

JOHN DRYDEN: THE OLD LION IN 1700

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ABSTRACT

WINIFRED ERNST: John Dryden: The Old Lion in 1700
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Poetry and politics were important to Dryden throughout his career. They are no less important to *Fables* and *The Secular Masque*. My dissertation explores the idea that *Fables* involves an earnest, if covert, appraisal of both the merits and the flaws of William and Mary, as well as a reappraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the monarchs before them, including all of the Stuarts in relation to the legendary Plantagenets. In assessing the connections and evaluating the careers of past and present monarchs, Dryden draws on several themes, particularly the tensions between family and individual, love and war, persuasion and force, involvement and detachment, and ultimately the historical versus the personal. And throughout, he is aware of the analogy between the ordering art of the poet (or narrator) and that of the King.

In the first chapter, I begin with *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque*. The traits of an ideal king traditionally have been expressed in terms of concordia discors and the balance between Mars and Venus. Edward III is an ideal king in English culture, as Theseus is in *Palamon and Arcite*. The satirical epilogue *The Secular Masque* touches on the failures of subsequent English monarchs. Chapter Two focuses on a related pattern involving persuasion (Venus) and force (Mars), which is explored further through marriage (persuasion) and rape (force). These symbols have political significance:

James I and Robert Filmer codified the typical views in the 1660s regarding the state as a family, and rape was a common image for usurpation. Finally, Dryden's genius in *Fables* lies in the artist's eye that perceives large historical patterns, but remains acutely aware of the individual characters that are part of those patterns. Chapter Three explores this aspect of Dryden's poetry in 1700.

I suggest that Dryden's loss of political favor has not handicapped the urbane wisdom that is his signature. However, despite his ability to provide his readers with dispassionate yet committed patterns of both kingship and poetry, it isn't clear whether or not Dryden feels that he himself has achieved such an ideal.

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‘All those at the banquet!’ they’d say, and shake hands or hug. Sometimes they said this laughing, and sometimes they said it in tears. But that they were still at the banquet of life was always affirmed. –Alice Walker

This was my favorite quote at the age of 18, when I left Little Rock for Chapel Hill. Professor Thomas A. Stumpf was my second English professor that year, and he towered over all 100 of us in that marvelous survey. Since then, he has continued to both nurture and challenge my intellectual curiosity and capabilities through to the completion of this dissertation. Thus, it seems appropriate to end where I began. Who knew you could remain at the banquet while writing a dissertation? Then again, many of us read literature because we hunger for the feast.

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INTRODUCTION

A close look at two pairs of characters in *Ovid XII* reveals the care with which Dryden renders his characters in *Fables*, as well as the complicated and comprehensive context within which he places them. The depiction of Hylonome and Cylarrus, two centaurs in *Ovid XII*, appears in the midst of graphic violence between the Lapiths and the Centaurs. They are the shining examples of nobility and heroism, yet they are fighting for the “wrong” side. They are memorable yet minor characters in *Ovid XII*. That Dryden may have intended a parallel between the centaurs and William and Mary is rather surprising. In the Sandys translation of Ovid, Hylonome is dressed in “The skinnes of beasts, such as were choice and rare” (408),¹ but Dryden’s version is royal: “The scarf of furs that hung below her side/ Was ermine, or the panther’s spotted pride;/ Spoils of no common beast” (552-54).² According to William Cameron, “panther” signified the Church of England from “The Hind and the Panther” forward.³ Furthermore, Mary II had established herself as the Church of England’s protector during her reign, as every panegyrist and satirist acknowledged. While the centaurs already are an exemplar couple in Ovid, Dryden embellishes Hylonome’s Amazonian qualities, and she becomes Cylarrus’s equal in the hunt as well as in love. (Ovid’s Hylonome, like Cylarrus, is unrivalled in exhibiting the ideals of love and nobility, but she does not participate in the

¹ George Sandys, ed., *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished: Oxford 1632* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1976).

² John Dryden, “The Twelfth Book of Ovid his Metamorphoses, Wholly Translated,” *Fables*, in *Works VII*.

³ William Cameron, ed., *Poems on the Affairs of State. Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714. Volume 5: 1688-1697* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971). Quotation on 498.

sylvan chase.)⁴ Likewise, as William's regent when he was at war, Mary was his equal. She faithfully followed William's course, and he trusted her with his policies.⁵ This passage, therefore, may be an allusion to the royal pair, though for all their virtue, Cylarrus and Hylonome are fighting on the side of the centaurs, the cause of the lustful violence at the wedding feast.

Nestor is the narrator who highlights the centaur couple for the Greeks. Central to *Ovid XII* is Nestor's relationship to Hercules who, though he defended the Lapiths, is notably absent from Nestor's version of the war. He tells his labyrinth of stories while the Greeks are resting for the night, between battles of their own, outside the walls of Troy. Tlelopemus is the only listener who isn't charmed by the narration, but the old storyteller skillfully calms even Hercules' offended son: "Silence is all the vengeance I decree / For my slain brothers; but 't is peace with thee" (759-60). Nestor's choice to end the cycle of vengeance is in contrast to the machinations of gods and heroes, and his

⁴ Sandys' and Dryden's versions of this passage are distinct. Sandys translates as follows:

. . .and ware
The skinnes of beasts, such as were choice and rare
Which flowing from her shoulder crosse her brest,
Vaile her left side. Both equal love possesst:
Together on the shady mountains stray
In woods and hollow caves together lay
Then to the palace of the Lapithite
Together came; and now together fight. (Sandys 408)

Dryden's version is as follows:

The scarf of furs that hung below her side
Was ermine, or the panther's spotted pride;
Spoils of no common beast: with equal flame
They lov'd; their sylvan pleasures were the same:
All day they hunted; and, when day expir'd,
Together to some shady cave retir'd.
Invited to the nuptials, both repair;
And, side by side, they both engage in war. (lines 552-559)

⁵ Stephen Baxter, *William III and the Defense of European Liberty 1650-1702* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), 279.

omission of Hercules ties him to Dryden.⁶ In 1685, Dryden cast James II as a Hercules in *Threnodia Augustalis*, and in 1688, he compared James III to the infant Alcides in *Britannia Rediviva*.⁷ While Dryden clearly had claimed this image for the Stuarts, William began using Hercules as his favorite icon in order to move away from the anti-catholic rhetoric that was building momentum around the King's image as the Protestant protector.⁸ Surely Dryden is to Nestor what William is to Hercules.

Fables clearly is not the assertion of the myth of William as providential deliverer, nor could it ever have become so. But neither is it an accusation of tyrannical rule aimed solely at the current usurpers. *Ovid XII*, for example, isn't about a settled tyranny at all. The angst and chaos in *Ovid XII* reflects more closely the complete disruption of civil society that was caused by the English Civil War, as I will argue. What is intriguing about the details surrounding Hylonome and Cylarrus, or Nestor and Hercules, is that they are part of a much larger, complicated, and intricate story, in which Ovid begins with Achilles' victory in battle and ends with Achilles' death, and through which Nestor connects the past with the present in multiple ways for the Greek heroes, in a moment of respite from the Trojan war. I will argue that Dryden does the same thing in *Fables*: when he examines Chaucer's role in politics, for example, he provokes

⁶ Reverand's remarks regarding Hercules and Nestor are tantalizingly brief: "One might add that in avenging himself on a heroic figure while maintaining that he is taking no vengeance, Nestor also manages to accomplish what Dryden seems to accomplish in his incessant attacks upon William III throughout *Fables*." Cedric Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode: The Fables* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), Quotation on 27. Reverand also sees a parallel between Nestor/Agamemnon and Dryden/James II in *The First Book of Homer's Ilias*, on pages 16-17.

⁷ Winn addresses Dryden's use of Hercules and Atlas in *Threnodia Augustalis* on page 48. James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987). Garrison examines Dryden's evolution of the use of Hercules as a metaphor in *Threnodia Augustalis*, *Britannia Rediviva*, and finally in *Amphitryon*. James D. Garrison, "Dryden and the Birth of Hercules," *Studies in Philology* 77, no. 2 (Spring, 1980). (Winn also notes that Hercules is used in all three works on page 446.)

⁸ Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 27.

unanswered questions about the legality of Henry IV's rule, and he demonstrates that those questions were still relevant with respect to William III. He also reminds us that the Plantagenets were never free from wars over power.⁹ Unlike Dryden the artist, but perhaps like Ormond the military strategist, to whom *Fables* is dedicated, Chaucer's family loyalty allowed him to continue in the service of kings: "he was poet" to Edward III, Richard II, and Henry IV, despite Richard II's overthrow. Dryden addresses the delicacy of Chaucer's position while he emphasizes the illegitimate act of Henry IV, who was valiant and wise, but who nonetheless "claim'd by succession" a crown that was not "rightfully" his.¹⁰

Though not mentioned explicitly in the *Preface*, it was Shakespeare who established the force of the Tudor myth by illustrating the tension between an incompetent but rightful heir; a valiant, but illegitimate king; and a country that paid penance with the War of the Roses, to be delivered from the chaos by the House of Tudor. Chaucer's political choices and Shakespeare's artistic ones combine easily under Dryden's management. Shakespeare makes sense of history by developing a dichotomy between Richard II and Henry IV, and Dryden's imitation of *Palamon and Arcite* does the same by utilizing the archetypal opposition of Mars and Venus in his depiction of the two princes, who are cousins and rivals. Likewise, this division of affinities may be

⁹ "[Chaucer] was employ'd abroad and favor'd by Edward the Third, Richard the Second, and Henry the Fourth, and was poet, as I suppose, to all three of them. In Richard's time, I doubt, he was a little dipp'd in the rebellion of the commons, and being brother-in-law to John of Ghant, it was no wonder if he follow'd the fortunes of that family, and was well with Henry the Fourth, when he had depos'd his predecessor. Neither is it to be admir'd, that Henry, who was a wise as well as a valiant prince, who claim'd by succession, and was sensible that his title was not sound, but was rightfully in Mortimer, who had married the heir of York; it was not to be admir'd, I say, if that great politician should be pleas'd to have the greatest wit of those times in his interests, and to be the trumpet of his praises." (*Preface to the Fables, Works* 7:35)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

applied to the Stuart monarchs: some were militant, others were more flexible and peace-loving, but none embodied the *concordia discors* of an ideal king. Theseus does embody such a balance, however, and he mirrors Edward III's legendary reputation. Chapter One examines these archetypal divisions as laid out by Dryden in *Palamon and Arcite*, which he replicates on different terms and with a different tone in *The Secular Masque*.

Chapter Two focuses on a related pattern that Dryden pursues in *Fables* involving the dialectic between persuasion and force, which resonates with the imagery of Venus and Mars, and which is explored further through marriage (persuasion) and rape (force). These symbols have political significance: James I and Robert Filmer had codified the typical views in the 1600's regarding the state as a family. In 1694, James Tyrrell catalogued the current opinions regarding divine right, and framed both sides of the argument in terms of Adam and Eve and their progeny.¹¹ Additionally, rape was a common image for usurpation. *Palamon and Arcite* provides a Theseus who embodies *concordia discors* by balancing a state's need for both peace and war, yet *Ovid XII* offers a wedding feast in which the bride is seized and political warfare ensues. These fables may seem disparate at first glance. I will argue that they are related, and that Dryden is working with many of the same political questions about monarchy, fealty, and leadership that he engaged when he wrote *Absalom and Achitophel*, though in *Fables* he writes without the one-for-one political allegory. As it was with *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*, Dryden as artist is willing to scrutinize multiple perspectives of an argument, including those that he holds dear, and he is capable of appreciating the

¹¹ James Tyrrell, *Bibliotheca Politica: Or an Enquiry into the Ancient Constitution of the English Government Both in Respect to the Just Extent of Regal Power, and the Rights and Liberties of the Subject. Wherein All the Chief Arguments, as Well against, as for the Late Revolution, Are Impartially Represented, and Considered, in Thirteen Dialogues. Collected out of the Best Authors, as Well Antient as Modern. To Which Is Added an Alphabetical Index to the Whole Work.* (London: Printed for R. Baldwin, 1694).

complexity of positions that he ultimately opposes. Theseus is a model of the perfect absolute monarch, though he is not a patriarch. Tancred (*Sigismonda and Guiscardo*), on the other hand, provides an illustration of the patriarchal monarch turned tyrant. Dryden chooses to include both Tancred and Theseus in *Fables*, and therefore is not providing stories that prove one side or the other in the debate concerning the divine right of kings and its relevance to the Glorious Revolution. This even-handedness produces some surprising revelations. The presence of familial passions in one king, and the absence of them in the other, is a factor in the overall equation: Tancred's passion as a father prohibits the rational and deliberative action of which Theseus is capable.

Dryden's genius in *Fables* lies in the self-conscious artistry that perceives large patterns, but remains acutely aware of the individual characters that are part of those patterns. Chapter Three is devoted to this very dialectic, described in terms of detachment and involvement. Dryden weighs the strengths and weaknesses of his characters based on their abilities to balance commitment and compassion with rational discernment. *The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*, for example, demonstrates in Ajax what happens when emotional detachment breaks down, and showcases Ulysses as a skilled rhetorician who manages himself and his audience. This ideal balance is integral to both artistry and kingship, and Dryden often examines poets and monarchs (or statesmen) simultaneously, as a cursory review of the characters in *Fables* will attest: Ulysses/Ajax as kings and contenders in rhetoric (a form of artistry), Timotheus/Alexander, John Dryden/John Driden, Pygmalion as artist and king in one, Nestor as storyteller and counselor paired with Achilles (*Ovid XII*) and Agamemnon (*Book One of Homer's Ilias*) are a few of the obvious examples. The personal and the historical is another version of

this combination of involvement with detachment, and Dryden's final statement as an artist is not devoid of personal reflections, nor of a review of his quite public career. A man like Dryden would not miss the significant detail that he was approaching the end of his own life at the turn of the century.

In this dissertation, I would like to explore the idea that Dryden's *Fables* involves an earnest, if covert, appraisal of the merits and flaws of William and Mary, and a re-appraisal of the strengths and fatal weaknesses of the monarchs before them, including all of the Stuarts in relation to the legendary Plantagenets, and going back as far as Edward I and Edward III. In examining the current monarchs, and in re-examining the previous ones, Dryden addresses the principles behind the strategies of kingship, such as family, legacy, and the requisite balance between persuasion and force, love and war, and detachment and involvement. While examining these qualities that are critical to both kingship and artistry, Dryden necessarily must also scrutinize the poet whose art records, and neglects to record, the king's works.

Historical Precedent as Political Argument

Dryden had written about kingship and history many times over by 1700. So had others. While *Absalom and Achitophel* is the seminal example of Biblical allegory, Alan Roper demonstrates the common use of historical precedent "to legitimize current events and treaties" or to "prove" the "fanaticism, tyranny, or treason" of contemporary kings or other political figures and events.¹² He points to figures both major and minor, from Sir Walter Raleigh forward, who make use of this widely accepted tradition, particularly

¹² Alan Roper, *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms* (New York: Barnes & Noble: 1965), 29-31.

popular during the Exclusion Crisis and again during Convention Parliament in 1688.¹³ Citing the depositions of Richard II and Edward II proved both useful and problematic, but were undeniably commonplace.¹⁴ Earl Wasserman outlines a similar use of biblical history as precedent in the arguments leading up to the Restoration: David and Saul, chosen by God through Samuel before being chosen by the people, was the most common parallel as Englishmen debated limited and absolute monarchy. “To My Honor’d Friend, Dr. Charleton” (1663) makes use of this precedent, along with Denmark’s history of elective monarchy and recent choice of absolute monarchy, according to Wasserman’s persuasive argument.¹⁵ Michael McKeon demonstrates Dryden’s use of the family/state parallel, which he defines as both Biblical and Virgilian, in *Annus Mirabilis* (1667),¹⁶ and Alan Roper assesses the same paradigm, tracing it through the various phases of Dryden’s career, and concluding with the image of Adam and Eve as wrestlers in “To John Driden of Chesterton” (1700).¹⁷ Finally, Steven Zwicker argues that political debate during Dryden’s time involved extreme partisanship, where both sides presented themselves as moderate while accusing the opposition of

¹³ Roper mentions Raleigh’s *History of the World*, William Howell’s *Institution of General History*, and John Sleidon’s handbook on the four empires in this context, along with Genesis and other historical books of the Old Testament (29).

¹⁴ Roper, 170-171.

¹⁵ Earl Wasserman, *The Subtler Language; Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959): 15-33.

¹⁶ Michael McKeon, *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England: The Case of Dryden’s Annus Mirabilis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹⁷ Roper, *Dryden’s Poetic Kingdoms*, 104-124.

fanaticism.¹⁸ This corroborates with Alan Roper's assessment of historical precedent that "prove[d]" either righteous government or tyranny.

To place William III within the context of contemporary commentary on English kings, *Poems on the Affairs of State* makes it clear that the title of "tyrant" belonged to more than one monarch after 1660. *Tyrannicidium* (1690) is an example of poems that portray James as a minor tyrannical figure next to Louis XIV:

Let bastard Lewis be the first in story
Stab the lewd dog and then give God the glory.
Next Irish James, of coin and wit bereft,
The only male of his weak line that's left:
A Caesar's fate do thou on him confer.
Send him to visit tyrant Lucifer. (*POAS* 5: 217)

According to Winn's interpretation of *Don Sebastian*, even Dryden refers to James II as a tyrant.¹⁹ Dorax refutes Benducar, who urges him to rebel, with the following response:

He [the Emperor] trusts us both; mark that, shall we betray him?
A Master who reposes Life and Empire
On our fidelity: I grant he is a Tyrant,
That hated name my nature most abhors;
.....
But, while he trusts me, 'twere so base a part
To fawn and yet betray, I shou'd be hiss'd
And whoop'd in Hell for that Ingratitude. (*II.i.288-91; 296-98*)

Winn examines the inferred commentary on James' unfaithful servants, who are the real sinners in the passage, yet Dorax acknowledges the unlawful nature of his king.²⁰

¹⁸ Steven Zwicker, *Politics and Language in Dryden's Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984)

¹⁹ James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 440.

²⁰ Howard Erskine-Hill, "Dryden's Drama: A Reevaluation," *John Dryden: His Politics, His Plays, and His Poets*, eds. Claude Rawson and Aaron Santesso (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004): 52-64, writes: "If there is a more or less lasting allusion in the exiled Sebastian to the exiled James II, characters in this play are not meant to portray historical figures; rather, they are addressed to contemporary and fundamental issues" (56). This is precisely the sort of method Dryden seems to use in *Fables*. Richard

Earlier, in *Britannia Rediviva*, Dryden warns James against succumbing to the temptation of ruling like a “conqu’ror,” as Winn and Reverand have pointed out.²¹

In a number of satires, Cromwell and William hold the same claim as competent usurpers. However, in *The Ghost of King Charles II* (1691), William out-tyrants the tyrant. Charles II’s ghost visits the current monarch of England to give him advice on how to maintain power, and avoid the fate of William’s “dull father” James:

First, cast all idle thoughts of Heaven away,
Those pious clogs to arbitrary sway,
That serve to sink a subject to a slave,
But must not check the actions of the brave.
Kings are free agents, and their wills are laws,
Which they may keep or break as they see cause,
And claim a share in the almighty power
Which Heaven assumes, to nourish or devour. (*POAS* 5: 304, 15-22)

Charles II continues to counsel his successor on how to “obtain/ The pleasing fruits of arbitrary reign” (26), by bribing counselors, dividing them amongst themselves, and other

Kroll, in ‘The Double Logic of Don Sebastian,’ *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly: John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany* 63 (2000): 47-69, also appreciates Dryden’s complexity in this work. I disagree, however, with his assertion that Dryden’s loyalism is “peculiar,” or that it was Dryden’s Catholicism that “caused him to view both William and James—that is, kings as such—with profound ...ambivalence” (58). He concludes by speculating that Dryden’s final views on monarchy, as seen through *Don Sebastian* and *Amphitryon*, suggest that “actual kings...are highly problematic” and that “the ‘best’ king is not so much no king at all but an absent king or a king virtually dead” (69). While I disagree once again with this interpretation, Kroll’s concluding sentence that William’s legitimacy was “uncomfortably predicated on the ritual sacrifice of a Stuart king” (69) is quite interesting in view of the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon in “The First Book of Homer’s Ilias,” and Cymon’s willingness to jettison all principles in order to secure his Iphigenia in “Cymon and Iphigenia.” These versions of sacrifice, in *Fables* at least, would implicate Williamites, not Dryden. Michael McKeon, ‘The Politics of Pastoral Retreat: Dryden’s Poem to His Cousin,’ in *Enchanted Ground*, eds. Jayne Lewis and Maxmilian Novak (Toronto: The Regents of California, 2004): 91-110, takes Kroll’s interpretation of Dryden’s “ambivalence” even further, and states that in “To My Honour’d Kinsman,” Dryden presents “an experiment in defining the terms of an emergent system of parliamentary democracy” (108). While this is a provocative argument that establishes a new way of looking at Dryden’s later work, it is difficult to make the leap that Dryden intended that parliamentarians, even exemplary ones like John Driden of Chesterton, should replace the English monarchy.

²¹ *Britannia Rediviva*, 339. See Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, 433, and Cedric Reverand, *Dryden’s Final Poetic Mode: The Fables* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 213.

fine points in “kingly craft” (53). He says he must be gone, and asks William for a response:

The pensive prince, not given to replies,
Upon his bed a while revolving lies,
Then starting up, to's cabinet he went,
And shewed the ghost his scheme of government:
Which when he'd seen, away the goblin spun,
Frighted to see himself so much outdone. (82-87)

Tyrants, standing armies, conquerors, Hercules, and even Numa were not the only code words being used by all parties in the 1690s, but they were useful to Dryden since they contributed to an art that could be interpreted in more than one way.²² Winn writes that *King Arthur* (1691) received the Queen's approbation, yet that it also “[lay] open to a Jacobite reading.”²³ Winn believes that this is an example of necessary “literary trimming” on Dryden's part.²⁴ He was, after all, a Catholic, and undeniably a supporter of the Stuart line of succession. Yet Dryden also was an artist who loved irony, and the double nature of the battle cries in the 90's may have been a particularly enjoyable medium for Dryden to utilize in his poetry and plays. He also was an author who was not afraid to re-visit his own previous convictions, as we know from his well-documented changes of opinion regarding themes as diverse as rhyme and religion. Readers assume that the tyrants and standing armies in *Fables* always are parallels to the current monarch. It seems quite possible that they also are directed at the monarchs and usurpers who preceded him. Dryden's own *Secular Masque*, for example, does not attribute clemency to the age of the Stuarts. *Fables* delves deeply into themes of violence, power, and

²² Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode*, writes that “Numa had by tradition been associated with Catholic superstition and popish ceremonies, and people like Sir Robert Filmer were changing him into the prototype of a worthy Anglican,” 186-87.

²³ Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, 448.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

betrayal that often remain unresolved, and while they comment on the monarchy after the Glorious Revolution, they also look backwards at English history.

Literature Review

The most significant work on *Fables* is *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode* by Cedric Reverand. He begins by noting the appreciation for *Fables*: from Congreve and Pope, to Wordsworth, to Mark Van Doren, to Earl Miner who, like Sir Walter Scott, equates Dryden's poetical prowess with that of Milton in *Paradise Lost*.²⁵ Reverand provides a thorough bibliography of critical works through 1988, including: the anti-heroic nature of Dryden's later work as viewed by Michael West, Judith Sloman, William Frost, and Derek Hughes;²⁶ Dryden's resignation to England as a fallen state after the Glorious Revolution as argued by Steven Zwicker;²⁷ the argument posited by Judith Sloman and Earl Miner that Dryden's *Fables* progressed towards Christian ideals;²⁸ Fujimura's insistence that Dryden's experience after 1688 both tainted his Christian piety and forced

²⁵ Cedric Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 2-3. See also Adam Rounce, "Eighteenth Century Responses to Dryden's *Fables*," *Translation and Literature*, 16 (Spring 2007), 29-52 for further evidence of the popularity of *Fables*. Rounce points out that Richardson and Wollstonecraft alluded to *Fables* with the expectation that their readership would have an intimate knowledge of the stories within it.

²⁶ Michael West, "Dryden's Ambivalence as a Translator of Heroic Themes," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 36 (1973): 347-66; Michael West, "Dryden and the Disintegration of Renaissance Heroic Ideals," *Costerus*, 7 (1973); Judith Sloman, "The Structure of Dryden's *Fables*," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota (1968); J. Peter Verdurmen, "Dryden's Cymon and Iphigenia at Century's End: Ploughshares into Swords," *Revue des langues vivantes*, 44 (1978): 285-300; Derek Hughes, *Dryden's Heroic Plays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

²⁷ Steven Zwicker, *Politics and Language in Dryden's Poetry: The Arts of Disguise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

²⁸ Judith Sloman, "An Interpretation of Dryden's *Fables*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 4 (1970/71):199-211; Earl Miner, *Dryden's Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967). See also Miner, *The Restoration Mode from Milton to Dryden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

him in the direction of more personal themes;²⁹ Garrison's examination of private fires that destroy civilization and public fires that protect it;³⁰ and many others whose work is particularly focused on one fable or another.³¹ Reverand addresses the difficulties that most modern critics have had with coming to terms with this enormous and complicated piece of Dryden's work, and attributes this difficulty to its elusiveness. His primary thesis asserts that this is central to Dryden's design. Dryden establishes "possible connections, and systems of value that . . . [he] deliberately weaves together only to unravel."³² Reverand speculates that the polarities in *Fables* attest to the ambiguity that Dryden may have felt during this time:

Faced with a king who represented everything hostile, dangerous, and illegal, and faced as well with a stable throne and a nation no longer at war, Dryden found himself caught between two long-standing but now contradictory principles, one being his Jacobite allegiance to the rightful monarch, the other his pragmatic belief in the necessity of a secure throne and a peaceful state.³³

²⁹ Thomas H. Fujimura, "Autobiography in Dryden's Later Work," *Restoration* 8 (1984): 17-29; See also Fujimura, "The Personal Element in Dryden's Poetry," *PMLA* 89 (1974): 1007-23.

³⁰ James D. Garrison, "The Universe of Dryden's *Fables*," *Studies in English Literature*, 21 (1981): 409-23.

³¹ Judith Sloman's *Dryden: The Poetics of Translation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), was one of the first scholars to consider the work as a whole, rather than as a miscellany of translations. Reverand uses her as a primary source, and disagrees with many of her arguments. David J. Latt, *John Dryden: A Survey and Bibliography of Critical Studies, 1894-1974* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976) writes that Miner and Sloman were the only scholars to consider *Fables* as an original work, rather than as a collection of translations. Latt also classifies Miner as the first to combine an examination of both the literary and intellectual background when writing about Dryden, and categorizes much of Miner's work on Dryden as having a focus on the public-private paradigm prevalent in his works. Though published in 1976, several of the authors listed remain current with regards to work on Dryden in the 1690's: Steven Zwicker, Alan Roper, and Michael West are three examples.

³² Reverand, 5.

³³ Reverand, 216-217. David Gelineau revisits the concept of unity in *Fables* in "'Adorn'd with Labour'd Art:' The Intricate Unity of Dryden's *Fables*," *Modern Philology* 106 (August 2008): 25-59. He reviews the work of others who have asserted that Dryden denies unity in *Fables*: Paul Hammond, *John Dryden: A Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991); David Bywaters, "The Problem of Dryden's *Fables*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26 (1992); Steven Zwicker, "Dryden and the Dissolution of Things," *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays*, eds. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). Gelineau believes that Dryden aligns meaningless violence and materialism with William III, and then

At the same time, Reverand ties his examples of anti-heroic and anti-war strains, which he believes are countered by partial ideals, to the resentment Dryden holds towards William and his policies.

Reverand's work on *Fables* and James Winn's *John Dryden and His World* were published within a year of each other, and their theses often complement one another with regards to the last twelve years of Dryden's life and works. In *John Dryden and his World*, Winn highlights virulent Jacobite commentary in all of Dryden's post-revolutionary publications. Many critics agree with him that Jacobitism is Dryden's primary motivation in the 90's. Winn provides a copious list of examples of scholarly work with this focus, which Christopher D'Addario updates in 2004.³⁴ Winn spends a small amount of time on the *Fables*, but refers primarily to "the forthcoming" book to be written by Reverand.

Between the late 1980's and the publications on the occasion of Dryden's tercentenary celebrations, Earl Miner reasserted his position that Dryden's *Fables* were heroic, and that *Britannia Rediviva* marked the end of Dryden's poetry where politics was

counters it with divine love, creation and Catholicism. He disputes Reverand's assertion regarding Dryden's ambivalence.

³⁴ Christopher D'Addario, "Dryden and the Historiography of Exile: Milton and Virgil in Dryden's Late Period," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67: 4 (2004): 553-74, supplies a succinct list of the articles that focused on Dryden's Jacobitism in the translations of the 1690's: Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 94-100; Zwicker, *Politics and Language in Dryden's Poetry*, 177-205; Thomas Fujimura, "Dryden's Virgil: Translation as Autobiography," *Studies in Philology* 80 (1983): 67-83; Zwicker and Bywaters, "Politics and Translation: The English Tacitus of 1698," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 52 (1989): 319-46; Kirk Combe, "Clandestine Protest against William III in Dryden's Translations of Juvenal and Persius," *Modern Philology* 87 (1989): 36-50; Howard Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics: Shakespeare to Dryden* (Oxford, 1996), 201-15; and William J. Cameron, "Dryden's Jacobitism," in Harold Love, ed., *Restoration Literature: Critical Approaches* (London, 1972): 277-308.

at its center.³⁵ He believes Dryden chose Ovid's material to form an epic that would be more appropriate for the fallen England in which he was an exile. For Miner, Dryden renders moral but not political allegories in his fables. Unlike Miner, David Bywaters asserts that Dryden was still very much involved in politics, but that he elevated the literary above the political in order to re-assert his authority after the Glorious Revolution.³⁶ According to Bywaters, Dryden reaches out to Williamite opposition in the country, and undermines William's reign with a constant focus on anti-martial themes. David Hopkins dovetails with Earl Miner's focus on Dryden's later work as apolitical, and asserts that Dryden's exclusive concern is his relationship with the authors he translates: Hopkins uses the term "transfusion" as a key to Dryden's translations, which he describes as "acts of simultaneous self-surrender and self-discovery so extraordinary as to seem almost the work of some higher power...destruction, despair, and decay are constantly counterpointed by rebirth and hope."³⁷ Paul Hammond believes that in his translations, Dryden captures Lucretius's "satirical didacticism," Virgil's "combination of

³⁵ Earl Miner, "Ovid Reformed: issues of Ovid, fables, morals, and the second epic in *Fables Ancient and Modern*." Eds. Miner and Brady, *Literary Transmission and Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 79-120.

³⁶ David Bywaters, *Dryden in Revolutionary England* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

³⁷ David Hopkins, "Dryden and his Contemporaries," *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Vol. 3*, eds. Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005): 55-67. Quotation on 65. See also David Hopkins, *Conversing with Antiquity: English Poets and the Classics, from Shakespeare to Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 113-129, where Hopkins traces Dryden's views about translation from *Ovid's Epistles* (1680) through *Fables* 1700. Hopkins acknowledges and appreciates Reverand's work, but warns against placing too much weight on any architectural organization of *Fables*. The California Edition agrees, and categorizes *Fables* as a miscellany. Tom Mason, "Dryden's Cock and the Fox and Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale," *Translation and Literature*, 16 (Spring 2007): 1-28, aligns himself with Hopkins and Hammond, and details the degree to which Dryden does and doesn't remain true to Chaucer in a line-by-line and phrase-by-phrase fashion. He addresses religious issues such as predestination, but in an apolitical manner.

melancholy and reverence,” and Ovid’s “perpetual wit and delight in paradox.”³⁸ Though he maintains that Dryden’s primary interest is in universal truths, his analysis of Dryden’s *Aeneid* focuses on the idea of Dryden as an exile, which Miner had utilized previously, and which other critics continue to find useful. While Howard Erskine-Hill admires the dedication of Hopkins and Hammond to Dryden’s artistry, particularly as editors of the Longman’s Edition of the *Poems of Dryden*, he feels the need to point out that Dryden’s involvement in contemporary affairs does not disparage his art: “He could draw on the great classics, allude to major contemporary affairs without lapsing into bald parallel or allegory, and at one and the same time plumb the depths of moral and religious psychology through dramatic expression. . . classical awareness and political awareness are not mutually exclusive and are not at odds with one another.”³⁹ This eloquent assessment makes sense to me as a touchstone for approaching Dryden’s later work.

Metempsychosis, exile and anti-Williamite fervor continue to have prominence in the literary criticism on Dryden’s later years. In Huntington Library Quarterly’s *John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany*, James Winn and Ann Cotterill address the line of poetical succession that Dryden puts forward in his *Preface*: Cotterill’s reading builds on the tradition of Dryden as a marginalized poet, and Winn continues the thread of Dryden’s Jacobite intentions, nostalgia for a lost cause, and Dryden’s relationship with the poets he translates.⁴⁰ In his essay, Winn’s emphasis on the peerage and descent of the

³⁸ Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 208.

³⁹ Howard Erskine-Hill, “Dryden’s Drama: A Reevaluation,” *John Dryden: His Politics, His Plays, and His Poets*, eds. Claude Rawson and Aaron Santesso (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004): 52-64, quotation on 62-63.

⁴⁰ Cotterill’s article explores several lineages in *Fables*: that of recusant Catholic families in England to which Elizabeth Dryden belongs; the Duchess of Ormond’s Plantagenet ancestry that Cotterill asserts is in

Duke of Ormond serves two purposes; to create a parallel to the lineage of poets, and to create satire against William. Winn offers many tantalizing tidbits about the self-conscious style of Dryden's end of life writing, in which "succession, reproduction, and metamorphoses loom large."⁴¹ In both of his contributions to the tercentenary publications, as well as in his biography on Dryden, Winn asserts that Dryden demonstrates nostalgic tendencies.⁴² He writes that Dryden "took comfort in imagining history moving in grand cycles," and that his use of past and present tenses conflate the times and timelessness of the poets.⁴³ Dryden memorializes Ovid and Chaucer, and places himself in their midst by "establish[ing] a kind of simultaneity linking the ancients, the (medieval) moderns, and Dryden himself."⁴⁴ He also views Dryden's translation of *The First Book of Homer's Ilias* as "more than a little nostalgic about the vigour and originality that had characterized his works as a young man."⁴⁵

opposition to the war-like nature of the descendants of the duke; and the poetic line of succession of which Dryden claims a part. She defines the act of writing elegies as a ritual for Dryden that involves burying the feminine: the weak, soft, and diseased symbolic of his position as a poet whose politics have been marginalized. He reasserts the vigorous and fruitful in John Dryden of Chesterton, and thereby secures his rightful place at the end of his life, and reclaims control over his own story. See Ann Cotterill, "'Rebekah's Heir': Dryden's Late Mystery of Genealogy," *John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany, The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63:1-2(2000): 201-226. In her subsequent contribution to the 2004 *Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, Cotterill views *Fables* as an "exuberantly unsentimental vision" that responds to Jeremy Collier's view of a reformed civil society; a movement that William and Mary supported. See Ann Cotterill, "Dryden's *Fables* and the Judgment of Art," *Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 259-79, quotation on 277.

⁴¹ James Winn, "Past and Present in Dryden's *Fables*," *John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany: Huntington Library Quarterly* 63: 1-2 (2000): 157-74, quotation on 163.

⁴² Winn, "Past and Present in Dryden's *Fables*;" Winn, "'According to my Genius': Dryden's Translation of 'The First Book of Homer,'" *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays* eds. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000): 264-81.

⁴³ Winn, "Past and Present in Dryden's *Fables*."

⁴⁴ Winn, "Past and Present in Dryden's *Fables*," 158.

⁴⁵ Winn, "'According to my Genius': Dryden's Translation of 'The First Book of Homer's Ilias,'" 270.

Cotterill and Zwicker interpret Dryden's use of digression quite differently.⁴⁶ For Zwicker, digression in the 1690's allowed Dryden to "acknowledge-and then to embrace...the casual and inevitable drift of all things towards dissolution."⁴⁷ Decay and disappointment are key to Zwicker's interpretation of *Fables*, particularly in the poems "To the Dutchess" and "To John Driden of Chesterton," though he believes Dryden took comfort in dissolution in "Of the Pythagorean Philosophy."⁴⁸ Zwicker's subsequent analysis of Dryden's relationship with the House of Ormond aligns Dryden's own disappointment over the broken Stuart line with the Duchess of Ormond's personal misfortune of losing her only son and heir, combined with her loneliness while the Duke was away at war.⁴⁹

Sean Walsh's essay agrees with Cotterill and Winn that some of the passages are aimed against William and his court, yet he writes that rather than an amalgamation of Jacobite "potshots," Dryden's "late work is oppositional, and it can be read . . . as

⁴⁶ Cotterill believes Dryden used digression in *Discourse Concerning Satire* as a means of emasculating Dorset, aiming Juvenalian satire at William, and reasserting his own rightful authority and masculinity. Ann Cotterill, "The Politics and Aesthetics of Digression: Dryden's Discourse of Satire," *Studies in Philology* 91 (1994): 464-95.

⁴⁷ Steven Zwicker, "Dryden and the Dissolution of Things: The Decay of Structures in Dryden's Later Writing," *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays*, eds. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000): 308-329, quotation on 309.

⁴⁸ Taylor Corse suggests that Pythagoras is "a melancholy reminder of the human limitations that beset even the best of teachers, including Dryden's Pythagoras...who tried to reform the "Ill Customs" (682) of his age." "Dryden's Vegetarian Philosopher: Pythagoras," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 34:1 (Winter 2010): 1-28, quotation on 22.

⁴⁹ Jane Ohlmeyer and Steven Zwicker, "John Dryden, The House of Ormond, and the Politics of Anglo-Irish Patronage," *The Historical Journal*, 49:3 (2006): 677-706. Zwicker provides evidence of a personal affection and friendship between Dryden and the Duchess of Ormond. Reverand connects the themes of lineage with Dryden's personal life and concerns for his own descendents in "John Dryden: Personal Concerns of the Impersonal Poet," *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era*, 13 (2006): 3-21.

showing more sympathy for both republicanism and deism than one might expect.”⁵⁰

Like Bywaters, Walsh believes that Dryden depicts literary above political endeavors in an effort to re-establish and reclaim his former position of authority as poet laureate.

Walsh points to Dryden’s reclamation of Milton from Whig extremists and poetasters as proof of rising above polemic.⁵¹ Earl Miner notes that Dryden’s rejection of perfect political and literary parallels begins with *Don Sebastian*, and that the early nineties particularly were a period during which Dryden could not possibly create a work with clear applicability like *Absalom and Achitophel*. In fact, he had to take special care that his works would not be interpreted as such.⁵² In their commentary on “Character of Polybius and his Writings” (1693), A. E. Wallace Maurer and Alan Roper conclude with statements that support an examination of Dryden taking a detached stance in the final decade of his life: “[Character of Polybius] comments flexibly and dispassionately upon forms of government, a subject so often treated in everyday politics with reductive partisanship. . . It exemplifies Dryden’s power, even when hurried, to instruct, by encouraging his countrymen- whether Jacobites or Whigs-to apply Polybius’ principle of disinterested scrutiny and thereby to know the good and the bad in themselves.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Sean Walsh, "Our Lineal Descents and Clans': Dryden's Fables Ancient and Modern and Cultural Politics in the 1690s," *John Dryden: A Tercentenary Miscellany: Huntington Library Quarterly* 63, no. 1-2 (2000).

⁵¹ Christopher D’Addairio also builds on the idea of Dryden as “internal exile,” yet insists that more important than the emphasis on Dryden’s covert Jacobite arguments is “his turn to classical translation as a retreat into the comforts of a distant literary past.” “Dryden and the Historiography of Exile: Milton and Virgil in Dryden’s Late Period.” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 67:4 (2004): 553-74.

⁵² *Works* 15: 405

⁵³ *Works* 20: 326

Additionally, John Barnard and David Hopkins point to his ability in his last decade to rise above political differences when collaborating on literary endeavors.⁵⁴

Annabel Patterson and Mark Loveridge, in their surveys of the genre of the fable, treat Dryden's *Fables* briefly. Loveridge believes that Ogilby and Dryden are working from similar notions of the fable as a "double-handed" genre connected to the heroic epic.⁵⁵ He speculates that Dryden's reason for revisiting this genre after the hostile reception of *The Hind and the Panther* "may lie in a combination of Eric Rothstein's perception of the broad movement of English poetry in this period as one away from the theme of power and towards an interest in the principle of interaction, relationship, and synthesis, with Judith Sloman's comment that 'the multiple meanings of fable allow Dryden to cut across the hierarchy of genres once again, since fable can describe so many aspects of literature.'⁵⁶ Like Reverand, Loveridge notes that Dryden "modulates between fixed positions," and that "many parallels lead nowhere, or pass contradictory messages."⁵⁷ Annabel Patterson points out that only one piece in Dryden's *Fables*, *The Cock and the Fox*, is actually a beast fable.⁵⁸ Apart from her mention of Dryden, but relevant to this project, she later points out that at the turn of the century there were "Grub Street Aesop" writers who composed pro- and anti-Williamite pamphlets. *Poems on Affairs of State* also notes that there was a strain of Aesopian satires during this time,

⁵⁴ John Barnard, "Early expectations of Dryden's Translation of Virgil (1697) on the continent," *The Review of English Studies*, 50 (1991); David Hopkins, "Charles Montague, George Stepney, and Dryden's Metamorphoses," *The Review of English Studies*, 15:201 (2000)

⁵⁵ Mark Loveridge, *A History of Augustan Fable* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 102.

⁵⁶ Loveridge, 77.

⁵⁷ Loveridge, 178.

⁵⁸ Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991)

and attributes this to Dryden's use of the form in *The Hind and the Panther*, and Dryden's persistent influence on satire in the 1690's, even though he does not write purely satirical pieces himself.

Further Considerations Regarding Revolutionary Politics and John Dryden

The reasons for Dryden's opposition to the new monarchs are obvious and well documented. Among them are the following: their reign was illegitimate, their wars were expensive and deadly, Dryden's public conversion and support for the Stuarts could have endangered his life and his livelihood. Additionally, of course, Dryden lost his position as laureate. Without denying the impact or importance of these facts, there still are other historical details that also merit acknowledgement, and that complicate our understanding of Dryden's opinions, and perhaps of his actual circumstances. In his conclusion, Reverand speculates persuasively and at length regarding Dryden's ambivalence towards William III: "Dryden by 1688 had begun to see that the rightful monarch might not be the *right* monarch."⁵⁹ William's reign, though illegitimate, nevertheless had re-instated the domestic stability to England that Dryden prized and that James II's policies had disrupted, and this stability in turn protected England from another Civil War. By 1697, William III had negotiated peace on the Continent as well.

Dryden's literary and personal situations also were impacted by William III's reign, but that impact was not entirely negative. In his introduction to *Poems on Affairs of State VI*, Frank Ellis casts Charles II and James II as powerful and dangerous censors, especially in comparison to William III:

⁵⁹ Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode*, 213.

