ON THE PASSIONS OF KINGS: TRAGIC TRANSGRESSORS OF THE SOVEREIGN'S DOUBLE BODY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH THEATRE

by

POLLY THOMPSON MANGERSON

(Under the Direction of Francis B. Assaf)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to examine the importance of the concept of sovereignty in seventeenth-century Baroque and Classical theatre through an analysis of six representations of the "passionate king" in the tragedies of Théophile de Viau, Tristan L'Hermite, Pierre Corneille, and Jean Racine. The literary analyses are preceded by critical summaries of four theoretical texts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to establish a politically relevant definition of sovereignty during the French absolutist monarchy. These treatises imply that a king possesses a double body: physical and political. The physical body is mortal, imperfect, and subject to passions, whereas the political body is synonymous with the law and thus cannot die. In order to reign as a true sovereign, an absolute monarch must reject the passions of his physical body and act in accordance with his political body. The theory of the sovereign's double body provides the foundation for the subsequent literary study of tragic drama, and specifically of king-characters who fail to fulfill their responsibilities as sovereigns by submitting to their human passions. This juxtaposition of political theory with dramatic literature demonstrates how the king-character's transgressions against his political body contribute to the

tragic aspect of the plays, and thereby to the development of seventeenth-century tragedy during the Baroque and Classical periods.

INDEX WORDS: Tragedy, Sovereignty, Passion, Double Body, Seventeenth Century, France, Theatre, Baroque, Classical, Corneille, Racine, Théophile de Viau, Tristan L'Hermite, Bodin, Loyseau, Le Bret, Senault, Cinna, Auguste, Octave, Pyrame, Thisbé, Le Roi, Hérode, Marianne, Rodogune, Cléopâtre, Andromaque, Pyrrhus, Oreste, Mithridate, Iphigénie, Agamemnon

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

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December 2015

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INTRODUCTION

"Mais parmi tant d'honneurs, vous êtes homme enfin."

-Jean Racine, *Iphigénie* (I.i 32, Arcas to Agamemnon)

This dissertation analyzes the importance of the representation of the king's double body in seventeenth-century French tragedy through the juxtaposition of political theory and dramatic literature. The objective of my study is to demonstrate how the concept of sovereignty as understood during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV was developed by dramatists to create a vehicle for successful tragedy that was at the same time compatible with the notion of royal glory. The idea of the king's double body – physical and political – and more specifically of the physical body's transgressions against the political body, functions as a guiding force for the action of these plays, and serves inversely to glorify the true monarch by comparison.

My study draws its original inspiration from the work of Francis Assaf. In the first part of his book *La mort du roi: une thanatographie de Louis XIV* (1999), Assaf summarizes several theoretical texts dating from the late Medieval period through the end of the seventeenth century in order to establish that the French absolute monarch possesses a double body – physical and political. The king's physical body is mortal and imperfect, whereas his political body is inseparable from the state and thus cannot die: "Le roi est mort, vive le roi!" Assaf's work builds upon the hypothesis of the double body presented by Ernst Kantorovicz in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957) in order to extend this theory to seventeenth-century France. Assaf applies his revised definition of the double body to analyze the texts associated with the death of Louis XIV. My study further develops Assaf's approach

by reading many of the same treatises cited in *La mort du roi* from an entirely different perspective. Rather than using political theory to explain the lingering in death of the king's political body, I rely on the theory of the sovereign's double body as a basis for my literary analysis of the representation of the passionate king-character in Baroque and Racinian tragedy.

The portrayal of the king in seventeenth-century theatre has been widely addressed in modern literary criticism. As both Jean-Marie Apostolidès (*Le roi-machine, Le prince sacrifié*) and Louis Marin (*Le portrait du roi, La parole mangée*) argue in their respective writings, the absolute monarch is synonymous with his image, and this image is most effectively communicated through art. This is particularly true for theatre, since all "official" theatrical performances were part of the permanent endeavor to glorify the king and reinforce the legitimacy of his power. In conformity with both the Aristotelian model of the *Poetics* and the principle of *bienséances*, seventeenth-century French tragedy abounds with king-stories, and, consequentially, many of its most iconic characters are dramatic illustrations of royal power. My current research differs from previous scholarship in three ways. Firstly, my literary analyses are preceded by an intensive study of absolutist political theory: in order to appreciate the role of the king in theatre, it is essential to understand his position in the State. This is why my dissertation begins with a detailed historical description of the ideal sovereign's rights, responsibilities, and character. Secondly, I choose to focus on the specific characters that fail to achieve sovereign status as defined in the theoretical texts, forging a unique connection between tyranny and tragedy. Finally, rather than concentrating on the complete works of a single playwright, my study addresses the theme of the transgressive sovereign in a selection of tragedies from Théophile de Viau (1590-1626), Tristan L'Hermite (1601-55), Pierre Corneille (1606-84), and Jean Racine (1639-99), thereby demonstrating that the evolution of the idea of king's double

body mirrors the development of the tragic king-character over the course of the seventeenth century. My research identifies the intersection of passions and sovereignty as an important element in defining seventeenth-century tragedy in both a literary and political context.

My first chapter presents the theory and methods of this study by explaining the origins and evolution of the king's double body and how this concept translates into neoclassical theatre. This chapter includes a critical summary of the works of four principal political theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Jean Bodin (1530-1596), Charles Loyseau (1564-1627), Cardin Le Bret (1558-1655), and Jean-François Senault (1599-1672), without, however, overlooking their medieval predecessors' pioneering efforts. I begin with *Les Six livres de la République* (1576) by the jurist Jean Bodin, a text that signals the beginning of the absolute monarchy in France. Written during the Wars of Religion (1562-98), Bodin's treatise marks the transition from a Christomimetic model of kingship (which assimilates the king to a Christ-like figure) to a juricentric model (centered on the law and the relationship of the monarch to it). Bodin re-organizes the commonwealth around a single sovereign power, most effectively executed in the person of the monarch. A generation later, Charles Loyseau develops the juricentric structure proposed by Bodin's *Six livres* in his *Traité des seigneuries* (1608), *Cinq livres du droit des offices* (1609), and *Traité des ordres et simples dignités* (1610). Loyseau solidifies the absolute political authority of the king, who becomes solely responsible for delegating his sovereign power back through the administrators of his kingdom. Loyseau's more rigorous definition of absolutist monarchy paves the way for the *Conseiller d'État* Cardin Le Bret's *De la souveraineté du roi* (1632), in which the scope of the king's authority has expanded to fully encompass his realm. The king *is* the law and he embodies the state, hence the origins of Louis XIV's famously reputed declaration: "L'état, c'est moi." As the incarnation of his

kingdom, the sovereign can only be good and just. Now that his "political body" has been established, the monarch must strive to maintain its health and prosperity and ensure its immortality. In order to reign effectively, he must reject, or at least rein in, the human desires of his physical body, insofar as they can interfere with the functionality of his political body. The Oratorian Jean-François Senault's *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* (1661) addresses the monarch's responsibilities to himself, to God, and to his people, emphasizing the imperative need to shun passions and pursue justice.

