failed to account for this. MacLure pithily states that Chapman's comedy 'oscillates between lofty religiosity and amoral intrigue', and he sees the tragedies as constantly experimental, and for this reason not fully explicable by Chapman's own stated theory of tragedy, but united by their common theme: virtuous men pitted against corrupt society.¹⁴

Charlotte Spivack's 1967 study, *George Chapman*, surveys the writer's life and work, summing him up as a 'rigid moralist' in both comedy and tragedy

¹² Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation* (London: Methuen, 1936), p.54.

¹³ Ure, Peter, 'Chapman's Tragedies' in *Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies I: Jacobean Theatre*, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Edward Arnold, 1960), pp. 227-47.

¹⁴ MacLure, *George Chapman*, p.103.

(p.84). She follows Rees in viewing Chapman as a spokesman for the established order, and takes the general message of *Bussy* to be that 'authority must and will function, either without as law or within as discipline' (p.118). This statement could also apply to her reading of *Byron* which is based on the division between the 'wise ruler' Henry and 'Fortune's minion' Byron (p.125). She reads the post-*Byron* tragedies in light of Chapman's stoicism, referring to the heroes as 'Senecal saints' who choose the contemplative life over the active (p.132), sidelining the political theme of these plays.

Leonard Goldstein's two-volume work, *George Chapman: Aspects of Decadence in Early Seventeenth Century Drama* (1975) is a Marxist indictment of Chapman's supposed conservatism, which shows a continuous lack of imagination in its long-winded attempt to align Chapman with the forces of a dying aristocratic ideology in conflict with an emergent bourgeoisie.¹⁵ At no point does Goldstein consider that Chapman's involvement with the aristocracy might be at all complicated by his personal disappointments, or that they might constitute anything more than unthinking propaganda on the behalf of the elite. His willingness not to let the textual facts obstruct a simplified attempt at criticism is exemplified by his assertion that Tamyra's discontent with her marriage in *The Revenge* can be seen as 'the perennial cry against the double standards of bourgeois morality' (p.160). That the label 'bourgeois' might not be the most appropriate way to describe the marriage of a Count and a Countess does not occur to Goldstein - this demonstrates the confusion of his general approach, which scarcely bothers to distinguish between aristocratic and bourgeois in its haste to denounce Chapman's involvement with both spheres.

In *Possessed With Greatness: the Heroic Tragedies of Shakespeare and Chapman* (1980), Richard S. Ide surveys five 'heroic' tragedies in a comparative study of Shakespeare and Chapman, arguing that in their divergent treatments of the soldier protagonist whose ideals of honour lead him into conflict with society, Shakespeare and Chapman were responding contentiously to each others' influence. He argues that, while Shakespeare undermined the ideal of epic heroism with plays like *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida*, Chapman 'blindly

¹⁵ Leonard Goldstein, *George Chapman: Aspects of Decadence in Seventeenth Century Drama* (Salzburg: Inst. für Eng. Sprache und Lit., University of Salzburg, 1975), 2 vols.

embraced' the 'defective epic ideals' of tradition.¹⁶ He gives detailed accounts of *Bussy* and the *Byron* plays, concluding that Bussy's death is represented with a grandeur which vindicates his heroic pretensions, and that Byron is represented with the sort of irony also found in *Troilus*. He concludes that Chapman does not mock aspiration in itself, seeing Byron's fall as above all a waste of potential when it is brought into conflict with the principal of order represented by King Henry. Ide's main error in his reading of *Byron* is to assume that Chapman aligns himself with the monarchy, but (as shall be demonstrated in the section on political criticism of Chapman) this is the habit almost all critics have fallen into when discussing these plays. More generally, Ide does Chapman a disservice by assuming that he blindly accepts anything – on the contrary, Chapman habitually explored the ambiguities of his characters and the political situations in which they find themselves.

S. Gorley-Putt's chapter on Chapman in his 1981 monograph *The Golden Age of English Drama* is a refreshingly original account which concentrates on *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Widow's Tears*. Gorley-Putt's main interest is in Chapman's fascination with what he terms 'intellectual superiority' as manifest through the protagonists of each play.¹⁷ He also sees this intellectual passion as being politically charged with a view to subverting the theory of Divine Right, but ultimately finds this passion unattractive, and sees *The Widow's Tears* as 'a hyperbolic, semi-sadistic black farce' (p.95). This idea of the political valence of intelligence is very important to Chapman's work, although Gorley-Putt is perhaps a little too sweeping in his condemnation of such intelligence as amoral and dangerous. Lee Bliss focuses on the same two plays but takes a more forgiving attitude towards them in *The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama* (1983). Bliss situates Webster's work in the context of the early Jacobean generic development of ironic tragicomedy and heroic tragedy, and she considers Chapman central to this development, so her introductory chapters provide detailed and thoughtful readings of both plays.¹⁸

¹⁶ Richard S. Ide, *Possessed With Greatness: The Heroic Tragedies of Shakespeare and Chapman* (London: Scholar, 1980), p. 18.

¹⁷ S. Gorley-Putt, *The Golden Age of English Drama: Enjoyment of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), p. 84.

¹⁸ Lee Bliss, *The World's Perspective* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983).

A. R. Braunmuller's *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (1992), focuses on *Bussy*, the *Byron* plays, and *Chabot*, and its close readings of each play in them an impetus 'to discover an ethical and intellectual context, a system of principles, in which events and individual may find or be given significance'.¹⁹ He sees the main concern of the plays as being, not the conflict between individual and society, but 'humankind and our relation with change' (p.26), and argues that as Chapman's career progressed, 'his allegiance to system, to social dogma, and to transcendently sanctioned ethical codes begins to abate' (p.27). Although this study disagrees with the suggestion that Chapman was artistically and socially conservative, Braunmuller's readings of the plays are admirably nuanced and make some very insightful comments, particularly about the ambiguity of Chapman's art and morals.

Chapman's Ethics and Philosophy

Moral Interpretations

A common approach taken by Chapman's critics, particularly of the mid-twentieth century, is to outline his ethical stance or philosophical opinions. At its worst, this type of criticism assesses Chapman's artistic merit purely on the grounds of how far his plays are deemed to coincide with the critic's own moral views. Hardin Craig's 1935 article 'Ethics in the Jacobean Drama' sees Chapman as 'the psychological dramatist *par excellence*,' and examines his ethics in this light.²⁰ Craig censures Chapman for condoning the triumph of passion over reason in *Bussy* and *Byron*, and even suggests, against almost all previous criticism, that Chapman approves of Byron's rebellion (p.43), but he does not seem aware that this opinion is out of line with other assessments of the play, and so unfortunately does not elaborate upon it. T.B. Tomlinson also interprets Chapman's writing as demonstrating moral failings, in his chapter in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (1964), which accuses Chapman, along with Ford, of being 'wrong-headed' about the moral issues of Jacobean drama. He arrives at this conclusion largely because

¹⁹ A.R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (Toronto: University of Delaware Press, 1992), p. 25.

²⁰ Hardin Craig, 'Ethics in the Jacobean Drama', in *Essays in Dramatic Literature*, ed. Hardin Craig, pp.25-46 (p. 29).

he, like Craig, reads *Bussy* as unequivocally celebrating the 'Marlovian exuberance' of the hero's attempt to overstep the natural order.²¹

Ennis Rees shows a more interesting way of approaching the ethical structure of Chapman's writing, as he argues that it is understandable only as an expression of the author's 'Christian humanism'.²² His method is to study the poetry in order to extract from it a 'body of doctrine' which he then uses to interpret the tragedies, and his main argument is that Chapman viewed learning as a religious vocation with the primary object of using it to control the passions of 'natural man'. Although this gives rise to a deeply conservative picture of Chapman, Rees is nevertheless insightful about many issues, particularly the importance of self-knowledge for Chapman's idea of virtue. However, he ultimately gives a shallow reading of *Bussy* based on the assumption that Chapman viewed his protagonist entirely ironically, rather than recognising the ambiguity of *Bussy*'s presentation and indeed, of his situation at court.

Robert Ornstein argues in his 1960 book *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* that while the tragedies 'span the poles of Jacobean disillusion', they also indicate Chapman's evolution from writing with an emphasis on melodrama to a privileging of morality, and an intellectual journey towards Stoicism.²³ Another moral interpretation is offered by T.F. Wharton, who begins his discussion *Moral Experiment in Jacobean Drama* (1988) with a chapter on Chapman. He posits a genre which he calls 'drama of moral experiment', and characterises it as being marked by a 'quest for moral disorder', and engaged with questions about the relation of innocence to society.²⁴ Unlike most other critics concerned with Chapman's moral schematics, he does not confine himself to the tragedies, and instead discusses *The Gentleman Usher* and *The Widow's Tears*, as well as *Bussy*, in terms of moral experiment. He finds *The Widow's Tears* a powerful example, pointing to 'the appalled fascination' (p.19) with which Chapman demonstrates human weakness

²¹ T.B. Tomlinson, *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 256-64.

²² Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman: Renaissance Ethics in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 1-28.

²³ Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p. 47.

²⁴ T.F. Wharton, *Moral Experiment in Jacobean Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 3.

in Cynthia's rapid surrender to the advances of her husband's supposed murderer.

Chapman and Stoicism

One major strand in ethical interpretations of Chapman has been devoted to the influence of classical philosophers, particularly the Stoics. Richard Perkison, though making the qualifying statement that Chapman was primarily a dramatist, not a philosopher, nonetheless characterises the *Bussy* plays as Senecan, with an additional influence coming from the idea of the Marlowe's aspiring, high-achieving heroes.²⁵ Perkison argues that Chapman's unique idea of Nature has no precedent in Classical or Christian thought, and this explains the vulnerability of the 'Marlovian super-man', attributing the inevitability of Bussy's downfall to a Nature which seems to coincide in many ways with the idea of a governing principle of Fate determining a tragic outcome. However, he argues that this perspective changed as Chapman came more under the influence of Stoicism, and that in *The Revenge*, Nature becomes a Stoic pantheistic force with which Clermont is aligned in opposition to the corrupt world of men.

Particularly useful contributions to the Stoic debate are Michael Higgins' two articles on the subject from 1945 and 1947. The first of these, 'Chapman's Senecal Man: A Study in Jacobean Psychology', is perhaps the most powerful, showing how the use of classical Rome in early modern drama enabled writers to 'hold [...] up to admiration the republican virtues of Roman senators'.²⁶ The article examines the characters of Cato, Chabot, and Clermont, arguing that they are all 'instinct with the spirit of classical republicanism' (p.186), and that although Chapman does not explicitly condemn monarchy, these plays contain 'the philosophical seed of the civil war'. Higgins fails to consider, however, that these characters might *not* be intended by Chapman to be seen as paragons of virtue, or that in Clermont or Chabot he might be exploring the fate of a philosophy which fails to take account of its own compromised situation in relation to the worldly

²⁵ Richard Perkison, 'Nature and the Tragic Hero in Chapman's *Bussy* Plays', *MLQ*, 3 (1942), 265-285.

²⁶ Michael Higgins, 'Chapman's Senecal Man: A Study in Jacobean Psychology', *RES*, 21 (1945), 183-191 (p.184).

authorities. The later article considers Strozza and Bussy D'Ambois as showing elements of Stoicism in their characterisation – Bussy lacks the self-control of a Stoic but achieves in his death scene a freedom for fear and willingness to suffer pain which Higgins sees as essentially Stoic.²⁷ *George Chapman: The Influence of Stoicism Upon his Tragedies*, by John W. Wieler, offers a full-length study of Chapman's Stoic influences, which helpfully outlines the particular doctrines he sees as having exerted particular force over the playwright, and then provides a reading of each tragedy in light of this. Wieler comes to the conclusion that Chapman became progressively more stoical as his career went on, but in proportion to this his plays became less dramatically effective because Stoic principles 'culminate in the negation of tragedy'.²⁸

Roy Battenhouse's impressive article on the tension between Christian and classical thought in Chapman's tragedies is thought-provoking and beautifully structured. He argues that Chapman's philosophy of the nature and destiny of man is 'split by the Platonic dichotomy between sense and intellect', and that Chapman displays a fundamentally pessimistic view of man and his relation with nature, which is radically at odds with Christian tradition and derives from Classical thinking.²⁹ He sees the fate of Bussy and Byron as offering 'an apology for violence in the name of piety' because it is through violence, suffering and death that they manage to transcend the material world and achieve heroic stature. Battenhouse's interpretation is intellectually brilliant but ultimately flawed by the impulse to make Chapman's work coherent – he often views speeches made by certain characters as simply Chapman's own opinion, backing this up with quotations from the poetry which offer similar sentiments. However, this method sidelines the ambiguity of Chapman's presentation of his characters, and the fact that he often explores the ways in which the truth of a statement or perspective can be altered by its context (for example, the two very similar statements of man's independence from royal authority found in *Bussy* and *The Gentleman Usher* which have very different implications given their different

²⁷ Michael Higgins, 'The Development of the Senecal Man', *RES*, 23 (1947), 24-33.

²⁸ John W. Wieler, *George Chapman: The Effect of Stoicism Upon his Tragedies* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), p.160.

²⁹ Roy Battenhouse, 'Chapman and the Nature of Man', *ELH*, 12 (1945), 87-107 (p.107).

dramatic contexts). In setting up a clear dichotomy between classical and Christian thought Battenhouse elides the way Chapman borrows from both traditions as and when it suits his purpose. This is a typical failing of accounts of Chapman's philosophy: they often succumb to the temptation to make the ambiguity of his plays conform to a neatly coherent reading in light of a particular philosophical tradition.

There has also been an abundance of articles on individual plays which build on this acknowledgement of the Stoic aspect of Chapman's thought, most often centring on *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. Geoffrey Aggeler, in 'The Unity of Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', provides an account of how this play was influenced by Epictetus, arguing that his reading of this classical author changed Chapman's whole conception of the Stoic hero, and that far from the revenge action being incompatible with his ethics, Clermont's acceptance of the burden of Bussy's revenge provides the whole play with unity, and indicates his realisation that the truly virtuous man is not bound by the conventional moral laws of lesser men.³⁰ Peter Bement also sees Clermont as a successful expression of Stoic ideals, but he situates the play within the context of the Classical debate about the relative merits of the active and the contemplative life, acknowledging that the political world represented by *The Revenge* is utterly corrupt, and that therefore although Clermont manages to successfully enter public life without compromising his morals, the play 'is not a general endorsement of the active life', and the retirement of the female characters to convents at the end suggests pessimism about the extent to which Clermont's achievement can be emulated.³¹ Following a similar line to Aggeler on the function of the revenge plot, Roland Broude makes an astute warning not 'to suppose that Stoicism meant to Chapman what it means to us, and to take it for granted that Christianity in Chapman's day was essentially what it is in ours'.³² He therefore argues that to a Renaissance reader, revenge was not necessarily incompatible with either of these ethical systems. Broude takes the important step of reading the revenge in the context of

³⁰ Geoffrey Aggeler, 'The Unity of Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 4 (1969), 5-18.

³¹ Peter Bement, 'The Stoicism of Chapman's Clermont D'Ambois', *SEL*, 12 (1972), 345-57 (p.356).

³² Roland Broude, 'George Chapman's Stoic-Christian Revenger', *SP*, 70 (1973), 51-61 (pp. 51-52).

the tyranny of King Henry and the failure of justice in his kingdom, arguing that this, in both Christian and Stoic thought, requires a private man to rectify the injustice.

Articles on the stoic influence on Chapman are not confined to discussions of *The Revenge*. *Caesar and Pompey* also receives a significant amount of attention from this angle, exemplified by Derek Crawley's 1967 article which argues that the three characters in the play are 'adjudged admirable or misguided on the basis of Stoic doctrine'.³³ Crawley views Cato, not as the protagonist, but as the 'moral touchstone' of the play, a view which had previously also been expressed by Elias Schwartz and perhaps owes something to his reading.³⁴ Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Revised Version of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*: A Shift in Point of View,' takes as a given the theory that Chapman's thought underwent a major shift after 1608, to become very much dictated by Stoic doctrine.³⁵ From this perspective, he studies the revisions in the second quarto of *Bussy* and concludes that their effect is to undermine Bussy's heroism by stressing the dangers of uncontrolled passion condemned by the Stoics: this is seen as manifested in three distinct developments: his affair with Tamyra; his rivalry with Monsieur; and his social ambition.

More recently, critics have challenged the extent of Chapman's stoicism, with various articles on *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* in particular arguing that Clermont's stoicism should be read ironically, in terms of how it fails to equip him for the public world. Allan Bergson's 1977 article argues that the heroes in both *The Revenge* and *The Tragedy of Chabot* should be seen in an ironic light, because even as they proclaim their Stoicism and independence from the political world, Chapman's dramatic vision is 'one in which renunciation of the world and immersion in it fully partake of each other'. In a separate article, Bergson argues that *Caesar and Pompey*'s Cato is a departure from the worldly Stoics of the earlier two plays. He suggests that through Cato, Chapman demonstrates how Stoicism

³³ Derek Crawley, 'Decision and Character in Chapman's *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*', *SEL*, 7 (1967), 277-297 (p.277).

³⁴ Elias Schwartz, 'A Neglected Play by Chapman', *SP*, 58 (1961), 140-159.

³⁵ Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Revised Version of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*: A Shift in Point of View', *SP*, 70 (1973), 288-306.

provides 'a real moral safeguard for public men'.³⁶ Taken together then, Bergson's articles argue that Chapman's interest in Stoicism intensified through his career, peaking with *Caesar and Pompey*, in which he threw off the ironic treatment he had given it in the past to embrace its tenets in earnest.

However, it is Bergson's suggestions about the irony of that representation which most accurately reflect the consensus of later criticism. Fred M. Fetrow argues that the dramatisation of 'the limitations of stoic self-sufficiency' is the main dramatic interest in the play.³⁷ He also, rather curiously, interprets Clermont's relationship with the Guise as the main example of this, but argues that Clermont's aim in this relationship is to turn Guise into 'an agent of reform', and makes of Guise himself a martyr who 'dies for Clermont's philosophy' (p.236). This identification of the Clermont-Guise relationship as pivotal to Chapman's concerns about the insufficiency of Stoicism is correct, but Fetrow's reading of the Guise in terms of redemption and martyrdom has to twist the textual evidence almost beyond recognition. Far more convincing is Suzanne F. Kistler's 1980 article which argues that the play shows how Clermont *fails* to create 'a world of virtue and calm', and that both his revenge task, and his involvement in the 'vortex of court intrigue' force him to betray his principles. Alexander Leggatt makes a very similar argument, focussing particularly on the disparity between Clermont's proclaimed scorn of social position and the fact that he is fully involved with the social and political life of the court; he argues that his suicide is 'a final, definitive statement of Clermont's dependence on another man', rather than a gesture of self-sufficiency.³⁸ Kistler and Leggatt overlap in a number of ways, although Leggatt does not refer to Kistler's earlier article (presumably it did not come out in time for him to use in his own piece). The success of both their analyses comes from the fact that they work with a flexible idea of Chapman's indebtedness to Stoicism, and crucially site it within the context of Chapman's

³⁶ Allan Bergson, 'The Worldly Stoicism of George Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France*,' *PQ*, 55 (1977), 43-65; 'Stoicism Achieved: Cato in Chapman's *Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*,' *SEL*, 17 (1977), 295-302 (p.297).

³⁷ Fred M. Fetrow, 'Chapman's Stoic Hero in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*,' *SEL*, 19 (1979) 229-37.

³⁸ Suzanne F. Kistler, "'Strange and Far-Removed Shores': A Reconsideration of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*,' *SP*, 77 (1980), 128-143 (p.130, p.131); Alexander Leggatt, 'The Tragedy of Clermont D'Ambois,' *MLR*, 77 (1982), 524-536 (p.530, p.535).

attack on the corruption of the court of Henry III, and therefore his dissatisfaction with court politics in general.

However, despite their acknowledgement of Chapman's flexibility as regards the philosophical ideas which influenced him, both Kistler and Leggatt assume that in Clermont's actions there can be traced a betrayal of his avowed Stoicism. Richard S. Ide disputes the view of Clermont's Stoicism as a monolithic concept which he must either obey or betray. 'Exploiting the Tradition: The Elizabethan Revenger as Chapman's Complete Man' argues that Chapman uses Clermont to interrogate the figure of the Elizabethan revenger, possibly to dispute Hamlet's claim to a moral consciousness; and that in recognising the need for a compromise between the philosophy of a Stoic and that of a man of action, Clermont in fact represents Chapman's philosophically ideal man, albeit one who cannot be finally reconciled to the genre of revenge tragedy.³⁹

In *Light From the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature* (1984), Gilles D. Monserrat examines the influence of Classical Stoicism on the intellectual culture of Renaissance England, particularly focussing on drama. The book contains a chapter on Chapman which argues that while *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* contains the most complete representation of a Stoic hero in Jacobean theatre, and some of his poetry contemporaneous to this play also voices Stoic doctrine, this was Chapman's specific response to his recent reading of Epictetus and does not evince a sustained commitment to Stoic philosophy. This is a useful and undoubtedly a meticulously scholarly book, but as Ide and others have already shown, combing Chapman's work (or indeed, the work of any early modern writer) to assess the purity of their philosophical opinions is perhaps not the most fruitful way of taking into account the many different influences at work on each play.

It seems clear that for Chapman, the classical Stoic writers held some appeal, particularly in his later tragedies. However, the most interesting critical accounts of this have not been those which seek to find the classical source of every sentiment or phrase, but are rather the efforts of Higgins, Bement, Kistler and Leggatt to view the Stoic influence within a social and political context, and it

³⁹ Richard S. Ide, 'Exploiting the Tradition: The Elizabethan Revenger as Chapman's "Complete Man"', *MRDE*, 1 (1980), 159-72.

is this theoretical approach which my study will follow. This issue will be dealt with in more detail in the final chapter's discussion of Chapman's concept of virtue, but it is worth noting for now that the major problem in casting Chapman as a fully committed Stoic, as some of these studies have sought to do, is the fact that the philosophy is so concerned with accepting misfortune and bearing it contentedly, while Chapman's plays, poems, translations and prose dedications all bear the hallmarks of a deeply *discontented* man. This explains to some extent his attraction to Stoic thought – he perhaps realised that if he could accept his lot as a poverty-stricken debtor he might have a calmer, happier life – but all the evidence in his writing points to a writer who constantly chafed with bitterness because he felt he was undervalued. This discontent is very much bound up with his feelings about the court, and about the way great men treat their inferiors. Many previous critics have recognised this social and political dimension of Chapman's thought, though not all of them have convincingly assessed his attitude towards the governing elite.

Political Readings of Chapman's Work

One of the earliest political interpretations of Chapman's work is *Stuart Politics in Chapman's Tragedy of Chabot*, by Norma Dobie Solve.⁴⁰ Solve suggests that Chapman's last play is a complicated allegory of the events surrounding the disgrace of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, and his replacement as the king's favourite by the young Buckingham. Her thesis revolves around the assumption of a very late date of composition for the play, between 1621 and 1624, and since the only evidence for this is the resemblance the events of the play bear to Somerset's trial and fall, Solve's logic is a little circular. Nonetheless, the study makes some astute comments about Chapman's political interests, aligning him with an oppositional party centred on Prince Henry, and arguing that in the French tragedies he was 'attacking definite and specific political conditions in the Stuart court' (p.18). It is also excellent on the effect upon Chapman of his constant struggle for patronage, and the ways it influenced his political outlook. Solve writes, with reference to Chapman's possible feelings about the fall of his last

⁴⁰ Norma Dobie Solve, *Stuart Politics in Chapman's Tragedy of Chabot*, (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1928).

important patron: 'again Chapman was without the patronage of the great, which to a man whose pen was his plough in the reign of James meant poverty in the extreme. [...] It is no wonder that we find his contempt for the vulgar herd, his bitterness toward success, his abuse of the great, bursting forth with the froth of self-consuming rage' (p.29). This is a succinct view of Chapman's acerbity at his own unfortunate situation, which this study seeks to build on.

When it comes to her main argument, however, Solve is less convincing. She reads the play-text in detail to demonstrate analogies between its events and the downfall of Somerset. She first turns her attention to the play's opening, which provides a 'long defense' of Chabot's character against the views of the populace which 'is not in the source', and so concludes that it must be present 'because the Earl of Somerset was held in just such contempt by the court and populace of London' (p.87). But as she herself points out, the source is 'less than four folio pages' in length (p.64), and so we must expect that when Chapman came to write a play on the subject he would flesh out the source details with his own imagination. Furthermore, the additional details which Solve sees as evidence of an allegory in fact revolve around issues which had been of concern to Chapman all through his career – the role of a favourite as a corrupting influence on royal authority, for example, was explored by *The Gentleman Usher*, written no later than 1604.⁴¹ It also seems as though her assertion of Chapman's unwavering loyalty to Carr is hyperbolic – Chapman's suspicion of court figures and great men is deep-seated enough that even in his overt bids for patronage there is always an ambiguity of presentation, and as I shall argue in the following chapters, his sense of degradation at being forced to sue for patronage from such men greatly complicated his representations of them. It therefore seems unlikely that he would present Carr as an unequivocally innocent, injured party, as we find in *Chabot*, given his clear hostility to rule by a favourite as revealed elsewhere. In short, Solve's theory of allegory is an attractive one, and it is not impossible, but it is improbable, largely because of the arguments surrounding its date (see the section on dating below). On balance, there is enough uncertainty and improbability surrounding this argument to disallow any critical responses to the play based on

⁴¹ See my discussions of *The Gentleman Usher*, pp.39-40 and pp.161-71 below.

the Somerset allegory, but this does not cancel out the other useful points which Solve makes in relation to Chapman's art and his politics. She is one of the earliest critics to see Chapman as writing in opposition to the dominant tone and culture of the court, which has been an important contribution to the critical debate. Charles W. Kennedy, in a brief essay, agrees with this broad definition of Chapman, and sees his thought as converging on 'fundamental problems of political justice'.⁴² Kennedy suggests that Chapman sees government as a necessary evil, only brought about through man's weakness, and that his plays explore the qualities of an ideal subject and monarch.

Irving Ribner edges towards a political interpretation of Chapman, in his focus on the corruption of the society in which his heroes move. However, that political theme is circumscribed by connecting it to man's fall from grace, and his decayed relations with nature, rather than any flaw in the political system itself. Responding to Ennis Rees's ethical reading of *Bussy*, he argues that it is a mistake to view Bussy merely as a moral exemplum held up for the approbation of the audience.⁴³ Instead, he reads the play as defined by man's fall from Paradise, and representing the corruption of a decayed, fallen nature, in which virtuous man cannot survive. Bussy is an example of natural man being gradually corrupted by his involvement in the fallen world around him, but who nonetheless solicits the sympathy of the audience because he represents mankind, and for the heroism he shows in accepting his death at the hands of this fatal nature. A later article on *The Tragedy of Chabot* disputes the allegorical reading suggested by Solve, largely on the grounds that Chabot's death after he has been fully exonerated makes no sense if read, as Solve suggests, as a plea for mercy for Somerset.⁴⁴ The implications of this argument for the dating and authorship of *Chabot* will be discussed in the relevant section below, but for Ribner, the interest of the play goes beyond its immediate application to current affairs, and lies in its exploration of 'the imperfection of a human justice whose source is the king's will' (323).

⁴² Charles W. Kennedy, 'Political Theory in the Plays of George Chapman', p. 75.

⁴³ Irving Ribner, 'Character and Theme in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*', *ELH*, 26 (1959), 482-496, (p.483).

⁴⁴ Irving Ribner, 'The Meaning of Chapman's Tragedy of Chabot', *MLR*, 55 (1960), 321-331, (pp.321-2).

Edward D. Kennedy, in his 1965 article 'James I and Chapman's *Byron Plays*', views the *Byron* plays as little more than vehicles for Chapman's propaganda on behalf of King James, stating that 'King and dramatist appear to have agreed upon basic political maxims: a nation needs an absolute and just ruler who can save it from feudal chaos; subjects need and desire security; [and] they owe their ruler, God's representative upon earth, absolute obedience'.⁴⁵ He traces similarities between King Henry's stated political philosophy and James's position as laid out in his own political writings but does not consider the possibility that Chapman's own opinions may not have coincided with those expressed by Henry.

J.W. Lever's important study, *The Tragedy of State*, allots a chapter to Chapman's tragedies and suggests that the *Bussy* plays can be seen as revenge tragedies in reverse, with the social order taking revenge on its challenger in each play.⁴⁶ He sees the treatment of Bussy and Tamyra's affair as 'daring' in its sympathy with the adulterers, and refutes the idea, common to much previous criticism, that Bussy is killed by Fate, arguing for the pivotal roles of Monsieur and the Guise in the hero's downfall. Lever sees the first play as more political than its sequel, noting that Bussy is killed by gunpowder – 'the first weapon of the modern state' (p.47) – and arguing that the glossing over in *The Revenge* of the importance of Monsieur and the Guise in Bussy's murder renders Clermont's revenge on Montsurry purely private and without political significance. Lever breaks with previous critics by pointing out Chapman's distance from the King Henry of the *Byron* plays, calling him 'an uneasy despot' who operates 'an inhuman machinery of power through a chain of secret agents' (p.49), and posits a Chapman whose plays show his opposition to the 'dehumanizing' power of the state against the individual. This recognition of Chapman as opposing the political system is shared by Conrad Bollinger, whose 1978 article reads Chapman's and Shakespeare's tragedies as reflecting the scepticism of both writers towards the doctrine of obedience promoted by the Tudor 'Homilies'.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Edward D. Kennedy, 'James I and Chapman's *Byron Plays*', *JEGP*, 64 (1965), 677-90 (p.689).

⁴⁶ J.W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London: Methuen, 1971), p.38.

⁴⁷ Conrad Bollinger, 'The Powers that be Through a Glass Darkly: The Theme of Disobedience in Shakespeare and Chapman', *Parergon*, 12 (1975), 39-48.

Albert H. Tricomi has contributed an enormous amount to our understanding of Chapman's politics. His reading of *Monsieur D'Olive* shows how its subplot refers satirically to the embassy of the Earl of Nottingham to Spain in 1605. This pushes back the date of composition for the play to some time later than March of that year.⁴⁸ His fascinating article 'Philip, Earl of Pembroke, and the Analogical Way of Reading Political Tragedy', describes the Earl's annotations to his copy of the *Byron* plays, which have survived in an edition now at the British Museum.⁴⁹ This demonstrates how Pembroke interpreted the play with topical reference to the politics of the Caroline court, in particular drawing analogies between Byron and English favourites such as Buckingham, despite the fact that he was aware the play was written many years before Buckingham's appearance. Tricomi argues that this analogical way of reading, which was clearly not bounded by notions of authorial intention, indicates the existence of a tradition of reformist political drama among parliamentary aristocrats. His monograph, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-42*, finds in the drama of the early Stuart period an exploration of the political issues raised by James's monarchical theory and practice. In a chapter on contemporary satire he examines *The Widow's Tears*, *Monsieur D'Olive* and *Eastward Ho* in the light of both satire against James's prodigality and of contemporary anti-Scottish sentiment.⁵⁰ A later chapter on Chapman's French tragedies classes the playwright with Jonson, Greville, and Daniel, as creating drama aimed at probing 'the proper limits of aristocratic fealty to overbearing, frequently villainous kings' (p.62). It argues that Chapman's choice of the modern French court as a setting allows him to explore 'the relation between monarch and subject in a settled national state' (p.80). Tricomi sums up the question which occupies all the tragedies as being: 'Under what conditions can heroic individuals reform the court, or at least insulate themselves from its corrupting effects?' (p.81). Tricomi makes the very important recognition that Chapman uses the *Byron* plays to explore, and to some extent to understand, the conditions that give rise to aristocratic rebellion. He sees Chapman's subsequent plays as more concerned

⁴⁸ Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Focus of Satire and the Date of *Monsieur D'Olive*,' *SEL*, 17 (1977), 281-294.

⁴⁹ Tricomi, 'Philip, Earl of Pembroke, and the Analogical Way of Reading Political Tragedy', *JEGP*, 85 (1986), 332-345.

⁵⁰ Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England*, pp.25-33.

with virtuous heroes in tension with a corrupt setting, in a movement away from the lawlessness of Bussy and Byron, toward a Stoic philosophy. His reading of these later plays is hampered by the fact that he assumes the protagonists are mouthpieces for Chapman's opinions, and so somewhat simplifies the way in which Chapman attacks court values by not allowing for the possibility that the heroes are implicated in those values as much as Byron was, but in differing ways.

Tricomi's argument also tends slightly too much toward associating Chapman unequivocally with his aristocratic audience. I would not dispute the fact that Chapman was writing predominantly for the elite, and that he shares many of their concerns, but it must be recognised that his position as a poverty-stricken second son dependent on the patronage of rich noblemen puts him in a strange relation to this elite on whom he relied. In one sense, he is part of the group (or at least desires to be part of it), but in another sense he is removed from it by his poverty and lack of success in his bids for patronage. This gives his representation of aristocratic behaviour and values a distinctly uneasy and sometimes hostile edge. Nonetheless, Tricomi's broad argument is entirely correct, in his identification of Chapman with an intellectual challenge to court values and monarchic power aimed primarily at the aristocratic play-goers of the private theatres.

Another broad study of political themes in Chapman's tragedy is Richard Hillman's two-part article for *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, which examines the political uses to which the author turns his French sources in his tragedies.⁵¹ The first part, on *Bussy D'Ambois* and *Byron*, uses Derrida's trope of absence-presence to identify previously neglected analogies in the French tragedies, including, in *Bussy D'Ambois*, audience preconceptions about the decadence and sexual incontinence of Henri IV manipulated by echoes of the writings of Marguerite de Valois. Perhaps more radically this essay argues for Prince Henry as the absent centre of the *Byron* plays, reading a veiled warning to the prince in the parallel between Byron and Essex, the latter being often invoked as a hero by many of the prince's circle. The second instalment of this essay continues the intertextual approach,

⁵¹ Richard Hillman, 'The Tragic Channel-Crossing of George Chapman Part I: *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*', *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, 65 (2004), 25-43; 'The Tragic Channel-Crossing of George Chapman Part II: *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Tragedy of Chabot*', *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, 67 (2006), 23-31.

focussing particularly on Chapman's departure from historical fact to suggest that *The Revenge* in taking liberty with historical facts imaginatively negotiates an English subjectivity whose engagement with France is paramount to its identity, and which *Chabot's* more simplistic symbolic scheme rejects.

Much of the politically-themed criticism, particularly in recent decades, has taken the form of articles on a single play. In 'The Inverted World of *Bussy D'Ambois*,' Jane Melbourne argues that Chapman's use of the image of an inverted world is heavily influenced by Johannes Kepler's theory of the inverted retinal image, published in 1604, and that this image is deployed not only to suggest the traditional connotations of immorality and social disorder, but also to convey a relationship between man and nature in which man's significance and capacity for meaningful action is obliterated. Deborah Montuori takes a similarly critical view of Bussy's heroic status. She considers the tragic action in the play as stemming from Bussy's inability to recognise the conflict between his rhetoric and his actions; his dying attempt to mythologise himself is seen as further proof of this misrecognition.⁵² Montuori's reading becomes political by making a connection between Bussy's misrecognition of himself and his relation to the court: she suggests that he should be seen as a parallel figure with Monsieur, not his antagonist (p.291), and points out Bussy's dependence on the policy he proclaims to abhor.

Alexander Leggatt takes issue with the tendency to view the *Byron* plays as one whole work, arguing for their individual integrity and outlining the difference of tone between the two, which he sees as primarily evident in their depiction of the social-political background. In the first play the emphasis on Byron's gullibility makes him appear naïve and even innocent, rendering the conspiracy lightweight, and preparing us for Henry to dismiss it with a laugh in the final act; Leggatt contrasts this with *The Tragedy's* sense of a kingdom under threat, interpreting the allusions to Philip of Spain as hinting at darker manifestations of political power, and the latter play as representing a world in which moral distinctions have become a question of expediency, not absolutes.⁵³ Leggatt's argument is

⁵²Jane Melbourne Craig, 'The Inverted World of *Bussy D'Ambois*', *SEL*, 25 (1985), 381-95; Deborah Montuori, 'The Confusion of Self and Role in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*', *SEL*, 28 (1988), 287-99.

⁵³ Alexander Leggatt, 'Tone and Structure in Chapman's *Byron*', *SEL*, 24 (1984), 307-326.

convincingly relayed, but nevertheless, most works on the *Byron* plays tend to discuss them in tandem. This is the case in Glen Mynott's 1995 article which relates the plays to the constitutional dispute between advocates of absolute monarchy and those in favour of the 'ancient constitution', to read Byron's revolt as a justified attempt to restore constitutional restraints upon a monarchy bent on absolutism.⁵⁴ But despite this sympathetic reading of the revolt, Mynott views Chapman as advocating tradition at the expense of innovation and characterises him as deeply conservative. Gisele Venet also sees in the two main characters a clash between feudalism and modernising absolute monarchy and goes on to explore the implications of this conflict for the way in which space and action are conceived, tracing in Byron a character constantly in flux and defined by relativity, in contrast with Henry's wish to fix and define limits on space and time.⁵⁵

A.R. Braunmuller's "'A Greater Wound': Corruption and Human Frailty in Chapman's *Chabot, Admiral of France*", offers a reading of this play focussed on the conflict between Chabot and King Francis, and suggests that in its depiction of an 'ugly, demeaning world' this play is the most pessimistic of Chapman's tragedies, with Chabot's death leaving behind a court full of immoral politicians or ineffectually virtuous minor characters who cannot hope to improve their society.⁵⁶ However, in his emphasis on the personal nature of the conflict, Braunmuller denies its political import altogether. Also focusing on *Chabot*, Luke Wilson considers the complex relationships between contracts, bribes, and gifts in early modern England. Wilson argues that both this play and the trial of Francis Bacon revolve around and reveal differing conceptions of justice aligned to the difficulty in distinguishing these categories.⁵⁷ His chapter concludes that both

⁵⁴ Glen Mynott, "'We must not be more true to kings | Than Kings are to their subjects'": France and the Politics of the Ancient Constitution in Chapman's Byron Plays," *RS*, 9 (1995), 477-493.

⁵⁵ Gisele Venet, 'Baroque Space and Time in Chapman's Tragedy: The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron', in *French Essays on Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: What Would France with Us?*, ed. by Jean-Marie Maguin and Michèle Willems (Newark; London: University of Delaware Press, 1995), pp. 304-13.

⁵⁶ A.R. Braunmuller, "'A Greater Wound': Corruption and Human Frailty in Chapman's *Chabot, Admiral of France*", *MLR*, 70 (1975), 241-259.

⁵⁷ Luke Wilson, 'The Rich Cabinet: Bacon, Chapman, and the Culture of Corruption', in *Solon and Thespis: Law and Theatre in the English Renaissance*, ed. Dennis Kezar (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 218-263.

Bacon and Chapman in different ways see the practice of 'respecting persons' in lawsuits as fundamentally more damaging than contractual agreements or bribes.

James F. O'Callaghan examines the political and moral issues explored through the character of Caesar in *Caesar and Pompey*, and takes the view that Chapman's opinion is reflected in the character of Cato. He sees Caesar as holding a certain amount of dramatic appeal, but concludes that despite this, he is to be viewed as a criminal and a tyrant.⁵⁸ In 'Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey* and the Fortunes of Prince Henry', Ralf Soellner places this play in the context of the plethora of written advice and solicitations to the young Prince Henry.⁵⁹ He argues that its hesitant tone derives from Chapman's own unease with the prevailing celebration of military ambition in the discourse of Henry's court: for Chapman, the parallels between Henry and Caesar are cause for apprehension, and this play was a coded warning to his patron to be careful of the war-mongering that surrounded him.

Court Masques and Court Politics

Although Jonson famously told William Drummond that, apart from himself, only Chapman and Fletcher could write a good masque, Chapman is only known to have written two masques: one performed in 1613 for the Princess Elizabeth's wedding to the Elector Palatinate, and one, until very recently overlooked by critics, for the Christmas celebrations of 1618, which Jonson was unavailable to write because of his journey to Scotland during which this conversation with Drummond occurred.

The Masque of the Inner Temple (1613), has been recognised as participating in the Jacobean debate over England's role in a colonial world seeing rapid expansion of its known limits. Rocco Cornato's 'Inducting Pocahontas' explores the trope of cannibalism as a symbol of Renaissance Europe's cultural interaction with America. It suggests that Chapman's masque foreshadows the accounts of Pocahontas' visit to London, particularly by the way in which the otherness of the Indians is assimilated into the conventional masque celebration of monarchical

⁵⁸ James F. O'Callaghan, 'Chapman's Caesar', *SEL*, 16 (1976), 319-331.

⁵⁹ Ralf Soellner, 'Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey* and the Fortunes of Prince Henry,' *MRDE* 2 (1985), 135-151.

power.⁶⁰ David Lindley's contribution to the essay collection *The Stuart Courts* sees the masque form as being influenced as much by the agenda of patrons as that of the monarch, and so places Chapman's masque within the political negotiations between Prince Henry, King James, and the lawyers who presented it.⁶¹ Lindley's reading argues that the masque's emphasis on the conversion of the Indians ties it to the propaganda of the Virginia Company; but he argues too that the ambitions it articulates also betray the depth of anti-Catholic feeling within Henry's faction, and could therefore be seen to critique James' pacifying policies towards Spain.

The Masque of the Twelve Months had not been considered part of the Chapman canon until the 2007 appearance of Martin Butler's article 'George Chapman's *The Masque of the Twelve Months*', which compellingly summarises the case for Chapman's authorship, and suggests that it is the missing court masque for the Christmas festivities of 1618-19.⁶² Butler offers an interpretation of the masque which pinpoints it as heralding an ideological shift in Jacobean propaganda away from advocating an active and martial foreign policy towards a posture of defensive isolationism in the face of increasing conflict across Europe. Butler's article also includes an edited transcription of the full masque text, which is not easily available elsewhere.

Themes of Sexuality and Gender in Chapman Criticism

Perhaps surprisingly, given how popular feminist and queer theory has been over recent decades, particularly in criticism of Renaissance writers, this is a theme on which Chapman's critics have been rather silent. One possible explanation for this is that there is a paucity of developed female characters in Chapman's work: his interest does seem to lie in the dealings of men, and, as one character remarks of Byron, 'his blood is not voluptuous | Nor much inclinde to women' (*Conspiracy* 1.1. 66-7). However, there have been a small number of articles on this theme, many of them on the presentation of female sexuality in *The Widow's Tears*. Samuel Schoenbaum argues that with this play, Chapman 'anatomizes [sic] the character

⁶⁰ Rocco Cornato, 'Inducting Pocahontas', *Symbiosis*, 2 (1998), 24-38.

⁶¹ David Lindley, 'Courtly Play: The Politics of Chapman's *The Memorable Maske*', in *The Stuart Courts*, ed. Eveline Cruickshanks (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), pp. 43-58.

⁶² Martin Butler, 'George Chapman's *The Masque of the Twelve Months*', *ELR*, 37 (2007), 360-400.

of the female sex'.⁶³ He finds in Chapman a writer who, although occasionally capable of romantic idealism, is more comfortable when penning lecherous, hypocritical women, a tendency which is at its height in the savage caricatures of Eudora and Cynthia. Later critics have been kinder to Chapman on these allegations of misogyny: Rene Juneja traces a growth in maturity in Tharsalio's character to argue that he recants his antifeminist attitude. Juneja contextualizes the play within the double standards pertaining to widows in early modern society, finding particular relevance in the economic benefit to society in general that derived from a widow's remarriage. This is used to argue that Chapman is far more sympathetic towards women than previous criticism has given him credit for, and that the play's antifeminism is undermined by a celebration of human passion and sexuality. Elizabeth Hansen places *The Widow's Tears* amongst a group of Jacobean comedies focussing on rich widows as symbols of wealth influenced by the allegorical tradition of the Morality plays, and suggests that more important to these plays than anxieties surrounding the power of financially independent women is the uncertain nature of the masculine agency of these women's suitors.⁶⁴

One excellent article on the theme of sexuality is Mario Di Gangi's 'Asses and Wits: The Homoerotics of Mastery in Satiric Comedy'.⁶⁵ This examines the convergence of eroticism and servitude in several Renaissance plays, and includes a reading of *The Gentleman Usher* which shows how the homoerotic relationship between master and servant causes the servant Bassiolo to become interchangeable with the heterosexual object of desire, Margaret, giving the orthodox union a sodomitical taint and disturbing the social coherence of the play's denouement. The homoeroticism of some of the relationships in Chapman's plays has been largely overlooked, and this thesis seeks to rectify that oversight in Chapter 4, particularly with regard to *The Gentleman Usher* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. DiGangi's approach has been influential in my own readings of

⁶³ Samuel Schoenbaum, 'The Widow's Tears and Other Chapman', *HLQ*, 63 (1960), 321-338 (p.323).

⁶⁴ Rene Juneja, 'Widowhood and Sexuality in Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*', *PQ*, 67 (1988), 157-175; Elizabeth Hanson, 'There's Meat and Money Too: Rich Widows and Allegories of Wealth in Jacobean City Comedy', *ELH*, 72 (2005), 209-238.

⁶⁵ Mario Di Gangi, 'Asses and Wits: The Homoerotics of Mastery in Satiric Comedy', *ELR*, 25 (1995), 179-208.

these plays, especially in the connection it makes between homoeroticism and the role of the servant. Also useful in this respect is Mark Thornton Burnett's book on masters and servants, which discusses *The Gentleman Usher*, arguing that the troublesome role of the usher 'sparks off [...] reflections upon the intersections between political power, erotic persuasion, and domestic instability'.⁶⁶ I have built on the work of both critics to consider the servitude of patronage relationships, and the sexual tone they often carry in Chapman's work.

Text and Canon: Authorship, Dating and Source Material

Authorship of Disputed Texts

Much early twentieth century criticism was occupied with the task of identifying Chapman's sources and debating questions of disputed authorship. Those plays of Chapman's which were published during his lifetime with his name on the title-page are undisputedly his own work: *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (published 1598); *An Humorous Day's Mirth*; *All Fools*; *The Gentleman Usher*; *May-Day*; *Monsieur D'Olive*; *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Widow's Tears*; *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron*; *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*; and *Caesar and Pompey* belong to this category.

Sir Gyles Goosecappe was first printed in 1606 with no authorial ascription, but T. M. Parrott's 1906 article 'The Authorship of Sir Gyles Goosecappe,' thoroughly establishes Chapman's claim to it on grounds of stylistic and thematic similarities to other Chapman plays, and his conclusion has not been disputed – the play appeared both in his own edition of Chapman's *Comedies* and in Allan Holaday's now-standard two-volume edition of Chapman's works (although for some reason it is grouped with the tragedies rather than the comedies).⁶⁷

Two other plays which had been suggested as Chapman's, *Revenge for Honour* and *Two Italian Gentlemen*, are now agreed to be apocryphal. *Revenge for Honour* was published in 1654 by Richard Marriott, with a title-page claiming it as

⁶⁶ Mark Thornton Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p.184.

⁶⁷ T.M. Parrott, 'The Authorship of Sir Gyles Goosecappe,' *MP*, 4 (1906), 25-37. See also T.M. Parrott, ed., *The Comedies*; and Allan Holaday, ed., *The Plays of George Chapman: The Tragedies with Sir Gyles Goosecappe*.

Chapman's. However, D. L. Thomas points out that it had been entered the previous year in the Stationer's Register under the name of Glapthorne, and he disputes that Chapman had anything to do with it, arguing instead that it is one and the same as *The Parricide*, which is mentioned in Henry Herbert's licensing-book in 1624. Thomas finds that it bears strong enough resemblance to Fletcher's work to have been composed primarily by him, or by a student working under his influence, and possibly revised by Glapthorne before being printed in 1654.⁶⁸ T.M. Parrott examines the arguments, put forward by W.W. Greg in *The Malone Society Collections*, for ascribing to Chapman the authorship of *Two Italian Gentlemen* and thoroughly refutes the idea that there is any convincing evidence to suggest anything other than that the play was the work of Anthony Munday.⁶⁹

The Dates of the Plays

Dating has been one of the most contentious issues in textual criticism of Chapman's work. Albert Tricomi produced an excellent article for *English Literary Renaissance* in 1980 summing up the key pieces of evidence for each play and offering his own chronology, and there has been very little dispute of his conclusions.⁷⁰ Tricomi accepts the established dates for Chapman's earliest plays, which are: *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, 1596 and *An Humorous Day's Mirth*, 1598. Given that the rest of the plays are subject to slightly more controversy, I will summarise the key points of each debate here.

All Fools. Henslowe's *Diary* notes a play by Chapman named 'the world Rones a whelles & now all foolles but the foolle', in 1599, which is generally agreed to indicate a change of name.⁷¹ The play was not published until 1605, however, and Parrott argues that it was substantially revised in 1603-4 (*Comedies*, p.704). Tricomi

⁶⁸ D.L. Thomas, 'Authorship of *Revenge for Honour*', *MP*, 5 (1908), 617-636.

⁶⁹ T.M. Parrott, 'The Authorship of *Two Italian Gentlemen*', *MP*, 13 (1915), 241-51.

⁷⁰ Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Dates of the Plays of George Chapman', *ELR*, 12 (1980), 242-266. On the previous debate see chiefly: E.E. Stoll, 'On the Dates of Some of Chapman's Plays', *MLN*, 20 (1905), 206-209; T.M. Parrott, 'The Date of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*', *MLR*, 3 (1908) 126-40; Parrott, ed., *Tragedies of George Chapman*; Elias Schwartz, 'The Dates and Order of Chapman's Tragedies', *MP*, 57 (1959), 80-82; Schwartz, 'The Date of Chapman's *Byron Plays*', *MP* 58 (1961), 201-202; Schwartz, 'The Date of *Bussy D'Ambois*', *MP*, 59 (1961), 126-127; Robert Ornstein, 'The Dates of Chapman's Tragedies, Once More', *MP*, 59 (1961), 61-64.

⁷¹ E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage: Volume 3* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p.252; quoting Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. by W.W. Greg (London: 1904), volume 1, p. 109.

disputes this, finding 'no shred of evidence for a revision of *All Fools* later than 1601 (p.245). However, as I have argued in a forthcoming article, Tricomi's dismissal of a Jacobean revision is complicated by two references to James's distribution of honours, and the well-noted echoes of *Hamlet* also suggest a later date, because *Eastward Ho* (1605) is also full of Hamlet references. This backs up the notion that the play was revised around the same time as the collaborative comedy was in progress. Therefore, a revision of *All Fools* after James's accession, but before its court performance at New Year, 1605, is likely, so that Parrott's estimate of 1603-04 is sound, although 1604 seems the more credible suggestion.

May Day. Parrott and Tricomi agree that evidence of Chapman's imitation of *Twelfth Night* and *Antonio's Revenge* points to a date of around 1601. However, Parrott then argues that another parallel with *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609, but Parrott mistakenly assigns it to 1607) must indicate Dekker's influence on Chapman, as *May-Day* was not published until 1611. He therefore moves the date of composition back to 1607, but Tricomi shows this to be wrong, as the parallel is not very close, and could easily have been explained by Dekker remembering a stage version of the play. He therefore rests with the date of 1601, or early 1602 at the latest.

Sir Gyles Gooscappe. Parrott set the limits for this play as 1601-1603, since a reference to a recent visit of French gallants possibly glances at the Duke of Biron's visit in September 1601, and a paeon to Elizabeth suggests it was performed during her lifetime (*The Comedies*, p.890). Tricomi further refines this to a specific date of 1602, identifying *Sir Gyles* with an unnamed play described by a visiting German who saw it in September 1602 (pp.247-8).

The Gentleman Usher. Tricomi agrees with Parrott and E.K. Chambers that a date of 1602 is likely, as there are several close parallels with, and indeed an explicit reference to, *Sir Gyles Gooscappe*, which suggests a date immediately following this play. However, Robert Ornstein's 'Textual Introduction' to the play in Holaday's *Comedies* points out that there is no internal evidence other than the *Gooscappe* reference, and that Chambers had also recognised a date of 1604 was possible. As I argue in Chapter 4, there is a reference to the usher as a 'sweet beagle' (5.1.35), which could be picking up on James I's well-known pet name for

Sir Robert Cecil.⁷² If this is a deliberate reference to such a nickname, then a date sometime after 1603 is likely. Added to this, Tricomi's reasoning that the reference to the older play must suggest a date immediately after it seems flawed – surely an audience could be expected to remember a play performed a year or two earlier, and even if they did not, its inclusion in this play merely points to Chapman's wishing to advertise his own previous achievements. I also think the predominance of the hunting theme in the play might be seen as indicating James's fondness for this pastime, so I am inclined to think 1604 is correct. However, it must be admitted that the evidence is inconclusive.

Bussy D'Ambois. 1604 has been generally agreed on as the likeliest date of composition for *Bussy*, largely on the basis of Parrott's argument of internal references to a leap-year; to knighthoods; and to Elizabeth as an 'old queen', which must have been written after her death (Parrott, 'The Date of *Bussy*', p.132). Elias Schwartz argues for an earlier date on the basis of a reference to 'trusty Damboys' in Marston's 1601 *Satiromastix*; a possible reference to a minor character, Pero, in Henslowe's *Diary* of 1598; a 1598 description of Chapman as a writer of tragedy. However, as Ornstein and Tricomi have shown, the story of D'Ambois was well-known before Chapman wrote the play, the reference in Henslowe is almost certainly not to *Bussy* (Ornstein, p.63), and Chapman may have been considered a tragic writer after he finished Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (Tricomi, p.253). It therefore seems beyond reasonable doubt that the date for *Bussy*'s composition can be accepted as 1604.

The Widow's Tears. Tricomi argues that Parrott's date of 1605 is slightly too late: he suggests that *The Widow's Tears* was instead written between *Bussy* and *Eastward Ho*, partly on the basis that Chapman's imprisonment after the latter's performance would have interrupted his writing and also left him less willing to offend the censors with a satiric depiction of justice as is found in the final scene's depiction of the governor. Therefore Tricomi settles on a date of 1604 for this play. However this has been disputed by William Dean, who proposes a date of 1608 on the basis that Tharsalio's reference to his descendents being 'post-issue beggard' is in fact a topical allusion to the court case determining the legal status of Scots born

⁷² Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), p.181.

after James' ascension to the throne of England, which was decided in this year.⁷³ Dean makes an intriguing case, but the link is tenuous, and the balance of evidence suggests Tricomi is correct.

Monsieur D'Olive. Stoll, Parrott, Chambers, and Fleay all agree on 1604. However, Tricomi's article, 'The Focus of Satire and the Date of Monsieur D'Olive', traces extensive parallels between D'Olive's embassy and the Earl of Nottingham's mission to Spain, which did not occur until 1605, so he very convincingly argues for an adjustment of the date to the later year.

The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron. The dates of this play are mostly undisputed: it was entered in the Stationer's Register in summer 1608, and it demonstrably relies on Grimeston's *General Inventorie of the History of France*, which was not published until 1607, so relatively narrow limits of 1607-08 are accepted.

The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois. Parrott suggests 1610-11, which Tricomi accepts, largely because the title-page proclaims it was 'often presented as the private playhouse in the White-Fryars', and the Children of the Queen's Revels began playing there in 1609. The only evidence otherwise is another reference in *Northward Ho* to French figures who appear in this play: however, Tricomi argues that this has no relation to *The Revenge*, as those personages were familiar to English audiences from other sources, such as *the Massacre at Paris* and *Loves Labours Lost* (Tricomi, pp.260-61).

Caesar and Pompey. Parrott suggests 1612-13, but Tricomi revises this to 1604, partly on the basis of a source study which shows Chapman used a 1599 edition of Plutarch which also featured in his 1609 *Euthymiae Raptus*.⁷⁴ He also finds satirical reference to knighthoods, which he argues is a feature only of Chapman's work in the period 1604-05, and further cites the character of Bellamont in Dekker's *Northward Ho*, who is generally seen as modelled on Chapman and who mentions a play about the characters of Caesar and Pompey. This argument is, however, not as strong as the rest of Tricomi's allocations. In the first place, Ingledew's conclusion that the play predated *Euthymiae Raptus* is by no means proven, and I do not see why the evidence adduced in his article indicates a date of 1604. The

⁷³ William Dean, 'The Date of *The Widow's Tears*: An Allusion to the Case of Post-Nati (Calvin's Case), 1608', *N.&Q.*, 35 (1988), 59-60.

⁷⁴ J.E. Ingledew, 'The Date of Composition of Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey*', *RES*, 12 (1961), 144-59.

reliance on a particular edition of Plutarch only proves that it could not have been written before 1599 – Chapman could have read it, or re-read it, at any time thereafter, so this argument has very little weight. Furthermore, Ornstein shows in great detail that the identification of Chapman as Bellamont is problematic, suggesting that Drayton fits the description just as well as Chapman, and also pointing out that as Chapman declares *Caesar and Pompey* was never performed, it would be odd for Dekker to have identified him satirically by that play, given the success of many of his previous works (Ornstein, pp. 61-63). Tricomi does not take account of this argument, and his own suffers from it. It is not inconceivable that *Caesar and Pompey* was written this early, but its clear interest in Stoic thought, which has been summarised above, would also argue for a later date, aligning it with Chapman's other Stoic play, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*.

The Tragedy of Chabot. As previously outlined in the discussion of Norma Dobie Solve's study on *Chabot*, her proposed date of 1621-23 is based on the assumption that the play is an allegory of the downfall of the Earl of Somerset. However, Tricomi argues that the logic behind this revised date 'has never been scrutinized and seems [...] utterly mistaken' (p.261). He finds the allegory itself unconvincing, citing 'the basic dissimilarity of the two stories' (p.262), and detailing many of the ways in which the story of the play departs from the actual events of the Somerset trial. Tricomi then supports both Parrott and Ribner ('The Meaning of *The Tragedy of Chabot*', see p.30, n.43) in assuming an earlier date of composition, and further suggests that their date of 1612-13 should be revised to 1611-12 on the basis of verbal similarities with other works written at around the same time.

It should be clear from the arguments summarised here that the dating of Chapman's plays is a delicate and uncertain business: this study will work on the basis that Tricomi's dates are roughly correct, with the exception of the revision of *All Fools*, which I date to 1604; *The Gentleman Usher*, which I think is an early Jacobean work; and *Caesar and Pompey*, on which I tentatively agree with Parrott that 1612-13 is likeliest. However, the very uncertainty in the cases of so many of the plays should alert us to the danger of making arguments, like that of Norma Dobie Solve, which are dependent on a particular date for a particular text. While this thesis does make some arguments for a certain progression of Chapman's

thought, it is all too aware that many of the dates of composition are largely speculative, and so the readings I propose can stand up to an amount of flexibility in the dates assigned to the texts in question.

Source Study of Chapman's Plays

An early source study of *Eastward Ho* by Harlow Dunham Curtis finds 11 parallels of detail between the play's romantic plot and two novels by the Italian novelist Massucio.⁷⁵ Franck L. Schoell was one of the most important pioneers in detailing Chapman's sources and classical influences. 'A New Source of *Sir Gyles Goosecappe*,' finds in many passages in this play evidence of Chapman's debt to a work by the French author Estienne Tabourot entitled *Les Apophtegmes du Sieur Gaulard*; indeed he sees the eponymous character as almost entirely dependent on the *Apophtegmes*. 'George Chapman and the Italian Neo-Latinists of the Quattrocento' examines Politian's influence on Chapman, finding it particularly strong on 1610-1614. He makes a detailed examination of how the 'Epicede to Prince Henry' embellishes the substantial borrowings it makes from the Italian poet, concluding that Chapman 'altogether failed to harmonize his own invention with that of Politianus'. He then traces the influence of Jovius Pontanus in Chapman's 'Hymn to Hymen' on the occasion of the Princess Elizabeth's wedding. Schoell's 1919 article, 'Chapman's Commonplace Book', studies Chapman's classical influences and hypothesises that he kept a commonplace book from which he inserted many images or phrases when writing; it shows through detailed textual comparison that this book was substantially based on Erasmus' *Parabolae Sive Similia*, though the influence of the works of DuBartas can also be seen.⁷⁶ In another contribution to our knowledge of Chapman's classical reading, J.E. Ingledew shows through close textual comparison that several passages in *Caesar and Pompey* depend on Lucan's *Pharsalia*.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Harlow Dunham Curtis 'Source of the Petronel-Winifred Plot in *Eastward Hoe*', *MP*, 5 (1907), 105-8.

⁷⁶ Franck L. Schoell, 'A New Source of *Sir Gyles Goosecappe*', *MP*, 11 (1914), 547-548; Schoell, 'George Chapman and the Italian Neo-Latinists of the Quattrocento', *MP*, 13 (1915), 215-238; Schoell, 'Chapman's Commonplace Book', *MP*, 17 (1919), 199-218.

⁷⁷ J. E. Ingledew, 'Chapman's Use of Lucan in *Caesar and Pompey*', *RES*, 13 (1962), 283-288.

Although *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* has no clear historical source, being a play about a fictitious personage, E.E. Wilson posits a convincing theory that the character of Clermont is based on the real figure of the Count D'Auvergne.⁷⁸ He points out that it is the Count's capture on which Clermont's ambush is based, but more importantly points to the Stoic sentiments voiced by D'Auvergne in the *Byron* plays, and so suggests that Chapman, wishing to write a play about a Stoic hero, turned to a figure he had already portrayed some years earlier as the basis for Clermont.

John Hazel Smith, while acknowledging that the source of the main plot in *The Gentleman Usher* is unknown, and so assumed to be Chapman's own invention, finds the source of the subplot involving Strozza's wounding by an arrow and subsequent 'mystical transcendence' in a sixteenth-century medical text by the Italian Antonio Benivieni.⁷⁹ Rita Belladonna, 'A Jacobean's Source Revisited: George Chapman and Alessandro Piccolomini's *Allessandro*', examines Chapman's use of Piccolomini's romantic comedy in *May Day*, suggesting that Chapman's notably more satirical tone is due to the influence of Ben Jonson and the expectations of a private theatre audience, both of which worked to lessen the romantic elements of the source play in favour of more cynical social satire and a markedly less idealised treatment of women.⁸⁰

A.R. Braunmuller's short note, 'Chapman's Use of Plutarch's *De Fortuna Romanorum* in *The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*', finds a close verbal parallel between King Henry's speech to his son on cutting off Fortune's wings and shoes, and a passage in Plutarch describing Fortune's arrival in Rome, where she voluntarily gave up her wings and shoes to indicate her intention to stay.⁸¹

The parallels between *Eastward Ho* and *Hamlet* are well-explored. Richard Horwich's '*Eastward Ho* and *Hamlet*' comprehensively details the verbal parallels between the two plays, arguing that they are not merely gratuitous, but instead

⁷⁸ E.E. Wilson, jnr., 'The Genesis of Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *ELN*, 71 (1958), 567-69.

⁷⁹ John Hazel Smith, 'The Genesis of the Strozza Subplot in George Chapman's *The Gentleman Usher*', *PMLA*, 83 (1968), 1448-1453 (p.1448).

⁸⁰ Rita Belladonna, 'A Jacobean's Source Revisited: George Chapman and Alessandro Piccolomini's *Alessandro*', *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 3 (1982), 63-70.

