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MIXED GOVERNMENT AND MIXED MARRIAGE IN *A KING AND NO KING:* SIR HENRY NEVILLE READS BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

BY ZACHARY LESSER

The diplomat John Nicholas may have been the first, though certainly not the last, to read a royalist politics in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1611). Writing to Lord Clarendon in April, 1654 from the Dutch court of Mary Stuart, Princess Royal of Orange and sister to Charles II, Nicholas reported that "the gentlemen and maides of honour to the Princess Royal are preparing to act a play . . . the very name of which seems to please many in her Court . . . it being so judicious and discreetly chosen, viz. *A King and no King*; but all loyal persons are astonished when they hear it named." Four months after Oliver Cromwell was named Protector, Nicholas apparently saw the play, or at least its title, as a sarcastic commentary on the paradoxically regal pretensions of the regicide, who had begun signing documents in the royal manner: "Oliver P."[1]

Twelve years earlier, the anonymous author of *The Last News in London*, published only eleven days before the Battle of Edgehill, also read the play in the context of the Civil War, though this time as a subversive attack on monarchy. In the pamphlet, a country gentleman and a citizen, both royalists, discuss the latest news from the capital:

> *Count[ry Gentleman]*. Why, I thought that playes & play-houses had been put downe:
> *Cit[izen]*. Yes so they were in the Suburbes, but they were set up in the City, and Guild-hall is made a Play-house.
> *Count*. But I pray, what Play was it that was Acted? . . .
> *Cit*. Some say it was called *a King or no King*, or *King Careo* ["I lack a king"] . . .
> *Count*. Truly it was a strange play, did not they whisper Treason in it? on my word we Country folks dare not be so bold as to make sport at Kings.[2]

The Citizen's faulty recollection of the title is suggestive, for in 1642, unlike in 1611 when the play was first performed (both at the public theater and at court before King James) or in 1619 when it was first published, the issue that was about to come to blows was precisely over "A King" *or* "No King."[3] The Citizen resolves the paradox of the original title into simple opposition, since for royalists like him—though probably not, at this early stage in the conflict, for those on the other side of the battlefield—the Civil War came down to the question of whether England would remain a monarchy.[4]

Literary critics attending to the play usually follow, without realizing it, the analysis of either John Nicholas or the Citizen, and in doing so they reproduce the divisions of the Civil War that provided the context for those analyses. Most critics have seen Beaumont and Fletcher as, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's words, "servile *jure divino* royalist[s]"; on this reading, the "libertine skepticism" of *A King and No King*, in which "the entire edifice of morality vanishes," implies the play's participation in "absolutism's rejection of morality as a criterion for sovereignty."[5] Beaumont and Fletcher's play about incest is accused of indulging a decadent courtly society that was "characterized by a 'falling off in the general discipline,'" and hence of providing "the basis of what will later develop into the Cavalier mentality."[6] Others, like the author of *Last News in London*, have read the play as a critique of absolutism and monarchy: indulgence here becomes "calculated satire," for "the assertion of an absolutism so paradoxical is a corrosive attack against it."[7] This latter reading, of course, only reverses the valences of the former and, like all antitheses, is open to the same critique. Both depend on a Whiggish literary history that reads the conflicts and ideologies of the Civil War back into the early Jacobean court, seen in retrospect as decadent, Cavalier, and absolutist, virtually inviting an anti-absolutist, constitutionalist attack on itself.[8] Both focus exclusively on the monarchy, thereby obscuring the importance of the other institution central to English politics and to the play: Parliament.

I want to suggest that *A King and No King*, when first produced and first published, was neither a simple defense of nor attack on absolute monarchy; rather, the play participated in what was, both in 1611 and in 1619, a crucial issue in English politics: what should the relationship be between king and Parliament?[9] While the question in 1642 may have been *A King Or No King*, in 1611 and 1619 no one could imagine that England would not remain a monarchy. Indeed, the very existence of a Jacobean "absolutism" has been challenged by

revisionist historians, but whether or not we accept this contention, England under James certainly had as yet no royalists to defend the monarchy and no parliamentarians to attack it.[10] But there was a serious debate within both the court and Parliament about the proper relationship between the two, a debate consistently articulated in the familial terms so troubling in *A King and No King*.

At the center of this debate stood Sir Henry Neville, the creator in 1612 of a new form of this relationship: the parliamentary "undertaking," in which a member of the House of Commons offered to "manage" Parliament for the king in exchange for high court office.[11] The same Sir Henry Neville was apparently the original owner of the manuscript from which Thomas Walkley printed the first edition of *A King and No King*. The play is dedicated to the "Worthy Knight, Sir Henry Nevill," although by 1619 Neville was dead, and Walkley may be referring to Neville's son, also named Henry, as the man who ultimately gave him the manuscript to publish: "I present, or rather returne unto your view, that which formerly hath beene received from you, hereby effecting what you did desire."[12] But it seems likely, as C. M. Gayley has argued, that it was the father who originally procured the manuscript; after his death, it stayed in his family's possession until his son gave it to Walkley.[13] What did the elder Neville see in *A King and No King* that caused him to like the play enough to pay for a manuscript copy of it?[14]

To avoid unconsciously reproducing the Civil War readings of Nicholas and the Citizen, I want to try consciously to read *A King and No King* through Neville's eyes, for Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedy articulates the relationship between sovereign and gentry in the same familial discourse of "mixed government" employed by the parliamentary undertaker to bring together the king and Parliament.[15] And this discourse was far from idiosyncratic; it was spoken by many other members of Parliament and even by the king himself. Neville's "approbation and patronage" of the play can thus provide a clue to how some of its spectators in 1611—not in 1642 or 1654—might have understood it.[16]

Like Neville, and like James at times, the play seeks to elaborate a theory of government in terms of interdependence and mutuality, and it finds its emblem of these qualities in a marriage. But in domesticating its politics, *A King and No King* struggles with the politics of the domestic; the political theory of mixed government that the play and Neville articulate eventually conflicts with the untheorized ideology of domestic patriarchy that most of the play's

audience would probably have taken for granted. In an essay considering this intersection of gender and class in tragicomedy, Walter Cohen argues that "in most of the tragicomedies . . . resolution of gender difficulties is equivalent to or quickly leads to resolution of the political crisis," but *A King and No King* troubles such an easy alignment of the two realms.[17] Precisely because the play does *not* see royal authority as absolutist (like patriarchal authority), resolution of the political crisis in fact exacerbates the gender difficulties. Indeed, Beaumont and Fletcher's wondrous final act is largely driven by their need to reconcile the politics of the state and of the family, revealing the ideological work necessary to create the Jacobean commonplace that the two corresponded transparently.

In 1612, when Neville likely saw *A King and No King*, his career hung in the balance: he was making a bid to become Secretary of State by guaranteeing James that in exchange for the appointment he could manage the Commons into voting supplies in the next session.[18] The growing possibility of Neville as Secretary bewildered many, including Levinus Munck, Secretary to Lord Treasurer Salisbury. Meeting in the fall of 1611 with John More, Munck remarked: "I wonder from whence should grow so much discourse of Sir H. Nevill to be a Secretary of State." More replied that he did not believe the rumor, for Neville had "giv[en] himself to a mere country life [and] did not . . . speak in Parliament for the King's demands, but ranged himself with those Patriots that were accounted of a contrary faction to the Courtiers; which I think he would not have done, if he had aspired to any Court employment." But Munck assured More that "the plot . . . was, that Sir H. Nevill should undertake to deal with the Lower House, and then . . . there was no doubt but that better effects would come of the next Session . . . than did come of the former."[19]

The "former" session in 1610 had ended disastrously for the Crown, as the Great Contract collapsed and the Commons attacked James's extraparliamentary impositions. The debate had led each side to take more extreme positions on the relationship between king and Parliament. In May, James had ordered Parliament not to debate impositions, since imposing was part of his absolute prerogative with which Parliament must "forbear to meddle." Forced to defend his right to impose, James resorted to language that struck some members as absolutist: "It is not lawful for you to dispute what a king may do . . . What a king will do upon bargain is one thing and what his prerogative is is another thing." In response, "patriots" questioned the king's willingness to rule according to law: "If the King have a

power over the laws, we cannot have security, therefore we must see if the law can bind the King." One member feared that if the king could impose, "then he shall not need a court of parliament," and he warned that absolutist France "by power of edict never calleth parliaments."[20]

But, as Clayton Roberts points out, it was the very failure of the 1610 session that "furnished the immediate occasion" for Neville's undertaking.[21] Precisely because Neville had "ranged himself" with the "patriots," James sought him out for help in understanding the grievances of Commons members and in persuading them to grant supplies. On 17 November 1610, the king abruptly called thirty MPs, including Neville and other patriots, to reveal their opinions privately to him.[22] After James asked them whether they believed he needed money, Neville told the king that

> he thought indeed his Majesty was in want [but] in this one parliament they had already given four subsidies and seven fifteenths, which is more than ever was given by any parliament at any time, upon any occasion; and yet withal they had no relief of their grievances.