It is into this potential conflict of interest between political body and physical body, between absolute power and human vulnerability, that tragic drama intervenes. After painting the portrait of the ideal sovereign through a sequential analysis of the writings of Bodin, Loyseau, Le Bret, and Senault, I shift my focus to explain how this image of the king is communicated into theatre. I refer to the Abbé D'Aubignac's *La Pratique du théâtre* (1657) and Aristotle's *Poetics* to explain how the duality of the king's person complements the seventeenth-century prescriptions for the tragic character. As an example of the theatrical representation of the sovereign's double body, I present a brief analysis of Pierre Corneille's Roman tragedy *Cinna* (1642), in which the king-character Octave, who bears only a name referring to his physical body, successfully liberates himself from his human passions in order to assume his political body, Auguste. The character of Octave/Auguste provides an essential counter-example for the king-characters that will be analyzed in the second and third chapters of my study. For whereas Auguste succeeds in reigning over himself, embodying the image of the true sovereign as defined by the political theorists and softening the tragic *dénouement* of *Cinna*, my subsequent subjects of study are all characterized by their submission to the passions of their physical bodies, which ensures the tragic outcome of the plays. I argue that these conflicted sovereigns

are as effective, if not more so, in creating successful tragedy, for their transgressions against their political bodies are more conducive to the evocation of fear and pity that is essential to catharsis.

The second chapter of my dissertation examines three plays from the Baroque period: *Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* (1623) by Théophile de Viau, *La Marianne* (1636) by Tristan L'Hermite, and *Rodogune* (1647) by Pierre Corneille. This compilation of plays is unique because it assembles a very diverse group of dramatists around a common theme, and unites three very different king-characters around a common tragic flaw – their inability to overcome their passions. In this sense, the structure of the chapter itself could be considered Baroque. For when we think of "Baroque", diversity and complexity are two of the keywords that traditionally characterize this artistic movement. In his article "L'imaginaire baroque," J.-J. Wunenburger also defines the Baroque aesthetic as an alternation of nocturnal and diurnal imagery,[1] generating what Wunenburger calls a disseminatory pole that creates an artistic representation of a reality that coexists with illusion, "dans le choc des mondes à l'endroit et à l'envers" (Wunenburger 93). In the case of these three Baroque king-characters, the illusion of sovereignty transforms into the reality of tyranny, and the illusion of a political order morphs into a tragic state of disorder because of the crimes of the tyrant who is controlled by passions of his (or her) physical body. For example, although the anonymous monarch "Le Roi" in *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* declares himself to be aware of his sovereign status, he is completely consumed by his desire for Thisbé and obsessionally compelled to assassinate an innocent subject. Likewise Hérode in *La Marianne*, although he has successfully fought to establish an empire, is driven to murder and madness because of his unrequited love for Marianne, a passion that is intensely conflictual with the terror he experiences at having

[1] As proposed by Gilbert Durand in *Les Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (1960).

murdered her brother Aristobule. Finally, while *Rodogune*'s Cléopâtre manages to forge a temporary political body for herself as queen regent, she cannot overcome her ambition and jealousy in order to pass her kingdom to her sons, and she resorts instead to infanticide and suicide, doubtless seen by the spectator as a horrendous consequence of her disregard for Salian law. These powerful rulers reveal themselves to be powerless against the influence of their physical bodies, and their failure to behave as true sovereigns triggers death, destruction, and chaos in each of these plays, which, of course, is what generates tragedy.

My third and final content chapter discusses the importance of the passionate monarch in three tragedies by Jean Racine – *Andromaque* (1667), *Mithridate* (1673), and *Iphigénie* (1674). The function of the king-character in Racinian drama is more difficult to determine and requires a far more nuanced critique, for the question of the nature of sovereignty is not as overtly addressed as in the Baroque plays. These kings are not as blatantly tyrannical as their predecessors: neither Pyrrhus, Mithridate, nor Agamemnon fully morphs into a murderous abuser of royal power. But neither are any of them ever granted the illusion of embodying the ideal sovereign, nor do they seem aware of their failing. On the contrary, they battle their passions alongside their equally passion-stricken subjects and with much less hope of ever overcoming their physical bodies (such is the beauty of Racine). My analyses reveal that the representation of the king's double body, while not as obvious in Racinian drama as in Cornelian drama, remains just as critical to the tragic success of Racine's plays. For example, in my comparison of the Epirean king Pyrrhus with the Greek ambassador Oreste in *Andromaque*, the passion of Pyrrhus for Andromaque drives the action of the play, and his death reverses an entire political order, whereas the passion of Oreste for Hermione only serves to drive Oreste mad. In *Mithridate*, the title character suffers from a jealous curiosity that ultimately claims his life and

destabilizes the future of his hard-won (and already damaged) empire. And in *Iphigénie*, Agamemnon's weakness and indecision cause him to lose his sovereign voice as High King of the Greeks. The respective *dénouements* of these three tragedies all coincide with a literal or figurative relinquishment of the transgressive king-character's sovereign status. In the case of Pyrrhus and Mithridate, the political body is forcefully separated from the physical body through death and transferred to a successor. In the case of Agamemnon, his political status remains outwardly preserved, but his sovereign authority is severely diminished at the end of the play. I conclude this chapter with the observation that the Racinian avatar of the sovereign's double body becomes inherently more human than his Baroque counterpart, and that he is incapable of reigning fully in either his physical or political bodies.

In conclusion, my study seeks to incorporate theory and tragedy, politics and passions, in order to highlight the evolution of the representation of the sovereign's double body in tragic drama over the course of the French seventeenth century. This dissertation provides a valuable perspective to the criticism of Baroque and Racinian theatre that can potentially be extended in the future to shed light on the role of the transgressive sovereign in both post-Classical tragedy and Molierian comedy.

CHAPTER 1

THE SOVEREIGN'S DOUBLE BODY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE: THEORY AND APPLICATION

Before presenting the concept of sovereignty in the context of the French seventeenth century, and as it will be significant in my subsequent literary analyses, it is first important to discuss the evolution of the idea of sovereignty and of how it came to be invested wholly in the person of the king of France. To understand who *le roi* was and why the representation of his double body was of such great relevance in theatre, it is useful to understand the origins of French seventeenth-century absolutist theory. This chapter provides a critical summary of four treatises from the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth in order to establish a cohesive and politically relevant definition of kingship during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. I then proceed to demonstrate how this definition of the sovereign's double body translates into tragic drama, and specifically how the submission of the king-character to the passions of his physical body functions as a vehicle for tragic action.