From 1660 to 1695 the volume of verse satire ebbed and flowed as censorship was tightened (May 1662, October 1679, February 1685) or relaxed (May 1679, March 1681), but from April 1695 (when the Licensing Act was allowed to expire) until August 1712 (when the newspaper tax was imposed), it just flowed. The days when Stephen College could be hanged, drawn, and quartered for publishing libelous verses (August 1681) and Algernon Sidney beheaded for mere possession of treasonable verse in manuscript (November 1683) were almost over. . . James II had believed that “command of the press [was] a prerogative inseparable from the sovereignty of his imperial crown”, but whatever he believed, William III did not even try to “command” the press. Instead he learned to use it (or to allow it to be used for him) to create and change public opinion, “not being able,” as he explained to Antonie Heinsius, “to play any other game with these people than to engage them imperceptibly.”⁶⁰

William’s tactics with regards to censorship reflect a sophisticated strategy that Dryden probably appreciated. Additionally, Dryden may have felt that James had placed coercive pressures on him to produce works that promoted the monarch’s program.

While these are speculative suppositions, Ellis’s evaluation of censorship implies that Dryden as an oppositional poet was probably not in danger. It is easier to recognize such things retrospectively, but Dryden likely knew this by 1700. He also likely knew that his person was not in danger for being Catholic. Craig Rose states that the King himself was probably behind a bill in 1689 to protect the private worship of Catholics. Though the bill failed, Catholics were not persecuted by the government, and the fine for failure to attend the Church of England “became a dead letter.”⁶¹ In an effort to stem potential for mob-based anti-Catholic fervor, William III disseminated widely his own opinion that if Catholics were persecuted in England, Louis XIV would use it to his advantage across the Continent. Thus, Dryden would have known early on that William III did not intend to target Catholics. William’s rhetoric was substantiated by the terms of settlement in the

⁶⁰ Ed. Frank Ellis, *Poems on Affairs of State, Volume VI: 1697-1704* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970): xxvii

⁶¹ Rose, 26-27.

Treaty of Limerick in 1691: Jacobites who refused to pledge allegiance to William III were allowed transport to France, Irish Catholics were allowed the same freedoms that they had under Charles II (and William III took the treaty as another opportunity to publicize his aversion from the forcing of conscience), and all officers and civilians who had opposed William III could keep their property and receive pardons as long as they swore allegiance to the King.⁶² Though the double tax for Catholics certainly caused financial duress, Dryden and his family were not in physical danger from the government. Furthermore, while his financial situation was impacted by wars, subsequent taxation, and the recoinage crisis, it was not affected by the loss of the laureateship. Winn gives evidence that at the time of Charles II's death, Dryden had received only half his salary from 1677 forward.⁶³ In 1692, Dryden publicly reminded England that his loyalty to the Stuarts was not a financial one: "But being encourag'd only with fair Words, by King Charles II, my little salary ill paid, and no prospect of a future Subsistence, ..." were the reasons he gave for never having had the time or patronage required to write an epic.⁶⁴

With regards to prosperity in terms of appreciation, the subscription-based Virgil project was successful for Dryden. He had numerous patrons and protectors, many of whom were supporters of the King, including the Duke and Duchess of Ormond. Several of his older plays were running again in the 1690's, among them *The Indian Emperour*, *Tyrannick Love*, *Oedipus*, *The Spanish Fryar*, and *All for Love*.⁶⁵ From 1689-1700,

⁶² Rose, 218-219.

⁶³ Winn, 314.

⁶⁴ "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," *Works* 4:23.

⁶⁵ Winn, 478.

Dryden also wrote four new plays, one opera, translations of Juvenal, Persius, and Ovid, multiple dedications, literary criticism, and original poems, in addition to the ambitious projects of translating *Works of Virgil* and producing *Fables*. Dryden was no longer poet laureate, but he had hardly retired, and he was widely appreciated. Poetasters still satirized him, and Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) directed many of its accusations at Dryden, but these affronts do not seem to have diminished Dryden's popularity in the theater or his reputation as England's preeminent poet. The days of *The Rehearsal* (1671), the Earl of Rochester's *An Allusion to Horace* (1676), the beating in Rose Alley (1679), and even *The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd* (1687), the most effective attacks on Dryden, all occurred before the Glorious Revolution. His funeral, marked by a procession of six plumed white horses and a velvet hearse, a burial in Chaucer's grave, orations in Latin, and two collections of poems to commemorate his death, does not have the outward appearance, at least, of a man who was in exile.⁶⁶ While he certainly was aging, and tired, and in opposition to the current government, his personal and literary circumstances from James II's reign to William III's had not necessarily worsened, and they may have improved. This must have deepened the ambivalence that he felt at the end of the 1690s, an ambivalence that Reverend asserts is at the center of *Fables*. Dryden's own success in the 1690s likely increased his need to remain loyal to the Stuarts, since that loyalty defined in part his own moral integrity and convictions. However, his release from the partisanship required of a poet laureate provided an opportunity for the kind of impartial historical evaluation that also is at the center of his final work.

⁶⁶ Winn provides these funerary details in *John Dryden and his World*, 512-513.

CHAPTER 1

PALAMON AND ARCITE AND THE SECULAR MASQUE

At first glance, *Palamon and Arcite* might not appear to have anything in common with *The Secular Masque*. One is a narrative and a translation, with characters. The other is a short, concise masque with iconic figures. In one, Dryden must come to terms with the intentions of the original author, and the other is his own invention. Yet the two works seem to bracket Dryden's final year as a writer. *Palamon and Arcite* is the first fable of Dryden's final collection of poetry, and *The Secular Masque* is Dryden's final piece of writing. *Fables* was published in March of 1700, only months before *The Secular Masque* was performed in May. Venus, Mars and Diana play prominent roles in both works. Janus and Chronos also are present, and seem to fit end-of-life and end-of-century writing. While *Palamon and Arcite* appears to be a courtly romance, Dryden has added details that create parallels, if broad ones, between the age of Theseus, the age of the Plantagenets, and the age in which Dryden himself lives. *The Secular Masque* also provides a review of the age of the Stuarts. If Dryden is playing one against the other, he may be asking important questions in the process: Is William a necessary evil? Do the Stuarts matter? Was England ever perfect? What part does art play in the telling of that history?

It may seem odd to introduce the history of the Plantagenets when addressing Dryden's *Palamon and Arcite*, but it would not have seemed unusual to Dryden's contemporaries. Many of the Plantagenets were used as precedents to justify the premises behind the Glorious Revolution, still a politically contemporary event at the time of *Fables*. The deposition of Edward II by Edward III was commonly evoked to justify William's deposal of James II (and Dryden alluded to it in "To Congreve" (1693)). So was Richard II's overthrow by Henry of Bolingbroke. It is not surprising that Dryden also would engage a common political precedent: even when writing plays and translations, contemporary politics was not something that Dryden ever ignored, and *Palamon and Arcite* provides a romantic backdrop that easily echoes the legendary reputation of Edward III and the Plantagenets.

This tradition of comparison and precedent was heavily relied upon to justify the actions of current politics. According to Alan Roper, from Sir Walter Raleigh forward it was an established expectation that the royal historiographer would find "historical precedents to legitimize current events and treaties."⁶⁷ Roper places Dryden's translation of "History of the League" (1684) in this practice of royalist propaganda. Another important and contemporary example of this genre is a work by Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's estranged brother-in-law and former literary collaborator.⁶⁸ In 1690, Sir Robert dedicated his *History of the Reigns of Edward and Richard II* to King William III, and

⁶⁷ Roper, *Dryden's Poetical Kingdoms*, 29

⁶⁸ On the surface, the heated dispute between the two centered on Dryden's preference for rhymed verse, and Howard's disdain for it. Political differences also played a significant role. Howard was at the heart of the pillorying of the Earl of Clarendon, and his play *The Duke of Lerma* (1668) took direct aim at the exiled friend of Dryden. According to George McFadden and James Winn, Dryden was furious that Howard, who had received many favors from Clarendon, facilitated his downfall. Additionally, Winn speculates that Howard used lines composed by Dryden in his play without acknowledging them. (190-91) Regardless, politics and art were intertwined in the dispute, and Howard demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice loyalty for political expediency.

claimed that the “Fatal Methods and Arbitrary Designs” of the aforementioned tyrants “were exactly copied by our Two last unhappy Princes.”⁶⁹ “This Dedication, SIR, is also proper for You, since the subject Matter of it was the Cause that Excited you to attempt our Relief thro so many Threatening Dangers.”⁷⁰ The conclusion of Howard’s *History* provides a comparison between Edward II and Richard II, on the one hand, and Edward I and III on the other; Charles II and James II mirror the first two, and William III is the embodiment of the great Plantagenets Edwards I and III:

*Edward I. and Edward III. grew fierce by Opposition, and gentle by Submission; They seldom denied Pardon to those that implor'd it, nor suffer'd any abused Mercy unrevenged; They were Mighty enough to conquer Enemies, and Powerful enough to forgive those they conquer'd; They were equally Victorious both to Themselves and Others; and those that submitted proved always more fortunate than those that resisted.*⁷¹

This combination of strength and compassion is a version of the ideal balance that many believed to be essential to good government and great kingship. Edward III was the emblem of English monarchical perfection well before Howard described him thus, of course. According to W.M. Ormrod, Edward III’s chroniclers consistently referred to him as “The Honorable,” and compared him to “The Tyrant” Phillippe VI of France. Later, when Richard II’s domestic policies caused restlessness, chroniclers nostalgically referred to Edward III as “the golden age of the golden king.”⁷² Ormrod distinguishes the seventeenth century as another moment of Edwardian fervor: “In particular, the

⁶⁹ Sir Robert Howard, *The History of the Reigns of Edward and Richard II with Reflections, and Characters of Their Main Chief Ministers and Favourites: As Also, a Comparison between Those Princes Edward and Richard the Second, with Edward the First, and Edward the Third* (London: F. Colins for Thomas Fox. . . 1690).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Howard, 177.

⁷² W.M. Ormrod, “Edward III,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

seventeenth century saw Edward as a constitutional king in whose reign crown and parliament had worked together for common profit: it is significant that Joshua Barnes' substantial and scholarly biography of Edward III was published in 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution."⁷³

Palamon and Arcite is a chivalric tale, through which Theseus embodies an ideal in kingship. Likewise, Edward III captured the English imagination even during the time in which he was king, and was compared to Arthur from the time of Edward III's own contemporaries and forward. Edward III initially intended to re-create an Arthurian round table after the victories of Crécy and Calais, which eventually found expression in the Order of the Garter. His kingship was marked by a strict adherence to the code of chivalry, and a great restoration of Windsor Castle under his reign was his self-conscious effort at solidifying the connection between his own reign and that of the legend: "Thus were the contemporary allusions to Edward's role as the new Arthur given tangible and permanent expression."⁷⁴

Dryden makes use of contemporary sentiment towards Edward III in both *Britannia Rediviva* (1688) and in "To Congreve" (1693). He compares James II's newborn son to Edward III's son, Edward the Black Prince, both of whom were born on Trinity Sunday:

If our victorious Edward, as they say,
Gave Wales a prince on that propitious day
Why may not years revolving with his fate
Produce his like, but with a longer date
One who may carry to a distant shore
The terror that his fam'd forefather bore? (*Britannia Rediviva* 134-39)

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The verse awards James II the lofty status of Edward III, in contrast to Howard's version, published two years later, that aligns James II with his forebears Edward II and Richard II. The primary focus on James III envisions the warrior prince that the baby heir will become, though it inevitably brings to light the fact that Edward the Black Prince died a prince, not a king, an undesirable comparison, one would think, considering his precarious future.

Edward III maintains mythical status in "To Congreve" (1693), but Dryden puts the image to new use by conflating kings and poets, and by reminding his audience that Edward III deposed his incompetent father, Edward II:

O that your brows my laurel had sustained;
Well had I been depos'd, if you had reigned!
The father had descended for the son;
For only you are lineal to the throne.
Thus, when the state one Edward did depose,
A greater Edward in his room arose.
But now, not I, but poetry is curst;
For Tom the Second reigns like Tom the First. ("To Congreve" 41-48)

Dryden is unable to cede his laurels to Congreve. Instead, England has Thomas Shadwell and Thomas Rhymer. Focusing on the poet laureate and historiographer thinly veils the allusion to the royal overthrow that caused the poetical upset, and William III is represented by the dunces he has appointed. Despite Dryden's strident political loyalties, the passage also might be read in a sense that is favorable to William III. Edward II's deposition was considered a necessary one. While Dryden's deposition causes poetry to decline, the lines suggest that the political kingdom has fared better than the poetical one.

Howard's comparison of great with tyrannical kings relies on an appreciation of *concordia discors*, and an expectation that a king should embody it. Denham also relied on this concept in kingship much earlier in *Cooper's Hill* (1642-68). Dryden would have

read his brother-in-law's *History*, given their former literary collaboration, Dryden's former post as royal historiographer, and his constant sense of historical consciousness. Furthermore, it is well known that Dryden paid close attention to Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, another example of the use of Plantagenet history as precedent for reflecting on the current situation. Like Dryden, Denham alludes to the legendary images of Edwards I and III; then he attaches his more controversial hope that Charles I can live up to the legacy of the founder of the Order of the Garter:

But thee, great Edward, and thy greater son
(The lilies which his father wore, he won),
And thy Bellona, who the consort came
Not only to thy bed, but to thy fame;
She to thy triumph led one captive king
And brought that son, which did the second bring.
Then didst thou found that Order; whether love
Or victory thy royal thoughts did move,
Each was a noble cause, and nothing less
Than the design has been the great success,
Which foreign kings and emperors esteem
The second honor to their diadem. (77-88)

Edward III is a combination of love and force, and both his marriage and his rule over family and kingdom embody this ideal. Yet Denham implies later that perhaps England was never as it should be. Perhaps Edward, in all his greatness, fought too much, and shouldn't have shed blood that eventually would be part of his own family; England and France united in the marriage of Charles I and Henrietta Maria:

That blood which thou and thy great grandsire shed,
And all that since these sister nations bled,
Had been unspilt, had happy Edward known
That all the blood he spilt had been his own. (97-100)

According to Denham, Windsor Castle still houses Mars and Venus in the day of Charles I and Henrietta Maria. Earl Wasserman details the lengthy historical tradition of

Mars and Venus as the metaphor for concordia discors, going back to Hesiod, and directly referenced by Alexander Ross in 1653.⁷⁵ He quotes Plutarch's use of this metaphor as the perfection of civic order,⁷⁶ and classifies the scenes at St. Paul's and at Chertsey as "the failure of a concordia discors between monarch and populace."⁷⁷ For Wasserman, "Windsor the next (where Mars with Venus dwells,/ Beauty with strength) above the valley swells" (39-40) is the integral image for the entire poem.⁷⁸ Concordia discors also is integral to *Fables* on the whole, and in *Palamon and Arcite*, Theseus is described as the ideal combination of love with force. By contrast, *The Secular Masque* is an illustration of extremities, though they certainly are not harmonious.

For Denham, Dryden, and Howard, excess and extremes can have the opposite effect of concordia discors. Denham illustrates this in his images of the Londoners near St. Paul's: "While luxury and wealth, like war and peace,/ Are each the other's ruin and increase" (33-34). His lamentations over Henry VIII's crimes further emphasize a

⁷⁵ "Hyginus, VI, 148; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 937, 975; Lactanius on Statius' *Thebiad*, I, 288; Lactanius, *Divine Institutes*, I, xvii; Eustathius on Homer's *Iliad*, XXI, 416. See further, Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York, 1939), pp. 163-64. Alexander Ross (*Mystagogus Poeticus*) explained that Harmonia was born of Mars and Venus because 'the two chief props of a kingdome are *Mars* and *Venus*, warre and propagation, and these two live in harmony and order.' In his commentary on Benivieni's sonnet (trans. By Thomas Stanley in his *History of Philosophy*) Pico supported the claim that beauty is 'the union of contraries, a friendly enmity, a disagreeing concord' and 'cannot subsist without contrariety' by the myth of Mars and Venus: 'she curbs and moderates him, this temperament alliaies the strife betwixt these contraries. And in Astrologie, *Venus* is plac'd next *Mars*, to check his destructive influence' (I, V)." Quoted in Wasserman, *The Subtler Language*, 58.

⁷⁶ "In his life of Pelopidas, for example, Plutarch saw in the myth the principle of civic order: the Thebans did well, he wrote, to make Harmony, the daughter of Mars and Venus, their tutelary deity, since where force and courage (Mars) are joined with gracefulness and winning behavior (Venus) a harmony ensues that combines all the elements of society in perfect consonance and order. In his treatise on Isis and Osiris he interpreted the birth of Harmonia from Venus and Mars as a symbolic expression of all the ancient dualisms, Heraclitean, Empedoclean, and Pythagorean: harmony is the balance of the creative and destructive powers. And similarly the unknown author of *De Vita et Poesi Homeri* found in the myth the whole Empedoclean doctrine of the cosmic order born of the clash of opposing elements. (In *Plutarchi Opera*, ed. Dübner (Paris, 1876), v, 127." Wasserman, 59.

⁷⁷ Wasserman, 64-5.

⁷⁸ Wasserman, 57.

disordered universal state: “Is there no temperate region can be known/ Betwixt their frigid and our torrid zone?/ Could we not wake from that lethargic dream/ But to be restless in a worse extreme?/ And for that lethargy was there no cure/ But to be cast into a calenture?” (139-144). Dryden uses similar language and imagery of polarized, rather than complementary, extremes in *The Secular Masque*. Momus notes the difference between the ages of Diana and Mars thus: “Better the world were fast asleep, than kept awake by thee” (65). The “Changes of this Age” involve the following: “Plenty, Peace, and Pleasure fly;/ The Sprightly Green/ In Woodland-Walks, no more is seen;/ The Sprightly Green, has drunk the Tyrian Dye” (53-6). Not surprisingly, Harmony, the daughter of Mars and Venus, does not make an appearance in the masque of 1700.

Though Howard does not use Mars, Venus, or Diana, he does make use of indecorous extremes to illustrate the wrongs of Edward II and Richard II, and therefore of their descendants, Charles II and James II.⁷⁹ The following is his contrast to the above quoted examples of Edwards I and III, who were presented as an embodiment of an ideal balance:

*Edward and Richard II. were submissive when oppos'd, and fierce when submitted to; They always abus'd the Tenderness of others, and seldom shew'd any of their own; never forgiving, where they had opportunity to punish; They neither had Power nor Design to conquer Enemies, but used both to overcome their Friends; Others were Masters of Them, not They of Themselves, and they that resisted were always more fortunate than they that submitted.*⁸⁰

Unlike Edward I and Edward III, Edward II and Richard II display a disastrous and in fact dangerous combination of opposing forces in kingship (submissive/fierce,

⁷⁹ The last Plantagenet male heir was Richard III. However, the Stuarts claim that same royal blood: James I was a descendant of Henry VII, as great-grandson to Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's sister. Henry VII claimed the throne via his mother's Plantagenet ancestry.

⁸⁰ Howard, 177-78.

abusive/tender, forgiveness/punishment, powerless against enemies/conquer friends) that results in Howard's definition of tyranny.

Howard and Denham are two contemporary examples of *concordia discors* as applied to politics, and of evoking the legendary Plantagenets when analyzing a current situation. Theseus reflects Howard's depiction of Edwards I and III. He appears "a chief, who more in feats of arms excell'd,/ The rising nor the setting sun beheld" (*Palamon and Arcite* I.3-4). Only a few lines later, after he has conquered the Amazons, women beg his help in burying their lords and in defeating Creon: "The prince was touch'd, his tears began to flow,/ And, as his tender heart would break in two, /He sighed;. . .He would not cease, till he reveng'd their wrongs" (I.93-95; 102). Thus, Theseus does as Edward did: "grew *fierce* by *Opposition*, and *gentle* by *Submission*."⁸¹ Likewise, Palamon and Arcite, discovered after the victory at Thebes, were spared from death though they were the nephews of the conquered tyrant. At Perithous' request, Arcite was freed. Howard's Edward is "*Mighty* enough to *conquer* Enemies, and *Powerful* enough to *forgive* those they *conquer'd*."⁸² When Theseus himself found Arcite and Palamon after they had been his prisoners, one freed and one having escaped, he was poised to sentence them to death. Again, like Edward: "nor suffer'd any *abused Mercy* unrevenged." Howard relies heavily on the contemporary belief that great kings possess within themselves a version of *concordia discors*. For both Howard's Edward III and for Dryden's Theseus, this *concordia discors* is illustrated with examples such as their ability to dispense justice as well as compassion, and to exercise power in terms of bestowing mercy.

⁸¹ Howard, 177.

⁸² Ibid.

Dryden's depiction of Theseus also utilizes imagery from Denham's version of Edward III, or at the very least it proves that Wasserman was correct in his claim regarding the currency of Venus and Mars as a metaphor for balanced variety and, just as importantly, for a successful monarch or a happy political state. Venus and Mars coexist in both Theseus and his bride: "In Scythia with the warrior queen he strove, / Whom first by force he conquer'd, then by love; / . . . With honor to his home let Theseus ride, / With Love to friend, and Fortune for his guide, / And his victorious army at his side" (*Palamon and Arcite* I.7-8; 11-13). As in Denham's poem, where Venus and Mars illustrate the epitome of a harmonious royal couple, Theseus and Hippolyta exemplify the same in *Palamon and Arcite*. Dryden's Theseus also possesses the darker possibilities of Denham's Edward. Though many versions of this classical conquest assert that Theseus restrained his soldiers from unethical behavior when he conquered Thebes, Dryden's version tells it differently (as did Chaucer's): "The country wasted, and the hamlets burn'd, / And left the pillagers to rapine bred, / Without control to strip and spoil the dead" (I.138-140).

These are not the only lines that imply that Theseus, even in his greatness, may not have been perfect. Additionally, they may echo well-known anecdotes regarding Edward III. Jean de bel Froissart first recorded the often repeated stories regarding the momentous battles at Crécy and Calais, where English soldiers plundered ruthlessly the French towns. The same chronicler was the first to record that Edward III was poised to execute all townspeople of Calais, but relented due to the entreaties of his Queen Isabella, and instead demanded the lives of six burghers, and then finally spared the burghers as well in response to the Queen's continued pleas. There may be a subtle allusion to this

myth when Theseus bestows mercy on Palamon and Arcite at the behest of his queen and subjects. The chivalric practices of both Theseus and Edward III converge in this potential allusion. Upon return of these same victories in Crécy and Calais, Edward III held numerous tournaments in celebration, and his renowned attention to high protocol parallels those that Theseus lays out for the participants of the tournament between Palamon and Arcite. Additionally, it was upon return from Calais that Edward III established the historic Order of the Garter, to which Dryden alludes in his dedication to the Duchess, the introductory poem for *Palamon and Arcite*, and in his translation of *The Flower and the Leaf*. The Order was intended as a permanent memorial to those who fought at Crécy and Calais, the same battles from which Dryden may have borrowed details that would tie his version of Theseus to Edward III.

Though Edward III's legendary status as the ideal king continued unshaken, his progeny brought about the War of the Roses: the battle for royal power within the Plantagenet family, fought throughout the country for generations. Dryden's Emilia, in her homage to the first day of May, makes herself a garland of those roses that ultimately were combined in the marriage of Henry VII at the conclusion of the lengthy war:

And thrust among the thorns her lily hand
To draw the rose, and ev'ry rose she drew,
She shook the stalk, and brush'd away the dew;
Then party-color'd flow'rs of white and red
She wove, to make a garland for her head:
This done, she sung and carol'd out so clear
That men and angels might rejoice to hear;
Ev'n wond'ring Philomel forgot to sing,
And learn'd from her to welcome in the spring. (I.192-200)

Chaucer illustrates his Emily with white and red imagery, but the roses are Dryden's addition, and he refers to the red and white roses of York and Lancaster again in his poem

to the Duchess: “O daughter of the rose, whose cheeks unite / The diff’ring titles of the red and white” (151-52). Dryden also compares Emily and the Duchess of Ormond to Joan of Kent, the Fair Maid after whom Edward III named the Order of the Garter, who became the wife of Edward III’s son, Edward the Black Prince, and who was a Plantagenet in her own right as granddaughter of Edward I.⁸³

If Chaucer by the best idea wrought,
And poets can divine each other’s thought,
The fairest nymphs before his eyes he set;
And then the fairest was Plantagenet;

Like her, of equal kindred to the throne,
You keep her conquests, and extend your own.
As when the stars, in their ethereal race,
At length have roll’d around the liquid space,
At certain periods they resume their place,
From the same point of heav’n their course advance,
And move in measures of their former dance;
Thus, after length of ages, she returns,
Restor’d in you, and the same place adorns;
Or you perform her office in the sphere,
Born of her blood, and make a new Platonic year. (11-14; 19-29)

Dryden’s millennial verses to the Duchess of Ormond connect her with her great ancestry and with the history of England that is inextricable from the history of her family, and he implies that a similar cycle is now underway. Another aspect of Emily embodies the history and families of England. Ormrod makes it clear that, as the origin of the Lancastrian, Yorkist, and Tudor lines, Edward III’s reputation did not suffer during dynastic upsets.⁸⁴ He remained irreproachable, as Theseus does, for the most part, in Dryden’s fable. Dryden also directly links Chaucer with these English monarchs:

⁸³ For biographical information, including the legend that the Order was named in honor of Joan of Kent after her loss of a garter at a dance, see *Works* 7: 631. See also “Edward III” and “Joan of Kent,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁸⁴ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

[Chaucer] was employ'd abroad and favor'd by Edward the Third, Richard the Second, and Henry the Fourth, and was poet, as I suppose, to all three of them. In Richard's time, I doubt, he was a little dipp'd in the rebellion of the commons, and being brother in law to John of Gaunt, it was no wonder if he follow'd the fortunes of that family, and was well with Henry IV, when he had depos'd his predecessor. (*Preface to the Fables, Works 7, 35*)

By connecting the Duchess with both Emily and Joan of Kent, by calling the Duke “a Palamon,” and reminding us of the Ormond family lineage, and by linking Chaucer himself to the specters of the same monarchs, Dryden intends his version of *Palamon and Arcite* to evoke the story of English royalty, beginning with Edward III. In his discussion of Chaucer and *Canterbury Tales* in the *Preface*, Dryden tendentiously ties it to all traits English. Dryden writes that Chaucer “has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humors (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age” (37). He continues:

We have our forefathers and great granddames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days; their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of Monks and Friars, and Canons, and Lady Abbesses, and Nuns. (37)

His classification of *Palamon and Arcite* is the most interesting of these musings, since Dryden distances it altogether from its Italian origins:

I prefer in our countryman, far above all his other stories, the noble poem of *Palamon and Arcite*, which is of the epic kind, and perhaps not much inferior to the *Ilias* or the *Aeneis*:. . .I had thought for the honor of our nation, and more particularly for his, whose laurel, tho' unworthy, I have worn after him, that this story was of English growth, and Chaucer's own; but I was undeceiv'd by Boccace; . . .but, the name of its author being wholly lost, Chaucer is now become the original. (44)

Thus, Dryden portrays Chaucer's works as a repository for the English great, aligning his stories with the epics of Homer and Virgil, and he builds on the mythology to conflate

past and present nobility with legendary figures such as Palamon, the Duke, the Duchess, Joan of Kent, Theseus, and Edward III.

In addition to his treatment of the Duchess, Dryden continues to tie the Duke with great English families, and with the nobility of Roman families as cast by Livy:

[S]ome of the noblest Roman families retain'd a resemblance of their ancestry, not only in their shapes and features, but also in their manners, their qualities, and the distinguishing characters of their minds. Some lines were noted for a stern, rigid virtue, salvage, haughty, parsimonious, and unpopular: others were more sweet and affable, made of a more pliant paste, humble, courteous, and obliging; studious of doing charitable offices, and diffusive of the goods which they enjoy'd. The last of these is the proper and indelible character of your Grace's family. (*Dedication to the Duke of Ormond, Works 7:18*)

By alluding to great Roman families when addressing the Duke, Dryden may intend his readers to see in that profile the line of English royalty as well. This would be in keeping with the English identification with the Trojans and the establishment of Rome (one reason why Dryden's translation of *The Aeneid* became a source of national pride).

These family lines may be divided into two parties, that which resembles Venus, and that which seems more partial to Mars. To further explore the parallel, the Stuart ancestors could be divided into two categories: those with the inflexibility and fiery temper of Mars, "noted for a stern, rigid virtue, salvage, haughty, parsimonious, and unpopular," (Charles I, James II, and perhaps William III), and those "of a more pliant paste," more Venus-like, such as Charles II, and perhaps James I. If, as I argue, Theseus personified the ideal of concordia discors, Palamon and Arcite may represent two habits of mind that resemble the gods Venus and Mars. To extrapolate further, if Theseus is a version of Edward III, and if Palamon and Arcite represent broadly the subsequent Plantagenets who fought for Emily and England for the next few hundred years, then it becomes

possible to explore *Palamon and Arcite* as a reflection of general historical patterns that Dryden believed were still pertinent to English politics in 1700.

It is widely recognized that *The Secular Masque* imparts commentary on the last saeculum that is coming to a close: the age of the Stuarts. *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque* seem to work in tandem, and as such, complicate that commentary. The two works have the same prominent gods within them, and Dryden makes parallels to their presence in each of the works. Yet these gods are not portrayed identically in the two works, but rather elaborate on one another. In *The Secular Masque*, Janus opens the curtain, appropriately, since he was the controller of beginnings (January being the most common example), and a god who represented historical consciousness, possessing two faces that looked forward and backward.⁸⁵ Diana, Mars and Venus parade across the stage, and are bracketed by the two appearances of Chronos, who doubles as Father Time and Saturn. In *Palamon and Arcite*, the two knights and Emily pray in the temples of Venus, Mars, and Diana, and Chronos serves as shrewd mediator between Mars's and Venus's claims.⁸⁶ Both works could be said to have a spokesperson, though they make an unlikely pair in comparison: Theseus as one, and Momus as the other.⁸⁷ Finally, the

⁸⁵ See Ovid's *Fasti*, I, 185-255 for an example of Janus as repository for knowledge of past and future. Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. James George Frazer and G. P. Goold, 2nd ed., *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁸⁶ While no Janus is physically present, Theseus commissions gates to be built as entrances to the battleground, and *ianua* means "gate(s)" in Latin. These gates are dedicated to the three gods. Janus commonly was associated with gates and arches. Chaucer's version possesses the gates, but only in Dryden do Mars's doors jangle in answer to Arcite's prayers: "The bolted gates flew open at the blast; / The storm rush'd in, and Arcite stood aghast" (III.361-62). Janus, as an icon of historical consciousness, seems an appropriate god for Dryden to choose to include in his masque, and it is not incongruous with the depictions in *Palamon and Arcite*, even if Janus is present only in the wings of the story.

⁸⁷ While a narrative poem like *Palamon and Arcite* does not traditionally have the same sort of master-of-ceremonies that a masque can provide, the character of Theseus sets the dominant tenor for *Palamon and Arcite*, and his is the ideal against which Palamon and Arcite are compared, and to which they also continue to fall short.

first work could be viewed as an allusion to the tribulations of the first royal family of England. The second has been categorized as an interpretation of the last century, ruled by the third and most recent of royal lines.

Unlike the works that render Mars with Venus as a decorous version of concordia discors, *The Secular Masque* presents Venus, Mars, and Diana as incompatible and undesirable extremes. So do the temples dedicated to these same deities in *Palamon and Arcite*. When Venus and Mars are combined, it is not harmonious but deadly, as the temple of Mars attests: “Soft smiling, and demurely looking down, / But hid the dagger underneath the gown: / Th’assassinating wife, the household fiend” (II.565-67). When they appear alone, they are equally malevolent. The “rich carvings” and “portraitsures” (II.468) in Venus’s temple portray “scalding tears” (II.476), “Jealousy suffus’d, with jaundice in her eyes” (II.487), “Sorceries” (II.482), “And all the mighty names by love undone” (II.504). “And all around were nuptial bonds, the ties / Of love’s assurance, and a train of lies, / That, made in lust, conclude in perjuries” (II.477-79). The concluding line for this description, “And lovers all betray, and are betray’d” (II.510), is quite similar to Momus’s condemnation that “Thy Lovers were all untrue” in the masque (II.467-510). The depiction of Venus herself is lovely, and that beyond measure. In this vein, Palamon seems to address Alma Venus of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*: “All nature is thy province, life thy care; / Thou mad’st the world, and dost the world repair” (*Palamon and Arcite* III.143-44). Venus casts herself similarly in *The Secular Masque*: “Nature is my kindly care; / Mars destroys, and I repair” (74-75). Dryden even uses the same rhymes in the two works, pairing “care” with “repair.” Likewise, any glorious or righteous aspects of the god Mars are relegated to the descriptions of Theseus. The temple itself is another

matter. In contrast to Diana's "sylvan scene with various greens" (II.619), Mars's landscape is one where "A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground, / And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found; / Or woods with knots and knares deform'd and old" (II.534-36). Instead of heroes, there are the "secret felons" (II.560), "Hypocrisy" (II.564), "And, far the blackest there, the traitor-friend" (II.568). The temple's illustrations forecast parallels in the masque: "Unpunish'd Rapine, and a waste of war;. . .And all with blood bespread the holy lawn"⁸⁸ becomes "The sprightly green / In Woodland-Walks, no more is seen; / The sprightly Green, has drunk the Tyrian Dye;⁸⁹" "The city to the soldier's rage resign'd;/ Successful wars, and poverty behind"⁹⁰ is repeated with "Thy Wars brought nothing about."⁹¹ Diana is preferable in both works: the narrator of *Palamon and Arcite*, "tir'd with deformities of death" (II.618), turns from Mars to describe Diana's temple. Momus in *The Secular Masque* wishes for the same, though the order of the gods is reversed: "Better the World were fast asleep, / Than kept awake by thee" (65-66).⁹²

⁸⁸ *Palamon and Arcite*, II.570-72.

⁸⁹ *The Secular Masque*, 54-56.

⁹⁰ *Palamon and Arcite*, II.560-87.

⁹¹ *The Secular Masque*, 94.

⁹² Dryden makes use of this laziness vs. activity polarity, in terms of the ages of Saturn and Mars, and the age of Charles II, in *Astraea Redux*:

Some lazy ages, lost in sleep and ease,
 No action leave to busy chronicles:
 Such, whose supine felicity but makes
 In story *chasms*, in *epoches* mistakes:
 O'er whom Time gently shakes his wings of down,
 Till with his silent sickle they are mown.
 Such is not Charles his too too active age,
 Which, govern'd by the wild distemper'd rage
 Of some black star infecting all the skies,
 Made him at his own cost like Adam wise. (105-114)

However, green stained to red is not sinister, but godlike, when Theseus marches into Thebes to overturn the tyrant and bury the bodies of the great:

Where in an argent field the God of War
Was drawn triumphant on his iron car;
Red was his sword, and shield, and whole attire,
And all the godhead seem'd to glow with fire;
Ev'n the ground glitter'd where the standard flew,
And the green grass was dyed to sanguine hue. (I.109-114)

In *The Secular Masque*, Mars justifies himself with regal imagery similar in tone to this description of Theseus:

Mars. Inspire the vocal brass, inspire;
The world is past its infant age:
Arms and honor,
Arms and honor,
Set the martial mind on fire,
And kindle manly rage. (45-50)

While Theseus incorporates the righteous aspect of Mars into kingship, he is capable of participating in the purity of Diana's hunt as well, and is able to do so even after his many wars.

In Theseus this appears; whose youthful joy
Was beasts of chase in forests to destroy:
This gentle knight, inspir'd by jolly May,
Forsook his easy couch at early day,
And to the wood and wilds pursued his way.
Beside him rode Hippolyta the queen,
And Emily attir'd in lively green,
With horns, and hounds, and all the tuneful cry,
To hunt a royal hart within the covert nigh;
And as he follow'd Mars before, so now
He serves the goddess of the silver bow. (II.222-232)

His "youthful joy" is like the "Age. . . in its Prime."⁹³ Momus's condemnations of a "Laughing, Quaffing, and unthinking Time,"⁹⁴ along with "Thy Chase had a Beast in

⁹³ *The Secular Masque*, 6.

View,”⁹⁵ lose a bit of their sting when applied to a king like Theseus. This is no unthinking, idle, or naïve king, as Momus implies regarding those who have an affinity for Diana. Rather, Theseus is a ruler who understands the appropriate roles for each season, and he performs them without apology. Pope, in *Windsor Forest*, makes the hunt an alternative to war, as well as, in some ways, an extension of it. The portrayal of the hunt as a crux between peace and war is relevant to Dryden’s depiction of Theseus, who is able to return to peaceful pursuits after fighting in Thebes. The above passage is similar to Diana’s own depiction of herself in the masque:

With Horns and with Hounds I waken the Day,
And hie to my Woodland walks away;

With shouting and hooting we pierce thro’ the Sky;
And Eccho turns Hunter, and doubles the Cry. (27-28; 33-34)

It is worth noting that when Theseus follows Diana, Mars still is recognized: “And as he follow’d Mars before, / so now He serves the goddess of the silver bow” (II.231-32). The king’s beloved Hippolyta, an ex-Amazon, accompanies him as they celebrate the rites of “jolly May” (II.224). Theseus maintains perfect balance of the opposing forces of Venus/Mars, not only by marrying an Amazon, but also by demonstrating throughout the fable that he is capable of compassion as well as war. In this passage, he also echoes the idea of a youthful Diana, rendering an image that is nothing if not harmonious. He is a Mars capable of mercy and compromise, and a Venus capable of vigor and statecraft. Pure forces are always deadly for humans, and Theseus tempers and commingles them as great men should. While it is easy to see how the traits of Venus might temper the choler of a devotee of Mars, Theseus also provides an example of how the traits of Mars might

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

restrain the infatuation of a devotee of Venus. He has managed to integrate his private love for Hippolyta into a public role with public responsibilities. This may be the reason that he requires Palamon and Arcite to assemble an army of 100 men, rather than allowing them to settle the dispute privately. They are, after all, princes, and therefore in training for the most public of roles.

Admittedly in the prime of youth and in the thick of jealous love, neither Palamon nor Arcite is as successful as their sovereign in the achievement of concordia discors. Love and war are combined with these royal cousins, but to ill ends. They were great warriors and friends in the days of Thebes, but after falling in love with Emily, they turn on one another. In striking contrast to Theseus's public decorum, who does battle as an embodiment of his state, Palamon and Arcite fight as private persons. Dryden compares them to boars with "frothy jaws" (II.204-5), and they face one another with "dumb surliness" (II.192). This unsuccessful combination of Mars and Venus manifests itself again when Palamon exposes Arcite to Theseus as a "perjur'd knight, his oath and honor scorn'd. . . A traitor trusted, and in high degree, / Aspiring to the bed of beauteous Emily" (II.279-84). Though Palamon blames the discord entirely on Arcite, these cousins who swore fidelity to one another have each become the figure in Mars's temple, "far the blackest there, the traitor friend." This is the opposite of the other regal friendship referenced in the fable, that of Perithous and Theseus.

Even when he isn't fighting Palamon, Arcite fares no better in moderating between the two extremes. After he sees Emily, he has control of neither his love nor his hate. He returns the insult of traitor to Palamon, and with it forswears their pact of brotherhood. Once freed, he rages unkempt like an Orlando Furioso. Additionally, when

he prays to Mars, Arcite asks for help for the sake of Mars's love for Venus (an illicit love):

Ev'n by thy shame, if shame it may be call'd,
When Vulcan had thee in his net intrall'd;
(O envied ignominy, sweet disgrace,
When ev'ry god that saw thee wish'd thy place!)
By those dear pleasures, aid my arms in fight,
And make me conquer in my patron's right: (III.319-24)

Arcite portrays himself as a version of Mars ensnared, while he imagines Emily laughing: "But, caught myself, lie struggling in the snare: / And she I love, or laughs at all my pain" (III.328-29). Clearly, in Arcite's case, the combination is not an harmonious one. The Petrarchan complaint also is present, and reinforces the discord.

Palamon is another failure at balance in contrarities. He embodies the jealousy depicted in Venus's temple:

The rage of jealousy then fir'd his soul,
And his face kindled like a burning coal:
Now cold despair, succeeding in her stead,
To livid paleness turns the glowing red.
His blood, scarce liquid, creeps within his veins,
Like water which the freezing wind constrains. (I.464-69)

While Palamon claims to follow the more bountiful and beneficent Alma Venus, this passage, one of many, betrays his rhetoric. It is Theseus alone who embodies the treasured concordia discors, and Palamon and Arcite represent the disorder that these forces also can produce.

Palamon and Arcite are cousins, as were Richard II and Henry IV, both of whose claims to the English throne were through their grandfather, Edward III, and both of whom were admitted to the Order of the Garter in the presence of that same grandfather. It is worth remembering Shakespeare's indelible portraits of Henry IV and Richard II,

and it is interesting to look at the excessive and defective traits in each of these kings, since they could fall into the categories of crimes noted previously in the temples of Mars and Venus. Richard II, imprisoned and petulant, abused his talent for rhetoric, a characteristic that ties him to the god of arts and civilization, traditionally perhaps associated with Apollo, but, as products of creation, and in opposition to destruction and war, they are quite relevant to Alma Venus. Certainly Virgil's *Aeneid* emphasizes Venus's role as divine mother to Aeneas, whom she protects in his journey to found a new civilization in Rome. Henry IV, who lacked the sense of form and ceremony requisite of a great king and leader, at least in Shakespeare's version, nevertheless was a man of integrity and action, and a competent ruler who was loyal to England. He was known as a great warrior. Though Palamon is not Richard II, and Arcite is not Henry IV, it is interesting to compare them to these English historical figures. Palamon is intelligent but self-absorbed and insubordinate, particularly before he sees Emily. Just before he sees her, his sorrow over his imprisonment makes him "With walking giddy, and with thinking tir'd" (I.227). While this is where Richard II's story ends, Palamon eventually finds a nobler outlet for his talents. The more persuasive of the two knights in the story, he is most eloquent when addressing Venus, and it is presumed that he will be equally chivalrous when addressing his fair Emily. Arcite, on the other hand, complains to Mars that he is "The fool of love, unpractic'd to persuade;/ and want the soothing arts that catch the fair" (III.326-27).

If Theseus echoes a version of Edward III, and Palamon and Arcite the subsequent Plantagenets who fought for Emily and England for the next few hundred years, then they also represent the ancestors of the Stuarts. Palamon and Arcite represent

two very different habits of mind, and these same habits of mind might be seen in politics as well as in love. They even may be seen in such kings as Charles II and James II. Palamon worships Venus, and therefore the symbol of civilization, arts, creation, and lust. One might argue Charles II does, too. Dryden portrays James II as the “militant” even in *Threnodia Augustalis*, though it is meant to be a favorable description. From the perspective of the 1690s, a Mars-like James could be said to have wielded his policies with wrath and inflexibility, and though this exposes his inadequacy, he is a military figure all the same. William was Mars-like as well, and lacked any eloquence that one might attribute to a devotee of Venus. Arcite is no philosopher, and perhaps, from Dryden’s perspective, he fails as a lover, too. Yet his behavior is highly esteemed among those around him, and would be honorable in every respect, except for the glaring details that he is not honest with Theseus, and that he breaks his life-long bond of friendship with Palamon.