Neville felt that "in matter of justice [these grievances] could not have an indifferent proceeding" and "would have delivered his judgment in all, in what respect soever it might be taken."[23]

Neville had adopted the persona of a plain-speaking patriot who had "giv[en] himself to a mere country life," retreating from the dissimulation and flattery of the court to speak his mind honestly no matter "in what respect soever it might be taken." As Frank Whigham has shown, this "country" persona, apparently opposed to the deceits of courtly rhetoric, was itself thoroughly rhetorical.[24] Neville in fact spent most of these years in London and at court, but the anticourt, "popular" subject position offered a means of rising *within* the court for those who, like Hamlet, lacked advancement.[25] And for a time Neville seemed on the verge of success; James seriously considered his undertaking. In the fall of 1613, however, the undertaking collapsed, partially due to the realignment of court factions, but also because James ultimately refused to bargain with the patriots: "the flocking of parlement men about [Neville] . . . hath don him nor them no good, for the King says he will not have a secretarie imposed upon him by parlement."[26] James apparently decided that to accept Neville's undertaking would be to capitulate to Parliament, for in naming

Neville Secretary, James would have admitted to the power exerted over him by the patriots whom Neville offered to manage.

When *A King and No King* was performed at court in the winters of 1611 and 1612, however, Neville seemed the ideal man to mediate between Crown and Parliament, a "man of the middle" who had the respect of the patriots in the Commons and the ear of the king.[27] The centerpiece of Neville's scheme was a letter he presented to the king in late October 1612, designed to counter the "sourness and distaste" of the 1610 Parliament, when debate had degenerated as each side felt the other was seeking to overturn the balance of mixed government in favor of either the royal prerogative or parliamentary sovereignty.[28] In his "Advice Touching the Holding of a Parliament" and its accompanying "Memorial" containing "bills of grace," or political concessions, to be offered in the next parliament, Neville sought to remind the king of an alternative—and, in fact, far more traditional—discourse about his relationship with Parliament, one which emphasized the familial bonds of affection and reciprocity inhering in mixed government.

Neville told James that only a successful Parliament could remove the world's "conceit" that "the prince and people stand not in kind and loving terms together." The problems of the previous Parliament were merely "some distemper between a tender father and dutiful children." The king must be prepared to grant some graces to Parliament, for "as in private families . . . where the straightest bands of nature . . . do concur to unite affections there is almost a continual necessity of mutual offices of kindness to nourish and maintain that love," so between the king and his people "there is a like necessary use of the frequent change of mutual effects of grace and love to cherish and foster that tender affection that daily is to be renewed."[29] The king, of course, is still the head of this family, and the subjects are his "dutiful children," but when we examine the specific proposals Neville puts forth, it becomes clear that he is proposing a more radical *equality* between family members than his patriarchal rhetoric at first suggests.

Neville presents eleven bills of grace, all reflecting the grievances of the landowning country gentry who dominated the Commons.[30] The proposals effectively recast the king and Parliament not as sovereign patriarch and dutiful children but as equal partners in a bargain that exchanges political concessions for taxes. When Neville speaks of "the frequent change of mutual effects of grace and love," these terms have specific political meaning: "grace" denotes the bills

of grace, while "love" refers to Parliament's granting of supplies, as James made clear in 1610, when, after the Contract negotiations had broken down, he ordered Parliament "to think how you will think fit to supply him and doubteth not but you will deal herein like *loving* subjects."[31] To speak of these "effects" as "mutual" was one thing, but to imply, as Neville did, a direct bargaining between king and Parliament was to level the negotiations too much for James's liking.

This leveling effect, and not the political concessions themselves, seems to have been the primary reason why James ultimately refused Neville's undertaking. In 1614 James did in fact present most of Neville's bills of grace to Parliament, but he offered them "not in the way of exchange or merchandising (which course he will not allow, nor cannot abide to hear of) but of mere goodwill and *motu proprio* [his own volition]."[32] In refusing to "merchandise" with the Commons, James attempts to reinscribe the hierarchy that Neville blurs: the bills of grace are now quasi-theological, given only out of royal "goodwill," not for any merit of the subject.[33]

But James himself could speak a familial discourse that leveled the patriarchal hierarchy he generally sought to impose, and it was this discourse that Neville wanted to recall. During the 1610 session, James tried to assuage those in Parliament who feared he was attempting to assert himself as an absolute monarch. Condemning John Cowell's *The Interpreter*, which had argued that James could alter law at will—a truly absolutist position that the king himself never took—James reassured Parliament: "the marriage between law and prerogative is inseparable and like twins they must joy and mourn together, live and die together."[34] In this remarkable statement, the king seeks to express the mutuality of his royal prerogative and common law, of the two parts of his "duplex" prerogative: *ordinary* prerogative, expressed by the king-in-Parliament in those areas governed by common law, and *absolute* prerogative, expressed in his own person not *against* common law but in those areas outside the law's jurisdiction.[35]

In articulating this complementarity, James initially shifts from his usual discourse of the patriarchal family, in which his people are his children, to one of marriage.[36] But the mutuality expressed by the view of husband and wife as one flesh coexisted uneasily with the potential for conflict within the hierarchy of English marriage, which under the law of coverture subsumed the wife as a *feme covert* within the subjectivity of her husband, denying her any separate legal identity.[37] Because of this hierarchy, James could employ the mar-

riage relation equally with the patriarchal to describe his political relation to his kingdom: "I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body."[38] In his statement to the Commons, however, James wants to allegorize not merely a hierarchical mutuality but an interdependent equality, and so the familial relation in his formulation slides quickly from marriage to "twins," an equality verging on identity, as Dromio tells his twin at the end of *Comedy of Errors*: "We came into the world like brother and brother, / And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another."[39] James attempts, in other words, to redefine his own hierarchical discourse of the marriage of king and people into one that can express the equality of prerogative and law, in which neither takes precedence over the other, but the difficulty of doing so can be measured in the strangely incestuous union he ends up articulating.

With this incestuous marriage, of course, we have returned to *A King and No King*. Beaumont and Fletcher's play may have won Neville's "approbation," because, like his own "Advice" and "Memorial," *A King and No King* urges James to be the king who endorsed "the marriage between law and prerogative," rather than the king who threatened the House of Commons that if it did not vote supplies, "you must not look for more parliaments in haste," and who warned that "for my relief I [may] be forced to stretch my prerogative."[40] Through another incestuous marriage, Beaumont and Fletcher present an image of sovereignty transformed from absolute to mixed. But, like James, they cannot do so without raising new tensions, for their articulation of mixed political power inevitably clashes with their patriarchal politics of the family.

In the play, Arbaces, the king of Iberia, conquers Armenia and its king, Tigranes, after a long siege. Upon returning home, however, Arbaces finds himself conquered by incestuous lust for his sister, Panthea, and as his passion consumes him, he degenerates into a ranting tyrant. In the final act, however, the Lord Protector Gobrius and the Queen Mother Arane reveal that Arbaces is not in fact the legitimate king but an unwitting usurper—thanks to a baby-switch—of the true sovereign Panthea. Arbaces and Panthea are not actually brother and sister, and they are free to marry.

Critics have generally seen Arbaces's incestuous desire for Panthea as "the ultimate metaphor for lack of self-control," which creates "a kind of worst-case scenario for testing the logical corollary of absolutist theory which proposes that for a ruler, desire is its own legitimating principle."[41] Arbaces's desire is here seen only as the ultimate

moral crime that proves him a tyrant. But the problem with this view is that, as Robert Y. Turner points out, Arbaces's transition from an illegitimate to a legitimate ruler in fact *depends on* his incestuous desire, for according to Gobrius's plan only "if his passion were to challenge all moral, legal, and religious prohibitions against incest . . . would [he] discover his real father and become a real king through marriage to the princess and true heir to the throne." Far from providing the ultimate signifier of tyranny, then, "this bizarre testing of kingship reverses traditional wisdom about a ruler's exercise of self-control." Even Turner, however, remains bound by this view of incest as lack of temperance, arguing that the play is designed to "throw us off balance and remove our confidence in judging all cases by one standard: temperate conduct need not be best for all in all circumstances."[42]

What this moral view of incest occludes is its specifically political dimension. In this context, as Gayle Rubin has demonstrated, the incest taboo serves, as part of the "sex/gender system," to prescribe a "traffic in women" that secures patriarchy through exogamous marriage.[43] At the outset, Arbaces plans to use Panthea in precisely this way, telling Tigranes that the price of his defeat is an alliance through marriage: "Thy ransome is / To take my onely sister to thy wife" (1.1.98–99). Emphasizing that Panthea is his "only" sister, Arbaces makes clear to Tigranes the political import of his gift of "rich treasure" (1.1.152), for in the event his line is extinguished, dominion over both Iberia and Armenia would fall to Tigranes's heir; Arbaces makes this offer because, in exchange for this gift, he himself receives increased dominion through alliance with Armenia.