Jean Bodin, *Les Six livres de la République* (1576)

As Ernst Kantorovicz brilliantly explains in his canonical text *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957), the idea of the sovereign's double body originates well before the French seventeenth century. I will begin my own study, then, not with the theorists writing during the reigns of the second and third Bourbons (during which all of the plays to be examined in this dissertation were published and performed), but with a summary and analysis of *Les Six livres de la République* by the French jurist Jean Bodin (1530-1596), written

in 1576 during the reign of the last Valois monarch Henri III. This is an essential text for defining the concept of sovereignty as it would be understood a century later, for Bodin's work builds a bridge between the medieval theories of kingship that preceded his study[2] and the seventeenth-century French *politologues* who would follow him. For example, certain aspects of Bodin's philosophy on sovereignty reflect the ideas already proposed by John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus* (c. 1159) and Jean de Terrevermeille in his *Tractatus* (1418-1419), while at the same time announcing the subsequent variations that would be presented in the works of Charles Loyseau (1610) and Cardin Le Bret (1632). The *Six livres* represent the transition from Christo-mimetic and Christocentric perspectives on sovereignty, in which the king serves a liturgical function as the vicar of Christ,[3] to a more juricentric model, in which it is not only God but also the law that upholds the king's power. For this reason, Bodin's treatise is often credited with signaling the beginning of absolutism in France.[4]

To provide some perspective on the political climate within which *Les Six livres de la République*[5] were composed, this text was heavily influenced by the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) and written in the wake of the bloody St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (August 24, 1572). This period of violence and political instability had an undeniable effect on Bodin's writings, as his earlier texts had advocated a more pluralistic view of sovereign power.[6] As M.J.

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[2] Kantorowicz provides a thorough description of medieval theories of kingship in Western Europe in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. For the purposes of my study, I have chosen to formally begin with Bodin, whose treatise carries a visible trace of the Christomimetic philosophies that preceded the *Six livres* (to which I will periodically refer as applicable during my analysis).

[3] According to the writings of the Norman Anonymous (c.1100) as summarized by Kantorowicz, the divinely appointed king is characterized as a "twin person" (46), a hybrid of holy and human, who functions as "the perfect impersonator of Christ on earth. Since the king's divine model is at once God and man, the royal christomimetes has to correspond to that duplication" (58).

[4] See Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (1973), and Preston King, *The Ideology of Order* (1999).

[5] Translated in English as *The Six Books of the Commonwealth.*

[6] Here I refer more specifically to the *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566), which preceded the *Six livres* and is treated in the second chapter of Franklin.

Tooley states in the introduction to his English translation of the *Six livres*:[7] "Civil war inspired him with a horror of rebellion and the anarchy that comes in its train" (xi-xii). With France no longer united under a single church, Bodin attempts to find a new stabilizing structure to bring the people together and restore order to the country – *la République* (otherwise known as the state or commonwealth) which exists to promote a good and virtuous life for its citizens. Bodin defines a *République* as "Un droit gouvernement de plusieurs ménages, et de ce qui leur est commun, avec puissance souveraine" (I.i). Simply put, the state is composed of families centered on a sovereign power, which can take several forms, and be held by one or multiple entities. Bodin specifically recognizes three types of commonwealths – monarchy (government by a single sovereign agent), aristocracy (government by an elite ruling body), and democracy (government by the people). And, as opposed to Aristotle's *Politics*, he acknowledges aristocracy and democracy in order to compare them to monarchy, which he considers the most effective form of government.

According to Bodin, monarchy is natural, because its hierarchy most closely resembles the structure of the family unit, which is the origin of the state, "la vraie source et origine de toute république" (I.ii, 39). As the family has one leader, the father, the state should ideally have a single sovereign. And just as the father is ordained by God and nature to make decisions for the benefit of his children who must obey him in all things, so the sovereign prince is divinely appointed to establish and enforce the law to assure the well-being of his subjects and the prosperity of the kingdom. In his defense of monarchy, Bodin also makes reference to the organization of the human body, which only has one head to direct its members. This organic model had already been linked to monarchical rule more than a century earlier by the

[7] All theoretical texts included in this chapter will be cited in French. Spelling has been modernized, but original capitalization has been respected.

Languedocian jurist Jean de Terrevermeille (c.1370-1430) in his *Tractatus* (1418-1419),[8] in which he describes the king as the *caput* of the *corpus mysticum regni*, or the political body. As Christ is the head of the Church, which constitutes his *corpus mysticum*, so the king is the head of his kingdom in a symbiotic relationship. A body with more than one head is considered a monstrosity, therefore government by more than one entity is likewise monstrous. In this respect, Bodin's dismissal of aristocracy and popular rule align with Terrevermeille's analogy. Bodin plainly states in the final book of the *Six livres*: "toutes les lois de la nature nous guident à la Monarchie" (VI.iv, 186). The king provides his subjects with his protection in exchange for their loyal service and obedience (II.vii). Bodin's version of the *caput* is the axis upon which the commonwealth turns, "le vrai fondement, et le pivot, sur lequel tourne l'état d'une cité" (I.ii, 43).

The eighth and tenth chapters of the first book of the *Six livres* are specifically dedicated to the description of sovereignty. According to Bodin, "La souveraineté est la puissance absolue et perpétuelle d'une République" (I.viii, 179). He defines sovereign power as being both perpetual and absolute. It is perpetual because it has no end – mortal men are only temporary placeholders of the immortal concept of sovereignty. But with this argument a problematic arises: how does one contain an eternal quality within a human agent, the term of whose agency is inevitably limited? Bodin reconciles this dilemma by stipulating that a sovereign prince should maintain his position for life (as opposed to an appointed officer), and that hereditary monarchies are the most sovereign, as they mimic the natural order of the family, allowing a king to pass his sovereignty on to his progeny and thereby to perpetuate beyond his physical death. Hence the oft-repeated statement "Le roi ne meurt jamais."[9]

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[8] As translated from Latin into French by Jean Barbey in *La fonction royale: essence et légitimité d'après les* Tractatus *de Jean de Terrevermeille* (1983).

[9] Kantorowicz credits Bodin as the original author of this phrase (409).

Bodin also defines sovereign power as being absolute, or as having no conditions. To present this idea, he uses the analogy of a gift, saying that a gift given with conditions is neither freely nor fully given. Likewise, a king should be given liberty to dispose of his subjects' goods and persons at his own free will (*à son plaisir*):

> Aussi la souveraineté donnée à un Prince sous charges et conditions, n'est pas proprement souveraineté, ni puissance absolue; si ce n'est que les conditions apposées en la création du Prince, soit de la loi de Dieu ou de nature. (I.viii, 187)

Bodin's seemingly paradoxical reference to the absolute sovereign's "submission" to the laws of God and nature must be addressed, for it is a carryover from medieval theories of kingship, and one that will continue well into the seventeenth-century texts of Loyseau, Le Bret, and Senault. Here, for example, Bodin agrees with his English predecessor John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (c. 1159) by stating that royal power is subject to divine and natural laws. Salisbury suggests this idea in the fourth book of the *Policraticus*, in his definition of the person of the prince:

> In this [the prince's rule], nature, that best guide to living, is to be followed, since it is nature which has lodged all of the senses in the head as a microcosm, that is, a little world, of man, and has subjected to it the totality of members in order that all of them may move correctly provided that the will of a sound head is followed. The prince is the public power and a certain image on earth of divine majesty…Whatever the prince can do, therefore, is from God, so that power does not depart from God, but is used as a substitute for his hand, making all things learn his justice and mercy. (IV.i, Nederman 28)[10]

[10] It is interesting to note here that Salisbury had used the organic head/body model several centuries prior to Jean de Terrevermeille. This is unsurprising as it was originally a Pauline biblical reference (Romans 12, Colossians 1) and therefore an essential element of Christomimetic kingship.