⁸¹ A.R. Braunmuller, 'Chapman's Use of Plutarch's *De Fortuna Romanorum* in *The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*', *RES*, New Series, 23 (1972), 178-179.

point up a wider thematic parallel by which both plays contrast thrift and reason with uncontrolled passion.⁸² He argues that while the irony implicit in Hamlet's character might have suggested an ironic interpretation of the comedy for its contemporary audience, at the same time the seriousness of the tragedy would perhaps have imbued the later comedy with a similar significance. In 'A Hamlet Crux', David Farley-Hills suggests that at *Eastward Ho* 3.2.50-53, the author of the scene (whom he supposes to be Chapman) responds to Hamlet's comment about a hobby-horse at *Hamlet* 3.2.125, and surmises on this basis that the word had a bawdy sense which suggested a childish toy put away on arrival at sexual maturity. The same author returns to the verbal parallels between these two plays in 'Another Hamlet Crux', to suggest that *Eastward Ho*'s innuendo-laden dialogue about the coach in the same scene can throw light on Ophelia's mysterious reference to a wheel at *Hamlet* 4.5.170.⁸³ He argues that Chapman is again parodying Shakespeare's tragedy by drawing attention to the supposition that women were aroused by a coach's motion, an idea which Montaigne's essay 'Of the Lame or Cripple' suggests was a common one at the time.

William M. Hamlin, 'A Borrowing From Nashe in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*', notes the close verbal parallel between *Bussy* 1.2.49-50, and a passage from Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, and argues that Chapman is drawing upon it to highlight concerns of class and cowardice in the face of verbal antagonism.⁸⁴ Nina Da Vinci Nichols, 'The Arlecchino and Three English Tinkers', suggests that both Chapman and Shakespeare were influenced by the subversive and transformative power of the Harlequin figures of Renaissance Italian popular entertainments; Cappriccio of *The Memorable Maske* is taken as evidence of the absorption of Arlecchino bellows-imagery into Jacobean drama.⁸⁵

What emerges most strongly from a study of the work on Chapman's sources is the sheer breadth of his reading – apart from the Classical knowledge

⁸² Richard Horwich, 'Hamlet and Eastward Ho', *SEL*, 11 (1971), 223-233.

⁸³ David Farley-Hills, 'A Hamlet Crux', *N.&Q.*, 240 (1995), 319-20; Farley-Hills, 'Another Hamlet Crux', *N.&Q.*, 243 (1998), 334-336.

⁸⁴ William M. Hamlin, 'A Borrowing From Nashe in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*', *N.&Q.*, 246 (2001), 264-65.

⁸⁵ Nina Da Vinci Nichols, 'The Arlecchino and Three English Tinkers', *Comparative Drama*, 36 (2002), 145-185.

one expects from a prolific translator of Homer, Musaeus, Virgil and others, it is clear that he also was very widely-read in literature of the European Renaissance, particularly Italian and French works of history, drama, and satire. Although this study does not engage a great deal with Chapman's relationship to his sources, this background of his intellectual vigour and enthusiasm for scholarly debate is important, because, as I will argue in the final chapter, he clearly saw learning as not only a path to virtue or a means of moral instruction, but an alternative scale of value to the aristocratic hierarchy prevalent (but under threat) during the early modern period.

Radical Chapman? the Dramatist as Political Commentator and Patron Seeker

From this study of Chapman criticism over the last century it is clear that there has been a large amount of attention to the political aspects of some of his plays. How then will this study manage to say anything new? First, it will not confine itself, as most political interpretations previously have, to the tragedies. The tragedies do admittedly dominate my reading of Chapman, largely because they constitute his most serious interrogations of the workings of monarchical authority in a court setting. However, I will also discuss several of Chapman's comedies which demonstrably share the concerns and anxieties he explores in the French historical (or republican Roman) setting. Furthermore, my study begins with an assessment of Chapman not as commenting abstractly on the theoretical issues of government (although this is an accurate description of his method at times) but as embedded in the values and everyday life of the court culture of which he was so critical. What has been conspicuously lacking in Chapman criticism is any attempt to explore how his plays can be read within the context of his own life, and his own struggles, at the margins of the court in Jacobean London.

Biographical concerns are not very fashionable in our postmodern era, which has long proclaimed the death of the author, but in Chapman's case his work must be understood in the context in which it was produced. That context is defined primarily by his life-long anxiety about his own poverty, his lack of success in the patronage rat race, and his sense that the corrupt statists of the time

rewarded flattery rather than virtue. David Lindley has commented on Chapman: 'He seems to have had a positive genius for picking losers as his patrons'.⁸⁶ A brief survey of his life bears out this assessment. Initially some kind of servant in the household of Ralph Sadler, he seems to have been abroad possibly in the Low Countries on military service – Jean Jacquot speculates that he left England some time around 1585, or after the death of Sir Ralph in 1587.⁸⁷ However, he was presumably back sometime before *The Shadow of Night* was entered in the Stationers' Register in 1593. His first major patron was the Earl of Essex, to whom he dedicated his first translations of Homer, and who was of course, executed in 1601 after his abortive rebellion. Graham Parry asserts that Chapman was 'granted a place in the Prince's household shortly after it was established in 1603', and reads the French tragedies as aimed at Henry's eyes:

The preoccupation with valorous heroic figures that is such a feature of Chapman's work, the various attempts at presenting the 'complete man' of the Renaissance in such characters as Bussy and Clermont, great and integrated brings who are 'young, learned, valiant, virtuous and full-mann'd', acquire a comprehensible context if we see Chapman working in the court of a young prince who himself embodies these qualities and who actively strove to create a heroic atmosphere at that court.⁸⁸

This is rather a simplistic view of Chapman's work: as we shall see, it is hard to see any of his heroes as representing unequivocally the virtues the playwright would prize as ideal in a courtier, let alone a ruler. However, Parry's description of Henry's court as 'noted for its air of chivalry, for its piety, sobriety and good order' (p.69), is useful. There is a discernible continuity between Chapman's first two major patrons: indeed, Henry was seen, as Roy Strong has detailed, as 'heir to the mantles of the two late Elizabethan heroes, Sir Philip Sidney and Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, as the epitome of militant Protestant chivalry'.⁸⁹ But it is a mistake to view Chapman as blindly praising the ideal of martial aristocracy.

⁸⁶ David Lindley, *The Trials of Francis Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.131.

⁸⁷ Jean Jacquot, *George Chapman: Sa vie, sa poésie, son théâtre, sa pensée* (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1951), p.16.

⁸⁸ Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court 1603-42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 68.

⁸⁹ Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p. 14.

Indeed, in many ways, his French tragedies, particularly *Byron*, reveal his continuing attempts to come to terms with the problems and contradictions inherent in the role of the warrior-hero in society. As Ralph Soellner has shown, it might be better to view at least one of those plays as a *warning* to the prince about these warrior ideals, rather than a flattery of him based on extolling them.⁹⁰

But however complicated Chapman's attitude towards Henry's court may have been, it seems likely that he felt attracted to the strong moral and religious tone by which it was dominated. Strong comments that: 'the atmosphere of the palaces at St. James's and Richmond was more like that of a puritan monastery than what we recognise as a Jacobean court' (p.80). For Chapman to go from a liveried position at this subdued, pious court, to soliciting the favour of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, seems something of a discrepancy. After the moral rigour and Protestant outlook of Henry's court, to follow it with praise of a man whose marriage to Francis Howard was one of the most scandalous episodes of James's reign may have seemed to Chapman to be a humiliating degradation. Furthermore, the most [in]famous work which he dedicated to Somerset was *Andromeda Liberata*, (1614) which defended in allegorical terms the marriage which had so scandalised society. It is unlikely that the morally-minded playwright did not feel that his new patron was, in reputation and in moral outlook, inferior to the dead prince, and consequently that his own position as a servant of the king's erstwhile favourite was insalubrious, to say the least.

This period in Somerset's service was not only degrading for Chapman, it was ineffective in rescuing him from the poverty which haunted his life. Somerset was replaced as favourite by Buckingham, and then implicated in the Overbury murder scandal, but Chapman stood by his man and continued to dedicate poems to the unfortunate Earl. This period in Chapman's life, if we accept the dating discussed above, did not begin until he had written all of his plays, but it must have solidified for him the sense that inherent in the act of seeking patronage was a humiliating submission, a selling of one's talent to those powerful but morally dubious men who had the ability to dictate the direction of reward in Jacobean courtly society. Key to this study is the acknowledgement that this was a sense

⁹⁰ Soellner, 'Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey* and the Fortunes of Prince Henry'.

which pervades Chapman's work even in his early years under the patronage of Henry.

It would be far too simple to say that after Henry's death Chapman longed for the restoration of a golden age of honest courtiers and deservedly rewarded poets which he nostalgically ascribed to the prince's influence – and his writings during this period show clearly that this is not how he viewed it. This is perhaps explicable by the fact that Henry's court, monastic analogies aside, was not hermetically sealed from the corruption and power games which dominated the court of James. Chapman was writing primarily for the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, the audience for which must have been made up of courtiers from both courts. Indeed, he also solicited patronage from Sir Thomas Walsingham and his wife Audrey, whom Reavley Gair describes as 'royal favourites' of James throughout his reign.⁹¹ Clearly, whatever arrangement Chapman had with Prince Henry was by no means an exclusive one, so it is a mistake to read, as Parry does, his plays from this period as solely reflecting sentiments he thought the prince wanted to hear. If he was influenced by Henry in his dramatic writing, it is far more likely that it was only to the extent that he could see the pitfalls and temptations to which his royal father was prone, and wanted to highlight these dangers for the successor to note and avoid whenever he came to power.

The process of reading Chapman's plays for their topical meaning necessarily involves taking some account of the censorship of the era. In this, my work has been more influenced by the views put forward by Annabel Patterson and Richard Dutton amongst others than it has by the draconian picture painted by Janet Clare. Patterson's idea of 'a system of communication in which ambiguity becomes a creative and necessary instrument, a social and cultural force of considerable consequence' is intriguing, although her contention that such a system was 'intelligible to all parties at the time, [...] a fully deliberate and conscious arrangement' perhaps over-emphasises the degree to which all parties were working with a coherent view of what was allowable.⁹² As Janet Clare has argued: 'The assumption of a cultural bargain struck between the professional

⁹¹ Reavley Gair, 'Sir Thomas Walsingham', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28628>, accessed 13/08/08.

⁹² Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p.11, p.17.

playwright and those in power simply has to be revised in view of what we know about a body of drama which fell foul of censorship'.⁹³ However, the best explanation for those instances when drama 'fell foul' of the censors comes not from Clare herself but from Dutton, who argues that the Master of the Revels was an intermediary between the writers and the powerful court members who were liable to be offended by topical implication. It was not that the authorities objected to writers making veiled political statements, he argues; rather the role of the censor was 'to ensure that the fictional veiling was adequate, so that serious offence might not be offered to members of the court or friendly foreign dignataries'.⁹⁴

The approach taken throughout this thesis has been to assume that Chapman's dramatic depictions of power relations, particularly between ruler and ruled, are reflections of his own ideas about the role of monarchy, and the prevailing issues facing courtiers and other members of the political class during the reign of James I. This does not necessarily mean that every ruler in every play is merely a stand-in for James himself, but it suggests that the political issues he explores have both an abstract meaning and a material relation to the actual circumstances in which Chapman was writing. It further suggests that his plays would have been interpreted in this way by an audience accustomed to reading analogically, very much in the way that Patterson articulates. That Chapman did on several occasions fall foul of the censors (see Clare, pp.150-65) is evidence that his plays were often very close to the line of what was allowable.

The following chapter examines how Chapman constructed a sense of English national identity through his plays and masques, picking up questions of religion and the role of the young prince in formulations of the nation, and considering the role of France and French history in this matter – five of Chapman's tragedies are set at the French court in the contemporary era, and French politics obviously had a close relation in his mind to English politics. Chapter 3 returns to the thorny issue of Chapman's economic status, arguing that matters of money and debt are represented with great anxiety in his plays, and

⁹³ Janet Clare, *'Art Made Tongue-Tied By Authority': Elizabethan and Jacobean Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.16.

⁹⁴ Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeswords* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p.7.

that this is related not only to his own experiences, but to his sense that, in James I, England had acquired a monarch whose liberality threatened its morality and reputation. Chapter 4 is concerned with the idea of patronage as a degrading experience, a prostitution of the literary work (and its maker) in the service of amoral aristocrats whose behaviour is fitter for condemnation than flattery. It examines the sexualised language in which Chapman often discusses patronage to draw a parallel between the subjection involved in courting a woman and approaching a patron. The fifth chapter tackles the more theoretical issues explored in Chapman's tragedies, of the relative rights and responsibilities of monarch and subject. This revolves around treason, and suggests that in his plays treason is a vague category deployed when the royal patronage between a king and his powerful favourite breaks down. The sixth and final chapter argues that Chapman considers the concept of virtue as a social and even a political measure of worth, but one which is almost impossible to reconcile with public life. This goes back to some extent to the idea of his antipathy towards the patronage which he was forced by his poverty to seek, but it also encompasses a way of looking at public figures, in terms not of their birth or status, but of their proclivity to virtue and learning, which is potentially radical.

All of these chapters are concerned with the basic paradox whereby Chapman demonstrates again and again his deep hostility towards the court and its values, and his conviction that only 'politic' self-serving flatterers have any chance for advancement, while he continues to flatter the flatterers by dedicating works to them, even after his apparent retirement from play-writing and his move from London back to his home town of Hitchin. How could someone who despised flatterers as much as Chapman clearly did write a poem like *Andromeda Liberata*, to defend a pair of aristocrats who had flouted moral and social norms to satisfy their own lust and their families' political ambitions? This is primarily a study of Chapman's drama, but obviously the concerns of his plays often overlap with concerns voiced in his poems, so I will at times draw on his poetry to back up assertions made about his position as I find it to be enunciated in the drama. What emerges is a picture of a writer whose work is riven by contradictions, who opposes the corruption of a court where honours are sold for an ever-decreasing price and where favourites chosen by the whim of a dissolute monarch can have

power of life and death over lesser men. Yet he also keeps attempting to have his work, and implicitly, his social identity, verified by its acceptance by the very men whose ambitions and values he attacks. There is no solution to this quandary, no neat way of resolving the tension, but perhaps therein lies the interest of his work. The image of Bussy on his knees proclaiming the absolute independence of the virtuous man from monarchic rule, against the evidence of his own position, can be seen as an emblem of the playwright himself, writing plays which explore the condition of being a subject of a monarch, and subject to the power structures and courtly alliances of that monarch's court. Even while his work explores the possibilities for independence and integrity within the court, he seems to admit that such possibilities are curtailed by material circumstance. However, it is in the negotiations between these two positions that Chapman reveals himself to be a nuanced, sophisticated, and radical dramatist.

Chapter 2

Imagining the Nation: Chapman's Frenchified Englishmen

Benedict Anderson has written that the nation is 'an imagined political community. All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished [...] by the style in which they are imagined'.¹ His seminal discussion of the rise of nationalism connects the growth of capitalism and the printing press to emergent ideas of nationhood which he situates in conflict with dynastic absolutism. Anderson's work is useful for a discussion of George Chapman's writing in two key ways. First, it allows us to ask how writers in England in general, and Chapman in particular, contributed to the process of imagining their community through their printed texts and theatre performances. In other words, in what style was the Jacobean nation imagined by Chapman and his contemporaries? Secondly, Anderson's insistence that such emergent national identity constitutes a challenge to the ideology of absolutism is highly relevant to Chapman's work, which imagines English national identity largely through the dramatic setting of the French court, in a series of plays which explore the relative rights, responsibilities, and limitations on the power of subjects and their dynastic rulers.

The process of imagining the nation is not just the prerogative of a ruler. It is conducted between many different voices, not all of whom will necessarily share a unity of vision as to the nature of the nation they are imagining. Allen Carey-Webb's comparative study of national identity formation in early modern Europe and twentieth-century postcolonial emergent nations shares with Anderson a belief that the nation-state has its origins in the early modern period, and argues that the drama of Renaissance Europe represented ideas of the nation

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

to the public. Carey-Webb views this dramatic project as conducted along the lines of inclusion and exclusion: 'in order to identify a national Self, difference within the nation is projected outward onto a constructed Other'.² Richard Helgerson agrees on the centrality of this era to the formation of English national identity, finding 'a concerted generational project' among the English writers born in the 1550s and 1560s to imagine the nation through their writings.³ He identifies two main issues at stake in this national project: 'One concerns the monarch and monarchic power. The other involves the inclusion or exclusion of various social groups from privileged participation in the national community and its representations' (p.9).

Essentially, both Carey-Webb and Helgerson see exclusion as key to the project of representing the nation to itself: for the former, England's incipient imperial conquest allows it to define itself against the native other of the Americas, while for the latter, the divisions between the ruling class and the common people are pivotal to the way Renaissance drama (exemplified in his study by Shakespeare's history plays) constructs the nation. However, when we study Chapman's dramatic writing in these terms, the inadequacy of such theories becomes obvious. Although he occasionally concerns himself with imperial expansion – notably in *The Memorable Masque* – his main explorations of English national identity take place in his French history plays. The picture of England which emerges from these plays is one in which the similarities, not the differences, between France and England, are stressed.

As Helgerson suggests, the negotiation of power between monarch and subject is closely bound up with national identity. Chapman uses his French tragedies to explore issues of government and agency which were of topical concern to England, creating structural parallels between the two countries which suggest an England not isolated from her European neighbour, but intertwined with France, culturally, historically, and politically. This is strengthened by his many subtle ways of reminding his audience of the cultural and historical links between the two countries – references to English volunteer soldiers during the

² Allen Carey-Webb, *Making Subject(s): Literature and the Emergence of National Identity* (New York; London: Garland, 1998), p. 12.

³ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1992), p. 1.

French civil wars, for example, and also to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, serve to underline the fact that French history had an immediate and direct effect on English life. This chapter argues that Chapman's representation of the nation in his plays and masques is marked, not by a xenophobic fear of otherness, but by a sense of cultural exchange and permeability which lends itself to an international, as well as national, outlook. In addition to Anglo-French relations, Chapman's relationship with Prince Henry is important for his ideas about nationhood. I would argue that he holds some sympathy with Henry's ideological Protestantism, but he is cautious, especially later in his career, of the belligerence of the war party and eventually uses *The Memorable Masque* as a means to urge colonial expansion as an alternative to European war. In short, in terms of a view of foreign relations, Chapman's outlook is better described as inclusive than exclusive.

However, the relationship *between* nations is only one side of the two-pronged method of exclusion suggested by Helgerson. The other, the question of which groups *within* the nation are taken as its representatives and endowed with authority accordingly, is a little harder to answer in Chapman's case. Helgerson writes of the books by his so-called 'generation' of poets who gave forms to the nation: 'No one but the literate and well-to-do could read or buy such books. And their representations of England were similarly exclusive. Neither in form nor in content did they wander far from the culture of learning and privilege' (p.196). He also contends that from the 1590s onwards, the drama 'moves in the direction of greater exclusion' with the advent of what he calls the 'author's theatre' of Marlowe and Nashe (p.198). He bases this on the representation of the common people in the plays of the public theatre, arguing that they are increasingly marginalised. These two aspects of Helgerson's argument display a surprising naivety about relations between different social groups in the period. The first statement errs in its assumption that the culture of learning was identical with the culture of privilege. Obviously, to be educated in this period was to some extent to be privileged, but to assume that the two are identical ignores the fact that it was possible to be learned without feeling oneself particularly privileged – as indeed was clearly the case with Chapman. On the other hand, learning could in some cases be used by the lower classes to obtain some of the power previously

reserved only for those of noble birth. Frank Whigham has written on this subject in detail, reminding us that the early modern period was 'a time when an exclusive sense of aristocratic identity [...] was being stolen, or at least encroached upon, by a horde of young men not born to it'.⁴ The relations between learning and privilege were far more complicated and disputed than Helgerson suggests. It is also flawed to assume that only the learned or the privileged were party to the process of national identity formation, when popular culture and local networks of alliance and power may have been just as important to a commoner when thinking about their own nationality.

Furthermore, the insinuation that we should automatically denounce playwrights for failing to speak up for the commons is flawed. It is true that the populace are very rarely even mentioned in Chapman's history plays, and when one of them crops up, disguised as a noble, in *The Gentleman Usher* (1604), he is exposed as a fraud and exiled, bearing the full disgust of the aristocratic community which he had attempted to join. In *The Tragedy of Chabot* (c.1612) commoners are generally seen as misguided and misinformed at best. They are heard cheering offstage after Chabot is convicted in the sham trial – the Chancellor who has coerced the judges into giving a guilty verdict notes 'how the votes applaud their blest deliverance!' (2.1.269). But it should also be recognised that this was the norm among commentators of the time – Christopher Hill argues, for example, that class hostility was 'a simple fact of the world [...], so obvious that it was rarely discussed', and he shows the ways in which 'dread and hatred of the masses were often reflected in literature'.⁵ To condemn dramatists for excluding the masses is to overlook the ways in which the plays could nevertheless dramatise ideological struggles and political tensions. Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, the struggle for representation at a government level was mostly conducted by privileged members of society, who already possessed a significant voice. Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, summarising the growth in the size and powers of Parliament up to the time of Elizabeth specifically remind

⁴ Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1984), p.5.

⁵ Christopher Hill, 'The Many-headed Monster', in *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp.181-204 (p.181). See especially pp.182-6 for a discussion of negative representations of 'the people' in literature.

their readers 'that it was the political nation, not the people, who participated in all this'.⁶ They specifically draw a distinction between the 'political nation' – meaning those with some voice in government, whether at a local or national level – and 'the people', meaning everyone else.

A focus on the court as the realm in which the nation takes shape, and on the monarch and nobility as the prime agents in its historical narrative, does not mean that Chapman was presenting propaganda on behalf of a united governing elite. Instead, his tragedies find their subject matter in the conflicts which occur within that elite, and he uses his aristocratic characters to explore contradictory political ideas. He reflects, particularly in the *Bussy* plays, upon the pressure which the nobility was facing from socially mobile 'upstarts'. Chapman was writing for the private theatres and so was speaking for and to the 'literate, well-to-do' audience Helgerson identifies, but he never makes the assumption that the meant he was addressing a unified group of people with identical interests and opinions. Instead, he uses the French historical settings of his plays to suggest parallels with England in a way more complicated than Helgerson's model of an emergent nation defining itself against its other: in fact, the overwhelming suggestion behind his tragedies is of the deep similarities between the French and English attempts to define their national identity. By foregrounding the problematic relations between monarch and subject in a French setting, he suggests a similarly fraught relation in an English context, and begins to imagine the nation as in some ways separable from the person of the monarch. That is, the political nation, while it is unquestionably privileged compared to the mass of common people, is at least thought of not as united by and embodied in the king, but as potentially ill-served by bad government. The parallels between English and French, then, are ultimately used to suggest a perspective which approaches the anti-monarchic sentiment and the idea of a nation as served by its ruler, which would come to be so important in the Parliamentary rhetoric deployed against Charles I.

⁶ Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.29.

'Frenchified Englishmen': Comic Depictions of English Otherness

A common charge laid against Englishmen of the Renaissance was that they slavishly imitated foreign fashions. Thomas Dekker famously writes:

An English-mans suite is like a traitors bodie that hath been hanged, drawne, and quartered, and set up in severall places: his Codpeece is in *Denmarke*, the collar of his Dublet, and the belly in *France*: the wing and narrow sleeve in *Italy*: the short waste hangs over a *Dutch* botchers stall in *Utrich*; his huge sloppes speakes *Spanish*; *Polonia* gives him the Bootes.⁷

A similar sentiment is voiced by Ben Jonson's Epigram 88, 'On English Monsieur'.⁸ This poem mocks a man whose 'whole body should speak French, not he', listing the items of French clothing which the fashionable Monsieur is wearing despite the fact that he is 'untravelled' and has never been 'toward the sea, farther than the halfway tree'. Roze Hentschell argues that Jonson's epigram demonstrates the satirist's anxiety about the malevolence of foreign fashion: 'The English Monsieur, his very name a blurring of national fealty, is several things at once: completely domesticated ("untravelled"), utterly French, morally suspicious (carrying "the French disease"), and possibly traitorous'.⁹ She sees this poem as embodying 'the threat of the other, and specifically the threat of the other's *clothes*' (p.544). Hentschell over-simplifies Jonson's poem, because she does not explore the tension, which is in fact the defining paradox of the poem, between the gentleman's propensity for French fashion and his actual ignorance of the French language and nation. This is not primarily a poem which mocks the foreign: it mocks the pretentiousness of the ignorant Englishman who supposes himself to be urbane and cosmopolitan when in fact his clothes 'speak' better French than he does.

Hentschell's article provides a fascinating account of the ways in which fashion was bound up with early modern perceptions of national identity, but it

⁷ Thomas Dekker, *The Seven Deadly Sinness of London*, ed. by H.F.B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1922), p. 44.

⁸ Ben Jonson, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by George Parfitt (London: Penguin, 1988), p.62.

⁹ Roze Hentschell, 'Treasonous Textiles: Foreign Cloth and the Construction of Englishness', *JMEMS*, 32 (2002), 543-570 (p.544).

errs insofar as it assumes more or less unanimity among English commentators regarding the evils of foreign clothes, which she connects to the threat to the English cloth trade constituted by the popularity of imported materials like silk and velvet. She finds in the work of several satirists, 'a material attempt to emphasize the values so important to England at a time when the value of England's materials was under assault' (p.565). This holds true for many of the texts she discusses, but what is lacking in her argument is a sense that much of the literature of the day was written for an audience who would perhaps have sided with the consumers of foreign fabrics, rather than their detractors. After all, the satirists would hardly have bothered to comment on foreign fashion unless there was a substantial number of people demanding, buying and wearing it. The ubiquity of the condemnation of foreign fashion perhaps also indicates a tradition of satire in which national unity could be asserted by the repetition of a stock joke about English self-image which would be appreciated even by the very consumers of the clothing it mocks. Both Jonson and Chapman were writing primarily for such an audience, and Jonson's poem perfectly shows up the ambiguities caused by this position. Although the wearing of French fashion is undeniably a focus of the satire, the 'French Monsieur' is made particularly ridiculous by his ignorance of France – the subtext suggests perhaps, that if he *had* been well-travelled, and knew how to speak French, his fashion choices would be more appropriate (or at least, less ridiculous). Jones and Stallybrass have argued that "'fashion" did not have changing styles of clothing as its naturalized referent; rather, it commonly referred to the act of making, or to the make or shape of a thing'.¹⁰ Bearing this in mind then, it would seem as though the epigram mocks the 'English Monsieur' for his lack of success in fashioning himself, for the fact that despite his pretensions, it is clear to all onlookers that he has never been to France. The tone of the poem, although acerbic, does not seem to be particularly threatened by the foreign influence – rather, it responds to a long tradition of English satire which Hentschell herself traces back to Andrew Boorde's 1542 *The First Booke of the Introduction to Knowledge*, which 'famously represents an unclothed Englishman with shears in his hand' (p.546). Jonson knowingly refers to this tradition to

¹⁰ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.1.

paradoxically create a sense of community among his audience through a satirical perspective in which that audience are very much implicated in the behaviour which they take pleasure in mocking.

Jonson's approach is very close to Chapman's, and both writers use the word 'frenchified' to explore the issues of English-French relations. The *OED* suggests it is a Jonsonian coinage, first occurring in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1597), which mocks Sir Fastidius Briske, 'the fresh Frenchified courtier'.¹¹ In *Eastward Ho* (1605) the runaway 'thirty-pound knight' (4.1.197-8) Sir Petronel, having been washed up on the Isle of Dogs during a shipwreck while attempting to sail to Virginia to escape his creditors in London, becomes convinced that during the storm he and his companion have managed to cross the channel and land in France. He says, in response to his companion's scepticism: 'dost thou think our Englishmen are so Frenchified, that a man knows not, whether he be in France, or in England, when he sees 'hem?' (4.1.172-4), and proceeds to speak a comic version of French to two passers-by, who ask him: 'Why speak you this broken French, when y'are a whole Englishman?' (187-8).

The same word also occurs in *Sir Gyles Goosecappe* (1602), where the character Captain Foulweather is mocked throughout the play for his love of all things French. Foulweather employs a French page, Bullaker, who comes upon two English pages in the first scene, who mistake him for a monkey. He is indignant: 'Out ye *mopede monckies* can yee not knowe a man from a *Marmasett* in theis Frenchified dayes of ours?' (1.1.34-35). In both *Sir Gyles Goosecappe* and *Eastward Ho*, 'Frenchified' appears in a context which involves the breaking down of categories of identity. In Sir Petronel's case, his certainty that he is in France rebounds ironically upon him and the passers-by who mock him: he obviously thinks he is in France because the gentlemen he sees approach him are wearing clothes which would be associated with French fashion. In this way, his mistake indicates that as far as appearances go, the French and the English have indeed become indistinguishable. But the fact that he speaks French in response to his belief about his whereabouts is interesting too: although this might render him 'Frenchified', the 'broken' nature of his linguistic skills allows the passing

¹¹ Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, in *Ben Jonson: Volume 3*, ed. by C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), repr. 1954, p.459, 1.3.195.

gentlemen to be certain that he is instead 'a whole Englishman'. Speech is seen here as a more reliable indicator of national identity than clothing, and it is Sir Petronel's *flawed* speech which identifies him as English. Mostly this scene is having some good-natured fun at the pretensions of English courtiers, but it nonetheless enacts a crossing and recrossing of national identities which Chapman explores more seriously elsewhere.

In the opening scene of *Sir Gyles Goosecappe*, the term becomes more definitely a marker of the chaos of contemporary category-boundaries: the speaker is lamenting the inability of the addressees to distinguish 'a man from a *Marmasett*'. That he should associate this inability with the 'Frenchified' nature of the times is a little curious, as he himself is French and the addressees are English, but it seems broadly to suggest that in a culture where national identities are no longer fixed or knowable, even the line between human and animal becomes uncertain. The fact that the animals in question are monkeys perhaps glances at the connotations of 'aping' the behaviour of another. As Dekker writes, in his denunciation of foreign fashion: 'An Ape is *Zani* to a man, doing over those trickes (especially if they be knavish) which hee sees done before him, so that *Apishnesse* is nothing but counterfetting or imitation'.¹² In Bullaker's formulation, the French and English are caught in a cycle of mutual imitation which renders it impossible to tell who is aping whom.

But the play as a whole does not treat the proximity of English and French versions of cultural identity as threatening. Once the initial conflict between the French and English boys has been resolved (a harmony achieved by Bullaker threatening the English pages with a beating unless they apologise to him *in French*, which they promptly do), the three begin to discourse as equals, setting the scene for the audience and gossiping about their masters and mistress. There no longer seems to be any difference between them at all, perhaps because they are united by their shared position as servants to the upper classes. Is this a simple case of class considerations overwhelming national ones? This would be suggested by Helgerson's reading of Shakespeare's history plays, where, he argues, 'the high declared itself high by spurning the low. No feeling of national

¹² Dekker, *The Seven Deadly Sinnes*, p.43.

solidarity across the classes could be expected to prevail against the demands of this fundamental strategy'.¹³ In light of this, should we read this exchange as Chapman distancing himself (and his audience) from the lower-class pages, partly by showing how readily they submit themselves to the domination of a French character of similarly low status? Actually, the play makes this reading far more complicated: other characters, particularly Captain Foulweather, also contribute to the dissolution of French-English categories, and although this is seen as comical, it never becomes truly threatening.

Foulweather seems to view Frenchness not as an innate characteristic but as a sliding scale on which one could move according to one's behaviour. So when Bullaker gives him some unsolicited advice he accuses him of being 'so mere rude and English to advise your Captaine' (1.3.62). Englishness here is associated with a cheeky presumption, a refusal to know one's proper place, which is implicitly contrasted with Foulweather's idealised view of French behaviour. Conversely when Jack and Will entertain him with their word games, he praises them by calling them 'my more then English pages' and 'my almost french Elixers' (3. 1. 239, 242-3). 'More than English' is here synonymous with 'almost French', and Foulweather is consistent in his view of the superiority of French to English. But elsewhere in the play the relationship is viewed in a different order: when Goosecappe declares he will 'nere love English moone againe' (3.1.278) because he fell over attempting to make his way home by its light, Rudsbie immediately draws a distinction between the astronomical moon, characterised as English, and 'french moonnes (their torches)' (282), that would supplement its light. This formulation associates the English with the moon and the French with the inferior, supplementary torchlight so would seem to offer the audience a more flattering self-portrait of their nation. But the fact remains that the English articulation of their own identity relies on these supplements from the French (the moon itself is the secondary light-source, borrowing its light from the sun, so even this association of England with the moon is problematic for a reading of English self-sufficiency). Similar conjunctions occur in Lord Tales' judgement that Goosecappe is 'the best Sempster of any woman in England, [who] will worke you needle

¹³ Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p.206.

worke edgings, and French purles' (2.1.328-30): again with the link to fashion which so often seems to come into play in these discussions, the mastery of French stitching is necessary in order for Goosecappe to be better than any English 'Sempster'. This reliance on French skills is also seen in the men's discussion in Act 3 about whether to alight from their horses or ride downhill in a frost. Foulweather asserts that 'your Frenchman never lights', and Goosecappe replies 'there's nere a paltrie English frost an them all shood make me light' (3.1.36-40). There is some sense of rivalry in Goosecappe's determination not to be outshone in horsemanship by the French, but nonetheless here, as in the other passages from this play, English ideas of what France is (however stereotyped or inaccurate these may be) are appropriated as a vital element in the imagining of an English identity.

Both *Eastward Ho!* and *Sir Gyles Goosecappe* deal with the overlap between French and English identities in ways best characterised as playful rather than threatening. In Chapman's tragedies he makes a much more serious engagement with ideas of national identity, but often relies on the same parallels between the two nations as *Sir Gyles* hints at. By emphasising the shared history of France and England, and by finding analogies even between separate historical events, Chapman again presents a rather surprising version of English national identity, one which is predicated on permeability and openness to cultural exchange rather than a xenophobic definition of self against other.

'A Mere Mirror of Confusion': the French and English Courts in Chapman's Historical Tragedies

Chapman's tragedies utilise several different strategies to make the French court bear meaning upon the English one. In an analogical reading, the power relations among different factions of the French nobility are used to stand for issues at stake in Jacobean England. Perhaps more interesting and more subtle than this method is the way Chapman has his French characters make references or even engage in extended discussions of English court behaviour or well-known English historical figures. In continuation of the theme of French clothing, for example, *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604, published 1607) contains an interesting scene early in the play

where the French nobles discuss the English fondness for foreign clothing. Count Montsurry says of the English courtiers:

No Question we shall see them imitate
 (Though a farre off) the fashions of our Courts,
 As they have ever Ap't us in attire;
 Never were men so wearie of their Skins,
 And apt to leap out of themselves as they;
 Who when they travell to bring foorth rare men,
 Come home deliver'd of a fine French suit:
 Their Braines lie with their Tailors, and get babies
 For their most compleat issue. (1.2.37-45)

This passage obviously taps into the concerns discussed earlier in relation to Jonson's Epigram. The metaphorical image of the last four lines in this passage utilises the 'semantic slippage in the early modern spelling of "travel" as "travail"' which Russell West argues demonstrates a sense of 'vulnerability and inadequate knowledge' on the part of the traveller.¹⁴ However, here the slippage is complicated by also containing a play on childbirth, suggesting that the traveller gives birth to himself on returning home after a journey. They 'travel to bring foorth rare men' in an attempt to distinguish themselves at court. This suggests not only the process of self-fashioning well documented by Stephen Greenblatt, but also, if the word 'travel' is taken in its literal sense, the idea that the man who has travelled widely in foreign countries improves his value at court, makes himself a 'rare' man.¹⁵ The pathos of the following line suggests that the travelling English do not fully avail themselves of this opportunity: all they come home 'delivered' of is 'a fine French suit'. As in Jonson's epigram then, the joke is not at the expense of those men who have genuinely travelled and experienced foreign cultures – it is at those whose only connection with the foreign is sartorial.

The joke is also heightened in this case by the fact that these words are, of course, spoken by an English boy who was very probably dressed up in clothes which were intended to invoke the atmosphere of the French court. This context gives the lines 'we shall see them imitate [...] the fashions of our Courts' a self-

¹⁴ Russell West, *Spatial Representations and the Jacobean Stage* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), p.188.

¹⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

referentiality which calls attention to the theatrical illusion, stretching it almost to breaking point. But as with the Jonson poem, the tone here is far removed from xenophobic fear of the foreign. Rather it calls attention to the domestic familiarity at the heart of the scene by reminding the Blackfriars audience that what they are watching is, in fact, English imitation of French history.

But the structural parallels between the English and French courts are more widely suggested by this scene. Rather strangely, it begins with the introduction of a minor character, an English lady-in-waiting who has come to France to attend on the Duchess of Guise. Her appearance (although she does not speak during this scene, and indeed only has a handful of lines throughout the entire play) is the catalyst for a detailed discussion of the relative merits of the French and English courts, of which the speech on clothing already quoted in only a part. This passage is a substantial meditation by Chapman on the ways in which national identity is dependent upon perceptions of the court for its definition. The court is explicitly described as representing the nation as a whole: 'Courts should be th'abstracts of their kingdomes', muses the king, then adds approvingly:

The world is not contracted in a man,
With more proportion and expression
Than in her [Elizabeth's] Court, her Kingdome: Our French Court
Is a meere mirror of confusion to it. (1.2.19; 22-25)

The picture of England which emerges in this scene is one in which the whole nation is microcosmically reflected in the Queen's court, which Henry contrasts with his own 'mirror of confusion', painting a curiously chaotic picture of French court life:

The King and subject, Lord and everie slave
Dance a continuall Haie; Our Roomes of State,
Kept like our stables; No place more observ'd
Than a rude Market place: And though our Custome
Keepe this assur'd deformitie from our sight,
Tis nere the lesse essentiallie unsightlie,
Which they would soone see, would they change their forme
To this of ours, and then compare them both (26-33).

This is a bizarre thing for Chapman to have his French king say about his own court, and it makes sense only if we regard it not as a speech in character, but as a

set-piece discussion in which Chapman himself is suggesting ways of thinking about the court. As is typical in these moments in Chapman's work, there are two conflicting ways of reading this scene. On the surface, English patriotism is voiced even by the French characters, who lavish praise on the Elizabethan court at the expense of their own. But this reading is complicated by suggestions throughout the scene that the English and French courts are in fact more similar than first glances would allow. This suggestion is contained even in Henry's image of the French court as a 'mere mirror of confusion' to the English. Although 'mirror' could be meant in the sense the *OED* defines as 'a person or thing embodying something to be avoided; an example, a warning', it is also resonant with the connotations of similarity and reflection which every other sense of the word carries, so that the English court becomes associated with the confusion of its French counterpart. This is developed when, after the discussion about fashion quoted above, Henry concludes the discussion by noting the similar sins of foolishness that belong to both sets of courtiers:

But they have faults, and wee; They foolish-proud,
To be the Pictures of our vanitie;
We proud, that they are proud of foolerie. (51-53)

In the English courtiers' affectation of French fashion, Henry sees them as providing 'pictures of our vanitie', a phrase which, when read in conjunction with the previous image of the 'mirror of confusion' suggests French and English courts caught in a relationship of mutual imitation and similarity – the French are a mirror to the English, the English a picture of the French. The 1641 quarto expands Henry's last speech with the additional line 'Holding our worthes more compleat for their vaunts', a line which clarifies the otherwise slightly puzzling 'we proud, that they are proud of foolerie', by suggesting that the English courtiers' imitation flatters the French nobles, making them more 'compleat'. However, the connotations of similarity are somewhat elided in the later text, as the 'Pictures of our vanitie' is replaced by the less controversial 'they foolish-proud | To jet in others plumes so haughtely' (1.2.53-4). The later text also adds one word to emphasise the difference between the two nations (and English superiority) 'they have faults and we *more*' (my italics). Perhaps in the revision of *Bussy* Chapman wished to retract some of the suggestions he made in the earlier version, realising

that their controversial suggestion of similarity between French and English had the potential to alienate audiences.

Nonetheless, both versions hint that the perceived differences between the two nationalities of courtiers are in fact deceptive, and only serve to hide deeper resemblances. This has topical implications for the court of James I: Neil Cuddy has detailed how James's Scottish court was based very closely on the French model, and both differed from Elizabeth's way of organising her entourage. He writes that Elizabeth's court aimed at 'the restriction of intimacy between subject and monarch' while the Scots court was less strictly regulated, and based on 'the management of free and open access'.¹⁶ With this in mind then, Chapman's lines comparing 'our Roomes of State' to stables where 'no place [is...] observ'd' perhaps constitute a critique of James's court style in comparison to an idealized version of Elizabeth's.¹⁷ This is particularly suggested by the seemingly hypothetical suggestion that 'would they change their forme | To this of ours, and then compare them both' then the English would recognise their own superiority. These audacious lines suggest that the English would only come to appreciate their own superiority to the French court ways after they had lost their own style by adopting the French: precisely the perception of what had happened with James's reorganising of the court to centre on the Bedchamber. Curtis Perry has argued that such a political system, 'transformed the intimacy of the King's chamber into a crucial and contested political venue', where the Gentleman of the Privy Chamber 'began to reap significant benefits from their guarantee of access'.¹⁸ The networks of patronage, obligation, and even bribery which could spring up around such powerful figures who mediated between the king and his subjects could easily be seen as a 'rude Marketplace'.

The figure of Queen Elizabeth is functioning here not so much as a genuine alternative to James's (and Henry's) style of government, but as a nostalgic symbol by which to discuss the failings of the current regime in a way unlikely to arouse

¹⁶ Neil Cuddy, 'The Revival of the Entourage: the Bedchamber of James I, 1603-25', in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London: Longman, 1987), ed. by David Starkey, pp. 173-225 (pp. 178-9).

¹⁷ Miller MacLure notes in passing the similarity between the French court and that of James I as both being mirrors of confusion to Elizabeth's. See *George Chapman: A Critical Study*, p.117.

¹⁸ Curtis Perry, 'The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England', *RQ*, 53 (2000), 1054-1083 (p.1057).

the displeasure of the censor, much as Fulke Greville was later to do with his *Life of Sidney*. English national identity is here set up in a triangular relationship with both the French court and its own national past. On one level the scene expresses a vast difference between English and French, but on another, it suggests deep resemblances between the two courts. The resemblance *could* perhaps be read as a sign of the inferiority of the Jacobean court to the Elizabethan golden age, but the unsettling suggestions of similarity are not confined only to the hypothetical discussion of how the English would feel *if* they tried out the French model of courtliness. The images of mirror and picture set up a structural parallel between the two courts which suggests that even Elizabethan England shared a great deal with its French counterpart.

Religious Violence and State Authority: The Massacre of St. Bartholomew

This suggestion of a structural similarity between France and England is given sinister overtones when Chapman reminds the audience of the religious violence which had wracked France during the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day. The incident is referred to in both *Bussy* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (printed 1613, written 1611-12). In *Bussy* the reference is not controversial – the hero upbraids the Guise for having 'cut too many throates already [...] and robb'd the Realme of many thousand soules' (1.2.103-4). In this play, the Guise is an outright villain, and Bussy is already in conflict with him, so the reference here would have the effect of strengthening the audience's sympathy for the hero and their antipathy towards Guise. However, in *The Revenge*, Clermont D'Ambois takes the extraordinary step of defending the Guise's role in the massacre of St Bartholomew. In response to another character's insistence that the Guise has 'one act' which 'blemishes' his reputation, Clermont is aghast: 'what one act can you name | Suppos'd his staine, that Ile not prove his luster?' (2.1.201-2) He goes on to argue that it is 'hainous' only to 'a brutish sense | But not a manly reason' (206-7), perhaps calling attention to the distinction between national perceptions of the

same events with a possible pun on 'brutish' and 'British'.¹⁹ He maintains that the Huguenots themselves were responsible for the massacre for preferring Protestantism to Catholicism: 'When soules are smother'd in the flatter'd flesh, | Slaine bodies are no more then Oxen slaine [...] Had Faith and true Religion been prefer'd | Religious Guise had never massacred' (218-9; 233-4).

Although it is the audience at the private Whitefriars in 1611-12 would probably not have been solely made up of Protestants, it seems hugely unlikely that any English aristocrat, Protestant or Catholic, would have supported such an extreme view. Clermont is not only arguing that the massacre does not stain the Guise- he goes as far as to say that it provides a 'luster', suggesting it should be seen as actively enhancing his patron's reputation. The comparison of the dead men to oxen is particularly inhumane and must have alienated the audience from Clermont at this point in the play. Alexander Leggatt argues that: 'a defence of the St Bartholomew massacre would sound (granted the difference of scale) as a defence of Hitler's death factories would sound to us'.²⁰ Why would Chapman have his protagonist speak in defence of an incident which was, to English public opinion, one of the most heinous crimes of recent history?

Leggatt does not go into this question in much detail, using the incident as part of a broader argument that Clermont's attachment to the Guise is meant to be interpreted by the audience as corrupting his integrity, and that this alarming speech is only one among many instances of his blindness concerning his patron. Suzanne F. Kistler takes a similar line, and adds that Clermont's approval of the violence meted out to the Huguenots conflicts with his attitude elsewhere in the play not to 'revenge a villany with a villany'.²¹ Both critics are correct in their reading of the relationship between Clermont and the Guise as being one which compromises the hero's judgement, but this does not fully explain Chapman's decision to include such a controversial discussion of the massacre.

In order to ascertain exactly what Chapman is doing with this provocative exchange, it is necessary to put it into the context of his prolonged response to

¹⁹ I am indebted to Professor Willy Maley for this suggestion.

²⁰ Alexander Leggatt, 'The Tragedy of Clermont D'Ambois', *MLR*, 77 (1982), 532.

²¹ Suzanne F. Kistler, 'A Reconsideration of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *SP*, 77 (1980), 128-144, (pp.139-40).

recent French history. With his evocation the massacre he harks back to a body of literature written closer to the time, both pamphlet reports, and of course, Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*. Andrew Hadfield has written of Marlowe's *Massacre* that 'it is one of only two plays which deal directly with the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's Day, an event which [...] was a defining moment in English Protestant consciousness, and which produced the horrified fear that similar apocalyptic violence could easily explode in England if measures were not taken to prevent it'.²² However, although English audiences would certainly have disapproved of the religious violence, the tone of much recent criticism of the play has been set by Julia Briggs, who contends, against most previous opinion, that the play is not a 'crude piece of Protestant propaganda'. Briggs finds a parallel between the massacre scenes and the murder of the Guise and argues that this indicates an ironic treatment of the religious intolerance the play depicts.²³ She also suggests that in the final scenes Marlowe moves the focus from the Guise's crimes towards Henry's duplicity and ruthlessness.

This critique of Henry is an important feature of the play, and is typical of Marlowe's treatment of the entire Valois line. Henry, Catherine of Medici and Charles IX are all presented as being in varying degrees complicit with the events of the massacre. Andrew M. Kirk picks up on this in his suggestion that the play 'offers French kings as sources of disorder [...] Both Charles IX and Anjou/Henry III demonstrate an inability to control themselves, their royal identity, or their kingdom'.²⁴ Marlowe's double vision refuses to condone the behaviour of either side, and presents the rebellious Guise and the legitimate monarchy as sharing responsibility for the violence. It is this perspective, with all its potentially radical implications, which Chapman picks up on in the *Bussy* plays, particularly in *The Revenge*.

Marlowe's influence on Chapman while he was writing the first of these plays, *Bussy D'Ambois*, can be seen in a striking similarity of plot. In *The Massacre*, Henry's coronation is interrupted when one of his favourites cuts off the ear of a

²² Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance 1545-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.201. Hadfield cites *Bussy D'Ambois* as the other play to deal with the Massacre, and makes no reference to *The Revenge*.

²³ Julia Briggs, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*: A Reconsideration', *RES*, 34 (1983), 257-78.

²⁴ Andrew M. Kirk, 'Marlowe and the Disordered Face of French History', *SEL*, 35 (1995), 193-213.

servant, prompting the Guise to order his arrest. However, Henry intervenes, saying 'I will be his bail|For this offence' (14.35-6). This has a parallel in *Bussy* when Bussy and two of his followers are reported to have duelled with three courtiers, resulting in the deaths of all but Bussy. Here the Guise is pivotal in demanding retribution, calling it 'a pitious and horrid murther!' (2.1.105) but the king, after the intervention of his brother, pardons Bussy. Chapman's play follows Marlowe's, in both the violent act which is pardoned by the king, and in the Guise's resultant anger, which is inflected by jealousy at the influence of the favourite he perceives to be a social upstart. This sense of the Guise as protecting the prerogative of the nobility in its access to the monarch, and as resentful of lower-born courtiers evokes topics that Marlowe also explores in *Edward II*, and these are important facets of the Guise's character in both *The Massacre* and the *Bussy* plays.

The sense of the Guise as a kind of pantomime villain is also common to both plays. In *Bussy* he is seen as a plotter and a malcontent, complaining about Henri's pardon of Bussy: 'wher's a king? Where law?' (2.2.24). He uses this perceived abuse of the law on Henry's part to put together a faction of discontented nobles which later comes together to plot Bussy's downfall. In Act 3 he enters into an alliance with the King's brother, Monsieur, because both agree that Bussy 'must downe' since 'upstarts should never perch too neere a crowne' (3.2.134-5).

The role of Monsieur is one of the biggest ways in which Chapman's depiction of the French court departs from Marlowe's. The character of Henry's younger brother does not appear in *The Massacre*. In *Bussy*, it is Monsieur who is presented as the greatest threat to Henry's crown, making various sly remarks about inducing Bussy to 'Doe any thing but killing of a king' (3.2.345), and alluding to the possibility of his having 'obtain'd a Kingdome' with his patronage of Bussy (2.1.211). Unlike *The Massacre*, where the Guise is very much the prime instigator of the violence, *Bussy* presents him as the ally of Monsieur and in many ways it is Monsieur who is the ringleader, and the Guise who plays second fiddle. For example, in Act 5 scene 2 the two nobles enter above the stage and discuss Bussy's impending end (which they remain onstage to watch). In the 56-line scene, the Guise speaks only 10 lines, as both men talk about Bussy's death in terms of

'nature' – a rather curious abnegation of responsibility for what is about to occur, considering that it is they who have been scheming to bring about his death since the third act. The unequal division of dramatic attention here is typical of the characterisation of the pair throughout the play. They are seen as being united in murderous resolve and a determination to protect their positions at court from the influence exerted by the social upstart, but Monsieur seems to show more initiative than the Guise.

Chapman makes one other important departure from Marlowe's perspective. In *The Massacre* all the characters talk about religion constantly. The pope is invoked several times by both sides, and religious rites and objects are referred to throughout the massacre scenes in particular. However, Chapman basically strips his description of period in French history of any religious elements, which is what makes the extract regarding the massacre so out of character. Chapman very rarely uses any kind of sectarian labels such as Catholic, Protestant, or Huguenot, despite the fact that so much of his work is set during periods of intense religious conflict. This could be seen as a deliberate move on Chapman's part: perhaps he did not intend his works to engage in religious controversy, whether through a sense of religious tolerance or merely because he did not wish to alienate any potential patrons who happened to be Catholic. Instead, what Chapman is interested in is the opportunity this period of French history affords to criticise the monarchy and the nobility. In the first play, the Guise, although villainous, is subordinate to Monsieur, and in *The Revenge*, Guise is even presented largely sympathetically as Clermont's patron, and the King is the bloodthirsty schemer who has him murdered. This is comparable to Marlowe's contradictory characterisation of Henry III, whom David Potter describes as changing from 'a stage villain of the Massacre itself [...] through the foppish, mignon-obsessed monarch [...], finally to the dignified ally of Henry of Navarre who hands the succession willingly to him, recommending him to Elizabeth and cursing the Pope and the Catholics'.²⁵ Chapman imbues his Guise with a similar fluctuating character, although he spreads the incongruity between two separate

²⁵ David Potter, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* and the Reputation of Henry III of France', in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Daryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Scholar, 1996), pp.70-95 (p.74).

plays. Most importantly, he picks up on the potential for anti-court rhetoric inherent in the behaviour of these figures, a potential which is very much present in Marlowe, but by weakening the religious angle and strengthening the role of Monsieur (the heir to the throne), he makes the anti-monarchic sentiment stronger.

Such a perspective is taken further in *The Revenge*, which is a play about the impossibility of maintaining integrity and virtue in a corrupt court setting. Clermont is presented as having promised, against his better judgement, to avenge his brother Bussy's murder, a promise which sits uneasily with his Stoic principles. However, his ideals are also more thoroughly compromised by his relationship with his patron, the Duke of Guise. I would agree with Kistler and Leggatt then, that Clermont's defence of the massacre should be read in light of this. But the massacre reference achieves more than just signalling to the audience that Clermont's proclaimed virtue has been corrupted by his involvement with the Guise.

The discussion of the massacre in *The Revenge* ascribes sole responsibility to the Guise, and despite Clermont's spirited defence of his patron, he does not dispute his central role. However, given the pamphlet literature and the success of Marlowe's play, it must be assumed that Chapman's audience would have been familiar with the idea that the French royal family had also been complicit in the violence. In Marlowe's play, Henri of Anjou is an enthusiastic participant in the killing. This is a perspective shared by Protestant observers at the time. John Stubbes' *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulfe* likewise assigns the blame for the massacre to the royal family, specifically Catherine of Medici whom he pictures as a sort of theatrical prompter of the massacre: [she] 'stoode holding the booke (as it were) upon the Stage and told her children and every other player what he should say.' He accuses Henry of Anjou of 'play[ing] false semblant' and sums up the events finally: 'A king falsified his sworne word. The mariage of a kings sister embrued with blood. A king murdered his subjectes'.²⁶ The massacre of St Bartholomew is repeatedly invoked throughout Stubbes' tract as one of the main pieces of evidence for his demonising of the Valois line. It is also referred to by Sir

²⁶ John Stubbes, *The discoverie of a gaping gulf vohereinto England is like to be swallowed by another French mariage, if the Lord forbid not the banes, by letting her Maiestie see the sin and punishment thereof* (London, 1579), *Early English Books Online*, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:18498:13, accessed 7/10/08, image 13 of 44.

Philip Sidney in his letter to Queen Elizabeth, where he complains of Alençon: 'that he is the son of the very Jezebel of of our age; that his brother made oblation of his own sister's marriage, the easier to make massacres of all sexes; that he himself contrary to his promise and against all gratefulness [...] did sack La Charité and utterly spoil Issoire with fire and sword'.²⁷ Sidney then goes on to argue that Monsieur's presence in England would exacerbate the danger from 'all discontented persons', who would either chafe against the French prince, or view him as the head of a Catholic faction. He seems to perceive Alençon as inviting the rebellion of the people in whatever kingdom he resides. For Protestant commentators, the deeds of the French royal family during the massacre were proof of their malevolence towards their own populace, a malevolence which could only result in civil turmoil.

Stubbs' influence on Chapman has been noted by Richard Hillman in his discussion of the historical context of *Bussy D'Ambois*. Hillman writes: 'Chapman's unremittingly villainous configuration of Monsieur serves to endorse the diabolical portrait that had been served up on behalf of extremist Protestant opinion by John Stubbs'.²⁸ Perhaps one of the reasons Elizabeth reacted so violently to the pamphlet is that she recognised that the wholesale criticism of the entire French royal line was as incendiary as the religious intolerance Stubbs preached. The massacre provides for Stubbs and his readers a concrete example, alive in recent memory, of why princes are not to be trusted, and that is one of the reasons it is such a dangerous discursive topic. As Rick Bowers has argued of *The Massacre*: 'Marlowe rehearses the French atrocity and then veers it towards England where authority too asserts itself over "treacherous foes" through official public displays of violence'.²⁹ For Chapman, revisiting the events and the historical figures in 1611, it is this critique of the legitimate monarchy, present both in Marlowe and in Stubbs, which is of importance. The uneasy sense of similarity

²⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, 'A Letter to Queen Elizabeth', *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p.48.

²⁸ Richard Hillman, 'The Tragic Channel-crossing of George Chapman, part I', *Cahiers Elisabethains*, 64 (2004), 25-43 (p.26).

²⁹ Rick Bowers, 'Marlowe's Messy Consensus Narrative', in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, 1998), pp.131-141 (p.139).

between French and English cultures becomes a vehicle by which the playwright can suggest the dangers of personal monarchic rule.

Clermont's defence of the massacre was perhaps intended to remind the audience of how 'a king murdered his subjects', and thus more thoroughly to establish the tyranny of Henry III in the context of the play. This links in with other concerns: the play opens with a courtier lamenting that Henry has allowed Bussy's murder in the previous play to go unpunished: 'Murther made parallel with Law?|Murther us'd to serve the Kingdome?' (1.1.4-5). While Clermont struggles to carry out his revenge, the sub-plots revolve around Henry's concern to control 'the faction of the Guise', which he does mainly through the underhanded dealings of his spy Baligny. Baligny's promise to Henry in Act 2 reveals the topsy-turvy nature of the king's morality:

Your Hignesse knows

I will be honest; and betray for you

Brother and Father: for I know (my Lord)

Treachery for kings is truest loyaltie. (2.1.29-32)

Acts 3 and 4 of the play are mostly concerned with Henry's attempt on Clermont's life – after instructing his lieutenants to swear his safety to lull him into an ambush, he has Clermont arrested, but the Guise manages to persuade him to release the prisoner. The emphasis on the false promise of safety given to Clermont directly before his ambush calls to mind two points in *The Massacre at Paris*: Charles' promise to Coligny that he will bring his attackers to justice, despite having already agreed to sanction the massacre; and Henry's promise of safety to the Guise directly before his murder.

Once we realise that state-sanctioned murder is of repeated concern to Chapman in *The Revenge*, it becomes clear that the reference to the massacre is not merely a controversial remark designed to show the protagonist's failings, but is in fact a reference to previous crimes of the monarchy, and serves to strengthen Chapman's attack on corrupt Machiavellian rulers. Clermont kills himself on learning of the Guise's murder because, he says 'There's no disputing with the acts of kings,|Revenge is impious against their sacred persons' (5.5.151-2). However, as the audience would have known very well, Henry was assassinated only months after the events depicted, which lends these lines a distinctly ironic tone.

Perhaps what attracted Chapman to write so often about recent French history was the very fact that it suggests it is possible to dispute the acts of kings – a lesson which English culture would take so much to heart that, thirty years after the publication of *The Revenge* they would execute their own monarch.

Chapman's dedication to the published text of this play indicates that in its performance it met with 'some maligners'. Although the same dedication also hints that the play was criticised for not being based on true events (Clermont D'Ambois was not a real historical figure), it seems likely that one of the reasons it may have been unpopular could have been Clermont's defence of the massacre. Although the historical distance from the actual events probably allowed a calmer response to them than, for example, Marlowe could have expected from his audience in 1592, nonetheless, the mostly Protestant English audience were being asked to put aside their immediate feelings of revulsion about Clermont's speech and consider its wider implications, and this may have been too much to ask from them. I suspect very few would have considered the matter carefully enough to pick up on the anti-monarchic implications involved, even if they had agreed with them. In terms of national identity, the Massacre functions to remind the contemporary audience of the dangers attendant on conflicting versions of the nation, the civil wars which spring from religious intolerance, and above all the vulnerability of a subject to violence or repression unleashed by an unscrupulous monarch.

Although there is no clear parallel between the court of Henry III and that of James I, and I do not argue that Chapman intended a point-to-point analogy, this is a way of thinking about the nation which, while recognising the centrality of the monarch, positions him not as the nation's representative, but its oppressor. The French nation here is viewed as a victim of the whims and power struggles of its king and nobility. This recognition of the potential for antagonism between ruler and populace is also a radical insight and a precursor of the Parliamentary view of national identity which would come to prevail in the 1640s.

French History in England, English History in France

If Chapman's references to the massacre of St. Bartholomew in the *Bussy* plays are effectively an intrusion of turbulent French history into the theatre-going experience of his English audience, there are also instances where English historical figures intrude onto the French court scenes depicted. Elizabeth herself is discussed at length in both *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Tragedy of Byron* – in the later play there is even a long scene in which her words to Byron are recorded (the scene may have originally shown the Queen directly but was turned into reported speech after the intervention of the censor). Perhaps more effective than the discussions of Elizabeth and her court in reminding the English audience of their own involvement in French affairs is the way Chapman often refers to Englishmen who have achieved some eminence, usually through their exploits abroad. *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* name-checks the Earl of Essex several times, as many critics have pointed out, explicitly drawing a parallel between his fate and that of the tragic hero. Byron feels a premonition of his own downfall when he is told one of his horses has run mad and died during the night. He says:

The matchless Earl of Essex who some make,
(In their most sure divinings of my death)
A parallel with me in life and fortune,
Had one horse like-wise that the very howre,
He suffered death (being well the night before)
Died in his pasture. (*Tragedy* 4.1.133-8)

The references to Essex essentially set up an analogy between Byron's case and Essex's, which in turn suggests parallels between the French and English monarchies, giving Chapman's exploration of the tensions between nobility and monarchy a topical relevance to the English audience.

However, as should be clear by now, the French court in Chapman's tragedies is much more than simply a representative of the English court, and one of the most interesting signals in the *Byron* plays of this more complex relationship is the repeated reference in *The Conspiracy* to two English soldiers, General Norris and Colonel Williams. These two figures are central to the conflict between Byron and Henry. Savoy aims to irritate the king by extravagantly praising Byron's military exploits at the siege of Dreux, ascribing the triumph solely to him, and

Henry responds, first by asserting his own role in the battle; then, riled by Savoy's continued encomium for Byron, he launches into a long speech in praise of the two Englishmen:

We must not give to one, to take from many,
 For (not to praise our countrymen) here serv'd,
 The Generall, Mylor' Norris, sent from *England*:
 As great a captain as the world affords:
 One fit to leade, and fight for Christendome;
 Of more experience; and of stronger braine;
 As valiant for abiding; In Command,
 (On any sodaine; upon any ground
 And in the forme of all occasions)
 As ready, and as profitably dauntless;
 And heere was then another; Collonell Williams,
 A worthy Captaine; and more like the Duke [i.e., Byron],
 Because he was less temperate than the Generall;
 And being familiar with the man you praise,
 (Because he knew him haughty and incapable
 Of all comparison) would compare with him,
 And hold his swelling valour to the marke
 Justice had set in him, and not his will. (*Conspiracy*, 2.3.214-231)

This marked emphasis on the importance of English military commanders during the French civil wars reminds the English audience of their own investment in the stability of the French state. The two men referred to are Sir John Norris (1545/50-1597), also known as 'Black Jack', and Sir Roger Williams (1539/40-1595). Norris was one of six brothers, all soldiers, but Sir John is the most likely candidate for the identity of the man Henry singles out for praise, as he was the most successful in his military career and commanded troops under Henri of Navarre from 1591-94, one episode in a long career which also included lengthy periods in the Low Countres and Ireland.³⁰ Both he and Williams were well-known for their military brilliance and their resolute Protestantism, a fact which perhaps indicates something of Chapman's own religious sympathies. The fact that he has Henry

³⁰ David Trim, 'Sir John Norris', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20276?docPos=1>, accessed 28/08/08.

single out these two militant Protestants for praise in 1608, when he was already serving in Prince Henry's household, suggests a certain amount of sympathy for this outlook, although as we shall discuss, he was by no means an unequivocal supporter of military aggression. It is generally thought that Chapman was abroad for the period 1585-94, and he was certainly in the Low Countries in 1586 when he was admitted to hospital there, having been serving under Sir Robert Sidney.³¹ It is possible that he included the praise of these two commanders because he was familiar with them from his own military service at this time.