Looking backwards, all of the previous Stuarts might be classified as having affinities for Mars or Venus, which in turn places even more significance on Dryden’s comments written to the Duke, regarding the two types of “lines” in Roman families, one that was of “stern, rigid virtue,” and the other that was “more sweet and affable.”⁹⁶ James I had a reputation more like that of Charles II, and Charles I possessed the inflexibility of his son James II: “James [I]’s innate political shrewdness and flexibility enabled him to ride out political storms in a way that was later characteristic of Charles II.”⁹⁷ Charles I was viewed as “unapproachable and...uncommunicative,”⁹⁸ while his

⁹⁶ *Works*, 7: 18.

⁹⁷ Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England 1603-1714*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 2003). Quotation on 152.

father was known for being “open,” “accessible,” and for allowing “free flow of ideas within his court.”⁹⁹ One was known for his extreme positions, and the other for his spirit of compromise.”¹⁰⁰ Coward concludes his father-son comparison thus:

One final major difference between James I and Charles I that boded ill for political harmony in England might be noted: Charles’ abandonment of his father’s conciliatory role in international affairs and in the Church. Charles’ accession signaled the involvement of England in war, first against Spain and later against Spain and France. Financial and military necessities caused the crown to wield its emergency ‘prerogative’ powers on a scale and with an intensity unparalleled since the last years of the Elizabethan war against Spain.¹⁰¹

James I, however, was seen by some, not least by himself, as a philosopher king,¹⁰² and known for his love of the arts (as evidenced by his support of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, and by his own publications like *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), still referenced in Dryden’s time), for the energetic exchange of ideas not strictly abiding with his own, and for his shrewd flexibility in creatively navigating the opposing inclinations of his subjects. His handling of the Millenary Petition, an appeal to the newly appointed King James for reform in the church, provides such an example of his love of rhetoric and exchange of ideas. Though he was advised to dismiss the Petition, King James instead convened the Hampton Court Conference, in order to debate its merits. After the Conference, the Bishop of Durham wrote to the Archbishop of York: “A king and a priest in one person to propose, discuss, and determine so many important matters so

⁹⁸ Coward, 158.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰² Kishlansky, 69.

soundly as I never look to see or hear the like again.”¹⁰³ His was not an untainted reputation, however: his enemies portrayed him as extravagant, idle, and lustful.¹⁰⁴ It has long been assumed that Diana represents the age of James I in Dryden’s *The Secular Masque*, as he was king at the beginning of the century, before the civil war. He also was a great hunter.¹⁰⁵ While the masque is least critical of Diana, she embodies the “laughing, quaffing, unthinking age” that is a gentler version of the characterizations put forward by James I’s enemies. This depiction of Diana is unusual in that it lacks the sternness, not to mention force, normally associated with the warrior virgin. She appears almost like another version of a soft and smiling Venus, making it possible to associate her with the peace-loving James I.

Peter Paul Rubens reinforces the possibility that James I was associated with Peace, if not Venus, and Charles I with Mars. Peace and Wisdom are combined in the ceiling of the Banqueting House of Whitehall Palace, where James I is at the center in *The Peaceful Reign of King James* (1632-34), and gestures to Peace and Plenty while

¹⁰³ Quoted in Kishlansky, 73.

¹⁰⁴ Regarding James I, some of his contemporaries viewed his wisdom as false, his faithfulness to his wife as an illusion, and his attraction to young, beautiful men as loathsome (Kishlansky 69). Additionally, there are reports of his manners that display anything but the panache that might be associated with a devotee of the finer pleasures of civilization. The California edition notes Sir Anthony Weldon’s published report of James I’s unseemly table manners, wine running out of his mouth, unwashed hands and all (16: 434). However, many of the uncomplimentary versions of James I were written by anti-Stuarts. In fact, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that James’ reputation began to change with the writings of Whig historians in the 1690s, and that the “wisest fool” in Christendom was not a phrase that Henry IV of France coined regarding James I, but one that Weldon fabricated himself. Additionally, the Howard family into which Dryden married rose to power and prominence under the aegis of King James I, and it seems likely that Dryden would have heard the more favorable accounts of the King in his wife’s home. Considering the anti-Stuart sources and motivations for the change of opinion towards James I in the 1690’s, Dryden might have been partial to the more favorable depictions of the King in any account.

¹⁰⁵ See commentary in *Works* 16: 424; 432) Diana also represents Elizabeth I for many of the same reasons, including the Queen’s own intentional efforts to be classified as Diana-like during her reign.

Minerva banishes rebellion.¹⁰⁶ Commissioned by Charles I, the panels depict and protect James I's reputation for maintaining a peaceful reign and good government.

Additionally, Lisa Rosenthal's exposition of *Venus, Mars, and Cupid* (1630)¹⁰⁷ and *Minerva Protects Pax from Mars* (ca. 1629-30)¹⁰⁸ reveals pertinent insights regarding both Venus and Mars in the two paintings. Venus and Pax are in the same pudica pose in both works, and both are nursing, creating an image of abundance as Pax feeds Plutus, and Venus Cupid. Pax also is nude like Venus, though traditionally she would have been draped. Rosenthal also asserts that in Mars there is an allegory for Charles I. In *Venus, Mars, and Cupid*, Mars is disarmed and submissive to both Venus and to his own role as father, yet he remains outside the bond between Venus and Cupid as mother and child.

Rosenthal then compares it to *Minerva Protects Pax from Mars*, which she refers to as

War and Peace:

[Mars is] unable to convincingly complete an idyllic family group. What is uncertain in [*Venus, Mars, and Cupid*] appears resolved in *War and Peace*, where Mars is no longer admitted, however awkwardly, into the circuit of maternal pleasures but is vigorously cast out so that the legitimate paternal position is shifted to the inscribed viewer [Charles I]. At the same time, Rubens fashions both the benign and destructive Mars figures with strikingly similar facial features and expressions as they are both separate from, but focused on, the woman and child. In the allegory for Charles Mars thus combines the longings of the benign father and the threats of the destructive one.¹⁰⁹

Thus, Rubens provides another precedent for considering Stuart monarchs in terms of Venus and Mars. He also provides several iterations on themes that combine Venus with

¹⁰⁶ For an image of Whitehall ceiling, see Charles III Scribner, *Rubens* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1989).

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Rosenthal, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory in the Art of Rubens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ Rosenthal, Plate II.

¹⁰⁹ Rosenthal, 50.

Peace, Peace with Wisdom, and even Venus with Wisdom in a complimentary association with Athena. While Minerva protects the Venus-like figure of Peace in both *War and Peace* and in the ceiling panel at Whitehall Palace, Venus herself represents literature and the arts in *The Horrors of War* (1637), where the destruction caused by Mars, when he is led by Alecto, is in direct opposition to creative and peaceful forces. Rubens articulates this representation in a letter to Justus Sustermans, dated March 12, 1638:

The principal figure is Mars, who has left the open temple of Janus (which in time of peace, according to Roman custom, remained closed) and rushes forth with shield and bloodstained sword, threatening the people with great disaster. He pays little heed to Venus, his mistress, who, accompanied by her Amors and Cupids, strives with caresses and embraces to hold him. From the other side, Mars is dragged forward by the Fury Alecto, with a torch in her hand. Nearby are monsters personifying Pestilence and Famine, those inseparable partners of War. On the ground, turning her back, lies a woman with a broken lute, representing Harmony, which is incompatible with the discord of War. There is also a mother with her child in her arms, indicating that fecundity, procreation, and charity are thwarted by War, which corrupts and destroys everything. In addition, one sees an architect thrown on his back with his instruments in his hand to show that that which in time of peace is constructed for the use and ornamentation of the City, is hurled to the ground by the force of arms and falls to ruin. I believe, if I remember rightly, that you will find on the ground under the feet of Mars a book as well as a drawing on paper, to imply that he treads underfoot all the arts and letters. There ought also to be a bundle of darts or arrows, with the band which held them together undone; these, when bound, form the symbol of Concord. Beside them is the caduceus and an olive branch, attributes of Peace; these also are cast aside. That grief-stricken woman clothed in black, with torn veil, robbed of all her jewels and other ornaments, is the unfortunate Europe who, for so many years now, has suffered plunder, outrage, and misery, which are so injurious to everyone that it is unnecessary to go into detail. Europe's attribute is the globe, borne by a small angel or genius, and surmounted by the cross, to symbolize the Christian world.¹¹⁰

These divisions between Mars and Venus apply to Dryden's use of these deities in both *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque*, and are an unwelcome alternative to the concordia discors in Theseus. In light of Theseus's integration of the attributes of

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Scribner, 122.

both Venus and Mars, it is pertinent to note that in *The Horrors of War*, there is a difference between Mars and Alecto. When Alecto calls, Mars tends to listen, yet Rubens distinguishes mindless violence (Alecto) from just or righteous war. War can involve reason or fury.

To continue the comparisons of Stuarts to Venus or Mars, Denham classified Charles I as Mars, and though he writes in favor of the king, he is fearful of Charles's tyrannical tendencies. Denham's depiction of Strafford exemplifies this uneasiness, and the poem's conclusion is grim, with an overflowing river and neither Parliament nor King acting as they should. By contrast, Dryden characterizes Charles II in *Absalom and Achitophel* as the benign patriarch who is capable of ruling with a stronger hand when necessary: "Mild, easy, humble, studious of our good; / Enclin'd to mercy, and averse from blood" (325-26). Coward's analysis supports Dryden's insistence that Charles is firm but flexible: "Charles II too, unlike his father, responded cleverly to this conservative reaction [during the Exclusion Crisis]. He remained firm in his insistence on his brother's right to succeed, but made many strategically timed concessions."¹¹¹

Dryden contrasts "the militant" James II with Charles: "That all-forgiving king, / The type of him above" (257-58). Dryden's later images of "resistless force" and a "lame, imperfect deity" in *Britannia Rediviva* have been interpreted as a warning to James II that his actions would have terrible consequences. Thus, according to poets, artists, and historians, Venus's mildness is preferable to Mars' war-like strategies, at least when embodied by the Stuarts.

For those who favored William and Mary, the royal couple was *concordia discors* personified. Sir Robert Howard compared William III to Edward I and Edward III,

¹¹¹ Coward, 332.

whom he credited with perfect balance: they are both “fierce” and “gentle,” merciful avengers, “Mighty enough to conquer” and “Powerful enough to forgive.”¹¹² Likewise, George Stepney used Denham’s pairing of Venus and Mars in his eulogy “A Poem Dedicated to the Blessed Memory of her Late Gracious Majesty Queen Mary” (1695); a poem that may have been corrected by Dryden:¹¹³

Grace and mild mercy best in her were shown,
In him the rougher vertues of the throne,
Of justice she at home the ballance held,
Abroad, Oppression by his sword was quelled
The emblems of the Lion and the Dove
The God of battle, and the queen of love
Did in their happy nuptials well agree
Like Mars, he led our armies out, and she
With smiles presided o’re her native sea.
Such too their Meetings, when our Monarch came
With Laurels loaden, and immortal Fame,
As when the God on Haemus quits his Arms
Softning his Toyls in Cytherea’s Charms. (51-63)

In a depiction reminiscent of Rubens’ *Venus, Mars, Cupid* painting, Stepney portrays the disarming of Mars as a move towards harmony, rather than a surrender to the temptations of sensuality. Rosenthal includes *The Four Parts of the Earth* (ca. 1615-16) in her exploration of Rubens’s version of peace, which almost requires sensuality, and the plentiful abundance that it can provide.¹¹⁴ *The Four Parts of the Earth* was painted during a period of peace between Spain and the Dutch United Provinces, and Rubens added water nymphs in a departure from the traditional iconography of solitary male river gods, an invention unique to Rubens that paired peace with sexual fruitfulness and

¹¹² Howard, 177.

¹¹³ George Stepney, *A Poem Dedicated to the Blessed Memory of Her Late Gracious Majesty Queen Mary* (London: Printed for J. Tonson, 1695). See *Early English Books Online* for Dryden’s potential collaboration.

¹¹⁴ Rosenthal, Figure 6, 42.

family: “The loving figures also refer to the fruitfulness of a peaceful, productive society as a whole.”¹¹⁵ That Stepney has drawn on these precedents of combining sex with peace, and Mars with Venus, in his public eulogy for the Queen, demonstrates its currency at the time Dryden was writing *Fables*. While Dryden includes the potential for concordia discors in his depiction of Theseus, he uses the same deities in *The Secular Masque* to produce precisely the opposite effect when reviewing the century and its monarchs.

Symbolic deities are common in masks, and perforce are simpler than are iterations of the same gods in a narrative poem like *Palamon and Arcite*. Nevertheless, Dryden’s deities remain elusive regarding any allegorical intentions. There are two methods for approaching the presentation of the gods in *The Secular Masque*: the first is to assume that the progression of time is a linear one, and that each age represents one monarch, or one period of the century. The second is to interpret the “changes” in the line “What changes in this age have been” (25) as “exchanges,” or alternations, which would be neither cyclical nor linear. Roper, the only scholar to have examined *The Secular Masque* at length, concurs that each of the Stuarts could be said to possess the attributes of Venus, Mars, or Diana, though he pursues the theory Scott first proposed, that the gods were sequential representations of the monarchs.¹¹⁶ He explicates a sophisticated structure that this chronology produces in his analysis of *The Secular Masque*, ending with Chronos, William, and an iron age. However, Chronos is distinct from Diana, Venus and Mars in the masque. As Time, he is a medium by which the other monarchical personalities may be judged, which makes it difficult for him to represent

¹¹⁵ Rosenthal, 42.

¹¹⁶ Alan Roper, “Dryden’s Secular Masque,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 23 (1962).

William. Since Saturn is both the ruler of the golden age as well as a dark figure associated with crime and sickness, he provides a link to both the “bad times “ to which Momus refers, and also to the age of Diana which, though not the golden age of Saturn, still is the first and most felicitous age of the masque. This would support a cyclical view of time, and the time to begin “anew” could be taken to mean the time to begin “again,” repeating the same cycle, as Roper also suggests.¹¹⁷

Regardless of which interpretation is favored, scholars concur that the alternation as well as linear and cyclical approaches coexist within the masque. This seems appropriate in light of the similarities that historians find across all of the Stuart reigns: all were confronted with decisions about war and plagued with debt; all were feared for their potential for absolutism and tyranny, and consequently were reined in by their parliaments in terms of power and finances; all suffered assassination attempts, and were able to recover lost royal prerogatives as a result of those attempts (excluding Charles I); and religion was the root of nearly insurmountable tensions for all of the Stuart monarchs, including William and Mary. Though the primary focus of the masque seems to be on the monarchy, these same issues could be applied to the interregnum. Despite the intensity of the arguments and efforts on either “side” at any point in the century, the cycles continued even after being interrupted by something as devastating as the Civil War: “The Fools are only thinner, / With all our Cost and Care; / But neither side a winner, / For Things are as they were” (67-70). Cycles from this perspective are not of the millennial sort articulated in praise of the duchess.

If the masque’s gods represent monarchical personalities, various interpretations (beginning with Scott’s) show how a sequential reading of the masque can work. As a

¹¹⁷ Roper, “Dryden’s Secular Masque,” 40.

play designed to reflect the court and its Kings and Queens, it seems plausible that one facet of the masque could be this sort of reflection through the age. As such, it is appropriate that Diana comes first to represent Elizabeth I and James I. Venus (Charles II) repairs what Mars (Charles I) has destroyed (75), and James II, if Mars-like in other respects, at least supported Dryden's art in the spirit of Venus, and his habit of extramarital affairs coincides with that of his predecessor as well. This leads us to the end of the age of the legitimate Stuarts, but not the end of the century. This interpretation doesn't take into account William III nor Mary II, however, and it belies all of James II's Mars-like attributes. It also neglects to recognize the complicated nature of Charles I, who leveraged his patronage of the arts in order to promulgate an image of himself as the heroic prince and godly warrior, partly in order to mask the failures of his actual military exploits.¹¹⁸ Additionally, his beautification of the church was central to the conflicts from which the civil war would erupt. The combination of Venus with Mars produces disorder and instability, rather than concordia discors. These complexities force the deities to represent more than one monarch, and open up the possibility that *The Secular Masque* is as elusive as Dryden's other works of the 1690's. The iconic deities provoke both current and perennial issues, without providing consistent allegories. All of the kings, taken as one, may have tried and exemplified the enthusiasms and obsessions represented by these deities, as perhaps so did Dryden, and so did the ages of the century, but serializing them is more difficult than it first appears.

The previously explored dichotomy between Arcite/Mars and Palamon/Venus, and their inability to combine harmoniously the attributes of opposing forces, apply to the

¹¹⁸See pages 21-34, especially 26, Reid Barbour, *Literature and Religious Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

figures of Mars and Venus in *The Secular Masque*. Diana is in opposition to Venus and Mars in both *Palamon and Arcite* and in *The Secular Masque*, and her symbolism of youth and innocence, in addition to her primary connection to the hunt, is consistent in Dryden's representation of her in both works. Her youth and innocence also contrasts with Chronos, who is aged in both tales, whose wisdom is effective in at least one of the works, and whose experience is worldly, if also world-weary.

In *Palamon and Arcite*, Diana represents a tenuous state of purity that bears a comparison to the unadulterated character of Astraea. While *Palamon and Arcite* is one of the last pieces that Dryden writes, *Astraea Redux* begins Dryden's career as myth-creator for the Stuarts. He quotes Virgil's eclogues in order to evoke Astraea: "Now too the Virgin returns, and the reign of Saturn returns."¹¹⁹ While Dryden appropriates Astraea for the Restoration, the propaganda that surrounded Elizabeth I equated her with both Diana and Astraea (Collinson "Elizabeth I" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). Unlike the temples of Mars and Venus, Diana's is a respite for the author, "Tir'd with Deformities of Death" (II.617). Diana's vengeance exists in the murals, but the descriptions are constrained in contrast to the elaboration of evils of Venus and Mars. They also are part of a broader ensemble of all of Diana's roles, as chaste hunter, and as guardian over childbirth as well as the underworld. The shared images of Diana in *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque* are equally benign. Her "shouting and hooting" and "Horns with Hounds" in the masque are reminiscent of Theseus's own

¹¹⁹ Translation by George Noyes, *The Poetical Works of Dryden* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 942.

chaste hunt.¹²⁰ She is “buskin’d” in both pieces, and bears a “wexing moon” in both.¹²¹ The silver bow would appear in any description, but nevertheless also is present in both works.¹²² “Thy chase had a beast in view” is one of Momus’s condemnations, yet Theseus’s hunt in *Palamon and Arcite* is portrayed as chaste (ie moderate and disciplined) and regal. Emily also prays for a chaste life: “And only make the beasts of chase my prey!” (III.247). When her prayer is denied, Dryden uses the green to red image for the second of three times, tying the fable to the line in the masque “The Sprightly Green, has drunk the Tyrian Dye” (56). In the case of the denied prayer, it is the flame for Diana that changes: “And as the brands were green, so dropp’d the dew, / Infected as it fell with sweat of sanguine hue” (III.259-60). The first use of green to red is when Theseus marches in and conquers Thebes: “And the green grass was dyed to sanguine hue” (I.114). The second is quoted above, when Emily’s “brands,” burning for Diana, change from green to “sanguine hue.” The last is during the great battle: “Out spins the streaming blood and dyes the ground” (III.604). Though in the case of Emily, green to red seems to be a progression from Diana to Venus rather than Diana to Mars, in all three examples there is a movement away from the innocence that Diana can represent.

Like Astraea, vanquished by violence and greed, Diana disappears from her temple once she reveals to Emily that Mars and Venus have superceded her. “Farewell!’ she said, and vanish’d from the place” (III.281). After this, Diana does not reappear in

¹²⁰ *The Secular Masque* 33, 27; In *Palamon and Arcite*, Theseus appears with his entourage: “With horns, and hounds, and all the tuneful cry” (II.229).

¹²¹ *The Secular Masque* 29-30; *Palamon and Arcite* II.646, II.649

¹²² *The Secular Masque* 25; *Palamon and Arcite* II.232, II.647

the fable. Furthermore, Arcite and Palamon, though they vacillate in extremes between Mars and Venus, never display the attributes of Diana. She doesn't appear in the debate between the gods, and she is absent on the subsequent battlefield. Her departure is permanent, despite the happy ending.

It is only logical to assume that Dryden's perspective would shift between 1660 and 1699, and Diana's disappearance may symbolize such a change. At the time of the Restoration, Dryden had hoped Charles II would become a king like Theseus, when really he was only as great as Palamon. England's fate could be worse than finding itself in the hands of a Palamon. Though Palamon begins as an uneven mix of extremes in contrast to the balanced Theseus, at the conclusion he has grown into a hero. Yet, still there is no Astraea. Dryden no longer expects Astraea, as he did in 1660. Certainly *Palamon and Arcite* does not. The best that can be hoped for is not the revival of the golden age that *Astraea Redux* represents, but the kind of worldly wisdom that proceeds from experience, from hearing, in Wordsworth's phrase, "The still, sad music of humanity."¹²³

While there are similarities between Diana and Astraea in *Palamon and Arcite*, Diana is more enigmatic in *The Secular Masque*. Hers is the "laughing, quaffing, unthinking time" (40), casting a different light on the concept of innocence. Furthermore, to say "a beast rather than a man," as Emily does, puts hunting in an exemplary light. To say "only a beast after all," as does Momus of Diana and perhaps of James I, denigrates the hunt. That hunting is a form of peace may seem paradoxical, but it was a widespread notion in Dryden's time. Yet Denham in *Cooper's Hill* and even Pope in *Windsor Forest* recognized the similarity between the hunt and war. If *The Secular Masque* represents

¹²³ Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, 91.

ages of England, and not just its monarchs, then a peaceful Diana would come before the Civil War, as did Elizabeth I and James I. Yet if the masque also is cyclical, then William III is Diana with a difference. The hunt, if associated with William III, who was in fact passionately devoted to hunting, may represent discipline rather than the decadence of “laughing” and “quaffing” times, but it also clearly would anticipate war, the subsequent god in the masque, in such a context. William, without a doubt, exemplifies the attributes that Mars represents. This reinforces Janus’s role, who traditionally remembers as well as anticipates, and is the gatekeeper for both the old and new *saecula*. If the ages of the century are anything like the Jacques’s ages of man in *You Like It*, then the last age of the circle becomes the first again, but without hope. Thankfully, Momus’s tone is not as desolate as that of Jacques. Dryden’s secular cycle also bears some resemblance to the cycles of society, as described by Livy or Machiavelli: 1): youthful vigor and innocence; 2): martial valor or world-beating in one form or another; and 3): pleasure-seeking, perhaps even decadence; concluding with 4): decline, and finally a new beginning.

Diana’s youth and Chronos’s age present an interesting parallel to Dryden himself, in addition to being the first and last deities of the masque. The old Dryden, to whom Chronos has often been compared, is full of years and sapience, and a better judge than perhaps was the young Dryden of *Astraea Redux*. The young Dryden served and celebrated kings, but the old Dryden is in a position to judge them.

Janus, Chronos, and Momus of *The Secular Masque* may represent Dryden’s own perspectives regarding the follies of Zeus’s children: that of remembering and anticipating (Janus), enduring (Chronos), and satirizing (Momus). Dryden always

possessed an affinity for the historical consciousness that Janus represents, so Janus and Chronos are an appropriate pair in Dryden's final piece. In Ovid's *Fasti*, Janus tells the narrator about the times of Saturn, and in Macrobius's *Saturnalia*, Janus and Saturn ruled together as kings. By this account, it was Janus who gave Saturn a festival after he disappeared, and who gave him the attribute of a sickle.¹²⁴ In both Ovid and Macrobius, Janus receives Saturn who arrives by boat. In *The Secular Masque*, Janus sends him off: "Spread thy Fans, and wing thy flight" (6).¹²⁵

Chronos orchestrates the performance, aligning him with Janus and Momus as an observer, like Dryden himself. Janus commands "Old Time" to "begin the show" (23), and Chronos in turn directs Diana. Yet Chronos is unique in that Momus and Janus also observe, direct, and judge him, and he is an actor who is inextricable from the pageant. Likewise, Dryden is inseparable from the Stuarts, for whom and about whom he wrote.¹²⁶ If the Stuarts are personified in the masque, it makes sense that there would be parallels to their poet as well.

While Chronos of *The Secular Masque* has been compared to William III by Alan Roper, Dryden's depiction of Saturn in *Palamon and Arcite* is more worthy, it seems, as a critique of William as an unsavory leader for great England. In *The Secular Masque*, Chronos is tired, and ready to give up the load of humankind. It is his sequential place as the final god who speaks, not his symbolism as time, and not his personification as

¹²⁴ See Samuel L. Macey, *Patriarchs of Time* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987) for a thorough account of literary depictions of Saturn and Chronos.

¹²⁵ The California Edition and the *Oxford English Dictionary* link this line to "The Cock and the Fox," line 770-771: "Then stretched his feather'd fans with all his might, / And to the neighb'ring maple wing'd his flight." Considering Reverend's proposition that Dryden is the "father" of Chanticleer, this supplies another reason to consider the possibility that Chronos's view is linked to Dryden's perspective.

¹²⁶ James Winn in particular has examined closely this aspect of Dryden's work and character in *John Dryden and his World*.

beleaguered, that casts him with the William we expect Dryden to hate. Saturn of “The Knight’s Tale” is another matter. Though the arbiter who brings peace in the heavens, and settles the dispute between Mars and Venus, Saturn is no hero, nor does he cast himself as such:

Wide is my Course, nor turn I to my Place
Till length of Time, and move with tardy Pace.
Man feels me, when I press th’Ethereal Plains,
My Hand is heavy, and the Wound remains.
Mine is the Shipwreck, in a Watry Sign;
And in an Earthy, the dark Dungeon mine.
Cold shivering Agues, melancholy Care,
And bitter blasting Winds, and poison’d Air,
Are mine, and willful Death, resulting from Despair.
The throttling Quinsey ‘tis my Star appoints,
And Rheumatism I send to rack the Joints:
When Churls rebel against their Native Prince,
I arm their Hands, and furnish the Pretence;
And housing in the Lion’s hateful Sign,
Bought Senates, and deserting Troops are mine.
Mine is the privy Pois’ning, I command
Unkindly Seasons, and ungrateful Land.
By me Kings Palaces are push’d to Ground,
And Miners, crush’d beneath their Mines are found.
‘Twas I slew Samson, when the Pillar’d Hall
Fell down, and crush’d the Many with the Fall.
My Looking is the Sire of Pestilence,
That sweeps at once the People and the Prince. (III.397-419)¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Compare to Chaucer:

“My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath more power than wot any man.
Myn is the drenching in the see so wan;
Myn is the prison in the derke cote;
Myn is the strangling and hanging by the throte,
The murmure and the cherles rebelling,
The groyning, and the pryvee empoysoning:
I do vengeance and pleyne correccioun
Why I dwelle in the signe of the Leoun.
Myn is the ruine of the hye halles,
The falling of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
I slow Sampson, shaking the piler;
And myne be the maladyes colde,
The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
My loking is the fader of pestilence. (1596-1611)

This is the description worthy of the leader of leaden times. Dryden is constrained by his dedication to “channel” Chaucer’s meaning, but he must have welcomed the similarities in this instance between Saturn and the less noble aspects of William III. In particular, Dryden expands the extent to which Saturn curses man with the agues of age (a nod to Chronos of *The Secular Masque*, perhaps), and, more pertinent to William, Saturn’s role in overturning a “Native Prince.” Yet Chronos is multi-faceted in this tale. In the next line, he becomes the soothing grandfather, and plays the part of Vulcan between Juno and Jupiter, when the heavens need placating in order to cease fighting over something as small as men:

Now weep no more, but trust thy grandsire’s art;
 Mars shall be pleased, and thou perform thy part.
 ‘T is ill, tho’ different your complexions are,
 The family of heav’n for men should war.”
 Th’expedient pleas’d, where neither lost his right;
 Mars had the day, and Venus had the night.
 The management they left to Chronos’ care;
 Now turn we to th’effect, and sing the war. (III.420-427)¹²⁸

In the above passage, Chronos is in contrast to Diana, who already has vanished, and whose innocence seems to have rendered her powerless over Venus and Mars. The aged Saturn, in a direct contrast to Diana’s innocence and youth, is also more powerful and more skilled than either Mars or Venus in the management of men and gods.

Mediator he may be, but ugly he is. Dryden introduces him thus:

¹²⁸ Chaucer’s version:
 Now weep namore, I shal doon diligence
 That Palamon, that is thyn owene knight,
 Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
 Though Mars shal helpe his knight, yet nathelees
 Bitwixe yow ther moot be som tyme peese,
 Al be ye nought of o complexioun,
 That causeth al day swich divisioun.
 I am thyn aiel redy at thy wille;
 Weep thou namore, I wol thy lust fulfille.” (1612-1620)

Jove was for Venus; but he fear'd his Wife,
 And seem'd unwilling to decide the Strife;
 Till Saturn from his Leaden Throne arose,
 And found a Way the Diff'rence to compose:
 Though sparing of his Grace, to Mischief bent,
 He seldom does a Good with good Intent.
 Wayward, but wise; by long Experience taught
 To please both Parties, for ill Ends, he sought:
 For this Advantage Age from Youth has won,
 As not to be outridden, though outrun. (III.379-388)¹²⁹

However shrewd a player, he nevertheless brings peace to the war among the gods, and his machinations secure the happy ending in *Palamon and Arcite*. If this is a critique of William, then perhaps Dryden grudgingly recognizes the value in a ruler who, in 1700, has finally brought both peace and prosperity, and therefore stability, to England. Yet, once again, this passage merely suggests similarities with the current issues. William III, though aged with illnesses, and experienced since boyhood with managing and even controlling self-interested and powerful parties, was not an old king. He was 39 at the time of the Glorious Revolution, 50 when *Palamon and Arcite* was published, and nearly 20 years younger than Dryden. Dryden may even be referring to himself when he writes the following couplet: "For this Advantage Age from Youth has won, / As not to be

¹²⁹ Chaucer:

And right anon swich stryf ther is bigonne,
 For thilke graunting, in the hevene above,
 Bitwixe Venus, the goddesse of love,
 And Mars, the sterne god armipotente,
 That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;
 Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
 That knew so manye of adventures olde,
 Fond in his olde experience an art,
 That he ful sone hath plesed every part.
 As sooth is sayd, elde hath greet avantage;
 In elde is both widom and usage;
 Men may the olde at-renne, and noght at-rede.
 Saturne anon, to stinten stryfe and drede,
 Al be it that it is again his kynde,
 Of al this stryf he gan remedie fynde. (1580-1594)

outridden, though outrun.” Art, “not to be outridden,” vs. Action, “though outrun,” may refer to the experience/art of Dryden and youth/action of others in this enigmatic line.

Clearly, Saturn is an elusive figure in *Palamon and Arcite*. Dryden maintains the god’s astrological significance, and baleful influence, on humans in his version of “The Knight’s Tale.” In fact, he further links *Palamon and Arcite* to *The Secular Masque* with this theme. Janus opens thus: “Chronos, Chronos, mend thy pace; / An hundred times the rolling sun / Around the radiant belt has run / In his revolving race” (1-4). In the *Preface*, Dryden highlights Chaucer’s interest in astrology. He writes of Ovid and Chaucer: “Both . . . were knowing in astronomy . . . But Chaucer was likewise an astrologer, as were Virgil, Horace, Persius, and Manilius . . . I found I had a soul so congenial to [Chaucer’s], and that I had been conversant in the same studies” (30; 31; 41). Both Palamon and Arcite refer to Saturn as a planet, and Arcite speaks in terms of horoscope at the very beginning of the fable:

So stood our horoscope in chains to lie,
And Saturn in the dungeon of the sky,
Or other baleful aspect, rul’d our birth,
When all the friendly stars were under earth. (I.245-248)

Palamon, when cursing Arcite, claims that he is cursed by the zodiac in orbit:

Just, or unjust, I have my share of woe,
Thro’ Saturn seated in a luckless place,
And Juno’s wrath, that persecutes my race;
Or Mars and Venus, in a quartil, move
My pangs of jealousy for Arcite’s love. (I.496-100)¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Dryden adds Mars to complete the “quartil.” Chaucer’s version is the following:
But I mote been in prison thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood
Of Thebes, with his waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that other side
For jelousye, and fere of him Arcite. (470-475)

One of the reasons for the astrological emphasis, then, is to link like-minded poets and souls through the ages. This aspect of the story is a reminder that nothing is a one-for-one allegory, and most themes and characters have multiple meanings, if not allusions. Chronos of *The Secular Masque* is distinct from the same god in *Palamon and Arcite*. There is something about Chronos in the masque that compels the reader's sympathy. Momus laughs at his misery and insists that "'Tis better to Laugh than to Cry" (20). He may be Time, but he doesn't control the times:

Weary, weary of my weight,
 Let me, let me drop my freight,
 And leave the world behind.
 I could not bear another year
 The load of humankind. (7-12)

This burden and "load of humankind" appears many places in *Palamon and Arcite*, and seems to connect it with the theme of cyclical patterns of individual lives, such as Jacques of *As You Like It* might describe. It is an interesting counterpoint to Chronos, and a masque dedicated to a century, which would connote cycles of a more historical nature. The first time the image appears, it is a literal load of humankind, covering the bodies of Palamon and Arcite:

There, in a heap of slain, among the rest
 Two youthful knights they found beneath a load oppress'd
 Of slaughter'd foes, whom first to death they sent,
 The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument. (I.141-44)

The phrase that puts the knights "beneath a load oppress'd" is Dryden's, not Chaucer's.¹³¹ Palamon himself uses the expression next, when Theseus discovers him

¹³¹ Chaucer:
 And so bifel, that in the tas they founde,
 Thurgh-girt with many a grievous blody wounde,
 Two yonge knightes ligginge by and by,
 Bothe in oon armes, wrought ful richely,

fighting his previously beloved cousin for Emily, and begs Theseus to kill them both. “Our life’s a load; encumber’d with the charge, / We long to set th’imprison’d soul at large” (II.265-66). Again, Chaucer’s version shares the word “encumbrance,” but “load” and “set th’imprison’d soul at large” are Dryden’s.¹³² Likewise, Palamon’s “charge” arguably is similar to Chronos’s “freight” in the above passage from *The Secular Masque*, though one carries a heavy personal conscience, and the other holds a more public burden.

The final character to use this metaphor is Theseus in his second speech, beginning with “The Cause of Spring of motion” (III.1024), which, among other things, discusses the inevitability “that individuals die, his will ordains; / The propagated species still remains” (III.1056-57), and “So men oppress’d, when weary of their breath, / Throw off the burden and suborn their death” (III.1038-39). As will be discussed in the third chapter, this is the same load and burden imagery that Dryden used in his translation of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*, signifying the part death plays in the natural stages of man. That Chronos shares the same burden as Palamon, or as everyman in Theseus’s speech, is intriguing, and again juxtaposes the cares of an individual life against an historical trajectory. It provokes the question of Dryden’s own place of importance when he compares his private life with his legacy as a public figure, and it is reasonable that these thoughts would occupy the mind of such a politically involved poet at the end of his life. Chronos, the large god representing the voice of time and judgment, holding the

Of which two, Acrita highte that oon,
And that other knight highte Palamon (151-56)

¹³² Chaucer:
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of our owne lyves; (859-60)

weighty orb of human history, matched against Theseus and his words at the conclusion of the fable; a great king's musings on the end of an individual life, and whether it was well lived. Both are Dryden's creations, and it isn't clear which perspective he has chosen, or whether he felt it was necessary to eschew one and accept the other. Yet there undeniably is tension between the two. To reinforce further this tension, Chronos, though the metaphorical representation of time, strikes the most poignant, and therefore most human, chords in the masque. His situation, as aged and as missing the age of Venus, is what makes his voice sound like a reflection of the old poet.

The Secular Masque, however, is not an image of everyman and his siblings. The characters are gods and goddesses, sons and daughters of Zeus, and Old Time, whose daughter may be Truth, but who is grandfather to them all. Dryden is accustomed to greatness in subject matter, and James Winn has pointed out Dryden's conviction that his own fate and even his personality were intertwined with those for whom he wrote.¹³³ Like the monarchs he represented, Dryden was accustomed to his own private actions being thrust into the public light, and his conversion is a palpable example of the ways in which his own fate was inextricably tied to his kings'. Scott writes:

Of the numerous satires, libels, songs, parodies, and pasquinades, which solemnized the downfall of Popery and of James, Dryden had not only some exclusively dedicated to his case, but engaged a portion, more or less, of almost every one which appeared. Scarce Father Petre, or the Papal envoy Adda, themselves, were more distinguished, by these lampoons, than the poet-laureate. (1: 293)¹³⁴

If Dryden as Momus is judging the follies of some of the Stuart sons and daughters, he may be judging the different phases of his own career as well. Perhaps the

¹³³ Winn, *John Dryden and His World*.

¹³⁴ Walter Scott, ed., *The Works of John Dryden : Now First Collected in Eighteen Volumes*, 18 vols. (London: Printed for W. Miller, 1808).

“laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time” (40) represents Dryden’s youth, and his exuberant hopes for an *Astraea Redux* in the Restoration. While satire admittedly is a type of warfare, for most of Dryden’s life he abhorred the real wars, and certainly was opposed to those of William. Perhaps “Better the world were fast asleep,/ than kept awake by thee” (65-66) is a judgment on his own complicity in the second and third Dutch wars, and his celebration of them in *Annus Mirabilis* and *Amboyna*. Many have already speculated that the age of Venus reflects Dryden’s success in the theatre during the years of Charles II’s court. It may seem odd to evoke Venus at this later stage in a man’s life, but Dryden translated Virgil’s Pastorals in his “great climacteric,” as he termed it, and hoped his experience, while at odds with the subject matter, might allow him to “wrong [Virgil] less.”¹³⁵ Like Chronos, Dryden is nothing if not weary in 1699.

James Winn claims that Dryden identified personally with Charles II: as a father, as a persecuted persona, as a lover of an actress, as a lover of plays and play-writing. Winn also gives examples of moments in Dryden’s poetry (such as in *Threnodia Augustalis*) when he attempts, perhaps unsuccessfully, to identify with Charles’s brother once James II became Dryden’s rightful king. Whether Dryden wanted to see them or not, there also were parallels between Dryden and William III: they each had only one mistress, and they each ended the relationship and afterwards remained faithful to their wives (though one was a faithful widow); according to Baxter and Winn, they both seem to have had deep and lasting companionship with their wives, and for both this seems to have happened after a phase when they were not close at all as married couples. The health of both men suffered in the 1690’s, due to the same ailments of gout and debilitating pains in their legs. Neither was viewed as lively or witty company in person

¹³⁵ Noyes, *Poetical Works of Dryden*, 419.

(though Dryden obviously is the wittier writer of the two); neither was comfortable at court. Whether Dryden recognized these similarities, or not, Winn's thesis that he identified so intensely with Charles II provokes the possibility that Dryden at least may have examined all the ways in which he was not like his Dutch monarch. If *The Secular Masque* is about both kings and poets, then a comparison of the poet and his final king in the review of the century seems inevitable.

However, both of these suppositions about Dryden, that he may have seen himself reflected in the follies of the deities of the masque, and that he may have recognized similarities between himself and the monarch he could only oppose, are true in quite general terms. That certain passages regarding Chronos in *Palamon and Arcite* likely allude to William III (III.408-11), and that others in *The Secular Masque* resemble Dryden, is evidence that Dryden is working with many issues at once, and that poetry and kingship are among them, as is the tension between the private and public loads of humankind, and whether history is cyclical or a linear progression. Likewise, Diana is multi-faceted. She presents a portrait of a "Laughing, quaffing, unthinking time" that is a milder version of anecdotes told by James I's adversaries,¹³⁶ and though this is not the unadulterated Diana that resembled Astraea in *Palamon and Arcite*, Diana still represents a time of Peace, before the Civil War. She has affinities with William III as well, and

¹³⁶ Sir Walter Scott quotes Sir John Harrington from *Nuquoe Antiquoe*, 1601: "I have much marveled at these strange pageantries, and they do bring to my remembrance what past of this sort in our queen's days, of which I was sometimes a humble presenter and assistant, but I ne'er did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety, as I have now done. I have passed much time in seeing the royal sports of hunting and hawking, where the manners were such as made me devise the beasts were pursuing the sober creation, and not man, in quest of exercise and food. I will now, in good sooth, declare to you, who will not blab, that the gunpowder fright is got out of all our heads, and we are going on hereabouts as if the devil was contriving every man should blow up himself by wild riot, excess, and devastation of time and temperance." Scott, 8:493. These are Sir John Harrington's concluding remarks after describing what became an infamous evening on the occasion of a visit from Christian IV of Denmark, where even the players of the masque were too drunk to complete their roles on stage. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, this evening was the exception, not the rule, but the image remained with King James I and his court.

poets had recognized hunting not only as a symbol of peace, but paradoxically as a precursor to war. As a symbol of youth, she also is a foil to Chronos, and to Dryden in 1700. She is a symbol, not a character, and as such Dryden makes use of her many representations to encompass multiple allusions, even contradictory ones, at once. As with Chronos and with Diana, Mars and Venus are vehicles through which Dryden presents many ideas at once. It is easy to see in them the specific foibles of one monarch or another, and yet it also is possible to view them as symbols of perennial problems, through the centuries.¹³⁷ While this ambiguity may vary distinctly from Dryden's earlier satirical poetry, it is consistent with the ever-changing natures of the Greek and Roman

¹³⁷ The allusion to James I, and his court's indiscretions at the masque held for Christian IV of Denmark, is only one example of the specific ways that the deities in the masque reflect, in bits and pieces, foibles of the monarchs of the *saeculum*. Scott, for example, suggests that it was widely believed that Venus represented the departure of James II's beautiful second wife. As noted previously, George Stepney, in his eulogy "A Poem Dedicated to the Blessed Memory of her Late Gracious Majesty Queen Mary" (1695), presented Mary II as her husband's peaceful counterpart. (*EEOB* refers to speculation that Dryden assisted Stepney with the poem.) In addition to the harmony that Stepney presents in his Mars/Venus metaphors of William and Mary, he proposes that Mary II portrays attributes of Astraea: "Of justice she at home the balance held." Astraea and Diana also were combined when used to illustrate Elizabeth I. Furthermore, William's behavior at Mary's death certainly was as forlorn as that of Chronos over Venus's departure in *The Secular Masque*. Baxter writes of her death that "Although the Queen had been much beloved and was to be mourned deeply and sincerely—the House of Commons was said to have burst into tears as one man at the news of her death—the immediate danger was for the life of the King" (320). William broke down in front of Parliament and "had great difficulty in speaking a few words" (321). Stepney smooths over William's emotional collapse when he begins a passage that describes the love between the royal couple: "The bravest Heroes have the softest mind" (97). He also combines imagery of despair with holding up the weight of the world, as Dryden does later with Chronos in *The Secular Masque*: "Yet why Despair? Tho' one Supporter Fall, / The Stronger holds, and will sustain the Ball" (78-79). Stepney suggests that the fate of Europe is in William's hands, even while he recognizes William's personal grief. "By bringing to Thy View how Europe's Fate / Does on Thy Councils, and thy Courage wait / But when the vastness of Thy Grief they see / They own 'tis just, and melt in Tears with Thee" (88-91). That the last monarchs of the *saeculum* could represent for Stepney, and therefore for others, Venus and Mars and Astraea, if not Diana, and that Dryden makes use of the same deities to different purposes in *The Secular Masque*, reinforces the possibility that the masque may be addressing all of the monarchs as one: "all, all of a piece throughout." That none of these allusions are more than fleeting in the masque demonstrates that Dryden draws on these well-known anecdotes and poems en passant, but that the figures in his masque encompass issues that are broader than these specific allusions.

representations of these deities, and the ways in which deities are meant to articulate human and, in this case, historical, strengths and weaknesses.¹³⁸

The difference in tone between the two pieces is worth considering, and the figures of Theseus and Momus seem to control the general tenor of each. Theseus is earnest and wise, and Momus is derisive and satirical. Perhaps it could be said that a combination of the two produces something closer to Dryden's truth than either could accomplish alone. Chronos is a good point of departure for this possibility. Momus takes one look at the weary, burdened god, and the crimes of the world that he and his load represent, and says "'Tis better to Laugh than to Cry" (20). Though Theseus, like Chronos, talks of fatigue and death, he does so in the context of a contentedness and a belief that all things have their place and their purpose, a very different philosophy from that of Momus. Theseus's counter couplets to Momus's quip could be the following: "What then remains, but after past annoy, / To take the good vicissitude of joy? / To thank the gracious gods for what they give, / Possess our souls, and while we live, to live?" (III.1111-1114). Perhaps Dryden intends the truth to reside not in the tone of one work, or the other, but in the combination of both, "As jarring notes in harmony conclude" (III.1118).