Bodin insists on adherence to divine and natural law much more strongly than Salisbury. Even the most sovereign king must still submit to God, or else he is guilty of *lèse-majesté divine.*

> Si nous disions que c'est de puissance absolue, qui n'est point sujet aux lois, il ne se trouvera prince au monde souverain; vu que tous les princes de la terre sont sujets aux lois de Dieu, et de nature, et à plusieurs lois humaines communes à tous peuples. (I.viii, 190)

Bodin's prince is not, however, subject to the command of any other person, whether magistrate, aristocrat, or feudal prince. As the maker, keeper, enforcer, and changer of laws, he is *legibus solutus*, above human law, with the exception of those specific laws that ensure the existence and perpetuity of his realm:

> Or il faut que ceux-là qui sont souverains ne soient aucunement sujets aux commandements d'autrui, et qu'ils puissent donner loi aux sujets, et casser ou anéantir les lois inutiles, pour en faire d'autres: ce que ne peut faire celui qui est sujet aux lois, ou à ceux qui ont commandement sur lui. C'est pourquoi la loi dit que le Prince est absous de la puissance des lois. (I.viii, 191)

This is one aspect in which Bodin's philosophy departs from that of John of Salisbury, who states in the *Policraticus* that the king is bound to obey the law[11] and to serve not only God but also the clergy.[12] Bodin's monarch is given much more individual liberty in regards to the law, a liberty which would be further exploited by the more absolutist *politologues* that would follow him. For Bodin, the prince's power to make and change laws, "de donner loi à tous en général et à chacun en particulier" (I.x, 306), represents the supreme mark of sovereignty. It encompasses all of its other distinguishing characteristics, which include the administration of justice, the

[11] *Policraticus* IV.i, Nederman 29
[12] *Policraticus* IV.iii, Nederman 32. This is unsurprising, since John of Salisbury was Bishop of Chartres from 1176-80.

nomination of high-ranking officials, the declaration of war and peace, the right of coinage, the levying of taxes, and the according of rewards and pardons. If any of these rights can be exercised independently by another subject, then the king is not truly sovereign. As the final authority (*dernier ressort*) in judgment, the monarch is not bound to his own law or those of his predecessors, but he should naturally want to uphold those reasonable and equitable laws which promote the welfare of the state, such as Salic law. Neither is he obligated to keep his word to his subjects, but it is in his best interest to do so, so that he will obtain a reputation for justice and honor, which will add to the glory of his reign:

> Et par ainsi notre maxime demeure, que le Prince n'est point sujet à ses lois, ni aux lois de ses prédécesseurs, mais bien à ses conventions justes et raisonnables, et en l'observation desquelles les sujets en général ou en particulier ont intérêt. (I.viii, 194)

According to Bodin, it is also prudent for the prince to appoint and listen to a wise council, although he should ultimately make all decisions for himself.[13] While he must strive for justice in all things, and take an active role in judging his subjects, he should also allow instituted officials such as magistrates to perform their functions and execute punishments, so that he is not seen as cruel and overbearing.[14] He should not be too quick to show mercy, and he should be most willing to pardon offenses committed against his own person rather than those committed against other subjects, for this demonstration of clemency is pleasing to God:

> Mais entre les grâces que le Prince peut donner, il n'y en a point de plus belle, que de l'injure faite à sa personne; et entre les peines capitales, il n'y en a point de

[13] *Six livres* III.i
[14] *Six livres* IV.vi

> plus agréable à Dieu, que celle qui est établie pour l'injure faite à sa majesté. (I.x, 330)

Ultimately, a true king maintains and perpetuates his sovereign rule by abiding by divine and natural law, and by acting consistently in the best interest of his subjects. If he respects nature and fears God, his character should be as follows:

> Il [le Roi] est pitoyable aux affligés, prudents aux entreprises, hardi aux exploits, modeste en prospérité, constant en adversité, ferme en sa parole, sage en son conseil, soigneux des sujets, secourable aux amis, terrible aux ennemis, courtois aux gens de bien, effroyable aux méchants, et juste envers tous. (II.iii, 44)

According to Bodin, a commonwealth that is ruled by such a wise, courageous, firm, caring, and gracious prince cannot help but prosper.

Bodin does not, however, claim that all kings are good kings. He is quite aware that bad kings exist, and that even the most well brought-up prince can be corrupted by absolute power[15] or by poor counsel.[16] It is, in fact, in his description of the "anti-sovereign" that Bodin's text shows its greatest originality in regards to his medieval predecessors.[17] Terrevermeille, for example, did not even consider in his *Tractatus* that a legitimate ruler could be anything but virtuous and law-abiding.[18] Bodin, however, at the beginning of the fourth book of the *Six livres*, makes the very humanistic statement that since there are so few good men in the world, it is not unexpected that even fewer of them rise to the throne:

> Il ne faut donc pas s'émerveiller s'il y a peu de vertueux Princes: car s'il y a peu de vertueux hommes, et que de ce petit nombre les Princes ne sont pas

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[15] *Six livres* IV.i.
[16] *Six livres* III.i.
[17] For this reason, Bodin's unique treatment of the "anti-sovereign" will be of particular interest later in this study.
[18] *La fonction royale*: "Le chef ne pouvant abuser de son légitime pouvoir, le tyran d'exercice est dans cette perspective inconcevable" (Barbey 254).

> ordinairement choisis, c'est grand merveille s'il s'en trouve quelqu'un fort excellent entre plusieurs: et quand il se voit si haut élevé qu'il ne connaît rien plus grand que soi après Dieu, étant assiégé de tous les allèchements qui font trébucher les plus assurés, c'est un miracle s'il continue en sa vertu. (IV.i, 21)

Bodin goes on to characterize an evil prince as being either cruel, oppressive, licentious, or as incapable of controlling his own desires (*paillard*). Such kings are often the ruin of their commonwealths and the un-doers of their own sovereignty, as they act in their own personal interests rather than in the interests of their people. A ruler who cannot control his own desires is incapable of controlling a state:

> Mais la paillardise a plus ruiné de Princes, que toutes les autres causes: aussi est-elle beaucoup plus dangereuse à un Prince pour son état, que la cruauté : car la cruauté retient des hommes timides et lâches, et donne une terreur aux sujets: mais la paillardise tire après soi la haine et le mépris du tyran: d'autant que chacun juge que l'homme éfféminé a toujours le cœur lâche: et qu'il est indigne de commander à tout un peuple, n'ayant pas la puissance sur soi-même. (IV.i, 24)

As in the above citation, Bodin often refers to these abusers of sovereign power as tyrants, yet he also argues that the term "tyrant" is typically misused and misunderstood. Bodin's definition of tyranny is more complex than that of John of Salisbury, who declares in the third books of the *Policraticus* that the tyrant is "a public enemy" (Nederman 25) who can lawfully be killed.[19] Bodin actually acknowledges tyranny as a form of sovereignty, and considers it as one of the three types of monarchy that he describes in detail in the second book of the *Six livres*, (the other

[19] *Policraticus* VIII.xx, Nederman 206.