More intriguingly, given the Essex-Byron parallel which *The Tragedy* makes explicit, both Norris and Williams were connected with Essex, but, in Norris's case, not on the best of terms. Norris had a rather fraught relationship with the great Elizabethan military noblemen, and came into conflict with both Essex and Leicester during his life. John S. Nolan details how, after Leicester had assumed command of the forces in the Low Countries in 1586, he rapidly excluded Norris from his council of war, preferring instead a number of men, including the Earl of Essex, and Sir Roger Williams. These men, he argues 'coalesced into an anti-Norreys faction. Whether from personal dislike or jealousy of Norreys's success, these men set about bringing Norreys down to size and Leicester acquiesced'.³² David Trim adds to this that the conflict split the English forces: 'All the English captains [...] took sides, for or against Norris'.³³

Given that Chapman was in Middelburg in 1586, he would presumably have been well aware of this dissension in the English ranks. It seems quite clear that his retrospective praise of Norris in *The Conspiracy* indicates that Chapman took the side of the injured client rather than the noble patron. Norris again found himself in a similar situation in France in the early 1590s, when he led an English army to Brittany to aid Henri IV in the battles under discussion in *The Conspiracy*. Trim also notes that Essex had wanted command of these forces, and so attempted to undermine Norris's authority: 'Essex's clients defamed him, hoping he would

³¹ Jean Jacquot, *George Chapman (1559-1634): Sa vie, sa poésie, son théâtre, sa pensée* (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1951), p.16; William Schrichx, 'George Chapman in Middelburg in 1586', *Notes and Queries* 40 (1993), 165.

³² John S. Nolan, *Sir John Norreys and the Elizabethan Military World* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), p.93.

³³ David Trim, 'Sir John Norris', *ODNB*.

be replaced by one of them (if not by Essex), but Henri and his generals wanted Norris and so he maintained command throughout'. Byron's jealousy over the fact that Norris and Williams have been praised by the French king then, places him in precisely the role played first by Leicester then Essex in their attempts to supplant Norris, and Chapman's inclusion of this long speech about Norris's merits clearly shows where his loyalties lay. He is perhaps with this reference attempting to rectify a perceived injustice in the allocation of praise to these high-ranking commanders at the expense of the less highly ranking Norris.

Williams also experienced difficulty in his relationships with noble commanders – the recent editor of his military writings, John X. Evans, describes him as 'a poverty-stricken adventurer' who became the object of Leicester's jealousy and defamation after the loss of the town of Sluys: Leicester had borne the brunt of the blame for the loss of the town, while Williams was praised for his valorous conduct even in defeat.³⁴ It emerges that both the men praised by King Henry had been undermined by noble, superior-ranking officers, and Chapman's references to them here perhaps indicate his impatience with the aristocratic, jealous pride typified by Byron, Essex and Leicester. This seems to have been a theme which would have had some support at least in the 1590s. A pamphlet by Henri de Bourbon Montpensier, *The true reporte of the service in Britanie. Performed lately by the honorable knight Sir Iohn Norreys and other capitaines and gentlemen souldiers before Guingand* (1591), begins by suggesting that Norris had not been sufficiently recognised or praised for his actions in taking the town of Guingand for the forces of the new Henri IV:

the surest whetstone of valour and vertue is renowne and glorie: in defrauding the soldier of his pay, you cut his purse and rebate his edge; in depraving his honour you cut his throate and strike him stone deade: whereby I was induced to publish the renowned service done lately by that honourable knight S. JOHN NORREYS in Britanie: to the end that neither he, neither the rest of the brave Capitaines, gentlemen and Soldiers should want their due commendation.³⁵

³⁴ John X. Evans, ed., *The Works of Sir Roger Williams* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. xvii-xxxi.

³⁵ Montpensier, Henri duc de Bourbon, *The true reporte of the service in Britanie. Performed lately by the honorable knight Sir Iohn Norreys and other capitaines and gentlemen souldiers before Guingand* (London: 1591), *Early English Books Online*, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:13634:2, accessed 7/10/08, image 2 of 7 (p. A2).

This pamphlet explicitly sets itself the task of righting the perceived wrong in the paucity of praise which had been allocated to Norris. How relevant this would have been in 1608, however, is debatable. What it shows more than anything is that Chapman had a long memory, and sided with the underdog in disputes between titled commanders and their social inferiors.

Henry's speech is reported by Savoy to Byron in a greatly condensed form. Savoy says:

The English Generall, the Mylor' *Norris*,
That serv'd amongst you here, he paralleld
With you, at all parts, and in some preferd him,
And Collonell *Williams* (a Welch Collonell)
He made a man, that at your most containd you:
Which the Welch Herrald of their praise, the Cucko,
Would scarce have put, in his monology,
In jest, and said with reverence to his merits. (3. 2. 55-62)

The repetition of the two names only a few scenes after the first speech praising them particularly calls the attention of the English audience to the identity of the two men whose glory appears to threaten Byron so much that he falls into a rage against the king's 'so rotten bosome' (75). But there are some interesting departures from Henry's speech in Savoy's reporting of it. Savoy says very little about Norris, despite the fact that Henry praises Norris more clearly and enthusiastically than Williams. Williams, Henry says, is like Byron, 'less temperate' than Norris, and the main thrust of his speech is that he forced Byron, through a sense of rivalry ('would compare with him'), to behave himself and obey orders, so curtailing his personal ambition ('hold his swelling valour to the marke | Justice had set in him, and not his will'). This quite complex argument about Williams is lost in Savoy's reporting of it, where it becomes more simply, that Henry says Williams 'containd' Byron.

Savoy focuses not on what Henry actually said about either man in relation to Byron, but on the fact that he 'paralleld' both the Englishman and the Welshman with the French admiral. In doing so, he introduces a national differentiation between Norris and Williams where Henry had made none, and it is Williams' Welshness that receives most attention. This is interesting because Chapman very rarely shows any interest in the relations between the different

countries that make up the British Isles. The only mention of Ireland in all his works is a passing reference in the revised quarto of *Bussy* when Tamyra's maid Pero upbraids Montsurry for his verbal aggression towards his wife, saying to him 'you rush upon her with these Irish warres, | More full of sound then hurt', seemingly invoking a proverbial idea of the Irish as having a bark worse than their bite in military matters, and perhaps also implicitly denigrating the importance of the Irish conflict. The explanation of the profile given to Williams' Welsh nationality is perhaps the fact that he is a likely candidate for the real soldier who inspired Shakespeare's Fluellen. John X. Evans voices caution over the assumption that Williams was 'the prototype for Fluellen', but then concludes 'Williams and Fluellen had the same type of ignescent personality, and Sir Roger was surely no stranger to contemporary writers'.³⁶ Trim also finds the theory convincing, and thinks that Fluellen's departures from Williams' known opinions were intended as satirical strokes.³⁷ The significance of this for Chapman is, I think, that if audiences of *Henry V* would have been aware that Williams was behind the character of Fluellen, then it is likely that at least some of the audience of *Byron* would also have made this connection, particularly when provided with such clear reminders of Williams' Welsh heritage as Savoy provides.

What effect does this have on the depiction of national identity in this play? It is difficult to establish this with any certainty, but it is perhaps significant that the Welsh references which would have called Fluellen to mind are only present in Savoy's version of the king's words. For Henry, the two soldiers he praises are not differentiated in nationality: he specifies that Norris was 'sent from *England*', and only says of Williams that he was also 'heare', but the implication seems to be that he considers them both worthy representatives of Queen Elizabeth, and indeed they were both in France under her banners, so Savoy's subsequent emphasis on Williams and his Welsh-ness is perhaps intended to enhance Byron's sense of indignation, that this upstart soldier from an insignificant country is being made his equal in Henry's praise. Given that Chapman was a veteran of the same Dutch wars as both Williams and Norris, it is likely that his own feelings are reflected

³⁶ John X. Evans, *Sir Roger Williams*, p.lxxvi.

³⁷ D.B.J.Trim, 'Sir Roger Williams', ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29543>, accessed 28/08/08.

more accurately by King Henry's words of praise for the men than Savoy's later use of that praise to stir Byron to rebellion. Although not everyone in the audience in 1608 may have been old enough to remember these Elizabethan figures themselves, it nonetheless is likely that they would have picked up on the fact that Savoy's manipulation, and Byron's arrogant response, were being held up here by the playwright as an example of extreme hubris. The reputations of both Norris and Williams as skilful military men were surely well-enough established that even a decade after their deaths the audience would have recognised their names as belonging to the roll-call of Elizabethan glory.

Chapman's choice then, of these two men as the representatives of all those Elizabethans who assisted the Protestant cause in Europe in the 1590s, indicates an interesting conception of the nation. It not only includes a Welshman who was the model for one of the most famous stage-Welshmen of the early modern theatre, but both men were of low rank compared to the Earls and other powerful aristocrats who were also involved in such ventures. Chapman's use of Norris and Williams indicates an inclusive concept of the nation, one in which merit, not rank, is the defining scale of worth, and apparently marginal areas are accorded a similar level of recognition. It is also possible that the Welsh emphasis is intended as a compliment to Henry, Prince of Wales – his interest in Henri IV of France was well-known, and his own militant Protestant opinions would likely have made him an admirer of both the Elizabethan soldiers. That this recognition comes from a foreign king is suggestive of the prestige accorded on an international level to their countrymen of the previous generation who volunteered in the interests of European Protestantism. It could have been intended as a pointed reminder that men other than the famous Earls of Leicester and Essex deserved to be remembered for their deeds.

War, Peace and Prince Henry: The Treatment of Military Conquest in the Tragedies and Masques

One important issue in the presentation of national identity in Chapman's historical tragedies is the relative merits of war and peace. This is obviously called to mind by the fact that *Byron* references two famous Elizabethan soldiers as

representatives of the nation, but it is also suggested by broader themes in *Byron* and other plays. There are several instances in different plays where characters express the view that peace corrupts men, while war is conducive to valour and virtue, and this has often been taken as expressing Chapman's own view on the subject. Byron notoriously declares this viewpoint as a reason for his rebellion in *The Tragedy*:

The world is quite inverted; virtue throwne
At Vices feete: and sensuall peace confounds
Valure, and cowardise: Fame, and Infamy. (1.2.14-16).

The opening dialogue of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, which concerns the corrupt state of the country, largely on account of the bad example set by the King, states a very similar view. The courtier Baligny says:

Now all is peace, no danger: now what followes?
Idelnesse rusts us; since no virtuous labour
Ends ought rewarded: Ease, Securitie
Now all the Palme weares; wee made warre before
So to prevent warre; men with giving gifts
More then receiving, made our Countrey strong;
Our matchlesse race of Souldiers then would spend
In publike warres, not private brawles, their spirits;
In daring Enemies, arm'd with meanest armes;
Not courting strumpets, and consuming birth-rights
In Apishnesse, and envy of attire. (1.1.32-42)

T.M. Parrott argues that these lines represent 'Chapman's lament over the degeneration of English character during the peace that followed the accession of King James. Chapman's sympathies, as became an old Elizabethan and panegyrist of that "thunderbolt of war", Sir Horace Vere, were all with the war party'.³⁸ Jacquot shares this conception of Chapman: 'Les principaux héros de son théâtre sont des gens de guerre. Il a le mépris de ceux-ci pour les métiers paisibles et voit dans la paix une génératrice de corruption'.³⁹ The problem with this argument is that it ignores the dramatic context in which both of these passages are spoken,

³⁸ T.M. Parrott, *The Tragedies*, pp. 577-8.

³⁹ Jacquot, *George Chapman*, p. 16. 'The protagonists of his drama are men of war. He shares the contempt of these men for peaceable pastimes and views peace as a catalyst for corruption' (my translation).

particularly the fact that the speakers are in both cases very ambiguous characters who cannot be assumed to be speaking for the playwright. In the case of *The Revenge*, the speaker is a double-dealing spy for a murderous king, who is, in this scene, deliberately attempting to elicit some kind of treasonous speech from his companion that he can then report to the king. Renel, the more honest of the two men talking in the opening scene, does not mention the question of war and peace: his concern is the abuse of power by the tyrannical monarch, which he contrasts with an idealized past when, unlike the present, 'Kings sought common good' (20). Given the treatment of Baligny throughout the play (he later asserts that 'treachery for kings is truest loyalty' – as is discussed in Chapter 4, there can be no doubt that Chapman found this ideology abhorrent), and the fact that his is the only voice within the play to ascribe the corruption of the realm to peace, it is deeply flawed to assume that this was therefore Chapman's own position.

This is also the case in the *Byron* plays. Although Byron himself is at times an attractive character, his tragic narrative takes shape through his monstrous egotism. The conflict in *The Conspiracy* essentially boils down to the fact that he cannot bear to hear Williams and Norris praised equally with him – and Chapman's choice of these men, familiar to the Elizabethan veterans of the audience, and possibly known personally to himself, indicates a distance from Byron and a condemnation of his hubris. The motivation behind his rant against 'sensuall Peace' is the same arrogance as prompted his dismissal of the great Elizabethan soldiers. Directly after this speech he declares:

I who through all the dangers that can siege
The life of man, have forcst my glorious way
To the repaying of my countries ruines
Will ruine it again, to re-advance it. (1.2.32-35)

The idea of 'Sensuall Peace' at odds with virtuous war is moreover completely in contrast to the description of the civil wars given in the play's prologue. There, Chapman describes 'the uncivill, civill warres of France', which entailed 'the countries beaten brest', 'batterd Citties', 'slaughterd carcasses', 'murtherous breaches' (*Conspiracy*, Prologue, 1-5). In this narrative, Byron 'Pluckt her from under her unnaturall presse, | And set her shining in the height of peace' (8-9). The summary of the forthcoming action of the play stresses Byron's egotism as the

cause of his fall, contrasting the Byron of the wars, who only thirsted for 'his countries love' (18) with the later Byron who narcissistically admires 'the faire shades of himself' in an 'empoisoned Spring' (19-20).

Chapman does not subscribe to the idea that peace corrupts: rather, he presents it as a myth which is put to unscrupulous uses by men who are corrupted already by other factors – in Byron's case his own self-regard and worry that he will not be valued in peace-time now his military skills are no longer needed, and in Baligny's case, by a 'politic' wish to rise by serving a Machiavellian king by treacherous means. Indeed, Chapman explicitly debunks this myth in *Caesar and Pompey* (1631, written either c.1604 or c.1612), which is perhaps of all his plays the most sceptical of the value of war to a society. There is a sort of comic interlude in the Second Act, which depicts a conversation between Fronto, a criminal about to hang himself, and a devil named Ophioneus. Despite the sensationalist, slightly camp tone set by the appearance of an actor dressed as a dragon, this scene is revelatory of Chapman's attitudes to the debate about the relative merits of war and peace. Fronto's complaint is that, because of the 'warres and presses', he can no longer get away with 'shifting courses' and 'villanous fashions' (2.1.1-6). Ophioneus shows how civil war and factional strife provide new opportunities for unscrupulous politicians: 'Hold rascall, hang thyself in these dayes? The only time that ever was for a rascall to live in?' (25-26). He points to the divided nature of the political world: 'a thousand rulers wresting it this way and that, with as many Religions' (38-39), and basically offers Fronto a job in a grotesque pastiche of the system of courtly patronage: 'I have promotion for thee; both here, and hereafter' (146-47). This scene has no bearing on the subsequent plot, and neither Fronto nor Ophioneus appear again in the play, so its purpose is purely atmospheric. The focus on the murky negotiations surrounding state positions perhaps taps into general malaise on the subject of corruption and patronage at the Jacobean court. The devil's summary of Fronto's career so far suggests him to be one of those characters of the underworld who so often ended up doing the dirty work of the state authorities:

And has Fronto liv'd thus long in Rome? Lost his state at dice? Murther'd his brother for his meanes? Spent all? Run thorow worse Offices since? Beene a Promoter? A Purveyor? A Pander? A Sumner? A Seargeant? An Intelligencer? And at last hang thyself? [...]

S'light, what need hast thou to hang thyself? As if there were a dearth of hangmen in the land? (69-74; 78-80)

Ophioneus's insistence that war brings just as many opportunities for profit as peace does for a villain like Fronto, is a deliberate rebuff to the myth of 'sensuall peace' proposed by Byron, Baligny, and indeed, a significant faction of Jacobean nobles, centered around Prince Henry, who were pushing for war with Spain.⁴⁰

Indeed, Chapman's concern with war is directly related to his relationship with the young prince. As Ralph Soellner's excellent article on this play points out, 'the Prince was from various sides being urged to study Caesar's military accomplishments and even encouraged to think of himself as a future Caesar'.⁴¹ Soellner argues that the Caesar of the play is a response to Chapman's uncertainty about the martial stance the prince was being urged towards. In Caesar, he suggests, Chapman 'sought to encourage the young man's energy and enthusiasm but also to purify them and to steer him away from thoughts of conquest and military glory' (p.144). Although Soellner's identification of the character of Caesar with the young prince is perhaps stretching the point a little (Caesar's blatant ambition and 'politic' dealing to assert his power would be rather an unflattering portrait for Chapman to paint of his patron, particularly if he hoped he would respond to the proffered advice), this identification of Chapman with a cautionary voice to beware of the war party is entirely convincing. The ambivalent attitude displayed towards military activity is present not only in *Caesar and Pompey*, but also in Byron's arrogant pride, and in the opening dialogue of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. It seems quite clear that, despite his military past, Chapman was far from blasé about the benefits of war: indeed, he seems to display an awareness of the terrible waste of life involved, particularly in civil wars. The prologue to the *Byron* plays with its emphasis on 'slaughterd carcasses' has already been quoted, and a similar cautionary note is sounded in Cato's admonition to Pompey not to celebrate his victory over Caesar's forces, which entailed the slaying of two thousand of the latter's men: 'Oh boast not that, | Their losse is yours, my Lord' (2. 4. 5-6).

⁴⁰ See Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance*, pp.71-85.

⁴¹ Ralph Soellner, 'Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey* and the Fortunes of Prince Henry', *MRDE*, 1 (1985), 135-151 (p.137).

Chapman's perception of English national identity then is deeply ambivalent about the role of militarism and conquest. Although Chapman clearly has some admiration for the soldier's valour (particularly apparent in his glowing accolades of Norris and Williams), the claims of the corrupting power of peace made by certain characters are undermined by the context in which each claim occurs, and he seems to be intent on demonstrating for his royal patron the dangers of conquest. However, *Byron* represents the perennial problem faced by much early modern drama, and treated in detail by Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: what role can the military man have in society during peace-time?

I would suggest that Chapman provides an answer to this question with his 1613 masque for the wedding festivities of Princess Elizabeth. This masque, like his 1596 poem 'De Guiana', celebrates the virtues of imperial conquest. David Lindley asserts that 'Those who most applauded the Protestant alliance as a symbol of a potentially more decisive foreign policy were precisely the same people who were most enthusiastic about pursuing the colonial dream, not simply as a missionary enterprise, but as part of the anti-Spanish crusade'.⁴² This elides the interests of the militant Protestants with the anti-Spanish faction and the proponents of colonial exploration, and to a large extent, the same people (notably Sir Walter Raleigh) supported all three planks of such an approach to foreign policy. However, in light of Chapman's trepidation regarding militarism as apparent in his tragedies, I would suggest that the masque's treatment of imperial expansion sees it as an alternative to war, not its corollary.

Lindley, the most recent critic of *The Memorable Masque*, reads it as extolling 'a more vigorous expansionist policy than James himself would have favoured' (p.51), and argues that its depiction of Virginian Indians in a gold-filled mine was intended 'to supply a potent reminder to James of a source of wealth that, to Raleigh and others of his ilk, was being needlessly passed up' (p.52). However, it should also be noted that James was among the most prominent approving voices after the performance, with John Chamberlain reporting that he 'made the

⁴² David Lindley, 'Courtly Play: The Politics of Chapman's *The Memorable Masque*', in *The Stuart Courts*, ed. Eveline Cruikshanks (Sutton: Stroud, 2000), pp.43-58 (p.51).

masquers kiss his hand at parting'.⁴³ It seems likely then, that whatever tension the masque might have embodied between different imperial outlooks, James (whether through accident or design) did not notice it. The masque itself is perhaps Chapman's most detailed and sustained exploration of notions of national identity, staging as it does an encounter between Britain and the New World. The rather elaborate pretext for this encounter is that a South Sea island, inhabited by Virginians, has been brought close to Britain by the earth's movements. Capriccio, the witty spokesman for the anti-masque (or antemasque, as Chapman spells it), points out the unlikelihood of such an occurrence but explains:

That this Ile is (for the excellency of it) divided from the world (*divisus ab orbe Britannus* [sic]) and that the whole world besides moves; yet this Ile stands fixt on her owne feete and defies the Worlds mutability, which this rare accident of the arrival of Riches, in one of his furthest-off-scituate dominions, most demonstrably proves (45-49).

Many of the contradictions running through the whole masque are present in this statement. Not only has the speaker rather self-referentially highlighted the tenuousness of the premise before expanding on it, but perhaps more importantly, the claim that the island 'stands fixt on her owne feete' is more undermined than proven by the sudden arrival of a foreign god on her shores. The masque suggests, in spite of its repeated emphasis on Britain's island status and James's supremacy as monarch, that isolation from a changing world is neither possible nor profitable. Perhaps the most intriguing point of this short passage is its clear assertion that Riches are not native to Britain: the 'here' of the court is identified as 'one of his furthest-off-scituate dominions'. Plutus's journey is thematically associated with the description of the Virginian inhabitants of the Pacific island (perhaps Britain's counterpart?) who have 'crost the Ocean' in honour of the royal couple's wedding. Gold and riches in general, then, are seen as naturally occurring not in Britain but in the overseas colonies, who are here presented as paying homage to Britain's sovereignty.

Visually, the masque must have accorded with the imperial rhetoric of abundant wealth: the description of the masque's opening procession evokes a

⁴³ John Chamberlain, *Letters*, I.425, quoted in A.R. Braunmuller, *A Seventeenth century Letterbook: A facsimile edition of Folger MS V.a.321* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), p.444.

parade of people and animals, all copiously decorated with gold and silver. The costumes of the chief masquers are particularly lavish:

The ground cloth of silver, richly embroidered, with golden Sunnes, and about every Sunne, ran a trail of gold, [...] betwixt every pane of embroidery, went a rowe of white Estridge feathers, mingled with sprigs of gold plate; under their breasts, they wore bawdricks of golde [...] and about their neckes, Ruffes of feathers, spangled with pearle and silver (23-30).

There was also a chariot of silver with a canopy of gold, and various gods and goddesses adorned in silver and gold silks. The association of the New World and its inhabitants with gold is furthered through their entrance in the masque proper. After a song from the 'Priests of the Sunne' who pray to the earth to 'ope thy wombe of golde' (237), the mountain in the scenery opened to reveal the main masquers dressed in the opulent costumes described above, sitting in a goldmine. The overwhelming visual message must have been that the New World was a land of plenty, and that these riches were available to any English explorers brave enough to claim them.

However, the attitude towards riches in this masque is extremely ambivalent. The main theme, in keeping with the emphasis on union revealed in the 'Hymn to Hymen' at the end of the masque, is the union of Honour and Riches. This is represented by Plutus, the god of Riches: 'being by Aristophanes, Lucian &c. presented naturally blind, deformd and dull witted; [who] is here by his love of Honor, made see, made sightly, made ingenious, made liberall' ('Description', 230-232). That the god of riches, and indeed, the pursuit of riches, is something inherently ugly, which has to be beautified by Honor before it can be palatable for a court masque, is made clear in the 'antemasque', which presents a 'man of wit', Capriccio, breaking open the stage set of rocks in search of a goldmine. Plutus accuses him of 'miching about my goulden Mines here' (64) – the *OED* has no entry for 'miching' as a verb, but 'michery' is thievery, so the meaning is clear. Capriccio never actually denies that he is a thief, and indeed when introducing his 'companie of accomlisht Travailers' – the baboons who will dance the antemasque – he says they have recently 'cut out the skirts of the whole world in amorous quest of your gould and silver' (131-2). This rather predatory sexual metaphor suggests the way in which the New World was figured as a

virgin woman awaiting the conquerors to deflower her. Walter Raleigh described Guiana as 'a Countrey that hath yet her Maydenhead, never sackt, turned, nor wrought', and Chapman, Jonson, and Marston's satirical treatment of would-be colonisers in *Eastward Ho* contains the memorable line: 'Come boys, Virginia longs till we share the rest of her maidenhead' (3. 3. 15-16).⁴⁴ Capriccio's description of ransacking wealth all over the world then, is perhaps not the best endorsement of the profits to be made from colonial enterprise.

D.J. Gordon describes Capriccio as representing 'unprincipled wit at the service of the highest bidder'.⁴⁵ However, despite his unsavoury characterisation there is nonetheless a sense in which the masque depends upon Capriccio's energy, and this has led David Lindley to argue that he should be read as an allegorical representation of Raleigh.⁴⁶ Lindley's argument is persuasive, but in view of Capriccio's proclaimed status as a 'man of wit' he is surely equally likely to stand for the poet himself. This ambivalent stance towards the main figure of the antimasque is symptomatic of Chapman's divided attitude towards the riches Capriccio seeks – he would also like a share of them but he cannot rid himself of the suspicion that they are tainted by dishonesty in the acquiring of them.

In allegorical terms, the problematic nature of gold is solved through the figure of Honor. Capriccio twice asks Plutus why it is that he is no longer blind, stupid and ugly, as his reputation seems to demand that he should be. Eventually Plutus relates the story of his transformation: 'my late being in love with the lovely Goddess *Honor*' (147-8). This is where the implications of the allegorical narrative for national identity become clearer. Honor has, according to Plutus, set up a 'rich temple', which is shown onstage, where she has 'fixt those her golden wings,[...] and that rowling stone she us'd to tread upon, for signe shee would never forsake this kingdome' (151-3). This temple, Chapman has informed the reader in the 'Description' of the masque, 'figur[es] this kingdome' (134-5), and so the association of the Virginians with gold would suggest that colonial expansion

⁴⁴ Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana*, transcribed, annotated and introduced by Neil L. Whitehead (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 196.

⁴⁵ D.J. Gordon, 'Chapman's Memorable Masque', in *The Renaissance Imagination: Essays and Lectures by D.J. Gordon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), ed. by Stephen Orgel, pp.194-202 (p.199).

⁴⁶ Lindley, 'Courtly Play', pp.54-55.

brings Jacobean honour to native American riches, resulting in glory for both parties. Interestingly, this image is almost identical with one in *The Tragedy of Byron* which A.R. Braunmuller has traced as having its direct source in Plutarch's *De Fortuna Romanorum*.⁴⁷ Henry says of his young son:

Let him by vertue, quite cut of from fortune
Her fetherd shoulders, and her winged shoes,
And thrust from her light feete, her turning stone;
That she might ever tarry by his throne. (*Tragedy* 1.1.141-5)

Braunmuller points out that this passage differs from its source by the fact that in Plutarch the goddess voluntarily gives up her wings and rolling stone, while in Henry's words his son is imagined as taking them from her by force of his 'vertue'. In the masque, Chapman returns to the idea of Fortune's voluntary abnegation of her attributes, perhaps because here the image occurs in a context of peace and plenty, whereas Henry's is a speech made still in the aftermath of civil war. However, while this image compliments James in his role of peace-maker, it also envisages Britain as the natural heir of the Roman empire, in a similar way to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. This, in the context of the colonial theme, must suggest a Britain engaged in expansion and conquest rather than in peaceful isolation from her neighbours.

That the version of the nation represented in this masque is Britain, rather than England, is hugely significant. 'Britain' is used five times in the text, while 'England' is not mentioned. Honor's priestess, Eunomia, who represents Law, instructs the Virginians to give up their 'superstitious worship of these Sunnes', in favour of 'our Britain *Phoebus*'. The only other instances of Chapman using the term 'Britain' are in relation to Prince Henry. In the 'Epicede or Funerall Song', the prince is described as 'Brittaine Henry' (344); in 'The Tears of Peace' he is exhorted to 'gird the diadem | Of thrice Great Britaine' (247-8); and the dedication to the Prince at the beginning of *The Whole Workes of Homer* (not actually published until 1616, four years after the Prince's death) describes him as 'inheritor to the united kingdoms of Great Brittain &c'. It is very likely that Henry had had some input into the plan for the masque, though he died before he could see it, and his sister's

⁴⁷ A.R. Braunmuller, 'Chapman's Use of Plutarch's *De Fortuna Romanorum* in *The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 23 (1972), 178-179.

wedding negotiations, completed. Both the use of the term Britain and the imperial theme of the masque can therefore be traced to Henry's influence on Chapman. Of course, the idea of a united Britain was also something of a pet project for James, and this may have been one of the reasons he was so pleased with the finished piece. But the Virginian project was certainly something towards which Henry was more sympathetic than James, and Chapman's endorsement of it here indicates that, while in terms of European warfare he may have been closer to James's position of peace, when it came to colonial conquest he was in favour of a more aggressive approach. When read in conjunction with the tragedies discussed above, it can be suggested that Chapman saw the overseas imperial mission as a useful area into which warlike men such as Raleigh could expand their energies and make a living without endangering the state through rebellion at home, as Byron and Essex had done.

The image of a united Britain engaged in fruitful exchange with other European countries and profitable subjection of American lands is however, not present in Chapman's other masque, *The Masque of the Twelve Months* (1619). Martin Butler argues that this production 'was a striking reversal of the attitudes of Chapman's previous court festival, *The Memorable Masque* (1613), the iconography of which adopted a much more "forward" position on religious and overseas trade, and which strongly implied that Britain could not remain apart from the rest of the world'.⁴⁸ Butler's assessment of the isolationist position taken by the masque is correct, and the explanation for it lies in another point made by his article, the fact that this masque was written for Prince Charles rather than Prince Henry. The presentation of the Prince in this masque is complementary to James, 'father and son together embodying the union of "majesty and love", "youth and state" (34, 356)' (p.380), in contrast with the more contradictory stance often taken by Prince Henry's events. In one way then, we could read this masque as suggesting a more unified version of the nation: more independent of other nations for its identity, and less riven by conflict at the heart of government, the harmony of the father-son relationship suggesting a continuity and stability for English national identity which is not found in Chapman's earlier writings.

⁴⁸ Martin Butler, 'The Masque of the Twelve Months', *ELR*, 37 (2007), 360-400 (p.383).

Does this mean then that Chapman had become a less oppositional figure in his old age? Was he reduced to voicing Jacobean propaganda with this masque, even, as Butler suggests, inaugurating the defensive tone of all future propaganda efforts? This does not seem an entirely satisfactory explanation of what is going on in this text. It does take fewer risks with its depiction of royal authority than any of Chapman's plays, and it is certainly less confrontational than the earlier masque, but these changes in tone can be explained by the circumstances of its composition. In 1619, Chapman had retired from theatrical writing and moved to Hitchin, a move generally agreed to have been prompted by the fact that he owed £100 to Henry Jones and was unable to pay the debt. When he was approached to write the Christmas masque, (possibly as Butler suggests, on the recommendation of Inigo Jones) he would have been sorely in need of the money it was going to bring him, and understandably reluctant to do anything to jeopardise the contract. Masques allow far less room for hostile critiques of the court than productions for the private theatres, and even the criticism which has been perceived in *The Memorable Masque* is less a critique than a positive representation of an ideology which James *could have* adopted: essentially it shielded its criticism behind the familiar veil of offering advice to the monarch, and made that advice even more palatable by the inclusion of a great deal of flattery of James himself.

It is hardly surprising then, that *The Masque of the Twelve Months* presents Prince Charles in a light calculated to flatter both him and his father. But this is not to say that it is entirely complementary to their sense of the nation. The introductory dialogue subtly suggests some tensions within the nation itself, so that even as it presents a view of a harmonious royal authority and self-contained national identity, it removes the conflict previously suggested as inherent in authority and turns it into a conflict between court and country.

The masque opens with an encounter between Pigwiggen, a fairy, and Howlet, an owl. The two characters discuss the masque and introduce the first song. Howlet suggests that the fairy looks so like a mouse she had been about to eat her until the fairy spoke, adding 'Oh, a good fat mouse were an excellent rere-banquet this midnight, specially a city mouse; your country mouse is not worth the flaying' (7-9). Then, in response to the fairy asking her where they are, Howlet replies 'In a good yeoman's barn, I think, for I am sure that from hence flows all

the barn's-bread of the kingdom' (11-12). These comments seem slightly out of place in a court masque, the first drawing attention to the difficulties faced by the rural poor, in contrast with city inhabitants who are better-fed, and the second emphasising the disparity in this by reminding the court audience that it is the country which is the source of the kingdom's food. This would perhaps have particular relevance for the occasion, as Giovanni Battista Gabaleone's description of the evening records: 'a most sumptuous table was set out with food, which, according to the custom of great courts, was laid waste in a moment by the courtiers'.⁴⁹ In this opening reminder of the hunger experienced by the rural poor then, lies a distinctly Chapman-esque critique of the conspicuous consumption of the court, and an indication that the seemingly homogenous vision of the nation he has been commissioned to write is not quite as unproblematic as the court would like to believe.

The figure of Howlet is in fact suggestive of Chapman himself, which makes the criticism voiced by her all the more powerful. Shortly after the exchange about food, the following exchange takes place:

HOWLET I hope I have not harboured so long in an ivy bush but I can play
the poet for need.

PIGWIGGEN Meaning a needy poet.

HOWLET Faith, needy we all are, Pig, and for the needlessness of so many.

But this all equal knowledge hath decreed,

Need is no vice, since vices hath no need. (42-7)

If Butler had not already provided a very rigorous argument for Chapman's authorship of this masque, these lines would surely convince any doubter. They quite simply sound like pure Chapman, in their reminder of the poor status of poets, and the apparent sententiousness of the last couplet which actually masks a bitter observation of the rewards of vice – 'vices have no need' containing a 'safe' meaning about the senselessness of vice, and a more dangerous meaning that in a world where country mice are so starved that they are not worth the eating, only those who turn to vice can live a comfortable lifestyle. Furthermore, there seems to be a direct reference to Chapman's own situation in Howlet's hope that she has

⁴⁹ Giovanni Battista Gabaleone, translated by John Orrell, 'The London Court Stage in the Savoy Correspondence, 1613-1675', *Theatre Research International*, 4 (1978-9), 83; quoted in Butler, p. 371.

not 'harboured so long in an ivy bush' (alluding to Chapman's removal from London to Hitchin several years previously?) that she has lost the ability to write poetry when she needs to. The question of need is one which was implicit in the preceding discussion of food, and the statement 'needy we all are, for the needlessness of so many' is a difficult one. The *OED* defines 'needlessness' as 'the fact of being needless; unnecessariness, pointlessness', and cites this passage as the second occurrence. However, it seems to me that this definition conflates two different concepts, and does not fully explain the word's meaning in this context. If something is needless, it *could* be pointless, but surely given the previous discussions of need and want, what it means here is to be free from need. Pigwiggen's statement is nonsensical if 'needlessness' is taken to mean pointless – but if it means free from need, perhaps with overtones of prodigality and waste, then it has the troubling effect of connecting the neediness of poets (and the fairy characters who have already shown their connection to the countryside) to the extravagance of the courtly audience – their comfort depends on and directly contributes to the neediness of their social inferiors. Another hint of this viewpoint is given later in the masque, when the heart-shaped fort is revealed, with its sentinels asleep around its gates – the soldiers are described as 'poor younger brothers, it seems, serving at this fort only as *enfants perdus*' (166-7). Taken together, these lines suggest a viewpoint at odds with the perfectly harmonious kingdom which will be presented by the masque proper.

However, it must be admitted that from this point until the end of the masque, the troubling elements are brushed out of sight. The speeches are full of references to James, specifically to his role of peace-maker (or perhaps more appropriately at this stage in European history, peace-keeper, as war-like elements at home were pressing him to intervene in the conflict in Bohemia which had been sparked by his son-in-law's acceptance of the crown in 1618).⁵⁰ The fort's ensigns are inscribed 'to this our glory of the year, and his most peaceful employer' (presumably Beauty and the King respectively), and Beauty, calling the procession of the thirteen moons of the year, refers to them as 'the whole pomp of the

⁵⁰ See Derek Hirst, *Authority and Conflict: England 1603-1658* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), pp.126-7; Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham 1592-1628* (London: Longman, 1981), pp.79-84.

peaceful sky' (211). The flattering images peak with the description of the dancers as:

the celestial seed
Of men's good angels, that are said to breed
In blessed isles about this Britain shore. (291-3)

The worth of the masquers is imagined as a credit to James himself:

For whose worth all
These wonders in these isles angelical
Are set in circle of his charmed command,
Walled with the wallowing ocean, and whose hand
Charming all war from his mild monarchy
Tunes all his deeps in dreadful harmony! (303-8)

These images of magical islands inhabited by spirits and ruled over by a wise and dreadful father-figure are reminiscent of *The Tempest*, and perhaps even are designed to specifically invoke that play. James is depicted as a Prospero figure whose power binds the magical island spirits to his service. This is not Chapman's usual style, and it is worth noting that he can only achieve this harmonious picture of authority by moving from the material reality of the first part of the masque, where the practicalities of food production and the employment of younger sons can be discussed, even in a flippant manner, to this realm of mythical, unworldly spirits.

That there is an element of illusion which borders dangerously on delusion in this manoeuvre is signalled by the fact that the second song of the masque (which is, in stage terms, the first song to which the royal masquers dance) is about the 'charm' by which the royal dancers will 'make this winter night | Our beauty's spring' (288-9). Chapman's ambivalence toward the transformatory power of the prince's dancing is perhaps indicated by the fact that in this song, the overwhelmingly powerful images are those of winter, not the spring represented by Charles (as the month of April) and Buckingham (as the month of May):

Shine out, fair suns, with all your heat,
Show all your thousand-coloured light,
Black winter freezes to his seat;
The grey wolf howls, he does so bite;
Crook'd Age on three knees creeps the street;

The boneless fish close quaking lies,
And eats for cold his aching feet;
The stars in icicles arise. (280-87)

Even followed as this is by the couplet urging the 'Prince of Light' to transform the scene with his bright shining presence, the power of light and heat seems unconvincing in comparison to the vivid images of cold winter which dominate this song. Also interesting is that the themes hinted at in the opening dialogue, of starvation and want, are also subtly present here, in the idea of the 'boneless fish' (as Butler's gloss to these lines explains, Chapman's name for the octopus) eating his own feet, and 'crook'd age on three knees creep[ing] the street', an image which seems to suggest an old beggar hauling himself along with a cane, with no one to assist his laborious progress.

Overall then, this masque mostly toes the royal line, particularly in its constant praise of peace, and the idea of the nation united by its ruling dynasty and separated from other nations, 'walled by the wallowing ocean' (306). The emphasis on the island imagery is important to this project, as it is to some extent the geographical integrity of 'Britain' (itself a problematic concept, as James still struggled to persuade Parliament to effect a Union of the Crowns), which provides its independence. Nevertheless, Chapman works into his text a number of subtle hints that the proclaimed unity of the nation is illusory and that the divisions between court and country, rich and poor are more significant than the royal audience would like to admit.

Both court masques, then, despite their status as court entertainments, manage to highlight certain tensions within the ruling elite which point to competing ideas of the nation and its relationship to other countries. Although the later masque certainly does present a less internationally engaged version of England (or Britain), it moves to highlight domestic factors which would complicate the court's idealistic opinion of itself. This move towards isolation is all the more surprising considering that his earlier writings indicate that Chapman was strongly supportive of exchange and engagement between European nations, and of colonial expansion into the New World. However, the colonial aspect of his thought is far less important than the way he imagines England and France engaged in parallel struggles to articulate a version of national identity distinct

from, and often in conflict with, the figure of the monarch. Chapman's interest in cultural exchange and in drawing parallels across national borders is perhaps explained, at least in part, by the fact that he had spent some considerable time abroad, possibly fighting on behalf of the Protestants in the Low Countries. This gives an interesting twist to his many characters who are presented as returning travellers. It has been remarked that Chapman had a fondness for trickster-type figures: carnivalesque, manipulative and intelligent characters often appear in his comedies, beginning with Lemot in *An Humorous Days Mirth*, through Rinaldo in *All Fools*, Lodovico in *May Day*, and Vandome in *Monsieur D'Olive*, and this character-type turns finally into the cynical misanthropist of *The Widow's Tears's* Tharsalio.⁵¹ What has not been noted about these characters is the fact that several of them are presented as newly returned from travels abroad: *Monsieur D'Olive* opens with the arrival of Vandome, who proclaims 'these three yeares, I have travailed' (1.1.42), while Cynthia in *The Widow's Tears* explicitly notes the change in personality which has occurred in Tharsalio since his return from his travels: 'I feare me in your travaile, you have drunck too much of that Italian aire, that hath infected the whole masse of your ingenuous Nature' (1.1.115-17). Both of these characters hold a power over the world of the play, manipulating other characters' behaviour and resolving the conflicts therein (although in Tharsalio's case, he also caused the conflict by his deliberate provocation of his brother's jealousy).

The agency accorded to these men suggests that travel in foreign countries endows the traveller with knowledge and powers which continue to be of use on his return – and indeed, the powers which both characters exert are distinctly authorial, as they tie up loose ends and resolve crises which were at least partially of their own making. That Chapman himself had 'travailed' in the Netherlands suggests perhaps that the power with which he endows his own travellers was a deliberate point on the benefits of such cultural exchange. This is then passed on to the audiences of his plays, demonstrating Russell West's suggestion that theatre can be seen as 'a way of creating, within the settled stability of the source culture, similar modes of perception to those gained in travel'.⁵² His portrayal of the

⁵¹ On Chapman's trickster characters see M. C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p. 178, and Millar MacLure, *George Chapman*, p.84.

⁵² Russell West, *Spatial Representations*, p.173.

relationship between France and England especially indicates such a positive conception of international relations.

Despite the fact that Chapman's foreign experiences had been military, his attitude towards war is distinctly ambivalent: although he celebrates the heroism of Elizabethan soldiers in France, he is also careful to note the destructive properties of war, and the egotism at the heart of the military thirst for glory, a perspective which is strongest in *Caesar and Pompey*, and might suggest, if the date of 1611-12 is accepted for this play, that he grew less enamoured of militarism as his career went on. He was a firm Protestant, and his position at Henry's court only serves to emphasise this fact, but his opinion on military intervention was clearly less enthusiastic than many of the other advisors to the Prince, and his positive presentation of imperial expansion in *The Memorable Masque* should be read in light of his reluctance to celebrate the glories of war in and of itself. Perhaps where Chapman's depiction of the nation was most radical, however, is in the fact that despite his focus on the court and its politics, the monarch is not presumed to stand for the nation, and indeed, is even seen in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* in opposition to the rest of the political class in a way which has sinister and violent implications for the subject-monarch relationship.

His trepidation about war perhaps came from the fact that his tragedies focus on nations split by *civil* war – the last days of Republican Rome, and early modern French history both offered examples of the bloodshed that could occur when the competing versions of the nation offered by different voices within the political elite could not be reconciled. It is of course, dangerous to ascribe prophetic qualities to writers, or to read their works as inevitably indicating future events. But Chapman was clearly aware of the dangers of absolute power in a monarch to a nation's sense of unity, and this is a major theme of many of his plays. It is perhaps indicative of the political climate in the era preceding the English Civil War that these were the themes which preoccupied, not just Chapman, but also so many of his contemporaries – perhaps most prominently Greville, Daniel, Jonson and Webster. While Chapman's conception of the nation is one which is happy to acknowledge parallels and even shared history, between England and France, he also sees in the internal divisions of England a dangerous similarity to the turbulent power struggles which had rocked her close neighbour

in the recent narrative of French national identity. His plays explore in great detail the internal divisions of English culture. One of the major aspects of such divisions was of course money, and the perennially troublesome question of its unequal distribution.

Chapter 3

Chapman and Money: Economic Insecurity at the Jacobean Court

One of the characteristics of the Jacobean court most often commented upon by historians is its financial mismanagement. Elizabeth had kept her debts just under control by a combination of frugal management and strategic selling-off of royal land. James, on the other hand, was notoriously extravagant: generous to his favourites, free with his hospitality, and overly fond of new clothes, rich food and copious amounts of drink. Derek Hirst comments of the new monarch: 'When so many of his later political difficulties were associated with English resentment of his extravagance, the suddenness of his journey from penury to riches may have been significant'.¹ While at the beginning of James's reign the resentments had yet to build up, the difference in the economic behaviour of the monarch must have been radically apparent from the fact that he created 906 knighthoods in his first four months.² This was mirrored by an increased reliance on credit arrangements all down the social scale, with a resulting increase in disputes. Craig Muldrew remarks upon the rapid expansion of debt litigation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: 'In the central courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas the number of suits which reached advanced stages of pleading increased six-fold in the period from 1563 to 1640: in 1563 there were 5278 cases in advanced stages in these two courts, which by 1580 had risen to 13,105; by 1606 to 23,147; and by 1640 to 28,734'.³

Against this background of a culture in which court nobles and commoners were all perpetually short of money, George Chapman had his own personal fiscal

¹ Derek Hirst, *Authority and Conflict: England 1603-1658* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), p. 98.

² Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p.74.

³ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p.203.

troubles, which several times resulted in court appearances and twice led to his imprisonment. As the younger son of a yeoman, he inherited only £100 on his death, while his older brother came into possession of his father's estate.⁴ An ongoing dispute with a money-lender of low repute, John Wolfall, regarding a bond for £100, resulted in a brief period in the Counter in 1600, fifteen years after the alleged lending of the money (Chapman's defence was that although the bond had been made out, Wolfall had never actually given him the money; Wolfall had in the meantime been convicted on several counts of fraud; despite this his son pursued Chapman after his father's death, until Chapman lodged a complaint with the Court of Chancery in 1608).⁵ The final outcome of this particular case is unknown, but Chapman was again imprisoned for debt in 1613, prompting him to write to Edward Philips, the master of the rolls, asking for payment for his recent masque, for the wedding celebrations of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatinate.⁶ His language in this letter reveals his desperation: he points to the success of the masque ('in that Royall assemblie, for which it was ordained (to say ye least) it did not displease') and then complains:

Yt if you were not then satisfied wth yt I had done; you will yet at ye last be satisfied with what I have suffred; yt is: losse of reputation, want, and imprisonment: the daunger whereof still pressing me, will not give me leave to rest with such answere as *Habet mercedem suam*.⁷

In 1614 he moved from London back to his home town of Hitchin, partly, his most recent biographer speculates, to alleviate the material pressures of life in the city.⁸ When he died in 1634, he did not leave enough money for a tomb, so Inigo Jones designed and paid for a monument which can today be seen in St-Giles-in-the-Fields.⁹

⁴ Jean Jacquot, *George Chapman (1559-1634): sa vie, son poésie, son théâtre, sa pensée* (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1951), p. 4.

⁵ Mark Eccles, 'Chapman's Early Years', *Studies in Philology*, 43 (1946), pp. 176-93.

⁶ A.R. Braunmuller, ed., *A Seventeenth-century Letterbook: a facsimile edition of Folger MS V.a.321* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), item 89, pp.294-298.

⁷ Lit. 'it contains its own wages', perhaps more elegantly translated as 'it is its own reward'.

⁸ Mark Thornton Burnett, 'George Chapman', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5118?docPos=1>, accessed 25/09/08.

⁹ Michael Leapman, *Inigo: The Troubled Life of Inigo Jones, Architect of the English Renaissance* (London: Review, 2003), p.255.

Jean-Christophe Agnew has argued that the early modern theatre was one of the arenas in which changing conceptions of the marketplace and economic exchange were enacted. He posits that early modern Britons were in the process of 'putting forward a coherent and repeated pattern of problems or questions about the nature of social identity, intentionality, accountability, transparency, and reciprocity in commodity transactions – the who, what, when, where and why of exchange'.¹⁰ Agnew's statement should alert us to the fact that the conceptualisation of exchange and credit impacted on more than just the purses of early modern citizens: it affected their whole way of imagining social relations. This is particularly true of Chapman. While many Jacobean writers took up themes of prodigal sons, debt, and speculation, Chapman's particularly unfortunate experience of the credit relations of the early modern period gives his writing a more pessimistic outlook than that of many of his contemporaries. This chapter begins by examining the obvious anxiety with which Chapman viewed economic pressures: the hostile portrayals of money-lenders, pawnbrokers and others whose profession might be seen as profiting from the financial losses of others combines with several clear instances of disapproval of both wealth-obsessed misers and profligate spenders to suggest Chapman's despair at the current economic climate. The attack on prodigal spending goes all the way to the top of the political elite in *Monsieur D'Olive* (1606), where the Duke's flamboyant bankrolling of an unnecessary ambassadorial mission is viewed with a satiric eye which very probably, as Albert Tricomi has shown, had as its target James' spending on a real court ambassage of 1604.¹¹

This critique of court spending is also a notable element of *All Fools* (printed 1605; probably written originally in 1599 and revised in 1604) and *Eastward Ho* (1605), both plays in which battle-lines are drawn between two apparently opposed approaches to money, spending and credit: a party of 'prodigals' who tend to be young, aristocratic, and keen on taverns and women, versus a more cautious, usually older generation who advocate saving money instead of spending it. As we shall see, however, the contrast between these two parties is

¹⁰ Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 9.

¹¹ Albert Tricomi, 'The Focus of Satire and the Date of *Monsieur D'Olive*,' *SEL*, 17 (1977), 282-294.

complicated by the fact that the sober cautious figures tend to be represented satirically, as single-mindedly pursuing money at the expense of all else, and are often portrayed, in contrast with the explicitly sexualised language of the more spend-eager characters, as sterile, asexual, or even impotent. This conjunction between the sexual and economic themes is apparent in both plays and suggests a more open mind regarding credit and spending than is allowed by simply arguing that Chapman disapproves of prodigal spending and borrowing habits. Instead, the repeated association of spenders with fertility and procreation suggests an acknowledgment that credit transactions are a necessary lubricant of social life.

This is best explained by considering how Chapman's writing would have affected his own credit and standing in society. As the primary means not only of his income, but of his dissemination of his reputation as a writer, his plays voice the conventional wisdom of engaging in one's community economically and not profiting from the losses of others, while exploring the pressures and tensions resultant from always having to be aware of one's credit, or reputation. Chapman's writing on matters of money is riven by a divide between the wish to prove himself credible, and a growing hostility towards the necessity of doing so.

Essentially, Chapman knew he was dependent upon credit for his economic survival, but his many brushes with disaster and a sense that true virtue goes unrewarded while the undeserving prosper lends his treatment of money a distinctly bitter edge. This is nowhere more apparent than in two scenes from different plays: *Bussy D'Ambois* (1607) and *Byron's Conspiracy* (1608) – in which the payment of cash to or from a servant ends in a violent exchange. These scenes suggest Chapman's ambiguous attitude, not only towards money itself, but also regarding his own status as a paid servant for the entertainment of the nobility, (which will be the subject of the next chapter). Throughout this chapter, the discussion will revolve around Chapman's simultaneous need for credit, and his anxiety regarding his constant indebtedness, which spreads out to encompass a concern at the indebtedness prevalent throughout the Jacobean court and in wider society.

Courtly Wastrels: Knighthoods, Ambassadors and the Devaluation of Nobility

All Fools, *Eastward Ho*, and *Monsieur D'Olive* share many of the same concerns regarding debt and the devaluation or corruption of the nobility. They also all make several jokes about the sale of knighthoods, which is very much connected to Chapman's sense that the court was providing an irresponsible example of economic behaviour. *Monsieur D'Olive* and *Eastward Ho* were both written in 1605, and as I have outlined in Chapter 1, *All Fools*, although originally written for the Rose in 1599, was probably revised in 1604.¹² The thematic continuity between all three plays, combined with their closeness in date, indicates that Chapman was particularly preoccupied with matters of debt, rank, and exchange at this point in his career. I would argue that this is in large part due to the new culture of conspicuous spending which James had introduced to England. One of the most obvious examples of this new prodigality was James's approach to knighthoods.

There can be no doubt that the sudden upsurge in knighthoods was remarked upon disapprovingly by observers at the time. James journeyed south from Edinburgh through April and May of 1603, distributing honours widely as he went. In the first four months of his reign he created 906 new knights, often on the recommendation of his Scottish courtiers who were soon rumoured to be accepting bribes for this service. Alan Stewart cites a letter from English lawyer Roger Wilbraham who complained that 'it grew a public speech that the English had the blows and the Scottish the crowns'. The Archbishop of York phrased a similar complaint more delicately in a letter to Salisbury written in 1604, quoted by David Bergeron in his study of the royal family: 'His Majesty's subjects hear and fear that his excellent and heroical nature is too much inclined to giving, which in short time will exhaust the treasure of this kingdom and bring many inconveniences'. Lawrence Stone has calculated that by the December of 1604 James had created 1,161 new knights, almost tripling the existing number. Stone also comments on the widespread practice by which would-be knights paid

¹² See pp.39-40 above.

Scottish courtiers to procure the honours: prices apparently varied between £7.10s and £50 at the start of the reign, and increased to £100 by 1604.¹³

It is quite clear then, that at around the time Chapman was writing (or, in the case of *All Fools*, revising) these plays, it was common opinion, not only that the king was too generous in his awarding of titles, but that they were for sale to anyone with the ready cash. This was perhaps compounded by the fact that the aristocracy themselves were becoming increasingly reliant on fragile networks of debt and credit. Lawrence Stone argues that 'the period from 1580 to 1610 in which the nobility first became heavily dependent on credit was the one in which the dangers of borrowing – high interest rates and the potential danger of forfeiting mortgaged estates – were very real'.¹⁴ He suggests that high interest rates and punitive court cases made this period particularly risky for debtors. This sense of inherent danger is reflected not only in Chapman's drama, but in many of the plays of the period.

The excess at the heart of the Jacobean court is perhaps most vehemently satirised in Shakespeare and Middleton's *Timon of Athens*, a play which has been dated to between 1605 and 1607.¹⁵ *Timon* shares many of Chapman's concerns with issues of indebtedness, excessive spending, and the prostitution of art or speech in the service of a patron. The anxiety caused by a profligate master is voiced by Timon's steward, who complains:

He commands us to provide, and give great gifts,
And all out of an empty coffer;
Nor will he know his purse, or yield me this,
To show him what a beggar his heart is,
Being of no power to make his wishes good.
His promises fly so beyond his state
That what he speaks is all in debt; he owes for every word. (1.2.195-202)

¹³ Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003), p.168; Hirst, p.100; David Bergeron, *Royal Family, Royal Lovers: King James of England and Scotland* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), p. 85; Stone, pp. 71-82.

¹⁴ Stone, pp. 543-4.

¹⁵ Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton, 'Introduction', to William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2008), pp. 12-18. All further quotes from *Timon* are from this edition.

As *Timon* was not published until the First Folio of 1623, and there is no evidence for it ever being performed, it is impossible to speculate that Chapman might have been influenced by it directly. However, it seems very likely that Shakespeare and Middleton were responding to similar anxieties about James's expenditure, as David Bevington and David L. Smith have suggested.¹⁶ That it appears to have been unpublished until after Shakespeare's death is perhaps explained by the vituperative nature of its criticism of court practices. These lines could apply just as well to King James as to Timon, and it is very likely that they expressed a common opinion that the king's over-generosity devalued both his own position and the moral stature of those who flocked to profit from it. The idea of speech itself becoming indebted and fettered is particularly apposite to Chapman: perhaps the reason he never expressed his disgust quite as openly as Shakespeare does in this play is because his own speech was hampered by his chronic indebtedness and the consequent necessity to sue for court favour and material support.

This situation is exemplified by *All Fools*, which makes only two references to the selling of honours. Some version of the play was written in 1599, and after being revised for a run at Blackfriars in 1604 it was played at court before James for the New Year celebrations of 1605. It is therefore a little surprising that there are *any* references to the knighthood controversy at all, although both are discreet enough to maintain deniability, and there is no evidence that the play caused any offence. The first such reference is a joke made by a page about a female character – he says she must be titled 'lady' because: 'Lady is growne a common name to their whole sex' (3.1.170-1). This comment clearly suggests both the increasing frequency of noble titles, and the consequent debasement of the honour.

The second reference is more abstract, and does not refer to knighthoods explicitly, but more to a sense that undeserving and low-status hangers-on have found reward. It displays an anxiety about unprecedented social mobility, particularly on the part of people without a previous claim to noble birth. One of the aristocratic characters, Valerio, laments the current situation at court:

What objects see men in this world, but such

¹⁶ David Bevington and David L. Smith, 'James I and *Timon of Athens*', *Comparative Drama*, 33 (1999), 56-87.

As would yeeld matter to a rayling humour?
 When he that last yere carried after one
 An empty Buckram bag, now fills a Coach,
 And crowds the Senate with such troops of Clyents,
 And servile followers, as would put a mad spleene
 Into a Pigeon. (2.1.341-7)

This is a revealing passage: it seems to have a specificity in its reference to 'last yere', suggesting that the person in question, who only a year ago was a servant whose job was to carry someone else's 'empty Buckram bag' is now enjoying wealth and political influence. Unfortunately there is not enough detail to establish whether or not this is a jibe at an actual court personage, but even so, the implications are clear. Buckram bags were associated with lawyers (*OED* 'buckram' *n.2b*), so there could be an added dimension of social dismay at the fact that a lawyer's servant is the beneficiary of such mobility. The reference to the Senate of course suggests ancient Rome, and the fact that it is crowded 'with [...] troops of Clyents' perhaps glances at Jonson's *Sejanus*, published in 1603 with a dedicatory poem by Chapman. It has been suggested that Chapman collaborated with Jonson on an earlier, staged version of this play, so he was clearly familiar with its themes.¹⁷ *Sejanus* was also a study about the corruption resulting from royal favouritism, so here Chapman could well be alluding to the political implications of Jonson's depiction of the depravity of the Roman Tiberius to highlight the same implications in the court which Valerio describes.

Furthermore, a reference to *Hamlet* in '[it] would put a mad spleene into a Pigeon' gives another reference to a corrupt court. This seems to be a conflation of two of Hamlet's descriptions of himself. The first is his early lament that he is too passive to resist Claudius: 'I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall | to make oppression bitter'.¹⁸ The reference to the mad spleen perhaps also recalls Hamlet's threat to Laertes over Ophelia's grave: 'Though I am not spleenative rash, | Yet I have in me something dangerous' (5.1.250-51). The reworking of Hamlet's words in this context suggests that, had the Danish prince been witness to the scandalous changes in the court of the last year, he would not have procrastinated, but been

¹⁷ R. P. Corballis, 'The "Second Pen" in the Stage Version of *Sejanus*', *MP*, 76 (1979), 273-7.

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 2.2.512-3. All further quotes are from this edition.

spurred into action. It uses Hamlet as a precedent to suggest that one could be made mad by a corrupt court, with potentially violent consequences. All in all, this passage, when read in conjunction with the previous joke about 'Lady is growne a common name', suggests not only that Chapman revised *All Fools* after James's accession, but that it shares the concerns of his other plays from this period regarding the sale of knighthoods, and the corruption of the proper flow of reward and courtly favour.

Monsieur D'Olive and *Eastward Ho* further elaborate on this concern. Elmer Stoll finds many allusions to the selling of honours in *Monsieur D'Olive*, including one character who exclaims: 'Purchase their knighthood my lord! Marry, I think they come truly by't, for they pay well for't' (4.2.70-1).¹⁹ The most famous such reference in *Eastward Ho* comes with a sneer even at the king's Scottish accent in the line: 'I ken the man weel; he's one of my thirty-pound knights' (4.1.197-8). Van Fossen finds it 'curious' that this particularly audacious reference managed to escape the censor.²⁰ In fact these individual references to Jacobean practice are only one element of the subversive way in which Chapman, Jonson and Marston interrogated the very concept of nobility with their play. Whether the particular passages in question came from Chapman's pen or not is irrelevant: the very close relationship they have to similar passages in *Monsieur D'Olive* shows that he was consistently suspicious of the aristocracy.

In *Eastward Ho* much of the satire is directed at the character of Gertrude, the goldsmith's daughter who declares on her first appearance 'I must be a lady, and I will be a lady' (1.2.21). She marries Sir Petronel largely because she hopes he will 'take me to thy mercy out of this miserable chity' [sic] (1.2.139-40). Gertrude's single-minded pursuit of a title ends in disaster when she discovers that her knight, Sir Petronel, has no castle in the country, and she has been abandoned penniless. The final act opens with her and her maid, Sindefy, lamenting their respective plights. This passage contains a bitter assertion of the worthlessness of rank. Sin says she was 'stol'n from my friends, which were worshipful and of good accompt, by a prentice in the habit and disguise of a gentleman', and

¹⁹ Elmer Edgar Stoll, 'On the Dates of Some of Chapman's Plays', *MLN*, 20 (1905), 206-9.

²⁰ Chapman, Jonson and Marston, *Eastward Ho*, ed. by R. W. Van Fossen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979, reprinted 1999), p.157n. All further references are to this edition.

Gertrude responds by complaining that she ‘was made a lady; and by a knight, Sin, which is now as good as no knight, Sin’ (5.1.10-12; 19-21). Sindefy hints that Quicksilver was only pretending to be a gentleman, but in fact, we are given no other reason to doubt that he is, as he claims, of gentle birth: ‘my mother’s a gentlewoman, and my father a justice of the peace and of quorum’ (1.1.26-7). The titles to which Quicksilver and Sir Petronel lay claim are never disputed: despite the knight being landless, penniless, and hopelessly in debt, there is never any suggestion that he might be an imposter to the rank. Janet Clare states: ‘that Sir Petronel is a parody of the spurious Jacobean gentlemen who flocked to Court is evident from the conversation between the two gentlemen on the Isle of Dogs, where he has been washed ashore from his abortive sea voyage’.²¹ However, we might assume given his poverty that Sir Petronel would have been in no position to buy a knighthood, and therefore must have belonged to the ranks of the more established but increasingly insolvent gentry. Both the young men under discussion here seem to belong quite legitimately to the high ranks which Gertrude had previously been so desperate to join – but the two women’s experience has led them to the conclusion that rank is a meaningless category and cannot be used to gauge a person’s value – the title of gentleman or knight, even when genuine, is no guarantee of either wealth or of honesty.

And yet this is not quite the conclusion the play arrives at. Golding himself also claims to be ‘born a gentleman’, (3.2.114) and uses this, in conjunction with the ‘trade I have learned of my master’ (115) to prove his worthiness as a match for Mildred. Gertrude is sceptical about his claims to gentility (‘He’s a gentleman?’-125), but Touchstone (the only major character *not* to lay claim to gentle birth) jokes that there are ‘two sorts of gentlemen. There is a gentleman artificial, and a gentleman natural’ using this to insult Sir Petronel by calling him a gentleman natural – meaning a simpleton. This complex formulation suggests that, despite Golding’s claim to be of gentle birth, he is (by contrast to Sir Petronel) a gentleman artificial. Quite what Touchstone means by this term is unclear – it could be highlighting the use of artifice as a skill, which would be appropriate for a craftsman, such as the goldsmith’s apprentice. But it also suggests artificiality,

²¹ Janet Clare, *‘Art Made Tongue-Tied By Authority’: Elizabethan and Jacobean Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.140.

and the constructed nature of gentlemanly identity. This fits in with the earlier point about Petronel being a likely knight of the old stock, rather than the new, rich upcomers – he is a ‘natural’ gentleman, but unfortunately this goes along with foolishness. By contrast, Golding has achieved the same status by means of his artifice, and is more convincing or effective in the role, but is thus open to accusations of fraud and imposture.