Arbaces's subsequent incestuous longing, then, can in this context be seen as a tyrannical attempt to engross all political power to himself. For as Arbaces knows—and as James himself realized during his own negotiations for the marriages of his sons and daughter—the exogamous marriage of a member of the royal family entails for the monarch a loss or a sharing of power.[44] This loss could be actual, as in the concessions the Spanish and French both asked of James in exchange for their agreement to a royal match, or only potential, as in Arbaces's offer of possible inheritance to Tigranes's line, and it may be compensated by the significant gain of a dowry or of increased dominion; but the threat of loss is always present in the reproductive possibilities of the new marriage.[45] Even if the marriage produced no children, a royal match could entangle a monarch in the political affairs of other realms, thereby diminishing his ability to act freely in

his own, as James discovered after his son-in-law the Elector Palatine accepted the crown of Bohemia in 1619, forcing James either to aid the Elector in the battles that followed or to risk appearing to his subjects as an "unnatural father."[46] Arbaces attempts to efface these threats to his sovereignty through his incestuous desire, to consolidate his power by retaining for himself the "rich treasure" of royal marriage and recusing himself from the male network of debts and obligations created by the traffic in women. Whigham has argued similarly that in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand's incestuous desire for the Duchess is a "*social posture*," resulting from his fear of class contamination, "a desperate expression of the desire to evade degrading association with inferiors."[47] Of course, when a king like Arbaces, the apex of the social hierarchy, attempts to evade association with inferiors, he must evade association with *anyone*; the result is the tyranny of singular authority, of the "sole arme, propt by Divinity" (1.1.126).

Because it is designed to secure political power for himself, Arbaces's desire is always narcissistic.[48] Despite his protestation that his praise of Panthea "cannot be selfe flattery" (1.1.154), Arbaces's true reasons for praising her become clear precisely as he begins to recreate that praise as incestuous desire: "Nature did her wrong / To . . . make no man worthy for her to take / But mee that am too neare her; and as strangely / Shee did for mee" (1.1.165–69). While the play may condemn Arbaces's incestuous desire as sinful and immoral, it also makes clear that, politically, royal incest is not merely a *sign* of tyranny, but is a form of tyranny itself. On this reading, incest does not simply provide the ultimate taboo against which tyranny can constitute itself but rather serves as a formative constituent of tyranny, and perhaps the fundamental one.[49] For this reason the play will work out the problem of political authority *through* the problem of incestuous desire: if the first four acts present Arbaces as an incestuous tyrant seeking to engross all political power, the last scene of the play will reverse this characterization by reconstituting Arbaces's sovereignty through a marriage that is, as in James's formulation of the "marriage between law and prerogative," both exogamous and endogamous, a marriage of siblings who are not siblings, incest and no incest.

We should not, however, take this transformation as a critique of James's supposed absolutism.[50] Arbaces breaks the laws of God and nature, and James would have had no problem in seeing him as a tyrant, for James felt a king became a tyrant when he violated even

the laws of his kingdom: "A king governing in a settled kingdom leaves to be a king and degenerates into a tyrant as soon as he leaves off to rule according to his laws."[51] When Arbaces claims that he, who has "liv'd / To conquer men" (4.4.116–17), has now been conquered by "these meere sounds / Brother and Sister" (4.4.113–14), Panthea makes the entirely Jacobean point that even kings cannot evade natural law: "tis not in the power of any Force / Or pollicie to conquer them" (4.4.127–28). I am not suggesting that dramatic representations of tyrants cannot critique actual monarchs; obviously, few if any monarchs would have identified themselves as tyrants. But there is another obstacle to taking the tyrant Arbaces as an attack on James: Arbaces is not, in fact, a legitimate king. Indeed, for just this reason, many critics have seen the play as a defense of James, because, as Rebecca Bushnell points out, "legitimacy governs characterization . . . as an index of rightful rule" in the play much as it does in absolutist ideology: "whether a king is legitimate or not ultimately determines his moral character."[52] If Arbaces's tyranny results from his illegitimacy, it is hard to see it as subverting James's authority.

When we consider Arbaces's illegitimacy, together with the fact that James himself would have seen Arbaces's violations of natural and divine law as tyrannous, the play seems rather to illustrate an illegitimate authority in order to convince James and its other spectators to adopt the political vision that governs the play's ending, when Arbaces *does* become a legitimate king. By showing how illegitimate kings rule—they engross all political power to themselves—and by offering only one alternative to this type of sovereignty, Beaumont and Fletcher almost force James to take up the position of the play's legitimate king, as they urge their other spectators to adopt their vision of legitimate sovereignty. The play works not by denouncing James as a tyrant, but by complimenting him as a good ruler and by showing him (and everyone else) what this entails. In other words, it works precisely as Neville's "Advice" does.

We should not be surprised, then, that the play contains a character, Gobrius, in whom Neville might easily have seen some of himself. Along with Mardonius, Gobrius provides one side of the morality structure that Arthur Mizener sees in the play, opposing the Vice Bessus for control of Arbaces's soul.[53] But, as with the relationship between incest and tyranny, this morality play must also be read politically. The good and bad angels of this play function as royal advisors or court factions seeking to control Arbaces in order to effect their own political agendas. Just as James had to decide "whether the

king should relieve himself in his great wants . . . by a parliament, or by some projects and devices to raise money"—with Neville and some in the Privy Council urging him to call Parliament, and other "greate ones, of greatest power" advising that James would be better off ruling alone—so Arbaces is caught between those who encourage absolutism and those who attempt, through persuasion or manipulation, to convince him to share power.[54]

Mardonius and Bessus are directly opposed in their reactions to tyranny. When asked to help Arbaces win Panthea "[l]asciviouslie, leudlie, incestuouslie" (3.3.77), Mardonius stoutly refuses to obey his king against the law of God, but he also refuses to resist his king's power. Unwilling either to sin *for* his king or to sin *against* his king, Mardonius resolves to leave the kingdom, to "find a dwelling amongst some people . . . [who] harbor no such vices" (3.3.103–6). Bessus provides the negative example to Mardonius's positive, encouraging and enabling the incestuous accumulation of power into the king's hands. He eagerly agrees to "doe any thing without exception, be it a good, bad, or indifferent thing" (3.3.138–39). When Arbaces reveals the "thing" he would have done, Bessus replies with "no greater sence of such a sinne" (3.3.152) than to joke: "O you would haue a bout with [Panthea]? Ile do't, Ile do't" (3.3.147–48). Arbaces rightly sees that such complete obedience from a king's ministers is the precondition for tyranny: "If there were no such Instruments as thou, / We Kings could never act such wicked deeds" (3.3.184–85). Through Bessus and Mardonius, *A King and No King* dramatizes the Jacobean orthodoxy that if a king acted against God's law, subjects should refuse—though always passively—to obey.[55]

But while Mardonius may refuse to encourage absolutism, it is Gobrius who ultimately succeeds in refocusing the king's political vision, creating the sort of "tender affection" between "family" members that Neville had hoped, but ultimately failed, to achieve. Both Gobrius and the Queen Mother Arane attempt to resolve the central problem of the play, the babyswitch that has resulted in a crisis of royal legitimacy. Arane's solution is to take "violent courses" (2.1.50) to murder Arbaces and place her daughter on the throne. Unlike Mardonius, she refuses to "rest / With patience" (2.1.52–53), instead resorting to active resistance; like Bessus, she encourages absolutism, if not tyranny, in her desire to make her daughter sole ruler of Iberia by killing off Panthea's competitor for power. In discrediting Arane as treasonous for "stretch[ing] her arme / Against her King" and monstrous for "think[ing] the death / Of her owne

Sonne" (2.1.10–13), the play highlights in relief the wisdom of Gobrius's alternative "plot" (2.1.61) to make the royal "brother" and "sister" fall in love.[56]