two types being royal monarchy, which he fully supports, and despotic monarchy,[20] with which he sympathizes). Bodin defines a tyrant as a ruler who has acquired his realm by unjust means (violence or theft), and who holds his territory and subjects as slaves against their will, thereby breaking natural law: "La Monarchie Tyrannique est celle où le Monarque foulant aux pieds les lois de nature, abuse de la liberté des francs sujets, comme de ses esclaves, et des biens d'autrui, comme des siens" (II.iv, 55). Although this label of "tyrant" is often synonymous with the self-seeking oppressor previously mentioned, Bodin contests that a tyrant is not necessarily a bad king, but simply that he has taken his subjects by force without their consent. A tyrannical monarch, like a despotic one, can still be a just and virtuous ruler:

> Entre les tyrannies il y en a de plusieurs sortes et plusieurs degrés, de plus ou moins: et tout ainsi qu'il n'y a si bon prince qui n'ait quelque vice notable: aussi voit-on qu'il ne se trouve point de si cruel tyran, qui n'ait quelque vertu, ou quelque chose de louable. (II.iv, 57)

For example, a *tyran d'usurpation*, one who has used force to gain control of the realm, does not have to continue by oppressing the people (*tyran d'exercice*) once his sovereignty has been established. The severity of a tyrant can actually be beneficial to the commonwealth during difficult times, for a mild king is not always a strong ruler. Bodin refers to an ancient proverb in Book II.iv, "Et semble que nos pères anciens n'ont pas dit ce proverbe sans cause: 'De méchant homme bon roi'" (65). But the sovereign power of a tyrant is less stable than that of a legitimate monarch because he commands the loyalty of his people by fear rather than by love. Bodin also

[20] To differentiate between despotic monarchy and tyranny, Bodin defines despotic monarchy (*seigneuriale*) as a sovereign status over a territory that has been attained as a result of just warfare or conquest, which thereby exempts it from violation of natural law: "C'est bien aucunement contre la loi de nature de faire les hommes libres esclaves, et s'emparer des biens d'autrui: mais si le consentement de tous les peuples a voulu, que ce qui est acquis par bonne guerre, soit proprement au vainqueur, et que les vaincus soient esclaves des vainqueurs, on ne peut dire que la Monarchie ainsi établie soit tyrannique" (II.ii, 41).

specifies that the status of a tyrannical monarchy is not permanent. Just as it is possible for a hereditary prince to turn to evil and oppressive ways, it is possible for a tyrant to become a true sovereign if he begins to rule in accordance with divine and natural law, rather than corrupting the law to serve his own desires. In any case, Bodin warns that no subject has the right to judge and punish a tyrant, no matter his actions, for any attempt against the sovereign (legitimate or not) is considered an act of high treason (*lèse-majesté*).

In short, Bodin's concept of sovereignty advocates a "limited absolutism" – the king has full authority over his subjects in principle, yet he is himself a subject of God and of the natural order. He should be equitable and gracious, yet he is not always so. He can technically do as he pleases in regards to the law, yet it is more advisable for him to respect it, for he is still an actor within the machine of the *république*, and as the *caput* of the commonwealth, his sovereignty is dependent on the stability and functionality of this political structure. For as a body with two heads maybe be considered monstrous, a single head without a body is dead. Yet despite these inconsistencies in Bodin's argument, the ideas presented in the *Six livres* are indicative of an important shift of the locus of political power into the person of the king. Bodin begins to incorporate qualities that were previously attributed to God, the church, and the feudal aristocracy into the monarch himself, increasing the scope of his *corps politique*, and paving the way for a more concrete form of absolutism in the century to follow.

Charles Loyseau, *Traité des seigneuries* (1608), *Cinq livres du droit des offices* (1609), *Traité des ordres et simples dignités* (1610)

The first influential French jurist to represent the political thought of the early seventeenth century was Charles Loyseau (1564-1627), who published his three major works during the end of the reign of Henri IV, the first king of the Bourbon dynasty. Loyseau's *Traité*

des seigneuries (1608), *Cinq livres du droit des offices* (1609), and *Traité des ordres et simples dignités* (1610) address the primary topics of lordship, office, and order, which can be respectively defined as "dignity, with power in property", "dignity, with public function", and "dignity, with aptitude for public power".[21] Although Loyseau's work is separated from Bodin's *Six livres* by only 30 years,[22] Loyseau writes about public power from a different perspective and with a different objective, as the political climate of France had shifted after the end of the Wars of Religion. Whereas Bodin was reacting to the instability caused by civil war, Loyseau's three-part reevaluation of the functions of the state stems from his desire to stop corruption, namely in the form of the venality of offices. In the first chapter of *Offices*, he expresses his belief that the buying and selling of public power is against the nature of the state: "Or je n'estime pas qu'il y ait rien en notre usage plus contraire à la raison que le commerce et la vénalité des offices, qui préfère l'argent à la vertu en la chose du monde" (I.i, 1). Howell A. Lloyd summarizes Loyseau's mission in his analysis of the three treatises:

> As Loyseau perceived all too plainly, to an alarming degree in the France of his day, public power lay diffused and patrimonially in the hands of landed lords and venal office-holders. The task which he set himself was therefore to focus upon the actual mechanisms of public power and to show how and why control of these could and should rest ultimately with the sovereign prince. (Lloyd xv)

As Lloyd's comment suggests, Loyseau's answer to the imbalance of power is a centralization of this power in the person of the monarch, with all offices and lordships exercising (not possessing) a portion of his sovereign authority as delegated to them. This is why Loyseau's work is relevant to my study – although none of his texts are dedicated uniquely to sovereignty

[21] English definitions adapted from Howard A. Lloyd, *A Treatise of Orders and Plain Dignities* (1994).
[22] Loyseau is familiar with *Les Six livres de la République*, which he cites and critiques in turn in all three of his texts.

and deal more largely with administrative and feudal dignities, they are important in situating the position of the king in relation to the nobility and public office holders, and they are indicative of the increasing scope of the king's political body at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Loyseau proposes a state that is increasingly juricentric in comparison to Bodin's *République*. At the beginning of *Offices*, he claims to write not as a philosopher, nor as a politician, nor as a historian, but rather "en jurisconsulte", (I.i, 2) according to the law, and true to his profession. The result is a thorough, categorized, and meticulously detailed explanation of the distribution of public and private power in France. As opposed to John of Salisbury and Jean de Terrevermeille, Loyseau keeps the Church neatly separate from his state. He acknowledges, as did his predecessors, that the king receives his power from God, and as such he is subject to uphold divine law,[23] but he states in *Seigneuries* chapter XV in his definition of ecclesiastical lordship: "Chacun a son pouvoir à part" (XV, 88). The Church, being part of the spiritual world and not of the temporal, is its own sovereign entity and has no jurisdiction in the order of the state. He even gives the example of the English monarchy as a reason not to intermingle religion and politics – because of the error of Henry VIII, England had ended up with a woman (Elizabeth I) as the head of the Anglican Church, earning it the shameful status of being doubly *en quenouille*. Loyseau's position on the Church indicates a progression even further away from the medieval Christomimetic model of kingship.

Loyseau's juridical state is also strictly monarchical, which marks a departure from Bodin. Whereas Bodin fully addressed the three types of commonwealths – monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy – even if in order to discredit the two latter in favor of the former, Loyseau chooses only to discuss monarchy, as it has clearly been established as the most sovereign form of government:

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[23] *Seigneuries* chapter II.