The rank of knight is even more thoroughly debased by the play than that of gentleman: Sir Petronel being of course an example of the low quality of contemporary knights. Gertrude, in her despair at being abandoned, launches into an extraordinary tirade against the current nobility, compared to ‘the knighthood of old time’:

The rid a-horseback; ours go afoot. They were attended by their squires; ours by their lackeys. They went buckled in their armour; ours muffled in their cloaks. They travelled wildernesses and deserts; ours dare scarce walk the streets. They were still prest to engage their honour; ours still ready to pawn their clothes. They would gallop on at sight of a monster; ours run away at the sight of a sergeant. They would help poor ladies; ours make poor ladies. (5.1.38-47)

This tirade is not aimed at the selling of knighthoods, but rather at the sad comparison current knights make with their chivalric predecessors. In an audience which must have been made up largely of knights, this would surely have made for some uneasy comedy. Presumably the fact that it was spoken by children may have mitigated the sting somewhat, and encouraged the rich audience to take the joke in good spirit. Furthermore, it seems likely that no single aristocrat would want to show offence, no matter how indebted their estates, because no one would want to admit being one of those debauched or decayed knights who were being satirised. Its radical power is also somewhat complicated by the fact that the audience would presumably be laughing at the expense of Gertrude, who could be seen as having received her fair punishment for being so self-serving and determined to clamber into the aristocracy at any price.

But nonetheless this sweeping condemnation of the behaviour of the Jacobean knighthood must have picked up on a general unease about the impoverishment of the aristocracy, suggesting that the financial anxieties were mirrored by a concomitant draining away of heroic values. Percy Simpson

attributes this scene to Jonson, but even if this is the case, rather than devalue the importance of these issues to Chapman, such an attribution in fact demonstrates that his scepticism about the value of rank was shared by his collaborators.²² All three playwrights were happy for their names to be attached to the play, so therefore it is fair to assume that the social tensions it represents were of concern to all three authors.

Shortly after this, Gertrude considers trying to sell her 'ladyship' on, or attempt to borrow money on its security, to which the practical Sindefy retorts 'I make question who will lend anything upon it' (5.1.70-1). All in all, the treatment of nobility throughout the play suggests it has been emptied of all significance or honour. The playwrights seem equally happy to take swipes at the selling of honours and the impoverishment of the existing nobility – two distinct but related social developments which seem to combine in *Eastward Ho* to suggest that titles and rank bear no relation to true social worth.

The satire at the expense of the aristocracy and their wicked ways is also a major feature of *Monsieur D'Olive*. Indeed, D'Olive himself sounds very like Gertrude's characterisation of a faithless knight when he declares, having been promoted by the Duke to rank of ambassador (in another satirical move by Chapman to be discussed in more detail below):

Now Ile begin

To make the world take notice I am noble;

The first thing I will doe, Ile sweare to pay

No debts, upon my honor. (2.2.313-6)

He then goes on to provide a caricatured idea of the behaviour of great noblemen:

But if I knew where I might pawne mine honor

For some odd thousand Crownes, it shalbe layd:

Ile pay't againe when I have done withall (318-20).

This is very similar to Gertrude's wish to sell her ladyship and shows Chapman's concern that once a price has been fixed on a social rank it becomes just another piece of movable goods, to be exchanged or profited from wherever possible. This is related to his scepticism about the value of rank whether or not that rank has been bought for a set price. The terms 'honour' and 'noble' here take on a deeply

²² Percy Simpson, 'The Problem of Authorship of *Eastward Ho*,' *PMLA*, 59 (1944), 715-725, (p.724).

ironic meaning, because D'Olive immediately uses them as an excuse to break his word when it comes to money matters – the suggestion, as in *Eastward Ho*, that the buying and selling of 'honour' completely divorces it from the moral qualities it is supposed to represent. The economic profligacy of the court nobles then becomes associated with a sort of moral bankruptcy which clearly worries Chapman a great deal.

The most succinct summing-up of D'Olive's perception of social hierarchy also occurs in this scene: 'they that were my Companions before, shall now be my favorites: they that were my Friends before shall now be my followers: they that were my Servants before, shall now be my knaves: But they that were my Creditors before, shall remaine my Creditors still' (2.2.327-31). For all that D'Olive is satirised for his pretensions, this exchange reveals a sharp-sightedness about the realities of the Jacobean court and the transformatory power of an official title. Instead of social relationships based on trust – friends and companions – D'Olive considers that all the people around him will be there in a business capacity, the relationships defined by his superiority to them, and the possibility that one or other of them might turn a profit from their association.

Monsieur D'Olive is the clearest of these three plays in laying responsibility for the depraved state of the court with the ruler himself. As Albert Tricomi has shown in great detail, the story of D'Olive is a parody of the Earl of Nottingham's embassy to Spain in 1605, which became notorious for its delays, its expense, and the massive number of followers attending him.²³ This reading can also be used to consider what impression of courtly politics Chapman is trying to convey. Particularly important is the sheer waste of money involved in such excessive display. As Tricomi points out, Nottingham's mission was 'probably the most costly ever undertaken in James's reign' (p.291). Its burlesque in Chapman's play, therefore, should be seen in light of a sustained critique of royal authority in several of his plays from this period (a critique which is given its fullest expression in the political tragedies). For while D'Olive is undoubtedly a buffoon, Duke Philip, who grants him the diplomatic task is no better, and the glimpses Chapman gives us into the workings of this court suggest a culture of economic

²³ Tricomi, especially pp.290-91.

waste where virtue is unrecognised and the unworthy are rewarded purely to provide some passing entertainment for a bored monarch.

D'Olive is introduced to Philip in a pastiche of the type of language typical of Henry III's court in *Bussy D'Ambois*. Indeed, D'Olive's claim that he lived in 'freely choos'd obscuritie' (2.2.75) would be more appropriate to describe Bussy's life than D'Olive's, prior to his arrival at court. The delusion of this statement is highlighted: he goes to great lengths to describe his poverty and hermit-like surroundings, before claiming also to have paid a scholar 'forty or fifty crowns a year to teach me' (100). Clearly, his attempts at poverty and seclusion have been nothing but a rich man's fancy. Indeed, D'Olive's presentment at court is just as frivolous, though he does not know it. The courtiers Mugeron and Rhodoricke, who have been established in the first scene as cynically immersed in the mindset of 'courtly' intrigue, introduce D'Olive purely in order to make fun of him and provide sport for the Duke. As A.P. Hogan notices, the courtiers show 'open impudence' to the Duke, by declaring to him that D'Olive 'is as forward to usurp greatness, as all greatness is | To abuse virtue' (10-12).²⁴ That he should be introduced to court to carry out an expensive mission they know he is ill-equipped to perform, purely for the comedy value of witnessing his pompous failure, says rather more about the court which finds its pleasure in such expensive pastimes than about the fool they hire to perform. Mugeron tells the Duke: 'You cannot load the ass with too much honour' (13), and the subsequent sketch in which D'Olive kisses the Duchess, much to the hilarity of everyone present (except the Duchess herself), is almost a farcical version of Bussy's 'courting' of the Duchess of Guise at Henry III's court, with comic, rather than violent, results.

D'Olive's assertion of his right to kiss the Duchess comes from his conviction that as the Duke's ambassador he represents his 'second self' (301), and while the clumsy kiss is a carnivalesque piece of farcical comedy, in one way D'Olive is right. The Duke himself says: 'Take now the place and state of an Ambassador, | Present our parson and performe our charge' (296), emphasising the function of an ambassador to represent *in person* the body of the ruler unable to make the journey himself. D'Olive interprets this in a comically physical, erotic

²⁴ A. P. Hogan, 'Thematic Unity in *Monsieur D'Olive*', *SEL*, 11 (1971), 295-306 (p. 303).

fashion, assuming he can fulfil the Duke's physical duties in relation to his wife as well as to other rulers, but in essence he is not far mistaken. In appointing D'Olive to be his 'second self' the Duke shows that he is more concerned with obtaining cheap laughs at home than with his standing as a statesman or the success of the supposed mission. D'Olive's job is to persuade the King of France to intervene with the bereaved nobleman Saint Anne, who refuses to bury his wife's dead body. However, D'Olive has not even managed to leave the Duke's court when this mission becomes defunct, as Vandome achieves St Anne's change of heart without need of appeal to a higher authority, so the entire purpose of the elaborate preparations is revealed as chimerical.

Not only is D'Olive's ambassage utterly pointless from a practical perspective, it is also emphasised as unnecessarily expensive and wasteful. The Duke says to D'Olive: 'you need not look for a commission, | My hand shall well dispatch you for this business' (293-4). The meaning of this could be simply that he is endowing D'Olive with authority, but it could also suggest that he is willing to financially support the mission. The uncertainty is important, as in the next act the ambassage swells to gargantuan proportions, with seemingly every courtier wanting to join. It is very clear that enormous debts are being run up in the process, but far less clear how they will be paid off. D'Olive's inability to control his retinue becomes apparent when he complains 'my number's full, all places under mee are bestowde [...] Ile no more Followers, a mine honour,' (3.1.42-5) but immediately relents to take on two more when Mugeron insists: 'they have paid me their income and I have undertaken your Lordshippe shall grace them' (46-8). The obligations of patronage are here utilised to swell the numbers of an already exorbitant company, for no reason other than to make personal profit for those involved.

Chapman's disapproval of this situation is obvious in the satirical presentation of the events. D'Olive takes on the two men as followers on the basis that one can treat the venereal disease he expects his men to pick up in France, and that the other, a seller of second-hand clothes, can make his fortune by exploiting the needs of the 'three hundred [...] Gold-finches I have entertained for my followers' (148-9), presumably by buying their clothes for cut prices when they need cash, and selling back to them at enormous profit. The description of the

followers as 'goldfinches' is unusual – one possible meaning is 'one who has plenty of gold' (*OED* 'goldfinch' 3.a), but this does not quite fit with the context, as the text rather emphasises the *lack* of money on the parts of these would-be ambassadors. D'Olive is well aware of the desperation of many of his followers: 'there's not tenne Crownes in twentie a their purses: [...] 'Tis not for nothing that this Pettie Broker followes me; the Vulture smels a pray' (3.2.162, 168-70). It seems more likely that the brightly coloured bird is being evoked here to suggest the exuberant clothing of the impoverished followers. In effect, the ambassage has occasioned its own economy, providing ample business for the many tailors and frippers who clothe the 'younger sons' on credit in their sumptuary displays.

More explicitly than in any of Chapman's other attacks on prodigal spending, the excesses of the individual aristocrats and the excesses of court and state are seen to be analogous. The carelessness of debt is endemic to the court and is actively encouraged by the Duke himself. This must be seen as an indictment of the Jacobean court where the buck stops only with James himself. The society depicted is living beyond its means, and rather than setting an example of how to counter this, the ruler is guilty of the same prodigal behaviour as his courtiers. The ensuing danger is underlined by the language of death and violence with which D'Olive discusses his ambassage: it could almost be an army travelling to battle, and not only because of the clear pastiche of Henry V's Agincourt speech.²⁵ The fripper who follows after the entourage because he 'smels a pray' is well aware that such an economic situation simply cannot be sustained.

This moralistic condemnation of the practice of profiting from the losses of one's neighbours is also satirised in the character of the usurer Security, in *Eastward Ho*. Security's lack of concern for others is shown throughout the play, as he profits from Sir Petronel's need for ready cash by happily colluding with that gentleman to defraud his new wife Gertrude of the land she owns as her dowry. His catchphrase throughout his dealings with Sir Petronel draws attention to this: 'I hunger and thirst to do you good sir', he repeatedly says, despite the fact the he is clearly only interested in his own good. Security's eagerness to turn a profit at the expense of others rebounds on himself when he is tricked into helping his own

²⁵ See Tricomi, pp.282-5.

wife run off with Sir Petronel, because he believes her to be the wife of his neighbour, the lawyer Bramble. The usurer's undisguised glee at being party to the scheme and the prospect of making a profit on it by hiring out Winifred's gown to assist her escape, highlights the predatory aspect of his nature which seems to delight in doing wrong to his neighbours.

However, while Security comes in for the most explicit condemnation by the play, the bourgeois citizens are also ambivalently presented. Quicksilver suggests that he helps Touchstone to profit from the spending habits of young gallants, saying in the opening act 'How would merchants thrive, if gentlemen would not be unthrifths?' (1.1.38-9) Theodore B. Leinwand casts a sceptical eye on Touchstone's claims to have risen in the world purely by thrift: he points out that Quicksilver seems to have been lending money to other gallants for Touchstone's profit, that he used his wife's dowry to start his business (much like Sir Petronel does with Gertrude's land) and argues that he demonstrates 'a predatory, sadistic, anal-retentive economy thoroughly at odds with [his] pretensions'.²⁶ While this is a very extreme interpretation of Touchstone's prosperity, one does not necessarily have to assume that the goldsmith uses Quicksilver as a go-between in a shady money-lending business, as Leinwand does, in order to see the predatory nature of his prosperity. His assertion of the necessity for unthrifty gentlemen if merchants are to profit could also merely be a reminder that merchants and tradesmen rely on the spending of customers to make a living – and this will usually involve some measure of unthrift. Quicksilver's assessment of the economy is reminiscent of the way the media today often reminds the public that the best way to avoid a recession is to keep spending money they may not be able to afford. The balance between liquidity, credit, and financial ruin is a delicate one in early modern London, as Chapman was well aware.

But however these plays might show hostile representations of merchants and money-lenders who profit from profligacy, profligacy itself is not let off the hook. The selling of honours referred to throughout these plays, and the satirical portrait of the embassy in *Monsieur D'Olive* indict James I for his economic waste and willingness to turn everything into profit. But the nobility themselves are also

²⁶ Theodore B. Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 47.

satirised through the presentation of them as undeserving of the honours they have bought. This is particularly the case with the younger gallants, whose prodigal spending and willingness to incur debt is a major theme.

Generational Conflict? Debt, Inheritance and Profligate Sexuality

In *All Fools* and *Eastward Ho* the critique of the individual members of the nobility becomes at times a generational conflict. The younger characters are seen as more careless of their money than their fathers and masters. The play's condemnation of their prodigal spending is complicated by a satirical presentation of the older generation which suggests that they are guilty of avarice and that money has distorted their ability to judge value. Both plays also utilise a distinctly sexual set of images which associate the younger 'spenders' with sexual desire and possible procreation, while presenting the older and more thrifty characters as impotent or sterile.

The entire plot of *All Fools* revolves around the conflict between father and son, specifically over the son's decision to marry an impoverished but beautiful woman. Valerio, son of the knight Gostanzo, has married secretly, and asks his friend, the resourceful Rinaldo, for help in breaking the news of his wedding to his father. They come up with an elaborate plan whereby they will pretend that it is actually another knight's son, Fortunio, who has made the impecunious marriage, and request Gostanzo's assistance in reconciling Fortunio to his father Marc Antonio. This is made slightly more complicated as Fortunio is actually in love with Valerio's sister Bellanora, so in taking the apparently prodigal son into his house, Gostanzo actually assists Fortunio's wooing of his daughter. The predominantly light-hearted tone of all these deceits seems to assume that the audience will be sympathetic towards the younger characters. The storyline of love thwarted by authoritarian parents is after all, a common one in early modern drama, most famously perhaps in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As David Lindley argues, it is also one which never clearly denounces the authoritarian viewpoint: 'many plays dramatise the problems inherent in the demands for parental control

over marriage, but none can finally escape the doubleness of contemporary ideology'.²⁷ While the audience might have had some sympathy for the parents, however, Chapman's representations of these conflicts do tend to side with the children. He treats the subject slightly more seriously but just as sympathetically, in *The Gentleman Usher*, where Margaret and Vincentio marry in secret because Vincentio's father is pursuing Margaret for himself.

However, in keeping with the 'doubleness' that Lindley finds in the dramatic perspective on secret marriages, Gostanzo's opinion of the gallants as prodigal in their behaviour and spending patterns has some justification. On learning of Fortunio's supposed elopement, instead of attempting to reconcile him with his father, Gostanzo goes out of his way to elaborate to Marc Antonio the disgrace his son's behaviour has caused him:

And that knights competency you have gotten
With care and labour, he with lust and idlenesse
Will bring into the stypend of a beggar;
All to maintaine a wanton whirly-gig,
Worth nothing more than she brings on her back. (1.1.278-82)

Gostanzo's attitude expresses the common perception that being too much enamoured of a woman is tantamount to being feminised oneself and tempted into all kinds of vices – lust and idleness being, of course, flaws associated with the feminine. In praising his son for his 'husbandry' – a key term throughout the play – Gostanzo's main concern is that he should establish that Valerio 'dares not look a woman in the face' (1.1.227). He continually uses 'husbandry' to evoke the sense of careful economics and rural toil he would like to associate with his son, but fails to take into consideration the fact that Valerio might desire to be a husband in a different sense. Here, however, we see a hint of the association of the younger generation with fertility – Gostanzo's claim that the woman is 'worth nothing more than she brings on her back' is of course full of innuendo. What she brings on her back, however, is not only sexual intercourse, but also (in time) children. Gostanzo's failure to realise the connotations of his own metaphor reveal his sterile nature, in contrast with his son. In the generational conflict between

²⁷ David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 37.

father and son thus presented, it becomes clear that the discourse of sexuality is intertwined with that of the city, and both are the preserve of courtly 'gallants', to be distinguished from Gostanzo's insistence on agricultural wealth which is clearly derived from feudal values. Women, and the pursuit of them, have become associated for Gostanzo with a cash-flow economy (and its early-modern corollary, the credit-based economy) which alienates the aristocracy from the source of its wealth and tempts it into profligacy. The play as a whole, despite thoroughly satirising Gostanzo, depends upon, and ultimately upholds this incompatibility between amassed wealth and sexuality.

There seems to be a chasm between the 'husbandry' which Gostanzo sees as the best quality his son could aspire to, and which is connected to his frugal management of the feudal estates run by Gostanzo and the city life suggested by Valerio's disavowal of agricultural concerns. Valerio tells his new wife of his disdain for the source of his wealth: 'Here [in her body] shall my cattle graze, here nectar drink, | Here will I hedge and ditch, here hide my treasure' (1.1.142-3). The inescapably sexual nature of these images only serves to strengthen the idea that this new-found-land is a replacement for the estate of his family, not an addition to it. Rinaldo good-naturedly extols Valerio's skill at 'cards, tennis, wenching, dancing and what not' (1.1.154), which rather backs up Gostanzo's assumption that the 'stolen' marriage represents the first step 'in the right pathway to consumption' (1.1.286) and will lead to the dissipation of the family inheritance. The emphasis on the rank of the two father-figures – they refer to each other and are referred to frequently by other characters as 'knight' – suggests a near unbridgeable generational gap in the aristocracy between the current holders of rank and privilege, and their heirs.

Despite the underlying suspicion that the children are indeed too eager to spend their inheritance, Gostanzo, is thoroughly satirised for his miserly views in the first scene, when Rinaldo mockingly imitates the old man for the entertainment of his friends, drawing attention to his conviction:

That in the choyce of wives men must respect
The chiefe wife, riches, that in every course
A mans chiefe Load-starre should shine out of riches,
Love nothing hartily in this world but riches;

Cast off all friends, all studies, all delights,
All honesty, and religion, for riches. (1.1.199-204)

Rinaldo is keen to stress that the old man's pursuit of money compromises his moral convictions, and his social relationships – he would 'cast off' his friends, honesty or religion in search of wealth. His insistence that sexual desire is the short road to financial ruin associates him, and the old stock of aristocratic landed wealth he represents, with an enervated and sterile position, from which all he can do is count his money and wait for death. In effect, this position means that all Valerio can do is await his father's death too, in order to gain his inheritance. He fantasises about this in terms of debt and repayment, casually talking about his own debt to shop-keepers in the same terms as his father's debt to Nature:

But if shee turne her Debt-booke over once,
And finding him her debtor, do but send
Her Sergeant, *John Death* to arrest his body,
Our Soules shall rest Wench then, and the free Light
Shall triumph in our faces (1.2.79-83).

The last phrase is perhaps the most interesting – the image is one of a new dawn, the 'free light' perhaps intended to be contrasted with the mortgaged light that characterises the days of heirs incumbent while they wait for the death which will set them into solvency. Valerio's almost religious description – 'our souls shall rest' – is typically flippant, but reveals the patricidal fantasy that lies at the heart of the whole system of primogeniture. Gostanzo also acknowledges the power of inheritance: when he finally discovers the truth about his son's marriage he immediately reacts by disinheriting Valerio in favour of his sister.

The breaking up of family fortunes – particularly if it entails passing on that fortune to the heir of a rival family – is something Chapman had personal experience of. Some years earlier he and his brother had settled an acrimonious ongoing dispute with a rival branch of the family over the will of his maternal grandfather. This was eventually settled in 1599, when *All Fools* was first being composed. George and his elder brother Thomas agreed to accept £120 in compensation from the descendants of his grandfather's nephew in return for their giving up all claims to the disputed land.²⁸ So at the time of the play's first

²⁸ Jacquot, p. 4.

composition, and again while it was being revised for publication, Chapman had good reason to be thinking about problems of debt and inheritance. *All Fools* shows his treatment of these issues to be fraught with uncertainties, indeed, with the suspicion that the transmission of property through inheritance is fragile and not to be counted upon.

T.M. Parrott, in his edition of the collected comedies, complains of the denouement: 'the conversion of Gostanzo is both unexpected and unconvincing' but he fails to notice that, actually, it is far from certain that Gostanzo *does* convert and pardon his son.²⁹ Parrott may have assumed he does because this is what happens in the classical source play, and it seems nigh unthinkable that Gostanzo would be content to see his friend's son bestowed with his estate. However when he says 'Now all my choler fly out in your wits' (5.2.153) he is not speaking to Rinaldo, but is in fact responding to the revelation that his friend's son Fortunio has secretly married his own daughter. His proclamation that the marriage was 'no indecorum, | Knight's son, knight's daughter' (152-3) could be seen as drawing a further comparison with the *indecorum* he perceives in Valerio's marriage to a poor, dowry-less woman. This surely leaves open the possibility that at the end of the play, Valerio remains disinherited in favour of Fortunio, a possibility that would significantly change the dynamic of Valerio's final speech, a set-piece celebration of cuckoldry. This speech would then seem to be a subtle and skilful attempt to persuade Gostanzo to mitigate his punishment of his prodigal son.

Valerio begins by outlining a mythological history of the world, in which it has gone through 'the Golden age, the Silver, the Brasse, the Iron, the Leaden, the Wooden; and now into this present age, which wee term the *Horned age*' (5.2.226-8). He then goes on to suggest the relativity of value in anything, characterising the cuckold's horn as 'more common, and neverthelesse pretious' (230) in the current age. This inversion of traditional evaluations could apply of course to his wife, who has been deemed worthless by Gostanzo (because he thinks her 'common') on one scale of measuring value, but whom Valerio himself obviously thinks sufficiently precious to be worth gambling his inheritance for. Philip K. Ayers has detailed how in this speech Chapman subverts the myth of the Golden

²⁹ T.M. Parrott, ed., *George Chapman :The Comedies* (London: Routledge, 1914), p. 706.

Age, representing present degradation as a liberation from the restrictions of the past.³⁰ Valerio also suggests the inferiority of the past by insinuating that its naivety was in fact attributable to ignorance: 'It is said, that in the Golden age of the world, the use of Gold was not then knowne: an argument of the simplicitie of that age' (230-2). He also refers to this ignorance as a 'fault' from which he wishes to distance his own age by proving that they know the real value of the horn. This is not simply an excuse for some bawdy jokes. Rather, in a play in which the central conflict has been the differing conceptions of value held by father and son, this speech is a manifesto, eradicating the difference in their attitudes by emphasising the cuckold's horn as a universal and therefore unifying experience.

Valerio not only tries to convince Gostanzo to measure value on a different scale, but he also reinstates sexuality as being at the heart of that value. He goes on to suggest a brotherhood of cuckolds reminiscent of the male bonding over the 'horn' in *As You Like It*, positing the cuckold's horn as a great social equaliser: 'a Trophie so honorable, and unmatchably powerfull, that it is able to raise any man from a Beggar to an Empourer's fellow, a Dukes fellow, a Noble-mans fellow, Aldermans fellow' (240-2). Notice how, in his list of men whom the beggar might equal, he gradually moves down the social scale, rhetorically reinscribing the hierarchy while seeming to suggest its dissolution. This fits in with his strategy towards his father: he wants to suggest that money is no reliable marker of character, in order to gain his father's forgiveness for marrying a penniless woman; but he also wants to be reinstated into his inheritance. So he must suggest that temporary deviation from the demands of rank is permissible, but only in the context of the restoration of expected order which would see the eldest son rewarded with the father's estate.

His conclusion is even more finely tuned to his father's fiscal interests, pointing out that no man can be sure of escaping cuckoldry: 'for were they not irrevitable, then might eyther propernesse of person secure a man, or wisdom prevent am; or greatnesse exempt, or riches redeeme them' (288-90). The word 'irrevitable' here is apparently a misprint for 'irrenitable', for which the only citation in the *OED* comes from this passage. It means 'not to be struggled against

³⁰ Philip K. Ayers, 'Staging Modernity: Chapman, Jonson, and the Decline of the Golden Age', *Cahiers Elisabethains*, 47 (1995), 9-27.

or withstood', which certainly enhances Valerio's argument, suggesting the ubiquity of 'the horn' and also introducing a sense of fate which he can use to suggest the inevitability of his own reinstatement. Every argument then ultimately returns to the crux of the conflict: money. He goes on to emphasise: 'nor can money redeem them [...] this must be held for a maxime, that there are more rich cuckolds than poore' (295-6). The cuckold's horn even becomes equated with aristocratic title, as he draws a parallel between the wife of a knight retaining her title after her husband's death, and a man retaining his title of cuckold after his wife's death – an insinuation, perhaps, that Gostanzo himself cannot escape the brotherhood of which his son speaks, and a calculated way of emphasising the continuity of male experience to which he is appealing, in order to safeguard his own fortune.

Whether Valerio is successful in this final appeal is ambiguous: Gostanzo appears pleased with the speech, calling him a 'notable wag', and repeating the idea of inescapable foolery in the final line of the play. However, it must be noted that he never explicitly revokes the disinheritance of his son, deferring the decision past the end of the play. *All Fools*, in its presentation of sexuality and father-son relations is a considerably darker play than previous critics have allowed, and it clearly contains the seeds of Chapman's later concerns with social ambition and cynical, opportunistic family relationships as explored in *The Widow's Tears*.

Valerio's final speech attempts to convince his father that sexuality, even profligate sexuality, is a fact of life and not necessarily incompatible with economic prosperity. But this is not exactly how it is presented for the greater part of the stage action. As we have seen, the prodigal behaviour of the young gallants, despite being represented with a tolerant eye, causes Chapman some concern. This fundamentally divided perspective – whereby the playwright holds up the flaws of the younger generation but nevertheless suggests that they are an inevitable part of modern life and must be accommodated to conventional morality – is symptomatic of his divided attitude towards credit and spending in general. It is hard not to see something of the bitterness of the perennially impoverished poet in his representation of Valerio, whose longest speech about debt centres, after all, on the expectation that the debt of nature his father owes to

Death will presently solve all his financial worries. For Chapman, as a second son whose meagre inheritance was long gone, such simple solutions were not to be looked for, and his portrait of Valerio as eagerly awaiting his father's death in a cold-hearted, selfish manner perhaps responds to his own hard fortune by presenting material abundance as causing spiritual or moral laxity.

The thematic connection between spending and sexuality is even more pronounced in *Eastward Ho*. The later play also makes use of the rhetorical habit by which the spokesmen of the older, more frugal generation are associated with sterility and a lack of sexual desire, while the younger, debt-ridden characters are marked by a lust for life which often manifests itself in bawdy banter and an honest assessment of their own sexual needs. This contrast is most marked in the comparison between the two married couples of the play, and in the treatment of the usurer Security, and his young wife Winifred. The incongruity between the values of the main plot, involving Golding and Mildred's marriage and bourgeois rise, and those informing the subplot that revolves around Gertrude, Sir Petronel, and the would-be colonial party, is so pronounced that Ceri Sullivan finds two plays within *Eastward Ho*: a 'citizen comedy concerned with the proud distinction between the values of gentleman and merchant, and a city comedy profiting from the erosion of such boundaries'.³¹ Jill Philips Ingram sees this contrast more in terms of the characters themselves: 'The play pits the goldsmith Touchstone's two apprentices against one another: the industrious Golding against the dissolute, idle, Quicksilver. Touchstone's two daughters likewise represent opposite energies'.³² The dichotomy is highlighted by Touchstone himself when he announces to the audience: 'As I have two prentices, the one of a boundless prodigality, the other of a most hopeful industry, so have I only two daughters, the eldest of a proud disposition and a light wantonness, the other of a modest humility and comely soberness' (1.1.94-99). There is a huge difference in the manner in which the marriage of each of Touchstone's daughters is presented. Gertrude, the socially ambitious daughter, is determined to marry into the

³¹ Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of Credit: Merchants in Early Modern Writing* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p.122.

³² Jill Phillips Ingram, 'Economies of Obligation in *Eastward Ho*', *Ben Jonson Journal* 11 (2004), 21-40 (p. 23).

nobility: 'though my father be a low-capped tradesman, yet I must be a lady; and I praise God my mother must call me medam' (1.2.4-6).

But alongside the pursuit of a title, Gertrude also displays a strong sexual desire for her husband-to-be: indeed, her catchphrase, often-repeated, is 'I hunger and thirst to be abed with you'. The morning after the wedding-night, while waiting for the long-desired coach, to take her to Sir Petronel's non-existent castle, she declares: 'As I am a lady, I think I am with child already, I long for a coach so' (3.2.34-5). Of course, this is partly a joke about Gertrude's obsession with her coach, playing on the stereotype of pregnant women's cravings, but it continues the association of the prodigal party with fertility. Indeed, the structure of the sentence itself suggests a direct connection between social ambition and the conception of children.

When compared to the marriage of her sister Mildred, this stress on Gertrude's desire and fertility becomes even more marked by contrast. Mildred's match with the industrious apprentice Golding is arranged by her father, and the language in which it is conducted suggests an entire lack of desire on the part of both parties. In the initial betrothal, both partners use the language of obedience and submission to show their consent. Golding says 'Sir as your son, I honour you; and as your servant, obey you' (1.2.179-80), and Mildred's 'to your wisdom I wholly dispose myself' (188-9) sounds almost as though she were trying to outdo her fiancé in the apathy stakes. In the next scene in which they are alone together, Golding declares his love only by stating the impossibility of declaring anything: 'How dear an object you are to my affections I cannot express' (2.1.78-9). This spectacle of anti-passion has a parallel in the marriage of Security and Winifred. Security is represented as an impotent old man who has made himself ridiculous by marrying a beautiful young woman and keeping her under a restrictive, jealous eye. Quicksilver mocks him: "'Ay Winnie,'" quoth he? That's all he can do, poor man; he may well cut off her name at Winnie' (2.2.225-6). In the third act, Security leaves himself open to more ridicule when he declares to Sir Petronel:

I am new married to this fair gentlewoman you know, and by my hope to make her fruitful, though I be something in years, I vow faithfully unto you to make you godfather (though in your absence) to the first child I am blessed withal. (3.1.9-14)

By referring to the potential difficulty in conception occasioned by his age, but then nonetheless confidently predicting the arrival of a child, Security shows himself to be delusional as well as impotent. He further encourages the audience's derision in the next scene when, tricked into believing that he is helping Petronel elope with the neighbouring lawyer's wife, he makes many jokes to Winifred about how she will be escaping a sexless prison for a new life of fruitful pleasure with the knight:

So great a grace hath seldom chanced to so unthankful a woman: to be rid of a jealous old dotard; to enjoy the arms of a loving young knight, that, when your prickless Bramble is withered with the grief of your loss, will make you flourish afresh in the bed of a lady. (3.3.147-52)

The horticultural metaphors strengthen the association of the prodigals with fertility, and the fact that it is Security himself who is the cuckolded husband, the 'prickless Bramble' further suggests his sterility. Sir Petronel's reference to Winifred being 'prisoned | With his stern, usurious jealousy' (3.2.285) explicitly connects the jealousy to the money-lending, suggesting that those who make their living from profiteering on others' debt are in fact as sterile as the gold they crave.

This associational pattern to some extent undermines the conventional moral of the denouement of the play, whereby the prodigals repent and are brought back under the control of Touchstone and Golding, the industrious characters. However, the playwrights do not simply side with one party over the other: in other respects, prodigals' eagerness to spend is seen as wasteful, quite literally, as there are a number of scatological jokes. Quicksilver tells Golding in the opening scene: 'Why, do nothing, be like a gentleman, be idle[...] Wipe thy bum with testons and make ducks and drakes with shillings' (1.1.138-40). When read alongside Gertrude's later remark about her father, 'we shall as soon get a fart from a dead man as a farthing of court'sy here' (4.2.161-2) there does seem to be a distinct association of spending or giving away money with the act of defecation, in which I suspect Jonson's hand was uppermost, given his proclivity elsewhere for anal-oriented jokes. The question of who wrote the lines in question is not so relevant, however, as the fact that in this imagery the humour works against the prodigal party and makes the audience side with the moral,

industrious theme of the play which would condemn gallant spending as inherently wasteful. This characterisation has much in common with that of *All Fools*, where the men spend 'time, coin and self' in pursuit of gambling, alcohol and sex.

This basically contradictory approach in both plays, whereby unthrifty behaviour is on one level condemned but on another level associated with sexual desire and even fertility or productivity, is perhaps an indication that Chapman saw the running up of debts as necessary, not just to individuals who find themselves short of money, but to the economy as a whole. Susan Wells describes city comedy as a genre as concerning 'two contradictory aspects of the preindustrial city – commerce and celebration'.³³ Wells relates how city comedy 'is an attempt to recover, by stating in new terms, that harmony between the commercial and the communal organisation of the city' (pp.37-8), and argues that this allows them 'to subdue the motions of trade to the misrule of the feast, either by celebrating the freedom of exchange, its endless circulation, its possibilities for rapid shifting of roles and reversals of fortune, or by using the norms of the festival as a corrective to the norms of commerce – the voracity of misers and usurers can be educated through the rules of the feast' (p.49). This incorporation of the demands of commerce into the apparently conflicting demands of the community is exactly what happens when Golding arranges the prodigals' repentance and Touchstone's forgiveness of them. The play in fact seems to partake of both the strategies which Wells presents as alternatives, partially celebrating the circulation of energies and role reversals it enacts, while also clearly educating the more voracious characters such as Quicksilver, Sir Petronel, and Security.

This tension in the modes of economic behaviour is perhaps mirrored by a double vision of credit itself. The interrelation between credit as a loan of money or goods, and credibility in terms of reputation and standing in the community, was deep-seated. Ceri Ann Sullivan writes of the tensions that can result: A staged self [...] does not always elicit credit, which is an asset that is lent, not given, by its audience – and which can be withdrawn at any point. The merchant's credit, like the gentleman's honor, is a performance to which the audience assigns a worth. Reputation

³³ Susan Wells, 'Jacobean City Comedy and the Ideology of the City', *ELH*, 48 (1981), 37-60 (p.37).

must be continually and competitively solicited, an asset of comparison won by distinction.³⁴

Chapman's plays provide evidence of the way in which he attempted to solicit credit for his own reputation as a gentleman. As well as being works of literature, these plays were also the way he made a living, and if we consider them in that light, the importance of reputation for the writer in a credit-based economy becomes more apparent. *All Fools*, for example, in its first version, was written around the time that Chapman was in court both for the Wolfall dispute, and for the dispute over the inheritance from their grandfather. With Chapman's own personal reputation being subject to the kind of instability that such litigation caused, we can see that this play is in some ways a declaration of his own solvency. A successful play would improve Chapman's reputation as a playwright and so assist in gaining him further commissions for new works. The publication of a printed text of such a play gave him an opportunity to make money from a previous work, *and* allowed him to publicise his name, attaching himself through the play's performance history to both the Blackfriars and the court, *and* furthermore afforded an opportunity to solicit a noble dedicatee (Sir Thomas Walsingham) for patronage. The revision of his old play for another run and a printed text was an efficient, multi-purpose strategy for improving his own credit in the early modern literary marketplace.

Indeed, I would argue that this play marks the beginning of a renewed attempt on Chapman's part to be seen as a prolific and significant writer for the stage by aggressively marketing his works for a printed consumer base. After his first two relatively successful plays, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* and *An Humorous Days Mirth*, were published in 1598 and 1599 respectively, he did not publish another play until this group in 1605, despite the fact that several were clearly written and performed during this interlude. Conventional chronologies, focussing on the dates of composition for the plays, tend to obscure this, but if we examine a list of dates of publication then the gap becomes very obvious:

1598 – *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*

1599 – *An Humorous Days Mirth*

³⁴ Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of Credit: Merchants in Early Modern Writing* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p. 122.

1605 – *All Fools, Eastward Ho*

1606 – *Sir Giles Goosecappe, Monsieur D'Olive, The Gentleman Usher*

1607 – *Bussy D'Ambois*

1608 – *The Conspiracy and tragedy of Byron*

1609 – *May-Day*

1612 – *The Widow's Tears*

1613 – *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*

It is clear from this list that the years 1605-6 were by far Chapman's most prolific, not in terms of *writing* drama, but in the volume of published play-texts. Quite why he chose to prepare so many of his plays from the previous few years for publication at that point is unclear, although financial pressures would be the obvious explanation. If we view *All Fools* and *Eastward Ho* as marking the opening volley in this period of self-publicising through print, it could be argued that the curiously conflicted way these plays treat economic matters is a direct result of their status as artefacts by which Chapman tried to show his credibility. On one hand, having been in court, and even in prison, for debt, he was in many ways obliged to voice a conventionally frugal, industrious perspective such as that represented by Touchstone and Gostanzo. On the other hand, he would continue to rely on networks of credit for his own solvency, as did his audience, so he could not too stringently characterise the lending and borrowing of money as being profligate, despite his suspicion that it was indeed symptomatic of the devaluation of nobility represented by the 'thirty-pound knights'.

Indeed, *Eastward Ho* shows itself to be explicitly concerned with the imperative felt by members of society, on all levels, to keep up their own personal credit in the community. The pressures of maintaining one's credit are referred to throughout *Eastward Ho*. Issues of trust are of course bound up in the retention of credit, but credit is also connected to a more general sense of one's standing in the community. So while Quicksilver asks of Touchstone just before he leaves his service as his apprentice, 'Lend me some money, save my credit; I must dine with the serving men and their wives' (2.1.116-7) he is pointing to the necessity of keeping up appearances in order to maintain a flow of credit. The subtext is, if he is seen dining with the servants then society will know he is penniless and his credit supply will dry up. If, on the other hand, he has just enough cash to cover a

grander meal he will retain his reputation and money will continue to be lent to him. He then insists that his drunken state is 'for your credit sir' (2.1.30-31 and 126) – a claim which Quicksilver meets with incredulity but which actually makes some sense if considered in terms of reputation rather than finance. Quicksilver suggests that it is socially expected that Touchstone will open his house for hospitality to mark his daughter's wedding, and that keeping up with this expectation will solidify his standing amongst his neighbours. It is for this same reason that Mildred and Golding's decision to wed quickly so 'that the cold meat left at [Gertrude's] wedding table might serve to furnish their nuptial table' (3.2.67-8) so embarrasses Gertrude and her mother.

That this concern with reputation is not simply a matter of expediting the lending process is shown by the fact that the character most concerned with his reputation is the one least in need of borrowing anything: the usurer Security. Having agreed to lend Sir Petronel Winifred's best gown, as he thinks, in order to aid him in his elopement with Mistress Bramble (in fact it is used to sneak away Winifred herself), he realises he has no security for the clothing. Petronel gives him his word for the borrowing of it, to which Security replies:

Ay, by th'mass, your word; that's a proper staff

For wise Security to lean upon.

But 'tis no matter; once I'll trust my name

On your cracked credits; let it take no shame (3.2.346-9).

This passage is interesting because it implies that, were Sir Petronel and Quicksilver to default on their word, and run off with the dress, chief amongst Security's concerns would not be the loss of the valuable piece of clothing, but the loss that would befall his 'name'. The default would not only injure Security's pocket, it would cause him to lose face in the eyes of his neighbours, so further damaging his business interests. The precarious nature of the credit marketplace, where one person's reputation rests upon another's, is revealed by Security's sense that he is taking a risk by allowing his own name to depend upon the 'cracked credits' of the prodigal gang. Once again, this is an idea which has a parallel (and possibly also a verbal echo) in *Timon of Athens*: Timon's creditor complains 'My reliance on his fracted dates | Have smit my credit' (2.1.22-3). Here it is the date of repayment, rather than the credit itself, which is imagined as a broken object, but

the idea behind both speeches is very much the same – the usurer is concerned that his own credit will be harmed if he allows the agreed bargain to be defaulted upon.

This same concern over his reputation also seems to be at the heart of Security's response to being washed up on Cuckold's Haven after the storm in Act 4. More than anything else, he appears to be *embarrassed* at having been seen by the witness Slitgut, in such a compromising location. To Slitgut's offer to take him home he replies: 'Shall I make any know my home that has known me thus abroad? How low shall I crouch away that no eye may see me?' (4.1.55-7) This is perhaps partly due to his conviction that landing at Cuckold's Haven is a public sign of his wife's infidelity, but his comments later in the scene suggest it is also partly embarrassment about being seen in disarray (he is still wearing his nightclothes). He explains 'I have bought me a hat and band with the little money I had about me, and made the streets a little leave staring at my nightcap' (287-9) All of these remarks show a man obsessed to a comic degree with his public standing and reputation.

This is understandable if it is considered that as a money-lender, his profession is tied up entirely with the workings of credit – his own as well as other people's – and that credit was, in the words of Craig Muldrew: 'a public means of social communication and circulating judgement about the value of other members of the community'.³⁵ Security's repeated anxiety about his public image becomes much more realistic if this way of thinking about credit is borne in mind – it also has the effect of making the usurer himself a much more vulnerable figure. Unlike the conventional idea of the predatory Shylock-figure, Security's business interests are dependent upon his own credit just as much as those of the gallants to whom he lends cash. This is not to say that the predatory characterisation is entirely absent, but it is certainly complicated by the portrayal of the money-lender as surviving only as long as his reputation remains upstanding.

There is a sense in all these portraits of credit-conscious citizens, not only that they are not entirely in control of their own reputations (and therefore of their

³⁵ Muldrew, p.3.

own financial means) but also that their precarious finances could possibly be a positive means of facilitating social bonds. Although the risks taken when trusting other people's words are clearly dramatised by the fact that so many of them break their contracts, the denouement is only possible because Touchstone risks his own credit with his father-in-law in order to effect a reconciliation between him and the prodigal apprentice and runaway son-in-law. He does this because he trusts their repentance is genuine – this may not be the case, but the happy ending would not be possible without this trust, and in essence it solicits a similar kind of trust, or suspension of disbelief, from the audience themselves, who stand in relation to the playwrights much as Touchstone and Golding stand in relation to the prodigals, in a position to either offer or withhold trust (and, implicitly, financial assistance whether in the form of bail or future attendance at the playhouse) and so either mend or divide the communal bonds of society.

Chapman's whole presentation of debt and credit is shot through with ambiguity: although conspicuous spending and the corruption of morality he sees at the court obviously cause him a great deal of anxiety, and although he explicitly connects these to the way in which money and credit circulate in early modern society, he nonetheless retains a recognition that such circulation is necessary for the continuing health of the communal economy, and for his own personal solvency. Perhaps also, a part of him recognises that in the contracts and obligations incurred when entering into a credit arrangement is a possibility for trust and social benefit to accrue to each party, provided both are in truth credible. This perhaps accounts for the strangeness of the two occasions in his work when hard cash is depicted.

'These Crownes are sown in Blood': the Violence of Exchange

The opening scene of *Bussy D'Ambois* dramatises the conflict between different assessments of value, as the arrogant Maffé, servant of the king's brother, Monsieur, arrives to convey to Bussy one thousand crowns for his 'relief' as a reward for agreeing to enter the service of his master. The beginning of this scene has been the subject of frequent critical attention. Most critics argue that Bussy's

conversation with the Monsieur is displays his idealism, and the beginning of his corruption, as he eventually agrees to leave his life of obscurity and join the Monsieur's faction.³⁶ However, very little attention has been paid to the second half of the scene, after the Monsieur exits the stage promising to send Bussy money to enable his entrance to court immediately.

When Maffé makes his entrance he proclaims his disgust with Bussy in no uncertain terms, clearly regarding him as cutting a figure unworthy of his master's notice:

Humor of Princes! Is this man indu'd
With any merit worth a thousand Crounes?
Will my Lord have me be so ill a Steward
Of his Reuenue, to dispose a summe
So great with so small cause as shewes in him? (1.1.140-4)

It is interesting that Maffé represents himself not as jealous of Bussy's good fortune, but as mindful of the wealth of his master, whom he regards as wasting money in his patronage of Bussy. This is later further clarified when he tries to cheat Bussy out of the full amount promised – deeming him a 'poor soldier' (173) he claims the Monsieur has offered him one hundred crowns, commenting to himself: 'so there's nine hundred, saft' (178). Lest we think this is an instance of the corruption of court servants, he further elaborates on his next speech, after realising Bussy will not be fobbed off with less than the full amount: 'If I (to save my Lord some crownes) should urge him | T'abate his Bountie, I should not be heard' (196-7). Maffé complains that Bussy, whom he has categorised as a 'Jester' (200) should hold more influence over the Monsieur than he himself. He derides his 'merits' and, in a sentence that reveals much of Chapman's own personal anxieties, assumes Bussy to be a writer: 'By your no better outside I would judge you | To be a Poet. Have you given my Lord | some Pamphlet?' (160-2) This assumption on the part of a senior servant (at lines 149-50 Maffé boasts he has 'command of all his [ie. Monsieur's] other servants') that a bedraggled ex-soldier with no apparent talents must logically be seeking reward for some unnamed poetic efforts would no doubt have been played for laughs on stage, but it perhaps

³⁶ See for example Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman: Renaissance Ethics in Action*, pp.32-35; Miller MacLure *George Chapman: A Critical Study*, pp.116-117; A.R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies*, pp.40-41.

contains a more bitter and serious insight. The head servants, or stewards, in a nobleman's household would undoubtedly have wielded considerable influence over the dispensing of patronage, as Alan G. R. Smith has shown for the households of William and Robert Cecil.³⁷ The blithe dismissal of the worth of a poet then, in the mouth of the Monsieur's servant, may have been intended as a jibe at the lack of learning or taste amongst some servants of the aristocracy, though in 1602 when Chapman wrote this he had not yet experienced the worst of his poverty and unsuccessful suits for patronage, so it is perhaps a general observation rather than a specific gripe that is suggested with Maffé's remarks.

Despite Bussy denying that he had written a pamphlet for the Monsieur, when Maffé further questions him as to the reason for his receiving the money, Bussy draws upon his learning and poetic skill to justify his reward. He displays unflappable confidence in his own worth, and he refuses to accept the one hundred crowns initially offered:

A hundred sir? naie doe his Highnes right;
 I know his hand is larger, and perhaps
 I may deserue more than my outside shewes:
 I am a scholar, as I am a souldier,
 And I can Poetise. (180-4)

It is perhaps significant to note that Chapman himself was an ex-soldier, and came to writing as a career relatively late in his life (his first volume of poems was published in 1598, when he was probably thirty-nine). This situation, of the poor but learned soldier seeking employment in the household of an aristocrat, then, was familiar to him, and Bussy's self-assured bartering suggests Chapman's sense that learning and rhetorical ability deserve ample reward – even if it entails clashing with other servants in the process. In the 1642 quarto text, Bussy's line above becomes 'I am a Poet, as I am a soldier' further emphasising the poetic nature of Bussy's talents. Chapman is at pains to distinguish Bussy as far as possible from Maffé, and this is perhaps one of the reasons Bussy continues with the idea that he is indeed a poet, as it allows him to make further cutting remarks about the steward. Maffé has previously asked him: 'what [...] merit in you | Makes

³⁷ Alan G. R. Smith, *Servant of the Cecils: The Life of Sir Michael Hickes, 1543-1612* (London: Cape, 1977), esp. pp. 51-80.

his compunction willing to relieve you?' (170-1) 'His compunction' sounds almost titular, like 'his grace', and it also has the peculiar effect of reducing Monsieur's faculties to his sense of pity – an incongruous image considering his subsequent villainous behaviour. This choice of words, along with the verb 'relieve' all make clear to Bussy that Maffé considers him an object of charity, and an unworthy one at that.

Bussy prefigures his later talent for rude speech and disregard for the conventional social hierarchy of the court by making Maffé the object of his own interrogation, scornfully inquiring: 'What Qualities have you sir (beside your chaine|And velvet Jacket)? Can your worship dance?' (1.1.191-92) The parenthetical reference to Maffé's chain and velvet jacket indicates his badge of office, and the relative sumptuousness of his dress compared to Bussy, an erstwhile masterless man who at this point has been referred to as dressed in 'a thridbare suit' (1.1.106). When he comes to court, he is of course, dressed in clothes provided by his new patron, and so has clearly eradicated at least this source of the difference between himself and the servant he so mocks. When Maffé decides he will be prudent and pass on the whole sum (albeit grudgingly), Bussy immediately becomes more aggressive, presumably because he now has the money in his possession, calling him a 'rascall' and a 'rogue', cursing his 'villans blood' and saying:

A Barbarous Groome, grudge at his masters Bountie:

But since I know he would as much abhorre

His hinde should argue what he gives his friend

Take that Sir, for your aptnesse to dispute. (212-5)

At this he presumably beats the servant before exiting the stage. Maffé calls after him 'These crowns are sown in blood, blood be their fruit' (216), an image of money in an act of generation which is important to the play, and to which this discussion shall return. However, it should be noted that Bussy again asserts his difference from the Steward, and his insults are all couched in terms of class superiority. The key terms of the difference between them are 'hinde' and 'friend'. The *OED* defines 'hinde' not only as a general term for household servant, but also as a rustic or a boor. This second meaning is illustrated in the *OED* with a quote from Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*: 'Why should such a prick-ear'd hine

as this, be rich?' (1.2.32-3).³⁸ The sentiment behind both passages is almost identical – indignation that a low-born servant should occupy a more materially secure position than the speaker. There is possibly also a third meaning at play here – the 'hinde' as a female deer, which tallies with the abundance of animal metaphors throughout the play and also with Bussy's constant strategy of asserting his social worth in sexual terms (discussed in more detail in the following chapter). Connotations of service, class inferiority, animality and femininity come together in this word to mark powerfully Bussy's disdain for Maffé.

Bussy is that type of character found in almost every one of Chapman's plays – the impoverished gentleman. Although Bussy's beating of the servant does not have any concrete consequences in terms of his tragic ending, it is symptomatic of his lack of understanding over how the court functions. He here appears to think that he is simply the Monsieur's 'friend': on equal terms with him and not bound to his service in the way that Maffé is. His violence towards the steward is predicated on an assumption that the Monsieur will take his side over his steward's, and empathise with Bussy's sense of wounded pride. Yet this is an extraordinarily naïve view of patronage, and one which, moreover, in his more honest moments, he knows is not true. He says earlier, in response to the Monsieur's promise to send him money:

What will he send? Some crounes? It is to sow them

Upon my spirit, and make them spring a crowne

Worth millions of the seed crownes he will send. (1.1.119-21)

This is one among several vague hints in the play that the Monsieur is plotting to usurp Henry III's throne, and that he wishes Bussy to join his faction. Bussy rejects the treacherous path offered him, but his early speech here shows an awareness of the obligations of the patron-client relationship. The seed imagery is picked up again by Maffé in the curse he flings at Bussy's departing back 'these crownes are sown in blood, blood be their fruit'. Maffé is not onstage at Bussy's earlier speech, so we can dismiss the idea that he is consciously reminding Bussy of his own

³⁸ Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, in *Ben Jonson: Volume 3*, ed. by C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), repr. 1954, p.445, 1.2.32-3.

words. Rather, this must be Chapman's own imagery, which he considered important enough to reiterate. Jacques le Goff has shown that money was considered 'intrinsically unproductive' and medieval and early modern denunciations of usury often turned on this idea to show how forcing it to bear fruit was unnatural.³⁹ Here Chapman plays with this proverbial image, as it is not more money the coins will generate (as Bussy surely hopes) but blood to equal the violence with which he obtained them. Chapman invokes the sinfulness of usury in order to draw a moral comparison between it and the misuse of patronage as practised by the Monsieur.

The tableau presented in *Bussy* of a servant being beaten after performing a service and entering into an exchange of money has a parallel in *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron*. Here the exchange goes in the opposite direction – Byron has paid an aged astrologer to chart his horoscope. Byron begins the encounter full of courtesy: 'I would entreate you, for some crownes I bring, | To give your judgement to this figure cast' (3.3.38-39). On consulting the chart, the astrologer La Brosse expresses unwillingness to divulge what he sees, rousing Byron's anger: 'Was ever man yet punisht for expressing | What he was charged?' (68-9) he asks.

Here is a different manifestation of the obligations entailed in entering service to a nobleman: by accepting the crowns as payment, La Brosse puts himself in the position where he can be 'charged' by Byron and forced to speak. Of course, when he does say bluntly 'the man hath lately done | An action that will make him lose his head' (70-71) Byron beats and rails at him, presumably at length, for La Brosse pleads for mercy at lines 73, 83, and 93-94, suggesting that Byron's violence towards him continues through the intervening lines. His final plea appeals unsuccessfully to Byron's sense of decency: 'I told truth | And could have flattered you' (93-4). But this overestimates Byron's wish for objective advice, as he responds: 'Would I had given thee twenty thousand crownes | That thou hadst flattered me' (95-6). In Byron's fury at being told he will not survive his part in the conspiracy he reveals how far he has strayed from behaviour suiting a public statesman, and puts a higher price (literally) on flattery he knows to be false, than on the unqualified truth he had asked for.

³⁹ Jacques leGoff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p.29. See also Agnew, p. 44.

What connects both of these episodes is a sense that money cannot simply be exchanged for service in a fair or transparent fashion. Instead, the conflicting interests of different parties complicate matters and lead to violence (and not even an exchange of blows, but a one-way imparting of them in an unequal physical match). In both cases, the act of accepting money from a more powerful patron weakens the man who receives it. In *Bussy* this is complicated by the presence of a go-between in the economic exchange, and the fact that this middle man makes his distaste with the payment abundantly clear. This is perhaps why Bussy attacks him physically: it is a form of resistance to the degradation to which he suspects he has just voluntarily subjected himself. On the other hand, in *Byron* it is the wealthy patron who attacks the servant, precisely because he has taken his word as *too* trustworthy, assuming Byron was genuine when he asked the astrologer not to flatter him but only to speak the truth. The violence that ensues from each exchange of cash can be partly explained in terms of the complications and degradation arising from patronage networks, but it is also perhaps an indication of Chapman's ambivalent stance towards money itself. Perhaps the potentially beneficial social results of the credit arrangements are seen as being negated when the element of trust demanded by deferred repayment is absent. In other words, without the *delay* between promise and payment, the violence inherent in market exchange is exposed. Another difference between these two, violent, situations, and the relationships discussed in *Eastward Ho* is that while in the collaborative play the characters do to some extent exchange *things* – jewellery, land, clothes – in these extracts from *Bussy* and *Byron* what is sold is, in the case of the astrologer, his knowledge, and in the case of Bussy, himself. This is far closer to the situation of the poet seeking reward for his efforts, and points to Chapman's own deep unease with his situation as a poverty-stricken poet dependent on selling his art and soliciting aristocratic patronage for his survival.

Chapman is all too aware that money lubricates the machinery of society, but his explorations of financial or economic issues constitute an attack on the aristocratic courtiers who waste it by conspicuous consumption, reward undeserving clients or use it to try to corrupt their protégés. This attack goes all the way to the top of the hierarchy, as his rulers are generally presented as all too free with the money that haemorrhages out of their courts. It is difficult to see this

as anything other than a criticism of James's extravagance. His attitude to money is clearly bound up with the bitterness he felt about his lack of success in the world of patronage, but even those patronage relationships he depicts as being in some ways successful are complicated by the sense that in accepting assistance from the great men who populate the court, the individual must compromise his integrity. However, his criticism as detailed in this chapter was only part of a larger criticism of the *modus operandi* of the noblemen at the centre of the patronage networks, and it is to this broader criticism that we now turn.

Chapter 4

Seductive Corruption and Corrupt Seduction: The Perils of Patronage

Mary Beth Rose, in her study of sexuality in English Renaissance literature, argues that there was a distinct separation between public and private lives in the cultural imagination of the time, with sexuality forming part of the private experience, and politics and statesmanship firmly in the public realm. She suggests that recent criticism which reads love poetry as an expression of political ambition has erred: 'to assume that political power is more real – more worthy of analysis – than sexual love and marriage is to overlook the equivalence given to the terms of an analogy and to overlook the mixed, complex, and overlapping nature of public and private experience'.¹ However, in her subsequent attempt to outline a 'history of the private life', Rose in fact merely reverses the imbalance she complains of, assuming that private experience is separable from public, and in her own way thus overlooking 'the mixed, complex and overlapping nature' of the two realms of experience.

Such an approach is reminiscent of Rousseau's ideology of separate spheres, which might be relevant to a study of the Enlightenment, but is anachronistic when applied to Renaissance England. It has been well established, for example, that the Elizabethan sonnet sequences provided 'the occasion for socially, economically, and politically importunate Englishmen to express their unhappy condition in the context of a display of literary mastery'.² Arthur Marotti's influential essay, although it is focused on Elizabethan sonnet sequences, contains many useful insights on the links between erotic and socio-political

¹ Mary Beth Rose, *Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.11.

² Arthur Marotti, "'Love is not Love": Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order', *ELH*, 49 (1982), 396-428 (p.408).

discourses which are very relevant to Chapman. Particularly helpful is his suggestion that 'love lyrics could express figuratively the realities of suit, service and recompense with which ambitious men were insistently concerned, as well as the frustrations and disappointments experienced in socially competitive environments' (p.398). If it had become a recognised cultural code to discuss ambition through love poetry during the Elizabethan period, I would suggest that writers in other genres and forms could also avail themselves of this code with a flexibility that came from working outwith the formal and generic restrictions of the sonnet sequence. Chapman's plays suggest an intertwining of so-called 'private' and 'public' worlds which, on examination, precludes any meaningful separation of the two spheres. In the societies represented in his plays, as for Chapman himself, there is no such thing as a private sphere. Not only is sexuality itself bound up with politics and social status in all sorts of ways, but the language of politics, particularly the language of patronage, is structured by sexual images and the rhetoric of desire.

In Chapman's imagination, this intertwining of sex and politics is associated indelibly with corruption. This is not to say that he views sexuality *per se* as corrupt. On the contrary his early comedies in particular at times display a light-hearted approach to sexuality, with the proviso that it be heterosexual and geared towards marriage. However, from *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604) onwards, the sexuality represented in his plays becomes darker, more complicated, and more often tied up with the political realm. It is no coincidence that this is also the point when Chapman's plays become more critical of the workings of authority and court politics; specifically, when patronage begins to enter the equation. In *All Fools*, despite concerns of money intruding into the action, as discussed previously, the characters are all of an equal status (with the one exception of the impoverished bride whose arrival precipitates the action of the play), and so no relations of patronage are dramatised. The sexuality represented then, can be said broadly to be representative of nothing other than itself. It is not being used as a cipher, either by Chapman or by any of the other characters, to obliquely discuss political or social structures. While it would be overly simplistic to say that sexuality from *Bussy* onwards is merely a symbol of political issues (this would simply reinscribe the separation between public and private that this chapter

began by refuting), it would seem that for Chapman, the *conjunction* of sexuality and patronage is one which becomes marked from the turn of the seventeenth century onwards, and which he sees as exerting a corrupting influence.

The key to this is in his understanding of subjection. His Jacobean plays, particularly the political tragedies, are all emphatically (some might say obsessively) concerned with different ways in which an individual can be subject to another person, a system of belief, or a political hegemony. This subjection is at the heart of his understanding of both the patronage system and erotic desire, and therein lies the crux of the relation between the two. In both the client's desire to please the more powerful patron, and the lover's desire to please the beloved, Chapman sees an abnegation of self which he regards as potentially dangerous, demeaning and deluded. His negative portrayal of the patron-client relationship ultimately suggests that he felt compromised by his own experiences of patronage - that he suspected he was in essence prostituting his literary work for financial and social gain. His distrust of the subjection involved in both sexual and political suits was intensely personal in origin, and can perhaps be best demonstrated by a consideration of an episode in his own life.

'Sweet Commaunder of my sences, my service, my self': Chapman's Widow

Chapman's apparent courtship of a mysterious widow is revealed through the tantalisingly fragmentary evidence of several letters contained in the Folger MS. V.a.321. A.R. Braunmuller identifies 15 or 16 letters in the manuscript which appear to have been written by Chapman to the woman in question, and suggests two possible candidates for the widow: Elizabeth Burgh Brooke and her mother, Frances, Lady Burgh.³ Braunmuller settles on the mother as most probable, on the grounds that one letter seems to refer to grandchildren, and also because 'the letters imply a more mature affair, financial and social in its aims and discords, as well as amorous'. Lady Burgh was the widow of the fifth Baron of Gainsborough,

³ A.R. Braunmuller, *A seventeenth century Letterbook: A facsimile edition of Folger MS V.a.321/ with transcript, annotation and commentary by A.R. Braunmuller* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), pp.30-31. The letters he assigns to Chapman are items 34-41, 46-50, 112, 113 and possibly 134.

Thomas Burgh, who had died in 1597 in military service in Ireland. This points to another tangential connection between Chapman and the Elizabethan military circles also hinted at in his praise of Sir John Norris and Sir Roger Williams discussed in Chapter 2. These letters have received very little attention from Chapman scholars, despite the fact that they reveal so much about Chapman's own experience of courtship and his attitudes towards marriage, women, and (of course) social rank. They show a man who vacillates between extremes of self-abnegation in the profession of his love, and haughty tones of wounded pride when he perceives himself to have been slighted. It is fascinating material in its own right, but it also contains elements which are familiar to a reader of Chapman's plays and can shed light on the treatment of women, sexual relations, and social mobility therein.

Braunmuller is absolutely right to characterise Chapman's interest in this woman as 'financial and social [...] as well as amorous'. She is clearly above him in rank and wealth. One of the letters is a plea for money which begins by apologising for 'my longe absence' and explains that this is due to his imprisonment in Wood Street Counter, where the writer remains pending bail (Item 38, pp.156-58). He asks for a loan to 'worke my present deliverie', amid much protestation that 'it is not my use (most honourable ladie) I make it no custome to be beholdinge'. Braunmuller points out that there is only one record of Chapman's imprisonment in this particular jail, so the letter can be dated precisely to 29 February 1599/1600 (p.427). In the tone of this letter, and in others addressed to the same woman, there is a humility which Chapman must have experienced as humiliation: to have to ask a woman he was attempting to marry to bail him out of the Counter could not possibly have been comfortable for him, as is indicated by his profuse apologies for asking her for the money.