If Theseus represents a reflective resignation towards change in the speech cited above, he also represents Dryden's earlier millennial perspective towards the restoration of the Stuarts. Theseus, like Sir Robert's Edward III, is held to a certain standard of

¹³⁸ Judith Sloman makes a similar argument when discussing Dryden's contribution to *Translations from Ovid's Epistles* (1680): "Greek and Latin poetry generates a disposition to see the interconnectedness of literary works, whether by the same or by different writers, because of the constant re-use of the same material from myth and traditional story. Whether Theseus or Helen appear as central characters or as minor characters, . . . they are never far from our consciousness. . . This sort of literature leads one to expect multiple perspectives. No version of life is conclusive, epic least of all. Indeed, the spurious finality of epic seems to demand a revision" (*The Poetics of Translation* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985], 55).

perfection and ideal balance, though Dryden allows him certain human imperfections. If, at one time, Dryden believed that Charles II could become such a king, *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque* reflect and reshape Dryden's earlier millennial convictions. Yet if Astraea disappears, and if Momus dismisses the Stuarts, Dryden's purpose as their poet is in danger. Aegeus's speech may provide some serenity to such a devastating conclusion:

Old Aegeus only could revive his son,
Who various changes of the world had known,
And strange vicissitudes of human fate,
Still alt'ring, never in a steady state;
Good after ill, and, after pain, delight;
Alternate like the scenes of day and night.
Since ev'ry man who lives is born to die,
And none can boast sincere felicity,
With equal mind, what happens, let us bear,
Nor joy nor grieve too much for things beyond our care.
Like pilgrims to th'appointed place we tend;
The world's an inn, and death the journey's end.
Ev'n kings but play; and when their part is done,
Some other, worse or better, mount the throne.
With words like these the crowd was satisfied,
And so they would have been, had Theseus died. (III.877-92)

One reading of this passage could be that Dryden recognized that he had put too much hope in the return of a legitimate king, and that he must learn not to react too strongly to the usurpation of an illegitimate one. Whether an Arcite or a Palamon rules England, there will be good and evil, and the crowd will cheer for whoever is on the throne. An artist, a subject, and even a king has his part to play, but remains a part of the whole, and is both great and inconsequential.

Theseus, like Dryden and Charles II, appreciates art, and Dryden uses heroic imagery from *Astraea Redux* when writing about art in *Palamon and Arcite*. In *Astraea Redux*, he demonstrates the danger in mistaking artistic for actual bravery:

Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
With ease such fond chimaeras we pursue
As fancy frames for fancy to subdue;
But when ourselves to action we betake,
It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make. (*Astraea Redux* 157-162)

Palamon and Arcite exposes this same tension between art and action. The fable assumes the grandness of an epic, with valiant warriors fighting for both knights, yet they are battling on a field that has been erected as a glorious theater, commissioned by Theseus. Dryden's combination here of heroism with romance resonates with contemporary depictions of Edward III, whose chroniclers firmly established his reputation as chivalrous knight and warrior king, and whose devotion to tournaments as well as defending England reinforced this reputation. After the epic-like passages that describe the beauty of the props, so to speak, for the battle (temples and gates for Mars, Venus, and Diana, with the battlefield perfectly raised so that the spectators will have good seats), Dryden concludes with the following:

All these the painter drew with such command,
That Nature snatch'd the pencil from his hand,
Asham'd and angry that his art could feign
And mend the tortures of a mother's pain.
Theseus beheld the fanes of ev'ry god,
And thought his mighty cost was well bestow'd.
So princes now their poets should regard;
But few can write, and fewer can reward.
The theater thus rais'd, the lists enclos'd,
And all with vast magnificence dispos'd,
We leave the monarch pleas'd, and haste to bring
The knights to combat, and their arms to sing. (II.655-66)

Theseus has created a ritual in which hundreds of men will battle to decide the fates of three: Emily, Arcite and Palamon. He is "pleas'd" with the "vast magnificence" of the spectacle also created for the occasion. In the end, William III is satirized for his lack of

regard for poets, yet Theseus's love for ceremony is ominous, and the description of the battle demonstrates the chasm that can exist between romance and reality:

They look anew; the beauteous form of fight
Is chang'd, and war appears a grisly sight
Two troops, in fair array one moment show'd,
The next, a field with fallen bodies strow'd:
--
Hauberks and helms are hew'd with many a wound;
Out spins the streaming blood and dyes the ground. (III.593-96; 603-4)

Art's glorious attraction can mask the blood and dust that Dryden exposes in these passages. This is not to say that Dryden, in *Palamon and Arcite*, eschews the poetry that he has held dear. Aeneas's reaction to the mural in Dido's palace demonstrates why art is worth great sacrifice: "What first Aeneas in this place beheld / Reviv'd his courage, and his fear expell'd."¹³⁹ He weeps, and calls out to Priam, as if the man were present rather than the painting: "Devouring what he saw so well designed / And with an empty picture fed his mind" (I.651-52). The mural "revives" Aeneas, and yet the "empty picture" remains a reflection of that greatness, rather than greatness itself. It seems likely that Dryden would not have added the word "empty" to his translation if he had written it at the time of *Astraea Redux*.

Threnodia Augustalis (1685) insists that art is less than the royalty it depicts:

"But neither pen nor pencil can express / The parting brothers' tenderness; / Tho' that's a term too mean and low; / (The blest above a kinder word may know:)" (VIII.248-51).

Yet Stanza XV places princes and poets together in the careful, creative hands of God.

"Heroes in Heaven's peculiar mold are cast, / They and their poets are not form'd in haste" (432-33). Art remains a preoccupation in *Palamon and Arcite*, "To My Honour'd

¹³⁹ Dryden, *The Aeneis* I.632-33, John Dryden, *The Poetical Works of Dryden*, ed. George R. Noyes, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950). Dryden's translation was published in 1697.

Kinsman,” and most of the other *Fables*, despite the change in monarchs and despite the difference in Dryden’s tone in *The Secular Masque*, which seems to belie both the power and the danger therein. Since Momus is unable to “hinder the Crimes, / Or mend the Bad Times, / ‘Tis better to laugh than to cry” (18-20). The purpose is not to instruct, nor to reform, as satire might. Instead, it either implicates itself as satire for its own sake, or it denies its role altogether in the unfolding of events.

Preface to the Fables demonstrates that Dryden directly engages the authors who preceded him, in addition to his own contemporaries, and this chapter has endeavored to demonstrate that Dryden also engages English history and legendary figures in order to place the current usurpation within an historical context. Shakespeare shaped the Tudor mythology for the English imagination, and Dryden draws on the traditions created by Shakespeare’s histories in order to measure Stuart monarchs against the Plantagenets in *Fables*. In contrast, *The Secular Masque* concludes the century by providing a parallel to the plays with which Ben Jonson began it. Jonson’s satirical survey of English society includes *The Alchemist*: an anti-masque which first played in 1610. Jonson’s play pits the ideal of the masque against the grotesque of the characters in its story, who are the underside of London’s society. If the ages in *The Secular Masque* are meant to be sequential, then the age of Diana, “Free from rage, and Free from crime,” is shared with the age of *The Alchemist*.¹⁴⁰

The Secular Masque was attached to *The Pilgrim*, a play written by John Fletcher, a contemporary of Jonson who shared as prominent a reputation as Jonson and Shakespeare. Dryden specifically engages some of Jonson’s metaphors in his prologue

¹⁴⁰ *The Secular Masque* is his final production, and he draws on the “Carmen Saeculare” tradition created by Horace, and utilized by Prior in 1700, while he opposes it simultaneously with his own satirical inversion and anti-masque. See Roper, “Dryden’s Secular Masque.”

and epilogue to *The Pilgrim*. The infrastructure for the Black Friars theatre, where *The Alchemist* was performed, parallels the two-room shops that were ubiquitous in London. The co-conspirators in *The Alchemist* are selling nothing but promises in the front room. The back room of Black Friars was the tiring room, and the set up between the back and front room could be compared to a bawdy house, where the sale took place in the front, and the girl waited in back.¹⁴¹ Dryden alludes to this very metaphor in the epilogue to the *Pilgrim*:

What wou'd you say, if we shou'd first begin
To Stop the Trade of Love, behind the Scene:
Where Actresses make bold with married Men? (38-40)

Scholars have noted the self-referential quality of the above lines, regarding Dryden's infamous affair with actress Ann Reeves. In another self-conscious passage, Dryden links the fate of poets to their kings. Masques traditionally reflect noble ideals that, in theory, the aristocracy possess: noble blood is the source of these qualities. The comparison here, however, like the comparison implicit in *The Alchemist*, is hardly flattering:

The Poets, who must live by Courts or starve,
Were proud, so good a Government to serve;
And mixing with Buffoons and Pimps profain,
Tainted the Stage, for some small Snip of Gain. (11-14)

It could be said that *The Alchemist* paints a demonic image of artistic endeavor, in ironic parallel to Sidney's own metaphor of alchemy, that art takes the leaden world and makes it golden. If the satirist's concern is to produce art, not for correction of society, but for the pleasure of highlighting an unsavory truth, then *The Secular Masque* could be said to suggest a darker side of art as well. The two masques comment on the society that

¹⁴¹ Richard Kendall, class notes. *The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, March 2005.

each reflects, but the artists self-consciously implicate themselves in the satire. Jonson produced *The Alchemist* alongside the straightforward masques he created with Inigo Jones. A similar opposition may be found in a comparison of *Palamon and Arcite* and *The Secular Masque*: one is earnest, and the other satirical. The truth for Dryden encompasses both, a mean between their contrarities. The artist influences and even defines the age in which he lives, but he cannot control the unfolding of events that his poetry and drama reflect. The Stuarts were and were not important, the Golden Age of England and Edward III was, and wasn't, a myth to hold dear, and William, perhaps, was a necessary corrective that must be swallowed. The artist's commentary can instruct, inspire, ridicule, manipulate, or simply entertain. After decades of contributions, Dryden had earned the right to exercise two roles of the poet that work together but that also oppose one another: that of satirist and wise man. Dryden was capable of transmitting the wisdom found in a work as serious as *The Aeneid* in the same era in which he produced a review of the century, *The Secular Masque*, through the voice of Momus, who dismissed all of its achievements. Attempting to reconcile these tones, which also exist simultaneously in *Fables* at large, is part of the ever-elusive puzzle that *Fables* presents.

CHAPTER 2

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage, Force, and Alternatives to Force

Just as Venus and Peace often coincide with one another in the iconology of the 17th century, it also is true that the tradition of courtship, a form of persuasion, anticipates a resolution in harmony, peace, and marriage. Venus and Mars may represent concordia discors in marriage and politics, but force, which Mars represents, is inimical to peace. Within *Fables*, force and persuasion often oppose one another, and the tradition of courtship and persuasion is counterbalanced by violence and rape. Since Homer's *Iliad*, a wedding feast has symbolized harmony that is both political and personal. The city that represents a state at peace in Achilles's shield features weddings and the celebratory processions that accompany them. The wedding party moves through the marketplace past a public and orderly trial. The wedding and trial epitomize a stable, productive and civil society.¹⁴² Rape, a private form of violence, is also a prominent symbol for political usurpation and force. For Dryden, "rape" includes the idea of *rapio*, or theft, often in terms of kidnapping.¹⁴³ It is this form of rape that can be linked to Agamemnon when he takes Briseis in *The First Book of Homer's Ilias*, also part of *Fables*. It is within this

¹⁴² Homer, *The Illiad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

¹⁴³ Two of the definitions for "rape" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are: "The act of taking something by force" and "The act of carrying off a person by force, especially the abduction of a woman."

broader context of rape that Dryden chooses to imitate *Ovid XII*, which includes both the sexual rape of Caenis and the violence after the Centaur seizes the bride, and *Cymon and Iphigenia*. In both of these tales, the symbols of the wedding feast and rape coincide. Equally pertinent to the ideas of force vs. persuasion, and private passions impinging on public forms, are the fables *The Wife of Bath*, *Her Tale* and *Theodore and Honoria*. And at least part of the context of these tales is the long line of political tracts and theories, beginning with the writings of James I (1598) and Sir Robert Filmer (ca. 1620), but still current in 1700, which made it difficult to address political order without couching it in domestic terms.¹⁴⁴

Marriage is at the heart of the political discourse that compared the state to a family. But marriage is also the foundation of a network of complicated relationships, and Mary's reign presents the paradox of a loving wife, a childless mother, and an undutiful daughter. Dryden focuses in *Fables* on the stresses and strains of familial relations. The issue of family is important not just because Mary is a textbook case of the conflict between loyalty to parent and loyalty to spouse (the theme of more than one tragedy), and not just because the whole question of political legitimacy is bound up with families and dynasties, but because the family itself is a political unit, and the nucleus of social order. Mark Kishlansky cites two works that categorized the generally held beliefs regarding family, patriarchal reign, and divine right: Filmer's *Patriarcha*, and James I's (then James VI) *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598): "Like James, Filmer simply

¹⁴⁴ King of England 1566-1625 James I, *Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I*, ed. James Craigie and Alexander Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1982). Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha, or, the Natural Power of Kings by the Learned Sir Robert Filmer, Baronet; to Which Is Added a Preface to the Reader in Which This Piece Is Vindicated from the Cavils and Misconstructions of the Author of a Book Stiled Patriarcha Non Monarcha, and Also a Conclusion or Postscript by Edmund Bohun, Esq.* (Printed for R. Chiswel, W. Hensman, M. Gilliflower, and G. Wells, 1685).

codified commonly held views about the origins of kingship . . . analogizing them to the powers granted Adam to rule his family” (35). The “family was frequently compared to ‘a little commonwealth’ in which the structures and obligations of governance replicated in miniature those of the nation at large” (11). Robert Filmer’s *Patriarcha*, written originally in the 1620’s, was republished in 1680 to support the royalist justification of divine right against proponents of exclusion. Alan Roper details its use during 1679-82, as well as the counter re-publications of Algernon Sidney’s *Discourses*, and James Tyrrell’s *Patriarcha non Monarcha*, sponsored by those fearful of popery and tyranny.¹⁴⁵ Because propaganda from royalists and whigs during this time made free use of these theories, the terms were familiar to many who had never read the original treatises. “The politics of paradise provided ready material for discussing the constitution of England.”¹⁴⁶ The common terminology as well as analogies grew in number and strength during this time. The royalist support for absolute monarchy appeared to some to be so extreme that it “suggested to republicans that monarchy was one of the (more lamentable) consequences of the Fall. The first king was not Adam, in or out of Eden, but Nimrod, who set the pattern for all subsequent monarchy by tyrannously arrogating to himself authority over neighboring family groups” (108).¹⁴⁷ In contrast, royalists felt that “One result of the Fall was to introduce in subject Eve and her descendants an element of perverse obtuseness, and coercion inevitably became necessary from time to time” (108).

A dichotomy emerged between two views of Adam and Eve; Adam was either the

¹⁴⁵ Roper, *Dryden’s Poetical Kingdom* 110.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Nimrod certainly was a central polemical figure in the debate, with Filmer referencing him as a king who usurped lands from his neighbors, and Filmer’s opponents attacking his neutrality towards that usurpation, and arguing that an elective monarchy should be preferable to usurpation. See Edmund Bohun’s “Preface to the Reader” of *Patriarcha*, who defends Filmer and rebuts Tyrrell. Filmer, c2-3.

absolute ruler, with Eve embodying the wifely submissiveness appropriate for a subject to her king, or he co-ruled with Eve. This became a well-known analogy of the relationship between King and Parliament during the Exclusion Crisis.

In neither reading, however, was the relationship between Adam and Eve founded on rape. Rape is a common image used for usurpation. While family and kingship were interchangeable in political ideology throughout the Stuart century, the problem of succession and the threat of usurpation were also part of that equation. Upon the death of Elizabeth I, with no clear successor in place, it was a great relief to all of England that James VI of Scotland ascended the throne without incident. James I announced to his parliament: “What God hath conjoined, let no man separate. I am the husband, and the whole isle is my lawful wife; I am the head and it is my body.”¹⁴⁸ After the Civil War and execution of Charles I, Filmer published “Directions for Obedience to Government in Dangerous or Doubtful Times” (1652), which provided a solution to the all-too frequent problem of usurpation: “The title of a usurper is before, and better than the title of any other than of him that had the former right: for he hath a possession by the permissive will of God, which permission, how long it may endure, no man ordinarily knows.”¹⁴⁹ This interpretation helped conscience-stricken royalists accommodate themselves to the rule of Cromwell the usurper throughout the 1650’s. It proved useful in 1688 as well.¹⁵⁰

If marriage is the epitome of a perfectly ordered state, rape is used to represent what happens to the state in times of upheaval. There are two political applications for England with regards to the literary use of rape, or *rapio*, in *Fables*. One is the idea of

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Kishlansky, 77.

¹⁴⁹ Quotation in Roper, *Dryden’s Poetic Kingdoms* 61.

¹⁵⁰ Coward 358.

usurpation, an image that becomes complicated when, as is the case in some of the fables, the woman is complicit in the rape. The other is the violence and rape of the crown at the crux of the Civil War, and the tension that the Civil War continued to represent throughout the century between King and Parliament. Civil War is the means by which usurpation often takes place, as was the case for Cromwell. Yet usurpation and civil war are distinct in English history, since the Glorious Revolution provides an exception to their causal relationship. Even so, they coincide and overlap in *Fables*, and when Dryden combines weddings and rape, he invokes their presence simultaneously.

The Wife of Bath, Her Tale presents the enlightenment of a degenerate knight that ends in marriage, harmony, and order. It begins with a rape in which the woman is decidedly *not* complicit (and as such, is distinct from the rapes of Helen of Troy and Cymon's Iphigenia). The rape is a private violent action that eventually is settled by adjudication in a public court. The knight must make a journey that involves supplication to women throughout his search to answer the Queen's question. Though the knight receives a dispensation from death, he feels punished when he is forced to marry the old woman who helped him, and the strength of this antipathy is an indication of how much he has yet to learn. The real turning point comes after the wedding, when the knight submits to the wife's persuasive argument, and asks her to choose his fate for him:

Sore sigh'd the knight, who this long sermon heard;
At length, considering all, his heart he cheer'd,
And thus replied: "My lady, and my wife,
To your wise conduct I resign my life:
Choose you for me, for well you understand
The future good and ill, on either hand.
But if an humble husband may request,
Provide, and order all things for the best;
Yours be the care to profit, and to please;
And let your subject-servant take his ease."

“Then thus in peace,” quoth she, “concludes the strife,
Since I am turn’d the husband, you the wife:
The matrimonial victory is mine,
Which, having fairly gain’d, I will resign;
Forgive, if I have said or done amiss,
And seal the bargain with a friendly kiss:
I promis’d you but one content to share,
But now I will become both good and fair.
No nuptial quarrel shall disturb your ease;
The business of my life shall be to please. (509-528)

The knight has learned at last to do what he did not do in the rape: subordinate his own wishes and desires to the woman’s. The knight, who was a rapist, has become the submissive husband, and the wife, in winning, also submits. There is an earnestness in this conclusion that wins out over the worldly banter of the Wife of Bath, which nevertheless cannot be denied, since it sets the predominant tone in the fable, and one in which Dryden delights. The knight calls himself the “subject-servant,” and casts himself as the wife. Dryden uses the political discourse that compares husband to king, and adds contemporary relevance with the tale of Midas and his wife who cannot keep a secret, by adding the following lines to explain why Midas must hide his big ears:

For fear the people have ‘em in the wind
Who long ago were neither dumb nor blind,
Nor apt to think from heav’n their title springs,
Since Jove and Mars left off begetting kings. (161-64)

In a matter of two lines, the divine right of kings has lost all gravitas and reverence, those lines being written by a poet who remained loyal to such a theory at great cost to himself. Dryden is allowing himself to have some fun. To continue the playful inversion of life as it usually is ordered, the wife delivers a lengthy diatribe on inner worth, while the knight is nearly in tears over the reality that his wife is old and ugly. She lectures him on the worthlessness of a noble bloodline, and he laments that his own noble race will now

degenerate with his progeny. These topics take on added contemporary freshness when the reader takes into account that Mary II was widely recognized as a beauty, and cried for the first two weeks of her marriage over the ugliness and age of her new husband. William III, on the other hand, was a noble snob. His own lineage was one of the purest in Europe at the time, and he had been raised to believe in its importance. Stephen Baxter writes about William's perspective during the period of betrothal: "In William's eyes Mary was the next thing to a housemaid, since her mother had been not only a commoner but one of the Princess Royal's servants."¹⁵¹ It was well-known, however, that after years of marriage the two grew quite close, and became the model of unity as husband and wife.

While James I set himself up as the ideal bridegroom for his bride the state, in actuality the "marriage" was often tempest-tossed. The Wife of Bath, speaking in her own voice at the end, reminds us that real marriages are not the same as in romances:

And their first love continued to the last:
One sunshine was their life, no cloud between;
Nor ever was a kinder couple seen
And so may all our lives like theirs be led:
Heav'n send the maids young husbands fresh in bed;
May widows wed as often as they can,
And ever for the better change their man,
And some devouring plague pursue their lives,
Who will not well be govern'd by their wives. (540-46)

The final vision in *The Wife of Bath, Her Tale* of the bride and groom in perfect harmony stands in contrast to the circumstances of real marriage as well as real politics.

According to the Wife of Bath, the secret to marital bliss is the revelation of what all women want: "Sovereignty." The knight explains how women's sovereignty works:

¹⁵¹ Stephen Bartow Baxter, *William III and the Defense of European Liberty, 1650-1702*, [1st American ed. (New York,: Harcourt, 1966). Quotation on 145.

“A blunt plain truth, the sex aspires to sway / You to rule all, while we, like slaves obey” (279; 285-86). The knight, who originally takes a young girl by force, must first submit to the authority of the court of law, and then again in the private negotiation with his wife regarding who will “govern.” “Sovereignty” is an overtly political term, and Dryden is working with the idea, current in political theory of the time, of Adam and Eve as the original paradigm of the relationship of the monarch and his state. As discussed previously, James I, Sir Robert Filmer, and political theorists such as Edmund Bohun (who wrote a preface and apology for Filmer in 1685) and James Tyrrell (*Patriarcha non Monarcha* 1681), used Adam and Eve as a paradigm for King and his Parliament.¹⁵² Through the Wife of Bath, Dryden makes use of the battle of the sexes, and mirrors Bohun’s comments when he defends Sir Robert Filmer’s *Patriarcha*:

But then supposing the Woman should happen to be the stronger of the two,. . . [Tyrrell] leaves the Women at liberty to fight for the Mastery, and if they can get it, they have our Author’s opinion for the defence of this Usurpation, but not a tittle of reason to back it, . . .(b5)

Thus, Bohun believes that Tyrrell and his fellow whig republicans have set up a situation that invites political strife, and Bohun demonstrates that disorder in terms of the “usurpation” of the divinely appointed hierarchy. The Wife of Bath, who likes to speak for all women, can be thought of as Eve, who often symbolizes all women. The political

¹⁵² Edmund Bohun, "Preface to the Reader," in *Patriarcha, or, the Natural Power of Kings by the Learned Sir Robert Filmer, Baronet; to Which Is Added a Preface to the Reader in Which This Piece Is Vindicated from the Cavils and Misconstructions of the Author of a Book Stiled Patriarcha Non Monarcha, and Also a Conclusion or Postscript by Edmund Bohun, Esq.* (Printed for R. Chiswell, W. Hensman, M. Gilliflower, and G. Wells, 1685). See also James Tyrrell, *Patriarcha Non Monarcha the Patriarch Unmonarch'd : Being Observations on a Late Treatise and Divers Other Miscellanies, Published under the Name of Sir Robert Filmer, Baronet : In Which the Falseness of Those Opinions That Would Make Monarchy Jure Divino Are Laid Open, and the True Principles of Government and Property (Especially in Our Kingdom) Asserted / by a Lover of Truth and of His Country.* (London: Printed for Richard Janeway, 1681).

theorists often equate Parliament, which represents the King's subjects, with Eve.¹⁵³ The battle between the sexes, then, is used in the political rhetoric that canvassed a topic that was dear to Dryden, that of the relationship between English subjects and their kings. The Wife of Bath's version of that battle, replete with force as well as submission, creates an insightful parallel to the political discussion. While this is a topic that Dryden takes very seriously, he allows the Wife of Bath to provide a witty review of the power struggle between men and women as well as between King and Parliament. However, it would require the gullibility of Chanticleer to believe that English politics could end as happily as the union of the knight with his wife, if only the king would defer all decisions to the wisdom of his parliament.

If political allusions are intended, utilizing *The Wife of Bath, Her Tale* to take an irreverent look at the issues is a reminder that the political allegory of husband and wife to king and parliament has its limitations, though neither Edmund Bohun nor James Tyrrell concedes such a point. One example of the blindspots of the theoretical arguments is that, even in Tyrrell's summary of this ongoing debate in his *Bibliotheca Politica*, published as late as 1694, the year in which all thoughts and writings turned to the death of the Queen and her legacy, Eve never becomes a parallel to Mary as counterpart to William.¹⁵⁴ This is despite the clear relationship that William and Mary

¹⁵³ See Bohun:

. . .to show any other Original of Paternal Father than Adam over Eve, who indeed was as the first subject, so the Representative of all that followed, and it reaches not only to all her Daughters in relation to their husbands, but to all them in relation to their Fathers, and to her sons too . . .For if a priority of being gave Adam a power over his wife, it gave him much more so over his children. (b5)

¹⁵⁴ Tyrrell, *Bibliotheca Politica: Or an Enquiry into the Ancient Constitution of the English Government Both in Respect to the Just Extent of Regal Power, and the Rights and Liberties of the Subject. Wherein All the Chief Arguments, as Well against, as for the Late Revolution, Are Impartially Represented, and Considered, in Thirteen Dialogues. Collected out of the Best Authors, as Well Antient as Modern. To Which Is Added an Alphabetical Index to the Whole Work.*

have in terms of overseeing the country as co-rulers, and despite the common image of this King and Queen as an ideal couple, embodying the perfect harmony of male and female attributes and roles. Particularly in the royalist tracts written by Filmer and Bohun, the authors with whom one might expect Dryden to agree, very little time is spent on the differences between a family and a state, two examples being the passion between husband and wife and the bond between parent and child. (In fact, Bohun denies that there is any difference at all in the intensity of the bond between prince and subject and father and child.) Dryden touches on both of these complications in *Absalom and Achitophel*, and explores them again in his fables, which are fuller and richer than the political tracts, and cannot be compartmentalized in the way that a political theory can make all of its characters correspond to the argument's position. The example of deep companionship between Baucis and Philemon could never be applied to the relationship between a King and his Parliament. (Perhaps, however, some interesting parallels may be found if one were to compare the homely couple with William and Mary.) *The Wife of Bath, Her Tale* includes King Arthur, the female senate, and a rape tried in a public court with an official sentence that ends with a wedding. However, the conflict between husband and wife finally is resolved by sex, a form of harmony that may work emblematically for a political state in a painting by Rubens, but which is difficult to play out when placed within the confines of an actual King and his subjects. Dryden's fables recognize this tension. So, husband and wife may be reconciled, but king and parliament remain polarized.

Love, as expressed in courtship and marriage, is all the more startling when found in a character like Cymon. *Cymon and Iphigenia* begins as a story of a primitive figure

who, awakened by love, learns the arts of refinement. At its heart, however, *Cymon and Iphigenia* is about the violation of a wedding feast. As readers, we first sympathize and identify with Cymon's awakening, and we are drawn to the idea that his love for Iphigenia will invoke in him a larger sense of civic participation. This identification renders his choices to kidnap Iphigenia, first from the ship, and again from her wedding reception, all the more shocking, and it exposes love as a source of chaos rather than creation. Cymon's private love becomes political when he crosses the waters to claim a previously betrothed bride in a foreign country. After the tempest that causes Cymon's shipwreck and Iphigenia's recovery, Cymon is imprisoned. A double marriage is planned for Iphigenia and her betrothed as well as for her fiancé's brother, who also is engaged. Lysimachus, the public magistrate who is in love with the second bride, secretly summons Cymon. This further complicates the reader's sense of chaos, since the Rhodians entrusted Lysimachus to guard their public safety. The two spurned lovers, Cymon and Lysimachus, premeditate and successfully carry out the rapes and murders in the midst of a ritual of celebration and hospitality. The image of this wedding party, strewn with bodies in the wake of Cymon's and Lysimachus's departure with the stolen brides, is an illustration of public order disrupted and violated by private passions.

While there are numerous patriarchal (and often tyrannical) figures in *Fables*, *Cymon and Iphigenia* is a fable where a vacuum in authority has a significant impact on the unfolding of the story. Cymon's father plays an extremely peripheral role in the cultivation of his son, and whether Cymon chooses to be a "country clown" or a well-dressed, cultivated heir is left entirely up to Cymon. It is no accident that a crucial element, conscience, is missing in his self-education. The fathers of Iphigenia and her

betrothed are not central figures, either, and as a result it is Cymon who controls the plot. The country Rhodes further underscores this lack of patriarchal presence, since Lysimachus, Cymon's ally and instigator of the second rape, is the elected magistrate, not the father/ king. This fable is astonishing in the audacity of both Lysimachus and Cymon, and in the shocking realization that all ends happily for them.

It is useful to place the fable next to the attitudes of some on the Continent that viewed England as a rogue nation after Charles I's execution and Cromwell's assumption of power. Mark Kishlansky believes a primary reason that the conflict between king and parliament escalated to civil war was that there was a "vacuum of power" beginning in the first six months of the Long Parliament: Charles needed parliament to provide supply in order to repel the Scottish rebellion, but he could not press his priorities until Parliament initiated its grievances.¹⁵⁵ "But Parliament was not an institution designed to initiate. Its conventional leaders were the king's servants . . ." ¹⁵⁶ It was in this vacuum of power that men like John Pym were able to become such powerful leaders. And, according to Kishlansky, it was this vacuum that caused escalation to war to occur so rapidly. He asserts that, as late as November, 1640, no one understood the consequences of the brewing contentions. "There was as yet no inkling that the nation was on the brink of civil war or that Parliament and crown would become separate institutions in opposition to each other."¹⁵⁷ It was a surprise akin to that of the Lapiths and Centaurs at the moment of the rape that caused a war.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London: Penguin Books, 1996). Quotation on 141.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Quotation on 142.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

Though many references within *Cymon and Iphigenia* resonate with issues that go back to the Civil War, these echoes are due, in part, to the connection between the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution. Cromwell and William III often were compared with one another as usurpers of the crown. According to *Poems on the Affairs of State*, of all the tactics used by his opponents, that of comparing William III with Cromwell “was most capable of stirring prejudice against the new monarch.”¹⁵⁸ There are numerous satires that interchange “O.P” (Oliver the Protector) with “P.O.” (Prince of Orange). One of the most prominent examples of the comparison is in the Jacobite poem “On the Late Metamorphosis of an Old Picture of Oliver Cromwell’s into a New Picture of King William: The Head Changed, the Hieroglyphics Remaining” (1690).¹⁵⁹ It is so effective because it is based on an actual portrait of Cromwell (*The Embleme of Englands Distraction* 1658) that was used by Williamites to create a version of William III in 1690, in which they kept the same title and symbols (down to the very armor in which Cromwell was dressed), and changed only the face of Cromwell with that of William III:

Whether the graver did by this intend
 Oliver’s shape with King William’s head to mend,
 Or grace King William’s head with Cromwell’s body,
 If I can guess his meaning I’m a noddy.
 Howe’er I pity Cromwell. Thirty year
 And more are past since he did disappear.
 Now, after all this time, ‘tis hard to be
 Thus executed in effigie-
 This is a punishment he never dreaded;
 What did his Highness thus to be beheaded?
 Perhaps the artist thinks to get a name
 By showing us how two may be the same.
 If so, he’s gained his point, for he’s a witch
 That suddenly can tell one which is which! (1-14)

¹⁵⁸ *POAS* 5:149.

¹⁵⁹ *POAS* 5: 149. See also Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 258-62, for copies of the two prints and further description.

A crowd studies the two portraits side by side, and hazards guesses as to who the two men are:

‘You all shoot wide, my masters’ says another.
‘He in the wig is neither son nor brother,
But a late conqueror of different fame.
Sirs, pull off all your hats, and hear his name!
‘Tis good King William. See Rome trampled down.
See his victorious sword thrust through the crown.
See his triumphant foot on papists’ necks.
See Salus Populi Suprema Lex.
See Magna Charta. Can all this agree
With any man but Oliver and he? (38-47)

In both versions of *The Embleme of Englands Distraction*, Cromwell and William III are presented as England’s deliverer. Propaganda that suggested a divine element to each of the usurpations tied the two periods of history together as well. However, there are distinctions in the unfolding of events during the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution, just as the violence at the wedding feasts are connected but distinct in *Cymon and Iphigenia* and *Ovid XII*. Cymon’s rape is premeditated, and Iphigenia welcomes him. The Centaurs, by comparison, represent something more visceral, and certainly unplanned, in the rape that turns a wedding into war. This element of surprise and chaos aligns *Ovid XII* with the emotions and strife of the Civil War. There is something about Cymon’s single-minded focus, determination, and success that resembles the exploits and realpolitik of King William. Cymon is dedicated to any plan that will work. William III’s politics and wars had a reputation for a similar shrewdness. William III does not shy from war or violence when it is necessary, but unlike the Centaurs he is in control, and does not make use of violence gratuitously. Cymon agrees immediately to the rape at the wedding banquet in order to take back Iphigenia. Earlier, however, in his takeover of the ship, he sets free the Rhodians once they no longer stand between him and his love.

Cymon and Iphigenia also involves naval prowess, a strength that both Holland and England shared, and certainly relevant to the Glorious Revolution. Finally, the sense that Cymon's takeover happens twice, and that the second time is the successful attempt, creates the impression of a repetition in history that is similar to the perspective that the days of Cromwell and William III were connected. Cymon's coup is successful, while the war waged by the Centaurs ultimately failed. It also aligns the idea of a disrupted wedding with a disrupted line of succession. The details do not create one-for-one parallels, but they do suggest links to English history.

If husband and wife symbolize a king and his state, Iphigenia's inner turmoil may reflect on the English conscience. Dryden's contemporaries worried that the Great Fire and Plague of 1666 were punishment for having executed the king. Their ancestors worried that they had brought the War of the Roses onto themselves as a result of switching allegiances from Richard II to Henry IV. Due in part to these same sorts of concerns in 1688, the English spent much time and attention on the legal documentation that declared James II's overthrow an "abdication" and Mary II's ascent legitimate. Iphigenia, if she shares a similar angst while her ship is caught in a tempest, does not make the English plight seem very heroic:

Sad Iphigene to womanish complaints
Adds pious prayers, and wearies all the saints;
Ev'n if she could, her love she would repent,
But since she cannot, dreads the punishment;
Her forfeit faith, and Pasimond betray'd,
Are ever present, and her crime upbraid.
She blames herself, nor blames her lover less;
Augments her anger, as her fears increase;
From her own back the burden would remove,
And lays the load on his ungovern'd love,
Which interposing durst, in Heav'n's despite,
Invade and violate another's right:

The pow'rs incens'd a while deferr'd his pain,
And made him master of his vows in vain;
But soon they punish'd his presumptuous pride;
That for his daring enterprise she died,
Who rather not resisted than complied. (349-65)

Iphigenia's emotions mirror in some ways the English response to consequences of history, and Cymon's the part that William plays in it. Dryden presents a profile of Iphigenia who would happily blame her destruction on Cymon, rather than concede that she may share the burden. Cymon's is the "ungovern'd love, / Which interposing durst, in Heav'n's despite, / Invade and violate another's right." Iphigenia's plight in the tempest may parallel that of the Rhodians after the rape, particularly since the Rhodians are an example of a people who were willing to dismantle a patriarchy in favor of another form of government. In Rhodes, Lysimachus was elected: "Lysimachus, who rul'd the Rhodian state, / was then by choice their annual magistrate" (437-38). It is this elected ruler who betrays and abandons the nation:

What should the people do when left alone?
The governor and government are gone;
The public wealth to foreign parts convey'd;
Some troops disbanded, and the rest unpaid.
Rhodes is the sovereign of the sea no more;
Their ships unrigg'd, and spent their naval store;
They neither could defend, nor can pursue,
But grind their teeth, and cast a helpless view. (615-22)

On the one hand, this passage could illustrate what happens when a people takes prerogative from the divinely appointed king, and hands it to a popularly elected governor. After Charles I was executed, the nobility vacated all governmental posts as an expression of loyalty to the crown. Those posts were filled by inexperienced republicans, unlike those before them who came from families with centuries of service in those same positions of leadership. (The Duke of Ormond, as Dryden notes in the Preface, holds the

office that his father and grandfather had held before him.) The above passage evokes this sense of a vacuum. However, it also evokes a sense of abandonment, or abdication, the battle cry leveled at James II, though he certainly was not elected. Whether it was the people who were untrue, or the patriarch, the nation loses. No longer a viable power, Rhodes now can only “grind [its] teeth, and cast a helpless view” (622). The rape has left the island in shambles.

The moral to the fable is unsettling, and it is the inverse of a Rhodes that loses everything: Cymon takes what isn't his, Iphigenia is complicit in her own rape, and the couple prospers and lives happily ever after:

Jove's isle they seek, nor Jove denies his coast.
In safety landed on the Candian shore,
With generous wines their spirits they restore:
There Cymon with his Rhodian friend resides;
Both court, and wed at once the willing brides.
A war ensues, the Cretans own their cause,
Stiff to defend their hospitable laws:
Both parties lose by turns; and neither wins,
Till peace propounded by a truce begins.
The kindred of the slain forgive the deed,
But a short exile must for show precede:
The term expir'd, from Candia they remove,
And happy each at home enjoys his love. (628-40)

Using a fable that provokes the issues, without allegorizing the history, allows Dryden to provide two conclusions to two stories, that of Rhodes and that of Cymon, and leaves the reader to ponder whether the current situation in England mirrors the plight of Rhodes, or the victory of Cymon and Iphigenia. *Cymon and Iphigenia* is the final fable of Dryden's compilation, and its conclusion has some components that are the inverse to that of *Palamon and Arcite*.¹⁶⁰ Nothing in the conclusion of *Cymon and Iphigenia* is noble,

¹⁶⁰ On page 53, Reverand observes that Lysimachus and Cymon, who move from love to force that causes war, represent the opposite of Theseus, who moved from force to love and peace when marrying Hippolyta.

where almost every action in the first fable connotes nobility. Palamon and Arcite fight a sanctioned battle for Emily's hand. Cymon kidnaps the bride, kills the groom, and causes a war between two nations afterwards. Though Arcite is the winner, peace continues after his death, and there is a period of mourning before Palamon and Emily are joined in marriage. As for Cymon, many wars follow, until weariness results in peace. There is a period of exile to show respect to the dead, after which the couple lives happily ever after.

That *Palamon and Arcite* is the first fable and *Cymon and Iphigenia* the last suggests a triumph of realpolitik over chivalry, which could be applied to William's reign. If *Palamon and Arcite* is viewed as a romance, and if it echoes the romantic history of Edward III, then what happens in *Cymon and Iphigenia* is shocking because it contains none of the expectations of that genre. An heir like Cymon would not begin as a simple brute, the protagonist would not develop into a villain, and there would not be a violently disrupted marriage followed by a second marriage to the very villain who tore the heroine from her betrothed. Finally, the villain certainly would not have lived happily ever after with his stolen love.

This happily ever after problem presents a complication with the symbolism inherent in marriage. Normally, marriage represents an element of prudence, of looking forward. Love's passion, like that found within Cymon, is usually at odds with such prudence, yet the fable declares that all becomes well after the rape. The idea of consequence, important to *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, is absent in *Cymon and Iphigenia*. *Palamon and Arcite* begins and ends with a wedding, and society follows a pattern

Cedric D. Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode: The Fables* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

regulated by public ritual and law, which are guided by Theseus and Hippolyta as King and Queen. These parameters of social order simply do not exist in *Cymon and Iphigenia*.

In light of the dichotomy explored previously between Venus and Mars, and even Diana and Saturn, it is significant that Dryden makes a point of Cymon's nativity in a place like Cyprus, the birthplace of Venus, from which Cymon embarks on his Mars-like mission. Diana makes two appearances in *Cymon and Iphigenia*, through Iphigenia herself, and they could be classified as imposter allusions to the goddess. Iphigenia first appears, nymph-like and bathing, when Cymon finds her, similar in some ways to Actaeon's encounter with the virgin huntress, but with different results. (It also echoes the archetype of pastoral songs, particularly those of the rougher sort, a tradition whose rusticity fits with Cymon's character.) Additionally, Iphigenia's name evokes the daughter of Agamemnon, who was chosen as a sacrifice to Diana because of her purity, and whose story of sacrifice is told at the beginning of *Ovid XII*. In Dryden's version of *Cymon and Iphigenia*, Cymon's Iphigenia attempts to appear innocent. She prefers Cymon to her betrothed, and illustrates Achitophel's metaphor regarding a woman who wants to be overtaken: "a pleasing rape upon the crown" (*Absalom and Achitophel* 474). Diana of *The Secular Masque* represented youth in part. Though Cymon is perhaps never innocent, he is young. He begins, almost without speech and certainly with a complete lack of artistic control or detachment, from which he progresses and learns civilized arts. Despite what perhaps was an insufficient education, he nevertheless acquires the gifts of persuasion that are necessary to woo Iphigenia, and the detached calculation that becomes essential in carrying off his crime.