> Or d'autant que la souveraineté reluit plus parfaitement en la Monarchie qu'en la Démocratie ou Aristocratie, aussi je n'entends traiter que des Dignités de notre France Monarchique : je ne parlerai ici que de la Souveraineté résidant dans les Monarques. (*Seigneuries* II, 8)

Within this monarchy, the locus of sovereign power is explained differently, a difference which introduces one of the essential elements of the seventeenth-century concept of sovereignty. Bodin had described sovereign power (be it within a monarchic, aristocratic, or popular state) as a centralizing force, the axis upon which the commonwealth is united and enabled to function as a whole. For Loyseau, this central authority does not only unite the people – it reflects on them. Loyseau's texts do not only specify the rights and responsibilities that are vested in the monarch, but he goes further in explaining how that power is communicated back through the realm. He freely admits that the king cannot rule alone, being neither omniscient nor omnipresent, and as such he requires officers to enforce his law and manage the three administrative branches of the *fleur de lys* of the state – justice, military, and finance.[24] This idea is repeated in both *Offices* and *Seigneuries*:

> Mais le Prince ne pouvant seul et par lui-même exercer, en tous les endroits de son état, toute cette puissance sur les hommes, que Dieu lui a délaissée, est contraint d'en départir l'usage et exercice à certaines personnes qu'il choisit pour cet effet. Comme donc la puissance souveraine du Prince est un rayon et un éclat de la toute-puissance de Dieu, aussi la puissance des Officiers est un éclat et une influence de la puissance absolue du Prince. (*Offices* I.vi, 34)
>
> Mais d'autant qu'il ne peut être partout, ni donner ordre en tous lieux, il est contraint de communiquer l'exercice de cette puissance publique à ceux que nous

[24] *Offices* I.i, 9.

> appelons Officiers, à ce qu'au fait de l'Office à eux attribué, ils représentent sa personne, et fassent sa fonction publique, comme ses Commis ou Procureurs. De sorte que, comme on dit en Théologie, que toutes vertus résident parfaitement et essentiellement en Dieu, et aux hommes par participation seulement, en tant qu'il lui plaît les leur communiquer: aussi en la science politique nous disons, que la puissance publique de l'Etat réside parfaitement et entièrement aux Princes Souverains, et l'exercice d'icelle en leurs Officiers par leur communication, chacun au fait de sa Charge, et comme les représentants en icelle. (*Seigneuries* III, 15)

It is evident from these two citations (and from the extensive subject matter of his works) that Loyseau considers office holders to be necessary part of public function in a monarchy. And yet the second part of both of these citations clearly states that the power held by these officials is but an extension of the authority of the prince himself, *un éclat*, a ray of his sovereign light. Here we find the metaphor of the monarch as the sun, one which we all know to be the iconic identifier of Louis XIV in the middle of the century. The king's power radiates through the magistrature and the nobility, so that all members of the established orders, while each exercising a certain power within their own public or private function, are ultimately responsible to him.[25] And as the light burns longer and brighter in proximity to the sun, so the importance of nobles increases with their proximity to the reigning prince, as can be seen in the fourth chapter of *Seigneuries*:

> Toutefois il faut remarquer en ces divers degrés, que comme un corps est d'autant plus illuminé, que plus simplement il est opposé au Soleil: aussi toutes les

[25] This could arguably be considered to be Loyseau's continuation of the organic model proposed by Terrevermeille, in which the *caput* directs the function of the body members.

> Seigneuries suzeraines n'étant que des rayons et des éclats de la puissance souveraine du Prince, s'en ressentent d'autant plus, qu'elles en approchent de plus près. (IV, 22)

In this way blood princes receive higher honors than simple princes,[26] and members of the high nobility such as dukes and counts are more important than lesser fief holders.[27] But this subaltern hierarchy is all organized by the degree of separation from the single sovereign power, and on the basis that all suzerain lords "ne relèvent que du Roi" (*Seigneuries* VI, 30).

Let us now examine the specific attributes of that sovereign power as defined by Loyseau, which he also calls *Majesté,*[28] and which he classifies both as a type of hereditary office and as a form of lordship over the state, from which it is inseparable. He most specifically addresses the role of the monarch in chapters II-III of *Seigneuries*, where he first distinguishes the sovereign *prince*[29] from the other three categories of *seigneuries souveraines* – simple princes (magistrates with administrative power and no property), subject princes (who submit to a higher authority such as the Holy Roman empire), and despotic/lordly princes (who hold their subjects as property and thus exercise private sovereignty). The fully sovereign prince exercises supreme public power over free subjects. Loyseau's marks of sovereignty are very similar to those of Bodin, from whom he admits to having borrowed liberally. For example, his primary definition of sovereignty echoes the ideas of absoluteness and perpetuity presented in Book I of the *Six livres*. True sovereignty cannot be shared or divided:

> Or elle [la souveraineté] consiste en puissance absolue, c'est à dire parfaite et entière de tout point, que les Canonistes appellent plénitude de puissance: et par

[26] *Ordres* VII, "Des princes."
[27] *Seigneuries* IV-XII.
[28] *Seigneuries* III, 17.
[29] Loyseau prefers the term *prince* over *roi*, claiming that its etymological origins are more synonymous with sovereign power than *roi*, which was historically used to describe subject princes (*Seigneuries* II, *Ordres* VII).

> conséquent elle est sans degré de supériorité; car celui qui a un Supérieur ne peut être suprême et souverain: sans limitation de temps, autrement ce ne serait ni puissance absolue, ni même seigneurie…comme la Couronne ne peut être si son cercle n'est entier, aussi la souveraineté n'est point, si quelque chose y défaut. (*Seigneuries* II, 8)

This statement could be considered contradictory, as it figures in a treatise of which the majority is dedicated to an explanation of the division of power. But when understood in the context of the "solar effect" of the king's sovereignty, Loyseau's argument can be justified. Power may be delegated, but sovereignty must remain singular and intact. The three limits to absolute power are divine, natural, and fundamental laws (a pure recitation of Bodin). The rights of sovereignty are likewise similar – the prince is responsible for making laws, nominating officers, declaring war and peace, acting as the last resort in justice, and coining money.[30]

> Donc les droits concernant le pouvoir des Seigneuries souveraines, qui peuvent être proprement appelés actes ou cas de souveraineté, sont cinq en nombre, à savoir, faire lois, créer Officiers, arbitrer la paix et la guerre, avoir le dernier ressort de la justice, et forger monnaie. Lesquels cinq droits sont du tout inséparables de la personne du souverain, et tellement attachés à la souveraineté, que quiconque en entreprend quelqu'un, entreprend quant et quant la souveraineté, et est coupable de lèse-majesté. (*Seigneuries* III, 14)

Loyseau also agrees with Bodin that the act of making law encompasses all of the other marks of sovereignty, since they are carried out within the law.

[30] Loyseau mentions a possible sixth right, the levying of taxes at the discretion of the prince, but he is hesitant to include this as it may infringe on subjects' freedom of their own property, and become synonymous with despotism.