The letter which follows on from this one in the manuscript, item 39, speaks of a more metaphorical humility, in fairly conventional romantic terms. However, it also gives us glimpses of the material circumstances of the woman, and couches the appeal to the beloved in distinctly legalistic terms:

I make you Judge, & fall at your feete to sewe for Justice. I appeale to your virtues, wch can not wronge me: nor stand upon tearmes of ever-lasting Injurie. You sewe to others to have your right: I sewe to you and crave but equitie. You sewe to a Lord and I to a Saint:

and sweete commaunder of my sences, my service, my self and whatsoever. All yt I am, I freely gyve you: no more his owne, but onlie yours whose greatest comforte is your commaundement.

This letter demonstrates complete surrender of self in pursuit of the beloved, but what is most interesting about this is the way it explicitly relates it to the material power relationships of the court. Braunmuller points out that Frances Burgh resorted to legal means to try to obtain support for her family after her husband's death – he considers that the remarks about 'sewe'-ing 'may be quite insignificant; on the other hand, they could link the widow letters with Lady Burgh' (p.31). The letters quite clearly demonstrate that the recipient was involved in some kind of suit to obtain her 'right'. Whether this is enough to provide a concrete identification of the woman with Lady Burgh is disputable, and is the reason for Braunmuller's caution, but even if they do not, this piece of evidence is hardly insignificant. Rather, whatever the identity of the widow, this firmly establishes her as part of the webs of court patronage that such a suit would no doubt have necessitated – she 'sewe[s] to a Lord' to try and prevail.

But the really interesting point here lies in the fact that Chapman clearly sees the pursuit of material reward through the means of appeal to high-ranking court figures as *entirely analogous* with his own romantic pursuit of this woman. That the widow is obviously soliciting to a person of higher rank has its own parallel in the apparent disparity of position between her and Chapman. This disparity is evident in item 41, which details Chapman's irritation at a perceived slight (she seems to have refused to see him on the grounds that she was too busy when he called) and, after thoroughly upbraiding her for behaving 'against all kinde of curtesie', he then makes the unconvincing statement 'my meaninge is not herein to controll above my reatch; neither yet will I take it upon me to correct a better wytt than my owne'. 'Contrall' here should be interpreted as carrying the *OED* meaning 3.a: 'To take to task, call to account, rebuke, reprove (a person)'. The woman is firmly imagined as situated above him, although perhaps the sarcastic tone of the following statement actually works to level their respective social positions by reminding the beloved, through antiphrasis, of Chapman's superior intelligence (presumably the basis of his social and cultural capital and the main

attraction an indebted playwright would hold for a woman who was herself short of cash).

There are several more letters which display if anything even more vitriol. For example:

But you having glutted yourself wth mee: goe to deceyve an other as unhappie as my self [...] I will hensforthe take heede of suche as you are for ever. (Item 46)

I have never heard you promysse any thinge on the one day, but you brake it on the nexte. [...] Youre teares will proceede from eyes watred wth an Onnyon. [...] I wishe not the ende of your lyfe, but I much repent me of the begynnyng of our acquaintance. (Item 47)

Later letters make an attempt to heal the rift, and seem to explain Chapman's sensitivity to insult as being the corollary of his inferior social status. He asks the widow to blame her 'footeman or other servaunt' for not sending him away with the appropriate respect, and exonerates himself for having taken offence at this by saying:

I can not be so dull, but I must easely apprehend how worthie your love is of a much worthier mans respect. And therefore for me to stomacke or sleight any common or free lycence in your actions yt concerne me, were no lesse than sawcinesse; But (how poore soever I am &professe myself) to expresse as muche freedome & skorne in the touch of an open & contemptuous neglect, as the richest man lyvinge: I know you will not blame me. Wch for me to Imagine was offerd on your parte [...] were on my parte too prowde and foul an Ingratitude.

There is a combination of apology and pride in this passage which perfectly displays Chapman's mixed feelings here. He begins by acknowledging his own social inferiority⁴ and admits that his finding an offence in her perfectly appropriate treatment of him was 'sawcinesse' – a word which also crops up in *Bussy* to describe the hero's wooing of a socially superior woman. But despite this admission of guilt, he then reiterates his perception of the insult, explaining that because he felt he had been the victim of 'open and contemptuous neglect' he had as much right to react to this 'as the richest man lyving'. The end of this sentence,

⁴ This inferiority is also noddod at in the letter written by a friend of Chapman's to the widow, urging her to accept his proposal of marriage which, 'may to *his* honor and *bothe your* comfortes be effected' (Item 50, my italics).

his assurance that the widow will not blame him, turns this pride and care for his honour into a positive attribute, a distinctly audacious move considering it is exactly this behaviour he is supposed to be apologising for with the letter. The passage is hugely revelatory of Chapman's attitude towards the social system: he recognises that he has to apologise humbly if he is to stand a chance in marrying the widow, but he cannot resist the temptation to reiterate his own worth and justify his sense of wounded pride, even whilst he apologises.

This same reluctance to abnegate himself in order to gain favour from a social superior is characteristic his response to patronage more generally. Indeed, I would argue, particularly given the explicit parallel he makes between wooing and suing, that Chapman's entire way of thinking about patronage was linked to the paradigm of sexual pursuit. As Braunmuller states, his attempted marriage to the widow was about social standing and money as much as it was about love, and so it could even be seen as the first of many unsuccessful bids for patronage undertaken by him during his career (it is not clear what happened between Chapman and the widow, but there is no record of him ever marrying). The significance of such a viewpoint for a reading of his plays is wide-ranging, but the obvious place to start for a consideration of it is in the two instances where a protagonist achieves social mobility through a sexual relationship with a higher-ranking woman. This situation occurs in both *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Widow's Tears*, and it is reasonable to assume that Chapman's depiction of it is influenced by the fact that he himself had attempted to achieve the same goal, though, unlike either Bussy or Tharsalio, to no avail.

'Hees not base that sights as high as your lips': Courtship as Social Strategy

The protagonists of *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604) and *The Widow's Tears* (1604-5) share a number of common traits, prompting Eugene M. Waith to refer to Tharsalio as 'a comic version of Bussy'.⁵ Both woo a woman from a higher social echelon,

⁵ Eugene M. Waith, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England* (London: Routledge, 1971), p.131.

incurring the displeasure of their male superiors in the process, and Bussy's 'spirit to dare and power to doe' could be seen as coming to its logical, if cynical, conclusion in Tharsalio's Machiavellian faith that 'Confidence' will be his means of obtaining 'honourable preferments' (WT 1.1.58-9). Both are upstarts in a court setting, and both use their sexuality as a means of social advancement, though in Bussy's case this has tragic results. *The Widow's Tears* was written fairly soon after *Bussy D'Ambois*, and the differences in tone between the two are interesting, particularly as regards sexuality. In *Bussy*, although I will argue that Bussy's courtship of Tamyra is both an indication of his social mobility and a strategy by which to more firmly establish himself at court, the relationship is only one aspect of his rise at court, which also includes his violence, and his standing with the king and other nobles. *The Widow's Tears* is much more focussed on sexuality, with Tharsalio ascribing his success in wooing the widowed countess purely to his confident exploitation of his sexual charisma. It seems plausible that as Chapman was writing *Bussy* he realised that the convergence of sexual desire and social ambition was something which could be more thoroughly explored in a different context, and this prompted *The Widow's Tears*. Certainly, many of the concerns of the later play seem to be an expansion on ideas originating in *Bussy*.

Bussy begins to exploit sexually inflected language as soon as he arrives at court, making puns on 'enter[ing] a Courtier' (1.2.79) his ability to 'sing pricksong, Ladie, at first sight' (81). This provokes an outcry, as he is also accused of being 'saucie' and the Guise threatens to have him 'whipt out of the Court for this insolence' (126-7). Commentators on this scene often assume that Bussy is making advances towards the Duchess – one critic writes that Bussy 'proceeds at once to a series of bawdy and offensive exchanges with the Duchess of Guise, wife of Monsieur's great rival'.⁶ However, this is not an entirely accurate description of what is going on. In addition to the Duchess, Tamyra and Beaupre, the Duchess's neice, are also present, and on close examination it is clear that Bussy is reacting to all three women in turn:

D'AMBOIS. Tis leape yeere, Ladie, and therefore verie good to enter a Courtier.

⁶ A. R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), p.35.

TAMYRA. The man's a Courtier at first sight.

D'AMBOIS. I can sing pricksong, Ladie, at first sight; and why not be a Courtier as suddenly?

BEAUPRE. Heere's a Courtier rotten before he be ripe.

D'AMBOIS. Thinke mee not impudent, Ladie, I am yet no Courtier, I desire to be one, and would gladly take entrance (Madam) vnder your Princely Colours.

GUISE. Sir, know you me?

D'AMBOIS. MyLord?

GUISE. I know not you: Whom doe you serue?

D'AMBOIS. Serue, my Lord?

GUISE. Go to Companion; Your Courtship's too saucie. (1.2.78-91)

This is from the 1607 quarto: the revised edition adds in various lines, mostly spoken by or to the Duchess, with the result that it does appear more as if Bussy is addressing her alone. But in the first version, he is trading innuendos with all three women, and the exchanges carry a distinct social weight. They mock his inability to fit in with the court, and his innuendos are an attempt to assert his virility, and with it, his suitability for the court. The women take this in good humour, but this particular social performance is aimed primarily at the other men watching it. In his immediate attempt to stake out a role for himself, Bussy wants the other men to take notice of him, to pre-empt the possibility that he will be sidelined – infamy clearly being preferable to obscurity. By aggressively asserting his sexual presence he has forced the other male courtiers to recognise and respond to him, as Guise finally directly acknowledges him in exasperation after this exchange 'Sir, you know me?'. The tone of the Duke's questions, and his pointed inquiry as to whom Bussy serves are intended to put him in his place and reinstate the traditional hierarchy which Bussy's 'sawcie' behaviour threatens to overwhelm.

Bussy's strategy of using sexually-laden speech to deliberately create tension between men, is reminiscent of the relationship between sexual rivals on which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has written. She points out, following René Girard, that the relationship between rivals can be 'as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved'.⁷ In Bussy's attempt to carve out

⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1985), p.21.

a social identity at the French court, by setting himself up as a rival to the other courtiers we can see that 'play of identification and emulation' which Sedgewick describes (p.23). In his insistence on bandying bawdy words with the women, what he is doing is asserting his right to be part of the group made up of the male courtiers by emulating their 'courtly' behaviour. However, in *Bussy*, sexual rivalry functions not so much to create an intense bond between two men (as Sedgewick and Girard describe it) but more as a general mode in which the relationships among the men of the court are conducted.

Sexual rivalry abounds between the courtiers: most obviously through Bussy's affair with Tamyra, which Guise and Monsieur reveal to her husband Montsurry, prompting him to murder Bussy. That this rivalry only becomes unacceptable when it threatens social distinctions is demonstrated by Montsurry's calm reaction when Tamyra informs him that Monsieur (the heir to the throne) has been making advances towards her:

TAMYRA. I cannot live at quiet in my chamber

For opportunities almost to rapes

Offerd me by him.

MONTSURRY. Pray thee bear with him:

Thou know'st he is a Bachelor, and a Courtier,

I, and a Prince. (2.2.116-20)

This worldly-wise injunction for his wife to ‘bear with’ the advances of Monsieur is enormous contrast to his incensed jealousy on learning of her affair with Bussy. Perhaps fittingly, when Monsieur and Guise discuss Bussy’s situation, agreeing that ‘upstarts should never perch too neere a crowne’ (3.2.135), they immediately fix on sexual intrigue as the best way to effect Bussy’s downfall, with Monsieur saying ‘there is no such trap to catch an upstart | As a loose downfall’ (143-4). The courtiers’ discovery of the affair is also inflected with class concerns – Monsieur reflects that women have the ability to make ‘an Asse confident’ (382), an image which harks back to an earlier scene where Bussy is ridiculed for his suit of new clothes, provided by Monsieur, and which the other courtiers do not believe his real status merits. One of the courtiers whom Bussy kills in the duel compares him to: ‘the Asse, stalking in the Lions case, bear[ing] himselfe like a Lion, roaring all

the huger beasts out of the Forest' (1.2.162-4). This attempt to cast Bussy as a sort of upstart crow, beautified with the feathers of others, directly follows from Bussy's courting of the Duchess and her ladies. A pattern begins to emerge then, of the social upstart's sexual engagement with the upper class women as prompting the male courtiers to reassert their superiority through casting Bussy as a fraud, an imposter in the court. His sexual conquest of Tamyra, in this reading, is both a threat to the aristocratic elite, and the means by which they accomplish his downfall.

This double vision of sexuality verges at times on confusion, particularly in the representation of the affair itself. Bussy seems strangely passive in the liaison, with all the grand declarations of passion coming from Tamyra, while Bussy focuses more on his sense of obligation, service and honour. He says in the final act:

Should not my powers obey when she commands,
My motion must be rebel to my will:
My will, to life. (5.2.70-72)

This view of himself as Tamyra's loyal servant costs him his life, when he misinterprets her final letter to him. She has written it in her own blood under torture by her husband, but he reads the blood as a sign of her devotion and walks into the trap, still proclaiming her 'spotlesse name' (5.3.106) in idealistic terms. Much in the style of Chapman's grand declarations of service towards the widow he was courting, love here becomes aligned with an unquestioning obedience, and both are bound up with honour in a distinctly problematic way. Bussy's refusal to admit that Tamyra's honour has been lost is symptomatic of his confusion over the affair: he can only really keep up this opinion either by lying about their affair or by asserting that it has not tainted her honour. Either way, the Jacobean audience would have been alienated from the hero's perspective at this point, in the first case because they know he is lying, and in the second because it is so hugely unlikely that anyone at the time would have condoned such an affair. However, Bussy is at least being consistent here with his earlier insistence that he can be a law unto himself, and his idiosyncratic definition of honour seems to be one which depends on him fulfilling the idea of the obedient courtly lover and servant, even at the expense of his life. The bloody consequences that result from this

intertwining of adulterous sexual desire and unconcealed social ambition are perhaps indicative of Chapman's feelings of reluctance regarding the ethics of service to which Bussy so enthusiastically subscribes.

The confusion over the role of sexuality in social mobility is not present in *The Widow's Tears*. Rather, the hero Tharsalio successfully exploits the sexual desires of a higher-ranking woman in to improve his own status. There are two plots to the play, through both of which, Samuel Schoenbaum has argued, Chapman 'anatomizes the character of the female sex'.⁸ In the main plot, Tharsalio, second son of an impoverished noble family, courts and wins the widow of the Duke of Cyprus, Eudora, despite having previously been a servant to her husband. In the subplot, Tharsalio plays the Iago to his elder brother's Othello, convincing him that his devoted wife Cynthia is in fact dissimulating when she vows she would never remarry in the event of his death. Lysander, the brother in question, enters into a madness of jealousy, faking his own death in order to test his wife's fidelity. Posing as a soldier who has murdered her husband, he quickly seduces Cynthia and even convinces her to dig up her husband's body to save his life. Tharsalio intervenes at the last minute to reveal the ploy to Cynthia and she pretends she had penetrated the disguise all along, thus very narrowly (and, perhaps unconvincingly) rescuing the play from a tragic ending, and making it one of the earliest examples of a tragicomedy in theatre history.

Although patronage is not explicitly discussed, the play nonetheless explores the sense of subjection of the self which is involved in any suit addressed to a social superior. The Countess Eudora is both Tharsalio's former employer and, by the end of the play, his wife. Tharsalio sets out to marry the countess to redeem his family's standing, saying to his brother: 'our house is decayed, and my honest ambition to restore it, I hope will be pardonable.' His strategy towards the Countess is to fuse a Petrarchan rhetoric of service, bawdy humour, and overt sexuality to justify his suit:

THARSALIO. Base Madame? Hees not base that sights as high as your lips.

EUDORA. And does that beseeme my servant?

THARSALIO. Your Court-servant Madam.

⁸ Samuel Schoenbaum, 'The Widow's Tears and Other Chapman', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63 (1960), 321-338 (p.323).

EUDORA. One that waited on my boord?

THARSALIO. That was only a preparation to my weight on your bed Madam.
(1.2.62-67)

Tharsalio elides the distinction between courtly lover and manservant, gambling on his sexual advances in an attempt to gain honour and further his ambition. He makes no attempt to disguise his lower social status, or his former position as her servant, instead playing with the different meanings of the term to assert his sexual presence. He achieves considerable social mobility by playing on his sexual charisma and wooing her in a manner analogous to the wooing of patrons by poor clients. This is reminiscent of Chapman's own letter to *his* widow in which he describes her as 'sweete commaunder of my sences, my service, my self and whatsoever' and parallels this with her own suit to an unnamed lord.

One of the most interesting pieces of criticism on this play is Elizabeth Hansen's exploration of the character of the rich widow in various Jacobean comedies, which argues that such widows are 'allegorical figures for wealth, survivals of morality plays and interludes in which money is frequently represented as a powerful woman'.⁹ Hansen disputes the idea that such widows expressed a cultural anxiety about independent women and instead turns the focus onto their suitors, noting:

In general, the conflict in these plays lies not between the suitor and the widow but between the suitor and *his rivals*, and the widow's sexual susceptibility works to valorise 'spirit', as Tharsalio and Ricardo [of Middleton's *The Widow*] both call their guiding attribute, at the expense of more tangible assets such as titles and property. (p.221)

Hansen's recognition of the social implications of Tharsalio's success in marrying his former employer is useful, but her interpretation of the sexual conquest as purely allegorical does not give enough attention to the way that the sexual and the social were so intertwined as to be almost indistinguishable in early modern politics and in these plays. Indeed, although her discussion surrounds widows specifically, the insight into the importance of sexual rivalry and the socially radical implications of privileging 'spirit' over title and property could also be applied to Bussy and Tamyra's affair. The main difference between Bussy's and

⁹ Elizabeth Hanson, 'There's Meat and Money Too: Rich Widows and Allegories of Wealth in Jacobean City Comedy,' *ELH*, 72 (2005), 209-238 (p.210).

Tharsalio's respective situations is of course that Bussy's relationship is adulterous, and so, unlike Tharsalio's marriage to a rich widow, cannot function to socially sanction his upward mobility.

The scene discussed above, in which Bussy's flirtatious exchange with the court ladies prompts Guise's anger, has a parallel in *The Widow's Tears*. Tharsalio approaches Eudora to attempt to win her hand in marriage, and begins making sexually explicit propositions, despite the presence of ten other characters, several of whom are higher-ranking rivals for her hand. What is important is that the language of sex is bound up inextricably with the language of economic and political power. There is no separation between public and private, but rather the pursuit of desire is both personal and political. Tharsalio exploits the sexualised language of the court in his quest for self-advancement. In doing so he is also constructing his own identity partly in terms of sexual bravado – he boasts that he can prove the sexual frailty of women by seducing and marrying Eudora. The fact that this bargaining takes place in front of such a large onstage audience, including his nobler rival for the Countess's hand (the lord Rebus), emphasises that this is not only (if at all) about a private attraction to Eudora: it is at least as much motivated by Tharsalio's wish to dictate the terms of his social identity.

This is reminiscent of Francis Barker's theory that sovereignty is often constituted in a spectacular fashion, and that the numerous spectators standing around the throne in *King Lear* or *Hamlet* are necessary 'not because the action only acquires meaning when it is apprehended by an audience for whom it is played out, but because no other conditions are extant'.¹⁰ In other words, without spectators, kingship would not only be meaningless, it would be non-existent. Tharsalio constructs his own version of sovereignty here by asserting his right to be considered a match for the highest-ranking woman in the room. The power he constructs over the spectators can obviously not be seen in terms of royal authority, but he sets out his manifesto for social advancement in sexual terms, asserting his predominance within the group. His words are not the mere public representation of a desire to be acted out in private, but rather the constituting manoeuvre of his sexual and social self. Rebus understands this game, and

¹⁰ Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984), p.34.

expresses his affront: 'Sir y'are as grosse as you are sawcie' (1.2.86). Again it is impossible to separate out the sexual meaning of these insults from the class meaning: Rebus is angry both because Tharsalio has been sexually explicit, and because this is deemed inappropriate to his rank. Sexual boastfulness then is seen as the preserve of the nobility, and despite Tharsalio's claim that his house is merely 'decayed', the elite men wish to try and prevent him from taking part in this discourse, in much the same way as the Duke of Guise is scandalised by Bussy's 'courting' of the Duchess and her ladies. In both cases the higher-ranking courtier prioritises the sexual availability of noblewomen as an exclusive perk of the elite men of the court. In both cases too, Chapman's protagonist proves through exploiting the sexual desires of the woman in question, that the exclusivity of this noble club is not as narrow as the speaker would like to believe.

Tharsalio himself attributes his success to 'the third blind Deitie|That governes earth in all her happinesse,|The life of all endowments, *Confidence*' (1.1.154-6). Despite Lysander's conviction that his suit to the Countess will end in his humiliation, Tharsalio carries out an elaborate ploy to win her hand. In a skilful feat of reverse psychology he pays a notorious bawd, Arsace, to warn Eudora that 'hees the most incontinent and insatiate Man of Women that ever *Venus* blest with abilitie to please them [...] I have known nine in a night made mad with his love' (2.2.71-73, 81-82). Predictably perhaps, it is this which arouses Eudora's interest and ultimately assures Tharsalio of success. However, this scheme itself is just an example of his faith in 'confidence', or perhaps more accurately, arrogance, to trade on his sexual reputation in order to gain power. In the opening scene he shows his confidence that he is due this social promotion, when talking of how, once he is installed in a powerful position, he will cement the alliance by arranging a marriage between his nephew and Eudora's daughter: 'believe me brother,|These destinies goe ever in a bloud' (1.1.150-1). The invocation of 'bloud' here plays on its connotations both of sexual desire and of dynastic succession, uniting the interests of both.

His confidence perhaps stems from the fact that he believes his birth entitles him to better than he has so far received. His manner of speaking about the countess betrays resentment at his treatment so far:

[...] This great Ladie,

Whose Page I lately was; That shee, whose bord
 I might not sit at, I may boord a bed
 And under bring, who bore so high her head. (1.1.159-63)

These lines give no sense that Tharsalio loves, or even lusts after Eudora: his conquest of her is almost portrayed as an act of class warfare, a wish to bring her inside his power as revenge for her previous assertions of superiority. There is a violence to his image of copulation as 'bringing her under', suggesting a violation which perhaps goes beyond Eudora's own body and is, at least in Tharsalio's imagination, an act of rebellion against the entire hierarchy of Cyprus. It is perhaps this violence which leads S. Gorley-Putt to describe Tharsalio's success as 'a triumphant rape across the wavering frontiers of class barriers'.¹¹

The violence, and the underlying misogynistic tendencies revealed by it, could be seen as having a parallel in Tharsalio's otherwise unmotivated exploitation of Lysander's jealousy which very nearly proves catastrophic for his marriage. Both Cynthia and Lysander are initially scathing of Tharsalio's plan to woo the Countess, and his stirring of Lysander's suspicions follows directly on from both Cynthia and Lysander's strong condemnations of Eudora's decision to marry again. Tharsalio's brother and his wife are both part of that echelon of privilege also occupied by Eudora and her suitors, and against which Tharsalio wages his assault. Chapman suggests that Tharsalio is motivated at least partially by irritation at their smug complacency and assumption of the moral high ground, made all the more obvious by the fact they do not enter into the spirit of celebration with which Tharsalio informs them of the news. Cynthia says:

I am asham'd ant, and abhorre to thinke,
 So great and vow'd a patterne of our sexe,
 Should take into her thoughts, nay to her bed,
 (O staine to woman-hood) a second love. (3.1.111-114)

It is this, and Lysander's whole-hearted endorsement of his wife's opinion, which prompts Tharsalio to stir his brother up to test his wife's fidelity. Tharsalio's hostility to Cynthia seems fairly straightforward: a conviction that she is, like all

¹¹ S. Gorley-Putt, *The Golden Age of English Drama: Enjoyment of Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), p.97.

women, sexually corruptible and not a trustworthy recipient of the family estate which Lysander has (foolishly, in Tharsalio's opinion) promised to bestow upon her on his death, mixed with irritation at what he sees as her sanctimonious and misleading promises of posthumous fidelity to his brother.

However, the relationship between the brothers is far more ambiguous. A deep rivalry and latent hostility is present in almost all of their exchanges, and in this way, what Tharsalio does to Cynthia can be seen as merely an expedient way to more deeply wound his brother. In the opening scene Tharsalio makes no secret of his feelings of fraternal jealousy, though he keeps the tone comic: 'You were too forward when you stept into the world before me, and gull'd me of the Land, that my spirits and parts were indeed borne too.' (1.1.41-42) Lysander seems to relish the prospect that Tharsalio will fail miserably in his suit to the Countess, saying to her servant: 'Tis a phrensie he is possest with, and wil not be cur'd but by some violent remedie. And you shall favour me so much to make me a Spectator of the scene' (1.2.3-5). Tharsalio's repeated insistence that one of the first things he will do once he has married Eudora is arrange the marriage of his nephew to her daughter perhaps also shows his wish to usurp Lysander's place at the head of the patriarchal family.

Tharsalio's social strategy is one of high risk, but carried off with such confidence that he can manipulate the rest of the characters. His self-assurance is epitomised in his following the countess into her private chambers with a drawn sword (perhaps a glance at the Earl of Essex's famous *faux pas* with Queen Elizabeth?) after she has dismissed him, confident that she secretly desires him so much that this will finally convince her to marry him – which of course, it does. His supreme ability to play the games of the court, particularly in mastering the sexual discourse and behaviour required of a courtier, contrasts markedly with Lysander's obsessive trial of Cynthia which ends in his utter dejection, disguised as a soldier inside what is supposed to be his own tomb, mourning an infidelity he has himself seduced Cynthia into committing. Tharsalio's contrasting power, both in the politics of Cypriot society, and over his family and household (as symbolised by his arrangement of the marriage between his nephew and step-daughter) merely underlines Lysander's failure, as a husband, as a patriarchal figurehead, and as a courtier. He seems a pathetic, irrelevant figure, and the future

of his marriage at the end of the play is uncertain. Tharsalio's quick thinking provides a cover story for Cynthia, who pretends she has penetrated Lysander's disguise all along, but there is no on-stage reconciliation between the two, prompting one critic to view the relationship as 'apparently irretrievable'.¹²

Tharsalio's absolute mastery of the power games within the court make him perhaps, Chapman's picture of the quintessential Jacobean courtier. In his amorality and cynicism is contained a large measure of revulsion at the spiritual emptiness of the political elite among whom Chapman was attempting to live. But Tharsalio is also a dramatically vivacious and attractive character, so perhaps he is also a testament to the very power and loquaciousness that attracted Chapman to court circles in the first place. Certainly he is unique among the canon of characters in his apparent invulnerability and the ease with which he subverts the subjection that Chapman elsewhere associates with courtship. However, his success in achieving a place at the top of his society only comes by successfully marketing himself as the object of sexual desire in order to gain material reward. In other words, he prostitutes himself, even using a well-known procuress to broker the deal.

Tharsalio clearly does not mind paying such a price, but it would be a mistake to think that Chapman therefore approves this course of action. Instead, Tharsalio's success at so blatantly selling his sexuality to satisfy social ambition is intended as an indictment of the Jacobean court, and perhaps the broader culture in which his own relationship with a wealthy widow floundered. Arnold Preussner points to this when he points out the autobiographical similarities between Tharsalio and the 'dramatist who was himself a financially insolvent son', and remarks on how strange it therefore seems 'that Chapman paints his fortune-hunter in such negative hues'.¹³ It is also possible that the sexual relationships of Bussy and Tharsalio with their wealthier mistresses can be taken as allegorical representations of social advancement through the intercession of patrons. If this is the case, then the danger which attends on Bussy's surrender to Tamyra, and the prostitution at the heart of Tharsalio's marriage, can be interpreted as

¹² Arnold W. Preussner, 'Chapman's Anti-Festive Comedy: Generic Subversion and Classical Allusion in *The Widow's Tears*', *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 59 (1985), 263-272 (p.264). Parrott also comments on the failure to resolve the conflict (*Comedies*, pp.802-3).

¹³ Preussner, p.265.

expressing Chapman's own reservations about the patronage game he was attempting to play. The danger and degradation inherent in soliciting for patronage is also expressed by the homoerotic tensions present in patronage relationships, particularly in *The Gentleman Usher* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, which will be the subject of the rest of this chapter.

'The Dukes Minion Man': The Gentleman Usher

In *The Gentleman Usher* (published in 1606, probably written in 1604), two parallel homoerotic relationships develop which are seen to have different effects on the political culture of an unspecified court, ruled by the Duke Alphonso. The first, and perhaps simpler, of these pairings is that of the Duke and his favourite, Medice. Almost as soon as the play opens, the behaviour of Alphonso is criticised by the speakers, but the blame for it is ascribed within the first 100 lines to the influence of this unpopular favourite. We hear that the old Duke has been courting a much younger woman, and his subjects disapprove: 'Who, Ladie Margaret, that deare yong dame? | Will his antiquitie, never leave his iniquitie?' (1.1.29-30). This passing gossip becomes more obviously a sign of the disturbance of the social order when the Duke's son and heir, Vincentio, makes an entrance and reveals that he is also in love with Margaret. This father-son rivalry raises some distinctly Oedipal issues which continue throughout the play. The suggestion of incest is invoked with his complaint: 'Must not I mourne that knowe not whether yet | I shall enjoy a stepdame or a wife?' (1.1.81-82). The erotic connotations of the word 'enjoy' raise the spectre of Vincentio cuckolding his father, and is the first hint of sodomy in the broad sense of 'anything that threatens alliance', a term which can be applied to a host of different acts which 'emerge into visibility only when those who are said to have done them can also be called traitors, heretics, or the like, at the very least, disturbers of the social order that alliance - marriage alliance - maintained'.¹⁴

However, the cause of this social disorder is not Vincentio's desire for Margaret, which is seen by the surrounding characters as entirely correct and

¹⁴ Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p.19.

laudable, but rather the anti-social lust of the Duke for an inappropriate partner. Vincentio's friend Lord Strozza is quick to apportion blame, but he absolves the Duke of responsibility, blaming instead the corrupting influence of Medice. The exchange about Medice sets up many of the important themes of the play, so I will quote it at length here:

STROZZA. The Duke has none for him but Medice,
 That Fustian Lord, who in his buckram face,
 Bewraies, in my conceit, a map of basenesse.
 VINCENTIO. I, theres a parcel of unconstrued stuffe,
 That unknown Minion raised to honours height,
 Without the helpe of Vertue, or of Art,
 Or (to say true) of any honest part:
 O how he shames my father! He goes like
 A Princes foote-man, in old-fashioned silkes,
 And most times, in his hose and doublet onely,
 So miserable, that his owne few men
 Doe beg by virtue of his liverie;
 For he gives none for any service done him,
 Or any honour, any least reward.
 STROZZA. Tis pittie such should live about a Prince:
 I would have such a noble counterfeit, nailed
 Upon the Pillory, and after, whipt
 For his adulterie with nobilitie. (104-121)

This fascinating passage reveals much about how the inside of the court elite construct themselves in opposition to the outside, here epitomised by the figure of hate, Medice. Various ideologies are working in conjunction here, about aristocracy, patronage and aesthetic display. The word 'minion' is key, and repeated several times throughout the play: Chapman only uses it to suggest an inappropriate patronage relationship with connotations of sexual and social disorder. Whereas in *The Revenge*, I will argue, the patronage relationship is seen to corrupt the client, here it is the patron whose reputation is called into question by the association: the Duke is 'shame[d]' by Medice's power. He is clearly imagined to be encouraging Alphonso in his pursuit of Margaret, ('the Duke has none for him but Medice') and other images in this passage further the sense of

sexual corruption, particularly the description of his position as 'adulterie'. This is also present in the image of his disarrayed clothes, which suggest a permanent state of partial undress and a disregard for the conventions of courtly display.

This focus on clothes is important: as in the cases of Bussy, Tharsalio and Monsieur D'Olive, clothes are key signifiers in the complex game of patron-client relationships. Not only does Medice not clothe himself with suitable grandeur, (which reflects badly on the Duke, who, as his patron, would be expected to provide suits for his favourite) but he also does not reward his own entourage: 'his owne few men | Doe beg by virtue of his liverie'. This sartorial chaos shows that Medice does not contribute to, and indeed actively disrupts, the patronage system which has raised him to his current status. In short, the favourite is not playing by the established rules, and the rest of the court despises him for it.

His name is significant in this respect too: Medice suggests the Latin *medico*, a cure, which of course is deeply ironic since in the denouement of the play the court is seen to be cured only by his expulsion. However, during this expulsion, it is revealed that 'Medice' is a false identity, and he is really a gypsy named Mendice, from the verb *mendico*, to beg or be a beggar. Fittingly then, here his clothing and body are seen as being stable and trustworthy signifiers of his ignoble state – he wears 'old-fashioned silks', but even these are too good for him, as his status as a 'Fustian lord' with a 'buckram face' makes clear: both fustian and buckram being coarse cotton or linen not usually used to make courtly suits. Furthermore, the *OED* intriguingly suggests that 'men in buckram' is used figuratively to suggest 'non-existent persons', following *1 Henry IV* where Falstaff nebulously claims he is attacked by 'four rogues in buckram' (2.4.188-89), who of course multiply with every new point in the story to eventually become nine. By drawing attention to Medice's buckram face, Vincentio could be glancing at Falstaff to deny his father's favourite even the status of a real person. Chapman could, in addition, be relying on his audience to pick up the allusion to another royal favourite – Shakespeare's fat knight – who similarly exerted a corrupting influence on his princely patron. From the outset of the play, then, Chapman establishes that the power of the favourite is not in keeping with the conventional workings of patronage, and that it is bound up with suggestions of sodomy, and the 'iniquity' of the ruler. The homoerotic bond here is clearly being used to figure

what Chapman sees as the undesirable aspects of political life in Renaissance courts, which he locates in the influence of inappropriate favourites.

Does this therefore mean that he thought the patronage system had the potential to work ethically, if not corrupted by rogue or unsavoury elements? The other homoerotic bond in the play suggests not. The parallels between the relationship of the Duke and Medice, and his son's relationship with the gentleman usher of the title, are suggested by Vincentio himself when he compares Medice to 'a Princes foot-man'. The usher is not quite the same as a foot-man but there are similarities, and the distinction of master and servant is what is important here. The usher, Bassiolo, comes to occupy a position in relation to Vincentio remarkably similar to that occupied by Medice in relation to the Duke. This is due to his instrumental role in bringing Vincentio together with his beloved, Margaret. He is in fact, Margaret's father's servant, but Vincentio 'woos' him to be, in effect, his client, and carry letters between the young lovers. Again Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on erotic triangles is useful here. She argues that the erotic triangle should be seen 'as a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment'.¹⁵ This formulation has fascinating implications for *The Gentleman Usher*, which is full of triangular relationships. The one which most precisely fits Girard's model of two male rivals for one female beloved is the triangle of Vincentio, his father, and Margaret. However, there are also two other triangles, one involving the Duke, Medice, and Margaret, the other comprising Vincentio, Bassiolo and Margaret. These two secondary triangles are of course interlinked with the first, because in each case the bond between master and servant is characterised by a shared interest in the pursuit of the beloved (and by both 'teams' of men taking an opposing side in the Oedipal rivalry between father and son). Sedgwick focuses at length on the asymmetry involved in such triangles – in her reading, this asymmetry is most importantly constituted by the different gender positions and the fact that this means the beloved is generally less capable of agency than either rival. However, in the case of this play, and in an examination of the sexual nature of patronage relationships, perhaps the more

¹⁵ Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p.27.

important asymmetries are between the master and servant, and between father and son.

There is a disparity of power in this context which sheds light on the way the characters, particularly the servants Bassiolo and Medice, use the triangular relationship to attempt to negotiate some form of power. The roles of both servants reveal much about, in Sedgwick's words, 'the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment'. For in their engagement with the desires of their patrons/masters both Bassiolo and Medice become participants in the circulation of that desire in ways which further their own desire for social status. Each attempts to successfully bring his master's desire for Margaret to fruition because of his own desire for recognition and reward. But in both cases that recognition by the master of the servant's importance is inflected by the discourses of desire by which it was achieved. This structural parallel between the Alphonso-Medice partnership and that of Vincentio and Bassiolo leads to some disturbing implications for the reputation of the ruling family.

On the surface, at least, there are important differences between the two cases. Bassiolo's power is employed in effecting the secret marriage of the young couple, thus seemingly bolstering both the heterosexual, married love endorsed by society, *and* assuring the dynastic success of the ruling family by potentially securing a legitimate heir. When the Duke discovers the marriage, still acting under the influence of his desire for Margaret, he banishes his son, and Medice orders that he be pursued, leading to a near-fatal injury. In response to this, in a passage obviously influenced by Sidney's *Arcadia*, Margaret disfigures her face with acid and appears to castigate Alphonso in front of the court. He realises his error of his ways and forgives his son, and the play concludes with all the characters celebrating the marriage, and condemning and banishing the evil favourite. So on one level, the roles of Bassiolo and Medice would seem to be very different, the one acting in the interests of dynastic alliance and the authority of the ducal family, the other undermining such interests in favour of anarchy and disorder.

However, the conventional celebration of legally-sanctioned heterosexual love occasioned by the marriage gives rise to more subversive discourses of desire,

particularly between Vincentio and Bassiolo. Prior to the wedding in Act 4, Vincentio has 'wooed' Bassiolo to carry love-letters between them, utilising sexual language to encourage the usher to become his servant. He exhorts Bassiolo to call him 'sweete Vince' (3.2.118), and, on seeing the servant's reluctance to break down the conventions of hierarchy, proclaims: 'you are as coy a peece as your Lords daughter' (131) – verbally placing Bassiolo and Margaret as equivalents in his affections. He is successful in the end, and the usher enters enthusiastically into his new role. What is glossed over in the play, and has not been noted in any criticism, is the fact that in accepting this relationship with Vincentio, Bassiolo betrays the trust of his actual master, Margaret's father, who is more interested in the prospect of his daughter marrying the current Duke than his heir incumbent.

Sociologist Alexandra Shepard has defined patriarchy as 'the government of society by male household heads, involving the subordination of younger men as well as women'.¹⁶ It is clear from such a definition that Vincentio's actions undermine the interests of patriarchy. His wooing of Margaret and his patronage of Bassiolo both tend toward the disruption of patriarchal authority: he undermines his father's authority in wooing the same woman as him, and interferes with Lasso's ability to control his servants and to dispose of his daughter in marriage as he wishes. This divergence between patriarchal expectations and the privilege accorded to Vincentio as a prince of royal blood suggests that the interests of rank and the interests of patriarchy are not always identical. Here they are working in tension with each other, and the generational conflict suggested thereby is similar to that discussed in the case of *All Fools* in the previous chapter. However, unlike in *All Fools*, the society as a whole provides an almost choric commentary which makes it clear that it is the elder generation which is at fault, and Medice is a convenient scapegoat for the 'iniquity' of the Duke.

But while Bassiolo is certainly not demonised in the manner of Medice, he occupies an uneasy role. As discussed above, in order to win Margaret to his hand, Vincentio first has to engage in a distinctly homoerotic wooing of the servant, one which results not only in the undermining of patriarchal authority, but in the

¹⁶ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 3.

dissolution of the differences in rank separating Vincentio and Bassiolo. Vincentio depends on Bassiolo to mediate the relationship from its outset, and the usher cannot simply be discarded once the young couple are happily betrothed. The implications of the intimacy between the two men are literalised in the comic scenes in which the usher is seen intruding in their attempts at courtship. When all three are onstage, Bassiolo's clumsy attempts to help Vincentio with his wooing instead obstruct the lovers' ability to express their desire for one another. He interrupts and instructs them in a series of comical interventions, which are almost always of a stubbornly corporeal nature: 'Were I as Vince is, I would handle you | In ruftie tuftie wise' (5.1.33-4) he says to Margaret, before lying down between them, and forming both a discursive and a physical intrusion on their privacy. They often have to resort to asides to communicate, and laugh at him behind his back - Margaret snidely remarks to Vince, 'O, you have made him a sweete beagle, ha'y not?' (35) Her attempt to distance Bassiolo from her relationship with Vincentio suggests that the couple's philosophical idealisation of their love, suggested by the language of their betrothal ('since th'eternall acts of our pure soules, | Knit us with God, the soule of all the world, | He shall be Priest to us' (4.2.139-141)) can only be maintained by excluding the body - which of course returns, not so much to haunt them as to embarrass them in the form of the usher.

Incidentally, the term 'beagle' which Margaret here uses to belittle Bassiolo was used by James I to refer to Sir Robert Cecil: Alan Stewart has specified that thirty-five of the king's letters to Cecil open with a greeting referring to him as 'my little beagle'.¹⁷ Stewart traces several letters between Cecil and other courtiers in which this is referred to openly, so it seems safe to conclude that in court circles, it was a well-known moniker. Clearly, such a reference would not make sense if the play was, as Tricomi suggests, written in 1602, and it is tempting to see the appearance of this word as an indication that it was perhaps a Jacobean effort. The evidence for the 1602 dating is merely the reference to *Sir Gyles Goosecappe*, which was definitely produced in 1602, but Tricomi's argument that such a reference would only make sense in a play produced around the same time is perhaps too strict an interpretation. I see no reason that an audience would not have

¹⁷ Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), p.181.

recognised a reference to a previous successful play two years after its performance.

However, even if the later date is not accepted, it might be adduced that the word 'beagle' carried specific meaning of obsequious service and perhaps affectionate emotional attachment too, which James plays with in his addresses to Cecil. Such an affectionate attachment between master and servant is exactly what Margaret is mocking with her words here, so the line is entirely appropriate even if we cannot rigorously defend the idea that there was an additional joke at the expense of the unpopular Privy Councillor.

To return to the relationship between Vincentio and Margaret, however, the chastity is underlined further with the groom's statement during the marriage ceremony:

And now in token I dissolve
Your virgin state, I take this snowie vaile,
From your much fairer face, and claime the dues
Of sacred nuptials. (4.2.191-94)

Whenever any hint is made that there might be more to the nuptial rite than simply removing a veil it is Bassiolo who suggests it – as though the lovers, having required his efforts to declare their feelings, now still depend on him to mediate their physical desire. But this dependence of the orthodox heterosexual alliance upon the homoerotic discourse occasioned between the prince and servant, troubles the harmony of the conclusion. Mario DiGangi argues, with reference to this play: 'once evoked, sodomy lingers and sticks'.¹⁸ The power of sodomy to shake social hierarchy is represented by the confusion over Bassiolo's place, which is symbolised by the fact that he calls Vincentio 'Vince'. Margaret is aghast to hear this – 'O horrible hearing' (4.2.107) – and chastises Vincentio for encouraging the 'sawcie friendship' (114). The word sawcie is, as we have seen, used elsewhere in Chapman, particularly in *Bussy* and *The Widow's Tears*, to combine the notion of presumptuous insolence with that of lasciviousness, and highlighting the power of such behaviour to threaten the security of those at the top of the hierarchy. In these reactions to Bassiolo's power we can see the anxieties Alan Bray traces in

¹⁸ Mario DiGangi, 'Asses and Wits: The Homoerotics of Mastery in Satiric Comedy', *English Literary History* 25, (1994), p. 208.

Elizabethan society: 'If someone has acquired a place in society to which he was not entitled by nature and could then perhaps even lord it over those who were naturally his betters, the spectre likely to be conjured up in the mind of an Elizabethan was not the orderly relationship of friendship between men but rather the profoundly disturbing image of the sodomite'.¹⁹ This quotation could be a summary of the reactions of the courtiers to Medice's influence – particularly Vincentio's extended rant against him quoted above – but it could apply just as aptly to Bassiolo. While the anxieties raised by the figure of the servant are in large part dispelled by Medice's almost ritualised exile, Bassiolo remains a disturbing figure: all the more so as the clown Poggio refers to him as 'the Dukes Minion man' (5.4.159), again utilising that word which for Chapman seems to have distinctly corrupt, homoerotic connotations. The Lord Lasso is as scandalised as Margaret to hear the familiar way in which Bassiolo speaks of Vincentio: 'O Foole, dost thou call | The prince *Vince*, like his equal?' (5.4.169-70) There is a sense then, that the dangerous role Medice played in influencing the Duke has now simply been transferred to Bassiolo after the gypsy's expulsion from the court.

However, what is ultimately the important distinction between the two problematic upstarts is their powers of observation. In answer to Lasso's indignation, the Duke merely proclaims: 'But sure he saw the fitness of the match, | With freer and more noble eies than we' (5.4.175-76). Chapman repeatedly returns to the problem of accurate interpretation, and one of the features Vincentio most despises about Medice is his illiteracy (invoked at 1.1.124, and at several other points). Bassiolo's ability to *see* accurately distinguishes him in a hugely important manner from Medice, whose crimes against nobility are presented as far more noxious than Bassiolo's. In fact, Bassiolo is accorded noble status by the Duke's last judgement on him, which suggests perhaps the possibility of a patronage system which functions in a less corrupt way than it had throughout most of the play. However, the ambiguities surrounding Bassiolo are by no means cleared up, and while Chapman hints at possible positive developments, he quite

¹⁹ Alan Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England', in *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 1994), edited by Jonathan Goldberg, pp.40-61, p.51.

clearly regards the power of favourites and the manner of dispensing patronage as linked endemically to the corruption of the political system.

Quite what the implications of this are for Chapman's own politics is complicated by the fact that the date of composition for *The Gentleman Usher* could be anything between 1601 and 1604.²⁰ As a result, while the homoerotic aspect of patronage might suggest James's manner of government, we cannot be sufficiently sure that the dates fit in with such a reading. However, if we view the criticism laid against the ruler as being a structural concern over the role of favourites, and as indicating an uneasiness with the sexualised subjection involved in patronage, rather than a personal attack on either James or Elizabeth, then the uncertainty of dating matters less. Such a criticism, whether it was written in the last years of Elizabeth's reign or the first year of James's, is not specifically aimed at either one, but is rather a comment on the ways in which royal power is distributed through favour. We should see Chapman as laying out sources of his anxiety surrounding the sexualised patronage relationships that became so important in the Jacobean period. The language of Elizabethan public life obviously connected advancement at court and a sense of honour to the discourse of sexuality – Thomas Lacquer has written of 'an erotics of court life that both engendered factions of the great men of [Elizabeth's] realm and bound them to her and to each other'.²¹ In Chapman's plays and letters he demonstrates an awareness of how the languages of sex, service and honour were not only inextricable from each other, but from the political life of the Elizabethan and Jacobean elite, to whom he was anxiously and precariously attached. While the dynamics of this sexualised language changed with the accession of a male monarch, the fact that court language was so bound up in erotic discourse could be seen as providing some continuity between the reigns. Furthermore, Chapman's underlying anxiety regarding the potential humiliation involved in both patronage and sexual relationships, as evidenced by his letters (written before any of the plays under discussion, if the reference to his imprisonment in the Counter is accurate), was also continuous. However, as his career went on and his experience of the patronage system became ever more

²⁰ Robert Ornstein, 'Textual Introduction' to *The Gentleman Usher* in Holaday, ed., *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies*, 131. See also pp.39-40 above.

²¹ Thomas Lacquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

disappointing, it is possible to see a deepening of his hostility towards patrons, and an increased sense that the learned man who accepts patronage from a great politician is essentially prostituting himself and selling his integrity. This hostility is reflected most deeply in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*.

'Clermont thy creature comes': Patronage and Prostitution

In *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, one of Chapman's later tragedies (published in 1613, written 1611-12), discourses of patronage are bound up with a homoerotic undertone of the relationship between Clermont and his patron the Duke of Guise. Clermont is often referred to as a stoic hero, and the play has been interpreted as a conflict between Clermont's philosophical idealism and the corrupt 'politic' world he inhabits. Suzanne F. Kistler was the first to suggest this reading, arguing that the play represents 'the absolute inadequacy of Stoicism in protecting Clermont from the corruption surrounding him'.²² Alexander Leggatt develops this, seeing Clermont's suicide as 'a final, definitive statement of [his] dependence on another man', and evidence of his entanglement through his relationship with the Guise in the worldly corruption of the court. However, Leggatt also dismisses the sexual language used to describe that relationship as 'metaphorical'.²³ His identification of the Guise as compromising Clermont's moral position is accurate, but the consequences of this cannot be fully explored without recognising the homoerotic component of their relationship, and its broader implications for court patronage in Chapman's imagination.

Through his representation of Clermont's career, Chapman explores the ethical and sexual ramifications of patronage. Clermont, like all of Chapman's tragic heroes, is a man divided from the beginning of the play and suffering from a lack of self-awareness. He proclaims his reluctance to engage in the world of 'public' affairs, seemingly oblivious to the fact that by accepting the Guise's patronage he has, like Bussy with Monsieur before him, become his 'creature'. We

²² Suzanne F. Kistler, "'Strange and far-Removed Shores': A Reconsideration of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*", *Studies in Philology*, 77 (1980), 128-44, (p.143). For Clermont's Stoicism see the summary of articles on pp.17-19 above.

²³ Alexander Leggatt, 'The Tragedy of Clermont D'Ambois', *Modern Language Review*, 77 (1982), 524-36, (p.535; p.533).

are first introduced to Clermont through the eyes of his treacherous brother-in-law, Baligny, who remarks to the Monsieur on:

The Guise and his deare Minion, Clermon D'Ambois,
Whispering together, not of state affaires
I durst lay wagers, (though the Guise be now
In chiefe heate of his faction). (1. 1. 145-49)

The description of Clermont as a 'minion' is intriguing, as Chapman generally uses this word to describe unwelcome or undeserving favourites of royal figures, usually with some suggestion of sodomy in the relationship. We have seen how it is used in *The Gentleman Usher* to criticise the Duke's relationship with Medice, and it is also used in passing in *The Tragedy of Chabot* (c.1612) to describe Chabot's rival at the court of King Francis. These are the only other occasions when Chapman uses the word, so we should be alert to its connotations here. The sexual undertones of the relationship are further elaborated by the startling image of the Guise 'in chiefe heate of his faction', suggesting his political dealings as a fit of intemperate passion in which Clermont is implicated.

The emphasis on 'whispering' prefigures the Guise's later attempt to have Henry free Clermont after he has been arrested on spurious treason charges. He urges Henry to recognise 'what a villain | Hee was that whisper'd in your jealous eare' (4.4.2-3), suggesting an association between whispered conversations and underhand political intrigue. The Guise is a master of courtly rhetoric, an adept politician, and the courtiers clearly view his foray into philosophy as another of his strategies. In this first scene, Baligny goes on to suggest that his relationship with Clermont is a ploy to allow the Guise to affect a learned and Stoic persona. He dismisses this as:

Fine hypocrisie, and cheape, and vulgar,
Knowne for a covert practise, yet beleev'd
(By those abus'd soules, that they teach and governe)
No more than Wives adulteries, by their Husbands,
They bearing with so unmov'd aspects,
Hot coming from it. (1.1.162-7)

Again the relationship is imagined in terms of heat, here explicitly sexual heat. The relation between ruler and governed is presented as a marriage, with the rather surprising twist that it is the ruler who is the licentious wife and the unfortunate

mass of the governed being figured as the cuckolded husband. The syntax here, as so often in Chapman, is a little on the tortuous side, and it is hard to say whether the husband is being chided or sympathised with for believing his wife. The crucial contrast here is between 'knowne' and 'beleev'd' and perhaps the best interpretation of this passage is that although it is generally known that great men lie, or that a wife has been unfaithful, the rumour is not believed by the betrayed party (be that the gullible husband or abused subjects), because the hypocrisy is so convincing.

Some allowance must be made for the fact that the speaker here is a self-avowed double agent and has even at this early stage in the play firmly established himself in the role of villain. However, the schism between this somewhat seedy view of Clermont's relationship with the Guise, and Clermont's own very inflated, metaphysical conception of it is key, is not simply resolved by brushing aside the unpleasant implications of Baligny on the grounds that he is corrupt himself. Rather, Clermont's stubborn refusal to acknowledge this side of his patron's personality is to be interpreted as a major blindness. As detailed in Chapter 2, Clermont's defence of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre should be read, as Kistler and Leggatt both argue, as an indication of the moral perils attendant on an involvement with great men of state such as Guise. It recalls the crimes of the French monarchy and attendant nobility while showing Clermont's dismissal of these crimes as being a direct result of his closeness to his patron.

The context of the massacre discussion particularly calls Clermont's judgement into question because it follows on from a previous dialogue in which Guise makes Clermont's integrity the specific subject of his praise. But even this encomium is subtly suggestive of Clermont's amenity to manipulation. Guise describes his servant as having 'the crowne of man, and all his parts,|Which learning is' (2.1.84-85), and he goes on to highlight his ability to pick and choose the causes to which he will lend his eloquence:

Though (onely for his naturall zeale to right)
Hee will be fiery when he sees it crost;
And in defence of it; yet when he lists
Hee can containe that fire, as hid in Embers (91-94).

This could be read as praising Clermont's self-control, which of course would fit in with his Stoic idealism; but there is an ambiguity in these lines which suggests something more sinister, perhaps even a deliberate self-censorship, which causes Clermont to hide his indignation when he sees right 'crost', and it is in the context of this that his subsequent defence of the Guise's actions in Paris should be read. The Guise's description of Clermont's 'naturall zeale to right' is of course greatly undermined by his almost immediate use of his learning to defend the violence unleashed upon the Huguenots (he uses a metaphor which compares the murdered Protestants to Paris and the Trojans who, in this context, brought upon themselves the destruction of Troy by their ravishing of Helen from Menelaus). That the Guise praises here, not Clermont's sense of moral outrage, but his ability to control it as the situation demands, highlights in advance the Machiavellian uses to which this can be put. Clermont does not realise it, but his ability to defend right has been co-opted by the Guise and his learning turned to politic uses as a direct result of his patron's influence.

Motifs of observation and of the power of sight are common throughout the play, and if Clermont's power of true insight is thwarted by his embroilment in the patronage relationship we must consider what this suggests about Chapman's own position. For, although the implications of the patronage relations within the play are clearly murky, this is a text which nonetheless proclaims itself from the outset to be an object of exchange in the patronage system. Chapman's preface dedicates *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* to Sir Thomas Howard, and it is particularly revealing as regards Chapman's construction of the relation between patron and author in the business of dedications.

The opening paragraph emphasises the precedent already established whereby writers dedicate their works to noblemen. The preface as a whole is greatly concerned with the purpose of literature as educational, inspirational; an 'exitation to Heroycal life', a critical position influenced greatly by Sidney and Greville. In Chapman's hands, as John Huntington's work has suggested, the linking of morality and philosophy becomes a vehicle to 'identify an intellectual hierarchy, a "true nobility", that poses an alternative to, and therefore always entails a criticism of, the actual social structure, dominated by a "false nobility" of

blood'.²⁴ In a relationship marked by inequality – the patron gives the material support that the poet needs (and in Chapman's case this need by 1611 was pressing in the extreme) – writers, Chapman included, often found themselves making rather large claims for their work, in order to justify the rewards they hoped to receive. Chapman manages the extraordinary feat of suggesting that it is in fact himself who disperses the patronage towards Thomas Howard: 'Nor have the great Princes of Italie, and other Countres, conceived it any least diminution to their greatnesse, to have their Names wing'd with these Tragicke Plumes, and disperst by way of Patronage, through the most Noble Notices of Europe'. In this image, the circulation of printed books and their dedications becomes analogous to the distribution of reward under court patronage, placing Chapman in a position of far more power than he allows Clermont in relation to the Guise. To carry the comparison of Chapman and Clermont slightly farther, we should also note the emphasis on vision in his signature to the Preface: 'Your true Vertues most true observer, George Chapman'. Should we not perhaps notice some disparity in the fact that this preface constructs the patronage relationship as one in which true insight and agency accrue to the writer or client, while deserved honour and moral instruction benefit the patron, and yet that the play it prefaces shows this interpretation to be a dangerous delusion?

The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois articulates the anxiety Chapman felt about the pressing need to solicit patronage and the deep unease he felt in marketing his work to great men. The play was written in the same year (1611) as Chapman made his first approach to Robert Carr, at that time Viscount Rochester, and James's most powerful favourite. This approach was fairly low-key, constituting one dedicatory sonnet to the translation of the *Iliad*, in which Chapman urges Carr to 'let thy fruits be favours done to Good, | As thy Good is adorn'd with royall favours'.²⁵ A.R. Braunmuller notes that this formulation urges artistic patronage 'as a natural consequence of King James's recognition of Carr's own goodness'.²⁶ However, this poem is notable for the ways in which it draws attention to the

²⁴ John Huntington, *Ambition, Rank and Poetry in 1590s England* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001) p.67.

²⁵ Chapman, *Poems*, ed. Phyllis Bartlett, p.403.

²⁶ A.R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992) p.134.

possible *misuse* of royal favour. Although it does this by proclaiming the ways in which Carr is different from such abusers of their privilege, it nonetheless calls attention to the darker interpretation of patronage which this chapter has explored. The paradoxical nature of his praise of Carr also suggests ambivalence towards the recipient of his verse: 'You that in so great eminence, live retir'd', for example, seems a strange way to begin the praise of James's greatest courtier. The paradox is also played with in the further assertion:

He seeks not state, that curbs it, being found.
Who seeks it not, never comes by it ill;
Nor ill can use it.

This calling attention to the possibilities of using power 'ill', and the dubious virtue of those who would seek it, renders the praise of Carr dependent on his acceptance of Chapman's request for assistance, and on his continuing to spread the benefits of patronage around, to prove that he does not seek only self-aggrandisement. Although *The Revenge* was written before Carr became involved with Frances Howard and the infamous divorce case between her and the Earl of Essex, perhaps even at this stage, Chapman felt uneasy at soliciting the patronage of a man like Carr, in view of the distinctly distrustful way royal favourites tend to be portrayed in his plays.²⁷ The dedicatory sonnet certainly suggests a similar hesitancy in its portrayal of the patron-client relationship, as does *The Revenge*.

In Clermont D'Ambois's short-sightedness and ultimate failure to live up to his ideals is contained, in no small measure, Chapman's own realisation that the process of bidding for a patron constituted a significant moral sacrifice. The opening line of the play announces the debauchery of 'this declining Kingdome', and while King Henri III was presented at least ambivalently in *Bussy D'Ambois*, in the sequel he has become a fully-fledged Machiavel, whose servant spouts the doctrine, 'Treachery for Kings is truest loyalty' (2.1.32). The King's brother, Monsieur, who refers to himself as 'rising sovereigne', states the bondage inherent in the patron-client relationship. Referring to both Clermont and Bussy, he says:

When I tooke in such two as you two were,
A ragged couple of decaied Commanders,

²⁷ On the Essex divorce and the Somerset wedding, see David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1992), especially chapters 3 and 4.

When a French-crowne would plentifully serve
To buy you both to any thing I'th'earth. (1.1.234-7)

This is the bottom line in all of Chapman's imaginings of the dealings of 'great' men. Underlying the acknowledgement that patronage is a necessary evil, indicated by his dedications and poetic efforts such as 'Andromeda Liberata', is a suspicion that once a man has accepted reward from such a character as Monsieur, or Robert Carr, he has lost his independence, potentially prostituting himself in the process. The image of a 'French-crowne' serving to buy not even one man, but two, 'to any thing I'th'earth' is resonant of the degrading element of accepting patronage from an aristocrat of dubious moral stature. It also suggests the inescapably sexual nature of that degradation in Chapman's imagination: a French crown was of course the English name for the *escu* but it also contained a pun on the baldness caused by venereal disease, as the *OED* makes clear.²⁸ The pun here functions to suggest that both Bussy and Clermont were so desperate for employment that they would sell themselves to Monsieur even if the reward included a dose of the proverbial French disease. This line also hints at the vague aura of treason which accrued to Monsieur in his dealings with Bussy throughout the original play. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there is never any specific treason plot, but in *Bussy*, when the hero famously speaks his mind about the true character of Monsieur, the heir apparent responds with an assertion that Bussy would 'do anything but the killing of a king'. There is a lingering suggestion that the reason Monsieur sought out Bussy in his green retreat and urged him to come to court as his client had something to do with the merely 'slender thread' which hung between Monsieur and the crown.

In *Bussy* this degradation is less of a major theme than it is in the sequel, but it is nevertheless a concern. Bussy proclaims he will go to court and achieve the impossible – flourish there on account of virtue alone – but the next time we see him he is, crucially, wearing a suit of clothes provided by Monsieur. Miller MacLure sees this as symbolising Bussy's following his patron in the ways of 'policy', but he misses the point that it also demonstrates Bussy's subordination.²⁹

²⁸ See also *Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.2.99: 'Some of your French crowns have no hair at all'.

²⁹ Millar MacLure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study*, p.118. Other critics have commented on the significance of Bussy's clothes here, including Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman*, p.36, and Albert Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-1642*, p.81.

In *The Revenge*, Monsieur similarly emphasises his role in clothing Clermont: 'Why [...] have I rak'd thee out of the dung-hill? Cast my cast Ward-robe on thee?' (1. 1. 256-57). In both cases the practice of the client wearing his patron's 'cast' clothes is used as a symbol of the obligation, which might even be imagined as a debt, owed to the patron in return for their material assistance. Peter Stallybrass has written on the significance of clothing, and specifically livery, in early modern culture. He argues that clothing functioned both as a symbol of freedom and of servitude, depending on the context, but always involved 'the marking of a body so as to associate it with a specific institution'.³⁰ In these terms, the wearing of the patron's 'cast' clothing becomes loaded with meaning in a court situation where those clothes would be recognised as marking the wearer as the client of Monsieur, (or in Clermont's case, first of Monsieur and then presumably of Guise instead). Clothes become a public symbol of the obligation towards the patron, and perhaps also a visible marker of faction in a court torn by rivalries. So although Clermont has since rejected the Monsieur in favour of the Guise (just as Bussy rejects him when Henry offers him a role independent of the Monsieur's recommendations, and Tamyra offers him herself), this fundamentally bonded relationship between the poor man and the great man continues to affect Clermont's objectivity and prevent him from seeing the world as it really is.

The sexual undertones of the relationship between Clermont and the Guise complicate this reading slightly but ultimately support it. The opening description of their intimacy emphasises their physical closeness, to the exclusion of others: 'See how he hangs upon the eare of the Guise, | Like to his Jewell' (1.1.152-53). The Guise himself refers to Clermont as 'my love', and other characters frequently call him the Guise's 'creature' or 'minion', as discussed above. In his reaction to the Guise's murder, Clermont voices their relationship in idealistic terms:

Shall I live, and hee
Dead, that alone gave meanes of life to me?
[...]
But Friendship is the Sement of two mindes,
As of one man the soule and body is,

³⁰ Peter Stallybrass, 'Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Margreta deGrazia, Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.289-315 (p.290).

Of which one cannot sever but the other

Suffers a needful separation (5.5.149-50, 157-60).