Rape is a cause for more force in vengeance, as the unfortunate denouement of *Cymon and Iphigenia* demonstrates. Vengeance for the rape of Helen is the cause of the Trojan War, and Agamemnon's rape, or robbery, is the source of Achilles's wrath in *The Iliad*. *The First Book of Homer's Ilias* is an interesting choice in *Fables*, since it is an example of both Achilles' physical self-restraint, as well as the seed of vengeance that caused years of war during Achilles's refusal to engage in battle. Dryden connects the first book of *The Iliad* with his translation of *Ovid XII*, since Achilles is central to both, as is the tension in *Fables* between force and persuasion. Equally important, at least for Nestor, is the decision to step away from a perpetual cycle of vengeance.

Reverand's remarks regarding Hercules and Nestor are provocative but very brief:

One might add that in avenging himself on a heroic figure while maintaining that he is taking no vengeance, Nestor also manages to accomplish what Dryden seems to accomplish in his incessant attacks upon William III throughout *Fables*.¹⁶¹

Nestor, not Hercules, is the centripetal force in *The Twelfth Book of Ovid his Metamorphoses*. He is the narrator-artist who connects the histories of Cygnus and Caeneus for the warriors, who details for Achilles his father's heroism in that same battle, and foreshadows its relevance to Achilles' current endeavors, who creates a palimpsest with the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs and the current war between the Greeks and Trojans, and who carefully omits Hercules from his version of the battle. The story of Hercules' omission is worth repeating:

¹⁶¹ Reverand, 27. Sloman's remarks regarding the same issue are puzzling: "When we read. . . that Nestor decided not to praise Hercules because Hercules was his personal enemy, we quickly recognize the parallel with Dryden's treatment of William and note that Dryden is admitting a possible error in judgment" *The Poetics of Translation* 192. Nestor does not appear to admit an "error in judgment" in the fable.

This tale, by Nestor told, did much displease
Tlepolemus, the seed of Hercules,
For often he had heard his father say
That he himself was present at the fray,
And more than shar'd the glories of the day. (706-10)

Tlepolemus confronts Nestor, to which Nestor responds:

. . . The Pylian prince
Sigh'd ere he spoke; then made this proud defense:
"My former woes, in long oblivion drown'd,
I would have lost; but you renew the wound:
Better to pass him o'er, than to relate
The cause I have your mighty sire to hate.
His fame has fill'd the world, and reach'd the sky
(Which, O, I wish with truth I could deny!)
We praise not Hector; tho' his name, we know,
Is great in arms: 't is hard to praise a foe. (713-22)

Nestor recounts Hercules' cruelty towards Nestor's family and brothers (whom Hercules murders), then concludes his response to Tlepolemus:

"Now, brave commander of the Rhodian seas,
What praise is due from me to Hercules?
Silence is all the vengeance I decree
For my slain brothers; but 't is peace with thee."
Thus with a flowing tongue old Nestor spoke; (757-61)

Hercules loses his heroic place in this battle through Nestor's omission. If a king or hero is to live on after his works, he requires an artist to record those actions for him, as Homer did for Achilles:

Of all the mighty man, the small remains
A little urn, and scarcely fill'd, contains.
Yet, great in Homer, still Achilles lives;
And, equal to himself, himself survives. (816-19)

As for Dryden, it is clear that he identifies with the literary minds before him, including and perhaps even especially Homer,¹⁶² and he makes explicit this connection to his literary forebears in the *Preface*. Dryden also identifies closely with Nestor, who is an

¹⁶² "For the Grecian is more according to my genius than the Latin poet" (*Works* 7: 28).

old narrator like Dryden, and who makes choices literary and political in this fable. In fact, Dryden had used images of Hercules for James II in both *Threnodia Augustalis* and *Britannia Rediviva*, yet William's propagandists appropriated the icon for James's usurper, thereby reintroducing the concept of force as the ultimate justification for William's kingship, as it was for Cromwell.¹⁶³ Like Hercules who destroyed Nestor's family, William has destroyed a part of England's history, tradition, and the very line of kings that Dryden held dear. When Nestor calls Tlepolemus "brave commander of the Rhodian seas" he connects *Cymon and Iphigenia* with *Ovid XII*, since Rhodes was the place in which Cymon violently stole the bride from the wedding, thus potentially connecting William III with both fables (*Ovid XII* 757).

Dryden's vengeance on William, like Nestor's on Hercules, is silence rather than satire. Certainly Dryden was censured for silence on the occasion of Mary II's death, that silence becoming all the more conspicuous among the 50-60 eulogies in her honor.¹⁶⁴ Dryden and Nestor cannot use force. All either poet can do is adjust their stories. The choices of the poets are in stark contrast to the requisite violence of the heroes whose vengeance they record, or choose not to record.

Cymon's false refinement is in contrast, perhaps, to the more genuine refinement of someone with Nestor's experience and education. While Nestor cannot control the

¹⁶³ According to Craig Rose, William began using Hercules as his favorite icon in order to move away from the anti-catholic rhetoric that built momentum based on the King's image as the Protestant deliverer. (Rose 27) Winn addresses Dryden's use of Hercules and Atlas in *Threnodia Augustalis* (*John Dryden and His World* 408), and Garrison's article "Dryden and the Birth of Hercules" examines Dryden's evolution of the use of Hercules as a metaphor in *Threnodia Augustalis*, *Britannia Rediviva*, and finally in *Amphitryon*. Garrison, "Dryden and the Birth of Hercules." Reverand asserts that, in *The First Book of Homer's Ilias*, the interchange between Nestor and Agamemnon is similar to Dryden's advice to James II in *Britannia Rediviva*, warning him against "boundless pow'r" (341) and "Resistless Force" (349). Reverand points out that neither James nor Agamemnon listened. (16-17)

¹⁶⁴ *POAS* 5: 442.

violence in *Ovid XII*, he is able to place it within a context that reveals patterns of history. In *Ovid XII*, the fable's most salient impressions are those of violence and chaos, despite the many layers of stories and generations that revolve around the wedding feast. It begins with a love-lorn Aesacus, and moves to Paris, the other son of Priam, "author of the war, / Which, for the Spartan queen, the Grecians drew / T'avenge the rape, and Asia to subdue"(6-8). From there, the story moves to Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia and the start of the Trojan War, the battle in which Achilles conquered Cygnus, and all of the stories that Nestor ties to it. The story provides an end to the Trojan War as well as the end of Achilles, caused by Poseidon who revenges the death of Cygnus, which occurred at the beginning of the fable. Within this rich context that layers one story onto the next in *Ovid XII*, it is the violence at the wedding feast that is most central to the tale.

Violated hospitality initiates the Trojan War, the backdrop against which Nestor tells the story, and there is violated hospitality at the wedding feast as well. Poseidon's violence in the rape of Caenis is the starting point of Nestor's connections between the Trojan War and the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs, and Poseidon is the agent in both the story of Caenis, who is raped and becomes Caeneus, and of Cygnus, whom Achilles kills. Cygnus is Poseidon's son, and Caenis fell victim to Poseidon's lust. Poseidon makes both characters resistant to arrows and knives. His gift to Caenis/Caeneus evolves out of an act of violence (rape), and his gift to Cygnus is an act of primogeniture. Poseidon, as the link between rape (not marriage) and primogeniture, brings us full circle to the wedding at which there is a rape and a subsequent war, a description which fits both the conflict between Lapiths and Centaurs as well as the epic conflict between Greece and Troy.

Nestor's combination of the two impermeable characters, Cygnus and Caeneus, exposes a misplaced confidence in physical strength. Both are convinced that nothing can happen to them. Achilles supposedly had this impermeability, too. This reliance on force is central to what happens at the wedding feasts in both *Cymon and Iphigenia* and *Ovid XII*, the connection of which is Dryden's, as the third of three artists who have created this story: first Nestor, then Ovid, and finally Dryden. Nestor provides a counterbalance to this strength with a different sort of power. At this point in his life, Nestor has no physical force left. His power is in illuminating or darkening the characters and connections in the stories he tells.

The wedding feast is a potential symbol of peace, though in the cases of Cymon and Iphigenia, the Lapiths and Centaurs, and Helen and Paris, the wedding is violated. The peaceful symbolism in a wedding stands against violence of war, and in *Ovid XII* there is the ironic *inclusio* of two centaurs: Hylonome and Cyllarus. Their love is gentle but fiercely loyal. They endeavor to please one another in all things, and they share a love of the hunt that is in stark contrast to the war in which they find themselves, and in which they die violently. Dryden presents this same conundrum of a love story combined with something inappropriate in *Cymon and Iphigenia*. The Trojan War is another example of this strange tension, though we don't always think of Helen and Paris as a love story. The Rubens paintings of Mars and Venus resonate with the tension in these stories. The fables are very complicated, and the permeations of the narrative are slightly different in each, but the nexus of Venus and Mars continues to appear. The depiction of Hylonome and Cyllarus saves the centaurs from the stigma of complete brutality: they complicate the story of the centaurs vs. the Lapiths. Like Venus in the Rubens painting

The Horrors of War (1637), there is a helplessness of romantic love when caught up in the fury of war.

As we have explored, there is a potential allusion to William and Mary in Dryden's version of these loving centaurs.¹⁶⁵ According to Cameron, "panther" signified the Church of England from "The Hind and the Panther" forward.¹⁶⁶ Mary II represented the Church of England, and the Queen of England, and ruled faithfully during William's

¹⁶⁵ While they are an exemplary couple in both Ovid and Dryden, Dryden embellishes Hylonome's Amazonian qualities, and she becomes Cylarrus's equal in the hunt as well as in love. Ovid's Hylonome, like Cylarrus, is unrivalled in exhibiting the ideals of love and nobility, but she does not participate in the sylvan chase. While Ovid's Hylonome is dressed in "The skinnes of beasts, such as were choice and rare" (Sandys 408), Dryden's version is royal: "The scarf of furs that hung below her side/ Was ermine, or the panther's spotted pride;/ Spoils of no common beast" (552-54).

Sandys translates as follows:

. . .and ware
The skinnes of beasts, such as were choice and rare
Which flowing from her shoulder crosse her brest,
Vaile her left side. Both equal love possest:
Together on the shady mountains stray
In woods and hollow caves together lay
Then to the palace of the Lapithite
Together came; and now together fight. (Sandys 408)

Dryden's version is as follows:

The scarf of furs that hung below her side
Was ermine, or the panther's spotted pride;
Spoils of no common beast: with equal flame
They lov'd; their sylvan pleasures were the same:
All day they hunted; and, when day expir'd,
Together to some shady cave retir'd.
Invited to the nuptials, both repair;
And, side by side, they both ingage in war. (552-559)

The following is the Loeb Latin and translation:

nec nisi quae deceant electarumque ferarum
aut umero aut lateri praetendat vellera laevo.
par amor est illis: errant in montibus una,
antra simul subeunt; et tum Lapitheia tecta
intrarant pariter, pariter fera bella gerebant: (414-418)

Nor would she wear on shoulder or left side aught but becoming garments, skins of well-chosen beasts. They both felt equal love. Together they would wander on the mountain-sides, together rest within the caves. On this occasion also they had come together to the palace of the Lapithae, and were waging fierce battle side by side.

¹⁶⁶ *POAS* 5: 498.

absences.¹⁶⁷ Though Cylarrus and Hylonome are fighting on the side of the centaurs, who were the cause of the lustful violence at the wedding feast, it is noteworthy that Dryden admires these centaurs in the headnote to the fable, and calls their “loves and death. . .wonderfully moving.”¹⁶⁸ Dryden emphasizes their singular nobility. Dryden’s attention to the nobler qualities of the centaur pair, if they are meant as a parallel to the King and Queen, becomes an exercise in detachment for the artist, in the very midst of a story dedicated to revenge, violence, and utter involvement. At the same time, this paradox is a wry and ironic comment on the part of the poet. Like Cylarrus and Hylonome, William and Mary were cast as the ideal married couple, who loved each other dearly. Cylarrus and Hylonome were among the very violators of another married couple. Likewise, William and Mary were jointly engaged in violating the marriage between monarch and state.

In light of the long stream of connections that Nestor illustrates for the Greek warriors, and that Dryden extends in his connections across *Fables*, the wedding feast in *Ovid XII* is all the more powerful an image since it is only one of the stories that happened in the past, which Nestor connects to the present story of Achilles. The past can be more palpable than the present. This sense that the rape at the wedding overtakes everything else makes it all the more plausible that Dryden intended to connect it to an historical event as devastating as was the Civil War for England, as well as to the contemporary occurrence of the Glorious Revolution.

The point from which Nestor begins is Achilles’ overpowering of Cygnus, and the end of the fable shows that this moment ultimately brings about Achilles’ downfall, since

¹⁶⁷ Baxter, *William Iii and the Defense of European Liberty, 1650-1702*.

¹⁶⁸ *Works* 7: 406.

Poseidon aids Paris in vengeance for his son Cygnus's death. Nestor foreshadows the fall of the hero, and presents the idea that every action has a consequence in the long line of connected stories that make up *Ovid XII*. Achilles is within the custom of battle when he kills Cygnus, yet there still are repercussions. The neutrality of this sequence of events, since Achilles commits no moral sin, also presents a counterbalance to the revenge Nestor takes against Hercules. The Christian and classical ideas of consequence collide. In one, Nestor's foreshadowing indicates that Achilles' heroic actions are the seeds of his own demise, just as the love of Peleus and Thetis creates the warring Achilles. In the other, Hercules' intentional cruelty against Nestor's innocent family results in a loss of glory, equivalent in many ways to a loss of immortality, since he has lost forever his place in this battle as told by Nestor. This collision is important if it is meant to have application for William III: he either is an agent responsible for his actions (as it would be interpreted in the Christian tradition), or he merely plays his part in the unfolding of history (as in the classical tradition). Dryden recognized these incompatible interpretations in his versions of Hercules, and takes up the classical attitude towards consequence in *Amphitryon* (1690). Hercules is part of Jupiter's long view of history, and simultaneously the result of complete upheaval in the marriage of Amphitryon and his wife Alcmena. In *Amphitryon*, Hercules does not initiate the upheaval, unlike the confrontation between Hercules and Nestor's brothers in *Ovid XII*. It is Jupiter who controls the unfolding of events, and usurps Amphitryon's place as husband.

Not even Jupiter controls the violence that erupts at the wedding feast in *Ovid XII*, however. Cedric Reverand suggests that the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs raises the question of whether either side acts heroically, or just violently. In fact,

Dryden evokes the darkest moment for God's angels in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, when they resort to throwing mountains. The Centaurs begin by using holy relics as weapons: "Wine animates their rage and arms their hate./ Bold Amicus from the robb'd vestry brings / The chalices of heav'n, and holy things/ Of precious weight" (341-4). The Lapithean heroes resort to uprooting trees, and the Centaurs follow suit. Monychus rallies his half-beast brothers in the conclusion of Nestor's story: "Whole mountains throw / With woods at once, and bury [Caenus] below" (669-70). Dryden must have intended his readers to remember Milton's uprooted mountains: "From their foundations loos'ning to and fro / They pluckt the seated Hills with all thir load, / Rocks, Waters, Woods, and by the shaggy tops / Uplifting bore them in thir hands" (VI.642-45).¹⁶⁹

Milton and Dryden both draw on the classical trope of Jupiter and the revolt of the Titans, when Jupiter threw mountains on top of them. Dryden's copious use of gory details could be an illustration of Milton's line "War seem'd a civil Game / To this uproar" (VI.667-8). Some examples of these details include lines like "His eyeballs beaten out hung dangling on his beard" and "But looked a bubbling mass of frying blood" (*Ovid XII* .379; 388). If Dryden intended for his readers to recognize his allusions and elaborations, then the violence in his translation of *Ovid XII* is not gratuitous, or tragi-comic, as some have speculated, but rather underscores violence in the compilation of the *Fables*. Book VI is at the center of *Paradise Lost*, thematically as well as literally. *Ovid XII* is at the thematic center of the *Fables*, and the gruesome details underscore the angst and anguish of England's Civil War, which was at the center of both the century and of English politics, and as such powerfully impacted the choices made by the English from that

¹⁶⁹ John Milton, *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1957).

point forward. The war in heaven would have continued, but for God's intervention: "Endless, and no solution will be found" (VI.693-4). And, of course the war in heaven was a civil war, as was, for that matter, the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs, since the half-beasts were Perithous's half-brothers. This adds sobriety and sorrow to the point that tensions between Royalists and Republicans were rife throughout the century, leading up to the civil war and for every decade afterwards.

Cyllarus and Hylonome present the anomaly of half-beasts who are capable of a noble and steadfast love, and the image of the couple hunting together adds to that nobility. *Theodore and Honoria* presents a human, or a ghostlike version of one, who is capable of hunting his former love as if she were a beast. One shows us the image of conjugal harmony, combined with the jarring realization that this considerate and loving couple is defending a rape. The other presents the violent pursuit of a helpless woman, an image that is shocking in and of itself, then made triply so, first by the realization that the relationship began as a courtship, second by the knowledge that this is Theodore's relative who is the demon, and finally in the revelation that Theodore himself is capable of using the violence to his advantage in his own courtship of Honoria. The violence that becomes part of Theodore's courtship ends in the wedding he has sought for so long. While there is no rape, there is a serious breach of the role of host in Theodore's manipulation of his guests, and for the ghost, unrequited and spurned love is the reason for the violence.

There can be no doubt that *Theodore and Honoria* is about a hunt, and one need only place Theodore's hunt next to the "laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time" of *The Secular Masque* to prove the infinite flexibility of hunting as an emblem, with innocence

at one end of that continuum and brutality at the other.¹⁷⁰ The hunt often has represented a cheerful, energetic event that reflects involvement of youthful passion. Even in *Palamon and Arcite*, there is an energetic youthfulness in the hunt in which Theseus partakes. *Theodore and Honoria*, by contrast, is a particularly savage example. Spurned again and again by Honoria, Theodore retires to the country. While wandering alone through the woods to nurse his melancholia, he witnesses the ghost of his own cousin reenact over and over a hunt on his beloved. The ghost says that he is doomed to pursue her, and she to be hunted and violently murdered by him, as punishment for her haughtiness and his subsequent suicide. Theodore arranges a feast in honor of Honoria and her family, and the dinner is set up outdoors, in the exact place where the ghosts will return. For the guests as well as for Honoria, the violence appears as a premonition of Honoria's future. She lies awake at night in fear, and finally "persuades" Theodore to marry her after all.

¹⁷⁰ The theme of hunting in Dryden's *Fables* has been addressed by several scholars. Most have showcased "To My Honour'd Kinsman" as the singular exception to a primarily negative view towards hunting. Rachel Miller concentrates on the theme of tyranny and uncontrolled passion as it relates to the hunt in Dryden's *Fables*. According to Miller, "To My Honour'd Kinsman" is the primary exception to this rule in *Fables*, but she believes that "the image of the hunt is supplanted by a peaceful strife: Dryden's hopes for trade and naval supremacy" (184). Rachel Miller, "Regal Hunting: Dryden's Influence on Windsor Forest," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 13 (1979/80). Eric Rothstein argues that it is primarily a negative ambivalence with which the hunt is treated in poetry in the 17th and 18th century, and his thesis also points out the common comparison of political tyranny with tyrannical hunting, and the converse parallel of the noble huntsman who symbolizes British liberty. Rothstein highlights Dryden's "To My Honour'd Kinsman" as one of the exceptions to a tradition of negative ambiguity, since Dryden tempers the "cruelty and pathos" involved in hunting, and because Dryden is unequivocally a hero in the poem (337). Eric Rothstein, "Discordia Non Concors: The Motif of Hunting in Eighteenth Century Verse," *Journal of English and Germanic Philosophy* 83 (1984). Like Rothstein, Jay Levine highlights Dryden's parallel of Dryden's love of hunting with his dutiful observance of law and order. Levine believes that Dryden intended it to be possible to interpret both James II and William III, interchangeably, as kings on the "slipp'ry thrones" in "To My Honour'd Kinsman." Jay Arnold Levine, "John Dryden's Epistle to John Dryden," *Journal of English and Germanic Philosophy* 63 (1964).

Without using force himself, Theodore effectively scares Honoria and her family into agreeing to a marriage. In so doing, Honoria is spared her own nightmarish hunt, and, according to the moral of the fable, Theodore's tactics could save "the rest" as well:

By her example warn'd, the rest beware;
More easy, less imperious, were the fair;
And that one hunting, which the devil design'd
For one fair female, lost him half the kind. (425-28)

Whether or not a specific allegory is intended, the issues that the fable evokes are quite relevant. The hunt represents a degree of passionate involvement in the drama that precludes any ability to base decisions on a balance between emotion and reason. The English have been haunted by their fears of civil war and popish tyranny, and have made decisions based on that fear many times over by 1697. William III's carefully planned propaganda, distributed clandestinely in addition to his *Declaration*, warned England that they would find themselves at the cusp of civil war once again if they allowed the Stuarts to provide a Catholic successor in James III. William, as a Protestant, could protect and deliver England from that potential terror. Theodore's cold calculation in presenting the scene to the banquet party is powerfully persuasive, and Honoria becomes totally complicit, willing to do anything to avoid the prophetic nightmare.

The Glorious Revolution could be defined as an historical moment where force was as important as persuasion. While the takeover may have been bloodless, and while many Englishmen were involved in William III's plans, there can be no doubt that a show of force was key to William's arrival and subsequent success:

From the very start, the Dutch fleet achieved its key strategic aim, creating an unforgettable spectacle, inducing a feeling of shock and awe in onlookers on either shore. The iconic image of its offensive sortie into the English Channel was commemorated in countless contemporary paintings and engravings, still to be found today, on display or in store, in galleries on both sides of the Narrow

Seas. As the seventeenth-century armada made its way along the Channel, crowds gathered on the clifftops of the south of England to watch it pass. It was reported that the procession of ships had taken six hours to clear the 'straits'. . . William's plan was that this spectacular floating combination of forces and resources should avoid naval engagement at all costs.¹⁷¹

However important the image of force was to William's project, he placed equal emphasis on persuasion. In drafting the *Declaration*, William III enlisted Dutch and English emissaries as well as numerous members of the English expatriate community. Prior to landing, 60,000 copies were printed surreptitiously and kept in utmost secrecy, though there was knowledge that it existed, and there is evidence that James II and his court were desperate to find one. The pamphlets were concealed in key locations in England and Scotland, then authorized for release simultaneously once William left Holland.¹⁷² Free copies were sent to booksellers and mailed to private citizens.¹⁷³ By no means an effort directed solely at the English, the *Declaration* was widely dispersed across the Continent, and there were 21 editions printed in four languages in 1688. Copies were handed directly to all ambassadors at The Hague, excluding ministers of England and France.¹⁷⁴ Despite this careful preparation, William III's fleet carried, among its other emergency provisions such as boots, guns, and bombs, a printing press and enough printing paper for a substantial distribution across England.¹⁷⁵ Lisa Jardine posits that this propaganda was so effective that it colors how the Glorious Revolution is perceived even today. The *Declaration* was a persuasive argument that many were

¹⁷¹ Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008). Quotation on 8-9.

¹⁷² Jardine, 29.

¹⁷³ Jardine, 31.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

willing to believe at the time, and which was difficult to dismantle afterwards:

“William’s assault on English sovereignty is represented as an entirely reasonable intervention by one well-intentioned party in support of the fundamental rights of the English people.”¹⁷⁶

Yet, while the stories of Theodore and Cymon resonate with that of William, there is a critical difference that Theodore and Cymon share, and that distinguishes their actions from those of William. Theodore designs and carries out an elaborate, almost Machiavellian scheme, yet there is passion at its heart. He loves and desires Honoria. His willingness to use force is not all that different from that of Cymon, whose *raison d’état* is Iphigenia. William III, on the other hand, is single-minded in his attention towards matters of state. He loves Mary II, but unlike Cymon or Theodore, his love for her does not determine his political course of action. However, one could argue that William’s ambition occupies the same place in his heart that Honoria or Iphigenia holds in the hearts of Theodore and Cymon. It also might be argued that William’s love for Holland could be compared to Theodore’s love for Honoria. Theodore’s motives are mixed. He loves Honoria and wants to possess her, yet he also wants to avoid the nightmarish vision for himself as well as for his love. Likewise, according to Stephen Baxter, William’s reasons for taking control of England were quite focused: he was protecting his place in line to inherit the throne (disrupted by the birth of James III), and he was protecting Holland from England’s foreign policy that was strengthening Louis XIV’s position. His loyalty to Holland, and to his view of Holland that involved the Prince of Orange, not republican policies, were core considerations in all of his strategies.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

Order by right of force is central to *Theodore and Honoria* as well as *Cymon and Iphigenia*, and this theme in Dryden's *Fables* had contemporary relevance, since the King and Queen replaced the order of divine right when they usurped the throne. Unlike *Cymon*, Theodore produces a terrifying vision by manipulating the feast to coincide with the specter's violence, so that Honoria and the other guests understand that the horror they witness could have a direct impact on them. Though Theodore threatens force, it will not come from him, but from some avenging fury. This evokes William III's tactics, who built up his militia precisely in the hopes that he would not have to use them on English shores. His propaganda warned England of its own history and tendencies with regards to civil war, and presented William as the solution to, not the source of, potential violence. In reaction to their own fears regarding James II as well as James III, the English nobility invited the invasion. William III arrived on England's shore flanked by military support, and marched to London to claim the crown. Once James had fled, William III would not accept the crown unless it was on his own terms: regency until James II's death was not acceptable, nor by any means was ruling as Mary II's consort. The English were afraid of what might transpire if he left, and gave him what he required.

Of monumental importance to William III's manipulation of the English situation, however, were the convictions of Mary II. It would have to be Mary who would depose her father, thereby providing a veil of legitimacy to the effort. According to Baxter, she would not have been able to do so if she had not believed that the birth of James III was suppositious, and that subsequently she was being robbed, and the Church of England was in grave danger.¹⁷⁷ Dryden, unlike the political theorists who wrote about Adam and Eve and a King and his state, was willing to use the political analogy of marriage with

¹⁷⁷ Baxter, *William Iii and the Defense of European Liberty, 1650-1702*. Pages 226-27.

regards to William and Mary as husband and wife. As such, the symbols of both rape and weddings take on meaning that is much more powerful than any political tract. Without his marriage to Mary II, William III would not have been invited to take James II's crown, his *Declaration* would not have been persuasive, and his forces would have met with English resistance. In addition to the public aspects of their union, Dryden may have recognized the personal devotion of the royal pair as well. There are numerous examples of loyal and loving couples in *Fables*, two being Baucis and Philemon and Ceyx and Alcyone. Marriage between Mary and William played such a crucial role in the usurpation, that it is hard to believe that Dryden would have missed this collision of the literal and the literary, particularly in view of so much of the subject matter in *Fables*.

Patriarchal Complications

While Mars and Venus constitute the idyllic emblem of an harmonious marriage and state, with rape and usurpation as the frequent political aberration from that harmony, the idea of the perfect pair becomes more complex once children and other relationships are introduced. *Fables* contains many happily married, and childless, couples: Ceyx and Alcyone, Baucis and Philemon, and Cyllarus and Hylonome, to name three. The examples Dryden provides of parent-child relationships are more troublesome: Tancred and Sigismonda, Myrrha and Cinyrus, Althea and Meleager. Dryden distinguishes between relationships that are freely chosen, or democratic, and relationships that are dictated by blood, as between a parent and child. *Absalom and Achitophel* explored these complications between Adam and his children, and David and his. Perhaps the earliest in-depth exploration of the familial combined with the political and sexual is Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. From the beginning of the trilogy, a dichotomy forms between the needs of a king and state, and the domestic reality of a mother and child. Iphigenia must be sacrificed because Agamemnon as king needs to go to war, even though she is his own daughter (also part of *Ovid XII*). After Clytaemnestra kills Agamemnon, and Orestes in turn kills his mother, the Furies haunt him because he has violated the immutable biological tie between a child and a parent. Apollo, who commanded Orestes to commit the murder, stands as the messenger of Zeus, and as such he represents absolute monarchy. The Furies and Apollo represent opposites: one is based on a blind justice that punishes all who violate the parent-child bond, and the other is based on the arbitrary whim of the monarch. Athene provides a third option, democracy. The case of Orestes is

heard in a public court, and the Athenian citizens decide the case. Both the Furies and Apollo represent force that is irrational, as are filial relationships and arbitrary tyranny. The Athenian trial is a version of persuasion, since each side must appeal to the jury.

Though Apollo represents the force of Zeus, he also is associated with the building of roads in the play, and is an agent of civilization. The Furies represent a primordial source of order. If a man is bound to those who gave him birth, he is constrained by that tie against following his own instincts. Apollo argues that the tie between a husband and wife is as sacred as that between a parent and a child. If the Furies deny the power of this tie, he warns them, they disregard and disrespect the union between Zeus and Hera. Athene stands apart from both the sexual bonds of husband and wife as well as the blood relationships that the Furies represent, since she neither is a mother nor has one. She believes in persuasion, but is willing to back it up with force. When Athena breaks the tie in favor of Orestes, she offers the Furies a home in Athens and a place of veneration, though she admits that Zeus and Ares also reside there, a significant point since no god of Olympus will associate with the “Fatal Sisters,” as Dryden refers to them in “Meleager and Atalanta” (255). The Furies agree to live among those who follow Zeus, and Athene replaces force with persuasion, since it is she who charms the Furies to accept her offer rather than curse the land with infertility. There has been a reconciliation of forces that have fiercely opposed one another throughout the *Oresteia*: male with female, force with persuasion, civilization with primitivism, light with dark. The play ends with a procession of Athenians who hold torch lights as they march through the darkness: the light of Apollo reconciled with the darkness of the Furies.

The power of the furies cannot be ignored or denied, and the torment that they symbolize is relevant to the story of the Stuarts. When the Duke of York found himself in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis, he lived in Holland with William and Mary, and sent his son-in-law to England as his emissary and defense. James II later identified this as the moment of William III's initial betrayal. Mary II joined her husband to overthrow her father, and her sister, Anne, fled to join her husband in support of William III. Earlier, Dryden had observed as the Duke of York, already William III's uncle, became his father-in-law. The father James and the uncle Charles arranged the marriage at the urging of counselors, despite the young daughter's tearful resistance. The new son-in-law had expected the marriage to improve Dutch-English negotiations, but Charles II never made additional concessions. William also expected generosity from his other uncle and soon to be father-in-law at the initiation of the royal nuptials, but such generosity was not forthcoming. These significant slights were despite Charles's early involvement in the custody and education of his nephew William III, from the death of William II forward. Thus, the Glorious Revolution overturned a family in addition to England's policy of rightful succession, but there were many instances of betrayal before the usurpation.

Aeschylus suggested, through Agamemnon and Iphigenia, that the needs of king and state are at odds with the needs of mother and child, and in the case of the Stuarts, the political needs often trumped the personal ones. As for the political theory regarding struggles within the family unit, James Tyrrell and Edmund Bohun led the debate regarding Adam's sons and daughters: did Seth inherit title as ruler since Cain killed Abel, or did Abel's sons inherit it, or if Abel had only daughters was the eldest even eligible; is Eve the rightful heir after the death of her husband; does Cain's wife follow

Cain as her husband or Adam as her father; does a wife (ie a monarch's subject) owe obedience to her husband (ie the King) even if he is drunk or incompetent; does the absolute monarchy of Adam lend itself to an harmonious relationship with his dutiful wife, or does it lead to tyranny like Nimrod's; and, is the relationship of king to subject more like that of master and slave or father and child.¹⁷⁸ These questions were used to prove or disprove the legitimacy of the idea of divine right of succession, whether parliament had as much right to rule as its king, and whether or not parliament was justified in choosing one king over another. Many of Dryden's fables address similar issues, but Dryden allows them to unfold as stories with their own idiosyncrasies, and therefore proposes difficulties to the pat political theories proffered from both sides. Though each story is complex, the themes of the stories still are applicable to the topic of Adam and his family, and England and its monarchy.

The subject matter in *Sigismonda and Guiscardo* is relevant to these contemporary political issues in England. The fable presents a heroine who steadfastly preserves her wedding vows, and who, in doing so, disobeys her father. Certainly there is a parallel issue with Mary II, whom one poet called "too bad a daughter and too good a wife."¹⁷⁹ There is a parallel to the political debates as well, which used filial piety as justification for absolute obedience to the King. Edmund Bohun uses his introduction to the 1685 re-publication of *Patriarcha* as an opportunity to categorize and refute the current arguments against Filmer, as had been defined by James Tyrrell in *Patriarcha non Monarcha* (1681). He writes of Tyrrell:

¹⁷⁸ See: Filmer, *Patriarcha*; Bohun, Preface to *Patriarcha* (1685); Tyrrell, *Patriarcha non Monarcha* (1681); Tyrrell, *Biblioteca Politica* (1694)

¹⁷⁹ *POAS* 5: 430.

Our Author has another Whimsey: That if Parents are to be trusted with this absolute power over their children because of the natural affection they are always supposed to bear them: then Princes ought not to be trusted with it, since none but Parents themselves can have this natural affection toward their children; princes as the author (Sir R. F.) grants, having this power only as representing these parents. (c)

In the background of this argument lies the premise that Filmer and Bohun believe that a divinely appointed king would treat his subjects as lovingly as would a father his children, and that this love would check any tendency towards an abuse of absolute power. Tyrrell and others vehemently disagree. *Sigismonda and Guiscardo*, interestingly, plays out the scenario of a king who cannot demonstrate that loving bond even to his own daughter when she has disobeyed him. Elsewhere, Bohun writes on a similar topic:

To show any other Original of Paternal Father than Adam over Eve, who indeed was as the first subject, so the Representative of all that followed, and it reaches not only to all her Daughters in relation to their husbands, but to all them in relation to. . . both their Father and their eldest brother after his decease. (*Preface to Patriarcha* b5)

Thus, under this paradigm, a daughter owes piety to her father under any circumstance, but also to her husband. *Sigismonda and Guiscardo* complicates this straightforward duty to parent and husband (as did Tyrrell's response to this political argument). If one follows Bohun's rules with dogged inflexibility, a father such as Tancred, who cuts out the heart of his daughter's husband, and serves it to her in a golden goblet, should still be obeyed, and the daughter still is in the wrong for rebelling against him, yet if she obeys him, she wrongs her husband. The moral to the fable, which follows this patriarchal order, yet ignores the complications that the story produces, falls flat:

Thus she for disobedience justly died;
The sire was justly punish'd for his pride:
The youth, least guilty, suffer'd for th'offense,

Of duty violated to his prince;
Who, late repenting of his cruel deed,
One common sepulcher for both decreed;
Intomb'd the wretched pair in royal state,
And on their monument inscrib'd their fate. (750-57)

Dryden's fable, therefore, follows the party line of Filmer and Bohun on the surface, yet the reader's and, I suspect, Dryden's, sympathies remain with Sigismonda. In fact, the California edition of *Fables* indicates that Dryden is sympathetic to Sigismonda's suicide, and quotes Dryden's categorization of the centaur Hylonome's suicide in *Ovid's Twelfth Book of Metamorphoses* as "wonderfully moving."¹⁸⁰ Dryden connects Hylonome and Sigismonda, and each bears a parallel to Mary II. Both are dedicated, above all else, to their husbands. Sigismonda chooses her husband over her father, as did Mary II.

Hylonome fights side by side with Cyllarus, and Mary II, though not on the battlefield with William III, governed the country in his absence. Together, Mary and William conducted the duties of the King. As such, Mary II did exactly what the Chorus in *Agamemnon* believed Clytemnestra should have done while Agamemnon was at war: protect his palace and his kingdom.

James Tyrrell responds to Bohun's attacks nine years later in *Bibliotheca Politica* (1694), a tract that creates two personae who summarize all the arguments on both sides since Filmer's *Patriarcha* was first circulated in the 1620's.¹⁸¹ That there remains a need to review the details of each point of the argument as late as 1694 shows that the debate is still very much alive when Dryden is working on *Fables*. Tancred's and Sigismonda's

¹⁸⁰ *Works* 7: 688.

¹⁸¹ Tyrrell, *Bibliotheca Politica: Or an Enquiry into the Ancient Constitution of the English Government Both in Respect to the Just Extent of Regal Power, and the Rights and Liberties of the Subject. Wherein All the Chief Arguments, as Well against, as for the Late Revolution, Are Impartially Represented, and Considered, in Thirteen Dialogues. Collected out of the Best Authors, as Well Antient as Modern. To Which Is Added an Alphabetical Index to the Whole Work.*

speeches to one another summarize the argument for King as father, in one, and the right to resist repression, in the other. It is the context within which these arguments are given that make it so intriguing, and make original, perhaps, the arguments that had been used for the entire century regarding prerogative and privilege. It adds to the intensity that this debate over obedience is between a father and a daughter, considering Mary II's rebellion against and usurpation of James II.

Tancred responds to Sigismonda's transgressions with the following lament over her disobedience:

What pains a parent and a prince can find
To punish an offense of this degenerate kind.
As I have lov'd, and yet I love thee, more
Than ever father lov'd a child before;
So that indulgence draws me to forgive:
Nature, that gave thee life, would have thee live.
But, as a public parent of the state,
My justice, and thy crime, requires thy fate.
Fain would I choose a middle course to steer;
Nature's too kind, and justice too severe:
Speak for us both, and to the balance bring,
On either side, the father and the king. (352-363)

Tancred clarifies that he is thinking of his roles as prince and as father, and he claims that he would prefer to be a forgiving father rather than a just king. His presentation of Guiscardo's heart to his daughter, however, stands in the face of his tearful protestations, and indicates that Tancred is ruled by many complicated passions. Tancred defines his passion as a deep love, "more / Than ever father lov'd a child before," yet that "love" really is a term that includes his pride, envy, and revenge. As such, he acts as an absolute monarch who is also a tyrant, not as a father who is slow to punish and quick to forgive. He follows a version of absolutism that parallels that of Agamemnon, who follows the paradigm established by Zeus. Since the King is above the law, there will be no

repercussion for his version of justice. The bond that ties Tancred to Sigismonda is a natural one: "Nature, that gave thee life, would have thee live." This natural bond between parent and child should constrain him, but it doesn't. Instead, his response is something like irrational fury. The absence of law in *Sigismonda and Guiscardo* is even more striking when compared to the law by which David as father and king governs in *Absalom and Achitophel*:

Thus long have I, by native mercy sway'd,
My wrongs dissembled, my revenge delay'd:
So willing to forgive th'offending age;
So much the father did the king assuage.

O that my pow'r to saving were confin'd!
Why am I forc'd, like Heav'n, against my mind,
To make examples of another kind?
Must I at length the sword of justice draw?
O curst effects of necessary law!
How ill my fear they by my mercy scan!
Beware the fury of a patient man.
Law they require, let Law then shew her face;
They could not be content to look on Grace,
Her hinder parts, but with a daring eye
To tempt the terror of her front and die. (*Absalom and Achitophel* 999-1009)

David as father excuses Absalom for as long as he possibly can, but finally he must move forward as a king, and replace "native mercy" with "law." Tancred, however, wastes no time in planning Guiscardo's murder, and he promptly delivers Guiscardo's heart to his daughter to force compliance with his will. In one story, Absalom leads a public rebellion, and David, who prefers his role as father, responds as he must by enforcing public laws. In the second story, Sigismonda's transgression is carried out in secrecy, as is her punishment, and Tancred's whim is law.

Law, however, is a public promulgation: it is not a law if it exists only as a secret codicil, to which no one has access nor knowledge. During the rituals of both a marriage

and a coronation, the couple and the father/king leave the private world of affections and move into a public realm that is governed by law. Tancred's actions are not based on the law, but on private passion, which is the antithesis of law. Likewise, the marriage of a princess is of national consequence, and should involve an elaborate and public ritual, rather than be conducted within a cave, unknown even to the king. Sedition should have a public trial and sentencing as well. It should not involve secret discussions in a bed chamber between a father and child, or result in blood-filled golden goblets that the father serves and the daughter drinks. This secrecy fuels the irrational passions of both father and daughter. The third option presented by Athena in the *Oresteia*, in form of a public trial and the need for persuasion, is not forthcoming in *Sigismonda and Guiscardo*. However, there is plenty in the way of fury and tyranny.

When Sigismonda wants to re-marry, she does not make these desires public, and instead solicits Guiscardo's interest through riddles and covert meanings in public discourse:

When Guiscard next was in the circle seen,
Where Sigismonda held the place of queen,
A hollow cane within her hand she brought,
But in the concave had enclos'd a note.
With this she seem'd to play, and, as in sport,
Toss'd to her love, in presence of the court:
"Take it," she said, "and when your needs require,
This little brand will serve to light your fire." (77-84)

That Sigismonda "held the place of queen," as if she were wife rather than daughter, adds force to the distorted emotions within the tale. Sigismonda's "brand" alludes to another secret brand in *Meleager and Atalanta*; that which the Furies introduce at Meleager's birth, and which Althea protects, then ultimately destroys.

Tancred's private guards are another instance in which that which should be public is conducted privately:

What kings decree, the soldier must obey:
Wag'd against foes; and, when the wars are o'er,
Fit only to maintain despotic pow'r;
Dang'rous to freedom, and desir'd alone
By kings who seek an arbitrary throne.
Such were these guards; as ready to have slain
The prince himself, allur'd with greater gain:
So was the charge perform'd with better will,
By men inur'd to blood and exercis'd in ill. (597-605)

When a soldier serves the king secretly, neither the king nor the guards are bound by public duty to one another. Others have duly noted that William was denied a standing army during the time that Dryden was writing *Fables*, when he also was denied his private guards. The argument in the above passage is similar to parliament's reasoning against the standing army that William had requested, as had, coincidentally, Charles I, Charles II, and James II before him. However, the one caveat that is distinct is that no clandestine operation was underway for which William III needed his standing army. Even leading up to the Glorious Revolution, all of Europe watched as he amassed ships and ammunition with which to cross over to England. As Mark Kishlansky points out, the circumstances for Charles II's request were otherwise. Ralph Montagu leaked information in 1678 that the court was in the midst of secret negotiations for French subsidies at the same time that Danby was attempting to persuade parliament to fund a standing army for Charles II, ostensibly to protect England from France. A standing army became symbolic of tyrannical conspiracy: "Thus did the Popish Plot meld into the Exclusion Crisis and popery give way to arbitrary rule."¹⁸²

¹⁸² Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714*. Quotation on 254.