> Aussi le Prince et la loi sont comme relatifs, étant Prince celui qui fait les lois, et la loi l'œuvre du Prince. Car il n'y a point de plus propre effet de la souveraineté, que de faire de sa propre autorité des lois qui obligent tous les sujets en général, et chacun en particulier, tout ainsi que le Prince a pouvoir et commandement sur eux tous sans exception. (*Seigneuries* III, 14)

Like Bodin, Loyseau encourages adherence to Salic law and advocates hereditary monarchy as the most stable form of government, since it facilitates selection of heirs and minimizes the chances of interregnum.[31] He also supports Bodin's argument that "Le roi ne meurt jamais" in *Offices* and again in *Ordres*, giving the example that officers of the *Maison du Roi* are transferred immediately to the king's successor upon death,[32] at which time the Dauphin receives full sovereign rights from his father[33] as the political body of the king is transferred. Finally, Loyseau recognizes in the second book of *Offices* that a monarch does not act in his own interests, but in the interests of his people, and he has a reciprocal obligation to act in their best behalf, just as they have an obligation to serve him.

> Car c'est une obligation réciproque, comme au sujet d'obéir à son Prince, aussi au Prince de maintenir son sujet: et comme le sujet ne se peut distraire de l'obéissance de son Prince, aussi un Prince ne peut aliéner ses sujets…Aussi la vérité est, que les principautés Souveraines n'ont pas été établies en faveur des Princes, mais en considération du peuple, qui a besoin d'un Chef, pour être gouverné et maintenu. (II.ii, 102)

In many respects, the idea of sovereignty remains consistent between Bodin and Loyseau. But there are several differences that I would like to highlight. Firstly, Loyseau never mentions

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[31] *Offices* II.ii, 101.
[32] *Offices* IV.iii, 235.
[33] *Ordres* VII.

the character of the prince. His description of the royal person is confined to the context of the law, which is consistent with his mission to write "en jurisconsulte." Unlike Bodin, Loyseau never stipulates that the sovereign has to be equitable or virtuous, but the absence of these qualities in Loyseau's texts is just as important as their presence in Bodin's *Six livres* – if the king truly embodies the justice of the law (*corps politique*), he will naturally be all of these things. Secondly and in this same vein, Loyseau is not nearly as sympathetic as Bodin towards despotic or tyrannical monarchies. Whereas Bodin states that a despotic monarchy acquired by fair conquest can still be ruled by a just and virtuous prince, Loyseau believes that a despotic monarchy (although fully sovereign) constitutes an aberration from natural law:

> Néanmoins il faut confesser que ces Monarchies Seigneuriales sont barbares et contre nature, et particulièrement qu'elles sont indignes des Princes Chrétiens qui ont aboli volontairement l'esclavage en leurs pays, afin que ceux qui ont été rachetés du sang de Notre Rédempteur jouissent dés ce monde de leur pleine liberté…il reste donc à expliquer que la plus vraie et la plus commode espèce de Princes, savoir des Princes Souverains, qui sont ceux dont nous avons principalement à traiter, que j'appelle *Princes Souverains*, parce que non seulement ils sont premiers chefs, mais aussi ils ont parfaitement la Souveraineté publique. (*Seigneuries* II, 11)

Loyseau is also critical of Bodin's acceptance of tyranny as a type of sovereignty. In Loyseau's opinion, because a tyranny is not a legitimate form of kingship, it does not merit his attention in *Seigneuries*, and he refuses to discuss it:

> Il est vrai qu'il [Bodin] en met encore une troisième espèce, à savoir des Tyranniques que je ne mets point en compte, parce que je ne parle que des

> Seigneuries légitimes et bien ordonnées, aussi que la Monarchie Tyrannique ne peut être une espèce à part, parce qu'elle convient aux Monarchies Royales et Seigneuriales, si les Monarques d'icelles sont Tyrans, c'est à dire, s'ils sont usurpateurs de l'Etat ou oppresseurs du peuple. (*Seigneuries* II, 10)

In this Loyseau sets a new precedent for subsequent interpretations of sovereignty, in which it begins to seem that a king will only act within the law and be inherently good.

Cardin Le Bret, *De la souveraineté du roi* (1632)

In 1632, during the reign of Louis XIII, the jurist and Conseiller d'État Cardin Le Bret (1558-1655) published a text that would push the juricentric model of sovereignty proposed by Bodin and developed by Loyseau even further towards absolutism, maximizing the size of the king's political body. Le Bret's four-part treatise entitled *De la souveraineté du roi* provides another detailed description of the rights and responsibilities of kingship, this time from a governmental insider's perspective, and traces the evolution of sovereignty from biblical times to the Roman empire and through the history of French and European monarchies, in order to demonstrate that the current king of France is the most sovereign of all. And yet despite its immediate thematic resemblance to *Les Six livres de la République* and the three *Traités* of Loyseau, Le Bret's work presents a theoretical development that distinguishes him from his predecessors and makes his text essential to understanding the role of the king's double body in tragedy. This difference is evident from its title *De la souveraineté du roi*. Upon examining the contents of this treatise, there are several major topics that are consistent with those discussed by Bodin and Loyseau – the distribution of public power, the management of territories, and the role of the Church, to name a few. But rather than being analyzed within the context of the workings of the broader "state," these subjects are all addressed within the scope of sovereignty itself.

Rather than considering the monarch as an actor (albeit an increasingly important one) in the grand scheme of the administration of the commonwealth, Le Bret situates his state within the person of the king. Whereas Bodin's *puissance souveraine* unifies the people, and Loyseau's *prince* radiates his power back over them, Le Bret's *roi* encompasses every aspect of his realm. This purely absolutist philosophy provides a new version of the head/body model that was described in Jean de Terrevermeille's *Tractatus* two hundred years earlier. Instead of being organically connected to his political body, Le Bret's *caput* embodies the state. Bernard Vonglis confirms this idea in his essay *L'état, c'était bien lui*: "La tête a avalé, englouti le corps" (30).

Thus, as the sole motor of the machine of his kingdom, Le Bret's monarch is also its sole source of power (similar to Loyseau). The sphere of influence of other human institutions only exists through him and because he wills them to be. Le Bret goes into great detail in *De la souveraineté du roi* about the role of queens, princes, nobles, bishops, magistrates, financiers, and counselors (of which he was one) within the realm. He does not deny that these positions are powerful, or that these subjects enjoy certain privileges. Yet he insists that these privileges are not due to any of these people by any right of their own, but only by the good grace of the king, who wishes them to receive honor for their faithful service to him.