This is in many ways a conventional way of speaking about male friendship – Kenneth Borris, in his collection of Renaissance writing on the subject of love and friendship, writes of the way in which many classical texts, and the Renaissance authors influenced by them, ‘idealize the potential of friendship between males so much that it may appear romanticized, valorized over opposite-sex attachments, and this open to masculine homoeroticism’.³¹ Clermont’s words are reminiscent of Marsilio Ficino’s assertion of the unity of two loving friends: ‘whenever two men embrace each other in mutual affection, this one lives in that; that one, in this. Such men exchange themselves with each other; and each gives himself to the other in order to receive the other [...] O inestimable gain, when two become one in such a way that each of the two, instead of being only one, becomes two, and as if he were doubled, he who had one life, with only one death intervening, now has two lives’.³² Clermont’s words, given the context, obviously turn this conceit to a kind of fatalistic justification of his planned suicide, departing from Ficino’s spirit of celebration of friendship as life-giving, but the basic idea is the same. However, as his speech goes on his emotions become less controlled, and he asks: ‘Guise, O my Lord, how shall I cast from me | The bands and coverts hindring me from thee?’ (5.5.168-9) This sounds like an imitation of a prayer, as he seems to associate the Guise with the life-giving properties more often associated with Christ, perhaps furthering Chapman’s suggestion that Clermont is dangerously deluded in his idolisation of his ‘Lord’. As he goes on to imagine the body as clothing for the soul, his suicide and subsequent journey towards reconciliation with the Guise are figured as an undressing, almost a metaphysical strip-tease, suggesting that his feelings somehow exceed the bounds of socially sanctioned speech and allowable physical expression. It is perhaps symbolic still of Clermont’s delusion that this imagined stripping of his clothes suggests also a more equal relationship after death than he ever had with the Guise in life – clothing, as we have seen, having

³¹ Kenneth Borris, ed., *Same-Sex Desire in the English Renaissance: A Sourcebook of Texts 1470-1650* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.251.

³² Marsilio Ficino, *De Amore*, extracted in Borris, ed., *Same-Sex Desire in the English Renaissance*, pp.263-4. From Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s ‘Symposium on Love’ (De Amore)*, trans. Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985).

been associated throughout this play and *Bussy* with livery, faction and obligation to patrons. The clothes as a signifier of social status would necessarily have served to inscribe the Guise's superiority over Clermont, and his dying wish to be rid of them also suggests a lingering uneasiness with this difference. His last utterance: 'I come my Lord, Clermont thy creature comes' (193) is not only a declaration of absolute obedience, but is also a dissolving of his individual identity within that obedience, and represents perhaps, for Clermont, a distinctly orgasmic unity with his patron that could never be achieved in the world of the play other than through death.

But though Clermont's relationship with the Guise is certainly presented as a compromise on his integrity - a decline into the lax moral standards of the court - and though that decline is figured in sexual language, it is less clear whether Chapman figures the (homo)eroticism itself as corrupt. On one hand, it could be argued that Clermont is corrupted through his relationship with the Guise, and that this is a consequence of the excessive nature of his affection towards his patron, which in this context would perhaps be characterised as sodomitical precisely because it leads him to moral disorder - embroiling him in court intrigues and provoking his blasphemous suicide. However, it could also be looked at another way. Clermont tries to disavow *all* erotic experience in favour of the idealised male friendship so familiar to prose writers of the time. Interestingly, he does not deny he has ever experienced passion, admitting 'In love of women, my affection first | Takes fire out of the fraile parts of my bloud' (5.1.156-7). Notice how he distances himself from the passion, situating it in his blood, which in the next lines he contrasts with his 'judgement', claiming that only after he has been sexually satisfied can he 'love out of judgement, [...] Though the desire and the delight be gone' (160; 162). He explicitly rules out the possibility that erotic feeling can co-exist with reasoned judgement, and then, in response to the Guise's suggestion that he marry his mistress (the implication being of course, that his desire has long ago been satiated), launches into a quite extraordinary anti-feminist tirade which is worth quoting at length:

If there were love in marriage so I would;
But I denie that any man doth love,
Affecting wives, maides, widowes, any women:

For neither Flyes love milke, although they drowne
 In greedy search thereof; nor doth the Bee
 Love honey, though the labour of her life
 Is spent in gathering it; nor those that fat
 On beasts, or fowles, doe any thing therein
 For any love;
 [...]
 But what excites the beds desire in bloud,
 By no means justly can be construed love;
 For when love kindles any knowing spirit,
 It ends in virtue and effects divine;
 And is in friendship chaste, and masculine. (5.1.169-188)

The description of lust in these lines depicts an animal appetite which aligns the desired body of the woman as something which is literally consumed, and suggests a mindless pursuit, that, in the image of flies drowning in milk, is joined with the fear of complete dissolution of self. The choice of milk as a medium for the drowning is loaded with symbolism: milk could be a symbol of semen in the period, according to Gordon Williams, because it was 'associated by colour and because the means of drawing milk from a cow by friction is easily transferred to the sexual act'.³³ Clermont's choice of image for heterosexual lust then, slides into homoerotic territory as he subconsciously creates an image of himself in search of semen. The milk could, however, also be read in conjunction with the following image of bees, to suggest sexual pleasure in terms of milk and honey. The biblical connotations of paradise attached to this particular combination surely undermine Clermont's professed abhorrence for the fulfilment of sexual desire.³⁴ Nonetheless, the conscious thought voiced in these lines is almost violent in its expression of such abhorrence. Clermont's main purpose in speaking them seems to be to belittle his emotional connection to his mistress in order to stress the superiority of his friendship with the Guise.

³³ Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 3 vols., volume 2, p.885.

³⁴ Cf. Exodus 3.8: 'And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey'.

Samuel Schoenbaum has condemned *The Widow's Tears* for voicing misogyny, but Clermont in fact consistently speaks of a revulsion towards women far more marked and unappealing than anything Tharsalio has to offer us.³⁵ Earlier in the play, in response to his sister's exhortations to avenge Bussy, he tells her in no uncertain terms to become more feminine and leave off talking to him about masculine affairs: 'Good sister trouble not your self with this: | Take other Ladys care; practise your face.' (3.2.126-27) He then suggests she go to see a notorious bawd to take her mind off the revenge, telling her to seek:

The chaste Matron, Madam Perigot,
[...]
She did live by retailing maiden-heads
In her Minoritie: but now she deals
In whole-sale altogether for the Court' (129-133).

There is a double pun on whole-sale, which apart from being phonetically indistinguishable from hole-sale, is also only one letter away from whore-sale. There is also a suggestion that the more modest 'retailing' of virginities in her youth has become a more flourishing business because of huge demand provided by the court. This rather startling suggestion to his own sister is suggestive of Hamlet's 'get thee to a nunnery' (which of course can be paraphrased 'get thee to brothel'), and shows that Clermont's attempt to stoically renounce earthly pleasures actually results in violent expressions of sexual revulsion which perhaps reveal that he is not as disconnected from these appetites as he would like us to believe.

His attempt to define masculine friendship as something entirely different from this appetite is not altogether successful. As we have seen already, there are many linguistic suggestions that Clermont's closeness to the Guise is inflected by sodomitical cadences, but in this scene it becomes even more explicit as the Guise declares in response to his disavowal of women: 'Thou shalt my Mistresse be; me thinkes my bloud | Is taken up to all love with thy vertues' (5.1.189-90). Clermont's silence and exit with the Guise at the end of the scene not only suggests his assent, but also his utter passivity in this relationship. The fact that the Guise specifically

³⁵ Samuel Schoenbaum, 'The Widow's Tears and Other Chapman', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63 (1960), 321-338 (p.323).

locates his love for Clermont in his 'bloud' is a major signal of the eroticism of the friendship. The desires he tries so hard to define as being part of his past relations with women return to define instead his relationship with his patron. There is significant difference between the way Clermont and Guise's relationship is presented, and the master-servant homoerotics of *The Gentleman Usher*. In the earlier play, the homoeroticism of the master-servant relationship crosses distinct social boundaries and threatens the stability of the society accordingly – becoming tainted by the suspicion of sodomy as Alan Bray has defined it. *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* is more subtle in its suggestions of impropriety in the intimacy presented. Although both Clermont and Guise are clearly to be considered gentlemen, and although their friendship could be read in the light of the idealised male friendship praised by Ficino and Montaigne, Chapman plays with the homoerotic possibilities of that discourse of friendship to suggest the corruption at the heart of a patron-client relationship. Indeed, those homoerotic possibilities are just one manifestation of the sexualised nature of patronage, and Chapman is no more comfortable with that sexual dynamic when it is manifested in heterosexual imagery, as in *Bussy*, *The Widow's Tears*, or even his own wooing of a richer woman. Clermont's relation to the Guise points up the impossibility of separating erotic experience from public life, highlighting the constitutive role of desire in apparently 'public' relationships and the basically sexual nature of patronage relationships. That Chapman presents this as fundamentally degrading suggests his sense that both sexual and patronage relationships involve a subjugation of the self to another which in the context of courtly power relations, compromises the integrity and self-awareness of the individual.

Chapman's early letters to the widow he was courting reveal fundamental tensions which clearly remain a feature of his thought throughout his dramatic career. Most important, perhaps, is a morbid sensitivity to criticism, which originates in the sense of his own relatively inferior social position, and his uneasy sense of being beholden, revealed in the letter which asks the widow for a loan of money. Chapman's discomfort and resentment at being forced into a position where he has to ask for material assistance, remained a feature of his personal life all through the Jacobean period, and influenced his drama in a number of ways.

On a personal level, the dangers of self-abnegation are demonstrated by Bussy's fate, and perhaps his lingering bitterness at the refusal of his marriage proposal influenced the unflattering portrait of widows in *The Widow's Tears*. However, more generally, the dangers of favouritism to the stability of government are demonstrated in *The Gentleman Usher* where the homoerotic relationships surrounding both the Duke and his heir are used to suggest that sexual ambiguities and tensions, especially between masters and servants, can be manipulated for social recognition and contain the potential for corruption in unwary rulers.

The bitter perspective on patronage reaches its zenith in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, with its exploration of how a learned man can be corrupted by involvement with great politicians. All the works discussed in this chapter share an underlying suspicion, growing stronger as Chapman's career progressed, that soliciting for patronage meant selling one's integrity, prostituting oneself for material reward. Chapman's personal doubts and anxieties regarding the ethics of patronage are mirrored by his clear hostility towards the idea of a government structured by its concerns. His thought, becoming increasingly concerned with theoretical matters of political philosophy, turned in the tragedies to an interrogation of the dispensation of royal patronage, and the problems which could occur between monarch and subject when the patronage relationship breaks down irrevocably.

Chapter 5

Treason and the Perversion of Justice in the French Tragedies

Your Highnesse knows
 I will be honest: and betray for you
 Brother and Father: for, I know (my Lord)
 Treachery for Kings is truest Loyaltie;
 Nor is it to beare the name of Treacherie,
 But grave, deep Policie. (*The Revenge*, 2.1.29-34)

These words, spoken in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (1613) by the king's spy Baligny, reveal much about Chapman's attitude towards the dealings of court factions. 'Policy' in Chapman's oeuvre is, without exception, secretive, self-serving and corrupt. As Ennis Rees argues: 'In Chapman's tragedies the man of policy is the mortal enemy of the just or virtuous man'.¹ The deployment of such policy by monarchs is therefore indicative of the moral chaos at the heart of government. Baligny's statement that 'Treachery for Kings is truest loyalty' encapsulates everything that Chapman perceives to be amiss in Renaissance statecraft, and the paradox structuring these lines shows the ability of those in power to undo seemingly stable categories, changing the meaning of words and moral terms into the bargain. The assertion that it is 'honest' to betray brother and father undermines the demands of family patriarchy upon which so much monarchic rhetoric was founded, and the final lines highlight the power of the king to change one name for another, turning treachery into both loyalty and political reward.

The key word in these lines is 'treachery' and given that the focus of so much of Chapman's work in the tragic genre is treason, it is useful to consider the connection is between these two terms. They are of course, not exactly

¹ Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman: Renaissance Ethics in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954) p.23.

synonymous, but nonetheless they are linked thematically in Chapman's work. Etymologically, treason and treachery come from different roots; treason from the Latin *tradere* and Old French *trair*, to deliver up or betray, and treachery from the French *tricher*, to cheat (the echo of 'trickery' suggesting deceit and cunning). However, the connotations of perfidy and betrayal are common to both words, and indeed, one of the primary meaning of treason is given in the *OED* as treachery. In Baligny's speech, to substitute the word treason for treachery would perhaps make the radical critique of authority too blatant for a writer who was in perpetual trouble with the censors, but it seems likely that Chapman meant his readers to make such a connection.² Later in the play, on being informed of Clermont's arrest, his mistress the Countess of Cambray, exclaims 'Will Kings make treason lawfull?' (4.3.41), and the conduct of King Henry III throughout *The Revenge* indeed suggests exactly that. The ways in which both the ruling monarch and court factions manipulate the charge of treason is the focus not only of this play, but also of much of *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* (1608) and *The Tragedy of Chabot* (published 1639 but written c.1612).

These plays show Chapman's anxiety regarding the status of treason in early modern England. Alan Stewart sums up the essentially *tricky* nature of the crime:

High treason was the most serious crime in early modern England, and in its most heinous form threatened the life of the monarch. Yet treason did not consist in the actual assassination of the monarch, nor the attempt of assassination, nor even the discussion of such an attempt, but in the circumstances 'when a man doth compass or imagine the death of our Lord the King'.³

This definition had been in place since Edward III introduced it in 1352, so the status of treason as a thought crime was well established in Renaissance England. In these dramas Chapman seems to be concerned with the implications of this for

² At the time of writing *The Revenge*, in 1609-10, Chapman had been in prison in 1605 for his share of *Eastward Ho*, and also had to flee London after the *Byron* plays were performed and a warrant for his arrest issued due to the French ambassador's dislike of the portrayal of Henry IV's wife and mistress squabbling onstage (hence why the second Act of the Tragedy is so discontinuous: much of it has been cut for publication to pass the censor's pen). The best account of the *Byron* controversy is in Janet Clare, 'Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority': *Elizabethan and Jacobean Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp.159-65.

³ Alan Stewart, 'Instigating Treason: the Life and Death of Henry Cuffe, Secretary', in *Literature, Politics and Law in Renaissance England*, ed. by Erica Sheen and Lorna Hutson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.50-70 (p.50).

a subject who lives in an absolute monarchy where justice and its administration depend in large part on the whims of the king.

Karen Cunningham has written incisively on the discursive and imaginative dimensions of treason. She argues that: 'Defined as transgressive imagining, and focussed on exposing the hidden intent of the accused, treason necessarily encounters the problem and affords itself the privilege of characterizing and exposing a subject's interior'.⁴ The *interior* nature of this crime is something which Chapman recognises as open to manipulation by the monarch. The shaky nature of the proof often involved in treason trials is explored through the accusations and convictions of several characters in his French tragedies, none of whom the audience witnesses at any point actively plotting rebellion. Chapman foregrounds the way in which treason accusations rely on the interpreting of outward signs to try to prove an inward motive or malign intent. In this way, the treason trials represented in these plays are very similar to many high-profile trials of Elizabethan and Jacobean history. Cunningham describes how in the trials of the Babington Conspirators, Mary Queen of Scots, and Sir Walter Raleigh: 'the means of making the crime materialize were rhetorical and proof was contingent on the effective use of language in a particular situation. Yet the truth-value of speech was often uncertain, a topic of disagreement in the culture at large, and often explicitly contested in trials' (p.13). Taking a similar insight slightly further, Lacey Baldwin Smith writes of several Elizabethan conspiracies: 'It is quite possible to argue that such plots [...] were carefully orchestrated trumperies in which relatively innocent, albeit not overly bright, political small-fries fell victim either to deliberate government efforts to demonstrate the existence of treason or to the political machinations of court factions'.⁵ The fragile nature of truth; the pivotal role played by language and rhetoric in the construction of treason; and the vague nature of the plots themselves, are foregrounded in Chapman's explorations of treason. In effect, he edges towards the insights Smith suggests,

⁴ Karen Cunningham, *Imaginary Betrayals: Subjectivity and the Discourses of Treason in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p.11.

⁵ Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), p.4.

and the knowledge that 'at best, the line between historical fact and government fiction is cloudy; in cases of treason, it tends to vanish entirely'.⁶

In *The Revenge*, the faction allied to the king's brother Monsieur, feeling that Clermont's patron the Guise is a threat, convince the king that Clermont is guilty of treason and should be arrested. The Guise later manages to talk the king out of punishing Clermont, but the vulnerability of a weak monarch to such manipulations must paint a damning picture of justice in a state ruled by faction and the whims of a paranoid king. In *The Conspiracy of Byron* the eponymous general, who sees himself as the saviour of France through the Civil Wars, is 'tempted' (the word is often repeated throughout the plays) to join with a faction of malcontents allied against the king. However, the actual act of treason is never represented, nor is it entirely clear whether they have any plan of attack. Byron confesses his sins to the King at the end of the first part of the play, and is forgiven, but relapses in the *Tragedy* and is eventually condemned to death for his rebellion. Throughout the play much of the conflict between Byron and Henry stems from the fact that Byron thinks he deserves more reward for his military endeavours than Henry has so far given him. It is, as we will see, fundamentally a conflict about patronage, and the prerogative of the king to decide how to distribute reward.

Chabot, Chapman's last tragedy, is even more clearly a tragedy about patronage – the virtuous Admiral, Chabot, refuses to alter his judgement on a court suit at the request of his rival favourite, and the King, stirred up by Chabot's enemies, tries to force him to change his mind. Chabot is adamant that the law should be applied independently of personal obligations, and although he admits he owes his entire power and fortune to the king's favour, insists that this should not influence his professional judgement. This is shown to be a naïve and ultimately impossible position, as he is subjected to a sham trial and convicted of corruption and treason. Although the king pardons him, and subsequently arrests his prosecutor for perverting the process of the trial, Chabot dies ostensibly from a broken heart.

⁶ Smith, *Treason in Tudor England*, p. 15.

A study of all of these plays together reveals a remarkably coherent picture of treason as an offence which has very little to do with genuine plots against the state, and is instead a convenient accusation which can be made against individual members of the political elite when they have ceased to be agreeable to other factions within that elite. Each of these plays presents a different conflict, but a common factor in each of them is that the person who is accused of treason has been the beneficiary of court patronage, and that this patronage has somehow broken down. This chapter will examine Chapman's construction of treason as a vaguely defined category which can be deployed to rid the state of troublesome elements which arise when the patronage system succumbs to its structural weaknesses and breaks down in individual cases. In other words, when the relationship between patron and client becomes dysfunctional, allegations of treason abound, and justice is corrupted by the continuing obligations put in place by the patronage system.

The Monarch as Patron

The previous chapter of this thesis examined the implications of noble patronage, but key to the discussion of treason will be the specificity of a situation when the king is the patron. The monarch was, of course, the head of all patronage relationships at any Renaissance court, and was seen as the fountain of reward. Linda Levy Peck draws attention to the 'language of patronage' during the early modern period to show the importance of 'liberality and magnificence' in much political thought, but is careful to stress the importance of reciprocity. She argues: 'the King's rewarding of the political elite, especially the nobility, was essential because he thereby reinforced the reciprocal bonds established between the Crown and its most important subjects'.⁷ Despite, therefore, the idealised rhetoric of reward and royal beneficence, the political reality was that the early modern monarch had no choice but to give gifts to his or her noble subjects, and by that gift process they expected something back in return, be it a material counter-gift or something more abstract, such as gratitude, allegiance, or loyalty. This of course

⁷ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 14.

has implications for the patronage system, which was in essence a gift economy enabling the smooth operation of government by the monarch and the political elite.

That this gift economy did not always run as smoothly as might be hoped is exemplified by Kevin Sharpe's pessimistic assessment of James's dispersal of reward: 'As the nexus of patronage and public-relations headquarters of monarchy, the Jacobean court, for all the king's personal qualities, was an all too conspicuous failure'.⁸ Chapman's tragedies, perhaps in response to this problematic perception of James's rule, return again and again to the problem of what happens when different parties have different expectations of the rewards due, or obligations incurred, in the patronage game. In *Byron*, *The Revenge*, and *Chabot* we witness the breakdown of the patronage relationship, due to the incompatibility of the ideas of obligation held by patron and client, and in each case, an accusation of treason is made as a result of this breakdown. This is no coincidence: rather, Chapman uses these plays to outline his opposition to the entire political system, which rewards men not on the basis of merit or virtue, but on how skilfully they play the game of politics.

The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron was written in 1608, making it the earliest of these plays which feature treason as a major theme. That Chapman is making a political statement with this two-part play has long been recognised by critics, although *what* precisely he is saying about politics has been more disputed. For most of the twentieth century, scholars assumed that Chapman was acting almost as a propagandist for the power of absolute monarchy, representing, as Ennis Rees put it, 'a just king at odds with a selfish subject'.⁹ Glen Mynott outlines the critical tradition of reading the plays in this pro-monarchical light, tracing it from Parrott in 1910, through Rees, Peter Ure (1960), Eugene M. Waith (1971), and Leonard Goldstein (1975), to John Margeson in his 1988 edition of *Byron* and A. R. Braunmuller's study of 1992.¹⁰ Mynott challenges this view of the conflict between

⁸ Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.211.

⁹ Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman*, pp. 156-57.

¹⁰ Glen Mynott, "'We must not be more true to kings | Than Kings are to their subjects': France and the Politics of the Ancient Constitution in Chapman's Byron Plays", *RS*, 9 (1995), 477-93 (p.478). See also T. M. Parrott, ed., *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman*, vol. I (London: Routledge, 1910); Peter Ure, 'Chapman's Tragedies' in *Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies I: Jacobean Theatre*, ed. Maynard

Henry and Byron, situating their strife instead within the constitutional debate going on in Renaissance Europe regarding the growth of absolute monarchy as an ideology, and the nobility's attempts to restrict it by some kind of constitutional agreement between king and subject. According to Mynott, Byron is no selfish subject, but rather 'one could quite easily argue that in terms of constitutional theory Byron is not only justified in complaining but as an officer of the kingdom, obliged by oath to take action to remedy the situation'.¹¹ Mynott's attempt to counter the prevailing critical tendency to assume Chapman is a mouthpiece for Henry's authoritarianism is valuable, but unfortunately he seems to think that in order to do so he has to somehow apologise for Byron's actions, and in doing so he strains the credibility of his reading. In rehabilitating Byron's rebellion as a form of public service he has to completely ignore the characterisation which consistently shows us an arrogant, peevish and egotistical man who thirsts for glory and lashes out violently when challenged.

Albert Tricomi also overlooks this when he asserts that the *Byron* plays deal with 'the end of the last baronial threats to monarchy in France and England and the successful consolidation of royal power in a new era of peace. To men such as Chapman this new era of peace [...] signalled the end of a dream – that these charismatic military heroes might bring back a heroic age'.¹² But to assume either that Byron is Chapman's spokesman, or that the playwright looks on such baronial rebellions with a nostalgic eye, is to err (although Tricomi does also acknowledge that in *Byron* 'the contaminated court world turns more sharply [than in *Bussy*] back upon the protagonist himself').¹³ Chapman is quite clear from the offset that Byron's pride is his major flaw, as is indicated by the courtier Roncas's description of him in the opening scene of the *Conspiracy*:

Ambition also, cheeke by cheeke doth marche

Mack (London: Edward Arnold, 1960) 227-47; Eugene M. Waith, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England* (London: Routledge, 1971); Leonard Goldstein, *George Chapman: Aspects of Decadence in Early Seventeenth Century Drama* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1975), 2 vols; John Margeson, ed., *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); and A. R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (Toronto: University of Delaware Press, 1992).

¹¹ Glen Mynott, "'We must not be more true to Kings, | Than Kings are to their subjects'", p. 495.

¹² Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-1642* (Charlottesville; Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1989) p.85.

¹³ Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama*, p.85.

With that excesse of glory, both sustaind
 With an unlimited fancy, That the king
 Not *Fraunce* itself, without him can subsist. (*Conspiracy*, 1.1.79-83)

Coming so soon after the exhortation in the Prologue for the reader or audience to 'see in his revolt, how honors flood | Ebbes into ayre, when men are Great, not Good' (23-24) this is a clear indication of how Chapman wishes the reader to see Byron, and his subsequent behaviour often emphasises these faults of pride and egotism.

The conspirators rely on Byron's apparently well-known desire for praise when they stir up his conflict with the king by suggesting that Henry has dared to praise other soldiers, prompting Byron's aghast response: 'would he weigh other mens | With my deservings?' (3.2.53-54). As discussed in Chapter 2, the particular men whom Henry has 'weigh[ed]' with Byron's 'deservings' are well-known Elizabethan soldiers, John Norris and Roger Williams. As part of his demonstration of contemporary English interest in French current affairs, Mynott says: 'This interest reached its peak in the 1590s when Sir John Norris and Essex led armies to fight alongside Henry IV against the Catholic Leaguers and their Spanish allies', but he does not note that Chapman mentions Norris by name twice.¹⁴ This name-checking of a famous soldier must surely have been designed to alienate audience sympathy for Byron – his educated audience would have been well aware of Norris' part in the very wars Byron boasts of, and Chapman could have counted on English patriotism to pick up on this allusion and feel slighted at Byron's dismissal of the English commander.

Allusions to real historical Englishmen aside, the point remains that Byron's characterisation is simply too negative to allow for a reading in which he is Chapman's disinterested spokesman for a justified aristocratic challenge to absolute monarchy. But this is not to say that critical opinion has been right in assuming Chapman sides with Henry in the conflict. Either of these options oversimplifies Chapman's complex response to the rebellion, but the clue for how to interpret the plays lies in the lines of the Prologue which have been quoted above: 'honors flood | Ebbes into ayre, when men are Great, not Good'. Chapman does not condone the actions or ideology of either Henry or Byron, and previous

¹⁴ Mynott, "'We must not be more true to Kings | Than Kings are to their subjects'", p.481.

criticism has floundered because of its failure to recognise this. He shows his audience an amoral Machiavellian monarch in conflict with a self-obsessed, proud nobleman, and he criticises the behaviour and ideology of both.

Indeed, Glen Mynott is wrong to characterise A.R. Braunmuller as one of the monarchic party, as Braunmuller in fact is one of the most insightful critics into the conflict in these plays, arguing that 'like *Coriolanus*, which it often resembles at even the verbal level, *Byron's Tragedy* puts several flawed rights into conflict and poses difficult political questions'.¹⁵ Although he does hold that Henry is intended as a more sympathetic and moral character than Byron, Braunmuller is excellent on the ambiguities of both the monarch and the rebellious noble in the *Byron* plays. He writes: 'While Byron may be a malcontent traitor, he has equally been France's greatest military hero and a loyal servant through strenuous and unrewarding years. The "Most Christian" King dismayed (and worse) his English allies by "playing both ways with religion", and his use of La Fin, a man even Henry's friends despised, hardly earns assent, much less admiration, for the King's often pompous moralizing'.¹⁶ This ambivalence on Chapman's part towards the conflict he presents must be understood if his purpose in the two-part play is to be appreciated. However, although Braunmuller is one of the few to have recognised this, neither he nor any other critic has so far realised how important a role the dispensation of royal patronage plays in the conflict.

When Henry III first appears onstage in *The Conspiracy* he is in the midst of denying a suit from the malcontent La Fin. Henry had been King of Navarre, and as Chapman reminds us in the Prologue, after 'the uncivill, civil Warres', had become King of France too. This situation, where the ruler of a minor territory succeeds to the throne of a more powerful neighbour, is of course parallel to the situation facing Scotland and England after James's accession to the English throne. However, while James was felt to be rewarding only his Scottish courtiers, at the expense of the English nobility (Alan Stewart's biography of James cites a letter from the English lawyer Roger Wilbraham who complained that 'it grew a public speech that the English had the blows and the Scottish the crowns'),

¹⁵ Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, p.84.

¹⁶ Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, p.105.

Henry's first entrance shows that he is determined not to allow such criticism.¹⁷ La Fin has obviously been soliciting him for financial support, which he refuses:

I will not have my traine
 Made a retraite for Bankroutes, nor my Court
 A hyve for Droanes [...]
 Though I am growne, by right of Birth and Armes
 Into a greater kingdome, I will spreade
 With no more shade, than may admit that kingdome
 Her proper, naturall, and wonted fruites;
Navarre shall be Navarre, and France still France. (1.1.112-122)

The Duke of Savoy, the double-dealing villain of *The Conspiracy*, and the man who formulates the plan to tempt Byron to rebel, flatters Henry on the wisdom of his refusal to reward Laffin, praising Henry's 'spirit' that

Denies
 To give those of *Navarre*, though bred with you,
 The benefits and dignities of *Fraunce*.
 When little Rivers by their greedy currants,
 (Farre farre extended from their mother springs)
 Drinke up the forraine brookes still as they runne. (1.1.180-85)

This interesting exchange would probably have been immensely controversial to the eyes of a censor in the years immediately following James's accession, when the rewarding of Scottish followers was so bitterly debated, but by 1608 it was apparently allowed to pass, even though other parts of the text were excised (Chapman's dedication complains of 'these poore dismemberd Poems' after the censor had ordered various passages to be cut). The emphasis on Henry maintaining a separation between the kingdoms may have been pointedly intended as a chastisement of James, but not unambiguously so.

Henry is far more often represented in the act of denying suits from his courtiers than granting them, and it is this parsimony which causes his conflict with Byron. So while Chapman may not have approved of James's generosity towards his Scottish knights, the *Byron* plays do not suggest that Henry's habitual denial of reward is a more effective form of government. Indeed, in Henry's reluctance to reward we could perhaps read a criticism of Elizabeth I, whose

¹⁷ Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I* (London: Chatto and Windus) 2003, p.168.

conflict with the Earl of Essex is explicitly paralleled with Byron's case at several points in the text. To put it bluntly, Henry is not very skilful at keeping his nobles on side. This is immediately apparent with La Fin's reaction to being denied his suit, as he threatens some kind of unspecified revenge: 'But you tempt me, | To what, thou Sunne be judge, and make him see'. (1.1.162-3) In this opening scene we witness a rehearsal of the danger that the monarch can incur by refusing to grant requests from the nobility, prefiguring the main plot. La Fin obviously feels that if Henry is not going to reward his loyalty, he is justified in withholding allegiance. This is, in essence, what later happens with Byron. The conspirators, led by the Duke of Savoy, wish to stir up a conflict between Byron and Henry, clearly counting on Byron's insatiable ambition and assuming that once they have quarrelled irreparably Byron will try to rebel and take the crown himself. This conflict is aroused by the conspirators' manipulations of two known facts: Byron's desire for reward and Henry's unwillingness to grant it.

'Reward' is imagined both linguistically – the initial quarrel, as we have seen, is caused by Byron's desire to be *praised* above all other of Henry's subjects – and materially, in the form of the citadel of which Byron demands control. The scene in which he finally confronts Henry – the climax of all the tension in *The Conspiracy* – is full of the language of giving and receiving. La Fin has instructed Byron to ask for this citadel 'to try the Kings trust in [Byron]' (5.1.18), and Byron is certain his suit will be granted: 'Who will he grant, if he deny it me?' (31). His language while actually making the suit to Henry betrays this over-confidence, as Byron ignores the usual customs of polite request, responding to Henry's statement that 'tis like you shall obtaine' whatever he asks for by saying:

I do not much doubt that; my services,
I hope have more strength in your good conceite
Than to receive repulse, in such requests. (5. 1. 61-3)

Byron's request is, interestingly, not to have command of the citadel himself, but to have the privilege of naming the person who will receive it – he wants the power to broker a deal between the king and an unnamed third party (he does not even seem to have anyone in mind for the position, but wants the power to dispense reward nonetheless, for its symbolic value to him). The focus on brokerage continues with Henry's explanation for his refusal. He asserts that the

citadel is too powerful to be disposed of through a third party, and that it must 'be given to one that hath imediatly | Dependence on us' (74-5).

If we compare the language of Byron's request to the king with an actual letter of the sort often used to broker reward, we can see how much it differs from the usual respectful, sometimes even obsequious language of patronage. Angel Day's *The English Secreterie: or plaine and direct Method, for the enditing of all manner of Epistles or Letters* (1586) contains a model letter for a nobleman seeking preference for his client (the bearer of the letter):

I doe most hartely praye you, that you will not onely for my sake be contented to receave him into your service, but also in favour thereof and my great good liking towards him, you will in any place of preferment about you, do him that benefite and furtheraunce, as to one whom you wish thoroughly well unto, you woulde willingly have performed. Herein if my request may prevaile [...] I shall finde my selfe both greatly occasioned to thank you, and in like manner, in whatsoever you shall have meane to use me, bee most willing to requite you.¹⁸

Not only is this infinitely more polite in its language, allowing for the possibility that the addressee might turn down the writer's request, it also lays emphasis on the reciprocity of the transaction. If the writer's request is fulfilled, the addressee is promised both the thanks and the assistance of the writer in return.

Byron, by contrast, is incapable of such rhetoric, simply assuming that Henry continues to owe him for his past military service. The idea that his relationship with the king might be one of continual give and take is alien to Byron. Instead, all his credit with the king lies in his past military success, a fact that he reveals he is somewhat anxious about in his speech at the opening of *The Tragedy*:

The king hath now no more use of my valure,
And therefore I shall now no more enjoy
The credite that my service held with him. (*Tragedy*, 1.2.7-9)

The question becomes to what extent Byron's previous service to the King entitles him to continued reward. The following exchange is the crux of the conflict:

<p>BYRON</p>	<p>I sweare you wrong me, And deale not like a King, to jest and sleight,</p>
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¹⁸ Angel Day, *The English Secreterie*, English Linguistics 1500-1800 (A Collection of Facsimile Reprints) 29 (Menston: Scolar, 1967), p. 192.

A man that you should curiously reward;
 Tell me of your gray beard? It is not gray
 With care to recompense me, who eas'd your care.

HENRY You have beene recompenc't, from head to foote. (*Conspiracy*, 5.1.98-103)

Although in *The Conspiracy* the misunderstanding is in the end very easily cleared up, and Byron forgiven, the language of gratitude and recompense continues to be a bone of contention in the *Tragedy*.

In the opening scene of the second play, Henry refutes his 'aleadgd [...] ingratitude' by giving a lengthy list of all the honours and rewards he has given to Byron:

What offices,
 Titles of honor, and what admiration,
 Could *France* afford him that it pour'd not on? (1.1.2-4).

The country and monarch are compacted here into one imagined entity (France) which has rewarded Byron, and Henry later emphasises his own personal role, expressing disbelief that 'he that still daily reapes so much from me' could 'neither keepe his Othe, nor save his Soule' (1.1.61, 66). His focus on what he has given Byron works the double office of both refuting the idea that he himself is ungrateful and furthermore reversing the charge so that it rebounds against his erstwhile favourite. Indeed, in the same scene he makes explicit this accusation against Byron, saying he should have the restraint necessary to prevent 'all act and thought | Of treachery or ingratitude to his Prince' (85-86), and calling him 'this gulfhe of all ingratitude' (1.3.11). Byron's insistence that it is the King who is ungrateful continues in Act 3, where he tells his messenger that 'merit, by ingratitude crackt, | Requires a firmer sementing than words' (3.1.196-97), insisting again on some further material recognition of his services to Henry. This is reiterated in Act 4, when, responding to another courtier's direct accusation of treason he tells him that the king's belief that he has committed a crime 'must looke out of his owne ingratitude' (4.1.60). These charges and counter-charges indicate a potentially incendiary subject – Henry's casual elision 'treachery or ingratitude' shows how easily one can slip into the other, but Byron's continued attempts to convince himself and others that it is Henry who is ungrateful show

an awareness of how catastrophic it would be to accept that he has indeed been ungrateful – it would quite simply be interpreted as an admission of treason.

The easy step which the ruling power can make between ingratitude and treason is made even clearer in *The Tragedy of Chabot*. This play begins with a situation not unfamiliar to Jacobean audiences: the rise of a new favourite threatens to eclipse the power of the previous recipient of the king's favour. Two courtiers discuss the relative merits of both men and conclude that the Admiral Chabot 'will all stiles deserve|Of wise, just, good, a man both soule and nerve' (1.1.79-80), despite his lack of popular support, while his rival, the newly-raised Lord Constable, Montmorency:

The Constable explores not so sincerely
The course hee runnes, but takes the minde of others
(By name Judiciall) for what his owne
Judgement, and knowledge should conclude. (1.1.89-92)

This propensity of the Constable to be manipulated by others is exploited by a shadowy faction led by the Chancellor, to work Chabot's downfall. They encourage him to submit a suit to the Admiral which they know he will refuse, and stir up the ensuing conflict by painting it as a deliberate rebellion against the king's wishes. This personal vendetta becomes the means by which two conflicting ideas of justice are weighed up, and given a set-piece discussion in a dialogue between the king and his Admiral. The conflict boils down to this:

KING For my love no relenting?
ADMIRAL No my liege,
Tis for your love and right that I stand out. (2.3.36-7)

Chabot's insistence that the justice the king has appointed him to administer must be impartial and free from the claims of patronage is at odds both with Francis's absolutist pretensions and with the system of reward and obligation which characterises the patronage network.

A.R. Braunmuller summarises the king's position as being that 'man's rationality should recognise that "dignities of fortune" (2.3.21) are insecure, may well have been won through some wrongdoing, and may only be retained

through acknowledgment of the source of those rewards'.¹⁹ It should be added to Braunmuller's assessment, however, that a major force behind the conspiracy is the Chancellor. Francis is indeed offended by Chabot's stance, but through this he is characterised as a weak and impetuous ruler whose flaws make it easy for the factional plotters to manipulate him. It is the Chancellor who threatens the judges in Chabot's trial to force them to agree to his conviction for corruption and treason. When, however, this coercion is revealed, the king turns his anger to the Chancellor, who is then subject to a trial remarkable in its similarity to Chabot's previous one. In the final act, despite being forgiven and exonerated by the king, Chabot dies of a broken heart. This death should perhaps be seen as continuous with other of Chapman's heroes who commit suicide: although not strictly a suicide, Chabot's death obviously represents his only means of protest at the way he has been treated. This should be interpreted in the context of the breakdown of the patronage relationship between himself and the king, and his disillusionment with the workings of that system. As Allan Bergson has identified, 'Chabot's death is not caused by "the collapse of the ideal of justice," but rather by the breakdown of a more complex and immediate bond between himself and the king'.²⁰ This argument should perhaps be refined to recognise that, as far as Chabot was concerned, justice and its impartial administration had been at the core of his bond with his monarch – his broken heart arises in part from a realisation that this had been an illusion, and that the substance of that bond was in fact material reward and obligation.

Throughout *Chabot* the complications that arise from a political system in which patronage is guided by the whims of favouritism are explored in detail, and Chapman provides a savage critique of such a system which must have been understood by contemporaries as an attack on the way in which James I governed. One does not have to subscribe to Norma Dobie Solve's theory that the play is an extended allegory about the downfall of Robert Carr to see that the unfavourable light in which the king and his councillors are cast in this play is a reflection of

¹⁹ A.R. Braunmuller, "'A Greater Wound': Corruption and Human Frailty in Chapman's *Chabot, Admiral of France*", *Modern Language Review*, 70 (1975), 241-259 (p.247).

²⁰ Allen Bergson, 'The Worldly Stoicism of George Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France*', *Philological Quarterly* 55.1 (1976), pp. 43-65, p. 44.

Chapman's opinion about current government.²¹ Chapman's anxiety about the influence of favourites is not by any means limited to an airing in this play – it is a major theme in *The Gentleman Usher* and the *Bussy* plays, and *Chabot* has so many continuities with the political themes of Chapman's other plays that it is unnecessary to assume it must have been written to reflect one particular incident in James's reign. It is far more likely that, in common with Chapman's other plays, particularly his tragedies, *Chabot* responds to what Chapman sees as structural problems at the heart of government. Luke Wilson's recent essay on the legal aspects of *Chabot* is a fascinating account of the perceived difference in early modern society between bribery and 'respecting of persons' (that is, a judge taking account of his personal relations with appellants) in legal judgements.²² Wilson argues that Chapman's play responds, not to the downfall of Robert Carr, but to the accusations of bribery and corruption levelled at Francis Bacon in 1618. As previously outlined, the dating of *Chabot* does not support such an analogy, but the issues Wilson raises around ideas of corruption, obligation, and law, are nonetheless very relevant to Chapman's play, and it the parallel with Bacon's case remains useful because it shows how ingrained these problems were in the cultural imagination and political context of James's court. Wilson argues that *Chabot* 'provides a complex exploration of the relation between corruption in public office and the troubled nexus of generosity and dependence that both binds king and subject and thrusts them apart' (p.220). I would add to this that the 'troubled nexus' is of huge importance to the way treason is constructed in the play.

The opening scene of *Chabot* makes it clear that the situation in which a virtuous man has been raised to power by the king's favour is highly irregular. Allegre comments that the world 'will not patiently | Endure the due rise of a virtuous man' (1.1.9-10). This is soon confirmed when, after vowing friendship to the Admiral, the rival favourite Montmorency is convinced by an alliance of other courtiers to plot against him, the better to further his own career. The

²¹ Norma Dobie Solve, *Stuart Politics in Chapman's Tragedy of Chabot* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1928).

²² Luke Wilson, 'The Rich Cabinet: Bacon, Chapman, and the Culture of Corruption', in *Solon and Thespis: Law and Theater in the English Renaissance*, ed. by Dennis Kazar (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 218-63.

Machiavellian Chancellor explains to him that by provoking a conflict between the king and Chabot they will:

So render you,
In the Kings frowne on him, the onely darling,
And mediate power of *France*. (1.1.174-6)

The assumption by all the courtiers seems to be that the king can only have one favourite at a time, and the temporary situation where two enjoy equal benefit is unsustainable. Even Chabot's supporters agree with this assessment, with his loyal servant Allegre saying: 'the favor spending in two streames, | One must runne low at length' (2.2.15-6). Similarly, Chabot's father-in-law, the other moral touchstone of the play, is presented as having newly come to court, forgoing his preferred pastoral existence only in order to warn Chabot about the dangers facing him with the rise of the new favourite. The old man does not approve of Chabot's position, telling him that his titles and 'swelling offices' will 'ith'end | Engulfe thee past a rescue' (1.2.12-14). His first concern seems to be that Chabot will be betrayed by the Chancellor's 'army of state warriors' (21), but on being told of their sworn friendship he worries instead that Chabot's integrity will be corrupted by such an alliance:

I that abhorr'd, must I now entertaine
A thought, that your so straight, and simple custom
To render justice, and the common good,
Should now be patch'd with policy, and wrested
From the ingenious step you tooke, and hang
Upon the shoulders of your enemy
To beare you out in what you shame to act?
[...]
Being now atton'd, you must be one in all,
One in corruption, and twixt you two millstones
New pickt, and put together, must the graine
Of good mens needful meanes to live be ground
Into your choking superfluities;
You both too rich, they ruinde. (1.2.29-46)

In this speech Chapman's moral and political position is heard clearly. The father-in-law is mistaken about Chabot: events make clear that he is as dedicated to

administering objective justice as the old man could hope, but this speech is a strong indictment of corrupt government.

Chabot's integrity is firstly imagined as a garment, 'patch'd with policy' and given to another to wear. The metaphor has distinctly theatrical overtones, with the verb 'act' obviously suggesting the notion that Chabot is playing a role other than his true self with this reconciliation. It perhaps also glances at Hamlet's 'a king of shreds and patches', which, as Peter Stallybrass has pointed out, could either be an indictment of Claudius as a pretender to the crown, or a reaction to the entrance of the dishevelled ghost of old Hamlet.²³ The ambiguity of the image in *Hamlet* is also present in this passage, as the father-in-law voices a similar disturbing feeling of being unable to distinguish between two people who should by rights be discernable moral opposites. As old Hamlet merges uneasily with Claudius, largely through the similarity of both kings' garments, Chabot is here imagined as dressed in the garments of 'policy' which will render him dangerously similar to the ambitious and greedy Montmorency.

The second part of the speech, in its introduction of 'the graine of goode mens needful meanes to live', picks up on the man-as-flour imagery which is repeated throughout the play, in an outspoken denouncement of the 'superfluities' of the nobility. There is here much of the poor man's bitterness at the way he is used up (literally ground up for consumption) by the rich and it is difficult not to find here an echo of Chapman's own feelings of anger at his lack of success in the court patronage game. The discussion that follows this revolves around the question of whether or not a king's favourites can ever administer reward justly. The father-in-law is scathing of the way in which 'favorites frailties' affect 'the full rule of their Kings', while Chabot asserts that it is possible for favourites to remain 'within the rules of Law and Justice', and emphasises the obligation they are under to the king:

No power flies
Out of his favour, but his policie ties
A criance to it, to containe it still. (71-3)

²³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 3.4.99; Peter Stallybrass, 'Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Margreta deGrazia, Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.289-320 (p.315).

The *OED* defines a criage as a hawking term meaning a restraint put on a bird to stop it flying away, and cites this passage as its only example. Chabot intends this image to demonstrate the integrity of the King's favourites but it is this very obligation which proves the root of his conflict with Francis. Montmorency's faction urge Chabot to pass a bill he sees as unjust – it concerns a dispute between a French and a Spanish merchant, which the bill proposes to settle in favour of the Spaniard. It is crucial that we are given these details, because it shows that Chabot is not simply refusing the suit for the sake of blocking Montmorency's wishes, but because he wishes to protect the rights and laws of his country-men against the claims of the Spanish. That he considers this a vital part of his duty to the king is clear, as he says to Francis 'Tis for your love, and right that I stand out' (2.3.37). In this discussion between the King and the Admiral their incompatible views of their obligations to one another are manifest.

When it becomes clear to Francis that Chabot will not relent over the matter of the suit, his first objection is that Chabot owes him his power and influence, reminding him of his previous status as 'a meane Gentleman' and asking: 'Have I not rais'd you to a supremest Lord, | And given you greater dignities than any?' (2.3.63-5). The distance between each man's perceptions of their relationship is clearest when the King, listing all the honours he has given Chabot, asks 'cannot all these powers weigh downe your will?' (75). Chabot's insistence that, once given, those powers can be applied independently and in opposition to the king's wishes shows both his integrity and his utter naivety. His conviction that he does not owe the king anything in return for his promotions ('You merit not of me for benefits | More than myself of you for services' (94-5)) shows his lack of understanding of the system he ostensibly serves. He insists that the gifts the king has bestowed in him were intended:

To shew you royall, and most open handed,
Not using for hands talons, pincers, grapples;
In whose gripes, and upon whose gord point,
Deserts hang sprawling out their virtuous limbs. (2.3.166-9)

This vivid picture partakes of the same anatomising imagery found so often throughout the play, and gives a violent picture of the obligation to which the king seeks to hold his admiral. Wilson comments on this passage: 'The royal hand is

“open” but it is not the hand of bounty, for merit’s gifts are “due”; accordingly the royal pincers represent, first of all, inadequately rewarded merit’.²⁴ While questions of proper reward and merit are of course key to this passage, it would seem incongruous that in a passage in which he acknowledges how much he has received from Francis, Chabot should be suggesting his merit has been inadequately rewarded. Rather, the pincers are an image of the *king’s* insistence that he be counter-rewarded for his gifts to Chabot, turning the polite fiction of voluntary reciprocity into an enforced and dismembering power which Francis uses to insist on his due.

In keeping with the *Byron* plays, the conflict in *Chabot* essentially revolves around the question of gratitude, although here it is the king, not the subject, who feels inadequately compensated for what he has given. One of the main charges the prosecutor lays against Chabot in the trial is his ingratitude: ‘the first thing I shall glance at [...] his ingratitude, and to whom? To no lesse person than a King [...], what shall be said of the ingratitude more monstrous in this Chabot?’ (3. 2. 39-41, 63-4). Indeed, the king later admits in one of the few soliloquies of the play that he has engineered the trial solely in order to pardon Chabot and so instigate a public display of gratitude:

I joy

This boldnesse is condemn’d, that I may pardon,
And therein get some ground in his opinion
By so much bounty as saves his life (4.1.166-68)

In this, Francis has much in common with King Henry of the *Byron* plays. Henry similarly relishes the role of forgiving patriarch, chastising Byron to elicit his confession:

Tis all acknowlegd, and, (though all to late)
Heere the short madnesse of my anger ends
If ever I did good I lockt it safe
In you, th’inpregnable fortress of all goodnesse:
If ill, I presse it with my penitent knees
To that unsounded depth, whence naught returneth. (5.2.101-06)

²⁴ Luke Wilson, ‘The Rich Cabinet’, p.245.

Byron performs a ritualistic repentance but it should be noted that both he and Henry are extremely vague as to what he is actually confessing *to*. There is no revelation of a plot at this stage, only a confession that he has been 'wrathfull', made 'distracted faces' and listened too closely to flatterers 'who in swelling | [His] vaines with empty hope of much, yet able | To perform nothing; are like shallow streames' (5.2.69-71). The important point here is not what Byron has done, or what he confesses to, but that he is seen to kneel and ask the King's mercy, which Henry is happy to grant him:

Tis musique to mine ears: rise then, for ever
Quit of what guilt soever, till this houre,
And nothing toucht in honnor or in spirit,
Rise without flattery, rise by absolute merit. (107-110)

Henry, like Francis, shows awareness that by this apparent show of benevolent pardon he is in fact placing Byron under a symbolic debt from which he will never free himself. It is important that he qualifies his pardon with an insistence that it is only valid for Byron's *past* actions or thoughts: 'till this houre'. The implication is of course that in return for this benevolence Byron will play the role of a model subject in the future.

Alison V. Scott has written on the politics of early modern gift exchange in a courtly setting. She argues that poets presenting their writing as gifts to patrons were subject to great anxiety regarding the expectation of reward which threatened to turn a freely-offered gift into a marketplace commodity, devaluing the praise and turning it into flattery. In Scott's formation, early modern patronage writing anticipated Derrida's paradox of the gift which demands reciprocation, because such literature 'so often presented the counter-gift or reward as the enabling function of the gift itself'.²⁵ Just as the poets who dedicated their works to rich patrons and managed to insinuate that the praise they lavished upon such patrons could only be proven true when they rewarded the writers for their efforts, the gifts bestowed by royal patronage on the powerful subjects become loaded with expectation of a return in the form of continued loyalty, gratitude and support. The public forgiveness exerted by monarchs upon rebellious subjects

²⁵ Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts: The Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature, 1580-1628* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson, 2006), p. 16.

should be seen in these terms as a particularly fraught kind of gift exchange. Derrida does in fact touch obliquely on this connection between the gift and forgiveness when he talks of the necessity of forgetting the gift: 'we are speaking here of an absolute forgetting – a forgetting that absolves, that unbinds absolutely and infinitely more, therefore, than excuse, forgiveness, or acquittal'.²⁶ But the characterisation of forgiveness as something which *unbinds*, this passage does not go into detail on the fact that forgiveness is subject to precisely the same paradox as that which makes the gift theoretically impossible – in order for it to unbind it would also have to be immediately forgotten, and of course this is impossible too.

Returning to the plays while bearing this in mind, it is clear that neither Francis nor Henry have any wish to forget the pardons they have offered, because that would be to undo the political advantage such pardons provide to the monarch when they are carried out in view of their subjects. Francis's anger is temporarily rekindled when Chabot refuses to accept the pardon, saying:

It [pardon] is a word carries too much relation
To an offence, of which I am not guilty,
And I must still be bold where truth still armes,
In spite of all these frownes that would deject me,
To say I neede no pardon. (4.1.235-9)

The King's immediate reaction to this is to draw attention to his generosity in proposing a pardon 'without suite or prayer' (263) and contrast this with Chabot's apparent 'contempt' (264) in return (although later in the scene he begins to doubt the soundness of the conviction and calls the judges for questioning). His pardon is as arbitrary a use of his authority as the sham trial, as Bergson comments: 'the King's attempts to direct his powers toward freedom and life serve largely as ironic reiterations of his earlier use of power to violate and crush'.²⁷

Similarly, Henry is quick to remind Byron of his previous generosity in forgiving his first conspiracy when in *The Tragedy* Byron arrives at court against the advice of his friends. He chastises Byron for taking too long to obey his summons and asks:

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1992, p. 16.

²⁷ Allen Bergson, 'The Worldly Stoicism of George Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France*,' p.60.

Have you maintaind your truth of loyalty,
 When since I pardoned foule ententions,
 Resolving to forget eternally,
 What they apperd in, and had welcomd you
 As the kind father doth his riotous son? (3. 2. 86-90)

The paradox of Henry reminding Byron that he had resolved 'to forget eternally' is beautifully glossed over in Henry's rhetoric. Essentially what he is doing here is blaming Byron for forcing him to bring up what he had promised to forget: the new rebellion has acted as a catalyst to impel the king to remember unpleasant truths.

But if Henry can only forget the past on the condition that Byron always bear it in mind then this is also not a true forgetting of the sort that Derrida discusses, but rather a displacement of the memory from one person to another. The pardon was a form of contract – that Byron would remain loyal in future as a token of gratitude for the forgiveness shown – which in the breaking forces Henry to remind not only Byron, but also the assembled courtiers present at this point, of the continued obligation owed to him. That Henry continues to set value by such a contract is apparent from the fact that all he claims to want from Byron is another confession which could offer him yet another opportunity to forgive. He utilises the same metaphor also deployed in *Chabot*, of the subject as flour to be sieved, to express his benevolent intentions:

Some other time,
 We will (as now in private) sift your actions
 And pour more then you think into the sive,
 Always reserving clemency and pardon
 Upon confession, be you nere so foule. (3.2.118-22)

Henry continues to angle for a confession until Byron has been sentenced, largely because as far as he is concerned, control of what is said in his realm is absolute authority.

The political import of narrative, and the relative value of the 'truth' as a category are key to the *Byron* plays. One of the unsolved mysteries is the truth about Henry's military endeavours. This is the subject of the first argument stirred up between Byron and Henry – Henry, irritated with Savoy's lavish praise of Byron's ability, first praises the English commanders, as we have seen, and then

claims some of the credit for himself, refuting Savoy's assertion that Byron single-handedly won the battle:

The heart but now came on, in that stronge body
Of twice two thousand horse, lead by *Du Maine*,
Which (if I would be glorious) I could say
I first encountered. (*Conspiracy*, 2.2.133-6)

Savoy's final dismissal of the King's objections to his glorification of Byron – 'I onely tell your highnesse what I heard | I was not there' (200-1) – highlights the vulnerability of truth to rumour and embellishment. But the matter of Henry's actual military contribution to the wars continues to be a point of inconsistency throughout both plays, even in the way Henry himself talks about it. At the beginning of *The Tragedy* he details the divine support he thinks he has received in previous conflicts, citing 'that sacred power' which enabled him:

From twelve set battailes,
March home a victor: ten of them obtaind,
Without my personal service. (1.1.103-5)

This admission that of the twelve key battles in pacifying the civil wars, he was not personally present at ten of them is quite astonishing. It also perhaps reveals one of the reasons he is so concerned about the threat posed by Byron's military skill. Contrast this with his angry response at the end of the play to Byron's claim to have acted as king-maker:

What war hath rag'd
Into whose fury I have not expos'd
My person, with as free a spirit as thine?
Thy worthy father and thyself combinde [...]
Never were bristeld with so many battayles
Nor on the foe have broke such woods of Launces
As grew upon my thigh. (4.2.254-7, 260-2)

This inconsistency is rendered all the more politically dangerous by the fact that Byron's claims to deserve more of Henry revolve without exception around his military service. As discussed previously, he does not see their relationship in terms of repeated, circular, giving and receiving, but rather harks back to the services previously rendered to claim further reward. This is not the usual way a patronage relationship is conducted, and it is perhaps then unsurprising that this

one breaks down under the strain of the continual demands Byron appears to be making on it. Nor is it surprising that Henry would want to counter his claims to be single-handedly responsible for the peace, in order to give himself the power to refuse some of these demands without appearing to be ungrateful.

We have seen that both *Byron* and *Chabot* represent their treason trials as arising from a breakdown in the patronage relations between king and subject. *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* does not present this in quite the same light. The king in this play is not seen as a giver of patronage, but as a corrupt and weak ruler who feels threatened by the patronage networks he sees surrounding his nobility. The treason plot in *The Revenge* is a sub-plot, seemingly designed primarily to put an obstacle in the way of Clermont's revenge on his brother's killer, whilst simultaneously revealing the corruption of the court and Clermont's virtue in the face of provocation. It is quite clearly stated several times that reason the king and Baligny wish to arrest Clermont is his allegiance to the Guise. Baligny himself says 'The faction of the Guise [...] Grows ripe and must be gathered into hold' (2.1.5,7), then immediately names Clermont as key to this faction. After his arrest, Guise persuades Henry to sign a pardon, arguing:

What a villain

He was that whispered in your jealous ear

His own black treason in suggesting Clermont's,

Coloured with nothing but being great with me. (4.4.2-5)

Although the Guise lays most of the blame with the (unspecified) middleman, the phrase 'jealous ear', and his general language towards the King in this scene shows that he ascribes to Henry some responsibility. Despite the ambivalent characterisation of the Guise as a whole in this play, here his defence of Clermont and his forthright declaration: 'Woe to that state | Where treachery guards, and ruin makes men great' (53-4) indicate that he is voicing Chapman's own opinion. Although the consequences of royal patronage are not a major issue in *The Revenge*, then, the fact that the king's political expediency prompts a treason accusation connects it with the *Byron* plays and with *Chabot*. Looked at chronologically we can see a progression on Chapman's part in how this is represented. In 1608 the conflict between monarch and subject is shown in a highly ambivalent way in *Byron*, where although the accusation is unclear (as we

shall see), the accused party is to some extent unsympathetic for an audience. *The Revenge* (1609-10) is less equivocal about hero's innocence, but the storyline is relegated to the subplot and not explored in detail. However, by the time he came to write *Chabot* in 1612, Chapman has clearly decided that his project is nothing less than a full dissection of hypocrisy and injustice of the king's judicial proceedings. Having looked at the situations preceding the allegations of treason in these plays, and how this is bound up with royal or noble patronage, let us now consider in more detail the substance of the treason charges themselves.

The Nature of Treason

Critics have tended to take it for granted that Byron is guilty of treason. Jane Melbourne Craig, for example, characterises him as 'an arrogant, imperceptive military leader who conspires with the enemies of his good king to renew a disastrous civil war'.²⁸ However, few have analysed the actual substance of his treason, or noticed that the textual representation of it suggests that it is more a thought-crime than anything else, a mode of speaking and thinking which has very little truly threatening about it. We have seen how the conflict between Byron and Henry is essentially personal, and rooted in their contradictory expectations of how the patronage relationship between them should function. But what is the treason of which Byron is found guilty?

The two plays are to some extent analogous in structure, with Byron being 'tempted' to think of himself as a rebel to the king's authority in both plays, firstly by the agents of the Duke of Savoy, and in *The Tragedy* by the malcontent La Fin, (now working for the king as a double agent). La Fin is described by Henry as 'our golden plummet,|To sound this gulphe of all ingratitude' (1.3.10-11). This phrasing emphasises the analogy between the two sets of tempters, as Savoy uses the same word to describe La Fin in *The Conspiracy*, noting that Byron is being seduced to their cause:

La Fin is in the right; and will obtaine;
He draweth with his weight; and like a plummet
That swaies a dore, with falling of, puls after. (3.2.1-3)

²⁸ Jane Melbourne Craig, 'Chapman's Two Byrons', *SEL* 22 (1982), 271.

That the malcontent goes from being the 'plummet' in the service of Savoy to performing exactly the same office for the king emphasises the monarch's role in soliciting the crime for which he is to punish Byron.

In *The Conspiracy* there is no mention of any concrete plot against Henry: rather, the conspirators only utilise a language of royalty around Byron, obviously hinting that he would make a better king than Henry (such as the painter employed to flatter Byron, who talks of 'glances crown'd with glances' in his face at 3.2.138, or Savoy's addressing him as 'most roiall Duke' in the same scene at line 183). The most explicitly Savoy ever speaks is to note that 'there are so oft attempts against [the King's] person, | That sometimes they may speede' (3.2.191-2). Byron begins to imagine violence against Henry only at the height of his rage after being denied the citadel, as he vows: 'Forth vengeance then, and open wounds in him | Shall let in Spaine, and Savoy' (5.2.28-9) but he is calmed down by D'Auvergne before he can draw his sword, and reconciled with Henry immediately after this. Henry's accusation that Byron has 'had intelligence with my vovd enimies' (5.1.117-8) may be true, but if he includes Savoy as chief amongst those enemies, his definition of treason is being very selective indeed, as Savoy is at this point still very much an honoured guest at his court, so the fact that Byron has had speech with him is not in itself treacherous. Indeed the comedy scene at the end of the play in which everyone laughs at Savoy's attempts to woo three mistresses at once would suggest that he is not considered a threat, and of course the comic interlude is included precisely to emphasise the harmony of a conclusion in which all threats have been dissipated. MacLure comments on this scene that it 'diminishes the tempter as a diplomat, and the conspiracy seems in retrospect fancy only. Byron can be saved from himself by a good word, as his treason seems to have been little more than swelling language'.²⁹ Alexander Leggatt takes this perspective a little further with his suggestion that in the first play 'an air of conspiracy hangs about [Byron], but we have little sense of the specifics. He seems to be playing with the idea of treason, without doing any of the work'.³⁰ This idea of playing strikes exactly the right tone – Byron (at the

²⁹ Millar MacLure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p.141.

³⁰ Alexander Leggatt, 'Tone and Structure in Chapman's *Byron*', *SEL*, 24 (1984), 307-26 (p. 310).

instigation of the conspirators) flirts with a way of speaking and thinking which could be termed treasonous. It is more an imaginative way of expressing his discontent with Henry than a concrete threat to monarchic rule.

However, the opening of *The Tragedy* throws us back into the realm of political intrigue. Although Leggatt argues that *The Tragedy* presents 'a less innocent world' and 'a kingdom threatened by real danger' (p. 319), the treason in this play is still seen primarily as a way of thinking, speaking, or presenting oneself, rather than a rebellious plot. Henry's reliance on the 'golden plummet' of La Fin should alert the observant reader or audience to the fact that the king is more of an active party to the events of this play. He refers to the fact that La Fin has 'prov'd the parts of [Byron's] ingratefull treasons' (1.3.15), and throughout the entire play much emphasis is laid on this apparently proven crime. However, no evidence other than La Fin's word is ever presented for Byron's treason. Although the audience is party to some of Byron's more violent, ambitious words, we see nothing that proves his crime has gone beyond what he himself admits to: 'I did speake and wright more than I ought' (5.2.11-12). The dramatic focus is not Byron's actions, or even his words, but the process by which Henry attempts (and fails) to elicit a confession from him, then tries, condemns and ultimately executes him. The matter of the treason itself is given remarkably little attention or stage-time. Act I has one scene in which Byron voices his dissatisfaction with the king; Act 2 is entirely based around the fragmentary masque scene, cut due to the censor's demands; Act 3 concerns the King's ordering Byron back to court and the question of whether he will obey the summons; Act 4 focuses on Henry's decision to arrest Byron; and Act 5 represents his trial and execution. The treason mentioned at the trial seems to be alleged to have happened before the play begins, and the dramatic representation is of its aftermath rather than of the foiling of a plot or an outright rebellion. This makes it very difficult for the audience to judge what has actually happened. This is a deliberate strategy: Chapman was more interested in the workings of power than in the vain rebellions of great men, and this is where he turns his focus in *The Tragedy*.