Gobrius himself explains his project as an attempt to "*reconcile* all" (2.1.54, my emphasis). John Chamberlain described Neville in similar terms as trying "to *reconcile* and set all in tune."[57] I point out this striking linguistic coincidence not to suggest that Gobrius *is* Neville, but rather that the projects of the two royal advisors are themselves similar. Both seek to make "discordant facts . . . consistent, accordant, or compatible with each other," to bring two apparently incompatible positions into some unity (however unstable), to create, that is, a *paradox*, the governing trope of *A King and No King*.[58] Whereas Arane believes that *either* Panthea *or* Arbaces must be the absolute sovereign, Gobrius reconciles the two, allowing both to retain "part of [their] right" (5.4.250); whereas in 1610 both James and the Commons had come dangerously close to seeing royal prerogative and common law as so opposed that *either* one *or* the other must rule, Neville sought to reconcile the two, to remind the king of what he himself had called "the marriage between law and prerogative."[59]

In *A King and No King*, of course, the reconciliation Gobrius effects also takes the form of marriage, and it is this final marriage between Arbaces and Panthea that has led so many critics to see the play as fundamentally "immoral" or "libertine," as sanctioning a world in which "technicalities existed which permitted one to lie with one's sister . . . without having to pay with a moral illness that might last an eternity."[60] But this is to demand a character coherence and consistency that the play itself refuses, as, with the revelations of Arbaces's birth, it marks a decisive break in the narrative. As Arbaces himself tells Mardonius, invoking the same language of wonder that Hamlet uses to remind Horatio of the inadequacy of his philosophy: "Since I saw you / There are a thousand things deliverd to me / You little dreame of" (5.4.271–73). The play urges us to read separately the events before and after this marvelous transformation, not to read across it in search of moral development.

If we take the break in act 5 as a decisive reorientation of politics rather than as a moral "technicality," we can see that whereas Arbaces's desire was coded as incestuous and tyrannical in the first four acts—that is, when Arbaces was in fact an *illegitimate* king—in the last moments of the play, this desire takes on an entirely positive valence, for it allows both Arbaces and Panthea to retain "part of [their] right." Since the endogamous marriage of the first four acts

has been revealed as having been exogamous all along, Arbaces's desire for Panthea no longer works to retain absolutist power for himself; it now serves to share power with another, whether we conceive of the ending as showing the sovereign Arbaces sharing power with Panthea, or the sovereign Panthea sharing power with Arbaces. Indeed, this indeterminacy is itself part of the "reconciliation" that Gobrius has effected.[61] But, as I will show, it is an indeterminacy that ultimately proves unworkable.

I want first to specify more precisely the political arrangements obtaining at the end of the play, beyond merely stating that they involve a sharing of power. In the marriage of Panthea and Arbaces, the play creates a marriage of the two elements of Jacobean society at odds in the Parliament of 1610: the monarchy and the landowning gentry. While Panthea assumes her rightful position as monarch, the king of the first four acts transforms into "plaine *Arbaces*" (5.4.270); both new positions are emblematized as Arbaces kneels before his queen, "the humblest subject that you have" (5.4.327). Arbaces, of course, is far from Panthea's "humblest" subject; his father Gobrius, after all, is Lord Protector and obviously a man of some stature in the realm. But Arbaces figures himself at the end of the play exactly as did many of the patriots in the House of Commons, as a "country" gentleman, a "plain" man who wants to be called by his first name, merely a "fellow subject" (5.4.293). He tells those around him to put on their hats in light of his new status, asking of Mardonius, Bessus, and the accompanying "Gentlemen" not even the respect owed to a great lord or peer, respect that as the son of Gobrius he might legitimately command: "I cannot now command you, but I pray you . . . each man clap on his hat / At my desire" (5.4.279–82). If Panthea has assumed the royal prerogative, Arbaces looks now like a member of the parliamentary class, the gentry. When Arbaces closes the play by declaring, "I am prov'd no King" (5.4.353), he is only half right, for he has also resumed his sovereignty through marriage to Panthea; however, he now rules not absolutely but only through the "marriage between law and prerogative."

In the last act of the play, then, political power is reconstituted as mixed, both in the political theory of mixed government and in the class miscegenation that this theory, like the marriage of Panthea and Arbaces, entails. This mixture is not indiscriminate, however; just as Arbaces is placed below his sovereign as a "fellow subject," so too he is marked off from those below him, those whom the play excludes from the political nation: the merchant class. After he returns from

Armenia, Arbaces enters his capital to the adoration of his "sweete people" (2.2.108), synecdochically embodied by three apprentices, one lower-class woman, two "Citizens Wives" (2.2.21.SD), and their apprentice Philip. The group shoves and squabbles, and the city dames discuss fashions and the ignorance and parochialism of the country, where "you can have nothing" (2.2.36), none of the commodities available in the city. When Arbaces comes on stage, they welcome him effusively but misunderstand his words. The king claims that their "expences to maintaine my warre"(2.2.84) have won the realm one word: "Tis peace" (2.2.88). The citizens' wives imagine he has "brought us home Peaes for all our money" (2.2.153), taking Arbaces's Jacobean enunciation of international politics for just one more commodity.

Indeed, this scene, like none other in the play, comes close to identifying Arbaces with James. Arbaces not only claims, like James the *Rex Pacificus*, to have brought peace to the realm; he also speaks to his people in James's familiar patriarchal rhetoric: "when there is / A want of any thing, let it be knowne / To me, and I will be a Father to you" (2.2.137–39). Finkelpearl, like many critics, takes the city wives' misunderstanding of Arbaces's gift of peace as a "deadpan comment on [his] overblown rhetoric," but viewed in light of the play's entire political agenda, the scene seems to me to be more interested in marking the city dames as unsophisticated, unlearned, and, like the brawling apprentices around them, unfit to engage in political discourse.[62] The urgency of this characterization can be seen, I think, in the transparency of representation in the scene, for if Arbaces here acts most like James, the audience is thereby enjoined to make a more direct "application" of the other representations to contemporary London. These are people to be ruled, to whom power must be displayed, not people who can participate in power. In fact, the clearest indication of the politics behind the scene lies in the fact that no citizens are actually represented, only their wives and apprentices. The scene, in other words, not only mocks those of the urban classes whom it chooses to represent—the women and apprentices who axiomatically could not wield political power—it also completely effaces the male merchants who were actually exerting it.[63] Secured from contamination by the citizens below him, and marked off as himself below the monarchy, Arbaces can now play his role as the country gentleman.

If it still seems far-fetched to see in Arbaces a transformation from absolutist tyrant to member of the gentry, we might note that the

same sort of marriage occurs in the other kingdom represented in the play, Armenia. Despite its defeat in battle, Armenia is presented as firmly founded and stable in comparison to Iberia's turmoil ("There is no alteration . . . all is as it was" [5.2.18–19]), and hence can be seen as normative in its political arrangement. Tigranes has contracted—"as fast / As oathes without a formall ceremony / Can make" (2.1.293–95)—to marry Spaconia, the daughter of his advisor Ligones. Spaconia nevertheless fears she will be forsaken as one of "those maides / That place their loves unfortunately high . . . where they can never reach" (1.2.8–10), for like the Iberian marriage, the Armenian match involves a mixture of classes. Indeed, so unlikely does it seem that a king would marry a woman of Spaconia's class that her own father assumes she must have become Tigranes's whore: "For your Queene / I know you doe contemne her, so should I / And every Subject else thinke much at it" (5.2.61–63).

Tigranes, in fact, does begin to act tyrannically out of love for Panthea, exactly as Arbaces does, almost abandoning his sworn contract to Spaconia, a sin that he himself recognizes will "hazard all [his] peace" (4.2.16). In describing his change of affection, Tigranes might be describing Arbaces rather than himself: "my unmanly, beastly, sudden doting / Upon a new face; after all my oathes, / Many, and strange ones" (4.2.28–30). Arbaces too has been shown as unmanly ("he blushes like a girle" [3.3.5]), beastly ("I have lost / The onely difference betwixt man, and beast, / My reason" [4.4.64–66]), and sudden and inconstant ("he is vain-glorious, and humble, and angrie, and patient, and merrie, and dull, and joyfull, and sorrowfull, in extreamities in an houre" [1.1.81–83]). Tigranes seems to have caught tyranny like a virus by coming to the disordered kingdom of Iberia, for as Bushnell has shown, humanist rhetoric attributed all these traits to tyrants. When he eventually returns to Spaconia, then, Tigranes, like Arbaces, moves from potential tyranny to a marriage of mixed estates that removes this threat, though Tigranes needs no wondrous revelations to do so, merely his own "new strong constancie" (5.2.88), perhaps because Armenia, after all, requires no political transformation; from the outset, Tigranes has chosen to share power with the gentry through his contracted marriage to Spaconia.