Theseus stands out in *Fables*, and in this instance he and Tancred directly contrast one another. Like Tancred, he maintains absolute rule, yet he also maintains his personal integrity. His relationship with Hippolyta is measured. He has no children, and therefore is disconnected those natural passions that the Furies monitor. The forms and ceremonies of judgment in *Palamon and Arcite*, not to mention the elaborate ritual of the tourney, all for public display, mitigate the arbitrary will of the monarch. Theseus listens to the counsel of his wife and subjects, and chooses to be merciful to Palamon and Arcite, rather than proceed with the prescribed death sentences as punishment for Palamon's escape and Arcite's return from exile. All of his decisions are public, and everyone is aware of the dispensation that the two knights receive. Though Theseus is furious, he ends by being merciful, and reasons with himself:

“Curse on th'unpard'ning prince, whom tears can draw
To no remorse; who rules by lions' law;
And deaf to pray'rs, by no submission bow'd,
Rends all alike; the penitent and proud!” (*Palamon and Arcite* II.344-47)

Sigismonda is not “penitent” but certainly “proud,” despite the reader's (and Dryden's) sympathies towards her. Her dry eyes, admirable and stoic, contrast with the tears that move Theseus, yet they are in starkest contrast to Tancred's free flow of them. Tancred is as proud as Sigismonda, but has no control over his passion. Sigismonda shows no sign of emotion when she defends herself to her father or when she receives his “gift” in the goblet. When she cleanses Guiscardo's heart with silent weeping, another illustration of discipline even under extreme duress, it is utterly private.

Theseus is a model of the perfect absolute monarch, where Tancred provides an illustration of the monarch turned tyrant. Dryden chooses to include both Theseus and Tancred in *Fables*, and therefore is not providing stories that prove one side or the other.

Because they are stories, and not one-for-one political allegories, Dryden is free to speculate about absolute monarchy gone awry. It seems that the presence of patriarchal passions in one, and the absence in the other, is a factor in the overall equation: Tancred's passion prohibits the rational and deliberative action of which Theseus is capable.

Sigismonda valiantly justifies her love for Guiscardo, and claims she looked through her father's eyes to find a worthy subject for her love. From this perspective, Sigismonda remained faithful to her father in her choice, and Tancred's reaction to the marriage appears even more cruel. Our heroine uses political words:

What have I done in this, deserving blame?
State laws may alter; nature's are the same:
Those are usurp'd on helpless womankind,
Made without our consent, and wanting pow'r to bind. (417-20)

Sigismonda frames her plight as would a Parliamentarian devoted to the liberty of the people, a commitment that hardened in the years leading up to the Civil War, and continued through the century.¹⁸³ Kishlansky classifies those opposed to Charles I as such:

Parliamentarians fought for true religion and liberty. They too defended an ancient inheritance- a church purified of recent innovations and a government that respected the inviolability of private property. . . Their fundamental principle was consent—an ingrained belief in the cooperation between subject and sovereign that maintained the delicate balance between prerogatives and liberties. Without consent, monarchy became tyranny and free men became slaves. (151)

“Consent” is a key word for Sigismonda as well, and she uses it in the conclusion of her powerful argument, quoted above. The contest of wills and the movement from cooperation to tyranny, as recounted by Kishlansky, also is illustrated in the struggle between Tancred and his daughter. In *Absalom and Achitophel*, David presents a

¹⁸³ See Sloman's comparison between Aeneas/Guiscardo and Dido/Sigismonda in *The Poetics of Translation*, where she briefly compares Sigismonda's language to “Restoration feminism:” “[Sigismonda's] is essentially a Whig argument for just rebellion applied to the condition of women” (143).

rejoinder to Whiggish arguments made during the Exclusion Crisis. It would be a pertinent response to Sigismonda as well, if someone more reasonable and credible than Tancred were to pronounce it:

What shall we think! Can people give away,
Both for themselves and sons, their native sway?
Then they are left defenseless to the sword
Of each unbounded, arbitrary lord:
And laws are vain, by which we right enjoy,
If kings unquestion'd can those laws destroy.
Yet if the crowd be judge of fit and just,
And kings are only officers in trust,
Then this resuming cov'nant was declar'd
When kings were made, or is for ever barr'd.
If those who gave the scepter could not tie
By their own deed their own posterity,
How then could Adam bind his future race?
How could his forfeit on mankind take place?
Or how could heavenly justice damn us all,
Who ne'er consented to our father's fall? (*Absalom and Achitophel* 759-774)

“Consent,” from this perspective, has no impact on a situation that involves legacy. Choice, even if it involves saying only “yes” or “no,” is not a factor in the relationship between parent and child, monarch and subject, or Tancred and Sigismonda, as it is between husband and wife. *Absalom and Achitophel* explores the complicated relationship between king and subject, and the delicate balance between the just arguments on either side of the debate, ultimately coming down on the side of the monarchy. *Sigismonda and Guiscardo* adds weight to the argument Dryden opposed, since Sigismonda, though perhaps in the wrong, is subjected to a cruel tyranny, and she is the heroine that Dryden admires.

As should be expected, however, Dryden’s stance is not one-sided. Sigismonda implicates herself even as she curses her father:

My tender age in luxury was train'd,

With idle ease and pageants entertain'd;
My hours my own, my pleasures unrestrain'd.
So bred, no wonder if I took the bent
That seem'd ev'n warranted by thy consent;
For, when the father is too fondly kind,
Such seeds he sows, such harvest shall he find. (*Sigismonda and Guiscardo* 441-42)

Tancred, by having a child and indulging her every whim, planted the seed of his own dissolution. Dryden makes the same argument about David and Absalom:

With secret joy indulgent David view'd
His youthful image in his son renew'd:
To all his wishes nothing he denied;
And made the charming Annabel his bride.
What faults he had, (for who from faults is free?)
His father could not, or he would not see.
Some warm excesses which the law forbore,
Were construed youth that purg'd by boiling o'er,
And Amnon's murther, by a specious name,
Was call'd a just revenge for injur'd fame. (*Absalom and Achitophel* 31-40)

While this parallel links Tancred with David, the idea of the indulgent father also was a common complaint against Edward III: because he was so liberal in the education and training of all of his children, he lay the foundation for the struggle for power between the Houses of York and Lancaster. The indulgent father-king remains current in the political theory of Edmund Bohun, as a warning against any mitigation of absolute rule: when princes give their subjects too much liberty, those subjects rise up in anarchy, because they have no fear of their father.¹⁸⁴ This larger tradition suggests that Dryden is exploring another version of absolute monarchy in *Sigismonda and Guiscardo*.

Sigismonda makes other republican statements, yet betrays the self interest within her own self-righteous cause:

Are these the kings intrusted by the crowd
With wealth, to be dispens'd for common good?

¹⁸⁴ Bohun, "Preface to the Reader." c10.

The people sweat not for their king's delight,
T'enrich a pimp, or raise a parasite:
Theirs is the toil; and he who well has serv'd
His country, has his country's wealth deserv'd. (551-56)

On the surface, Sigismonda's words expose yet another layer of corruption in absolute monarchy. However, a system whereby kings are "entrusted by the crowd" begins as dubious from the start, and Dryden pointed out as much in *Absalom and Achitophel*. According to Sigismonda, kings are entrusted with wealth for the common good, but if a subject is a good servant to his country, he deserves some of that country's riches. "Gifts" to the king's hardest workers were, in fact, central to political operations, and the cause of many power struggles between Tory and Whig politicians. They were as important during William's reign as the lack of them had been during that of Charles I, and they played a central role in contentions during the reign of Charles II, since those loyal to the Stuarts wanted all appointments and power for themselves, and Charles's liberal forgiveness increased desires for delayed revenge. Gifts proffered to one side are those "t'enrich a pimp, or parasite," but those same gifts are well-deserved when bestowed on one's own friends and party. Sigismonda reveals, unintentionally perhaps, that all parties of all political persuasions are interested in the gifts that a powerful king can provide.

In addition to taking a look at the broader themes of absolute monarchy gone awry and the potential for a justifiable rebellion, it seems that Dryden wants his readers to recognize a more specific similarity between the portrait of Sigismonda and Mary II, as well as similarities between Tancred and James II. Tancred begins as a valiant and majestic prince, and certainly the Duke of York was an icon for English bravery. For some, James II later became a symbol of arbitrary power and unrelenting rule, and his opponents would point to his edicts that he ordered to be read in the churches throughout

England, and his treatment of traitors such as Monmouth and his followers.¹⁸⁵ Though there are obvious differences, Dryden's portrait of Tancred suggests a similar transformation:

While Norman Tancred in Salerno reign'd,
The title of a gracious prince he gain'd;
Till, turn'd a tyrant in his latter days,
He lost the luster of his former praise;
And, from the bright meridian where he stood
Descending, dipp'd his hands in lovers' blood. (1-6)

Sigismonda, on the other hand, is dry-eyed when she defies her father, and even as he weeps while she is dying. Pride and defiance are her most dominant traits, even if she also is heroic, and meant to be viewed sympathetically. Mary II was accused of pride, certainly, and it was reported that she was gay at her coronation, when the country expected sobriety if not contrition.¹⁸⁶ Just before the Revolution, it was scandalously reported that she attended the theater on the anniversary of Charles I's execution.¹⁸⁷ These examples of her comportment were proof to some that Mary II was blithe, self-serving, and irresponsible. The converse interpretation of Mary's actions was that she felt a duty to protect both her rightful place as Queen (believing the prince's birth to be suppositious) and the Church of England (endangered by the policies of her father). In Dryden's fable, Sigismonda's actions and motives can be viewed as heroic or as self-

¹⁸⁵ As indicated in the first section of this dissertation, Kishlansky details the aggressive actions that James II took to replace Protestants with Catholics in Ireland and England, culminating in 2,000 replacements in two years, and fomenting a widespread fear of tyranny and popery (Kishlansky 275). His execution of 300 Monmouth supporters was shocking, and considered extreme: "While a nobler monarch might have tempered justice with mercy, and a gentler one might have sooner slaked his thirst for blood, Monmouth's rebels were traitors and executed for treason" (271).

¹⁸⁶ Lois G. Schworer, "The Queen as Regent and Patron," in *The Age of William III & Mary II: Power, Politics, and Patronage 1688-1702; a Reference Encyclopedia and Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin and Martha Hamilton-Phillips (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1989), 221.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Baxter, 201.

serving, or both, and scholars have elaborated on these interpretations.¹⁸⁸ Mary II's subjects may have found themselves facing a similar difficulty in reconciling the irreconcilable: a virtuous queen who was a usurper.

A commonly held view has been that the multiple tyrants in *Fables* all provide commentary on the Dutch usurper. In some cases, this may be true. However, in *this* particular fable, there are not many parallels to William III. The first obstacle in comparing William III to Tancred lies in the fact that at the heart of Tancred's tyranny is his role as a father. William III crossed the ocean from one country to take the throne in another, bringing with him the culture and language of his own home. As such, he could hardly be considered a metaphorical father to all of England. Furthermore, it was well-known throughout Europe that William III was unable to have biological children. William's cool control cannot be compared to Tancred's undisciplined passion, either. Dryden may be exploring opposing contemporary opinions regarding Mary II as one part of the fable, but the tyrant in *Sigismonda and Guiscardo* has more in common with her father than her husband.

Tyranny is not at the heart of *Meleager and Atalanta*, but betrayal between parent and child certainly is, and Aeschylus's Chorus remembers Althea by name. Secrecy also is central to betrayal in *Meleager and Atalanta*, as it was in *Sigismonda and Guiscardo*. On the night that Meleager was born, the "Fatal Sisters" visited Althea, tossed a burning brand into the fire, and claimed that Meleager, her son, would die when the fire consumed it. Althea responds:

¹⁸⁸ See Cedric Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode*, 101-16, for an in-depth analysis of the "two Sigismondas," and the critical heritage regarding Dryden's version of her. Reverand maintains that Dryden purposely created a Sigismonda who was neither heroic nor self-serving, but both. For Reverand, the irreconcilable versions of Sigismonda are another example of Dryden's ambivalence in *Fables*.

. . .The frightened dame
Sprung hasty from her bed, and quench'd the flame:
The log, in secret lock'd, she kept with care'
And that, while thus preserv'd, preserv'd her heir. (*Meleager and Atalanta* 261-64)

Years later, when Althea learns that her son has killed her brothers, and the furies consume her, she finally throws the brand into the fire, and kills her son. Though the fable does not mention it explicitly, the additional news that Meleager not only killed her brothers, but also had chosen another woman (Atalanta), may have tipped the scales in Althea's irrational decision. The hunt to kill the boar, in direct contrast to the secret anguish of the mother in her private chamber, is a public event. All are fighting to kill the boar, which has ravaged their land. Meleager, who kills the boar, offers it to Atalanta, his new love. His uncles are jealous:

All envied; but the Thestyan brethren show'd
The least respect, and thus they vent their spleen aloud:
"Lay down those honor'd spoils, nor think to share,
Weak woman as thou art, the prize of war:
Ours is the title, thine a foreign claim,
Since Meleagros from our lineage came.
Trust not thy beauty; but restore the prize,
Which he, besotted on that face and eyes,
Would rend from us." At this, inflam'd with spite,
From her they snatch the gift, from him the giver's right.
But soon th'impatient prince his fauchion drew,
And cried: "Ye robbers of another's due,
Now learn the diff'rence, at your proper cost,
Betwixt true valor and an empty boast." (*Meleager and Atalanta* 222-35)

Meleager kills his uncles, while his mother, after much anguish, kills Meleager.

Dryden's introduction to the fable contextualizes it within Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, calling it "one of the most inartificial connections" in all of Ovid's work. Perhaps it provides just as naturally a window into the turmoil of the Stuarts, as it is easy to see how a struggle between uncles and nephews for a "prize of war," whether that prize be a boar

or a crown, might relate to recent events in England. Meleager is focused, and protects unflinchingly his prerogative, characteristics that could be compared to any number of decisions made by William. Dryden makes clear that what is at stake is rightful ownership: "Ours is the title, thine a foreign claim." The uncles assert their claim is due to shared "lineage." It continues: "From her they snatch the gift, from him the giver's right." While this seizure certainly is not sexual, the seizure connotes "rapio," and the male-female tension is central to the confrontation. Meleager denounces his uncles as he slays them: "[Meleager] cried: Ye robbers of another's due, / Now learn the difference, at your proper cost, / Betwixt true valor and an empty boast." By defending Atalanta, Meleager defends his own right and the honor of his future progeny as well. Likewise, both William III and Mary II held strong convictions about their rightful place in England. Mary II believed that she was saving both the Church of England and her own right to the crown. William III was protecting his place in line, behind his wife, to inherit the throne, and he was protecting Holland from England's foreign policy that bolstered Louis XIV. As for the fable, the uncles claim the right of lineage. Meleager, as would be the case for any future king, assumes prerogative with ease, yet he also claims the right of merit, since it is he who killed the boar. William and Mary claim the right of lineage leading up to the Glorious Revolution. Afterwards, the deed justifies itself. However, Meleager still killed his uncles, and Mary still overthrew her father.

Althea's anguish is central to the fable, and Dryden chose to highlight her torment. It is the murder of her brothers, not her father, that creates the situation, but Althea frames it at least once in her lengthy monologue as a choice between her husband or father: "Shall fate to happy Oeneus still allow/ One son, while Thestius stands

depriv'd of two?" (303-304). Her choice creates a tragedy for the blameless father Oeneus, as well: "The wretched father, father now no more, / With sorrow sunk, lies prostrate on the floor; / Deforms his hoary locks with dust obscene, / And curses age, and loathes a life prolong'd with pain" (369-372). Despite her actions, Althea remains a pitiable character who is controlled by conflicting loyalties. In fact, when describing what happened to Iphigenia, the Furies in *Oresteia* remember Althea with sympathy in addition to reprehension. Althea's choice could be compared to that of Mary II, and the intensity of the fable heightens and illuminates the emotions involved in the choices made within royal families for centuries, most recently among the Stuarts. There are obvious differences, but the angst and anguish remains pertinent to the usurpation, at least on the part of Mary II, whose diary is filled with guilt over her decision.

Althea, however, is not the only female who echoes similarities with England's monarch. It must be pointed out that Mary II often displayed strength, particularly in her ability to fill a king's (masculine) role in her husband's absence. And, she was both young and beautiful. Atalanta's skill and competence, while in the shadows of Meleager's actions as prince, could mirror those of Mary II, who might have served as queen in her own right, but who insisted on following her husband. While comparisons in *Fables* are not meant to be exact parallels, the similarities between fable and fact enrich our understanding of the internal saga revolving around the royal crown.

Althea is critically aware that her decision to kill her son will not only ruin herself and her husband in grief, but will end the royal line:

Let the whole household in one ruin fall,
And may Diana's curse o'ertake us all.
Shall fate to happy Oeneus still allow
One son, while Thestius stands depriv'd of two? (301-4)

**

Perish this impious, this detested son;
Perish his sire, and perish I withal;
And let the house's heir and the hop'd kingdom fall. (319-21)

Central to the burning brand is primogeniture, and the theme of the heirless royal family resonates particularly strongly with William and Mary, but also with the two monarchs before them. From Meleager's birth, Dryden's poetry equates the red brand with the line of succession: "And that, while thus preserv'd, preserv'd her heir" (264). Significantly, Dryden highlights Hercules in the concluding passages of the fable that also indicate a concern for legacy:

But Cynthia now had all her fury spent,
Not with less ruin than a race content:
Excepting Gorge, perish'd all the seed,
And *her whom Heav'n for Hercules decreed. ("Meleager and Atalanta" 395-98)

Sandys' version mentions Dejanira by name, yet Dryden inserts it in the margin, and calls her Hercules' wife in the poem proper.

In *Fables*, Dryden demonstrates that fathers can, in fact, be tyrannical to their children, not just kings to their people. And he concedes the argument that royal succession is not so clear cut, and often is decided by the sword after all when nephew and uncles both contend for the crown. Such a theme is at the very center of the fable *Meleager and Atalanta*, and is one of Tyrrell's many points when refuting the ease with which divine right and legitimate succession may be decided. In *Patriarcha non Monarcha*, Tyrrell writes:

So that it was no strange thing for King John to make himself King before his nephew Arthur, since it was a moot point among the lawyers of that age who ought to succeed. And where no Power could intervene, it was decided by War, and sometimes single combats, which Historians mention to have been waged between uncles and nephews contending for the principality; and not only in this

case, but in all others where the succession of the empire is not settled by such laws or customs, it lies continually liable to be disputed between the sons or grandsons of the last prince, nor can ever be decided but by the sword. (55)

In this tract, published in 1681, and in his subsequent *Biblioteca Politica* (1694), Tyrrell writes at length against the feasibility of legitimate descent. He gives historical precedents to show over and over that succession is not straightforward, and that it never has been. In *Biblioteca Politica*, Freeman, the persona representing republican views, reasons that complications over succession began as early as Cain, who “forfeited” his inheritance after murdering Abel, an allusion to the legalese that facilitated James II’s overthrow:

So then here is a Forfeiture, and an Abdication of this Divine Right of Succession in the very first Descent; whereas indeed I supposed, that this Divine Right had been at least as unforfeitable as the Crown of England... (67)

Meleager, however, in no way forfeits his prerogative as prince next in line to the crown. His uncles represent the envy and the power struggle as described by Tyrrell, who provides examples of the need to resolve, through violence, whether the uncle, nephew, or wife would assume the crown. What Tyrrell’s version omits, and what the fable illustrates powerfully, are the emotions inherent in such a struggle that takes place within the very nucleus of a family. The turmoil that Althea experiences, or Sigismonda, involves secrecy that intensifies the angst between the characters, and perhaps also the violence. The upheaval that occurs privately also has an enormous impact on the nation. The boar in *Meleager and Atalanta* ravages the crops and destroys peace, and a tension exists between this public event and the secret struggle in Althea’s bedroom, where she ultimately decides to kill her son. This decision made by the queen will affect the nation as thoroughly as had the plague of the beast.

Fables such as *Sigismonda and Guiscardo* and *Meleager and Atalanta* indicate that the order imposed by blood relations is not sufficient when ruling a nation. A patriarch cannot rely solely upon the ties that are based upon private affection, and a public element is critical to rational rule. If there were any doubt regarding the need for a public component, the case of *Cinyrus and Myrrha* makes that point even clearer. That public element, as represented by Athens in the *Oresteia*, is a version of detachment that is difficult to achieve in parent-child relationships, and the absence of impressive and attractive parent-child relationships in *Fables* is remarkable. Cinyrus is the son of Pygmalion and the statue, the subject of the preceding fable in both Dryden's work and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There is secrecy and privacy to the story of Pygmalion as well. As the statue's creator, he is both father and husband to it. The marriage seems to re-order the relationship, but the two stories side by side indicate that there are cycles that are as unavoidable as the one in which Orestes found himself. The union of Pygmalion and the statue produces Cinyrus, whose daughter will fall in love with him. Adonis is their son, and the fable ends with his birth, and the consequent pain felt by Venus at his death:

Time glides along, with undiscover'd haste,
 The future but a length behind the past;
 So swift are years: the babe, whom just before
 His grandsire got, and whom his sister bore;
 The drop, the thing which late the tree inclos'd,
 And late the yawning bark to life expos'd;
 A babe, a boy, a beauteous youth appears;
 And lovelier than himself at riper years.
 Now to the Queen of Love he gave desires,
 And, with her pains, reveng'd his mother's fires. (*Cinyrus and Myrrha* 380-89)

Each union sets a pattern for the one to follow it, "The future but a length behind the past." For Orestes, a public element exists even at the moment that he kills his mother,

since his friend Pylades is present and counsels him to follow the order of the gods. A third option, one that provides detachment, is necessary to break the cycle in *Cinyrus and Myrrha*, but none is proffered. Another son is born, and the end of one story provides the seed of “revenge” for the beginning of the next tale.

Dryden’s next story in *Fables* involves political rather than amorous revenge, in the form of confrontation between Agamemnon and Achilles in *The First Book of Homer’s Ilias*, where Nestor provides counsel in a political alliance gone awry. Ovid, unlike Nestor, is removed from the actual characters of his stories. Nestor, as both character and artist-narrator, provides an emblem of the divided loyalties that are the artist’s way: he must be rationally detached and yet passionately involved. In other words, he must be not one, or the other, but both. As such, an artist like Nestor provides that third ordering alternative in *Oresteia*, as represented by the city of Athens. Athene incorporates the dictates of Olympos, the Furies, and democracy within the gates of the same city, in a reconciliation of darkness with light. She provides a rational mind that is similar to detachment, yet she and her city are very much involved: the Furies will curse her land with infertility if she does not succeed in the compromise. While we already have explored Nestor’s involvement in the stories he tells, he also provides perspective with detachment. As an old man, Nestor takes a step back from the action, then another step forward by providing counsel to both Agamemnon and Achilles. He is the third party. Likewise, Dryden’s poetry still concerns itself with the fate of England at the time of *Fables*, and the themes explored here testify to that involvement. Yet, years of political retirement may have enforced a distance that was not possible during the Stuart reign. Dryden is not predicting another Athens in either *Fables* or *The Secular Masque*,

but perhaps he is suggesting that a third option is necessary in English politics, rife with familial and partisan tumultuous cycles. In their commentary on Dryden's "Character of Polybius and his Writings" (1693), A. E. Wallace Maurer and Alan Roper suggest that Dryden takes a detached stance at the end of his life, and that he offers counsel to both Jacobites and Whigs in his work.¹⁸⁹ The aged Dryden resembles the aged Nestor. The simultaneous involvement and detachment of Athena requires discipline and circumspection, and the willingness to step away from perpetual cycles. It is a balancing act, the mastery of which is requisite for great kings and great artists alike.

¹⁸⁹ "[Character of Polybius] comments flexibly and dispassionately upon forms of government, a subject so often treated in everyday politics with reductive partisanship. . .It exemplifies Dryden's power, even when hurried, to instruct, by encouraging his countrymen- whether Jacobites or Whigs-to apply Polybius' principle of disinterested scrutiny and thereby to know the good and the bad in themselves." (*Works* 20: 326)

CHAPTER 3

ARTISTRY AND KINGSHIP: DETACHMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

“Some estates are held in England by paying a fine at the change of every lord.”

This is the first sentence that Dryden writes as a preamble to his final literary statement, *Fables Ancient and Modern*. It is the opening to his dedication to the Duke of Ormond.

While he pays double taxes to the current government, the “tender” referred to here is of the sort he used to pay the court, and which he certainly paid at the changing of the guard between Charles II and James II:

’Tis true that by delaying the payment of my last fine, when it was due by your Grace’s accession to the titles and patrimonies of your house, I may seem, in rigor of law, to have made a forfeiture of my claim; yet my heart has always been devoted to your service; and since you have been graciously pleas’d, by your permission of this address, to accept the tender of my duty, ’tis not yet too late to lay these poems at your feet.¹⁹⁰

Throughout Volume V of *Poems on Affairs of State 1688-1697*, William Cameron, its editor, notes Dryden’s silence in this era regarding William and Mary while others scribbled away, some well enough, but always in the poet’s shadow. James Anderson Winn uses Dryden’s own words as evidence to assert his opinion that this was indeed Dryden’s choice, and speculates that Dorset extended an offer to Dryden to keep the

¹⁹⁰ “Dedication to the Duke,” *Works* 7: 17.

laureate if he would forswear his Catholicism.¹⁹¹ Dryden, like James II, was on the wrong side of “the rigor of the law,” and he suggests that his silence may have given the appearance of retirement. However, there was no lack of attention or devotion to his art in this last phase of his career. At the time of this dedication, Dryden’s recent translation of Virgil was viewed as a matter of national pride.¹⁹² Hopkins has shown that men like Pope, Garth, Congreve, and Wharton were of the opinion that Dryden’s last works were his best, especially the *Fables*.¹⁹³ Dryden’s translation of Virgil, and *Fables*, are the major components of this final phase in his life and literary career, and the above passage involves the first words of Dryden’s final literary statement. Dryden, it seems, is reclaiming his rightful place as the poet of England.

Yet, Dryden returns to claim his estate with a different tone, and with different works. *Fables* arguably is deeply involved in its own times, while being at the same time Dryden’s most detached work. Consistent with all of the phases of Dryden’s writing, much of the work in *Fables* has political relevance. In “To My Honour’d Kinsman,” the poet stands, with his cousin Driden, as a symbol of patriotism and steadfastness to England: “Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand” (175). But Dryden’s choice of authors (Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer) is not a particularly political one. Absent are the satirists (Horace, Persius, and Juvenal) that might have served as a springboard, had Dryden wanted to write the sort of political poetry he wrote from 1679 to 1684. The absence of the satirists cannot be taken as detachment from politics, however. Dryden

¹⁹¹ Winn, *John Dryden and his World*, 434.

¹⁹²Scott *Dryden* 1: 321

¹⁹³ David Hopkins, "Charles Montague, George Stepney, and Dryden's *Metamorphoses*," *The Review of English Studies* 51, no. 201 (Feb. 2000).

was aware that he was expected to either compliment or criticize William and Mary. Sometimes he does both, and sometimes he does neither. This pattern of compliment and critique was not a new one for Dryden. *Absalom and Achitophel* shows how Dryden does both: he is committed politically and morally as a satirist, but it is an involvement that includes discernment and judgment as well. As an author of narrative poetry, Dryden also is attached to his characters. The stories in *Fables* have psychological interest and stand on their own, independent of political allegory. When he allows their situations to reflect on current political situations, that reflection becomes another layer of the artist's involvement: he cares about the characters themselves, and he cares about English politics, and sometimes he addresses both in the same fable. When Dryden takes a long view of history, requiring detachment, that long view shows artistic discernment. It also provides another vehicle by which to assess contemporary events.

Dryden exercises control and detachment in part through devoted attention to the details of his craft. The focus on artistry is a form of discipline, and in *Fables*, Dryden combines art that takes the general view and reflects the idea that "mankind is ever the same" with art dedicated to the intricate details involved in depicting "the variety of game springing up before [him]" (*Preface* 497-498). He combines universality with variety, the detached historical perspective with a unique and personal life. An historical pattern can take shape as a consequential chain of events, but Dryden's *Fables* often concern themselves equally with the impact those events have on the characters. Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" possesses this same quality of involvement and detachment, where Leda's rape as personal tragedy is also the source of the Trojan War and murder of Agamemnon, and we are invited to look at both aspects. Dryden's *Amphitryon* (1690) also addresses

this personal involvement and historical scope, where the devastation of Alcmena's violated marriage was necessary for the birth of god-like Hercules. Both the immediate and historical ramifications of Zeus' desire are central to the play, as is the not so covert allusion to William III throughout the work.¹⁹⁴

We can speak of three kinds of detachment. The first is artistic rhetorical control, and the second its personal counterpart of emotional restraint and self-discipline. The third is philosophical detachment, which Theseus and Numa possess, and is counter-balanced in the same figures with an ideal type of involvement, expressed through compassion and commitment when managing national or personal affairs. John Dryden of Chesterton is another example of this ideal balance. Though he is not a philosophical man, Dryden is at once detached from the business of the city and the turmoil of marriage and family, and involved with social and political duties. As a chaste and disciplined man, Dryden is a model of detachment or disinterestedness, but he also is deeply involved in parliamentary politics as well as in the running of his own estate, and this participation is a moral virtue. Other prominent figures in *Fables*, however, of which Tancred (*Sigismonda and Guiscardo*) and Ajax (*The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*) are two, demonstrate a decided lack of this requisite balance between detachment and involvement, important for the discernment of a king and the craft of an artist alike.

The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses demonstrates what happens when emotional and artistic detachment break down. As early as 1679, Dryden had entertained the importance of the interchange between Ajax and Ulysses in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. His

¹⁹⁴ In "Dryden and the Birth of Hercules," James D. Garrison points out specific satirical allusions to the fallen state of England after the Glorious Revolution, one of which is the analogy between Jupiter-Alcmena-Amphitryon and William III (false Amphitryon)-James II (true Amphitryon)-England (Alcmena as wife and subject).

exposition of it in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, as preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, pits Ajax against Ulysses as representing two forms of artistry:

‘Tis necessary therefore for a Poet, who would concern an audience by describing of a Passion, first to prepare it, and not to rush upon it all at once. Ovid has judiciously shown the difference of these two ways in the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses: Ajax from the very beginning breaks out into his exclamations, and is swearing by his maker. . . Ulysses on the contrary, prepares his audience with all the submissiveness he can practice, and all the calmness of a reasonable man; he found his judges in a tranquility of spirit, and therefore set out leasurly and softly with ‘em, till he had warm’d em by degrees, and then he began to mend his pace, and to draw them along with his own impetuosity: yet so managing his breath, that it might not fail him at his need, and reserving his utmost proofs of ability even to the last. The success you see was answerable; for the crowd only applauded the speech of Ajax; . . . but the Judges awarded the prize for which they contended to Ulysses. (242-43)

Though two decades passed between the above criticism and *Fables*, Dryden’s translation of the heroes’ speeches reflects his earlier opinion of them. Ajax blusters about, without control, as Dryden says Ovid has portrayed him, and in spite of the composed demeanor of his audience:

The chiefs were set, the soldiers crown’d the field:
To these the master of the sevenfold shield
Upstart’d fierce; and, kindled with disdain,
Eager to speak, unable to contain
His boiling rage, he roll’d his eyes around
The shore, and Grecian galleys haul’d aground;
Then, stretching out his hands: “O Jove,” he cried,
“Must then our cause before the fleet be tried? (1-8)

Though they are not entirely without effect, Ajax’s arguments are blunt, and selfish, and bullying. An act that might have been viewed as heroic, Ajax saving Ulysses, is tainted by Ajax’s own telling of it. After making clear that Ulysses had been “forsaken” by everyone else, Ajax recounts how he was saved:

With my broad buckler hid him from the foe—
Ev’n the shield trembled as he lay below—
And from impending fate the coward freed:

Good Heav'n forgive me for so bad a deed!
If still he will persist, and urge the strife,
First let him give me back his forfeit life: (115-20)

An heroic deed, narrated by a more judicious character, would evoke admiration for the hero who has performed it. Ajax's account of his own bravery strips the act of its heroism, because it seems petty and self-centered. In another example of utter lack of judgment, he unwittingly conjures up an image of Ulysses himself, among the Trojans, rescuing both Achilles's body and his armor:

What farther need for words our right to scan?
My arguments are deeds, let action speak the man.
Since from a champion's arms the strife arose,
So cast the glorious prize amid the foes;
Then send us to redeem both arms and shield,
And let him wear who wins 'em in the field." (191-96)

Ajax's rhetorical ineptitude has awarded the shield to Ulysses, who already has done exactly what Ajax suggests, except that Ajax proposes rescuing the armor as a contest, whereas Ulysses recovered it, and Achilles' body, when both were in imminent danger. Ajax not only reminds his audience of Ulysses's valor, but he imprudently suggests that the Greeks risk losing the "glorious prize" by throwing it to the Trojans, for the sole purpose of a competition between himself and Ulysses, in the midst of a grisly battle. Ulysses responds with the appropriate gravity, grief and determination expected of a hero:

"Why am I forc'd to name that fatal day
That snatch'd the pomp and pride of Greece away?
I saw Pelides sink, with pious grief,
And ran in vain, alas! to his relief;
For the brave soul was fled: full of my friend,
I rush'd amid the war, his relics to defend;
Nor ceas'd my toil till I redeem'd the prey,
And, loaded with Achilles, march'd away:
Those arms, which on these shoulders then I bore,

'T is just you to these shoulders should restore. (435-444)

True to his own criticism in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, Dryden emphasizes the fact that everything Ulysses says and does is perfectly executed: "Action his words, and words his action grace" (*The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses* 204). Ajax accuses Ulysses of lying, but Ulysses frames it as persuasive wit, used by him for "the common cause:"

This only I request, that neither he
May gain, by being what he seems to be,
A stupid thing, nor I may lose the prize,
By having sense, which Heav'n to him denies;
Since, great or small, the talent I enjoy'd
Was ever in the common cause employ'd.
Nor let my wit, and wonted eloquence,
Which often has been us'd in your defense
And in my own, this only time be brought
To bear against myself, and deem'd a fault.
Make not a crime, where nature made it none;
For ev'ry man may freely use his own. (215-26)

As Ulysses takes apart Ajax's accusations, he makes transparent his use of wit in each of his heroic acts, and by showing his audience how his wit has worked for them, he persuades them that they cannot fight in the future without him. The judges vote in his favor:

Thus conduct won the prize, when courage fail'd,
And eloquence o'er brutal force prevail'd. (591-92)

The contrast between Dryden's and Sandys's translation is striking:

The chiefs were mov'd. Here words approv'd their charmes:
And Eloquence from Valour wins those armes. (Sandys 432)

Dryden's Ulysses still is calculating, but that very calculation makes for an exemplary character, and superb artist. Ulysses' judgment is contrasted with Ajax's lack of it, his perfect control with Ajax's "unmaster'd" passions (595). Ulysses also represents

complete public engagement; he is conscious of his audience and of himself as a rhetorician who is performing for that audience. While he is rhetorically detached in this role, he also is both self-confident and public-spirited.

Dryden's use of Ajax and Ulysses shows that the craft of the artist is similar to the discernment of a king. While Ajax's position exposes Ulysses as polished rather than ingenuous, Dryden's focus is on control and mental acuity, and he admires the artistry in Ulysses' performance. Ajax certainly is committed, but is powerless to see any perspective but his own, and therefore is ineffective, and even detrimental, to his own cause. Ajax's words echo Dryden's in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*:

Great is the prize demanded, I confess,
But such an abject rival makes it less.
That gift, those honors, he but hop'd to gain,
Can leave no room for Ajax to be vain:
Losing he wins, because his name will be
Ennobled by defeat, who durst contend with me. (23-8)

This last couplet is taken from Dryden's *Preface to Troilus and Cressida / The Grounds of Criticism*, where he quotes Longinus, "concerning Plato's imitation of Homer:"

We ought not to regard a good imitation as theft, but as a beautiful idea of him who undertakes to imitate, by forming himself on the invention and the work of another man; for he enters into the lists like a new wrestler, to dispute the prize with the former champion. . .we combat for Victory with a Hero, and are not without glory even in our overthrow. (228)

The argument is gallant in *The Grounds of Criticism*, yet appropriately clumsy as Ajax's boast, and the repetition of the same metaphor in the two works confirms that Dryden still is working with his ideas on artistry as he had expressed them in *The Grounds of Criticism*:

. . .all which errors proceed from want of judgment in the poet, and from being unskill'd in the principles of moral philosophy. Nothing is more frequent in a Fanciful Writer, than to foil himself by not managing his strength: therefore, as in

a wrestler, there is first requir'd some measure of force, a well-knit body, and active limbs, without which all instructions would be vain; yet, these being granted, if he want the skill which is necessary as a Wrestler, he shall make but small advantage. . .So, in a Poet, his inborn vehemence and force of spirit, will only run him out of breath the sooner, if it be not supported by the help of art. (241)

Dryden extends his metaphor of the artist as wrestler throughout *The Grounds of Criticism*, and it is relevant to *The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*, but also to *Fables* as a whole, because it brings to the forefront Dryden's belief in the requisite combination of the involvement of force with the detachment of art. It is no accident that wrestling was one of the contests Odysseus entered during the funeral games of Patroklos. Art, in this context, is a skill akin to Ulysses' control and judgment, his ability to "manage" his own passions as well as those of his audience. It is a metaphor that combines the force of action with a collected mind and skilled detachment. Yet discernment in action and words is as important in a king as it is in an artist, and Dryden reminds us that this is not just a forensic contest but "strife betwixt contending kings" (*Ovid XII* 821). The contrast between Ulysses and Ajax, therefore, is a contrast between one who is both an effective orator and a competent king, and one who is not.

Ulysses and Ajax represent opposing examples of artistry within heroic and epic traditions. Anyone familiar with the story of Ulysses would know that he demonstrates perfect control, from the Sirens to the Cyclops. Ajax's mad suicide represents the opposite. They are artists and kings, but they also are human beings. The scene is successful because Dryden feels and creates in his audience sympathy and admiration for the contestants. It is useful here to compare Dryden's opinions regarding Shakespeare's management of passions in *Richard II*, also in *The Grounds of Criticism*, with Dryden's own depiction of Ajax's defeat in *Fables*:

...the painting of [Richard II's defeat] is so lively, and the words so moving, that I have scarce read anything comparable to it, in any other language. Suppose you have seen already the fortunate Usurper passing through the crowd, and follow'd by the shouts and acclamations of the people; and now behold King Richard entering upon the scene: consider the wretchedness of his condition and his carriage in it, and refrain from pity if you can. (246)

Dryden as artist is involved with Shakespeare's characters, but he maintains distance in order to judge them, and he replicates what he admires in Shakespeare with his imitation of Ovid's Ajax and Ulysses. Henry Bolingbroke's control vs. Richard II's rhetorical self-indulgence is analogous to the kinds of control in the figures of Ulysses and Ajax, and Dryden depicts Ulysses' just victory. His performance is impeccable, and he resembles Dryden's assessment of Henry of Bolingbroke's success in the above passage. In turn, Ajax commands compassion and pity in the way Dryden has described Shakespeare's Richard II:

He who could often, and alone, withstand
The foe, the fire, and Jove's own partial hand,
Now cannot his unmaster'd grief sustain,
But yields to rage, to madness, and disdain;
Then snatching out his fauchion: "Thou," said he,
"Art mine; Ulysses lays no claim to thee.
O often tried and ever trusty sword,
Now do thy last kind office to thy lord: (*The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses* 593-600)

The difference in tone in the Sandys translation is clear from the first couplet:

He who alone, Jove, Hector, sword and fire
So oft sustaind; yields to one stroke of ire. (Sandys 432)

The Sandys translation is harsher in its judgment on both heroes.

The Grounds of Criticism demonstrates the artistic prowess of Ovid and Shakespeare in their versions of Ajax/Ulysses and Richard II/Henry IV. These pairs of kings also bear political relevance for Dryden. Dryden capitalizes on the contemporary

comparison of Henry IV to William III, and Richard II to James II, in the *Preface to the Fables*. Henry IV was often used as historical justification for William's overthrow of James II,¹⁹⁵ and Dryden alludes to this precedent and present debate when discussing Chaucer's relationship with Henry IV. The case of Ajax and Ulysses is less direct in its political applicability, but equally pertinent. William was well known for his cold calculation, and for his success as a military strategist as well as a soldier. The lack of discernment that Ajax displays bears some resemblance to James II's reputation for stubbornness and dogged loyalty to his Catholic policies, despite the clear indications that these policies would not be successful. The pathos towards Ajax that Dryden invokes resonates with the English sympathy towards their king once he was deposed, particularly after he was mistaken for a Jesuit, and stripped and searched in his first attempt to leave England. Upon his return to Whitehall, James II was met by cheering crowds, and court that day was full. This outpouring of support was possible precisely because James II was no longer in power.¹⁹⁶ The rise of Ulysses and the fall of Ajax resonate with contemporary politics and passions. As poet laureate, Dryden certainly was involved in politics at the time of James' downfall. In *The Speeches of Ajax and Ulysses*, Dryden chose to create compassion for Ajax as a fallen hero. He also emphasized what he found to be distasteful in Ajax, requiring even more skill to render him sympathetic in his defeat. It is clear that Dryden identifies with Ulysses. Yet if Ajax and Ulysses are two versions of the artist as rhetorician, one wonders whether Dryden discerns, in past works such as *The Medal* and *The Hind and the Panther*, moments when Dryden, like Ajax, was unable to enforce distance between himself and his subject.

¹⁹⁵ Roper, *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms* 170.

¹⁹⁶ Baxter, *William III and the Defense of European Liberty, 1650-1702*, 245.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is the source for the rhetorical joust between Ajax and Ulysses, but they engage in a wrestling match in Book 23 of the *Iliad*. Wrestling necessarily is a game that requires intense physical involvement: the bodies of Ajax and Odysseus are literally entangled, their sweat is intermingled and their bodies are red with welts from the match.¹⁹⁷ Again, in this scene, Odysseus is the crafty athlete, and Ajax the giant, though Achilles ends the game in a draw. *As You Like It* is another work in which wrestling is symbolic of involvement. Orlando is the unexpected winner, and the wrestling match is the moment at which he falls in love with Rosalind, and she with him, signaling the beginning of another sort of engagement. By contrast, Jacques, the figure whose melancholy and even cynical detachment sets him in opposition to Orlando, never enters a sporting game, nor the concluding dance, and his cynicism stands apart from the happy couples who marry.

Marriage may be an emblem of participation, but Dryden creates a less felicitous image of wedlock with Adam and Eve in "To My Honour'd Kinsman," where the participants are decidedly too involved: "How cou'd He stand, when put to double Pain, / He must a Weaker than himself sustain? / Each might have stood perhaps; but each alone; / Two Wrestlers help to pull each other down" (27-30). Though the wrestlers in "To My Honour'd Kinsman" apply specifically to Adam and Eve, wrestling can serve as an image of partisan wrangling as well as of marital discord, and Alan Roper has argued that the couple represent the King and Parliament.¹⁹⁸ Dryden's abstention from this form of "wrestling" points to his freedom from domestic entanglements, and to his ability to rise above party politics when reaching a decision. His detachment allows him to be a

¹⁹⁷ Homer, *The Illiad*. 23.803-49.

¹⁹⁸ Roper, *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms*, 124-135.

better judge and a better parliamentarian. Though he does not marry, Driden is nothing like Jacques of *As You Like It*, and he is by no means a cynic. Driden's love of country and political courage are examples of his commitment and participation. His actions are the counterpart to his cousin's rhetoric, and his public life mirrors the kind of involvement and detachment required of an artist.