Act 3 is almost entirely focussed on the question of whether or not Byron will respond to Henry's summons and come to court. This dilemma encapsulates the double bind of the subject accused of treason: Byron knows that the ostensible

reason he has been called to court is nebulous, and so his instinct is to refuse the summons.³¹ His friends urge him not to go, with D'Auvergne assuring him 'You can not come to Court with any safetie', but if he refuses, as Henry knows well, it will be taken as a sign of outright rebellion. His entry to the court is met with the exclamation, from one of the king's party: 'O madnesse! He is come!' (3.2.56). When he and D'Auvergne complain that, once at court, none of the other courtiers will speak to them, or even look at them, the King's agent Soisson urges them to confess all:

[...] he hath proofes
So pregnant, and so horride, that to heare them,
Would make your valure in your very lookes,
Give up your forces, miserably guilty. (4.1.42-5)

The power of the king to 'make' the truth in an image which suits him is something which is dwelt on throughout both the *Byron* plays, and we will return to it in more detail later, but for now let us consider the strange syntax here, which emphasises not a pre-existing guiltiness, but one which seems to be called into being by the force of the King's will. The metaphor here is of a military surrender (appropriate because in Byron's repeated assertions of his worth it is always his military credentials that he emphasises): Byron's 'valure' would surrender on hearing the 'proofes', but it is interesting that that surrender is described as taking place in his exterior 'lookes' – the guilt is imagined as being proven upon Byron's body, presumably on the horrified facial expression that he would be expected to exhibit on hearing the evidence against him. The idea of guilt imprinted on the body was common, but also ambiguous, in early modern culture. It is found, for example, in *Much Ado About Nothing* where Hero's blushing at the accusations levelled against her is taken as evidence both for her guilt ('The story that is printed in her blood') and her innocence ('a thousand innocent shames | In angel whiteness beat away those blushes').³² Bodily proof is thus imagined as an unreliable indicator of subjective truth, liable to be misinterpreted by those who

³¹ Henry calls him back because he claims to have evidence that his frontiers are about to be attacked. Byron responds to this with the reasonable objection: 'This is strange, | That when the enimie is t'attempt his frontiers, He calls me from the frontiers' (3. 1. 81-3).

³² William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. Claire McEachern (London: Arden, 2006), 4.1.122 and 160-1.

are predisposed to believing in the guilt of the accused. This is also the case in Chapman's play: the importance of Byron's 'lookes' to this formulation puts the onus on the observer to identify the guilt in the object on which he gazes. The image is distinctly ambiguous: in keeping with Chapman's usual strategy of veiling his worst criticism in slippery syntax so that the most critical of his observations could be denied, it is only on a careful reading that we notice the 'guilty' reading is dependent upon the power of the king as observer to make the truth in whatever image suits him.

The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois is far less equivocal than the *Byron* plays in its denunciation of an unscrupulous monarch. The main plot, as discussed in the previous chapter, concerns the impossibility of retaining integrity in the context of the patronage system, and we witness the hero Clermont lose his self-sufficiency by his involvement, through his patron the Duke of Guise, in the 'politic' world of court intrigue. However, the corruption of this court is unequivocally blamed on the monarch himself, and the example of immorality he sets for his nobles. The opening scene introduces us to the court atmosphere by having two courtiers discussing the time's faults, and castigating 'th'inordinate swinge of downright power' (1.1.15), which characterises Henry's rule. One of them voices the opinion that vice in kings encourages similar vice in subjects: 'all men studied self-love, fraud, and vice' (26). This is given an ironic proof by that fact that as soon as he exits the stage, his companion Baligny announces that he intends to immediately report to the king the substance of the entire conversation.

It is Baligny who later in the play utters the phrase with which we began our consideration of treason: 'treachery for kings is truest loyalty', and even in his initial soliloquy we see an indication of the possibility that treason will become a politically convenient accusation. Baligny informs the audience that he has been planting the idea of Clermont's treachery in the king's head:

[His greatness], as I spice it, hath possessed the King
 (Knowing his daring spirit) of much danger
 Charged in it to his person: though my conscience
 Dare swear him clear of any power to be
 Infected with the least dishonesty. (129-33)

The topsy-turvy world presided over by Henry III is emphasised throughout the play in Baligny's habit of switching the meaning of moral terms (also apparent in the speech which serves as the epigraph to this chapter); in this opening scene he draws attention to the possible profit to be made from this manoeuvre:

The more bad we make the most of good
The more our policy searcheth, and our service
Is wondered at for wisdom and sincereness. (140-2)

Baligny begins to put this plot into practice at the beginning of Act 2, when the King asks him for information on the doings of the court. He replies that the Guise's faction 'grows ripe':

Of which my brother Clermont being a part
Exceeding capital, deserves to have
A capital eye on him. (2.1.8-10)

This is a tremendously revealing line, its phrase 'a capital eye' containing again that sense it also carries in *Byron* of the power of the king's gaze to create treason in whatever it looks upon. The repetition of 'capital' also contains echoes of capital punishment, the usual end of one accused of treason. The symmetry of this formulation is testament to Baligny's rhetorical skill – he is persuasive in his speech to the king because he understands how to manipulate Henry's paranoia about attacks against his person and suggest a fitting course of action for circumventing such attacks.

The potential for the Guise and his faction to cause physical danger to the King is mirrored by Henry's judicial power to identify and punish that potential. There is perhaps also a pun here on 'eye' and 'I' as Baligny is also seeking with this information to suggest himself as the king's instrument of justice in rooting out such treason – in such a formulation he himself becomes the 'capital eye/I' that holds such power. Before the King can get even a word in edgeways his servant has outlined a plan to lead Clermont into an ambush at Cambrai. Henry's one-line response at the end of this long speech: 'Thanks, honest Baligny' has resonance with Othello's 'honest Iago' and carries the same potential for grim humour in its irony. The King asks for no proof whatsoever of Clermont's alleged treason, merely agreeing without question to have him arrested. The arbitrary power of the monarch is accepted as the norm by Clermont, who remarks to the

soldier he suspects of having come to arrest him 'Acts that are done by kings are not asked why' (205). This fatalism is also what prompts his suicide at the end of the play, when on learning that the Guise has been murdered on Henry's orders he feels impotent to react against such an injustice: 'There's no disputing with the acts of kings: | Revenge is impious against their sacred persons' (5.5.151-2).

Clermont is not quite consistent in this Stoic acceptance of royal power however. He vacillates curiously between acceptance and resistance of his arrest, first wishing to search the soldier who calls him to view the troops in case he is carrying an order for his detainment (surely an act of resistance); then telling the same soldier that he will not search him, but offering to go without a fight if he is under such orders; but then at the start of Act 4 putting up such a fight that the soldiers refer to him as 'wild lightning' (4.1.14).

Like Chabot, Clermont is revealed as holding a naïve view of court politics when he attempts to assert an idea of justice independent from the King's whim. In an exchange with Maillard, the captain who had earlier sworn he was *not* under orders to capture Clermont, he reveals the fundamental gap between his conception of justice and that held by almost every other character in the play:

CLERMONT	[...]	I pray you tell me, Are you not perjured?
MAILLARD		No, I swore for the king.
CLERMONT		Yet perjury, I hope is perjury.
MAILLARD		But thus forswearing is not perjury. You are no politician: not a fault, How foul so ever done for private ends, Is fault in us sworn to the public good. (4.1.44-50)

There can be no doubt that Chapman disapproves of this moral relativism, and that *The Revenge* is a critique of the way in which service to the king is used as an excuse to cover all kinds of pernicious, self-seeking behaviour. Chapman uses Clermont's mistress, the Countess of Cambrai, to voice the theory that kings are not above the laws of their kingdoms:

So kings to subjects crying, 'Do, do not this,'
Must to them by their own examples strength
The straightness of their acts and equal compass
Give subjects power t'obey them in the like. (4.3.61-4)

It is interesting that the most vocal criticism of the King's actions comes from a female character – this is also the case in *The Tragedy of Chabot*, and in both cases the character in question is responding to the immediate danger which threatens her lover as a result of the king's unjust behaviour. It is very possible that this was a deliberate ploy of Chapman's to allow him to distance himself from the radical words being spoken. In both cases, were a censor or indeed, the king himself, to object to these criticisms, Chapman would be able to claim that they did not represent his opinion and were instead only indicative of the character's emotional turmoil. This is one interesting strategy in the construction of what Annabel Patterson has termed 'functional ambiguity'.³³ She writes: 'Censorship encouraged the use of historical or other uninvented texts such as translations from the classics, which both allowed an author to limit his authorial responsibility for the text ("Tacitus wrote this, not I") and, paradoxically, provided an interpretative mechanism' (p.57). It has been suggested that Chapman used exactly this strategy in his first translations of the *Iliad*, which may have been extolling the virtues of the Earl of Essex in its depiction of Achilles.³⁴ In *Chabot* Chapman modifies this strategy, and sets up a double layer of protection – not only is his subject matter drawn from real history, but the most radical statements are coming from an emotional female character who is easily distanced from him (to paraphrase Patterson, 'A hysterical woman said this, not I'). Nonetheless, the corruption of justice arising from the influence of favourites and royal clients was clearly an issue which most Jacobean audiences would have recognised as being pertinent to their own political system.

In *The Revenge*, Baligny fulfils a very similar role to La Fin in *The Tragedy of Byron*, as his word is taken as evidence of the alleged treason despite the fact he clearly takes an active role in leading the accused party into whatever behaviour is then argued to constitute that treason. Following his conversation with Henry he attempts to trap the Guise into making some kind of statement in favour of political assassination, with a prolonged defence of Brutus's role as a conspirator, saying 'Caesar began to tyrannise' (109), and drawing further contract between the

³³ Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p.18.

³⁴ John Channing Briggs, 'Chapman's *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades*: Mirror for Essex', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 21 (1981), 59-73.

eternal law of gods and 'king's laws [which] alter every day and hour, | And in that change imply a bounded power' (121-2). He gets nowhere with this attempt, the Guise being too worldly-wise to be easily persuaded into such dangerous speech. But this use of double agents to prompt the treason for which men are then condemned is a feature of the *Byron* plays too. Byron's protestations at his trial do carry some weight, given the characterisation of Henry's 'plummet', La Fin:

Is it justice
To tempt, and witch a man to breake the law,
And by that witch condemn him? (5.2.156-8)

The use of these informers by the monarchs in both plays is surely intended by Chapman to reflect on their own lack of transparency. Byron's complaint is perhaps echoed in Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), where Vittoria accuses her accusers of being the origin of the charges levelled against her in her trial for her husband's murder:

For your names,
Of whore and murther, they proceed from you,
As if a man should spit against the wind,
The filth returns in his face.³⁵

Chapman's repeated dramatisations of trials in which the 'names' called by the prosecution proceed from the imagination of the authorities rather than from the concrete deeds or even the projected plots of the accused subverts the traditional idea that the monarch is the fountain of justice and instead highlights the arbitrary nature of a law which is at the service of a personal ruler.

The process by which some men are rewarded for others' misfortune is also stressed in all of these plays. Byron rails at La Fin, who 'would raise the loathed dung-heap of his ruines | Upon the monumentall heape of mine' (5.2.268-9), and later calls him a 'state-bawde' (5.3.5). This condemnation of La Fin, on whom Henry now relies, marks a reversal from his relationship with each man in the earlier play. In *The Conspiracy*, Henry warns Byron not to keep company with La Fin, calling the bankrupt courtier 'ill-aboding vermine' (3.3.215), and assuring

³⁵ John Webster, *The White Devil*, in *The Duchess of Malfi and other Plays*, ed. René Weis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.2.148-51.

Byron 'his hants are ominous' (217); 'La fiend and not Laffin, he should be cald' (226) and 'he followes none but markt and wretched men' (273). This insistence that La Fin's presence is indicative of future misfortune turns out to be true in Byron's case, but the King seems to have forgotten his own advice by the time *The Tragedy* opens, now relying for the execution of his justice on the very 'fiend' he had previously castigated so thoroughly. Braunmuller points out that 'even the king's ardent supporters and his equally ardent historians balked at La Fin'.³⁶ An early modern audience would surely have recognised the incongruity in a king claiming to absolute moral authority utilising such an underhand method to entrap his erstwhile trusted lieutenant. Furthermore, if Henry's early prophetic warning is applied to his own later behaviour, it could be argued that he himself becomes one of those 'markt and wretched men' about whom he warns Byron.

Despite the ambivalence in Chapman's presentation of Byron, his view of the justice meted out by the king is deeply critical, an attitude which is further sharpened in *The Revenge*. Both plays contain statements suggesting that a state built on such morally ambivalent forms of justice is one which cannot be secure. Byron's rhetorical 'Shall your justice call treacherie her father?' (5.2.198-9) is distinctly similar in tone to the Guise's upbraiding of Henry III:

Why should kings be prayed
To acts of justice? Tis a reverence
Makes them despis'd, and showes they sticke, and tyre
In what their free powers should be hot as fire. (4.4.8-11)

Henry's resort to political assassination in *the Revenge* even further indicates the distance from which his regime has travelled from justice. As Katharine Eisaman Maus points out in her introduction to the play, it ends 'with King Henry still in control, but members of Chapman's audience conversant with recent French history would have known that his downfall occurred only a few months later, just as Guise predicts in his dying moments'.³⁷ The perversion of justice in the play then is implicitly blamed for Henry's fall.

³⁶ A.R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, p.91.

³⁷ Katharine Eisaman Maus, ed., *Four Revenge Tragedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.xxiv.

This concept of treason as a crime which is in large part invented by the authorities is even more clearly laid out in *The Tragedy of Chabot*. The first mention of the term 'treason' in the text is not in relation to any concrete action, but in the opening dialogue between Asall, a gentleman-in-waiting, and Allegre, Chabot's devoted servant who is later tortured in the Chancellor's attempt to gather incriminating evidence against Chabot. Allegre acts throughout the play as the voice of virtue and reason, and in this initial scene staunchly defends the Admiral's character while also condemning 'this vile degenerate age' (1.1.16). Asall has asked why, if the Admiral is so virtuous, he is unpopular amongst the courtiers and general populace. Allegre's answer is worth considering in full, because it sets up the audience and reader in their evaluation of the subsequent action:

The most men are not good, and it agrees not
With impious natures to allow what's honest;
Tis an offence enough to be exalted
To regall favours; great men are not safe
In their own vice, where good men by the hand
Of Kings are planted to survey their workings;
What man was ever fixt ith'Sphere of honour,
And precious to his Sovereigne, whose actions,
Nay very soule was not expos'd to every
Common and base dissection? And not onely
That which in Nature hath excuse, and in
Themselves is priviledg'd by name of frailtie,
But even Virtues are made crimes, and doom'd
Toth'Fate of Treason. (1.1.17-30)

This could almost be a prologue summarising the events of the play. It also clearly shows up the connection of *Chabot* to previous tragedies: the contrast of 'great' men and 'good' in lines 20 and 21 harks back to the same distinction Chapman makes in the Prologue to the *Byron* plays, and the idea of a good man placed in a high rank by the king to root out corruption is suggestive of Bussy's representation of himself as the king's 'eagle'.

Allegre goes on to highlight the peculiar vulnerability of men in powerful positions, and the anatomical imagery of the lines 'expos'd to every | Common and

base dissection' gives this a distinctly physical, even visceral, dimension. This links in with the later discussion between Francis and Chabot, where Francis threatens Chabot with a legal inquiry:

What if conferring
My bounties, and your services to sound them,
We fall foul on some licences of yours? (2.3.101-3)

Chabot responds to this suggestion with another strangely physical image: 'The more you sift | The more you shall refine me' (106-07), his own deeds imagined as some kind of flour or powder, but again with the underlying assumption that deeds and body are indistinguishable and both are laid open to scrutiny by the king and his officers. The image of dissection is invoked again by the Chancellor's promise to the King to 'explore him [...] to every fiuer' (2.3.206), and indeed this close link between deeds and body may help to explain the somewhat unconvincing manner of Chabot's death, expiring of a broken heart even though the king has repented and exonerated him. Interestingly, the manner of Chabot's death might be an inverted image of that of Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*: there the servant dies of a broken heart occasioned by his sense of guilt at his *own* ingratitude. Enobarbus says:

O Antony,
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service, when my turpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart.
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought, but thought will do't, I feel.³⁸

In both cases the servant's 'thought' of the horror of ingratitude and the failure of reciprocal obligation is enough to cause his death. Chapman may have been influenced by Shakespeare's portrayal of Enobarbus's death (*Antony and Cleopatra* was entered in the Stationer's Register in 1608 so it is possible that Chapman had read or seen it before he composed *Chabot*) but he reverses the situation so that it is the royal master whose ingratitude prompts the broken heart.

To return to Allegré's speech, the real interest lies in the final lines, which seem to assume a certain degree of corruption in all men, 'which in Nature hath

³⁸ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by John Wilders (London: Routledge, 1995), 4.6.32-37.

excuse', but which also draw a distinction between that and the misinterpretation by which 'even Vertues are made crimes, and doom'd| Toth'fate of Treason'. There are two meanings at work in this rather strange statement. On one hand Allegre is voicing the opinion that the holding of authority inevitably corrupts men: the fate of treason is death, specifically judicial execution, so by asserting that in most great men virtues are detected like crimes and rooted out by execution he is simply making a familiar argument about the difficulty of retaining integrity under the temptations of power. But there is another interpretation of his words which hinges on the implications of 'made' and 'doom'd', and emphasises the power of the monarch to bend truth to his own will. Virtues are *made* into crimes by a law which distorts what it finds in order to suit the people who make that law, much as in *Byron* the king as observer can bring guilt into the 'looks' of his subject. Allegre's words call attention to the spurious definition of the term 'treason' which becomes so important later in the play. One possible gloss of these lines is that virtue is turned into treason by a corrupt observer, and as the events of the play show, the person who most effectively performs this somewhat alchemical transformation is King Francis himself.

After his confrontation with Chabot, Francis calls the Chancellor to his presence and orders him to investigate all the Admiral's dealings, making it clear from the outset that he expects to find evidence of treason: Chabot's 'gross overweening', he argues, indicates that they will find faults 'Of capitall nature in his sifted greatnesse' (2.3.195,197). This scene is absolutely key to any understanding of Chapman's political intentions with *Chabot*, for although in the later acts the Chancellor becomes a scapegoat for the plot, this scene quite clearly reveals him to have been following the king's orders. Francis progresses in paranoia each time he speaks, following from the speech above to return to the anatomical metaphor with this speech:

You must then employ,
Your most exact and curious art to explore
A man in place of greatest trust, and charge,
Whom I suspect to have abus'd them all,
And in whom you may give such proud veines vent,
As will bewray their boyling blood corrupted

Both gainst my crown and life. (199-205)

The last three lines are powerfully gory in their assertion that by opening Chabot's veins to the dissecting gaze of the legal system the chancellor will find evidence in his blood of his plots against the king. In his next speech he portrays himself as 'a distracted King, | Put in just feare of his assaulted life' (211-12), a depiction which has no bearing on what we have seen in the play so far, and must serve to suggest either paranoia or bare-faced hypocrisy. His remark at the end of the scene 'But I must have all prov'd with that free justice -' (the break at the end of the line perhaps indicating the peremptoriness of its delivery) would certainly suggest the latter. In 2.1 the king had asserted baldly 'Chabot's no Traitor', defending his Admiral against the Queen's rage. That so shortly later he has changed his mind so completely as to now be instructing his chancellor to make sure Chabot is convicted is surely to be interpreted as capricious at best, and downright tyrannical at worst.

The substance of the charge against Chabot is his tearing of the bill which had been brought to him to be signed – the Queen likens this to an impulse 'to teare your crowne off' (31-32), and in the trial scene at 3.2, through the arguments of a facetious and verbose lawyer, we also see how easily allegations of treason flow once the trial process has begun. The lawyer opens the proceedings by drawing attention to 'how infinitely the King hath favoured this ill-favoured Traitor' (3.2.6-7), and the first charge he lays against him is 'his ingratitude' (40). The other two charges are that he 'most traitorously hath committed outrage and impiety' (80-81) by tearing the bill, and that by exacting taxes from fishermen he 'aliente[d] the hearts of these miserable people from their King, which *ipso facto* is high treason' (100-01). The shaky nature of these charges, and the comic fashion in which the lawyer is presented, leaves no doubt that this is a flimsy excuse for a trial, motivated not by concern for the safety of the king's person but by political expediency. Francis quite simply wants to bring Chabot down a peg or two, and this is his chosen way of proceeding, as the debacle of his subsequent pardon makes clear. We have already examined the ways in which these plays show how monarchs use the pardoning of a crime to strengthen their subject's dependence upon them and so reify their own authority. The fact that Francis has instructed

his Chancellor to find Chabot guilty renders his subsequent outrage on the discovery that the judges were forced to assent somewhat dubious.

The further development, whereby the Chancellor is subject to as hastily-arranged a trial as Chabot was before him, suggests that this is a king who has learned nothing from previous experience. The similarities between the two trials are underlined by the fact that the same Advocate prosecutes the Chancellor, and goes about the proceedings in the same verbose fashion. The Treasurer calls attention to the ludicrousness of this situation by pointing out, after the Advocate has made a lengthy attack on the character of the Chancellor: 'Your tongue was guilty of no such character|When he sat judge upon the admiral' (5.2.61-2). Exhibiting the same capricious tendency to jump to the most extreme conclusion which he did when Chabot was the accused party, the king upbraids the judges for being too lenient on the Chancellor: 'You should have powr'd death on his treacherous head' (145). Quite how the Chancellor has committed treason is unclear, considering that he was following orders from the king, but this is precisely the point which Chapman wishes his audience to take from the play.

Although Chabot is exonerated, he dies apparently under the strain of having been accused of such nefarious crimes by the sovereign he loves. Like the death of Clermont in *The Revenge* this outcome is intended to demonstrate the impossibility of living a virtuous life in the elite circle of such an unjust government. The structures of favouritism, faction, and unchecked royal authority which led to Chabot's arrest have not been altered in the slightest by the scapegoating of the Chancellor. Indeed, King Francis seems to have no more self-awareness at the end of the play than he did at the beginning. As Braunmuller observes, Francis's 'hatred of the Chancellor leads to overt interference in the course of justice – the very interference the Chancellor threatened at Chabot's trial'.³⁹ *Chabot* is the most outspokenly pessimistic of all Chapman's plays, but it introduces no themes which have not already been explored in earlier tragedies. In *Byron*, *The Revenge*, and *Chabot* then, Chapman presents an increasingly bleak view of the workings of royal authority, suggesting that accusations of treason arise

³⁹ Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, p. 117.

whenever patronage networks stop functioning, and finally concluding that justice is impossible within courts where favouritism flourishes.

What bearing does this have on James I? It would be a simplistic reading indeed which suggests that each of the three different monarchs discussed above are all intended merely as avatars of King James. However, as Albert Tricomi has shown, early modern readers were in the habit of interpreting analogically, and if the Earl of Pembroke could find in the *Byron* plays a reference to Buckingham (who would not come onto the Jacobean political scene until four years after the publication of the plays), then it is reasonable to suggest that in the criticism of court patronage and the miscarriage of justice represented, contemporaries might have interpreted reference to the Jacobean court.⁴⁰ Byron himself draws attention to the habit of looking for historical parallels:

The matchlesse Earl of Essex who some make
(In their most sure divinings of my death)
A parallel with me in life and fortune. (*Tragedy* 4.1.133-5)

This suggests that Chapman was in the habit of writing and reading analogically, and expected his readers to follow suit. This specific analogy would of course place Henry in the role of Queen Elizabeth, not King James, which might be a warning not to try to read the parallels too strictly. But there continued to be treason trials under James I, most notably that of Sir Walter Raleigh, whom Chapman knew, and to whom he dedicated his poem 'De Guiana' in 1598. Philip J. Ayres has suggested that Jonson's *Sejanus* is in its presentation of treason trials, a sympathetic account of Raleigh's trial.⁴¹ Chapman has also been suggested as the 'second pen' to which Jonson refers in the published preface as having collaborated on an earlier stage version of the play.⁴² If Ayres is correct (and his argument is convincing) then it would also follow that Chapman was aware of such an analogical reading of *Sejanus*, and it seems perfectly reasonable that when, a few years later, he came to write his own detailed study of the downfall of a

⁴⁰ Albert H. Tricomi, 'Philip, Earl of Pembroke, and the Analogical Way of Reading Political Tragedy', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 85 (1986), 332-345.

⁴¹ Philip J. Ayres, 'Jonson, Northampton, and the "Treason" in *Sejanus*', *Modern Philology* 80 (1983), 356-63.

⁴² R. P. Corballis, 'The Second Pen in the Stage Version of *Sejanus*', *Modern Philology* 76 (1979), 273-7.

previously great man, he may have had such a parallel in mind too. As Raleigh was still in disgrace at this point, it was perhaps safer to suggest the parallel between Byron and the Earl of Essex, but this need not rule out the possibility that Chapman was thinking of more than one treason trial. Richard Dutton has argued:

One of the besetting sins of attempts to find topical meaning in early modern drama has been a determination to make the parallels too thorough and exact, explaining every detail. On the contrary [...] the analogies were commonly incomplete, titillatingly so. Daniel's Philotas was not Essex in every detail, nor could Greville's Antony have been.⁴³

Dutton is absolutely right to highlight the flexibility with which early modern writers and readers would have read analogically. A more open-ended reading than one which sees in every point of *Chabot* a correspondence to the downfall of Robert Carr, or in *Byron* a retelling of Essex's downfall, allows us to read these plays as cumulative expression of Chapman's discontent with the systematic way in which monarchic authority implemented its justice. While Millar MacLure might be correct in finding in the character of King Francis echoes of 'the pedantry, dilettantism and emotionalism of James I', any personal characteristics or similarity in details is less important for the radical potential of Chapman's work than the systematic concerns he explores regarding justice and government.⁴⁴ He suggests no possible note of optimism in these plays: particularly the later two present a vision of a court world in which self-interest and 'policy' rule, and in which a virtuous man is an aberration doomed not to survive.

The logical endpoint of such a critique is republicanism. Andrew Hadfield has recognised this streak in Chapman's thought, pointing to the *Byron* plays, *Caesar and Pompey*, and *Chabot* as providing evidence of 'a republican literary tradition that developed in the Elizabethan and Jacobean commercial theatre'.⁴⁵ Chapman never makes the leap from thorough disavowal of royal authority to imagining an alternative form of government without a monarch as its head, but in his conviction that virtue cannot survive in a court setting he could surely be

⁴³ Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeswords* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p.xvii.

⁴⁴ Millar MacLure, *George Chapman*, p.146.

⁴⁵ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.86.

seen as contributing to the intellectual culture which has led Markku Peltonen to assert of the Jacobean period that 'the cement of the English monarchical system did not inhibit a number of Englishmen from perceiving the advantages of a republican mixed government or even detecting its traces in their own commonwealth'.⁴⁶ Peltonen and Hadfield both argue that there existed throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods an intellectual tradition (which Peltonen suggests derived from classical humanism) in which republican ideas were given serious consideration – among the writers Peltonen cites as committed to the limitation of the king's power by some form of mixed government are Thomas Smith, Francis Bacon, Walter Raleigh and Barnabe Barnes. Hadfield goes even further, outlining a tradition of republican political theory, exemplified John Knox, George Buchanan and Henry Saville, and arguing that this republicanism was also expressed in the literature of an impressively comprehensive group of writers: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Spenser, Sidney, Daniel, Drayton, Fletcher and Greville are all included.⁴⁷ Hadfield's claims for all these writers might not be universally accepted, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse them in detail. Nonetheless, his argument for an intellectual and literary tradition whereby writers consistently challenged the governing powers from a systematic and constitutional perspective is convincing. Chapman's plays, steeped in his own classical learning, and presenting a highly critical view of monarchic government, should be understood as partaking of this tradition and even perhaps as anticipating to some extent the more explicit republicanism voiced by Milton and the Parliamentarians of the Civil War. There can be no doubt that in these tragedies, which deal with such recent French history, Chapman is making plain his own deeply ambivalent feelings about the English court and its governing ideology. It is an unremittingly pessimistic assessment and this perhaps gives us some clue as to why he seems to have left London and lived his final years in obscurity and poverty.

⁴⁶ Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.179.

⁴⁷ Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, p.58.

Chapter 6

‘Your True Virtue’s Most True Observer, George Chapman’

Many critics have recognised that Chapman’s writing throughout his career reveals a fixation with the troublesome concept of virtue. Richard S. Ide argues of the 1598 dedication of the *Iliad* to the Earl of Essex: ‘Chapman – thinking not only of Essex’s disfavor in high places but of Homer’s small repute relative to Virgil’s and of his own patronless plight – perceives that society and court are no longer amenable to virtuous instruction’.¹ Ide goes on to interrogate the ideal of heroism represented in Chapman’s tragedies, reading *Bussy D’Ambois* mainly in terms of the hero’s ‘quest for virtue’ (p.79). However, Ide, like many mid-twentieth century critics, errs in his interpretation of Chapman’s tragedies by assuming that in the ‘epic heroism’, as he terms it, of *Bussy* and *Byron*, Chapman is soliciting the reader’s approval. This overlooks the ambiguous and often contradictory way in which Chapman presents the concept of virtue.

John Huntington’s recent work on Chapman’s poetry offers a far more rich and rewarding reading of Chapman’s use of virtue than Ide’s idea of epic heroism. By connecting it with nobility and social hierarchy, Huntington shows how Chapman uses his writing to assert his own cultural importance in opposition to the aristocratic values of the court. He writes:

Because it belongs to the conventional lexicons of sexual morality and courtesy, the term *virtue* which Chapman frequently invokes has caused his work to be interpreted in a narrow and moralistic way [...] But [...] *virtue* in Chapman’s vocabulary stands for those individual qualities and accomplishments by which men and women make themselves, achieve competency, merit their place, and it is defined not by its opposition to *vice* but to

¹ Richard S. Ide, *Possessed With Greatness: The Heroic Tragedies of Chapman and Shakespeare* (London: Scolar, 1980), p. 4.

all the unearned privileges of wealth and blood. It is the key to a world of merit rather than inheritance.²

Huntington mostly confines his discussion to Chapman's poetry, although he does include a discussion of Bussy's virtue in which he argues that Bussy represents 'an engaged integrity that exists, perhaps tragically, in constant tension with the world of rank and power that the duke of Guise represents' (p. 84).

For all their differences of approach to Chapman then, both Ide and Huntington agree that the virtue he represents is generally set up in conflict to the court world it inhabits. How could Huntington's insights be applied more comprehensively to Chapman's drama? If the Chapman of the 1590s used his poetry to 'identify an intellectual hierarchy, a "true nobility", that poses an alternative to, and therefore always entails a criticism of, the actual social structure, dominated by a "false nobility" of blood' (p.67), then how did the Chapman of the Jacobean era apply that social strategy to his dramatic writing? To answer this question will require a re-evaluation of the *virtue* in the plays: rather than privileging a military, aristocratic heroism as the site of virtuous idealism, Chapman portrays characters whose learning and wisdom go alongside a modest social station and suggest that true virtue does not lie in the deeds of great courtiers. In this he clearly owes a great deal to the traditions of classical humanism which privileged virtue (often achieved through education) as the true root of nobility. Markku Peltonen has written extensively on the political uses to which classical humanism was deployed before the Civil War, and outlines a significant strand in Jacobean thought arguing that 'riches and wealth, birth and pedigree, even a title had nothing to do with true nobility, which consisted in nothing but virtue'.³ Virtue, throughout Peltonen's study of anti-monarchic politics, is a term loaded with the potential to undo traditional hierarchies of blood and inherited power. This is exactly the valence it carries in Chapman's drama. Accordingly, when Peltonen describes the philosophy of the republicanism of the 1650s he could almost be describing the political philosophy of Chapman's plays:

² John Huntington, *Ambition, Rank, and Poetry in 1590s England*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2001) pp. 77-78.

³ Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 167.

It conceived of men as citizens rather than subjects; they were characterised not so much by obedience to the king as by active participation in the political life of their community through counselling and the law-making process. The citizens' participatory role was chiefly based on their virtuous characters, which enabled them to promote the public good. The term 'classical republicanism' thus embraces a cluster of themes concerning citizenship, public virtue and true nobility. (p. 2)

Many of Chapman's plays revolve around issues of 'citizenship, public virtue and true nobility', and an attentive reading reveals the deeply anti-court and meritocratic undertones of such themes.

In *Monsieur D'Olive* (1605), Vandome introduces discussion of his mistress, the Countess Vaumont, he describes her as 'noble [...] by birth, made good by vertue' (1.1.17). This description envisions the Countess's virtue as defined, not (as we might expect) from her reputation as a good (meaning obedient and chaste) wife and subordinate female, but as marking out a tension between 'noble' and 'good'. Such a formulation could equally well be applied to Chapman's male characters, and suggests that for him, virtue was not a particularly gendered quality. Nobleness, it is implied, is merely a raw material which has to be actively improved by the bearer's virtue in order to become a positive quality. As we shall discuss, in the case of the Countess, chastity, and sexual fidelity to one's spouse is certainly a part of this virtue, but it is by no means the sole constituent of it. However, despite the fact that Marcellina and some other minor female characters are used to explore female virtue, in keeping with the etymology of the word as derived from *virtus*, strength and valour, the inherent quality of *vir*, a man, almost all of Chapman's detailed portraits of virtue in conflict with society centre around the struggle of a male figure.

For Chapman, virtue defends its holder against temptation and corruption, whether sexual or political. In some ways, Chapman's description of male characters' virtue chimes with the chaste virtue ascribed to women in traditional gender ideology because it often entails a withdrawal from the world similar to that encouraged in female behaviour. As a woman's chastity is often imagined as endangered if that woman was permitted the social freedoms enjoyed by men, so in Chapman's plays the virtuous stance of certain men is seen as somehow

safeguarded by their isolation and potentially compromised by immersion in public life.

However, just as Renaissance playwrights often explored the impossibility of keeping a wife locked away from the world (and the foolishness of husbands who attempt such a feat), the 'fugitive and cloistered virtue' which exists untested because out of reach of temptation is seen as unsustainable and basically solipsistic.⁴ When virtuous men *do* enter public affairs, their moral position inevitably becomes tainted by the corruption around them. This paradox is at the heart of Chapman's representation of virtue, and it is never solved. It is a moral dilemma which is, as Peter Bement has shown, deeply influenced by Renaissance interpretations of classical stoicism. Bement argues that:

Two important strains develop [from the neo-stoic revival], one confirming the contemporary predilection for the active life, the other finding expression in retreat and isolation from the world.⁵

Bement's article gives an excellent account of the way Stoicism could be interpreted either as allowing the virtuous man to participate in public life, or as specifically prohibiting such action. However, the account of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* which he then provides is flawed because it assumes that Chapman approves of Clermont's course of action, and argues that in carrying out the revenge task, Clermont is allying himself with Nature 'against Fortune and unreason'. The main reason for the limitations of Bement's article, as for many of the other works on the influence of Stoicism upon Chapman, is that it assumes that because Chapman was evidently influenced by Stoic ideas, his plays must therefore be seen as complete, coherent, philosophical expressions of that doctrine. This is a mistake also made by Geoffrey Aggeler, for example, who sees in *The Revenge* a coherent thesis revolving around the treatment of the revenge task itself, arguing that 'paradoxically, Clermont's progress towards private revenge, explicitly forbidden by his Christian-Stoic principles, coincides with his

⁴ John Milton, 'Areopagitica', in *John Milton: The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 247.

⁵ Peter Bement, 'The Stoicism of Chapman's Clermont D'Ambois', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 12 (1972), 345-57, p. 346.

intellectual and spiritual progress toward a clearer understanding of the basic premises of his ethical credo'.⁶

This attempt to tidy up Chapman's manifestly untidy play, sweeping all the ambiguities under a Stoic carpet, inevitably leads to critically tortuous assessments of the text – Aggeler finds in Henry's lamentation on Clermont's death the 'suggestion that Clermont's virtuous example may have far-reaching salutary effects' (p.12), which is a rather naïve response to the ending, considering that the entire play has been devoted to Henry's duplicity, hypocrisy and paranoia. Similarly Fred Fetrow argues 'Clermont intends to create in the Guise an agent for the reform of a corrupt society', an assertion for which there is no evidence in the play.⁷ Indeed, to uphold this depends on ignoring the fact that the Guise explicitly refers to his fear that:

Our plots Catastrophe
For propagation of the Catholique cause
Will bloody prove. (5.1.59-60)

The Guise is seen as plotting against the King, although the details remain unspecified, and Clermont does (rather half-heartedly) urge him to give up his plots: 'Retyre then from them all' (5.1.62). Nonetheless, this passage demonstrates the embroilment of both Clermont and the Guise in the murky world of politic intrigue.

This is not to argue that Chapman was not influenced by Stoic thought. However, claims that he was a fully committed and evangelical Stoic exaggerate the strength of his commitment to these ideas. The biggest stumbling-block to such a categorisation is that the virtue of a Stoic involves acceptance of misfortune. As Reid Barbour has summarised, 'the Stoic sage is virtuous to the extent that he or she is apathetic, that is, indifferent to anything outside his or her control'.⁸ But the overwhelming picture of Chapman which emerges through all his work is of a man who is bitterly *discontented* with his misfortunes, and who, even in *The*

⁶ Geoffrey Aggeler, 'The Unity of Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 4 (1969), 5-18 (p. 5).

⁷ Fred M. Fetrow, 'Chapman's Stoic Hero in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *SEL*, 19 (1979), 229-37 (p.236).

⁸ Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 15.

Revenge, whose protagonist continually espouses Stoic platitudes, rages against the injustice of worldly corruption and the way virtue is devalued. T.S. Eliot succinctly comments: 'The original stoicism, and especially the Roman stoicism, was of course a philosophy suited to slaves [...] A man does not join himself with the Universe so long as he has anything else to join himself with'.⁹ This is the root of both Chapman's attraction to Stoic ideas, and to the fact that he can never accept them as completely as Clermont does. A resignation to one's misfortunes is at bottom, a philosophy for slaves, and although Chapman certainly felt himself hard done by, possibly even to some extent, enslaved by his continual struggle to obtain recognition for what he saw as his own exemplary virtue (manifested through his learning and above all, his writing), a complete acceptance of Stoicism would have demanded that he give up that struggle. This was clearly not something he was willing to do, at least during the course of his active writing career.

However, perhaps one of the ways in which Stoicism can be of use to an assessment of Chapman's work is to begin with the recognition that it was not, either during the Renaissance or in classical antiquity, a monolithic or entirely homogenous philosophy. Barbour outlines a basic conflict at the heart of Stoic thinking:

On the one hand, the Stoic is charged with caring more about the cosmic whole than about any one part, and the sage is supposed to subject the will to natural law, fate, and divinity [...] But [...] early Stuarts are just as likely to recommend Stoics as pious advocates of the immortal soul [...] In some Stoic texts, what matters most of all is the seamless and invulnerable self in control of its own nature and destiny. In other words, there is a Stoicism that emphasizes will and the self; there is a Stoicism that emphasizes fate and the whole; and there is a Stoicism that works to bridge the gap between the extremes. (Barbour, pp. 16-17)

This can be seen as analogous to the tension between the active life and the contemplative life which is a concern of much Renaissance thought both Stoic, and more broadly humanist.¹⁰ This split is at the heart of Chapman's own conception of virtue and provides the clearest explanation for his use of Stoic philosophy. His

⁹ T.S. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca,' *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber, 1934), p.41.

¹⁰ See Bement, 'The Stoicism of Clermont D'Ambois'; and Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, pp.18-53.

plays are full of men and women who attempt to constitute themselves as morally good beings, often carving out a space for virtue outside of society as a whole. These attempts usually fail, but in them we can see what Chapman viewed as positive moral qualities, and considering the ways in which they fail we can surmise that although he felt deeply pessimistic about society in general, and court culture in particular, he nonetheless found some saving graces in the lives of learned men (and occasionally women) striving to live their lives in accordance with moral ideals.

'Her too much curious vertue wrongs her': Monsieur D'Olive

Chapman's 1605 comedy, *Monsieur D'Olive*, contemplates through two complimentary figures the problem of reconciling the demands of virtue and society. Both characters are introduced in the opening scene, when the protagonist Vandome, returning from three years of foreign travel, goes to pay a visit to his mistress to find 'the gates shut and cleere|Of all attendants' (1.1.45-6). His relationship with this mistress, the Countess Marcellina, has clearly been one of chaste Platonic affection. His own praise of her places her 'discipline' on an equal footing with her beauty, describing its power 'to checke and to affright [affection] from attempting|Any attaint might disproportion her' (30-31). Outside the shut-up house Vandome meets the Count Vaumont, Marcellina's husband, who relates the reason for its current state. He blames himself for unjustly and jealously questioning the chastity of her relations with Vandome, in reaction to which Marcellina has vowed never to see the light of day again, only rising at night and never appearing in public.

The two men's discussion of this vow revolves around their differing definitions of virtue. Interestingly, although Vaumont fully admits his jealousy was unfounded, he does not absolve Marcellina of all fault: rather he refers to her affection for Vandome as 'onely one doubtfull levitie' which is to be overlooked when weighed with 'all her other manifest perfections' (96-7). He affirms the surety of her chastity, but twice compares this to other women's behaviour, drawing to attention the possibility of unchaste relations within the 'friendship' he

describes. However, he does this in order to emphasise Marcellina's superiority to other women, showing confidence in her:

That she should nothing wrong her husbands right,
To use a friend, onely for virtue chosen,
With all the rights of friendship. (79-81)

The 'rights of friendship' here could refer euphemistically to the sexual relationship for which other women might 'use' their friends, but Marcellina, her husband is keen to tell us, had no such purpose in mind when she chose Vandome. The 'virtue' in this formulation works to the credit of both parties: on one level the phrase means that she chose the friend on the basis of his own undisputed virtue, but on another the virtue accrues to the *choice* made by Marcellina, which motivates her actions, and so this phrase cleverly assures the listener of the speaker's confidence in both parties' unassailable virtue. This is dramatically important, as Vaumont is confessing his own former jealousy to the very man he was jealous of, so he understandably wants to smooth over any ill-feeling which may result from such a confession.

However, the virtue of the friendship (and the chastity of Marcellina) established, a more nuanced debate about the appropriateness of her response ensues. The Count believes her withdrawal from the world to be entirely in keeping with the wrong he has done to her reputation: 'As nothing equals right to virtue done | So is her wrong past all comparison' (123-4). Vandome disagrees, arguing 'Vertue is not malicious' and should forgive sins against it when they are acknowledged and repented, and concluding: 'her too much curious virtue wrongs her' (125,184). To reiterate Vandome's point of view, this scene also introduces the story of St Anne, his brother-in-law, who is so consumed with grief at the death of his wife that he has had her body embalmed and keeps it in his bedchamber:

[...] and at her feete
He like a mortified hermit clad,
Sits weeping out his life. (160-62)

St Anne is a parallel figure to Marcellina in that the play represents him as taking a virtuous impulse too far, retreating into solipsism and rendering him unable to function in human society. In this he is reminiscent of *Twelfth Night's* Olivia, who

is described as 'like a cloistress' watering her chamber 'with eye-offending brine' in mourning for her brother.¹¹ Hardin Craig describes St Anne's sorrows as 'a sort of false and sluggish pleasure mixed with a humour that drowns all things in life with sour, wretched and fearful thoughts'.¹² This secondary plot emphasises the morbidity inherent in the impulse to section oneself off from the world, a morbidity which is equally inherent what one critic has identified as the 'tomb-like atmosphere of Marcellina's house'.¹³ Too much virtue, it seems, is a form of self-obsession which prefigures the ultimate solitariness of death, and is indeed a form of death for social relationships.

Vandome immediately takes it upon himself to bring both Marcellina and St Anne back into sociable company, forcing his way into the closed up house with his rapier drawn (in a penetration of closed female space by a male phallic symbol which could have been designed purely for the satisfaction of Sigmund Freud). Whilst there, he brings up the subject of St Anne and says of him:

I shall dissolve

His settled melancholy be it nere so grounded,

On rationall love, and grave Philosophy. (2.1.207-9)

As in his previous emphasis on Marcellina's chastity, Vandome here carefully acknowledges the virtuous intentions of St Anne, drawing attention to the love and learning which motivate him in his grotesque refusal to bury his wife, but stressing simultaneously that such philosophy can be misused when it turns into 'melancholy'. In this Vandome is acting as the enforcer of the social norm, in much the same way as he praises Marcellina's chastity but draws a distinction between that and her 'Batt-like life' (2.1.93) in the darkened house. In both cases, the virtue of the characters is undermined by their stubborn insistence on withdrawing from company and society. This is perhaps because this withdrawal is fundamentally a selfish impulse, a privileging of the individual over the community. In Vandome's conversation with St Anne it is made clear that what has been previously

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, ed. J.M. Lothian and T.W.Craik (London: Routledge, 1989), 1.1.28, 30.

¹² Hardin Craig, 'Ethics in Jacobean Drama', in *Essays in Dramatic Literature: The Parrott Presentation Volume*, ed. by Hardin Craig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), p.35.

¹³ A.P. Hogan, 'Thematic Unity in *Monsieur D'Olive*', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 11 (1980), 295-306, p.300.

interpreted by St Anne's admirer Eurione, as a positive virtue, evidence of his 'Constance in Love' (2.1.160), is in fact a dangerous despair. St Anne says: 'my dayes are not like life or light, | But bitterest death and a continuall night' (3.1.18-9), the association with death and night further highlighting the analogy with Marcellina. Vandome cheerfully prescribes another lover to take St Anne's mind off his dead wife, and begins to plot to bring him together with Eurione, Marcellina's sister. He achieves this by pretending to St Anne that he wishes him to help him woo Eurione on his behalf, and has soon convinced the reclusive widower to 'undergo the burden of the world' (3.1.109) and allow his wife's corpse to be buried.

But while the treatment of both Marcellina and St Anne would suggest that Chapman proposes a type of virtue that functions within society, this does not precisely prove the case. When Vandome tells the audience at the beginning of Act 4 that his plan has succeeded and he suspects St Anne of falling in love with Eurione, there is a moral ambiguity in his description of the events. We might expect, if St Anne is to be condemned for his morbid obsession with his dead wife, that his falling in love with Eurione is to be interpreted as a rehabilitation, a recovery of his moral standing and social functioning. However, Vandome's description of Eurione suggests that she has been less than honest in her pursuit of St Anne:

And she hath with such cunning borne her selfe,
In fitting his affection, with pretending
Her mortified desires: her onely love
To Vertue and her lovers: and, in briefe,
Hath figured with such life my deare dead Sister,
[...]

That I believe she hath entangld him (4.1.14-7).

The words 'cunning', 'pretending' and 'figured' all suggest that Eurione has been playing a part in order to obtain St Anne's affections: and indeed she has been consciously aping his dead wife. The main sense of 'pretending' is likely to be the obsolete one: 'to offer, present, or put forward for consideration' (*OED*, pretend, *v.* 2.a) but the connotations of deceit and performance are also present and only strengthened by the other similar words in the passage. The syntax allows for the

possibility that she is also 'pretending' to love only virtue, ascribing at least a hint of hypocrisy to both Eurione and Vandome in their 'industrious plot' (21).

Furthermore, the sexual connotations of 'cunning' in its phonetic suggestiveness which calls up both the Latin *cunnus* and the English 'cunt', is the first of several words which work together to bring to the passage a hint of sexual passion that undermines its claim to disinterested virtue. 'Affection' was of course a much stronger concept in the early modern period, with a sense of unrestrained passion, and the words 'desires' and 'lovers' following so closely must introduce a sense of promiscuity to the love which it describes. This promiscuity basically revolves around Eurione's 'cunning' which, with its innuendo recalling the female genitalia, characterises her form of wit and dexterity as a particularly feminine and undeniably sexual attraction, which also carries the previously outlined connotations of deception. It follows then that St Anne has been seduced, not because of Eurione's love of virtue ('pretended' or otherwise), but by her sexual availability. These insinuations are all very subtle, turning as they do on the cumulative effect of connotations of several words, which could all be read in a purely conventional manner, but to the alert reader they introduce a heavy dose of irony into the entire subplot.

This uncertainty as to the morality of Vandome's trickery is also present in the way he deals with Marcellina. He urges the Count to observe:

How my Braine's bold valoure

Will rouse her from her vowes severitie:

No Will, nor Powre, can withstand Pollicie. (4.1.101-4)

The use of the word 'pollicie' here again casts Vandome in a sinister light: as discussed previously, Chapman tends to use the word to refer to the immoral doings of men more interested in power than virtue, particularly in the tragedies. Although the comic genre and light-hearted plotlines obviously prevent us from judging Vandome in the light of politic courtiers such as *The Revenge's* Baligny, the king's assassin and propagandist, the negative connotations of the word should be enough to alert us to the fact that Chapman does not intend him to be seen as an uncomplicated hero. Indeed, in both Vandome and Eurione, we find the concept of 'virtue' beginning to overlap with the Machiavellian idea of *virtu* as an amoral strength encompassing quick-thinking and self-preferment. R.P Corballis has

suggested that for Chapman, the Machiavellian concept of *virtu* was more aligned with 'Confidence' than 'Virtue'.¹⁴ His excellent, though brief, article outlines the Machiavellian influence in both *All Fools* and *The Widow's Tears*, and notes that the latter play's 'juxtaposition of "Confidence" and "Fortune" is reminiscent of the relationship of *virtu* and *fortuna* in Machiavelli's philosophy' (p.44). Although *Monsieur D'Olive* does not have the specific verbal echoes of 'Confidence', Vandome's quick-witted mastery of the events and people around him are clearly very similar to Tharsalio's (or, for that matter, Rinaldo in *All Fools*, the other Machiavellian character discussed by Corballis), and his virtue certainly slides uneasily into *virtu* in a way which suggests the Florentine courtier's philosophy. It should be noted, though, that these trickster characters, while not explicitly censured from the playwright's moral perspective, are never associated with 'virtue' in the manner of characters such as Marcellina, or the later tragic figures of Chabot and Cato. Corballis's assertion that the Machiavellian *virtu* has turned instead into Confidence in Chapman's drama is a highly useful way of conceptualising the relation between virtue and *virtu*.

Indeed, the way in which Marcellina is 'restore[d]' 'To her most sociable selfe againe' (5.1.12-3) is subject to the same kind of double vision we find in St Anne's change of heart. Vandome stirs her up into a jealous rage by telling her that the Count has been courting another woman, and slandering Marcellina's beauty in public. She decides to break her vowe, 'not to procure, but to prevent his shame' (5.1.220), and so arrives at court to lay her claim on her husband. Interestingly, when she arrives at court she is an entirely silent participant. Her reaction to realising she has been tricked is only gleaned by the reader through Vandome's speech: he admits to having gulled her and says:

Nay, there's no going back: Come forward and keepe your temper. Sister, cloud not you your forehead: yonder's a Sunne will cleare your beauties I am sure [...] All was but a shooing horne to draw you hither: now shew your selves women, and say nothing. (5. 2. 24-8)

This passage has two main points of interest for our discussion. Firstly, to draw the comparison with St Anne's return to society, the manner by which the demands of virtue are reconciled to the dictates of community undermines the

¹⁴ R.P. Corballis, 'Chapman and Machiavelli', *Parergon*, 16 (1976), 39-46 (p.44).

idealistic terms in which that virtue had constructed itself. For, just as St Anne's vow of constancy to his wife does not last long when faced with a living, beautiful woman, Marcellina's vow of solitude is overcome by playing on a stereotypical assumption of female jealousy and vanity. Her claim that she is only coming to court to prevent her husband's shame would surely have been met in performance with ironic amusement, further rendering her an object of condescension rather than admiration for the audience.

Both Marcellina and St Anne began the play with an ideal concept of virtue which was opposed to society: they had each created a space for themselves in their eremitic desire to escape the public gaze. However, not only does the play insist that such a virtue is unsustainable and must somehow achieve a compromise with public life, it also reveals the idealist view of individualistic virtue as fundamentally mistaken. The 'virtue' which both characters initially saw as central to their identity was in fact already compromised by the flaws of their own personalities (vanity in Marcellina's case, despair in St Anne's), and the only solution is to accept the compromised virtue as the only true and workable version of it, and reintegrate it into society.

The second interesting point about Marcellina's reintegration is that it marks her removal from the house in which she lives according to a different time-scheme to the rest of the court: 'as if shee liv'd in another World amongst the Antipodes' (1.2.55). While she is shut up in her house she evades the control of men: she has initiated her solitude as a protest against her husband's false construction of her virtue, and she continues it in defiance of his wishes and against Vandome's advice. The topsy-turvy time-scheme adopted is a sign of her independence from the court. However, with the success of Vandome's scheme the Countess is brought back under the masculine control of the 'Sunne', and back into the same time schedule as the other characters. Vandome's final exhortation: 'now shew yourselves women and say nothing' (5.2.28) has a double meaning. It is of course, an order for both women to come forward to the presence of the Count and his court, making their first public appearance in the three years since their confinement, followed by a dismissal of their objections to Vandome's trick. However, it could also mean that in order to prove that they are women in the traditional sense, they have to keep silent: show yourselves women *by saying*

nothing. Either way, Marcellina does not speak again in the play, leaving the audience/reader in a dilemma similar to that produced at the end of *Measure for Measure*: is female silence a mark of acquiescence or resistance? This play perhaps allows less possibility for resistance than *Measure for Measure*, because the silence has been preceded by a male order requiring it, whereas Isabella's silence is in the face of the Duke's questioning and so has more potential for rebellion.

To return to the main subject, virtue in *Monsieur D'Olive* is treated in a very ambivalent manner. As we have seen, both Marcellina and St Anne engage in behaviour which they think a mark of their virtue, but which, in its anti-social bent, other characters find threatening or troublesome. However, their reintegration into society and their adoption of more moderate expressions of virtue only show up how fragile a base that virtue had in the first place. This play, perhaps because of its unremittingly satiric tone, ultimately disallows the possibility of idealistic, virtuous behaviour, and the moral ambiguity of its protagonist only underscores that fact. In it, Chapman explores in a light-hearted fashion a topic which is of repeated concern to him throughout his career: the difficulties arising from any attempt to reconcile virtue with society, particularly a courtly society. The virtuous individual beset by corrupting influences from outside is a leitmotif in his drama, and shows his own uneasiness with his involvement in the world of courtly, elite culture for which he wrote. Such a reading is supported by the fact that virtue is so often associated with learning, appropriate judgement, and philosophy. This suggests that the trope of beleaguered virtue we find in his plays is a version of the poet himself, struggling to maintain artistic integrity in a world which values only showy entertainment. This ambiguous representation of virtue is also a feature of the 1604 play, *The Gentleman Usher*, which shows if anything a slightly more serious and extensive consideration of the subject.

The Gentleman Usher: *Virtue in Stoic Fortitude or State Espionage?*

While conventional heroism is undermined throughout Chapman's work, there do appear in various plays characters who seem to command the respect of the

playwright. These characters are usually marked by their learned, philosophical outlook on life which gives them an independence from the court politics which surrounds them, and allows them to look upon their frequent misfortune with a fortitude probably influenced by Chapman's fondness for Stoicism. It is interesting to note that these characters are never the protagonists of the plays in which they appear: rather, in Chapman's imagination, virtue is confined to the margins of society, and consequently, to the sub-plots and minor characters of his plays.

One of the earliest examples of this marginalised form of virtue is found in *The Gentleman Usher*. I have argued in Chapter 4 that in this play, interpretative skill is viewed as a marker of moral strength – so the illiteracy of the Duke's favourite, Medice, demonstrates his ignoble standing in society, while the comic usher is judged to have seen 'with freer and more noble eyes' (5.4.175-6) than many of the aristocratic characters, which goes some way to mitigating his 'sawcie friendship' with the Prince (4.2.114). The sub-plot of this play concerns the Prince's friend Strozza, who is shot in the side with 'a forked shaft' while hunting with the Duke and Medice. Directly before this happens, Vincentio has informed Strozza of his plan to secretly marry his beloved, Margaret, while his father is distracted with the hunt, and exhorted to 'observe' the Duke and Medice, 'And note, if you can gather any signe, | That they have mist me' (3.2.286, 289-90). Strozza is established as one who has the ability to see through the false favourite and take Vincentio's side in the rivalry between him and his father over Margaret. That he is injured while carrying out this 'observation' in the service of the match between Vincentio and Margaret is surely also intended to heighten the audience's sense of his integrity.

Strozza's initial response to his injury, however, is not very exemplary. On being told by the doctor that the only means of treating it is to break his rib, he refuses to 'be anatomized alive' (4.1.27), and instead makes a long speech in which he expresses his wish for death, and arrives at the conclusion that suicide is the best option: 'King of Phisitians, death, | Ile dig thee from this Mine of miserie' (45-6). There are several instances of suicide in Chapman's works, but this impulse is far closer to Clermont D'Ambois's decision to take his own life on learning of the Guise's murder than it is to Cato's suicide in *Caesar and Pompey* (to be discussed

later in this section). Cato's act is done from the genuinely Stoic motivation of not wishing one's enemy to have control of one's actions. Clermont's suicide, as has been discussed, is a failure to live up to his ideals, essentially a cop-out caused by a wish not to have to undergo the trials life has brought, rather than a heroic and selfless decision. Strozza's impulse here is seen as a similarly cowardly desire, but in contrast to Clermont, he moves on from this position of despair and achieves a state of detachment some might consider to be almost ethereal. He does this, crucially, at the urging of his virtuous wife Cynanche. She says:

O hold my Lord, this is no Christian part,
 Nor yet scarce manly, when your mankinde foe,
 Imperious death shall make your grones his trumpets
 To summon resignation of Lifes fort,
 To flie without resistance; you must force
 A countermines of Fortitude, more deepe
 Than this poore Mine of paines, to blow him up,
 And spight of him live victor, though subdu'd:
 Patience in torment is a valure more
 Than ever crown'd Th' Alchmenean Conqueror. (4.1.47-56)

Although Cynanche refers to her philosophy as 'Christian' patience, what she is urging is not a faith in religion but a self-sufficiency and individual strength which she claims Strozza already possesses, and which has the power to overcome death. Michael Higgins describes her philosophy as 'a baptized Stoicism, [...] no longer a logical pantheism which admits man's right to dismiss his own soul, but a doctrine of "Christian patience", wherewith to salve "pagan sin"'.¹⁵ But to see this episode as demonstrating how pagan Stoicism becomes improved by assimilation to Christian ideals is perhaps a simplification. John W. Wieler's study, *George Chapman: The Influence of Stoicism Upon his Tragedies* does not mention this episode, but it does go into detail on the Stoic philosophy of suicide, and is at pains to point out that 'Only an illness that is incurable justifies suicide' – Wieler quotes Seneca's *Letters* as stating 'I shall not lay hands upon myself just because I am in pain; for death under such circumstances is defeat [...] He who dies because he is in pain is

¹⁵ Michael Higgins, 'The Development of the "Senecal Man": Chapman's Bussy D'Ambois and Some Precursors', *RES*, 23 (1947), 24-33.

a weakling, a coward.'¹⁶ Cynanche, although she brings the terms 'pagan' and 'Christian' into contrast in her argument, is essentially voicing this Senecan opinion. It is important to note that, as with most of Chapman's stoic expressions of thought, there has been some controversy over whether this actually constitutes stoicism. Gilles D. Monserrat argues that Strozza's conversion here cannot be seen as truly Stoic, because it is presented as a religious conversion. His reading of Chapman's works in general disputes the idea that Chapman had a 'sustained commitment' to Stoic doctrine, arguing instead that what stoic expressions are voiced in his works, particularly around the period of writing *The Revenge*, come from his immediate reading of Epictetus rather than a deep-seated and long-term conviction.¹⁷ Monserrat is correct to dispute the assumption that Chapman was fully committed to Stoic philosophy, for reasons I have already discussed, but his strategy of analysing the 'true' or 'false' Stoicism of these moments in the drama is perhaps not the most useful way to go about making such an argument, supposing as it does that Chapman was incorrect, careless or simply wrong in his reading of Seneca and Epictetus. Raymond B. Waddington's review of Monserrat's book points out the theoretical weakness of his approach: 'the quest for doctrinal purity too often takes the form of weighing the Stoic elements of the individual's philosophy against the Christian ones. Not surprisingly, few Stoics emerge from the search'.¹⁸ It is more interesting in Chapman's case to consider this fusion of Christianity and Stoicism as evidence of his flexibility of thought and the way he moulded the authors he borrowed from to more fully express Renaissance concerns.

Cynanche, then, borrows from both Stoic and Christian thought in her exhortation to Strozza to bear his pain more patiently. Ultimately what she suggests is that the ability to endure suffering is what constitutes a man. In this speech she accuses her husband of being 'skarce manly', but then turns the concept of 'man' into a metonym for humanity, eliding the specific gender

¹⁶ John W. Wieler, *George Chapman: The Effect of Stoicism upon his Tragedies* (New York, 1949), p. 13. Quote from Seneca, *Seneca ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, trans. Richard M. Gummere, I, 409.

¹⁷ Gilles D. Monserrat, *Light From the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature* (Paris, Didier-Erudition, 1984),

¹⁸ Raymond B. Waddington, 'Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature', by Gilles D. Monserrat', *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985), 757-9 (p.757).

connotations at work in the first instance in favour of a contrast between man and god. Her argument that 'patience in torment' is a virtue not achieved by 'th'Alchmenean Conqueror' could refer either to Zeus or to Hercules. Cynanche does not specify whether she means the one who *conquered* Alcmena, or the Conqueror who *came from* Alcmena. The ambiguity is suggestive of the uncertain border between human and divine, which can be crossed by exemplary deeds (as Hercules himself had proved). This is appropriate to her purpose because the virtue she prescribes can raise men above the status of the pagan gods or the archetype of human heroism – an argument which combines transcendent ideals with a sense of Christianity's superiority to classical paganism.

She returns to the gender-laden terms in her next speech, casting the pains which assail Strozza as 'womens clamours' which will be best stopped by ignoring them, as 'mens patience' ignores female nagging. There is an interesting paradox at work in the fact that even while Cynanche relies on very conservative notions of male and female roles in her speech here, her own behaviour is far closer to that ideal of manly virtue she promotes, than is her husband's. Even more intriguingly, this is not seen as a source of anxiety, but as an admirable moral stance which finally exhorts her husband to behave in a more philosophical fashion.

The extensive military metaphor running through this speech is also given a slightly surprising twist in the final lines. Initially it seems a conventional description of warfare, imagining Strozza as a fort besieged by 'Imperious death', and urging him to 'blow him [i.e., death] up', but immediately after this the resistance becomes much more passive, as Cynanche qualifies the 'victory' by adding that he has been 'subdued', and finally arriving at the conclusion that 'patience in torment' is the best form of heroism. This is not quite the expected conclusion of such military language: it essentially overturns the value of conquering to suggest instead that a passive form of resistance is *more heroic* than martial conquest.

This is a philosophy with conservative political implications: the idea of passive fortitude could be applied to the situation at the Duke's court too. Here, the Duke's court is corrupted because he is enamoured of an unworthy favourite, but his subjects, though they have noticed the corruption, take no steps to resolve it which may be seen as treacherous: rather, the events of the play work to bring

about a resolution which restores the court from the top. The Duke has a change of heart after his son is almost killed and Margaret, in a nod to Sidney's *Parthenia* of the *New Arcadia*, disfigures her own face with acid in a rebuke to her father-in-law. We might imagine that this is the only form of political resistance of which James I might approve: the violence is directed towards the subject, not the monarch, and the monarch can be relied upon to recognise the error of his ways and banish the unsuitable influence from the court. However, this is not to say that such an outlook approves of the status quo: rather, it recognises the futility of resistance to a corrupt world or desperate situation, and vows to withstand it individually. Contained in this is a withdrawal from the world, a disengagement from public life, which is also found in other of Chapman's virtuous characters. The figure of the morally upright hermit is repeated in various guises throughout Chapman's work, and Cynanche's branch of fortitude also contains the self-sufficiency of the eremitical impulse which Chapman seems so often to associate with moral probity.