Iberia, however, must be radically reconstructed to become an approximation of the normative Armenia, and Arbaces's shift from "king" to "no king" begins to effect this change. But in order to transform Iberia politically from tyrannical absolutism to mixed government, Beaumont and Fletcher need to portray Panthea tem-

porarily as a "woman on top," as the true sovereign married to the country gentleman Arbaces.[64] Unlike in Armenia, the monarch of Iberia is the woman, and the man occupies the lower position of the gentry.[65] By placing Panthea above Arbaces politically, the play attempts to compensate for the "natural" rule of the husband over the wife; the marriage of the regnant queen could theoretically result in a rough equality, or at least an alternating hierarchy, as was claimed of Mary Stuart's husband Lord Darnley: "Albe yt he was her hedd in wedlocke, yet was he otherwise but a membre of the . . . comon wealthe, subjecte to her."[66]

This precarious balance, however, proves difficult for Beaumont and Fletcher to maintain, for it relies on a strict separation between the political and the domestic, a separation that, given the pervasive early modern analogies between family and state, constantly threatens to dissolve. Either the gentry—"plaine *Arbaces*"—must rule the sovereign, or the woman must rule the man; both are unacceptable, and the impossible choice only reveals the contradictions inevitable in the alignment of domestic and political power. Like James, the play looks for its image of a marriage of radical equality in a marriage of siblings, but just as James's incestuous formulation reveals the cultural difficulties of redefining the patriarchal marriage of king to people as equal and interdependent, so too the politically mixed marriage of the play founders over the issue of gender hierarchy and domestic patriarchy. Crucially, James left the gender of his "twins" unspecified, a luxury the play cannot afford.

The play solves this problem by effacing Panthea's sovereignty and indeed her subjectivity, thereby allowing Arbaces to embody mixed government—the marriage of law and prerogative, sovereign and gentry—entirely within himself, to become both "king" and "no king." For if sovereignty merely passes *through* Panthea to Arbaces, Panthea can be repositioned as his obedient, chaste wife, only a vessel for transferring royal power from her father, the dead king of Iberia, to her husband.[67] Panthea's accession, as Jeffrey Masten has shown, actually effects a "return to the true patriarchal line," for Panthea's "[f]ather is within her" (2.1.16).[68] Once Arbaces's incestuous desire for Panthea has become a traffic in women between father and husband, the patriarchal power "within her" can be exchanged along with her body.

The audience is carefully prepared for Panthea's new role: following act 4, scene 4, the moment of greatest danger in the play, when Arbaces and Panthea kiss and come closest to consummating their

incestuous desires, she disappears from the stage until the final moments, undergoing the formal analogue of the sort of purification through death and resurrection that redeems Shakespeare's Hero after she has falsely been called a whore.[69] Panthea returns only to reinscribe male power and to take up her position as wife to Arbaces. When Arbaces kneels to her, she enjoins him to rise and rule her: "Why kneele you to me / That am your vassall?" (5.4.328–29). Asked to grant him a request, she answers humbly: "Alas, what can I grant you? What I can / I will" (5.4.330–31). Asked to marry him, she complies: "More willingly, then I would draw this ayre" (5.4.334). While the spectators know that she is queen and that therefore her replies are amusingly inappropriate, Panthea herself is never informed of her change in status and we do not hear her reaction to the wondrous news that Arbaces is "prov'd no King," since she does not speak again in the play.[70] Unaware of her own power, Panthea enacts her required role: as wife, she is Arbaces's vassal; under the law of coverture, she has nothing in her power to grant him, except herself; as the chaste object of desire, she merely consents to marriage, whereas before her disappearance and reemergence she had daringly asserted her own desire: "me thinkes / Brothers and sisters lawfully may kisse" (4.4.152–53).

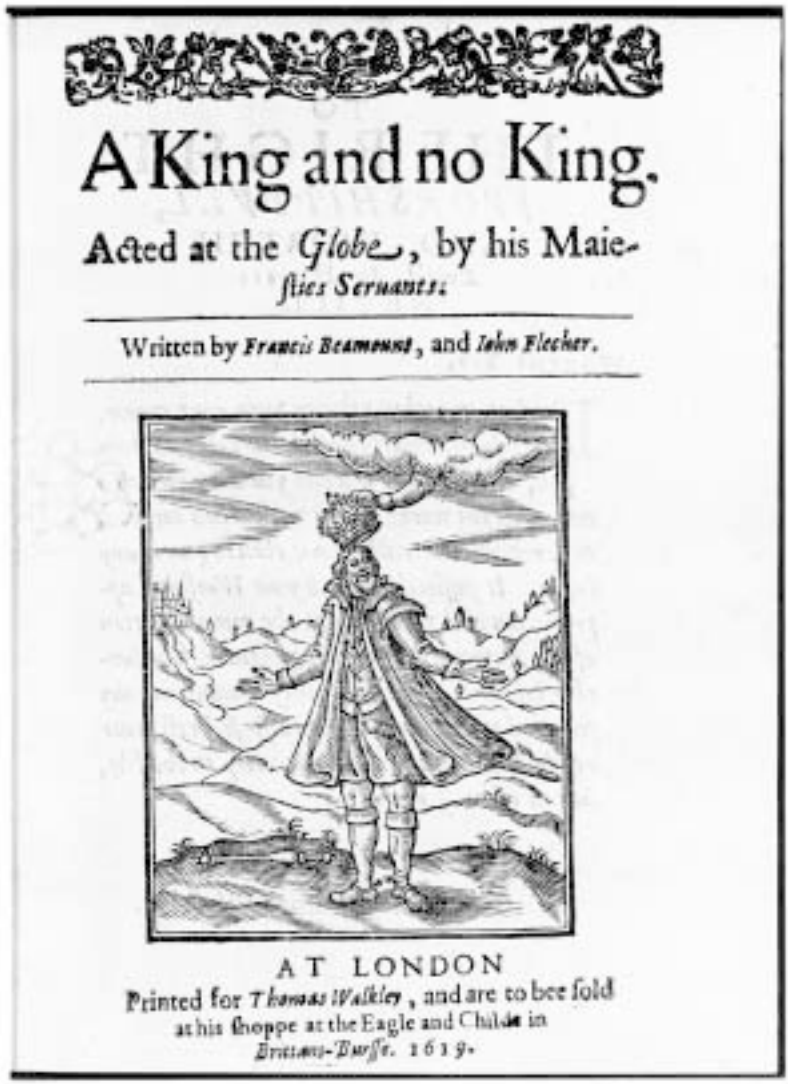
Indeed, given that she is the sovereign, Panthea's silence at the end of the play, like Isabella's at the end of *Measure for Measure*, speaks loudly. It is Arbaces—not Panthea—who, as monarch, frees Tigranes ("You owe no ransome to the state, know that" [5.4.344]) and orders the final procession off the stage, with the two kings, Arbaces and Tigranes, taking their queens in hand: "Take then your faire one with you.—And you Queene / Of goodnesse, and of us, O give me leave / To take your arme in mine" (5.4.349–51). Despite Arbaces's courteous "give me leave," Panthea does not speak, for the "leave" is of course assumed. By making Panthea silent except for her statements of wifely obedience, Beaumont and Fletcher not only reinforce her chastity through the early modern conflation of female linguistic and sexual continence, they also enforce her exclusion from state affairs, for, as Peter Stallybrass has shown, "silence and chastity are, in turn, homologous to woman's enclosure within the house."[71] At the end of the play, it is clear that, while political power may be shared, it is shared only between men, and gender power remains—like Panthea and Spaconia—firmly in the hands of men.

The publisher Thomas Walkley seems to have understood these politics perfectly, for the woodcut he put on the title page of the first

edition of the play continues the final scene's effacement of Panthea's sovereignty and subjectivity while furthering its representation of Arbaces. The image (figure 1) demands an allegorical or emblematic interpretation, considering its strong formal resemblance to emblems, particularly those in Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna*, published in 1612 just as *A King and No King* was first being played. Peacham's first emblem (figure 2)—headed *Nisi desuper* ("Not unless from above"), and dedicated to James—depicts, like Walkley's, the hand of God emerging from a cloud and holding a crown, though decorously omitting representation of James himself, a decorum that *A King and No King* need not observe.