Dryden incorporates two opposing genres of artistic involvement, satire and panegyric, in a poem that praises detached discernment. He also sets Driden apart from himself, since his cousin does not possess the same penchant for an irresistible quip. Dryden's potentially misogynistic lines allude to his particular talent in satire: "Not that my Verse wou'd blemish all the Fair; / But yet, if *some* be Bad, 'tis Wisdom to beware".¹⁹⁹ This predilection for satire is one that he does not share with his cousin, who requested that Dryden omit from the poem "a satire against the Dutch valour, in the late warr," against which Driden took "Exception."²⁰⁰ Dryden includes in this poem attacks on two inferior translators who have stolen his literary ideas and attempted to steal his glory:

But Maurus sweeps whole parishes, and peoples ev'ry grave;
And no more mercy to mankind will use,

¹⁹⁹ "To My Honour'd Kinsman" 31-32. Reverand (pp. 61-68 and elsewhere) asserts that Driden's bachelorhood and self-sufficiency counterbalance the Duchess's image of a motherly and restorative force. His lack of love and potential misogyny are what make him a "partial ideal," and the Duchess's illness makes her incomplete and incapable of providing a redemptive ideal in the midst of *Fables*. Reverand also points out that the Duchess provides a "pro-feminist" version of a woman, and that Driden provides the opposite, which seems possible. The misogyny and sworn bachelorhood would align Driden with Orpheus, who hovers in the shadows of *Fables* as the narrator-artist of many of the fables Dryden imitates from Ovid. However, it seems to me that the misogyny in the above image of Adam and Eve is either a reflection of Dryden's own opinions, rather than an intentional flaw that Dryden created for Driden's character, or that Dryden is doing something new with the worn out belief that women are the cause of all evil. I prefer to believe that Dryden is innovative with this image, and that misogyny serves as a self-conscious and reductive version of satire, or perhaps an emblem of the ongoing "marital spat" over power between King and Parliament.

²⁰⁰ Charles E. Ward, ed., *The Letters of John Dryden* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942). Quotation on 120.

Than when he robb'd and murder'd Maro's Muse.
Wouldst thou be soon dispatch'd, and perish whole?
Trust Maurus with thy life, and M-lb-rne with thy soul. (83-87)

“Maurus” is Sir Richard Blackmore, Pope’s “everlasting Blackmore,”²⁰¹ who wrote the epic poems *Prince Arthur* (1695) and *King Arthur* (1697).²⁰² Dryden includes this invective in the “memorial of my principles to all posterity,”²⁰³ a poem which is a panegyric, and it is as if Dryden just can’t resist leveling his inferior rivals. The addition of the invective harks back to Dryden’s uncharitable yet witty dig at Tom Sternhold, while writing in the persona of the plain good layman in “Religio Laici.” Yet “To My Honour’d Kinsman” may also record Dryden’s own desires for a movement away from the entanglements of praise and blame, towards the final stanza where he and Dryden stand together, detached from less noble pursuits such as partisan politics. At the time of *Fables*, Dryden has been freed from the partisan commitment that is inherent in the role and loyalties required of a poet laureate. His cousin’s stance as an independent Whig affords him the same freedom. When Dryden aligns himself with his cousin, it is to place both in a tradition of patriotism that is strengthened by common principles rather than family interests. Their common purpose is distinct from a blind devotion to the Stuarts as a family, as well. They are brothers in spirit, like Dryden and Oldham in “To the Memory of Mr. Oldham” (1684), or Dryden and Congreve in “To my Dear Friend Mr. Congreve” (1693).

²⁰¹ *The Dunciad Variorum: Book II*, 290 (1728).

²⁰² In the Preface, Dryden asserts that Dryden himself “drew the Plan of an Epick Poem on King Arthur” in *Discourse Concerning Satire*, from which Blackmore “plainly took his Hint” (*Preface 7*: 772-83). Milbourne translated parts of Virgil in 1687, and attacked Dryden’s later translation (*Works 7*: 626). Additionally, they are bad poets.

²⁰³ Ward 120.

The emphasis on Driden's unmarried state, as an emblem of his independence and freedom to follow his principles, makes possible the image of an untainted and altruistic family bond between Driden and Dryden. In *Fables*, the poet has highlighted in Numa, John Driden, and the Good Parson three childless and wifeless examples of ideal leadership. These men seem to demonstrate that public figures govern more effectively and more virtuously when unencumbered by the strains of familial relations. But other poems in *Fables* make the point that if one *is* married and *does* have children, cool detachment is not always a virtue. Unruffled distance is not always a good thing when applied to a relationship between a father and a daughter, for example. Ulysses' ability to persuade Agamemnon to offer up his daughter is unsettling, both in Ulysses' pride at the feat accomplished, and in Agamemnon's acquiescence to the recommendation. The whole purpose of *The Odyssey*, however, is how to return home, and Ulysses' wife, son, and dog are remote from the illustrations of Ulysses that Dryden uses to demonstrate perfect control. This is not to imply that passionate devotion to a daughter is an unmixed virtue. If Agamemnon is culpably remote, Tancred (*Sigismonda and Guiscardo*) is an example of overly involved fatherly love. Family and politics, it seems, function best when kept apart. A tyrant both as king and father, Tancred refuses to let Sigismonda marry, then punishes her cruelly when she takes matters into her own hands and chooses someone well beneath royal distinction. Yet family is at the heart of succession, and therefore an orderly and peaceful transfer of power. And the family is, as we have seen, the most common metaphor of the political unit. This is a conundrum that Dryden continues to engage in many parts of the *Fables*. Family and childlessness are forms of

involvement and detachment, and both have great impact on the stories Dryden has narrated.

Though poems are sometimes compared to children in the Renaissance, literary legacy does not involve the same irrational passions as progeny, and Theseus, Numa and the good parson also are artists. Kings, of course, are artists in their roles as founders, statesmen, and strategists, but Theseus and Numa also are poets in rhetoric or song. If Numa aims at enlightenment, the good parson brings “his audience” closer to salvation:

For, letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky;
And oft, with holy hymns, he charm'd their ears
(A music more melodious than the spheres):
For David left him, when he went to rest,
His lyre, and after him he sung the best. (“Character of a Good Parson” 19-24)

David is traditionally the Biblical ideal of a poet. Dryden shapes the relationship between David and the good parson in a manner similar to the metempsychosis that Numa describes in *Of The Pythagorean Philosophy*, combining philosophical detachment with artistic legacy. He also ties the good parson to Orpheus, whose song and lyre, passed down from Apollo, “charm’d [the] ears” of even the trees, rivers, and spirits. The good parson draws his audience upward, a movement that echoes Orpheus’s ability to draw Eurydice out of the underworld. One is a Christian ideal, and the other a classical one, but still they mirror one another. The good parson, Theseus, and Numa possess artistic discernment that allows for engagement and detachment simultaneously. Even if the good parson’s “holy hymns” are “more melodious than the spheres,” he is definitively involved in the daily ministering to his humble flock. Likewise, as a human being, Theseus is more emotionally and less pedagogically involved when he grieves deeply over the death of Arcite. But as artist and rhetorician, he expounds on how “The Cause

and Spring of Motion, from above/ Hung down on Earth the Golden Chain of Love” (*Palamon and Arcite* III.1024-25). He makes sense of the events by framing for his subjects the marriage of Emily and Palamon within the context of his grief for Arcite, and as part of his acknowledgement of a larger cosmological purpose. Numa presents another combination of the cosmological with the concrete purpose of a king as governor and teacher.

Timotheus and Alexander (*Alexander’s Feast*) provide a stark contrast to Dryden and Driden in the matter of artistic detachment and passionate involvement, and there could hardly be a greater difference between the royal Theseus and the imperial Alexander. Timotheus’s detachment demonstrates that exquisite art and perfect control of the passions can be amoral. Pygmalion (*Pygmalion and the Statue*), on the other hand, provides an example of complete loss of detachment in an artist, and familial involvement more aptly defined as obsession. *Alexander’s Feast*, like “To My Honour’d Kinsman,” emphasizes the correlation between politics and art. The California edition points out that Dryden’s first St. Cecilia’s Day poem “established the principle that the odes should give the composers a full opportunity to express the varied emotions music could display and arouse” (7: 558). *Alexander’s Feast* has been described in similar terms for obvious reasons. The characters Alexander and Timotheus complicate a simple exposition of the ability of music to stir emotions. Unlike the figures in “To My Honour’d Kinsman,” power is of major consequence to both Timotheus and to Alexander. Both artist and king are placed above the rest. Alexander is “Aloft in awful State” (3), and Timotheus is “plac’d on high/ Amid the tuneful Quire” (20-21). This is in contrast to Driden’s humility, reflected by his partial retirement in the country, and his

return to the city for the sole purpose of serving the common good. Neither Timotheus nor Alexander is concerned with the common good, and both are self-absorbed, though to different degrees. Timotheus wants to incite and control emotions in the “God-like Heroe” (4) and in the “valiant Peers” (6), and Alexander wants to experience and act out, unrestrained, every passion that Timotheus can create. Alexander willingly loses himself in the ecstasy of sensations. He weeps for Darius because it brings pleasure, and his sorrow stands in contrast perhaps to Aeneas’s genuine remorse over the death of Lausus, King Mezentius’s son who saved the tyrant father from Aeneas’s fatal blow. Timotheus relishes the power he exerts over his illustrious “crowd” (35); he creates power for its own sake, the pleasure of which allows him to maintain disciplined control over the elements of his art and the whims of his audience: whims of force that burn a city.

Timotheus’ creation is a public one. The “Heroe” and “valiant Peers” surrender individual choice and become mob-like, and there is danger in the power of the poet brought to bear on a public forum. Again, Timotheus exhibits the perfect detachment and skill that any artist would aspire to, yet with no moral core or sense of order, and therefore he paradoxically is a force of anarchy. Similarly, Alexander, though a king, represents a lawlessness that puts his pleasure and emotion first, and displays a sinister narcissism compared to the qualities that should exist in a king: a concern for the common good, and the skilled detachment that allows a king to make decisions that are best for the nation.

Alexander and Timotheus represent separate manifestations of king and artist, and Driden and Dryden also are such a pair. Pygmalion, on the other hand, is prince and artist in one. There is absolutely no distance between Pygmalion and his art. His

interests are purely private, though he was born a prince, and his emotions are as intense as those of Alexander. He initially maintains a chaste life, not out of discipline or moderation, but out of passionate “loathing” towards “all Womankind” (*Pygmalion and the Statue* 1-2). His sculpture is as moving as Timotheus’ music, but he becomes both audience and artist, a danger that never tempted the controlled musician. “Art hid with Art, so well perform’d the Cheat, / It caught the Carver with his own Deceit: / He knows ‘tis Madness, yet he must adore, / And still the more he knows it, loves the more” (*Pygmalion and the Statue* 17-20). Pygmalion courts his own creation in a love that could only be termed an obsession. Like the persona in John Donne’s “The Sun Rising,” Pygmalion has shut out the world from his private love, except that unlike the persona in Donne’s poem, Pygmalion has completely succeeded. There is no struggle at all against the public sphere, because he has lost all cognizance of it. The courtship is neither natural nor according to the appropriate rituals. Pygmalion in effect creates his own obsession, “wake[s]” the “image” with a kiss (94), then marries the statue in her first moments of animate life: she “view’d at once the Light and Lover, with surprise” (95). The kiss consecrates simultaneously her humanity and the private marriage. Metaphorically speaking, he is father (as creator) and husband in one person, as is Cinyrus (*Cinyrus and Myrrha*) without the metaphor. Furthermore, Pygmalion is a prince who has no thoughts of the public sphere, and his only interests are those that meet his private desires. At the conclusion of the fable, Ovid and Dryden remind their readers that there is a public element missing. The newborn becomes a king:

To crown their Bliss, a lovely Boy was born;
Paphos his Name, who grown to Manhood, wall’d
The City Paphos, from the Founder call’d. (99-101)

Dryden embellishes this conclusion, adding the details of Paphos walling the city, and calling Paphos a “Founder.” Paphos is not only a public figure, but also a warrior who builds a fortress to keep others out. It is a public parallel to the private life of his father, mirroring the isolation Pygmalion creates with his lover. There is no indication whether Paphos is a good or bad king. Neither is there any indication that Pygmalion’s personal and indulgent fantasy has caused harm to anyone else, despite the apparent disregard for the common good. In the short term, in fact, it seems to have produced a happy and prosperous family: “So bless’d the Bed, such Fruitfulness convey’d, / . . . To crown their Bliss, a lovely Boy was born” (98, 100). In the long-term, however, this form of private self-absorption results in Cinyrus and Myrrha, the subsequent fable in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as well as in Dryden’s *Fables*. The two fables are connected by their common story-teller, Orpheus (who has himself foresworn all women and all passion), by the fact that Cinyrus is Paphos’ son, and by the link between the two stories that both Dryden and Ovid emphasize in the narration. Myrrha, like Pygmalion, is turned inward by her obsession for her father. Pygmalion loves his own creation, and Myrrha her own creator. It is elementary to point out that one type of love is appropriate for a father, and the other for a husband, but Myrrha cannot sufficiently free herself from passion to make the distinction. “Our Kindred-Blood debars a better Tie; / He might be nearer, were he not so nigh. / Eyes and their Objects never must unite, / Some Distance is requir’d to help the Sight” (*Cinyrus and Myrrha* 72-75).

The characters who are governed by their passions do not recognize external laws or social order: Myrrha makes her well-known argument against both sacred and natural laws, Alexander rules by passionate whim, Timotheus incites chaos, Cymon is willing to

commit any form of violence for the love of Iphigenia. Though it is without the same societal impact, when Pygmalion becomes a lover, he also abdicates his role as a discerning artist. By contrast, Theseus and John Driden, steadfast and disciplined, underscore the lack of control in others. Driden enforces laws because they are integral to a civil, peaceful society, and Theseus is the ideal embodiment of hierarchical order and the king-to-subject paradigm.

Baucis and Philemon perhaps are a private counterpart to John Driden, and a foil to Pygmalion's narcissistic private life. Like John Driden, they do not have an excess of anything: not food or drink, and certainly not passion, but they do relish sharing what they have. Unlike Pygmalion's self-absorption, the happy couple follows an order external to their marital vows that commands generous hospitality. Though their lives are completely private, they behave with reverence towards the laws and religion that order the world outside their humble home. Distinct from the other fables, the protagonists live ordinary lives. They are retired, and do not have a vocation like that of the good parson, where they might have been role models on a local level, nor do they stand in opposition to august kings, which Dryden's parson does as well. Yet they have been chosen to serve the gods. Their story provides a message that the most ordinary acts can be of great consequence. Dryden creates elegance out of poverty, gracefulness out of the rude and rustic, in his illustration of Baucis's "busie care:" her art in charity (97):

All these in Earthen Ware were serv'd to Board;
And next in place, an Earthen Pitcher stor'd,
With Liquor of the best the Cottage cou'd afford.
This was the Tables Ornament, and Pride,
With Figures wrought: Like Pages at his Side
Stood Beechen Bowls; and these were shining clean,
Vernish'd with Wax without, and lin'd within. (99-105)

Dryden the poet is both private man and historical chronicler. His care and attention to Baucis emphasizes the value of an individual life, but most of the other fables are devoted to illustrious figures. Clearly, Horace's *vivere bene parvo* (*Satires II.ii*) and even Virgil's Old Corycian (*Georgics IV*) are part of Dryden's depiction of Baucis and Philemon. The difference is the marital dimension, unusual in the tradition and unusual in Dryden.

Though Baucis and Philemon are married, they have no children. This secures them from the furies potentially involved in parent child relationships, yet it places them between the detachment that chastity can represent and the involvement of family. Baucis and Philemon exhibit a measured devotion to one another, and passion does not create an obstacle to their companionship. Their metamorphosis into trees is an unqualified happy ending. The picture of enduring love and life as trees is so complete, in fact, that there is no concern that sex, or any sort of physical contact, will be impossible after their metamorphosis. It is as irrelevant a topic, it seems, as it would be when addressing the friendship between Driden and Dryden. There also is no mention of bloodlines, partly because of their social class, but also because of the sense of completion that they embody as a couple. Though they are distinguished by conjugal harmony, which implies a balance that is both physical and spiritual, their marriage is capable of transcendence. While this may be largely a function of their age, it nevertheless is a quality Dryden admires, and it is a version of engagement that is not tainted by selfish motivation or irrational passion.

Ceyx and Alcyone present another example of an ideal marriage despite, and perhaps even because of, the absence of children. Unlike Baucis and Philemon, their lives are passionate, but at a cost. As childless monarchs, where descent is most certainly

of consequence, they present a movement away from the snare of embroiled relationships. Ceyx's fateful journey begins as a search for a way out of the curse that plagues his family. Alcyone begs him not to go, and describes the winds over which her father rules in political terms:

Nor let false hopes to trust betray thy mind,
Because my sire in caves constrains the wind,
Can with a breath their clam'rous rage appease;
They fear his whistle, and forsake the seas.
Not so, for, once indulg'd, they sweep the main,
Deaf to the call, or, hearing, hear in vain; (29-34)

. . .

I know them well, and mark'd their rude comport,
While yet a child, within my father's court:
In times of tempest they command alone,
And he but sits precarious on the throne. (41-44)

As Alcyone had feared, the winds create an uncontrollable chaos that conquers Ceyx.

This storm, too, is described in terms of political warfare:

In this confusion while their work they ply,
The winds augment the winter of the sky,
And wage intestine wars; the suff'ring seas
Are toss'd and mingled as their tyrants please.
The master would command, but, in despair
Of safety, stands amaz'd with stupid care;
Nor what to bid, or what forbid, he knows,
Th'ungovern'd tempest to such fury grows;
Vain is his force, and vainer is his skill,
With such a concourse comes the flood of ill. (*Ceyx and Alcyone* 111-120)

Whether "the master" is Aeolus, king of the winds, or Ceyx, captain of the crew, the loss of command is complete, and the "fury" of the winds against Ceyx in the current tempest is as uncontrollable as the "clam'rous rage" that Alcyone observed as a child in court. As daughter to King Aeolus, Alcyone recognized the pattern of the "tempest" winds, over which Ceyx would have no control.

In the beginning, Ceyx chose duty to kingdom over remaining with his beloved Alcyone, and sought the oracle to end the curse. After his death, the devoted pair join one another as birds, but there is no human son to continue in Ceyx's stead. The birds are those who create the Halcyon days:

The gods their shapes to winter birds translate,
But both obnoxious to their former fate.
Their conjugal affection still is tied,
And still the mournful race is multiplied.
They bill, they tread; Alcyone, compress'd,
Sev'n days sits brooding on her floating nest,
A wintry queen: her sire at length is kind,
Calms ev'ry storm, and hushes ev'ry wind;
Prepares his empire for his daughter's ease,
And for his hatching nephews smooths the seas. (*Ceyx and Alcyone* 490-99)

There is peace from the storms that had beset Ceyx's ship and caused his death, and redemption from the curse that plagued their family as humans. The couple, as birds, provide the calm in the storms for all seafarers, at least until the eggs have hatched. This moment of peace from tempestuous winds is relevant to the temporary political peace as a result of the Treaty of Ryswick (1697). In "To My Honour'd Kinsman," Dryden indicates a logical problem regarding the King's confidence in the Peace of Ryswick followed by the King's request for a standing army: "The peace both parties want is like to last: / Which if secure, securely we may trade; / Or, not secure, should never have been made" (143-45). If the peace were secure, there was no need for the standing army that William requested and was refused.²⁰⁴ If William suspected that the peace would not last, and therefore England would need an army, then the terms of the

²⁰⁴ "The year 1697 closed with the celebration of the Peace of Ryswick, ending the Nine Years' War with France. The thanksgiving day in London was 2 December. The next day King William opened his fourth parliament with a speech in which he voiced his conviction that England needed a standing army to guarantee its freedom from further wars. Parliament, however, insisted on major reductions in the land forces, and on 2 February 1699 the king signed an act limiting the army in England to 7000 men, all to be native Englishmen, so that the king had to disband his Dutch guards" *Works* 7:576.

treaty should have been different. Like the Halcyon days in the poem, the peace in England would be brief. However, they were Halcyon days all the same, and they occurred during William's reign. Dryden's willingness to engage the possibility that William contributed to a peaceful future for England represents an extraordinary amount of emotional discipline on the part of the poet.

In his conclusion, Cedric Reverand speculates that peace in England from 1697 forward was one that Dryden accepted, however uneasily. Reverand demonstrates Dryden's concern regarding James II in *Britannia Rediviva* (1688), as reflected in his warnings about "boundless pow'r" (*Britannia Rediviva* 341) and "tempests" (351), and persuasively argues that Dryden recognized William's skill in maintaining a more stable domestic situation:

Faced with a king who represented everything hostile, dangerous, and illegal, and faced as well with a stable throne and a nation no longer at war, Dryden found himself caught between two long-standing but now contradictory principles, one being his Jacobite allegiance to the rightful monarch, the other his pragmatic belief in the necessity of a secure throne and a peaceful state.²⁰⁵

Reverand's assertion merits recognition and further discussion, and it is particularly useful regarding iterations of peace in *Fables*. Storms and peace are pitted against one another in "To the Dutchess," as we shall see shortly. It is a central metaphor in "Ceyx and Alcyone" as well. Though peace in *Fables* often is connected to a childless and unmarried, and therefore disinterested party, as with the magistrate John Driden, in the case of Ceyx and Alcyone, Aeolus calms the seas in order to raise a family, albeit a family of kingfishers. This is a version of peace that would coincide with a productive society and progeny that parallels depictions of peace as envisioned by Peter Paul Rubens. However, there are not many places in *Fables* where there is a stable or

²⁰⁵ Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode*, 216

satisfying peace, and even in *Ceyx and Alcyone* there is merely the brief respite from tempests. Additionally, peace and harmony often go together, but they are not always the same thing. When Emily prays to Diana in *Palamon and Arcite*, there is peace, but there is not harmony until the fable concludes with the wedding and the promise of a family. Likewise, the establishment of a structured tourney to decide Emily's fate is presented as an orderly alternative to the passionate and reckless duel between Palamon and Arcite, but the tournament itself is not harmonious. In Rome, the gates of Janus were closed only during the reigns of Augustus and Numa, yet the two rulers provided two different versions of peace. Augustus achieved peace through war, as does Theseus in Thebes at the beginning of *Palamon and Arcite*. Stability may be found in a well-crafted work of art or in a well-managed state, but Dryden highlights Numa, who embraces change, not stability. Additionally, Dryden juxtaposes weddings, emblems of peace and harmony, in *Fables* with the wars that follow them, as in *Ovid XII* and in *Cymon and Iphigenia*. Yet even these war-torn stories end peaceably, though as readers we are not necessarily at peace with their conclusions. *Ovid XII* ends with three consecutive versions of peace: in Nestor's story, Caeneus is covered with rocks by the Centaurs, but turns to a golden bird and escapes, after which the Lapiths end the war by chasing off the Centaurs; Tlelopemus resents Nestor's omission of his father Hercules in the story, and Nestor justifies his silence while emphasizing that "'tis peace with thee" regarding his attitude and actions towards Tlelopemus (760); after Achilles' death, which concludes *Ovid XII*, Ajax and Ulysses prepare for a debate, rather than a joust, in which they will attempt to persuade the court that one or the other merits Pelides' armour. All three versions of peace are indicative of a disciplined emotional detachment, either on the part of the artist or of the

characters. None are harmonious resolutions. Peace as it is presented in *Cymon and Iphigenia* is even more troubling, as I will discuss shortly.

Peace and harmony rarely coincide in *Fables*, but they do not contradict one another, either, in the way that harmony and tragedy certainly do. As it is with *Ceyx and Alcyone*, Dryden chooses many fables that, though they contain stories that are tragic, provide resolutions that escape the utter destruction that typifies the genre. However, a reader may also follow the thread of personal tragedy in *Fables*, as in the characters of Sigismonda and Guiscardo, Ajax, and Cyllarus and Hylonome. Dryden presents his readers with a multitude of complex and multi-layered patterns, each fable adding another shade of meaning to the others. Some of these patterns have ramifications for Dryden's interpretation of history as a context within which to view contemporary politics, and others recognize and empathize with both sorrow and redemption on a personal level. All reflect Dryden's own artistic commitment to a balance between detachment and involvement.

One form of escape from tragedy is a metamorphosis from hero to bird, as is the case for Meleager's sisters (*Meleager and Atalanta*), for Ceyx and Alcyone, and for the characters that Nestor connects in *Ovid XII* (Aesacus, Cygnus, Cainis/Caeneus, and finally Nestor's own brother, though his brother did not, in fact, escape). Particularly pertinent to the stories of Meleager's sisters and of Ceyx and Alcyone is the need to step away from familial tragedies. While they lose the power that they might have had as heroes and kings and queens, there is a redemptive quality in their flight away from the family ties that plagued them. But of course when we move from mythological figures to historical ones, the dialectic between politics and family becomes more complex and

more resistant to the generic simplifications of romance and fable. Take, for example, the issue of childlessness. More pertinent to Mary II and William III is the potential comparison of their lack of an heir to that of the Duchess in “To Her Grace the Dutchess of Ormond”: “You owe your Ormond nothing but a son; / To fill in future times his father’s place, / And wear the garter of his mother’s race” (165-67). Mary II and William III were the most recent examples of Stuarts without progeny at the publication of *Fables*. By June of 1679, it was reported throughout Europe that William III could never have children. Stephen Baxter writes that while this was distressing personally, it increased his political leverage when seeking allies for both domestic and international policies. Without the concern for his heirs’ future, he could and did spend his political authority freely. Baxter writes that he used it to promote a European balance of power, and to defend Holland.

Metamorphosing into a bird is not an option for the Duchess, who would not, at any rate, have been consoled by such a transformation. Without the hoped for heir, the Duke and Duchess are denied a noble legacy in its traditional form. However, Dryden creates in his portrait of the duchess the millennial image of an even more myth-laden bird than the kingfisher: the regenerative phoenix. The Plantagenets, ancestors to the duchess, are reborn in her, but it is a spiritual rather than biological continuity that matters most: “Thus, after length of ages, she returns, / Restor’d in you, and the same place adorns; / Or you perform her office in the sphere, / Born of her blood, and make a new Platonic year” (26-29). The Duchess assumes the power and the grace of Joan of Kent, and the Duchess’s own greatness likewise will be remembered for generations because Dryden has illuminated her for them, and her spiritual legacy will lead to no

Wars of the Roses. Through the poem, the duchess's legacy becomes her influence on England. Like the Duke and Duchess, if a King and Queen are to live on in their works, rather than their progeny, then they need an artist to record those works. Achilles, Dryden shows us, had Homer:

And now, the terror of the Trojan field,
The Grecian honor, ornament, and shield,
High on a pile th'unconquer'd chief is plac'd;
The god that arm'd him first consum'd at last.
Of all the mighty man, the small remains
A little urn, and scarcely fill'd, contains.
Yet, great in Homer, still Achilles lives;
And equal to himself, himself survives. (*Ovid XII* 812-19)

John Dryden, and the Duke and Duchess of Ormond, had Dryden. The heirless William III and Mary II not only have no poet on their side, but they have alienated the most recognized one in England.

In *Fables*, the relationship between poets and kings remains a tight one. In this instance, that relationship centers on the importance of legacy to both. Forms of descent preserve some kind of individual or even corporate identity in the midst of change and decay, and Dryden explores several of these forms in *Fables*. First, there is literary survival, for an artist as well as a hero. Second, there is literal, biological descent, important for its political, legal, and dynastic impact on families and states. Third, there also is the analogous idea of spiritual descent, which Dryden expresses in terms of his relationship to the literary minds before him.

Of The Pythagorean Philosophy addresses the legacy of artist and king simultaneously. First, Dryden embraces Numa's metempsychosis as a form of spiritual lineal descent when Dryden refers to the poets who have come before him. Second, Numa and Pythagoras are nearly interchangeable in the fable, tying Numa to Orpheus,

since the Orphic and Pythagorean traditions are so closely related.²⁰⁶ In both *Metamorphoses* and *Fables*, Orpheus is the narrator in Book 10, and Numa sings of Pythagoras in Book 15. Ovid and Dryden add two more layers of artists to this palimpsest. While Numa is a poet of divine vocation, he also becomes a king who was divinely inspired and also chosen by a council, but who did not inherit the crown. His divine appointment is entirely separate from biological ties. Dryden's additions to the fable include these lines of the introduction:

A KING is sought to guide the growing state,
One able to support the public weight,
And fill the throne where Romulus had sate.
Renown, which oft bespeaks the public voice,
Had recommended Numa to their choice. (1-5)

Though Numa is chosen by the people, it is as if God conveys wisdom through him, who receives it first through Pythagoras:

The crowd with silent admiration stand,
And heard him, as they heard their god's command;
While he discours'd of heav'n's mysterious laws,
The world's original, and nature's cause; (87-90)

Numa's authority comes from a source that is higher than biological succession; he has been chosen as teacher and as King not because his father was so before him, but because it was a divinely inspired vocation. Dryden puts a great deal of care into the idea of the spiritual lineal descent of poets in *Fables* as well, and again, that descent is not based on

²⁰⁶ The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* details multiple intricate connections between Orphism and Pythagoreanism. The following quotes provide two succinct examples:

"Metempsychosis and more generally, an interest in the afterlife connects Pythagoreanism with Orphism; Plato associates vegetarianism with the Orphic lifestyle. . . and authors from 400 BC onwards name Pythagoreans as authors of certain Orphic texts" ("Pythagoreanism" *Oxford Classical Dictionary*).

"In Classical times, Pythagorean Orphica were important; Pythagoras himself was said to have published poems under the name of Orpheus, according to Ion (2) of Chios (d. 422 BC); Epigenes (4th Cent BC) gave a list of Pythagoreans responsible for Orphica." ("Orphic Literature" *Oxford Classical Dictionary*).

a bloodline, but genius: “For the Grecian is more according to my genius than the Latin poet.”²⁰⁷ It is this genius, or spirit, that affords Dryden the prerogative to speak for Chaucer, just as Dryden presumes the poets after him will carefully amend Dryden’s own works. It is a spiritual affinity that is perfected by judgment, and that is not controlled by irrational family passions:

I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judg’d unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts, I have presum’d farther, in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true luster, for want of words in the beginning of our language. And to this I was the more embolden’d, because (if I may be permitted to say it of myself) I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies. Another poet, in another age, may take the same liberty with my writings. (*Preface to the Fables* 40)

It is in this context of genius moving from one generation to the next that Dryden writes the well-known passage of the descent of poets:

Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfus’d into his body, and that he was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease. Milton has acknowledg’d to me that Spenser was his original, and many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he deriv’d the harmony of his numbers from the *Godfrey of Bulloign*, which was turn’d into English by Mr. Fairfax. (25)

The transmigration of the poetic soul is an iteration of the mystical phoenix in *Of The Pythagorean Philosophy*, who “shakes off his Parent Dust” and assumes his father’s place in reverence, but also with authority:

“All these receive their birth from other things,
But from himself the Phoenix only springs;
Self-born, begotten by the parent flame
In which he burn’d, another and the same:

**

“An infant Phoenix from the former springs,
His father’s heir, and from his tender wings
Shakes off his parent dust; his method he pursues,

²⁰⁷ *Preface to the Fables, Works* 7:28.

And the same lease of life on the same terms renews.
When grown to manhood he begins his reign,
And with stiff pinions can his flight sustain,
He lightens of its load the tree that bore
His father's royal sepulcher before,
And his own cradle: This with pious Care
Plac'd on his Back, he cuts the buxome Air,
Seeks the Sun's City, and his sacred Church,
And decently lays down his Burden in the Porch. (578-81; 592-611)

In this passage, Dryden's version ties the phoenix to filial piety, and the image of the phoenix carrying his father's sepulcher on his back echoes Aeneas' devotion when he carries his aging father out of burning Troy. This, in turn, leads us back to questions of kingship. Aeneas, not one of Priam's sons, is chosen to build the next Troy. Considering the paramount importance that biological succession plays in the transfer of power from one king to the next, and in the political justifications for that transfer, it is intriguing to look at the emphasis that *Of The Pythagorean Philosophy* places on alternatives to hereditary lines. Numa, whose authority as future king does not rely on rightful succession, uses himself as an example of the transmigration of souls:

"Ev'n I, who these mysterious truths declare,
Was once Euphorbus in the Trojan war;
My name and lineage I remember well,
And how in fight by Sparta's king I fell
**
Then death, so call'd, is but old matter dress'd
In some new figure, and a varied vest: (231-34; 237-38)

This same transformation could be applied to the *Fables* themselves: they are "but old matter dress'd / In some new figure, and a varied vest." Numa, like Dryden, is using art to make sense of the world for others:

Nations and empires flourish and decay,
By turns command, and in their turns obey;
Time softens hardy people, time again
Hardens to war a soft, unwarlike train. (626-29)

Change is the one constant, Numa counsels. But, even with the death of one form there is birth of another, as it was with Troy and Rome. Numa's soul is part of that legacy, the vision of which was passed down from Helenus to Aeneas (630-667), in an exchange that crossed the breach between the living and the underworld.

The fable puts forward a King who is both "Gods anointed, and mans appointed."²⁰⁸

Which godlike Numa to the Sabines brought,
And thence transferr'd to Rome, by gift his own.
A willing people, and an offer'd throne. (712-14)

The irony, of which Dryden most certainly was aware, in this example of perfect harmony is that it is exactly this version of history that William's supporters would write when recounting the events leading up to the Glorious Revolution. However, a king with Numa's character, well-versed and charismatic, God's appointed and people anointed, could also apply, and perhaps more aptly, to Charles II's Restoration.²⁰⁹ Yet the fable does not seem to weigh the benefits of one king, and the deficits of another. It takes on a philosophical distance.

Change must have been the one constant in the span of Dryden's lifetime. His ability to bring his readers up close to the characters he presents, and then to help his readers stand back, and view from afar the patterns over time, is a key element to

²⁰⁸ *The Aphorismes of the Kingdome* (1642). Quoted in Wasserman, *The Subtler Language*, 23. Wasserman outlines the debate regarding the source of the monarch's authority at the time of the Restoration, and demonstrates Dryden's use of this debate in "To Charleton" (1663).

²⁰⁹ See Wasserman, *The Subtler Language*, "Dryden: To Charleton," 15-33. Reverand also compares Numa to William III and to Charles II. According to Reverand, Numa is "heaven-sent, rather than recently arrived from Holland," and William should be more peace-loving, like Numa (171). Reverand then segues to show that Charles II's reign also fell short of a Numa-like ideal: "The properly empowered Numa who gives laws to lust, then, also serves as an ideal monarch contrasted against none other than the properly restored David/Charles, whose blatant promiscuity suggests that lust gives laws to him" (171).

Fables.²¹⁰ It also may have been an important key for Dryden himself, as he neared the end of his life, and reviewed “What Changes in this Age have been” (*The Secular Masque* 25).

Dryden’s choice to include *Of the Pythagorean Philosophy* emphasizes the distance an artist must impose on himself in order to recognize historical patterns. We have seen the equal attention Dryden gives to the individual characters in *Fables*, and the emotional involvement that those stories require of him as an artist. Dryden’s care for the duchess’s health demonstrates a simultaneous concern for the personal and the historical perspective:

Rest here a while your luster to restore,
That they may see you as you shone before,
For yet, th’ eclipse not wholly past, you wade
Thro’ some remains, and dimness of a shade.
A subject in his prince may claim a right,
Nor suffer him with strength impair’d to fight;
Till force returns, his ardor we restrain,
And curb his warlike wish to cross the main. (“To the Dutchess” 103-110)

These lines simultaneously possess a genuine concern for the Duchess and her health, and a reminder that princes are beholden to their subjects. Though on the surface these lines

²¹⁰ Reverand provides an insightful chapter regarding the theme of change. Both Reverand and Sloman begin by comparing Theseus and Pythagoras as philosophers on this subject: for Theseus, change contrasts with the stable, unchanging First Mover, and Pythagoras focuses on change itself, regardless of its source. Reverand then continues with an analogy of Pythagoras as a Cartesian philosophy, and Theseus as representative of an English reaction to it. Inherent in the theme of change is whether that change is regenerative, degenerative, or merely neutral, and Reverand gives examples where Theseus’ and Pythagoras’ views converge and diverge on this topic, depending on the passage under scrutiny. Additionally, Sigismonda advocates for change as an upward movement, when she defends Guiscardo’s noble character despite his humble bloodline. The old woman in *The Wife of Bath, her Tale* argues that the knight has degenerated, and his bloodline therefore is worth less than he believes. Cymon is a definitive example of regression from one generation to the next. Reverand asserts that Pythagoras encompasses both of these perspectives on change, and that it: “presents on a philosophical plane the same clash of apparently irreconcilable positions that [Reverand has] argued pervade *Fables*” (183). I agree that the theme of change is central to *Fables*, and I also agree that what Dryden gives with one hand, he takes with the other. I am not sure that Pythagoras ties up all irreconcilable pieces of *Fables* so neatly, however. I do not see evidence that Numa embraces certain kinds of hunting, or certain kinds of conquests, as Reverand suggests (168-69; 181-83). In this one regard, he and Dryden are in opposition to one another, though they both are attractive ideals in *Fables*, and share multiple similarities.

refer to the Duchess's return voyage to Ireland, Dryden also probably refers to William III in the phrase "A subject in his prince:" it is time to reign in the "ardor" of William's wars, till England's "force returns." England is as tired as the duchess, and she must recover. The poet also is aging, recovering from illness, and tired.

The century is coming to a close as well, and *The Secular Masque* presents images of the cyclical nature of time.

Weary, weary of my weight,
Let me, let me drop my Freight,
And leave the World behind.
I could not bear
Another Year
The Load of Human-kind.
**
'Tis well an Old Age is out,
And time to begin A New. (7-12; 90-91)

"A New" could be millennial, or it could be circular, and time to begin "anew."²¹¹

Dryden the poet will not be beginning anew and will not have the enthusiasm for new beginnings that he had when he wrote *Astraea Redux*. Momus's quip in *The Secular Masque* that "things are as they were" (70) seems more pertinent to the poet's perspective in 1700 than any new beginnings. Dryden used similar imagery in 1685 when translating Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* (found in the *Sylvae* (1685) collection): "Yet still the selfsame scene of things appears, / And would be ever, could's't thou ever live" (142-43).

A few lines earlier in the same translation, Great Nature begins her response to man:

Why dost thou wish for more to squander still?
If life be grown a load, a real ill,
And I would all thy cares and labors end,
Lay down thy burden, fool, and know thy friend.
To please thee, I have emptied all my store;
I can invent no more,
But run the round again, the round I ran before. (III.134-40)

²¹¹ Roper, "Dryden's Secular Masque." 40.

In the same vein, Theseus begins his second speech with language reminiscent of Chronos in “The Secular Masque:” “So men oppress’d, when weary of their breath, / Throw off the burden, and suborn their death” (III.1038-39). These lines are Dryden’s additions, and not found in Chaucer, and they reflect Dryden’s weariness. Again, in Dryden’s translation of Lucretius, Great Nature defines life thus: “run the round again, the round I ran before.”²¹² Dryden’s Theseus supplies a gentler version of the cycles of life than does Great Nature:

We more or less of his perfection share.
 But by a long descent, th’ethereal fire
 Corrupts; and forms, the mortal part, expire:
 As he withdraws his virtue, so they pass,
 And the same matter makes another mass.
 This law th’Omniscient Pow’r was pleas’d to give,
 That ev’ry kind should by succession live:
 That individuals die, his will ordains;
 The propagated species still remains.
 The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
 Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;
 Three centuries he grows, and three he stays,
 Supreme in state, and in three more decays. (III.1049-1061)

Theseus concludes in a similar tone: “What then remains, but, after past annoy, / To take the good vicissitude of joy? / To thank the gracious gods for what they give, / Possess our souls, and while we live, to live” (III. 1111-1113). While they are consonant with Chaucer’s meaning, these lines are Dryden’s embellishments. Theseus addresses the end of an individual life, though it is significant that the state-like images (“monarch oak,” “Supreme in state”) are Dryden’s, and not Chaucer’s. Conversely, the primary subject of *The Secular Masque*, as the title suggests, is the end of an era. That this happens to

²¹² This is quite similar to the line in “John Driden of Chesterton:” “Emblem of human life, who runs the round.” (63)

correspond with the end of the poet's life is what gives it the richness and complexity that underlies the surface simplicity of the masque.

Numa also spans the "ages" of time that appear in *The Secular Masque*, and he addresses the physical change that is part of the traditional notion of concordia discors:

"That forms are chang'd I grant, that nothing can
Continue in the figure it began;
The Golden Age to Silver was debas'd;
To Copper that; our metal came at last.
"The face of places, and their forms, decay;
And that is solid earth, that once was sea:
Seas, in their turn, retreating from the shore,
Make solid land what ocean was before.
(*Of the Pythagorean Philosophy* 398-405)

This passage provides two very different kinds of change: the one is an example of decay, and the other of cycles. Dryden betrays his reluctance at times to recognize the inevitability of change that is distasteful to him, yet that he can no more influence than the movement from sea to earth to sea again. Time, if not Chronos, also is part of *The Pythagorean Philosophy*, where something as universal as time is broken down and divided into minutes. Doing so enables us to see the motion more easily:

For time, no more than streams, is at a stay:
The flying hour is ever on her way;
And, as the fountain still supplies her store,
(The wave behind impels the wave before,)
Thus in successive course the minutes run,
And urge their predecessor minutes on,
Still moving, ever new: for former things
Are set aside, like *abdicated kings*;
And every moment alters what is done,
And innovates some act till then unknown."
(*Of the Pythagorean Philosophy* 268-77)

Minutes have predecessors and successors, perhaps implying that *abdicated kings* (my italics) are equally small, or equally anonymous, in the expanse of history. Yet, even if

kings are as small as minutes, they have consequence in the history of an individual life, and in the life of a specific nation. Dryden echoes Shakespeare's *Sonnet 60*: "Like as the waves make towards the pibbled shore, / So do our minutes hasten to their end" (1-2). "Our minutes" are dearly beloved, but as small as those in Dryden's imitation. The sonnet lays out a general sequence by which all humans are subject to decay: "And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow" (11). Shakespeare's final couplet articulates tension between the personal and the universal: "And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand, / Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand" (13-14). In Dryden's *Fables*, Numa provides the acknowledgement that, in the end, each human life is one of a multitude of others, all of which flow through the same motions of time. Dryden's poems to the Duchess and to John Driden, like Shakespeare's "verse" in *Sonnet 60*, assert that poetry and individual worth can be more than momentarily important. So does *Of the Pythagorean Philosophy*: "And every moment alters what is done, / And innovates some act till then unknown." Perhaps, when counted in minutes, change is innovative, and dangerous, as "abdicated kings" implies. But when change is as large as centuries, its impact is gradual, and inevitable, and less threatening.