Strozza remains unconvinced throughout this short scene, but his reappearance in a later scene shows his change of heart. Here he thanks his wife for 'the sweete foode of thy divine advice' (4.3.3) and launches into an extended praise of 'a virtuous wife', whom he describes as possessing 'the weaker bodie, still the stronger soule' (4.3.8). He depicts a version of marriage in which the woman's exemplary virtue, like a Platonic ideal, strengthens the husband and provides more benefit to his life than either money or power. His speech is in many ways entirely conventional in its imagination of gender roles: he refers to the wife as 'in all things his [her husband's] sweete Ape' (21), but in the pivotal role given to the woman in her husband's moral and spiritual welfare Chapman here shows his alignment with what Lawrence Stone has described as 'the ideal of conjugal affection', and 'spiritual intimacy' which was gaining hold through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and often voiced in 'both Puritan and Anglican theology'.¹⁹ Strozza, through the quasi-divine influence of his wife, is shown as attaining a level of enlightenment unequalled by anything else in Chapman's drama: he claims that 'Humilitie hath raised me to the starres' (61): he

¹⁹ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp.100-101.

feels no pain and has achieved a gift of prophecy. Strozza is adamant that on 'the seventh day | The arrow head will fall out of my side' (65-6). Although the other characters think he has gone mad as a result of the pain, he correctly predicts that his doctor is about to arrive, and in the final act is seen vindicated in his claim, the arrow-head having fallen out as he had foreseen. He then uses these apparent psychic powers to convince Medice that he knows his full history of imposture and deceit, and makes him confess his true background by threatening: 'Forbidden is it from heaven to let him live | Till by confession he may have forgiveness' (5.4.228-9). Medice does confess, but he does not ask forgiveness, nor is it granted: Strozza urges the king not to kill him, because his blood is too base to be spilled in the Court, so he is banished instead, and exits the stage being beaten by two pages (5.4.278, *s.d.*).

The virtue attained by Strozza is complicated by the way he uses it to dispose of Medice: on one hand we could read it as a narrative of how humility and patience to suffer wrongs under a corrupt regime can eventually purge that regime of its corruption and heal the community. On the other hand, it is very possible that Strozza is bluffing Medice: he never proves that he knows his true identity, but merely persuades the favourite to reveal his past by convincing him it is already known. This suggests that Strozza is deceiving Medice, allowing for a reading in which the virtue and self-sufficiency he attained through his painful experience becomes tainted when he again involves himself in the political life of the court. It is very typical of Chapman's usual strategy that even the means by which everything is resolved is subject to its own troublesome interpretation when looked at from a certain angle. The reader is left uncertain of quite how to respond to Strozza's experience. Is there some measure of irony intended in how quickly he turns this direct line to the heavens to the service of the Duke? I suspect not: rather the disjunction between Strozza's idealistically philosophical stance in Act 4 and his role almost as an intelligence agent in soliciting Medice's confession in Act 5 is instead a demonstration of the fragility of virtue. Chapman suggests that virtue is a domestic quality, possible only in the brief interludes when man is isolated from society and involved in a contemplation of the relation between the self and the divine. It is inevitably compromised by its involvement in public

affairs. This is an insight which is explored in several other plays, and particularly developed in his later work.

The Republican Philosophy of Caesar and Pompey

Caesar and Pompey (published 1631, composed in 1604-05 or 1612) is one of Chapman's most morally didactic plays: both the title-page and the opening of the play proper bear the slogan 'Only a just man is a free man', as though advertising the author's philosophy in advance of the text. Critics have generally recognised that the character who most embodies the virtue set out in this epithet is Cato.²⁰ Allen Bergson, for example, sees Cato as Chapman's most idealistic example of Stoic virtue: 'In marked distinction to the putative Stoic heroes, Clermont and Chabot – as well as to the self-deceiving, corrupted protagonists, Bussy and Byron – Cato emerges complete in his knowledge of himself and without illusions as to the nature of the world and the political animal that preys upon it'.²¹ Bergson is correct to identify Cato as the character who most fully carries Chapman's moral approval in all his tragic oeuvre, but his assertion that he is entirely without illusion needs to be qualified: Cato is indeed consistently characterised as selfless, virtuous and wise, but nonetheless he harbours a fatal blindness about Pompey's real intentions which is similar to Clermont's blind approval of the Guise and Chabot's failure to recognise his king's folly.

However, this lack of understanding of his protégé is distinguished from the behaviour of those other protagonists, crucially, because his relationship with Pompey is not marked by the servile dynamic that structures both Clermont and Chabot's relationships with their patrons. Cato advises Pompey, but is not his

²⁰ For example, John W. Wieler, *George Chapman: The Effect of Stoicism on his Tragedies*, pp.158-9; Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman: Renaissance Ethics in Action*, p.132; Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order*, p.22; Derek Crawley, 'Decision and Character in Chapman's *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*', *SEL*, 7 (1967), 277-97 (p.277). Elias Schwartz, by contrast, sees Pompey as the true tragic protagonist in 'A Neglected Play by Chapman', *SP*, 58 (1961), 140-159 (p.140), although he also suggests that all three major figures share the dramatic focus and that the real unity lies in the action as a whole. Suzanne Kistler picks up on this in 'The Significance of the Missing Hero in Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey*', *MLQ*, 40 (1979), 339-57, which argues that the play has 'a tripartite emphasis' and presents Caesar's rise in counterpoint to the falls of both Pompey and Cato.

²¹ Allen Bergson, 'Stoicism Achieved: Cato in Chapman's *Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*', *SEL*, 17 (1977), 295-302.

servant. The political structure of the Roman republic allows Cato an independence and integrity which is not imaginable within a monarchy whose power relations are structured by court patronage. So despite Cato being mistaken about Pompey's virtue, his own integrity is not compromised by that mistake. The republican structure of Rome allows Cato's virtue to exist but when that political system is threatened and ultimately destroyed by Caesar's ambitions, Cato recognises that his moral integrity is untenable, and so he kills himself rather than compromise that political independence on which his virtue and sense of self both rest.

In the opening Act, Cato is immediately established as a voice of wisdom and an objective commentator on the turbulent struggle between Caesar and Pompey which characterises current Roman politics. The play's opening shows him predicting that the two generals 'threaten tempests to our peace and Empire, | Which we shall shortly see poure down in blood' (1.1.4-5). The first scene is a private conversation between Cato and several of his associates, in which it is revealed that Caesar's henchmen are planning on obstructing Cato from taking up his place in the Senate by any means necessary, including violence. This establishes the imminent ruin of the republican values Cato stands for, and also gives Chapman an opportunity to demonstrate Cato's concern for Rome as outweighing his personal safety, as he says to one of the Roman tribunes:

Welcome, come stand by me in what is fit
 For our poore Cities safety; nor respect
 Her proudest foes corruption, or our danger
 Of what seene face soever. (1.1.85-8)

The next scene enters the public arena of the incipient conflict: the crowded Senate, where a debate rages on whether, in the wake of Catiline's conspiracy, to protect the republic by allowing Pompey's army to enter Italy. Caesar is pushing for this because it gives him a pretext for bringing his own army close to Rome, strengthening his power. Cato, after a brief skirmish at the door of the senate, takes his seat and immediately speaks against the need for either army to enter, arguing instead that the surviving conspirators should be executed immediately. Cato here establishes himself as allied to Pompey, but nonetheless argues that it would be dangerous to allow one general such power over Rome. He shows his

unshakeable confidence that Pompey does not personally wish to lead his army to Italy: 'Since I as well thinke he affects not th'Empire [...] Since he loves his Country, | In my great hopes of him, too well to seeke his sole rule of her' (1.2.133-7).

Cato's faith in Pompey seems at odds with the characterisation of the general throughout the play. In the same scene, Caesar and Pompey debate with each other in a manner which descends into bickering and mutual insult, and both seem equally at fault, each saying that they do not want to boast of their services to their country, but then going on to do just that. Cato's allegiance to Pompey rather than Caesar is problematised even at this early stage in the play, and the divergence between his idealistic view of Pompey, and the reality, is only emphasised further in later scenes. Although the Senate scene ends with Caesar's party baying for war and the Senate and people chanting 'peace, peace, worthy Pompey' (301), the association of Caesar with war and Pompey with peace breaks down when Caesar offers a truce and Pompey, against Cato's advice, refuses it and forces the battle which is to prove disastrous for his fortunes. In Act 2, Cato rebukes Pompey for boasting that his recent victory has left 'two thousand soldiers slaine' (2.4.5), reminding him that Caesar's soldiers are Romans too. Cato consistently argues for as little violence against his fellow Romans as possible:

Let me beseech you that in this warre,
You sack no city subject to our Rule,
Nor put to sword one Citizen of Rome
But when the needful fury of the sword
Can make no fit distinction in maine battaile; (2.4.40-44).

However, when Cato leaves Pompey's camp to safeguard the neighbouring city of Utica, on orders of the Senate (62-70), not only does Pompey refuse the offered peace of Caesar, he also accepts the tribute of five unspecified lesser kings, in a scene reminiscent of *Tamburlaine* Part 1, when the kings of Morocco, Fez and Argier pay tribute to the Emperor Bajazeth. Pompey's acceptance of this tribute undermines Cato's belief that he is uninterested in personal rule. At the beginning of the scene in which he welcomes the five kings, he utilises distinctly royal language in speaking of his own power, saying he gives them:

Such welcome as the spirit of all my fortunes,

Conquests, and triumphs (now come for their crowne)
 Can crowne your favours with. (3.1.4-6)

The fact that he identifies the present moment as the one in which his achievements will be 'crowne[d]' shows that he is already beginning to think of himself in terms of a monarch. Chapman had previously used a similar linguistic technique in *Byron*, when Byron's ambition is shown in an increasing use of exactly such language of crowns and royalty, so it is reasonable to interpret the same phrases here as indicative of a comparable personal ambition in the character under discussion. This renders his conflict with Caesar far less noble: rather than Pompey defending the Republican values of Rome, those values are under attack from both generals as each struggles to maintain martial superiority and increase his personal power.

Furthermore, Pompey is obsessed with his reputation, abnegating himself of all responsibility for the outcome of the second battle with Caesar:

And therefore what event soever sort,
 As I no praise will look for, but the good
 Freely bestow on all (if good succeed);
 So if adverse fate fall, I wish no blame,
 But th'ill befall me, made my fortunes shame,
 Not mine, nor my fault. (3.1.22-27)

Pompey's fear that he will be blamed for losing a battle is apparent again in the following act, when after a night of bad portents his army is in chaos even before the battle has begun. He says to Brutus: 'I cannot, Sir, abide mens open mouthes, | Nor be ill spoken of' (4.1.45-6). His defeat eventually forces him to come to a more Stoic mindset, although his enlightenment is only partial, as he dies denouncing the gods in a distinctly un-Stoic manner which contrasts with Cato's cheerful plucking out of his own entrails to hasten his moment of death.

One of the tokens of Pompey's more virtuous outlook is his realisation that his previous concern for what men thought of him was erroneous. In a speech with distinctly meta-theatrical resonance, he notes that 'their applauses fail me, that are hisses | To every sound acceptance' (4.4.68-9). He has arrived at 'sound acceptance' and seen the false applause of the fickle public for what it is – the hissing of a snake. One wonders if this is a hint of Chapman's own position towards the theatre, in what could have been the last play he wrote, and was

certainly the last to be published.²² He also goes on to comment on the transience of worldly glory: 'the world's false loves, and ayry honours' (76), and he and his servant Demetrius resolve to disguise themselves and flee to Cato, visiting his wife and family first.

Pompey's scene of reunion with his wife Cornelia is important to the play's moral schema. Like Cynanche in *The Gentleman Usher*, Pompey's wife is a paragon of female virtue and accepts her husband's fall from power with a thoroughgoing fortitude. She is established as wiser than her husband, reacting with incredulity to the news that Pompey's side had been negotiating before the battle for the political positions they expected to be theirs after the victory:

Why should men

Tempt fate with such confidence? Seeking places

Before the power that should dispose could grant them?' (5.1.44-6)

Pompey tests Cornelia's reaction by staying in disguise initially, and having his servant quiz her on her feelings for her husband, asking if she thinks him good, to which she replies: 'he is not worldly, but truly good' (5.1.136). She then denies his assertion that 'every great Lady must have her husband great still, or her love will be little' (5.1.147-8). Finally Pompey, still disguised, asks her: 'could you submit yourself chearefully to your husband, supposing him false?' (153-5), and she responds 'If he submit himself cheerfully to his fortune' (156). Their subsequent conversation clearly reveals Chapman's belief that only the humble can be truly good. Pompey exclaims at the unlikelihood of Cornelia's reaction:

Is it possible?

A woman, losing gretnesse, still as good

As at her greatest? Oh gods, was I ever

Great till this minute? (165-8)

He also comments on the uncertainty of a greatness constituted by worldly success:

Greatness, not of it selfe, is never sure.

Before we went upon heaven, rather treading

The virtues of it underfoot, in making

The vicious world our heaven. (189-92)

²² See Introduction, pp. 43-44 for a summary of the dating debate surrounding *Caesar and Pompey*.

This is brought to the logical conclusion that a life lived cut off from public scrutiny and the temptations of power is inherently more virtuous:

And for earthly greatnesse
All heavenly comforts rarifies to ayre,
Ile therefore live in darke, and all my light,
Like ancient temples, let in at my top.
This were to turn ones back to all the world
And onely look at heaven. (215-220)

The sincerity of Pompey's new-found perspective is debatable. When Caesar's men (arriving to assassinate him) do not greet him, he complains 'I am now not worth mens words' (257). This is more in line with his previous habit of relying on other people's opinions than with his new resolution to 'stand no more | On others legs' (206-7). He also pleads with the gods to prolong his life: 'last yet life | And bring the gods off fairer: after this | Who will adore, or serve the deities?' (264-6). There are two possible ways of interpreting this reaction: either we can assume that Chapman condones it, and it is meant as an indictment of the injustice of the world, or it is intended to demonstrate the limitations of Pompey's new philosophy. The fact that it contrasts so much with Cato's attitude to his own death suggests the latter.

Cato voices strong approval of the eremetical impulse to desert the world and humbly cultivate one's own virtue. Large chunks of Acts 4 and 5 are devoted to his expounding of his philosophy, which prepares both his family and the audience for his suicide at the end of the play. In Act 4 he argues that no man should fear death, and Chapman anachronistically has him voice a distinctly Christian belief that death:

Makes a reunion with the spritely soule;
When in a second life their beings given,
Holds their proportion firme, in highest heaven'. (4.6.121-3)

That this discussion precedes Pompey's death-scene suggests that Chapman is subtly suggesting Pompey's conversion to virtue to be only partial at best. Cato remains the moral centre of the play, and after Pompey's death, he becomes its sole dramatic focus.

His speech before his suicide makes it absolutely clear that he is not, like Clermont, killing himself for the wrong reasons. Rather it is his determination to

avoid being corrupted by the political changes wrought by Caesar's victory which motivates him. He is horrified by the prospect that 'men needes must serve the place of justice, | The forme, and idol, and renounce it selfe' (5.2.14-5). He refuses to ask Caesar to spare his life precisely because he recognises that this would necessitate his own entrance into the cycle of obligation and repayment discussed in the previous chapter. Just as Henry pardons Byron to be assured of his future loyalty, and Francis attempts to do the same to Chabot, Cato's advisor Athenodorus says '[Caesar] would thinke | His owne life given more strength in giving yours' (4.6.20-1). This is precisely what Cato fears, saying 'Ile rather make a beast my second father' (44) and asking why he should 'reserve [his life] | To serve a Tyrant with it?' (56-7).

Cato's actions then spring from a conviction that if he remains alive, Caesar's tyranny will bend his life to corrupt uses, and he is not willing to compromise his own integrity in this way. He also counsels his son to avoid the public life which he himself had previously led:

Be counsailde,
By your experience't father, not to touch
At any action of the publique weale,
Nor any rule beare neare her politique sterne. (5.2.107-10)

The contrast between this advice and his own insistence in the opening scene that he must enter the Senate and serve the Republic regardless of personal cost, is marked. Suzanne F. Kistler comments on this, arguing that it demonstrates Chapman's distance from Cato's philosophy. She writes 'In the long run, Cato's very purity, the source of his strength, makes it impossible for him to assess the world around him accurately, or function in it effectively. His only solution to human evil is to run away from it: to "fly the world" in self-inflicted death'.²³ She sees the contrast between Cato's advice to his son and his previous enthusiasm for public life as evidence of the 'diminution of the man's energy of spirit' (p.347).

However, Kistler misses the vital point that Cato's change of heart does not occur because of the inherent weakness of his virtue or his philosophy. What has changed between the start of the play and its climax with his suicide is that the Republic no longer exists: as Cato recognises, Caesar's power has become a

²³ Kistler, 'The Significance of the Missing Hero', pp.345-6.

tyranny of personal rule. The only possible conclusion here is that virtue of the sort harboured by Cato is only possible in a republican political system. Within a tyranny, as within a monarchy (and in Chapman's imagination the two are remarkably similar) the only way for virtue to survive is to hide itself far from the wellhead of political power. This may well mean running away from human evil, as Kistler interprets Cato's actions, but to suggest that Chapman therefore castigates Cato is to miss the point that it is the evil done by Caesar's thirst for personal authority which is the main focus of the play's criticism.

This is a conclusion which is also suggested by several other plays. Perhaps the most extended discussion on this topic occurs in *The Tragedy of Chabot* (published 1639, written 1611-13). Chabot's father-in-law, as discussed in Chapter 4, is presented as a voice of criticism of the corrupt ways of the court. It is a crucial aspect of his characterisation that he has only very reluctantly come to court because he has heard of the dangerous situation Chabot is in. The king and Chabot discuss the old man's 'aversation' to the court, with the king asking: 'What's the strange reason that he will not rise | Above the middle region he was born in?' (1.1.139-40). Chabot replies:

He saith Sir, tis because the extreame of height
 Makes a man lesse seeme to the imperfect eye
 Then he is truly, his acts envied more,
 And though he nothing cares for seeming, so
 His being just stand firme twixt heaven and him,
 Yet since in his soules jealousie, hee feares
 That he himselfe advanced, would undervalue
 Men plac'd beneath him, and their business with him,
 Since height of place oft dazzles height of judgement,
 He takes his toppe-saile downe in such rough stormes,
 And apts his sailes to ayres more temperate. (1.1.141-51)

The king's question reveals his attitude towards social mobility, which is that it is 'strange' for anyone not to wish to rise above the level at which they were born. Chabot's description of his father-in-law's attitude revolves around the distortion of judgement that high stations entail: the good man raised above the rank of his birth is not only subject to the misinterpretation of the mass of men who observe him (a theme emphasised throughout *Chabot* in the discussion of the admiral's

unpopularity with the public), he also runs the risk of allowing his own judgement to be clouded, and it is this second risk which the father-in-law sees as unacceptable. The crux of the objection is that he would 'undervalue men placed beneath him'. Interestingly this is not a description of what later happens in the play (Chabot's flaw in judgement is not that he is unfair to his inferiors but that he is blind to the faults of the King). The old man's formulation can perhaps be seen as revealing Chapman's own bitterness at his sense that he and his work were undervalued by his patrons and potential patrons. These words suggest that it is inevitable that men in positions of power will not judge truly about the worth of those beneath them in the social scale. The fact that this is voiced by the morally upright father-in-law gives it added weight, as his distance from the court acts as a guarantor of his own virtue and objective judgement.

In the next scene, the old man's first speech to his son-in-law is to urge him to leave the court, something which he has clearly attempted to persuade him to previously, as Chabot refers to 'your old argument' (1.2.5), which the father-in-law claims is 'fortified with new and pregnant reasons' (6). Here we see the fundamental paradox at the heart of Chapman's conception of virtue. Virtue is associated with a life *away* from the court, but his plays only represent it as already compromised by a move back to that court. Similarly, Bussy D'Ambois is shown in the opening scene of the eponymous play of 1607 being wooed by Monsieur to leave his 'greene Retreat' (1.1.45). Monsieur describes him as:

A man of spirit beyond the reach of feare,
Who (discontented with his neglected worth)
Neglects the light, and loves obscure Abodes; (1.1.46-8)

There is a similar sense of bitterness here as can be traced in the undertone of the speech from *Chabot*, but with the difference that this bitterness is specifically ascribed to the character under discussion. Bussy's decision to live in 'obscure Abodes' is not obviously motivated by virtue, but by his sense of being neglected by those who are in the position to esteem 'worth'. As Richard S. Ide comments, 'his rhetoric of virtuous retirement disguises the grudge of a man who would rather be out on the heroic seas'.²⁴ By contrast, the father-in-law in *Chabot* is worried that he himself would fail to properly esteem virtue if he was to take up a

²⁴ Ide, *Possessed With Greatness*, p.80.

place at court. Bussy has no such self-awareness, as his blasé resolution to 'bring up a new fashion | And rise in Court with vertue' (1.1.125-6) shows.

Indeed, Bussy's speech at this juncture shows a basic incoherence in his thought which is symptomatic of the incoherence at the heart of the entire play. While he realises that Monsieur wants to bring him to court for shadowy purposes, he nonetheless proclaims 'A smooth plain ground | Will never nourish any politicke seede' (1.1.122-3). But this resolution vacillates when he decides that *if* he may 'rise [...] with vertue' 'speede his plow', which suggests not that he is rejecting the Monsieur's attempt to sow the seeds of treason in his own rise, but that he is willing to accept this compromise. Furthermore, he then makes the curious analogy:

As Rhetoricke, yet workes not perswasion,
But only is a means to make it worke:
So no man rises by his reall merit,
But when it cries Clincke in his Raisers spirit (1. 1. 132-5).

Chapman suggests that just as the power of rhetoric is not sufficient to accomplish the persuasion of the listener (perhaps insinuating that it must be accompanied by either the power of truth, or at least the listener's predisposition towards being persuaded), a man's 'reall merit' needs to chime with the whims of his patron in order to effect his social rise. This comparing of the *means* of persuasion with the *means* of social advancement through patronage undermines Bussy's vow to rise in court by virtue alone, rendering the support of a patron all-important. The troubling implications are magnified by the fact that in this construction, the 'reall merit' of a man is not being equated to the substance of an argument, but rather to its rhetorical gloss. These lines then confuse surface and substance, casting doubt on the possibility of distinguishing the two. The whim of the patron becomes more important to the social status of the client than his own 'reall merit', again radically undermining Bussy's plan to retain his virtue while at court.

Bussy makes no attempt to reconcile the conflicting claims he has made in the course of this speech. While he takes account of the proverbial phrase: 'Mans first houres rise, is first steppe to his fall' (137), he simply concludes that the rewards outstrip the dangers of court life: 'I'le venture that; men that fall low must die | As well as men cast headlong from the skie' (138-9). The double vision of even

this short scene is absolutely typical of the aesthetic approach Chapman takes throughout *Bussy D'Ambois*. The hero is incapable of resolving the paradox between his idealistic self-image and his actual rather sordid behaviour, and in many ways Chapman forces the reader and/or audience into a similar position of uncertainty with regard to Bussy's true worth, in order to challenge his audience and force them to accord with his own moral schema and social outlook.

Chapman's Aesthetic: Obscurity as Radical Artistic Theory

Having examined the various manifestations of virtue in Chapman's characters, it is clear that he values 'obscure abodes' as a site where one can maintain integrity away from the pressures of the world, even as he realises that the demands of materiality exert a pressure on the virtuous man to leave obscurity and attempt to reconcile public life with virtuous pursuits. This quandary has a parallel in his artistic life. As the previous chapter on patronage argued, he clearly felt compromised by engaging with court patronage and yet continued to do so for many years because his desperate financial situation did not allow him the luxury of self-sufficiency. In his final years he retreated again into obscurity, living in Hitchin and devoting his artistic efforts to translations rather than stage-plays. A Chancery suit against him in 1617 described Chapman as one 'of mean and poore estate,' who 'doth now lyve in remote places and is hard to be found'.²⁵ His literary reputation has suffered a similar fate, with many critics following Algernon Swinburne in declaring him insufferably obscure:

Our philosophic poet [...] before addressing such audience as he may find, is careful always to fill his mouth till the jaws are stretched wellnigh to bursting with the largest, roughest, and most angular of polygonal flintstones that can be hewn or dug out of the mine of human language; and as fast as one voluminous sentence or unwieldy paragraph has emptied his mouth of the first batch of barbarisms, he is no less careful to refill it before proceeding to a fresh delivery.²⁶

²⁵ C.J. Sisson and Robert Butman, 'George Chapman, 1612-1622: Some New Facts', *MLR*, 46 (1951), 185-90 (p.185).

²⁶ A.C. Swinburne, *George Chapman: A Critical Essay*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875) p. 13.

Such a damning verdict is perhaps not helped by Chapman's own pronouncements on the subject of poetry. In his dedication of *The Shadow of Night* to Matthew Roydon in 1594 he argues that to appreciate poetry properly a reader must 'manfully indure th'extremes incident to that *Herculean* labour: from flints must the *Gorgonian* fount be smitten'.²⁷ He views poetry as a vocation whose pleasures are dependent upon strenuous trial and should only be available to those readers willing to work hard and even physically suffer for them. There is perhaps a self-reflexive joke involved then in one character's statement in *A Humorous Days Mirth*: 'You must give me leave to be obscure and philosophical' (1.4.156-7). If we consider Chapman's linguistic obscurity as a deliberate aesthetic philosophy rather than a weakness of style, it becomes clear that it is a vital part of his radical social agenda. John Huntington has offered the best critique of this theme, when he argues that:

A hierarchic social structure generates a discourse within a certain fraction which out of necessity speaks *obscurely* – finds a voice that is hard to hear or difficult to interpret – as a way of establishing that fraction's social importance [...] For Chapman, 'obscurity' becomes a profoundly rich, self-reflective pun, denoting the style that identifies true art, the social place in which that art occurs, and the need to conceal the very fact that this is the issue.²⁸

This approach is used in Huntington's book to explain the poetry, but it can be fruitfully applied to Chapman's drama on many levels (and indeed is equally applicable to other learned playwrights such as Marston or Jonson). Firstly it works to explain the many textual puzzles throughout his work which leave a reader puzzling over several possible meanings. This becomes more convincing when seen in light of Annabel Patterson's theory of censorship as resulting in 'a cultural code by which matters of intense social and political concern continued to be discussed in the face of extensive political censorship'.²⁹ But more than just explaining Chapman's verse style this idea of obscurity as a deliberate social

²⁷ George Chapman, 'Dedication to *The Shadow of Night*,' *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1941), p.19.

²⁸ Huntington, 96.

²⁹ Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p.44.

strategy could be used to counter one of the most common charges against Chapman's plays: their incoherence in the presentation of the main characters.

This is a charge most often levelled against *Bussy D'Ambois*: that the heroic role in which Bussy sees himself and with which the poetry apparently imbues him, is inconsistent with the actual circumstances of the play. Robert K. Presson sums this up: 'the discrepancy between such acts as Bussy's murder of the despicable courtiers and his adultery on the one hand, and the praise of Bussy by the king, friar and even some of his enemies, on the other, has been a stumbling block to critics and doubtless always will be'.³⁰

In fact, incongruity is pivotal to Chapman's dramatic aesthetic, and can be best understood as related to the more general controversy over the nature of subjectivity in the Renaissance. Katherine Eisaman Maus points to the paradoxical treatment of interiority in English Renaissance literature, which is informed by 'two fantasies: one, that selves are obscure, hidden, ineffable; the other, that they are fully manifest or capable of being made fully manifest'.³¹ She argues that both fantasies were often deployed simultaneously, and this does seem to be one explanation for the discrepancy we find in Bussy's behaviour. But the idea of a hidden, inscrutable self relies on the assumption that such interiority exists, that, regardless of outward appearances there is an inner kernel of identity that the subject, at least, is in control of and has access to. However, in *Bussy* and the *Byron* plays, the two fantasies of interiority Maus traces are played with to such an extent that the existence of such an inner kernel is itself cast into doubt.

A recurring crux of many analyses of these plays is the contradictory characterisation of the protagonists. Bussy and Byron are both flawed heroes whose high aims and weighty sense of their own greatness sits at best uneasily with the actual deeds they perform onstage. This incoherence is a deliberate response on the part of the playwright to the politically charged questions of subjectivity typical of the period. The interpretative difficulty of Bussy and Byron stems from Chapman's desire to explore the implications of an inwardness that defies empirical knowledge or transparent interpretation. Typical of this defiance

³⁰ Robert K. Presson, 'Wrestling with this World: A View of George Chapman', *PMLA*, 84 (1969), 44-50 (p.46).

³¹ Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.28.

is the tricky nature of Byron's treason, particularly in *The Tragedy*. As we saw in the previous chapter, at no point do we see Byron engaged in a concrete act of treachery against Henry, and yet the climactic execution scene seems to demand that the audience infer his guilt and approve his punishment. His plea on being captured: 'let me haue the honor | To dye defending of my innocent selfe, | And haue some little space to pray to God' (4.2.247-9) is construed by Henry as mere hypocrisy: 'Come, you are an Atheist Byron, and a Traytor, | Both foule and damnable' (250-51). From these two conflicting interpretations of Byron's inner self it is impossible to ratify one over the other. The play provides no other evidence for Byron's atheism or otherwise, just as the treason for which he is executed is 'proven' during the trial on the word of La Fin, a man who, in Henry's own words 'Hast no heart but to hurt, and eatst thy heart, | If it but thinke of doing any good' (*Conspiracy* 1.1.152-3). The previous chapter's discussion of this treason also pointed out Henry's conflicting assessment of La Fin in each play. The reference to Byron's supposed atheism could of course be partially explained by the fact that both Essex and Raleigh were accused of this offence during their treason trials. However, more important for our purposes is the way that conflicting reports are given in the play with no empirical evidence for either the audience or the other characters to base their character judgements upon.

The problem of interpretation is dramatised repeatedly in the Byron plays and is first emblematised in Byron's initial appearance, when he fails to recognise the ill omen in the carpet embroidered with the story of Catiline. This unknown quantity at the heart of Byron's character has a parallel in his nemesis Henry. As discussed in the previous chapter, Henry's characterisation of himself as simultaneously a peace-keeper and a successful warrior results in him making contradictory claims about his own past deeds, the truth of which is never resolved. Peter Ure points to the difficulty in assessing the character of the king: 'On a larger scale, the King himself *is*, within the politico-moral scheme which the play illustrates, the ideal monarch; [...] but in the historical scheme which Chapman is also employing, the King does not maintain this aspect'.³² Ure's separation of the politico-moral scheme from the historical one is problematic, and

³² Peter Ure, 'The Main Outline of Chapman's *Byron*', *SP*, 47 (1950) 568-588 (p.571)

as I have outlined in the previous chapter, any evaluation of Henry as an ideal king is mistaken, but he is correct to highlight the conflicting interpretations of Henry which the play offers. What he fails to appreciate is that Henry's claims to be an ideal king and an exemplar of virtue derive their authority from his own narrative of royal identity within the play, and are not necessarily sanctioned by Chapman. Indeed, as I have shown, Chapman subjects these claims to a distinctly sceptical form of scrutiny. He demonstrates the way authority props up its own claims by controlling and even censoring competing narratives such as Byron's treason.

Bussy's characterisation is even more perplexing than Byron's. His claim at the play's opening that 'who is not poore is monstrous' (1.1.3) and his attempt to assume a reclusive pastoral lifestyle are both swiftly overturned by the Monsieur's promise of a good suit 'and all things fit | T'enchase in all shew thy long-smother'd spirit' (111-2). Despite his resolution to 'bring up a new fashion, | And rise in Court with vertue' (125-6), Bussy's deeds are clearly incongruent with his idealistic self-image. His self-proclaimed adoption of 'policy' in the final scene brings him to the level of men he had earlier condemned when promising King Henry he would be his 'eagle', rooting out corruption. But a view of Bussy as an ironic character 'made to express the frailty and fate of natural man without true learning or religion' is simply not satisfactory.³³ It cannot fully explain the play or the undeniable attraction of Bussy himself, whose rhetorical power makes him the vivacious centre of dramatic attention at all times. This can be no accident from a playwright for whom artistic merit and virtue are so inextricably linked. Bussy's fate, although to some extent of his own making, is intended to provoke the audience's sympathy for the 'great heart' of the aspiring man who is in the end undone by court intrigues to which Chapman most certainly does not lend his approval.

What is remarkable about Bussy is his total lack of introspection. Unlike Hamlet or Othello, he never considers the meaning or motivation of his actions, simply reacting to each situation as it arrives and living in a kind of eternal present. This is particularly apparent when he vows to obey Tamyra's summons

³³ Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman*, p.50.

even though he has been warned that to do so will bring his death: 'Should not my powers obey when she commands, | My motion must be rebel to my will: my will, to life' (5.2.70-72). There is no sense of an overriding consciousness behind these reactions, of that within which passes show. Bussy is multi-faceted, but the various facets have only an arbitrary, if any, relation to an interior self which might be imagined as governing them.

Byron's attempts to create such a self, such as his declaration: 'men in themselves entire, | March safe with naked feete, on coles of fire' (3.2.227-8) and the further assertion: 'I build not outward, nor depend on proppes' (229) is shown by the course of the two plays to be utterly illusory: Byron has nothing but props, because his sense of self is tied to grand symbols outwith himself. This is epitomised by his egotistical wish for 'the famous mountaine *Oros*' to be carved into his image (151-170). He insists on his self-sufficiency, but Byron's character is demonstrably capable of being shaped by outside forces, and he changes tack during his trial to make this very vulnerability the basis of his defence, when he claims to have been bewitched by LaFin:

[...]Let me draw
Poison into me with this cursed ayre,
If he bewicht me and transformed me not;
He bit me by the eare, and made me drinke
Enchanted waters; let me see an Image
That utterd these distinct words; *Thou shalt dye,*
O wicked King; and if the diuill gaue him
Such power upon an Image; upon me
How might he tyrannize? (5.2.158-166)

Byron rhetorically conjures up an image of a subject open to invasion through a plethora of physical weaknesses that leave him vulnerable to La Fin's supernatural power. This depends on a seamless continuity between body and mind: what is done to the body has an immediate effect on the inner self, and this is the source of the witch's power. An opposing perspective is voiced by the Chancellor when he retorts 'Witchcraft can never taint an honest minde,' (174) suggesting a mind defended impregably by an absolute concept of virtue. This is symptomatic of the way in which, as Braummüller has argued, 'principles of judgement, like

principles of perception, become radically debatable in *Byron's Tragedy*, and the hero dies in a monument to his world's incoherence'.³⁴

It is unclear to which, if either, of these versions of self Chapman subscribes, because throughout these plays his interest lies in the confusions and ambiguities generated by the collision of the two concepts of interiority. For the reader or audience, knowledge of these characters can only be obtained by decoding the outward signs, and a coherent interpretation of either *Bussy* or the *Byron* plays usually comes, as Peter Ure has observed, at the cost of a reduction in 'the size and splendour' of both the play and its hero.³⁵ The incoherence of the protagonist's characterisation is what leads to this perceived incoherence in the plays themselves. But the paradoxical nature of Chapman's dramatic structure, as only Ure and Braunmuller have adequately acknowledged, is actually entirely in keeping with his professed views about the function of art. As the poem to Roydon, quoted earlier, shows, he does not believe in making things easy for a reader of his poetry: why then should we assume he would think any differently about a spectator of his plays? In order to fully appreciate Chapman's plays, as with his poetry, a reader (or audience member) must labour to understand the contradictions, and through an active consideration of all the points of view on offer, come to a conclusion about what the moral message may be. That this is a dramatic philosophy that leads often to misunderstanding is not in doubt. This is probably why Chapman has been for so long misread as a staid, deliberately obscure, and conservative writer. But a reading of Chapman's comments about the nature and function of art should alert us to the dangers of such misreading.

His dedication of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* makes clear that he considers drama to be primarily moral in function: 'materiall instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to Vertue, and deflection from her contrary; being the soule, lims, and limits of an autenticall Tragedie'. This prologue is interesting in that it exhorts Sir Thomas Howard to be a certain kind of reader, one responsive to the kind of virtue Chapman exemplifies. He begins by making a faux-modest apology for dedicating the play to Howard, 'as containing matter no less

³⁴ A. R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, p.106.

³⁵ Peter Ure, 'Chapman's Tragedies', *Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies: Jacobean Theatre*, ed. by Maynard Mack (London: Edward Arnold, 1960) p.230.

deserving your reading, and excitation to Heroycall life, than any such late Dedication'. He draws attention to his play's merits in a marketplace of similar dedications. He also makes a double-edged claim, for not only is he quite conventionally advertising that the play deserves to be read by its noble patron, but he also suggests that it *deserves* to 'excite' Howard to a 'Heroycall life'. The syntax takes for granted that Howard will respond in the desired manner to the text with which Chapman presents him: the desired effect being not only material reward, but (apparently primarily) a learned and virtuous *manner of reading*. This theme is continued throughout the dedication, with the next paragraph referring to controversy over the value of the play and asking Howard to judge for himself: Howsoever therefore in the Scaenicall presentation, it might meete with some maligners, yet considering, even therein, it past with approbation of more worthy judgements; the Balance of their side (especially being held by your impartiall hand) I hope will to no graine abide the out-weighing.

This image of Howard as an allegorical figure of justice, holding the scales wherein Chapman expects his play to pass muster, is designed to make it impossible for the patron to do otherwise than to agree with the author's own assessment of his work. He then further promises to 'supply' any perceived 'defect' in the play with 'a generall account' of Howard's virtues, first among which is, naturally, his 'love of all virtuous and divine expression'. The praise which Chapman is so loudly singing here is nonetheless dependent on Howard's showing his true judgement by approving Chapman's play.

The last paragraph of the dedication takes this even further and cites both Christian belief and 'the most divine Philosopher' (commonly agreed to refer to Plato), to promise Howard reward in the after-life for his artistic discernment in the here and now:

I make it a matter of my Faith; that we truly retaine an intellectuall feeling of Good or Bad after this life; proportionably answerable to the love or neglect we beare here to all Vertue, and truly-humane Instruction.

This formulation is fascinating because it couches the traditional idea of spiritual reward for good deeds entirely in terms of true judgement. What is retained after life is 'an intellectual feeling of Good or Bad': a strange phrase, but one which emphasises the ability of the human brain to encompass a range of moral positions

and choose between them. On one level, it could mean simply that souls retain either a pleasurable or a painful experience depending on their deserving, but it also calls to mind the knowledge of good and evil which was of course the result of the Fall in Christian mythology. This knowledge allows its bearer to recognise the qualities of both good and evil, and to make an informed choice between them. This more complicated interpretation of the lines suggests that the soul will retain its ability to distinguish between intellectual and moral positions, only if it has demonstrated that it has used this ability to virtuous effect during its life ('the love or neglect we beare here to all Vertue'). The subtext of this, of course, is to offer Sir Thomas Howard some kind of eternal reward, in addition to the material reward of having his name praised in print, on the condition that he demonstrates his love to virtue by rewarding Chapman for his play.

This rather audacious strategy is reminiscent of Eckhard Auberlen's description of Jonson's approach in his 'Epistle to Sir Edward Sackville. Auberlen writes: 'Jonson sees true patronage – and he does not only think of literary patronage – as an education in *humanitas* and manners for both benefactor and beneficiary: the patron must learn to reward only the worthy, to anticipate help where it is required, and to give tactfully'.³⁶ *Humanitas* here is functioning in the Ciceronian sense outlined by Mike Pincomb. He argues that for Cicero (and his Renaissance followers), humanity 'was defined mainly in counterdistinction to bestiality, and the two key terms here were *ratio* and *oratio*: reason and speech. Hence it is the cultivation of these two faculties which allows for a degree of relativity in *humanitas*, which Cicero tends to regard in terms of potentiality rather than as a mere given. The more you develop your intellectual and verbal skills, the more you develop – perhaps increase – your *humanitas*'.³⁷ Auberlen quite rightly picks up on the self-aggrandising move inherent in this marketing of one's work as the way for the noble patron to increase his *humanitas* – it renders the prestige of the patron's learning dependent upon the generosity of the poet, and so encourages material generosity in return. Chapman also proceeds on the assumption that it is the poet's job to educate the reader, and his emphasis on the

³⁶ Eckhard Auberlen, *The Commonwealth of Wit: The Writer's Image and His Strategies of Self-Representation in Elizabethan Literature* (Tubingen: Narr, 1984), p. 115.

³⁷ Mike Pincomb, *Elizabethan Humanism: Literature and Learning in the later Sixteenth Century* (London: Longman, 2001), p.19.

patron's need to reward virtue, and on the connection between virtue, *humanitas*, and learned judgement, is very similar to Jonson's.

Another point of contact between Chapman and Jonson is in their shared contempt for the 'profane multitude' of readers who misunderstand their work. In Chapman's preface to Jonson's *Sejanus* he speaks of the danger Jonson faces bravely by publishing his work despite of the hostile interpretation which it may incur:

As thou adventurst on the Multitude,
Upon the boggy and engulfed breasts
Of Hyrelings, sworne to finde most Right, most rude.³⁸

Chapman's use of the word 'Hireling' is interesting here: its contemptuous referral to a person who serves for wages brings the thorny issue of class into the matter of interpretation, perhaps suggesting the stubborn refusal of working-class labourers to read in the correct way. Given that so much of Chapman's life was blighted by his fruitless search for wages, this seems an odd statement to make. However, it could have been an attempt to distinguish the 'noble' business of making art, and the reward perhaps voluntarily bestowed on the artist, from the more explicit wage-contract of a labourer. This *pretending* to an amateur status could be seen as one of the ways in which both Chapman and Jonson attempted to accrue more social status to the figure of the poet, by distancing themselves from the economic market. It could also be a deliberate attempt to appeal to the noble readership, whose only way to distinguish themselves from these 'Hirelings', as such readers would surely wish to do, is to follow the line of interpretation offered by Jonson and Chapman, and to read the play in a sympathetic manner.

It is clear then that Chapman is very anxious that his readers should interpret his plays in the way he intends, and use them as a means of becoming more virtuous: but what does this actually mean in relation to the texts, particularly the problematic tragedies of *Bussy*, *Byron* and *The Revenge*? If *Bussy* can be interpreted both as the 'king's eagle', rooting out corruption, and as a demon-raising, venal, violent man who only came to court for material reward; and if *Byron* can be read either as a traitor or a noble aspiring hero, how are we to establish where Chapman's own opinion lies? To reiterate a previous point, the

³⁸ 'In Sejanum Ben. Jonson', *Poems*, p.358-63, ll.14-6.

very difficulty in both the language and the interpretation of the characters is a deliberate strategy on Chapman's behalf. One way to make sense of the plays is to weigh up his views on virtue as they are expressed elsewhere: many of his poems centre on this theme and seem to suggest more explicitly what he considers important in a virtuous man. Many of these poems are translations of Virgil and other classical poets, but I would argue that the reason Chapman was attracted to these poems sufficiently to want to translate and publish them under his own name is because they chime so exactly with his own conception of virtue and its often unrewarded place in society.

In the first of Virgil's *Epigrams*, published alongside Petrarch's *Seven Penitentiall Psalms* in 1612, he writes of 'A Good Man':

A good and wise man (such as hardly one
Of millions, could be found out by the Sun)
Is judge himself, of what stuffe he is wrought,
And doth explore his whole man to thought [...]
Lest, through his polisht parts, the slendrest staine
Of things without, in him should sit and raigne; (*Poems* p. 227, ll.1-4, 9-10)

This is immediately juxtaposed with: 'A Great Man':

A great and politicke man (which I oppose)
To good and wise) is never as he shows.
Never explores himselfe to find his faults:
But cloaking them, before his conscience halts,
Flatters himself, and others flatteries buyes,
Seems made of truth and is a forge of lies,
Breedes bawds and sycophants, and traitors makes
To betray traitors. (*Poems*, p.228, ll.1-8)

In both of these poems, the primary marker of virtue is self-reflection. A rigorous approach to one's own deeds is seen as an essential practice to prevent vice and dissimulation, and acts as a guarantor of one's honesty towards others. In 'A Good Man', the virtuous subject is always on the alert for potential corruption which might creep into him from outside ('the slenderest staine | Of things without him') – an idea of the vulnerability of the individual to outside corruption which calls to mind Byron's protests about the influence of LaFin's witchcraft discussed earlier in this chapter. The lines on 'A Great Man', however, are even more pertinent to

the tragedies. That the great man 'traitors makes | To betray traitors', calls to mind the behaviour of several of Chapman's monarchs. As we have seen, both Henry IV in his use of La Fin to entrap Byron, and Henry III in his deployment of Baligny to inform on Clermont and the Guise, invert moral categories by making of treachery a way to serve the state. These lines then suggest the anti-monarchical thrust of Chapman's tragedies which I have been uncovering throughout this thesis.

The emphasis laid in the poems on the importance of self-examination is also hugely relevant to Chapman's tragedies: indeed, it goes some way towards explaining the contradictory dramaturgy which characterises *Bussy* and *Byron* in particular. What constitutes these characters' tragedies is largely their lack of self-awareness. So Byron is easily entrapped by the conspirators because they know that his pride and susceptibility to flattery (another feature of the Virgil poem) are easily manipulated. In essence, they understand Byron better than he understands himself, and this leads to his downfall. He continues to believe himself indispensable to Henry, thus, like the Earl of Essex, fatally misjudging his relationship with the sovereign and retaining a misplaced confidence in his own indestructibility.

Similarly, for all that Bussy's death can be blamed on the jealous wrath of Montsurry, or the politic intrigues of the Guise and Monsieur to bring about that jealousy, the most immediate explanation is that Bussy's failure to correctly interpret signs leads to his death. Tamyra, having been tortured by her husband until she relents to write the letter which summons Bussy to his death, writes it in her own blood as a signal to him that she is under duress and the assignation is a trap. However, Bussy, caught up in his fantasy of himself as epic hero, cannot read this letter the way it is intended, interpreting the fact that it is written in blood as being 'a sacred witness of her love' (5.2.90). This misreading (which has a parallel in Bussy's failure to penetrate Montsurry's disguise when he delivers the letter, disguised as the murdered friar) can be seen as Bussy's failure to recognise what kind of play he is in – he thinks he is in an epic or a courtly love story, and refuses to believe all the evidence which points to the impending tragedy.

However, the inability of these characters to rigorously examine themselves does not mean that an audience or reader should follow their example. Nor should it be taken as evidence that Chapman was confused in his approach to his

heroes, or (perhaps worse) that he was simply incompetent in his dramaturgy. Rather, he includes inconsistencies and paradoxes to challenge the reader and audience to weigh up the various possible interpretations. His most successful plays do not tidy up all the loose ends or offer a coherent, morally simple reading, because this would be, essentially, too easy for the reader. Chapman himself experienced the divisions caused by a desire to be accepted and rewarded by a court world he knew to be corrupt, hypocritical, and mercurial in its bestowing of its gifts. The problematic role accorded to virtue throughout his drama and poetry revolves around this paradox, which he never solved on a personal or aesthetic level.

The repeated focus on a solitary figure of virtuous learning who faces an impossible choice between either corrupting his integrity or retreating from society into an isolated irrelevance dramatises his own quandary. The didactic bent of his thought is clear from the same dedication to Sir Thomas Howard we have already considered: he states clearly that 'materiall instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to Vertue and deflection from her contrary; being the soule, lims, and limits of an autenticall Tragedie'. By forcing his readers to puzzle over the sometimes conflicting messages of his drama, Chapman is exciting them to a deeper awareness of their own moral judgements, which, in his philosophy, is the necessary basis of all virtue. So his very obscurity, on a poetic and dramatic level, is part of his deliberate project (in the style of Edmund Spenser) to fashion a truly virtuous gentleman, irrespective of birth.

Chapman's own conception of value is unrelentingly meritocratic: he only respects nobility if it coincides with his rather narrow definition of learned virtue, and those who do not meet his high standards are subject to his vitriol. A good example of this is his characterisation in 'De Guiana' of Raleigh's detractors as 'gold-made men, [...] dregges of men' with 'poysoned soules, like Spiders lurking|In sluttish chinckes' to hide their 'dunghill pride' (ll.78-81). His idea of virtue then is both deeply personal and uncompromisingly political: while his dramatic manifestations of virtuous men tend to be based on virtues he sees himself and his circle of poetic, learned friends, as possessing, this insistence on merit over birth places him in opposition to the hierarchical, rank-based society of Jacobean England.

The character who most succinctly displays Chapman's conception of himself, and the ideal relationship which virtue might have with the world, if the world were so inclined, is the scholar Clarence in *Sir Giles Goosecappe* (1602). As Jacquot writes, 'Clarence est une image embellie de Chapman lui-même, et son heureuse aventure satisfait le désir d'être aimé, admiré et compris'.³⁹ Clarence loves Eugenia, a wealthy widow who is herself a paragon of virtue whose pages introduce her in the opening scene as 'the best scholler of any woman but one [meaning Queen Elizabeth] in England, she is wise and virtuous' (1.1.145-6). Despite this emphasis on Eugenia's learning and virtue she is not a hypocrite, like the other notable widow of Chapman's *oeuvre*, Cynthia of *The Widow's Tears*, but neither is she a recluse in the manner of Marcellina. Instead, her first appearance shows her bantering with her female companions at the expense of the foolish male courtiers. Clarence, whom Eugenia's uncle Momford (a Pandarus figure who will eventually bring the pair together) introduces to the audience as his 'deep, and studious friend' (1.4.19-20), is presented as being somewhat reluctant in his love for the Countess. His first speech suggests that he is aware of the proverbial distance between love and rationality, but this discrepancy between true-seeing judgement and reason blinded by love is not located in the evaluation of Eugenia's worth. Instead Clarence's speech suggests that his love gives him, against reason, an optimistic view of the world itself:

Worke on sweet love, I am not yet resolv'd
 T'exhaust this troubled spring of vanities
 And nurse of perturbations, my poore life,
 And therefore since in every man that holds
 This being deare, there must be some desire
 Whose power to'enjoy his object may so maske
 The judging part that in her radiant eyes
 His estimation of the world may seeme
 Upright, and worthy, I have chosen love
 To blind my Reason with his mistie hands. (1.4.1-10)

This speech is the closest Chapman comes to reconciling the impulses of society and virtuous learning in all his work. The initial lines give an impression of an

³⁹ Jean Jacquot, *George Chapman: Sa Vie, Sa Poésie, Son théâtre, Sa Pensée* (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1951), p.89.

ennui renounced: an admission that while it might be tempting to 'exhaust this troubled spring of vanities', the presence of desire (and crucially, desire of a worthy object), as in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 71 ('But ah, desire still cries, 'give me some food') calls the poet back into the world.⁴⁰ Here, though, unlike *Astrophil and Stella*, where the concept of virtue is problematic and tied to Stella's continuing chastity, it is in the desire for the virtuous woman that Clarence achieves reconciliation between virtue and society.

This is problematic in a different way from the Sidney poem, however, as there is the underlying sense that the new, 'upright, and worthy' estimation of the world which Clarence has achieved through his love for Eugenia, is an illusion. That Clarence is something of a self-portrait is I think indicated by his enumeration of the reasons he fears failure in a suit towards the Countess:

My want of Courtship makes me feare
I should be rude, and this my meane estate
Meetes with suche envie, and detraction,
Such misconstructions, and resolv'd misdoomes
Of my poore worth. (1.4.36-40)

Clarence's fault is clearly his pessimism, something which Chapman, considering his intellect and his insistence that all men should examine themselves for their flaws, must have been aware he shared with his poverty-stricken scholarly character. Furthermore, Chapman's courtship of the wealthy widow detailed in Chapter 4 may have dated from around the time of this play's composition. In Clarence lies the recognition on the part of the poet that his philosophy sometimes tended towards isolation and self-negation, and a hopeful, almost fantasy-fulfilling narrative, in which he imagines how he might escape from this habit.

Clarence, like Chapman, has been materially unsuccessful and sees his own virtue as going unrewarded by an uncaring world, and this is why he fears to approach Eugenia. He complains to Momford of:

[...] The Spirits

That flye in ill-lungd tempests through the world,
Tearing the head of virtue from her shoulders
If she but looke out of the ground of glorie.

⁴⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.182.

Twixt, whome and me, and every worldie fortune
 There fights such sowre, and Curst Anitpathy,
 So waspishe, and so petulant a Starre,
 That all things tending to my grace or good
 Are ravisht from their object, as I were
 A thing created for a wilderness
 And must not thinke of any place with men (1.4.42-52).

This powerful image of virtue as a sort of burrowing animal which cannot come above ground for fear of the monstrous flying spirits which want to dismember it testifies to the emotional power of Chapman's sensitivity to his own place in Jacobean culture. It also, in typical Chapman fashion, casts considerable doubt on the lines preceding this passage in which Clarence seems to assert his intention to view the world in a more hopeful light.

Nonetheless, Clarence and Eugenia are successfully brought together by the end of the play, in what is perhaps the most optimistic expression of the possibilities available to virtue in all of Chapman's work. The courtship is in many respects an examination of the same situation as in *The Widow's Tears* but treated in a less satirical and more humane manner. Clarence, confessing his love of Eugenia to Momford, worries that his status as 'a poore Gentleman and farre short of that state and wealth that a Ladie of her greatnesse in both will expect in her husband' (1.4.121-3) will impede his progress. Momford's reply, that '*Audacitie* prospers above probabilitie in all worldie matters [...] The eminent confidence of strong spirits is the onely witch-craft of this world' (126-7; 138-9) testifies to the power of self-assurance in the Jacobean marriage market.

Despite Eugenia's anxiety about her 'honour, and good name', and the fact that she initially seems reluctant to 'marrie a poore gentleman', her doubts are overcome. Partly swayed by sympathy for his (feigned) illness, as her uncle has contrived, and partly by her waiting-womens' assessment of Clarence's 'inward wealth and nobleness', she declares her love for him:

I know thy kindenesse and have seene thy hart
 Cleft in my uncles free, and friendly lippes
 [...]

Knowledge is the bond

The seale and crowne of our united mindes (5.2.212-13; 219-220).

In this speech, Eugenia dismisses the disparity of rank and wealth between them as unimportant compared to the equality of mind she identifies in Clarence. Importantly, this knowledge she claims as the basis for her love comes to her not directly, but through the intercession of her uncle, Clarence's best friend. This is the second way in which this storyline represents Chapman's own wish-fulfilment fantasy. The beloved recognises and rewards the value of the poor but noble scholar as a direct result of the disinterested intervention of a third party. The story-line demonstrates Chapman's ideal of both sexual and patronage relationships. Momford, as Clarence's patron, dismisses the disparity of wealth between them even while he uses his superior position to advance his friend's wishes.

This is the only play of Chapman's in which virtue is imagined as receiving a fitting reward: it is telling that it is also one of his earliest efforts. His later plays become, as we have seen, markedly more cynical and critical of the ways in which sexuality and patronage intersect in a court setting. Perhaps this is because in Chapman's case the widow did not relent and marry the poor but noble scholar, and he also never found a patron who would intercede as successfully on his behalf as Momford did for Clarence. The striking image discussed above, of virtue torn to pieces by harpy-like flying creatures, is the lingering fate of good men throughout Chapman's dramatic work. The deaths of Bussy, Clermont, Cato and Chabot are all manifestations of the same death of idealism that seems to have occurred in Chapman's thought sometime after he wrote *Sir Giles Goosecappe*. The overwhelming arc of the most memorable of his plays is that of the virtuous man destroyed by society, or, to give due credit to his subtlety, flawed men with some virtuous potential which is progressively corrupted and wiped out by material demands and political cynicism. It is a deeply pessimistic view of human nature, and a thorough indictment of the political context in which he, and his characters, moved.

Afterword: 'The Eternall Victory of Death'

This thesis began with a consideration of the speech in which Bussy D'Ambois solicited his king for pardon of a crime even while he proclaimed his independence from law and monarchy. I have argued that the tensions in Chapman's work derive from a similar division between a wish for self-sufficiency and the knowledge that such independence is circumscribed by the material pressures and political realities of life at the wellhead of power in early modern England: the court of James I. The final scene of *Byron's Tragedy* provides a fitting counterpoint to Bussy's paradoxical plea for, or proclamation of his freedom. Byron's death is arguably the most ambitious, inspiring and ethereal passage in all of Chapman's oeuvre, and as such it is perhaps a fitting conclusion to a study of his drama.

While Bussy pleaded for his life with all the confidence (even arrogance) of a man who knows he is sure to obtain his desires, and whose audacity therefore seems retrospectively justified when he achieves his goal, Byron is an example of the darker possibilities of the same situation. In the penultimate scene he expresses his absolute certainty that he will be acquitted: 'Were I dead | I know they can not all supply my place' (5.3.36-7). But here the expected pardon is not forthcoming, and Byron's sentence must be carried out. Even as he lays his head on the executioner's block and asserts his readiness for death he clearly expects a last-minute reprieve:

Do it, and if at one blow thou art short,
Give one and thirty, Ile endure them all.
Hold; stay alittle; comes there yet no mercy? (5.4.181-3)

While the two-part play as a whole works to present Byron in a distinctly ambivalent way, his death scene seems calculated to arouse pathos at the injustice of the hero's fate and admiration at his remarkable spirit in response to that fate. Earlier in the play, when Byron is arrested, he asks the officers to give him his sword so that he can die in a heroic manner:

For all my service, let me have the honor
To dye defending of my innocent selfe,

And have some little space to pray to God. (4.2.247-9)

On a first reading, he seems to be asking to *firstly* defend himself, and *then* to withdraw to a private space in order to pray. However, he later invokes a man who 'prayed on horse-back and with a sword in hand' (53). These later words suggest that he views the action of defending himself as being equivalent to having 'some little space to pray to God'.

That he imagines this opportunity as a space is notable, and is possibly indicative of the way Chapman himself thought about death. In the dying moments of many of his heroes there seems to be a sort of withdrawal from the world which could be imagined in spatial terms. This is literalised in the death of Cato, who kills himself in a room barricaded against his family who wish to break down the door to prevent his suicide. In Byron's case, it seems to take the form of a gradual reconciliation to the idea of withdrawing into himself to prepare for death, but this withdrawal is imbued with a continued spirit of resistance to the manner of his death. He rejects the offers of the Bishop for spiritual comfort:

Horror of death, let me alone in peace,
And leave my soul to me, whome it concerns;
You have no charge of it; I feele her free,
How she doth rowze, and like a Faulcon stretch
Her silver wings; as threatening Death, with death;
At whom I joyfully will cast her off. (26-31)

He then launches into a twenty-line meditation on the corrupted nature of mortal life, imagining the human body as 'a slave bound face to face to Death, til death' (38) and life as 'a darke and stormy night, | Of sencelesse dreames, terrors, and broken sleeps (40-1). This speech, which begins with a rejection of the intercession of the Bishop in the interests of Byron's spiritual welfare, enacts a turning inward as he begins to consider his own soul, but at this point such a turn is only temporary. At line 50 he abruptly breaks off his train of thought:

Why lose I time in these things? Talke of knowledge,
It serves for inward use. I will not die
Like to a Clergy man; but like the Captaine,
That prayed on horse-back and with a sword in hand. (50-3)

At this point he rejects the 'inward use' of his own thoughts, clinging to the idea of himself as the warrior in action, a view which is further evidenced in his repeated

threats to the executioner not to approach until he gives the word (lines 164-6 and 188-9). King Henry himself is not present in this scene, but Byron's resistance to the priests and to the exhortations of the noble witnesses for him to calm down and submit to his sentence should be seen as a form of continued rebellion against the power the king seeks to exert upon him. He interrupts the reading of the charges and sentence, accusing the officials of being 'proud to heare your powreful domes' (78), and even when he begins to reconcile himself to his fate, allowing the hangman to approach the scaffold he still resists the narrative of repentant sinner which Henry's representatives would make of his death.

Byron's penultimate speech is a wonderful piece of self-assertion against the sanctimony of Henry's courtiers, even as he stands blindfolded awaiting his execution:

VITRY. My Lord you make too much of this your body,
Which is no more your owne.

BYRON. Nor is it yours;
Ile take my death, with all the horrid rites
And representments, of the dread it merits;
Let tame Nobilitie, and nummed fooles
That apprehend not what they undergo,
Be such exemplarie and formall sheepe. (190-6)

There follows a brief exchange in which an unnamed soldier proclaims his belief that Byron is guilty, but asserts nonetheless that Byron outweighs 'the Kings chiefe Mynion' in merit, and draws attention to the arbitrary nature of 'royall gift[s]' (220, 222). This interjection is important as it indicates the measured nature of Chapman's perspective on Byron – although not condoning him, he offers a sympathetic assessment of his plight and suggests that it be seen as resulting from the injustices of an absolutist government. Byron picks up on this in his final speech, where he laments that 'Kings suspicions, needes no Ballances' (228). His final words appear in some ways to be stridently nihilistic, denying any possibility of personal redemption or renewal:

And so farewell forever: never more
Shall any hope of my revival see mee;
Such is the endlesse exile of dead men.
Summer succeeds the spring; Autumne the Summer,

The Frosts of Winter, the falne leaves of Autumne:
 All these, and all fruites in them yearely fade,
 And every yeare returne: but cursed man,
 Shall never more renew, his vanisht face (245-52).

Although he then uses this pessimistic view to advise other aspiring courtiers towards submission to the king ('Fall on your knees then, Statists, ere yee fall', 253), his final words hark back to the earlier image of his soul as a falcon which has the power to overcome death. In this, he retains the determined independence from Henry's power which has been a feature of his speech throughout this scene:

[...] Flie, flie, commanding soule,
 And on thy wings for this thy bodies breath,
 Beare the eternall victory of death (259-61).

It is absolutely typical of Chapman that this final line could be read in two ways. It could mean that the soul's flight is a sign of death's victory over him; or it could signal Byron's continued defiant stance, by indicating his belief that his 'commanding soul' has the potential to win a victory over death. The imagery deliberately evokes the 'Faulcon [...] with silver wings' whom Byron had earlier imagined as 'threatening Death with death' (29-30). Although Henry has triumphed over Byron in the strictly physical sense, by having him imprisoned and executed, Byron wins the symbolic battle over the meaning which will be ascribed to his death, successfully positing a narrative in which his death allows him the personal space to resist Henry's power over his soul and his story. In this he perhaps comes closer to being a king himself than Bussy ever does.

Despite Chapman's often very pessimistic view of the possibilities the Jacobean court offers the virtuous individual, it is perhaps in Byron's death scene that we might witness some glimmer of hope. Byron initially refuses 'inward use', but then comes to realise that it is in his own examination of his 'inward' self and his death that he can most successfully resist Henry's power. This might be seen as analogous to Chapman's decision to return to Hitchin, retiring from the stage in order to concentrate on his translations. Chapman's move from the city to the country could be construed as a withdrawal from public life (albeit not a complete withdrawal, as he continued to dedicate his translations to great men in the hope of reward). He clearly considered literature to have the power to educate and

improve a reader's moral stature, so perhaps the freedom which Byron (along with Bussy, Cato, Clermont and Chabot) finds in the withdrawal of death is for him analogous to the withdrawal to private contemplation which takes place when a reader sits down with a book and opens his or her mind to its contents. From this perspective, although the plays are pessimistic about the possibility of good men making a material difference to a corrupt world, Chapman's writing could be a small gesture towards making each individual better equipped to resist that corruption or at least to withstand its worst assaults. In this, his deep and bitter cynicism regarding court politics, monarchy and aristocracy is in some way alleviated by a spark of optimism regarding the only examples among his contemporaries whom he could respect: the virtuous reader of his own texts. It is only by recovering the social and political import of Chapman's writing that modern readers can aspire to be accounted among this illustrious group.

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