Walkley's emblem of sovereignty is more ambiguous than Peacham's, however, for on the title page of *A King and No King* it is unclear whether the hand of God places a crown on Arbaces's head or removes it, whether Arbaces has just dropped the royal scepter or is about to pick it up. In leaving the viewer unable to decide whether the king is being anointed or deposed, the woodcut enacts the play's own transformation of Arbaces's sovereignty from absolute to mixed, allegorically embodying the play's final moments.[72] Arbaces is similarly paradoxical in his apparel: like a courtier, he wears a fashionable knee-length cloak, rapier, and pair of Spanish boots and spurs, but in other respects his clothing is remarkably plain, country rather than courtly. He has no collar, falling ruff, or standing band around his neck; his doublet lacks the deeply pointed skirt typical of the period, and he apparently wears neither stockings (for he has no sash garters securing them) nor boothose (which would protrude above the turned-down tops of his boots). Even his beard is unfashionable, bushy rather than pointed, and accompanied by a drooping moustache. Perhaps most tellingly, his entire costume eschews the conspicuous lace, fringes, slashes, and embroidery that generally ornamented all the garments of a courtier. When compared to another royal figure, the White Knight representing Prince Charles on the title page of *A Game at Chess* (figure 3), the plain, country style of Arbaces's clothing is readily apparent.[73]

The woodcut, in other words, not only represents the mixture of sovereignty depicted in the play, but something of its mixture of classes as well, of Arbaces's claims that he is merely a "plain" man and a "fellow subject." A king strangely placed in a pastoral setting, the Arbaces of the woodcut can embody not only James but also those patriots in the House of Commons, like Neville, who adopted the role of country gentlemen opposed to the court.[74] The Arbaces depicted



A King and no King.

Acted at the *Globe*, by his Maie-
ſties Seruants.

Written by *Francis Beaumont*, and *Iohn Fletcher.*

AT LONDON
Printed for *Thomas Walkley*, and are to bee ſold
at his ſhoppe at the Eagle and Childe in
Brittans-Burſſe. 1619.

Figure 1. Title page of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1619). By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 2. "Nisi desuper" emblem of sovereignty. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna* (1612), sig. B4^{v}, detail. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 3. The White Knight, representing Prince Charles. Thomas Middleton, A *Game at Chess* (1625), title page, detail. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

in the woodcut is not only a king and no king, he is a courtier and no courtier, a gentleman and no gentleman. Literally uniting the sovereign and subject in the single person of Arbaces, the woodcut completes the play's political project and in so doing brings James's discourse of twinship to its logical conclusion: equality has become identity. This identity, of course, is now entirely masculine. In the woodcut, Panthea's coverture becomes absolute. Effaced from the title page altogether, Panthea has become a *feme covert*, subsumed within her husband; the marriage of sovereign and gentry now occurs wholly within Arbaces.

What the play thus makes clear is the value, as Frances Dolan argues, of reading early modern culture "from the inside out: from the family to the state," rather than reflexively seeing familial patriarchy as secondary to the state "absolutism" that it supposedly mirrors through a "hegemonic transformation of private life into the public domain."[75] Both in the text and on the title page of *A King and No King*, patriarchy in the family is foundational, far more urgently defended against redefinition. While Beaumont and Fletcher, like Neville and like James himself, could readily conceive of an arrangement of political power that was not absolutist but mixed, both their play and Walkley's edition ultimately try to prevent their spectators and readers from imagining that this vision of state politics could involve a concomitant reassessment of the politics of the family.

But like the frontispiece engraving to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (figure 4), Walkley's woodcut ultimately represents less the person of the king than an "Artificiall Man," the body politic.[76] Whereas Hobbes's emblem of sovereignty works literally by incorporation—with the people subsumed as the body of the state, gazing up to the head of the body politic, the sovereign—Walkley's works by amalgamation. The body politic depicted on the title page of *A King and No King* contains both sovereign and subject, king and gentry, without the familiar hierarchy of head to body. If Hobbes provides the perfect device of the absolutist state, *A King and No King* creates its "Artificiall Man" in the image of Jacobean mixed government.

The play and its connections to Neville should remind us that patriarchal absolutism—whether endorsed or critiqued—was not the only political discourse available to Jacobean dramatists, to members of the political nation like Neville, or even to the king himself. If we turn our gaze away from the court and the monarch, away from absolutism and its discontents, we can begin to see the full complexity of English political discourse and practice interrogated in Stuart

Figure 4. The "Artificiall Man" or body politic. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviatan* (1651), frontispiece, detail. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

drama. Neville did not see in *A King and No King* either a subversion or a slavish sanctioning of absolutism, but rather, like his letter to James, a bit of "Advice," an attempt to recall the king to one of the king's own views of sovereignty. And both the play and Neville's letter provide *theatrical* advice, for Neville felt the problem with the previous parliament lay not in any Jacobean absolutism, but rather in the king's inability to play his role correctly in his drama with the gentry in the Commons. Neville counseled James "to speak graciously and benignly to the people that shall flock to see his Majesty this progress, and especially to take notice of the principal gentlemen and to let them kiss his hand or do them some other grace."[77] In the transformation of Arbaces, James could see this theatrical advice theatrically presented.

Indeed, the tragicomic form, with its marvelous reversals, is central to the play's ability to work out the paradoxical reconciliation that both Gobrius and Neville sought to effect. What Giambattista Guarini saw as tragicomedy's ability to present "contraries . . . join[ed] in a single mixed form" is precisely what allows *A King and*

No King to present political authority as itself joining "in a single mixed form" the two elements that had seemed perilously contrary in the 1610 Parliament: the prerogatives of the king and the dictates of common law.[78] Critics of the play have often condemned its last act as a poetic failure symptomatic of a moral one, in which "the twists and reversals of the story" serve only "to provide the maximum amount of sensationalism," while allowing immoral acts to go unpunished.[79] I think, rather, that the tragicomic reversal offered Beaumont and Fletcher the formal means of working out not a moral problem but a political one. Tellingly, Guarini, whose work Fletcher almost certainly knew, saw politics as the ultimate justification of tragicomedy, for the Italian republic takes "two species of government very different among themselves," aristocracy and democracy, and "puts them together and makes of them the mixture of the republic." "Why," Guarini asked, "cannot poetry make the mixture if politics can do it?"[80] Beaumont and Fletcher, working within the English tradition of mixed government, naturally include monarchy along with the aristocracy and democracy represented in Parliament. But, acknowledging this important distinction, we might see *A King and No King* as itself an elaborate reversal of Guarini's terms: at a critical moment in English political history, Beaumont and Fletcher seem to be asking, "Why cannot politics make the mixture if poetry can do it?"

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NOTES

I want to thank Alan Farmer, Jean Howard, David Kastan, Peter Platt, Anne Lake Prescott, and Naomi Reed, all of whom improved this paper greatly with their incisive critiques.

[1] *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers Preserved in the Bodleian Library*, ed. W. H. Bliss, the Rev. W. Dunn Macray, the Rev. O. Ogle, and F. J. Routledge, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1869–1970), 2:339, catalogue number 1845. I am grateful to David Kastan for alerting me to this letter. Nicholas may also have meant that the title was seen as a sympathetic glance at the contradictory position of Charles II, then in exile. Either way, Nicholas clearly saw the play as royalist; the performance at the court of Mary Stuart, of course, supports his reading. For Cromwell's quasi-royal signature, which he began using on 17 December 1653, the day after he was proclaimed Protector, see *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, ed. Wilbur Cortez Abbott, Catherine D. Crane, and Madeline R. Gleason, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 3:139.

[2] *The last Nevvs IN LONDON. OR, A DISCOVRSE Between A* Citizen *and a* Country-Gentleman . . . (1642), 2. The pamphlet claims that the conversation took place on 12 October 1642. The Battle of Edgehill was fought on 23 October 1642.

[3] *A King and No King* was licensed in 1611 by the Master of the Revels. It inaugurated the Christmas season at court on 26 December 1611 and was also performed at court (though not before James) in the winter of 1612–1613 as part of the celebration of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine. See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 3:225, 4:125, 127, 177, 180.

[4] In defending the Militia Ordinance, for example, Parliament claimed that "what they do herein hath the stamp of royal authority, although his Majesty, seduced by wicked counsel do in his own person oppose or interrupt the same." Charles satirized this logic as ultimately antimonarchical: Parliament wanted to "take up arms against our person, under a colour of being loving subjects to our office, and to destroy us, that they may preserve the King." Both quoted in Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 507.

[5] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures on Shakespeare, Etc.* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1907), 194; Michael Neill, "The Defence of Contraries: Skeptical Paradox in *A King and No King*," *Studies in English Literature* 21 (1981): 332; Rebecca W. Bushnell, *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 162. Bushnell discusses how criticism of the play and its playwrights tends to reproduce the "[h]umanist equation of aesthetic, political, and moral terms" (160).

[6] See the editor's introduction to Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *A King and No King*, ed. Robert K. Turner (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1963), xxv; John F. Danby, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Poets* (London: Faber, 1952), 161. Danby also writes: "there can be little doubt that Beaumont and Fletcher, broadly speaking, were 'royalist'" (185).