In one sense, *Of The Pythagorean Philosophy* counsels against attachment to people or ideals, since all things change, and become the opposite of what they were. In another, every moment of every individual is of great consequence. Dryden does not cede the power of the individual storyteller, nor the poet's impact on his world. The artist, whether he is Dryden or Numa, must be involved enough to believe in his own importance, but detached enough to see the patterns of history, of which he is a part, and to make sense of them for his audience. In *Of the Pythagorean Philosophy*, Numa's soul

may be transcendent, but he remains a distinctly Roman king and patriot. Likewise, Dryden participates in a community of poets who recognize and articulate universal themes relevant to history, literature and human emotions, but he cares deeply about the here and now of England and English politics, and it remains at the center of his poetry.

Dryden's use of time as expressed in the numerous works cited above reflects his recognition of the contradictory yet equally important individual and historical perspectives. Even his concept of cycles varies, from the near millennialism of "To the Dutchess," through the Lucretian perspective in *Of the Pythagorean Philosophy*, to the almost Ecclesiastes-like weariness of *The Secular Masque*. Dryden sees the truth in each of them despite their mutual contradictions.

But as an artist, Dryden is perhaps closer to Nestor than to the philosopher king, Numa. Nestor is both actor and narrator in his stories: he is involved in the story himself, yet in order to be of use he must be able to understand layers of meaning beyond the story's personal impact on him. And he has the advantage of age which would give him the perspective through which he might be able to see patterns- yet despite this, Nestor's "historical perspective" is deeply personal and not very philosophical. Nestor appears in both *Ovid XII* and in *The First Book of Homer's Illias*, where he advises kings and frames current events within historical patterns, but he also is present in *Meleager and Atalanta*. In this instance, he is not a seer but a frightened young man, who has climbed a tree to escape the boar's wrath, who provides a momentary comic respite from both the action at hand and the tragedy about to unfold, and who, perhaps not just incidentally, survives the general blood letting. Dryden embellishes the comic

circumstances of “Nestor then but young” (60), and he juxtaposes a joke about Nestor’s fear with the real danger Nestor was in:

Nestor had fail’d the fall of Troy to see;
But, leaning on his lance, he vaulted on a tree;
Then gath’ring up his feet, look’d down with fear,
And thought his monstrous foe was still too near.
Against a stump his tusk the monster grinds,
And in the sharpen’d edge new vigor finds;
Then, trusting to his arms, young Othrys found,
And ranch’d his hips with one continued wound.” (*Meleager and Atalanta* 133-40)

Nestor, like Dryden, is accustomed to greatness, yet he also is human, and as a boy he was particularly prone to the weaknesses that might be expected of youth. It doesn’t diminish his reputation later as a warrior and especially as a sage, but it does complicate and render a fuller character, and it conflates the individual with the historical, and the young man with the older mentor and historian.

Each of these historical analogies, cycles, or patterns can be seen only from a perspective of learned detachment. It is perhaps as much the scholar as the well-trained artist who’s involved in the articulation of them. Each has a very specific historical and political application in Dryden’s own time, but Dryden’s very use of analogies encourages his readers to recognize a larger scope as well. Beginning with the dedications of *Fables* to the Duke and Duchess of Ormond, Dryden emphasizes the similarities that may be found in the generations of great families. The first sentences addressed to the Duke simultaneously praise the man himself and express deference to his father and grandfather, to whom Dryden had dedicated other works: “Tho’ I am very short of the age of Nestor, yet I have liv’d to a third Generation of your House; and by your Grace’s Favour am admitted still to hold from you by the same Tenure”

(“Dedication to the Duke” 17). These generations of Kings, Queens, and legendary figures in *Fables* also are pertinent to Dryden’s use of the platonic year in “To Her Grace the Dutchess,” and to Dryden’s specific interest in the great families of English royalty over the centuries:

As when the stars, in their ethereal race,
At length have roll’d around the liquid space,
At certain periods they resume their place,
From the same point of heav’n their course advance,
And move in measures of their former dance;
Thus, after length of ages, she returns,
Restor’d in you, and the same place adorns;
Or you perform her office in the sphere,
Born of her blood, and make a new Platonic year. (“To the Dutchess” 21-29)

According to the New English Dictionary, the Platonic year is “A cycle imagined by some ancient astronomers, in which the heavenly bodies were supposed to go through all their possible movements and return to their original relative positions (after which, according to some, all events would recur in the same order as before).”²¹³ In the above passage, Dryden is referring to Joan of Kent, who is “restor’d” in the later Plantagenet, Mary Somerset, Duchess of Ormond. Mary Somerset’s father was the first Duke of Beaufort, and a descendent of John de Beaufort, who was the illegitimate son of John of Gaunt. The Beaufort line of Plantagenets was the same as that of Henry VII, and therefore of the Tudors and the Stuarts.²¹⁴ Joan of Kent was married to Edward the Black Prince, a descendant herself of Edward I, and mother to Richard II. When Dryden addresses the Duchess in the above passage, it is within this rich context of the Plantagenet family, and of the Tudors and Stuarts who are their descendants. She

²¹³ Quotation in Noyes 1027.

²¹⁴ The Stuarts also trace their ancestry back to Henry VII, since Margaret Tudor, daughter to Henry VII and sister to Henry VIII, married James IV of Scotland.

represents English royalty, and she is a miraculous return to greatness. Yet there are other patterns that have recurred among the English royalty, and the betrayals within the Stuart family are no different from the fight for power among the Plantagenets. What is said of Henry IV could be said about William III: one king rules like the next, and the current fight for power resembles those prior to it.

In “To the Dutchess,” Dryden compares Emily in *Palamon and Arcite* to both Mary Somerset (the Duchess) and the legendary Joan of Kent (11-14), and in so doing he makes direct references to Edward III and the Plantagenet “race divine” (30). He also makes more oblique references to the Stuart line, to Mary II and William III, and to the struggles for power within the royal family that have repeated themselves many times over. The Duke and Duchess become the future King and Queen of Thebes: “A Palamon in him, in you an Emily” (39). The Duke’s ancestral line is as important as that of the duchess, and this parallel fits nicely with the current hope that Ormond would receive the vice-royalty in Ireland, as his father and grandfather did before him. As servant to the English crown, the Ormond line goes back only as far as Dryden refers to it in the poem: “His father and his grandsire known to fame” (56). However, the ancestral line is one of the oldest in Europe, and the Duke also shares a Dutch heritage with William III: the Duke and King had the same great-grandfather; William I of Nassau and Orange. Both husband and wife, therefore, are reincarnations of their ancestors, and represent simultaneously service to and generations of royalty. William III, it should be pointed out, is also part of English royalty in his own right, not only as consort to Mary II. His mother was sister to both James II and Charles II, daughter to Charles I.

The ancestral lines of the Duke and Duchess encourage us to consider the patterns that they may represent. Both William III and the Duke of Ormond are known for their military bravery. The dedication to the Duke presents his magnanimity as a counterpart to his force and loyalty, but Joan of Kent and Mary Somerset (the Duchess of Ormond) present another counterpart in the larger work of *Fables*. They are known for their beauty and, by implication, their gentleness. In the poem, the Duchess is harbinger of the Duke's arrival to Ireland:

Hibernia, prostrate at your feet, ador'd,
In you, the pledge of her expected lord,
Due to her isle; a venerable name;
His father and his grandsire known to fame:
Aw'd by that house, accustom'd to command,
The sturdy kerns in due subjection stand,
Nor hear the reins in any foreign hand. (53-59)

Ireland greets Mary Somerset in expectation of her husband, the Duke of Ormond, "For Venus is the promise of the sun" (63). Alan Roper asserts that this sun is allegory for the King, and that this arrival of an ideal, almost mythological couple is in stark contrast to the royal couple in England.²¹⁵ However, it seems possible that the duchess could represent, rather than counter, the image of the Queen. Mary II legitimated William III. She also allowed England to consent to a Dutchman as its King, since she was a Stuart, and therefore they did not "hear the reins in any foreign hand."²¹⁶ "That house" that commands awe could be applied to the House of Orange, to which William III's "father and his grandsire" were the most recent cornerstones before him. It also could be applied

²¹⁵ Dryden's *Poetical Kingdoms* 119.

²¹⁶ The California edition points out that Dryden took this line from Georgics I, 514: *neque audit currus habenas*. Augustus, adopted son of Julius, is the one who can make the horse hear the reins, and who can end the strife of war. Augustus is the adopted, not the biological, son. William III is son-in-law to James II. The fact that Mary II was James II's oldest child, and the presumed heir for years, prior to the birth of James III, was the justification for asking William III to assume the throne.

to the Stuarts, descendants of the Plantagenets, the family to which William and Mary both belonged.

Dryden's use of Joan of Kent and Mary Somerset is interesting in light of similarities they share with Mary II:

Like her, of equal kindred to the throne,
You keep her conquests, and extend your own. ("To the Dutchess" 19-20)

**

Thus, after length of ages, she returns,
Restor'd in you, and the same place adorns;
Or you perform her office in the sphere,
Born of her blood, and make a new Platonic year. ("To the Dutchess" 26-29)

Like Joan of Kent in the poem, Mary II is "of equal kindred to the throne," second in line to inherit it, after James's newborn son. According to Dryden, the Duchess "performs" the "office" of Joan of Kent. Mary II "performs" the "office" of English queen, like Elizabeth I did before her. She also could be said to "perform" an "office" similar to that of Joan of Kent, who as mother to King Richard was involved in advising her son in national affairs. Likewise, Mary II was involved in the government of her husband the King, and held parliament during his lengthy absences when he was on the continent and in the battlefield.

If Mary Somerset's lineage is meant to allude to the Stuarts as well as the Tudors and Plantagenets in this poem, these allusions add a particularly bittersweet irony to the image of the dove sent forth from the ark. Charles II was the "royal dove" in the

Prologue to The Unhappy Favourite (1682):

When first the ark was landed on the shore,
And Heaven had vow'd to curse the ground no more;

**

The dove was sent to view the waves decrease,
And first brought back to man the pledge of peace.
'T is needless to apply when those appear

Who bring the olive, and who plant it here.

**

The ark is open'd to dismiss the train,
And people with a better race the plain. (1-2; 5-8; 11-12)

Compare the similar images in "To the Dutchess":

The waste of civil wars, their towns destroy'd,
Pales unemploy'd, Ceres unemploy'd,
Were all forgot; and one triumphant day
Wip'd all the tears of three campaigns away.
Blood, rapines, massacres, were cheaply bought,
So mighty recompense your beauty brought.
As when the dove returning bore the mark
Of earth restor'd to the long-lab'ring ark,
The relics of mankind, secure of rest,
Op'd ev'ry window to receive the guest,
And the fair bearer of the message bless'd; (64-74)

Rather than an olive branch and promise of peace, Mary Somerset brings beauty as a peaceful emblem, "so mighty recompense" that blood and massacres as payment are a bargain. In "To the Dutchess," Dryden recalls the wars in Ireland, but the images could describe as easily the English civil war, particularly if he is implying that England forgot so quickly the price of executing their king, "so cheaply bought," and was willing to overthrow the monarchy again in exchange for Mary II and the promise of a Protestant England. Noah and his family are "the relics of mankind" in the later poem, rather than the "better race," as Dryden characterizes those who arrive with Charles. If Mary II replaces Mary Somerset, and England Ireland, in this metaphor, she assures "rest" for England's future, but the "relics of mankind" are weary, and in light of the *Prologue* from 1682, this is a diminished conclusion, rather than a hopeful beginning.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Dryden also reshapes his own images of Charles II in *Astraea Redux* to fit lines about Mary Somerset "To her Grace the Dutchess." First, Portunus safeguards both (cf. *Astraea Redux* 120-24 and "To the Dutchess" 48-50). Additionally, the land of England rises to meet Charles II in one poem, and Ireland greets Mary Somerset in the other:

At the time of *Prologue to the Unhappy Favourite*, however, it must be remembered that the period of hopeful beginnings had passed, and the earlier poem also contains images of “civil broils,” with a warning not to allow their recurrence. Though the date of the King and Queen’s attendance of the play for which the prologue was written is uncertain, it is possible that it was shortly after the King’s return from the Oxford Parliament, and certainly it was in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis. Political turmoil again is described in terms of a storm, and it suits the temperament of the nation:

Must England still the scene of changes be,
Toss’d and tempestuous, like our ambient sea?
Must still our weather and our wills agree?

**

What civil broils have cost we knew too well;
O let it be enough that once we fell,
And every heart conspire with every tongue,
Still to have such a king, and this king long! (*Prologue to the Unhappy Favourite*
18-20; 31-34)

In this passage, however, there is no indication of anything “cheaply bought.” The image of the dove goes back to the Restoration, and the Prologue shows us how close England has come to shattering all those early hopes, as Dryden had expressed them in *Astraea Redux*. If Mary’s beauty, or Protestantism, brought peace, it is likely that Dryden considered it to have been purchased at great cost.

Behold th’approaching cliffs of Albion:
It is no longer motion cheats your view,
As you meet it, the land approacheth you.
The land returns, and in the white it wears
The marks of penitence and sorrow bears. (*Astraea Redux* 251-55)

~~

The land, if not restrain’d, had met your way,
Projected out a neck, and juttet to the sea. (“To the Dutchess” 51-52)

In *Astraea Redux*, England rushes to its king in penitence. In “To the Dutchess,” the land would meet her if it weren’t restrained, despite her beloved status.

This deliberate layering of images from past poems to add meaning to a present work is characteristic of Dryden's writing. It also is an example of artistic detachment, to combine past and present poetry in order to reflect a meaningful historical pattern. A final image of rebellion links *Prologue to the Unhappy Favourite* and "To the Dutchess." In the *Prologue* dedicated to King Charles, we read: "Our land's an Eden" (27). "All that our monarch would for us ordain / Is but t'injoy the blessings of his reign" (25-26). This line, in turn, echoes *Absalom and Achitophel*:

Achitophel, grown weary to possess
A lawful fame, and lazy happiness,
Disdain'd the golden fruit to gather free,
And lent the crowd his arm to shake the tree. (200-203)

It must be pointed out that the tragic protagonist in *The Unhappy Favourite* was the Earl of Essex, the would-be usurper of Elizabeth I. The Earl's troubles began with a failed commission in Ireland, where he served in the same position that the Duke of Ormond sought, and in which his forefathers served.

The application of the historical play, first performed in 1682, to the troubles of the Exclusion Crisis, is obvious enough. Dryden may be using this same material to create political meaning in "To the Dutchess." If Mary Somerset represents Mary II in "To the Dutchess," then the content of the play about rebellion adds further significance to Dryden's description of the Duchess's illness in those same terms, particularly since smallpox was considered by many to be Mary II's punishment for her rebellion against

her father.²¹⁸ The trope of comparing physical health to the health of the state was a common one:²¹⁹

Now past the danger, let the learn'd begin
Th' enquiry where disease could enter in;
**

Which of the four ingredients could rebel;
And where, imprison'd in so sweet a cage,
A soul might well be pleas'd to pass an age. ("To the Dutchess" 111-112; 117-119)

Dryden follows these passages with the often quoted allusion to William III's request for a standing army, thereby further suggesting a parallel between the duchess's illness and the body politic:

A subject in his prince may claim a right,
Nor suffer him with strength impair'd to fight;
Till force returns, his ardor we restrain,
And curb his warlike wish to cross the main. ("To the Dutchess" 107-110)

Charles's subjects do not know how to enjoy the Eden he has provided, and something within Mary Somerset has rebelled against her "faultless frame," and denied itself the pleasure of "so sweet a cage." Rebellion is the common thread.

Mary Somerset's lack of a son, and Dryden's explicit references to her missing heir, creates another parallel to Mary II. So does the elaborate metaphor about needlework, a symbol of nobility, and a craft in which both women excelled. Mary II's childlessness as well as her smallpox were considered punishments by God.²²⁰ Dryden's compliment in the poem that compares the Duchess's art to that of Penelope and Dido

²¹⁸ *POAS* 5:439.

²¹⁹ See Roper, *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms* 122, where Roper compares the Duchess's illness to the Irish civil war and her ability to "inspire harmony into the sick body politic of Ireland." On 124, Roper compares Dryden's physical health to the economic health of the nation in "To My Honour'd Kinsman."

²²⁰ Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 45.

cements her heroic status.²²¹ Likewise, Mary II also was known for her love of needlework, and satirists used the image of the Queen's embroidery against her husband when he lost all composure after her death. The first burlesque of George Stepney's elegy for the queen included this passage:

Sure Death's a Jacobite that thus bewitches;
His soul wears petticoats, and hers the breeches.
Alas! Alas! we've erred in our commanders:
Will should have knotted, and Moll gone for Flanders. (*POAS* 5: 445)

Allusions to Helen of Troy and epic warfare throughout "To the Dutchess" make clear the extent to which the Duchess is an embodiment of political themes. Dryden begins by comparing Chaucer to Homer and Virgil: "He match'd their beauties, where they most excel; / Of love sung better, and of arms as well" (5-6). He then transitions into a comparison of the Duchess with Joan of Kent, but the beauty to whom he refers could also be Helen:

...behold,
What pow'r the charms of beauty had of old;
Nor wonder if such deeds of arms were done,
Inspir'd by two fair eyes, that sparkled like your own." (7-10)

These eyes "rul'd the rival nations," and "three contending princes made her prize" (15-16). The duchess here evokes thoughts of beauty first, but also of war, power and rebellion. This is reinforced by the comparison in the first lines of the poem to Emily, who also is an emblem of beauty and the cause of war and rebellion. Penelope's knitting and unknitting sets the stage for the slaughter to come, and "Elisa's" encounter with

²²¹ Roper *Dryden's Poetic Kingdoms* 124. See Dryden:
All is your lord's alone; ev'n absent, he
Employs the care of chaste Penelope.
For him your curious needle paints the flow'rs;
Such works of old imperial dames were taught;
Such, for Ascanius, fair Elisa wrought. ("To the Dutchess" 157-62)

Cupid, disguised as Ascanius, is a portrayal of deception that brings about her personal and political demise, while “old imperial dames” and “fair Elisa” evoke an image of the powerful queen as Dido.

Dryden’s letter to the Duchess, dated “The first day of winter, 1698,” makes even more explicit what already was clear in the poem. Dryden combines the personal with the historical, and connects the Duchess not only with her Plantagenet ancestry, but with William of Orange:

What Ireland was before your coming Thither I cannot tell, but I am sure you have brought over one manufacture thither which is not of the growth of the country, and that is beauty. But at the same time, you have impoverished your Native Land by taking more away than you have left behind. We Jacobites have no more reason to thank you than we have our present King who has enriched Holland with the wealth of England. If this be all the effect of his going over the water for a whole Summer together and of your Graces leaving us for a much longer time, we have reason to complain if not of both, yet at least of one of you for the Sun has never Shone on us since you went into Eclipse on Ireland, and if we have another Such a yeare we shall have a famine of Beauty as well as Bread, for if the last be the Staff of Life to the rest of the World the first is so to the Nation of Poets; who feed only at the eyes. (*Works 7*: 629)

In the letter, Mary Somerset’s “beauty” refers first to her physical appearance, and secondly to her appreciation of the arts, specifically Dryden’s poetry. When she goes to Ireland, she takes both versions of beauty with her. Dryden parallels her departure with that of William III to Holland, who takes with him the “wealth of England” in more ways than one when he “crosses the water for a whole Summer together.” That Dryden frames William’s departure in the form of a lover’s complaint to the Duchess flatters both of them. The Duchess, who gave Dryden £500 for the poem he wrote in her honor, is both “Beauty” and “Bread” to the poet, though he makes it clear that he prefers her company to her financial support. William represents, in part, the “Bread” of the nation, and

Dryden's compliment to the Duchess implies that William's presence and absence has a direct correlation to England's abundance or "famine." In his opening address, Dryden complains that the Duchess's decisions have affected him personally, yet he further compliments her in his assumption that her actions have an impact on history, though he pretends to expect her to care more about him, as represented by "the poor English," than any sort of large trajectory:

But you Plantagenets never think of these mean Concernments; the whole race of you have been given to make voyages into the Holy Land to Conquer Infidells or at least to Subdue France without caring what becomes of your naturall subjects the poor English. (*Works* 7: 629)

Edward I was the Plantagenet who took part in the Crusades as Prince of England. While he was away, his father, King Henry III, died, and England waited for two years for Edward I to return and assume the throne. Edward III, as explored in the first chapter, led efforts to "subdue France." William's Wars aimed to do the same.

By creating these patterns that connect Mary Somerset to the Plantagenets, to Charles II, and to themes of power and usurpation that were relevant to both the Plantagenets and to the Stuarts, Dryden addresses through Mary Somerset the issues that were at the heart of William and Mary's reign: for many, the king and queen were symbols of usurpation and rebellion; for others, they were harbingers of stability, and ultimately peace. The same dilemma arose over Henry IV's assumption to the throne, and it seems that Dryden evokes unresolved historical questions: was it justifiable to overthrow Richard II? Was the overthrow, which helped England in the short term, the source of the subsequent War of the Roses, and a punishment on the country? These patterns are an example of the distance Dryden is able to enforce on his own perspective. At one level, "To the Dutchess" is a gallant piece of flattery to a patroness, but Dryden

was incapable, at least in *Fables*, of writing such a piece without connecting this unpromising material with some of the burning political issues of his own time, and then seeing those questions in terms of a much larger pattern of English history. A Hack could write the flattery. It took a major poet to situate it in such a context. Like Numa, who sees in himself a continuation of the great heroes Helenus and Aeneas, or like Nestor, who gives the Greek warriors in Ovid's *Book XII* a context with which to compare their bravery, blood and dust, Dryden is creating a palimpsest of English greatness and bravery, but also of power and betrayal. And by perceiving these patterns in all their subtlety and writing of them as even-handedly as he does, Dryden has transcended both satire and panegyric without sacrificing personal concern or patriotism.

Shakespeare's plays interpret history as an inevitable cycle of events: punishment must be endured before the subsequent Tudors and England can prosper. Dryden is provoking some of the same questions, though without a sense of resolution, in his arrangement of patterns as they apply to the Stuarts. His final fable, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, seems inapposite to Shakespeare's history plays. Of course it contains no overt allusions to English history, but it plays a prominent role as the final fable, and its conclusion seems like a cruel parody of all expressions of peace and harmony in *Fables* prior to it. There seem to be no repercussions for Cymon's crime. Dryden packs years into the final lines of the fable, bringing to mind his own characterization of Ovid's summary of the Trojan War in the headnote of Ovid *XII*, where he writes that "the poet naturally falls in to the story of the Trojan war, which is summ'd up in the present book, but so very briefly, in many places, that Ovid seems more short than Virgil, contrary to his usual style" (406). Ovid's summary shows the repetitive and destructive patterns of

revenge, whether in the story of the Lapiths and Centaurs, or with Achilles, or with Poseidon, who kills Achilles to revenge Cygnus's death, bringing the fable back full circle to the opening event, where Achilles conquers and kills Cygnus. The fable also provides three versions of hard-earned, if uneasy, peace and resolution.²²² *Cymon and Iphigenia* begins as a story about the civilizing power of love, and ends peacefully, but the events that lead up to that peace are meant to make the reader bridle at the resolution. At the start of the tale, we identify with Cymon, but that identification grows less and less as the story unfolds, until it disappears entirely. Dryden has taken his audience through a detailed story of Cymon's flourishing under the influence of love, and of the disastrous consequences of that growth gone awry and of the bloody war in the midst of a wedding feast. He then steps back and concludes with the economy he credits to Ovid in *Book XII*. Where formerly the audience experienced the action with Cymon, the conclusion provides distance in its summary:

In safety landed on the Candian shore,
 With generous wines their spirits they restore:
 There Cymon with his Rhodian friend resides;
 Both court, and wed at once the willing brides.
 A war ensues, the Cretans own their cause,
 Stiff to defend their hospitable laws:
 Both parties lose by turns; and neither wins,
 Till peace propounded by a truce begins.
 The kindred of the slain forgive the deed,
 But a short exile must for show precede:
 The term expir'd, from Candia they remove,
 And happy each at home enjoys his love. (*Cymon and Iphigenia* 629-40)

²²²*Ovid XII* concludes with three consecutive versions of peace: in Nestor's story, Caeneus is covered with rocks by the Centaurs, but turns to a golden bird and escapes, after which the Lapiths end the war by chasing off the Centaurs; Tlelopemus resents Nestor's omission of his father Hercules in the story, and Nestor justifies his silence while emphasizing that "'tis peace with thee" regarding his attitude and actions towards Tlelopemus (760); after Achilles' death, which concludes *Ovid XII*, Ajax and Ulysses prepare for a debate, rather than a joust, in which they will attempt to persuade the court that one or the other merits Pelides' armour.

The distance created by the conclusion is by no stretch of the imagination “philosophical.” There is instead a cynicism and almost an emotional anesthesia. Peace, it seems, requires forgetting, even by “the kindred of the slain.” The same was required of Nestor after Hercules murdered his siblings, but with Nestor it was possible to see his reconciliation with the future, if not the past, in his relationship with Tlelopemus. Peace, in this instance, certainly is not golden, and perhaps is due to weariness, but nevertheless it is peace. It is possible that this is a peace like the Peace of Ryswick, reached only after all sides lose and no one wins. It also could be a resignation to the Glorious Revolution. Typical of a fable, the moral belies the actual sentiment of the story. “And happy each at home enjoys his love” sounds like a fairy tale ending, but this peace is the sort that comes after the sorrowful acknowledgement that a truce, however painful, is better than an endless cycle of revenge.

CONCLUSION

Peace, then, is an ambiguous and even contradictory concept within *Fables*. There is the peace of Cymon and Iphigenia, a peace that has nothing to do with justice and everything to do with weariness. There is Rubens' version of peace as represented by a reconciliation of Venus and Mars, a passionate love that ties opposing forces in harmony. *The Secular Masque* presents Diana as the symbol of a peaceful beginning, and *Palamon and Arcite* equates Diana with Emily's innocence. But, Diana vanishes (and peace along with her) with the prospect of Emily's pending marriage. Art, manifested in the elaborate orchestrations of the tourney, and innocence cannot exist simultaneously, and Diana is incompatible with the worldly passions that Venus and Mars can represent. In contrast to Rubens' image of peace, Diana presents an era that is simpler, and innocent, and one that does not last. Emily's chastity, when she prostrates herself before the altar of Diana, is free from the machinations of the world because she has not yet entered it. Her marriage to Palamon, after the Astraea-like Diana vanishes, also is a version of peace, though a very different one. It involves harmony.

Numa and Augustus were the only Roman rulers under whom the gates of Janus were closed, symbolizing a time of peace. Numa's philosophical and meditative approach contrasts with the active nature of John Driden of Chesterton, an emblem of the

peaceful magistrate in the country, and Numa will not even admit that level of violence that is part of the life of the hunting squire. It is with peace as it is with many themes in *Fables*: Dryden embodies a method whereby he introduces one idea first, and then follows by presenting an opposing but equally attractive idea. This opposition throughout *Fables* could cause the work to appear fragmented and contradictory, yet this structure of contrarities also is a fruit of Dryden's experience: after living through a sufficient number of changes, it is possible to see a truth and a counter-truth simultaneously. A poet as experienced as Dryden would be capable of displaying the hunt as an emblem of peace, as well as a symbol that stands in opposition to that same peace. As such, a straightforward view, like that of Ajax in opposition to Ulysses, simply isn't good enough. Dryden proffers millennial rebirth with repeated images of rebellion, lineal descent in opposition to divine election, historical destiny matched against personal tragedy.

By 1700, Dryden had lived through the Commonwealth, the Restoration, the Exclusion Crisis, and the Glorious Revolution. His poetry reflected his thoughts through each of them. Dryden's enemies pegged him early on as a chameleon, stigmatizing his appreciation for complexity, and mocking his flexibility and urbanity in caricatures akin to the famous Mr. Bayes in George Villiers' *The Rehearsal* (1671). His change in opinion from *Religio Laici* to *The Hind and the Panther* was the ideal opportunity for Dryden's opponents to excoriate him: *The Hind and the Panther* was largely despised, and Matthew Prior's *The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd* widely popular. *Fables*' evocation of complexity reflects a central feature of Dryden's temperament. Dryden's self-conscious artistry perceives large patterns, but remains acutely aware of the

individual characters that are part of those patterns, and this is as true when Dryden writes about himself as when he writes about his characters. He doesn't address his own disappointments except indirectly in *The Secular Masque*, a work whose broad sense of historical pattern inhibits any confessional impulse Dryden might have had. Dryden is like Prospero who, when Miranda exclaims that it is a brave new world, replies, well, it's new to you. We may perceive a kind of *taedium vitae* here, but that should not be confused with intellectual enervation or the forfeiture of his responsibilities as a poet and citizen. The complexity of Dryden's vision increasingly militates against simple partisanship, but that leads neither to credulity, nor cynicism, nor quietism. There are accidents and other events that happen against his will, but Dryden does make sense of it all, and turns it into a masque. Like Theseus in *Palamon and Arcite*, Dryden is above the fray in *The Secular Masque*. There is a rollicking meter, almost, and there is no all-embracing vision, but no bitter disappointment, either, at least when compared to *Fables*. In *Fables*, however, we do feel Dryden's bitter disappointment. Even Palamon experiences bitter disappointment, imprisoned by the great king, whose greatness seemed more like tyranny from the prison tower. More important than Palamon's emotions, the audience feels the tragedy of Arcite's death, and perhaps even the helplessness of Emilia, who has no choice in anything as the fable unfolds.

Even though there are images of redemption and reconciliation throughout *Fables*, beginning with the millennial Duchess and the satisfying conclusion of *Palamon and Arcite*, and including stories like that of Baucis and Philemon and Ceyx and Alcyone, Dryden still chooses to end with *Cymon and Iphigenia*. That the three fables preceding the final one are *Of the Pythagorean Philosophy*, *The Character of a Good Parson*, and

“The Monument of a Fair Maiden Lady” makes the shock that we feel when reading *Cymon and Iphigenia* all the more profound. Dryden presents us with Apollonian figures in the preceding three fables, then sends us straight into the maelstrom, provoking the question of just how detached Dryden has become.

Ovid’s Numa is a philosopher, and though he is a king, Numa provides a detached way to embrace change. Change or the passage of time as represented by Numa, however, is almost chemical. It is easier for Numa to take such a stance than it would be for Dryden to do so. At the same time, Numa presents a form of metempsychosis that allows the transfer of patriotism from one spirit to the next, from the heroes of Troy to the heroes of Rome.

Fables and *The Secular Masque* are Dryden’s final statements. Though he was willing to look at the complexity involved in the takeover by William and Mary, he does not relinquish his role as the conscientious nonjuror. Like Nestor, he may appreciate Hercules’ contribution, but he won’t praise him. Like Numa, he recognizes the intractable force of change, but he does not relinquish the power of heroism, celebrated and passed down from Helenus to Aeneas to Numa, and from Julius to his adopted son Augustus. Augustus is a counterpart to Numa. Dryden flattered Charles II in a comparison to Augustus at the Restoration, and many urged Dryden to make a similar parallel to William III through Dryden’s recent translation of *The Aeneid*. Like Numa, Augustus represents peace. But unlike Numa, he achieved his peace through war. He is a conqueror who overthrows the great republic that Virgil cherishes, but ultimately Augustus establishes peace. Numa presented a more perfect ideal. Romulus left a savage people, whom Numa tamed into a great civilization. His Pythagorean principles present a

reverence for life and an aversion from violence that results in an effective denunciation of war. Livy and Plutarch provide precedents for discovering a cynical and manipulative side to Numa's rule, but Dryden does not make use of this tradition.²²³ Similarly, Dryden excludes cynical interpretations of Egeria from his version of Numa. The only involved elements of Numa that Dryden utilizes are his passionate devotion to the idea of change, his reverence for life, and his patriotic ideals that have been preserved in spirit and handed down from the heroes of Troy. Dryden then leads us straight from Numa to Cymon. Cymon's story takes all of the movement in *Fables* towards a philosophical detachment, and turns it inside out. With Cymon, Machiavellian scheming and calculated violence succeed. Cymon moves from rude clown to plausible, and even sincere lover who, when thwarted, is willing to use brutal and widespread violence to force the solution he desires. Cymon's father plays no role in Cymon's formation. He is detached from the tradition and responsibility that comes with noble blood, but the

²²³ Cf. *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. John Dryden (1683) and also *The First Booke of the Histories of Titus Livius of Padoa, from the Foundation of Rome*, trans. Philemon Holland (1600). As Sloman points out in *The Poetics of Translation*, 181-84, both Livy and Plutarch acknowledge Numa as a virtuous and effective ruler, who nevertheless fabricated his divine dispensation in order to instill awe and obedience in his subjects. The veracity of his relationship with Pythagoras is proven false by both authors, and Livy implies that Numa's relationship with Aegeria was part of Numa's propaganda. Sandys, though deferential to the memory of Numa, concurs. Dryden ends his Ovidian imitation before Aegeria is mentioned. In the headnote to the fable, Dryden acknowledges that there are many versions of Numa when he writes that "Ovid following the opinion of some authors, makes Numa the scholar of Pythagoras" (*Works* 7: 484). Sloman acknowledges Numa as an "historical source of popish ceremonies," whom "some important Anglicans" nevertheless defended in an effort to safeguard ceremonies of their own (Sloman 182-83). Reverand, *Dryden's Final Poetic Mode*, writes that "Numa had by tradition been associated with Catholic superstition and popish ceremonies, and people like Sir Robert Filmer were changing him into the prototype of a worthy Anglican," 186-87. For three specific examples of the anti-catholic use of Numa, see: Andrew Marvell's *Oceana and Britannia*, John Allen's *A Defence of the answer made unto the nine questions or positions sent from New-England, against the reply thereto. . . is more largely handled that controversie concerning the catholick, visible church* (1648), and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences* (1676). In his re-making of Numa, Robert Filmer emphasized his banishment of images from temples and other examples of his simple and pious methods. Cf. Robert Filmer, *The Free-holders grand inquest touching our Sovereign Lord the King and his Parliament to which are added observations upon forms of government, together with directions for obedience to governours in dangerous and doubtful times* (1679). See also S.K. Heninger, Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (Los Angeles: Huntington Library, 1974).

conclusion suggests that Cymon and Iphigenia will prosper as happily as did Palamon and Emily before them. To reinforce this disturbing conclusion, Dryden addresses the Duchess at the beginning of *Cymon and Iphigenia*, as he did in the more extended dedication prior to *Palamon and Arcite*.²²⁴ What is disturbing, then, becomes simultaneously reassuring, since the direct address to the Duchess in *Cymon and Iphigenia* brings *Fables* back, full circle, to the beginning lines that compare the Duchess to Emily in *Palamon and Arcite*.

As we have seen, Dryden praises the Duchess and those who came before her for beauty. At the time of publication, *Fables* also was praised foremost for its beauty, and at first glance, the collection of imitations can appear to be an amalgamation of love stories. Ending with translations, as Shakespeare ended with romance in *The Tempest*, is one layer of Dryden's final statement. Both romance and imitation are forms of reconciliation and community. Dryden aligns himself with Shakespeare, and with the artists he imitates, thereby allowing Dryden to evade his own decay by joining a community of artistic immortality. Under the cover of *Fables*, however, Dryden also is free to speculate about issues that he could not let go: the topics addressed in *Absalom and Achitophel* are just as important to Dryden when he writes *Fables*. But Dryden will not reveal his flexibility and earnest reflection again as freely as he did in *The Hind and*

²²⁴ We've seen already the many ways Dryden connects the Duchess of Ormond with Emily in *Palamon and Arcite*. Dryden concludes the *poeta loquitur* of *Cymon and Iphigenia* with the following tribute:

Ormond, the first, and all the fair may find,
In this one legend, to their fame design'd,
When beauty fires the blood, how love exalts the mind. (39-41)

But for the genuine warmth in correspondence between Dryden and the Duchess, these lines preceding the story of Cymon would seem to change to irony all of the lines written in praise of the Duchess. However, both the Noyes and California editions confirm that the general reputations of both the Duke and Duchess of Ormond correlate with Dryden's emphasis on their moral virtues. See also Scott: "The character [of the Duke of Ormond] was not exaggerated." Quoted in Noyes 1024.

the Panther, where he re-examined his initial position in *Religio Laici*. The conclusion of *Cymon and Iphigenia* is unsatisfying emotionally. Numa is presented as an ideal, but perhaps it is one that Dryden can't wholly embrace as a real option, either. Thus, the excerpt focuses on the Pythagorean philosophy, and provides neither panegyric nor satire, but philosophical detachment. The near flippant tone to the conclusion of *Cymon and Iphigenia* would indicate in categorical terms a resolution in cynicism on the part of the poet, but for the *poeta loquitur* of *Cymon and Iphigenia* tied to the Duchess and her millennium, and the equal care with which Dryden treats poems like *Baucis and Philemon* or "My Honour'd Kinsman;" poems that point in a different direction.

In *Fables*, Dryden follows the threads of detachment, and involvement, of passion, of family, of spiritual metempsychosis, of the ramifications of the successful overthrow achieved by William and Mary. But he explores all of these things covertly, through stories and myths, and he doesn't have to come down on one side, or the other. He could rise above the anxieties of the world, and delve into his own personal disappointments simultaneously. When the good parson weighs the merits of Henry IV's cause in a point-by-point analysis, Dryden provides his ultimate resolution regarding the current usurpation. When Dryden adds a lengthy original passage to his imitation of *The Cock and the Fox*, he may provide a summary of his private meanderings:

Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes;
When monarch Reason sleeps, this mimic wakes;
Compounds a medley of disjointed things,
A mob of cobblers, and a court of kings.
Light fumes are merry, grosser fumes are sad;
Both are the reasonable soul run mad:
And many monstrous forms in sleep we see,
That neither were, nor are, nor e'er can be.
Sometimes forgotten things long cast behind
Rush forward in the brain, and come to mind.

The nurse's legends are for truths receiv'd,
And the man dreams but what the boy believ'd.
Sometimes we but rehearse a former play;
The night restores our actions done by day,
As hounds in sleep will open for their prey.
In short the farce of dreams is of a piece,
Chimeras all; and more absurd, or less:
You, who believe in tales, abide alone;
Whate'er I get this voyage is my own.' (*The Cock and the Fox* 325-343)

In this passage, "the farce of dreams is of a piece." In *The Secular Masque*, the ages of man and of time, according to Momus, also are "all, all of a piece throughout"—but they are not dreams. This would be a dismal pronouncement indeed, especially if it were applied to all of the *Fables*. But we remember that the above passage was spoken by the merchant, who dismissed the value of visions, and who drowned shortly after his denunciation. His vessel went down, despite the fact that the sky was blue when he set out. The tale prior to this merchant's also indicates proof that visions must not be ignored, and a warning that all criminal acts will be found out:

Good Heav'n, whose darling attribute we find
Is boundless grace, and mercy to mankind,
Abhors the cruel, and the deeds of night
By wondrous ways reveals in open light;
Murder may pass unpunish'd for a time,
But tardy justice will o'ertake the crime. (*The Cock and the Fox* 281-86)

This proof that actions have consequences comes from the mouth of Chanticleer, however, not from Chaucer or Dryden. What Dryden gives with one hand, he takes with the other. And round it goes. Or, perhaps, it changes.

It appears that Dryden finished *Fables* before February of 1700, and wrote *The Secular Masque* shortly thereafter.²²⁵ Thus, Momus, not Cymon, was the mouthpiece for

²²⁵ "On 11 April 1700 Dryden wrote to his cousin Mrs. Steward, 'Within this moneth there will be playd for my profit, an old play of Fletchers, call'd the Pilgrim, corrected by my good friend Mr Vanbrook [John Vanbrugh]; to which I have added A New Masque, & am to write a New Prologue & Epilogue.' We may

Dryden's last work and words. *The Secular Masque* proved to be profitable to Dryden's family. Dryden wrote the masque, the prologue and the epilogue for John Vanbrugh's version of *The Pilgrim*. Dryden died on the third night, but his son was present at the playhouse, and therefore the benefit remained within the family. The California edition's review of Dryden's final letters, and state of mind, reveals a man who was still very much involved in his own personal affairs:

The letters show that he was living what we may call a normal life for a person like himself. As a literary man he was in touch with affairs in the playhouses, helping in the circulation of harmless lampoons, and afraid that none of his well-wishers in power would be able to override the Lord Chancellor's dislike of him. As a Catholic he was distressed by passage of an "Act for the further preventing the growth of popery," and happy that the land tax would not be heavy. As a practical moralist, he was convinced that a royal proclamation against vice and profaneness would have no more effect than the clergy's dull sermons. As Everyman he was grateful for various small kindnesses, and not very well. A mixture of good and bad, fun and business, hope and cynicism, which is not hard to recognize in his writing for *The Pilgrim* and prevents us from interpreting the pieces in any simple way. (*Works* 16: 420)

Dryden was not a malcontent at the end of his career. He had made amends with old enemies, such as his brother-in-law Sir Robert Howard, and Matthew Prior, whose lampoon of *The Hind and the Panther* had cost Dryden, and for which he suffered. But, Dryden had other adversaries, such as Sir Richard Blackmore and Milbourne, whom he satirizes even in the "memorial of [his] Principles to all Posterity." Nor was Dryden waiting for *Astraea*, as one might expect. What *Fables* seems to reveal is an equal concern on the part of the poet between the historical and the personal, with the

guess that he did not begin *The Secular Masque*, as it came to be titled, or his fourth contribution to the play, the *Song of a Scholar and His Mistress*, until he had finished work on his *Fables*. *Fables* was in press in mid-December 1699 and still in press at the turn of the year; it was advertised for sale in the *Flying Post* of 5-7 March 1700, though Dryden did not receive copies until the 12th. To judge by the signatures in the first edition, the preface to *Fables* was printed last. At its end it counterattacks Sir Richard Blackmore, but without mentioning his *Paraphrase of Job*, which was advertised in the *London Gazette* of 29 February-4 March 1699/1700. Because Dryden denigrates Blackmore's *Job* in the prologue he wrote for *The Pilgrim*, we may conclude that he had finished with *Fables* before the end of February. Perhaps we may also conclude, then, that he wrote all his contributions to *The Pilgrim* in 1700." (16: 419)

importance of passion and the requisite discipline of detachment. What it does not reveal is whether, in the end, Dryden had achieved a detachment akin to Numa, or more likely Theseus, in his ability to rise above the torment,²²⁶ or whether his final analysis of Cymon is also a final, categorical statement that dismisses the power of the ideals that he held dear. Dryden showcases John Driden of Chesterton, but he ends with Cymon. This combination, as the California edition states regarding *The Secular Masque*, is an obstacle to all urges to tie up *Fables* in any sort of tidy way. Perhaps this is one reason why the works Dryden chose to translate also remain enigmatic, as is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or unfinished, as is *Canterbury Tales*, or an elaborate escape mechanism, as in *The Decameron*, whose characters tell stories while the plague rages on. Perhaps this also lends a partial reply to the question of mixing of genres in *Fables*, and the difficulty in transferring ideas from one fable to the next. But, partial replies are all that Dryden allows.

²²⁶ Cf. Theseus's final speech:
What then remains, but, after past annoy,
To take the good vicissitude of joy?
To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
Possess our souls, and while we live, to live? ("Palamon and Arcite" III.1111-14)

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