[7] Maurice Hunt, "Conquering Words in *A King and No King*," *South Central Review* 7 (1990): 23; Jean-Pierre Teissedou, "L'Absolutisme en Question dans *A King and No King*," in *Coriolan: Theatre et Politique*, ed. Jean-Paul Debax and Yves Peyre (Toulouse: Universite de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1984), my translation: "L'affirmation d'un absolutisme si paradoxal est une attaque corrosive contre celui-ci" (250). For variations on the anti-absolutist approach, see also Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), 178–79; David Laird, "'A Curious Way of Torturing': Language and Ideological Transformation in *A King and No King*," in *Drama and Philosophy*, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 107–25; Stephan P. Flores, "'I am Arbaces, we all fellow subjects': The Political Appeal of Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* on the Restoration Stage," *Essays in Literature* 20 (1993): 171–96; Sandra Clark, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 116–20.

[8] Glenn Burgess analyzes the historiographic problems with the absolutism-constitutionalism dichotomy in *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996), esp. 209–24; and in *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1992), 110–14.

[9] See Russell, *The Addled Parliament of 1614: The Limits of Revision* (Univ. of Reading, 1992): "The dissolution of 1610 started a debate, in which the 1614 session has a crucial part, on whether Kings were more likely to be solvent with Parliaments or without them. This debate continued unresolved in the Privy Council up to . . . the Short Parliament of 1640" (13).

[10] For the revisionist position, see Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy*; Burgess, *Ancient Constitution*, chap. 4–8; Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621–1629* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). J. P. Sommerville revitalizes the classic view of James as an absolutist and those opposed to him as constitutionalists in *Politics and Ideology in England 1603–1640* (New York: Longman, 1986).

[11] Clayton Roberts, *Schemes & Undertakings: A Study of English Politics in the Seventeenth Century* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1985), chap. 1; he defines the term on ix–xii.

[12] See the dedication to Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1619), in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. George Walton Williams, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966–1996), 2:167–314. All citations of the play are from this edition. Hereafter cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line number.

[13] C. M. Gayley notes that Sir Henry was a member of the Mitre Inn group whose members were connected to Beaumont through the Inns of Court. See *Beaumont the Dramatist: A Portrait* (New York: The Century Company, 1914), 145–48. I. A. Shapiro claims that the Neville mentioned as a member of the Mitre Inn group is in fact a cousin of the same name, and Finkelpearl (179 n. 17) accepts his conclusion, but Shapiro's evidence seems scanty. "The 'Mermaid Club,'" *Modern Language Review* 45 (1950): 6–17. Neville the parliamentary undertaker, after all, had "lived and conversed inwardly" with "patriots" in the Parliament of 1610, including Mitre Inn members John Hoskins, William Hakewill, and Richard Martin. *Proceedings in Parliament 1614 (House of Commons)*, ed. Maija Jansson (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 249; hereafter cited as *Proceedings 1614*. Further, *A King and No King* was performed twice at court when only this Sir Henry Neville would have been present.

[14] On private transcripts of plays, see W. W. Greg, "Prompt Copies, Private Transcripts, and the 'Playhouse Scrivener,'" *The Library*, 4th ser., 6 (1926): 148–56; and Peter Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), 392–94.

[15] The *locus classicus* of mixed government is Polybius's variation on the Aristotelian polity in book 6 of his *Histories*: only through a balance of the three forms of government—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—could the vices of each form be controlled by the virtues of the other two. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), 77–80; and Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572–1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 232. Pocock argues that so long as the king called Parliament at his own prerogative, it was difficult for the English to theorize their constitution as fully Polybian, since ultimate authority over the Lords (aristocracy) and Commons (democracy) seemed to rest with the monarch (354–60). For this reason, he prefers to call England a mixed *monarchy*. I want to use the term "mixed government," however, without necessarily implying the complete Polybian model of a balance of powers, because the debate I am tracing here was over precisely this issue of the relationship between the three models of government (embodied in the three estates of Parliament). Using "mixed government" as a more inclusive term avoids begging the question, through reference to a supposedly stable politico-historical "context," of the extent to which *A King and No King* may be seen as advocating a more Polybian model of government.

[16] See the dedication to Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King*, in *The Dramatic Works*.

[17] Walter Cohen, "Prerevolutionary Drama," in *The Politics of Tragicomedy: Shakespeare and After*, ed. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (New York: Routledge, 1992), 141–42.

[18] Neville probably obtained the private transcript of the play sometime between its first performance and April 1613, when he returned to his country home until the 1614 Parliament. See Roberts, 10–13, 22.

[19] Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury*, ed. William Fraser and W. Scott, 2 vols. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1897–1903), 1:101–2.

[20] *Proceedings in Parliament 1610*, ed. Elizabeth Read Foster, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), 2:101, 103, 393–94, 398.

[21] Roberts, 3.

[22] Sir Julius Caesar later commented scornfully that these thirty men, despite or because of their "contempt in the inferior towards the superior," were "held amongst the common people the best patriots that ever were." *Proceedings 1610*, 2:348 n. 5. In July, Salisbury also met with "a select number of the lower House," including Neville and other patriots like Maurice Berkeley, Herbert Croft, and Edward Alford. *Proceedings 1610*, 2:274. Roberts notes that "all of them [were] accounted patriots" (15).

[23] *Proceedings 1610*, 2:338, 338 n. 16.

[24] Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), 127–30, 170–75.

[25] See Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege*, 128. Neville had been involved tangentially in the Essex conspiracy, and James never entirely trusted him, blocking his "access to the normal channels of government advancement." See Owen Lowe Duncan, Jr., "The Political Career of Sir Henry Neville: An Elizabethan Gentleman at the Court of James I," Ph.D. diss., Ohio State Univ., 1974, 190. On the false dichotomy of "court" and "country," see Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 5–26; on "patriots" within the government, see Burgess, *Ancient Constitution*, 112–13. See also Duncan on Neville's opposition to and hoped-for reconciliation with the government (215).

[26] *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), 1:358–59. See also Roberts, 23.

[27] Roberts, 21.

[28] Neither side, however, may have intended to do so. As Burgess notes, "the dispute was not primarily theoretical at all, but more about whether impositions were in fact properly a matter for the absolute prerogative and thus of no concern to the common law" (*Ancient Constitution*, 141–42). James argued that since impositions were levied not on English property but on the goods of foreign merchants, they were subject to prerogative, not English common law.

[29] *Proceedings 1614*, 248, 249, 250.

[30] Roberts, 11, 13. The entire "Memorial" is reprinted in *Proceedings 1614*, 253–56; see also Neville's letter to Rochester explaining the scheme: British Library Cottonian MSS, Titus F IV, fols. 349–50. The London merchant Robert Middleton remarked that Neville's graces "tend to the gentility, not to the cities, boroughs, burgesses, or merchants." Quoted in Duncan, 266.

[31] *Proceedings 1610*, 2:327, my emphasis.

[32] *Letters*, 1:525.

[33] According to Russell, in 1614 "the Commons, for the only time in James's reign, attempted direct redress-supply bargaining" over impositions (*Addled Parliament*, 5).

[34] *Proceedings 1610*, 2:50. John Cowell claimed that the king could use his absolute prerogative to "alter or suspend any particular lawe." Cowell, *THE INTERPRETER: OR BOOKE CONTAINING the Signification of Words* (Cambridge, 1607), sig. 2Q1[r]. James explained his reasons for condemning the book through Salisbury: "he minds no such voice [as *The Interpreter*] shall be left to succeeding times as shall say that the king can make laws without the estates or that subsidies are due to him because he is a king." *Proceedings 1610*, 2:50.

[35] On the duplex nature of royal prerogative, see Burgess, *Ancient Constitution*, 139–62. In 1607, the Lords clearly stated those areas they felt came under the absolute prerogative: "It hath bine ever without question . . . that to consider & resolue both of the conveniency & condicion of peace, warr, Contract of forraigne Ammitye, or entercourse of trade, is the sole right of the supreme majesty and whensoever it hath bine presumed to be touched in Parliament without expresse leave of the Soveraigne it hath bine stopped." British Library Cottonian MSS, Titus F IV, fol. 297v. In delineating the absolute prerogative in this way, of course, they implied the existence of the *ordinary* prerogative of king-in-Parliament.

[36] The classic work on patriarchalism as political theory is Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). On James's discourse of patriarchalism and its relations to literature, see Jonathan Goldberg, "Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images," in *Rewriting the Renaissance*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 3–32; and Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983). See also Jeffrey Masten, who relates this discourse to the emergence of the dramatic author in chap. 3 of *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997).

[37] Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), chap. 3; Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 152–53. Susan Dwyer Amussen usefully discusses the differences between the father-child and the husband-wife relationships in *An Ordered Society* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), 38–47.

[38] James VI and I, *Political Writings*, ed. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 136.

[39] William Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 5.1.426–27.

[40] *Proceedings 1614*, 144.

[41] Finkelpearl, 175; Clark, 117. For similar formulations, see Bushnell, 164. See also Robert K. Turner's introduction to *A King and No King*, xviii; Robert Y. Turner, "Heroic Passion in the Early Tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (1984): 109–10.

[42] Robert Y. Turner, 109, 126.

[43] Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly

Review Press, 1975), 157–210. Masten seems to be the only critic to discuss the incest of *A King and No King* in relation to the work of Rubin (100). But if I read him correctly, Masten sees the play's treatment of incest as a critique of James's, or at least Gobrius's, patriarchal "author/ity" (66). I think the play uses incest not to critique patriarchy, which it will ultimately and carefully reinscribe, nor to critique the incest taboo itself, but rather to make a political point about absolutism.

[44] For a similar argument, though in Lacanian terms, see Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 5–11.

[45] This sort of threat was especially present in the marriage of a sole female heir, like Panthea, or a female monarch, like Elizabeth, for it raised the specter of descent through a foreign male line. We might compare the widespread fear among English "forward Protestant" circles that Queen Elizabeth's possible marriage to the Duke of Anjou would result eventually in a united England and France, ruled by a French king, with England governed by his viceroy. See Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996), 103.

[46] See Marvin Arthur Breslow, *A Mirror of England: English Puritan Views of Foreign Nations 1618–1640* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), 20.

[47] Whigham, "Incest and Ideology: *The Duchess of Malfi*," in *Staging the Renaissance*, ed. Kastan and Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), 266.

[48] Neill, 325.

[49] Arbaces, of course, has many other tyrannous characteristics, and in general, he fits nicely in Bushnell's paradigm of the tyrant (50–69), becoming beastly, theatrical and ranting, and effeminate. Taking incest as fundamental to his tyranny, however, we might see Arbaces's effeminacy not simply as part of the traditional formulation of tyrants, but as a result of his refusal to engage in the patriarchal "traffic in women," a refusal that constructs him as less of a man.

[50] Most critics who view the play as a subversion of absolutism take this, implicitly or explicitly, as an attack on James. See, for example, Teissedou, 250; Clark, 102; Flores, 172.

[51] Quoted in Sommerville, *Politics & Ideology*, 132.

[52] Bushnell, 171.

[53] Arthur Mizener, "The High Design of *A King and No King*," *Modern Philology* 38 (1940): 150; see also Robert K. Turner's introduction to *A King and No King*, xviii–xix.

[54] Ralph Winwood, quoted in Russell, *Addled Parliament*, 15–16.

[55] *Political Writings*, 72, 79–80; Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology*, 34–39.

[56] On the importance of "plot" in the play, see Masten, 97–98.

[57] *Letters*, 1:384, my emphasis.

[58] OED, "reconcile," 10a.

[59] My thoughts on paradox and government have been informed by Peter Platt's essay, "'The Meruailouse Site': Shakespeare, Venice, and Paradoxical Stages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 121–54, which he kindly let me read in manuscript.

[60] See Robert K. Turner's introduction to *A King and No King*, xxvi.

[61] Finkelpearl seems to struggle with this indeterminacy in his reading of the ending of the play as "a shift from absolute to constitutional monarchy" (179). He claims that those critics "who see Arbaces's status as unchanged" are speaking "legalistically and not responding to what actually transpires on the stage" (178). As

his discussion of the title-page woodcut makes clear, Finkelpearl sees "what actually transpires on the stage" as involving "a deposition of some sort" (179). But he has misunderstood the "legalisms" of the ending: Arbaces has been "deposed"—or, rather, revealed as having been illegitimate all along—but this does not involve a shift to "constitutional monarchy" (somehow anticipating the relatively complete subordination of the monarch to Parliament that occurred after the 1689 Bill of Rights) since at the end "*Panthaea* is the Queene" (5.4.269) and will presumably rule as an early Stuart sovereign did, not as a constitutional monarch. Finkelpearl seems to have missed the crucial point that Arbaces's marriage to Panthea allows him to retain his (reformulated) sovereignty, restored as a legitimate king through marriage. The play and the title-page woodcut carefully construct this paradox: *A King and No King*; Finkelpearl would resolve both paradoxes to one of their terms: "no king." Like Finkelpearl, Laird reads the ending proleptically, as demonstrating "that the law itself is sovereign," with Arbaces becoming a constitutional "king-under-the-law" (123).

[62] Finkelpearl, 172. See also Neill, who writes that Arbaces's "rhetorical prowess is pathetically degraded by the Citizens' ludicrous misunderstanding of his heroical declamation" (331). William C. Woodson also claims that "Arbaces's vacuous self-esteem is ridiculed," adding that "the citizens *mock* him for bringing 'peas' to their land," an interpretation of the citizens' intentions that seems wholly unwarranted. "The Casuistry of Innocence in *A King and No King* and Its Implications for Tragicomedy," *English Literary Renaissance* 8 (1978): 325, my emphasis. I am not denying that Arbaces is also shown as intemperate in this scene, but the joke—especially the linguistic joke—seems largely to be on the masses.

[63] When preparing for the new impositions, Salisbury felt compelled to consult with the merchants, lowering several rates and abandoning others, an acknowledgement of their political clout. The traditional alliance between the Crown and the chartered companies held, and the merchants did not oppose the new customs in either the 1610 or the 1614 Parliament, reinforcing the importance of the land-owning gentry to Neville's scheme. Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 205–11.

[64] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1975), 124–51.

[65] The fact that the Armenian marriage leaves gender hierarchy intact—as it leaves Tigranes's kingship intact—suggests again that it is *Iberia* that needs political transformation, not Armenia, which is depicted for the most part as already politically ideal.

[66] Quoted in Dolan, 43.

[67] Not surprisingly, then, the play passes over the possibility of a queen's husband *not* being crowned, a vexed question in reality: when Mary Tudor married Philip II, many feared that if Philip were crowned King of England, all English subjects would be bound to obey him as he led them into Spanish wars. Sir Henry Dudley roused people to his attempted rebellion by asking if they had heard that "they goo abowtt a coronacyon." Quoted in Jennifer Loach, *Parliament and the Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 195–96.

[68] Masten, 98.

[69] See Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 69–70.

[70] I thus disagree with those who read Panthea's lack of knowledge and lack of reaction here as merely another indication of the "perfunctoriness" of the ending of the play, "resolved by a dramatic trick." Clark, 119–20. For me, these lacks serve a crucial ideological function.

[71] Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in *Rewriting the Renaissance*, 127. See also Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), chap. 1; and Belsey, 183, chap. 6.

[72] I am grateful to Anne Lake Prescott for her thoughts on the relation of the *King and No King* title page to the emblem tradition. Tellingly, critics often attempt to resolve the ambiguities of the woodcut. Finkelpearl argues that "the woodcut seems to corroborate my claim that a deposition of some sort occurs. . . . Some have said that it is unclear whether the crown is being placed on his head or taken from it, but the fact that his scepter is already lying on the ground makes it certain that Fortune (or Heaven) is removing the crown" (179). Boehrer reads the emblem the opposite way: "the hand of God reaches forth to place a crown not on Panthea's head, but on Arbaces's" (105). Either resolution of the paradox, I believe, flattens the carefully patterned politics of the play.

[73] On clothing, see C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 13–79; and Iris Brooke, *A History of English Costume* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1972), 54–71. For an excellent recent discussion of *A Game at Chess*, which takes the play beyond mere allegory of the Spanish Match, see Prescott, "Housing Chessmen and Bagging Bishops: Space and Desire in Colonna, 'Rabelais,' and Middleton's *Game at Chess*," in *Soundings of Things Done: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of S. K. Heninger Jr.*, ed. Peter E. Medine and Joseph Wittreich (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1997), 215–33.

[74] McMullan interprets the woodcut on the title page of *Philaster* (1620) as similarly depicting a "country" political position; he cautions that his reading should not be taken "to invoke the simple, dated polarization of court and country or to suggest that there were factions in the Parliament of 1621 that already constituted some kind of coherent opposition or country party." *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 114. His caveat can apply to my reading as well, for the Whiggish division between court and country is belied, as I argue above, by the fact that Neville clearly saw his country position as a means of advancement *within* the court.

[75] Dolan, 13; Goldberg, "Fatherly Authority," 25. I quote from Goldberg in the latter half of the sentence because Dolan formulates her own view of the relationship between family and state in contrast to Goldberg's injunction that "Renaissance families need to be read from the outside in: from the state to the family." Goldberg, *James I*, 89.

[76] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 9.

[77] *Proceedings 1614*, 251.

[78] Guarini, quoted in Allan H. Gilbert, *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (New York: American Book Company, 1940), 511.

[79] Muriel Bradbrook, quoted in Bushnell, 161.

[80] Gilbert, 511. On Fletcher's knowledge of Guarini, see Gilbert, 504–5.