Le Bret also contends, as did the jurists before him, that the king receives his power directly from God and is still therefore subject to divine law. In Book I Chapter II, he states that unlike other monarchs who must submit to the authority of the Pope, the true sovereign of France answers only to God. Which makes him subject to no other earthly power:

> Puisque nos Rois ne tiennent leur sceptre que de Dieu seul, ils ne sont obligés de rendre aucune soumission à pas une puissance de la Terre, et qu'ils jouissent de

> tous les droits que l'on attribue à la Souveraineté parfaite et absolue, on peut conclure qu'ils sont pleinement souverains dans leur Royaume. (I.ii, 6)

This idea of perfect, absolute, and indivisible royal power echoes the definition of sovereignty proposed by Bodin in the first book of the *Six livres*, with a few subtle changes. Bodin states that the king is subject to divine and natural law, as well as to the fundamental laws of the kingdom that uphold his reign. Le Bret's monarch is above all human law, *legibus solutus*, although he delights in observing the law because of his desire to provide an example of virtue to his subjects:

> Bien que les Rois soient par-dessus les Lois, néanmoins il leur est toujours bienséant de les suivre et de les observer: car si la Loi n'est autre chose, comme dit Platon, qu'une droite raison qui enseigne de faire toutes choses conformes à la vertu, et de fuir ce qui lui est contraire, y a-t-il rien de plus convenable à un grand Prince, que de vivre de la sorte, et d'en donner l'exemple à tous ses sujets. (I.ix, 35)

Along this same wavelength, according to Le Bret, there is no greater quality of a sovereign than to be known as just, as he specifies in the second book of *De la souveraineté du roi*:

> Comme la plus importante fonction des Rois est de rendre la Justice à leurs peuples, et que pour ce sujet ils sont appelés Juges dans les livres sacrés, et δικαιος dans Homère. Aussi ne doivent-ils rien rechercher avec plus de passion, que de se rendre recommandables par ce saint exercice, et de s'acquérir le glorieux titre de Juste: car ils ne peuvent s'enrichir d'une qualité, qui relève d'avantage l'éclat de leur dignité Royale. (II.ii, 80)

As for the other primary markers of sovereignty, they remain consistent with those stipulated by Bodin and Loyseau. Just as Loyseau admits to having borrowed them directly from Bodin, Le Bret does not defer from the public functions which have already been designated as executable by the king alone as part of his sovereign rights.[34] Only the monarch is endowed with the power to create, change, and interpret the law (I.ix), nominate officers (II.i-viii), declare war and peace (II.iv-v), maintain currency (II.xiii), levy taxes (III.ix-xiii), and act as the last resort in justice (IV.vii). Thus it is more in his perspective on royal power rather than in its properties that Le Bret's text demonstrates its originality in regards to earlier political thought.

Like Loyseau, Le Bret barely addresses tyranny in *De la souveraineté du roi*, which by its absence implies that he does not consider it as an aspect of sovereignty. And yet, Le Bret's treatise marks an important departure from the more juricentric Loyseau that aligns him more closely with Bodin or even with John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, for he re-introduces the importance of the king's character, and encourages resistance to the temptations of the physical body. For as the ultimate goal of sovereignty is to ensure the health, stability, and prosperity of the state and its people, "de procurer par toutes sortes de moyens le bien de ses sujets" (I.i, 1), all of the king's actions must originate from the desire to maintain a well-ordered realm. He must not abuse his absolute power in the interest of personal gain, but must be fully invested in the happiness of his subjects, who look to him as a benevolent father figure. The king who ignores this responsibility risks bringing disaster on his people. The final chapter of *De la souveraineté du roi* confirms what Le Bret repeats like a mantra throughout his work: "Les Rois ne doivent avoir d'autre but ni d'autres dessins en l'esprit, que de rendre leurs peuples heureux, et de les faire jouir de toutes sortes de félicités" (IV.xvii, 353). Therefore, the king must not let himself be corrupted by passions or desires that contradict this sovereign duty and purpose. He must

[34] It is interesting to note that Le Bret cites neither Bodin nor Loyseau in *De la souveraineté du roi*.

ignore his personal interests, as Le Bret plainly states in the first chapter and again the final chapter of his text: "Le principal office du Prince est de se dépouiller de ses propres intérêts, retrancher de ses plaisirs, se dérober à soi-même, pour se donner entièrement au public" (I.i, 2). This idea of the denial of self, of the rejection of the physical body in the interest of the political, gains greater importance as the role of the king becomes more essential to the welfare of the state, and will become a more major theme in the works of Jean-François Senault.

Jean-François Senault, *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* (1661)

The absolutist model of kingship that was developed during the latter half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century should, according to its authors Bodin, Loyseau, and Le Bret, be the surest means to establish and maintain a prosperous kingdom with happy subjects. By insisting on a juricentric structure of the state that invests more and more power into the person of the king, they have given him an almost godlike status over his people, symbolically returning to new kind of Christomimetic/Christocentric version of sovereignty in which the head of the state is also its body. And in theory, it is still a functioning body – the monarch has received his sovereign power from God, he acts as a benevolent father figure to his people, he *is* the law. And yet, a problem arises in this system that it becomes eventually impossible to ignore – the all-encompassing political body of the king is still contained in an imperfect human shell. Bodin attempted to justify this problematic in the *Six livres*, and Loyseau and Le Bret managed to gloss over it in their texts, but ultimately the immortal power of the sovereign must contend with the shortcomings of the king's physical body – sickness, death, and desire. Now that the king's political body has reached its capacity, it becomes increasingly important to minimize the influence of the physical body. In the case of death, this perpetuation is accomplished by the immediate transfer of the political body to the dauphin upon the king's

death.[35] Hence the seemingly oxymoronic proclamation during the royal funeral ceremony: "Le roi est mort, vive le roi!" (Kantorowicz 411). But the question of passions remains unresolved in the juricentric structure, since both Loyseau and Le Bret have presumed in their respective writings that a legitimate king can only be good. In order to discourage the abuse of absolute power, during the second half of the seventeenth century, political philosophers begin to re-focus not only on the structure and function of the king's political body, but on the character of the king himself. To be able to reign effectively and avoid becoming an oppressive tyrant, the king must train himself to be free from passions. This is suggested by Cardin Le Bret and further developed by Philippe Fortin de la Hoguette in his *Catéchisme royal* (1645), written to instruct the seven-year-old Louis XIV about his duty as a Christian prince.

Nowhere is the growing importance of the sovereign's moral responsibility and his rejection of personal desires more evident than in the works of Jean-François Senault and Pierre Le Moyne,[36] two ecclesiastics who viewed sovereignty in a more Christomimetic light than their jurist predecessors. Senault's 1661 text *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* was published in the same year that Louis XIV assumed full political power after the death of Mazarin. The title of this work is indicative of the ideological shift towards the responsibilities of kingship,[37] now that sovereign rights have been fully established in earlier texts. "Le Père Senault" (1599-1672), who was the *Supérieur général de l'Oratoire de Jésus*, writes from a very different perspective than Bodin, Loyseau, or Le Bret, choosing to focus more on the moral and religious

[35] See Loyseau, *Office*s II and *Ordre*s VII.
[36] The Jesuit Pierre Le Moyne (1602-1671), who was also a poet, published his 750-page treatise *De l'art de régner* in 1665, four years into the personal reign of Louis XIV. As the main ideas expressed in Le Moyne's work strongly echo those proposed by Senault in relation to this study (both men having studied passions prior to undertaking sovereignty and sharing similar views on the double body of the king), I have chosen to focus the present analysis on Senault. I will indicate with footnotes the key points of intersection and deviation between these two texts.
[37] This is confirmed by Ellen McClure in *Sunspots and the Sun King* (2006): "The phrase 'les devoirs du souverain' should shock us and may have shocked readers of the time familiar with Bodin's insistence on the absolute independence of sovereignty. That Senault's title is possible at all reveals the extent to which the slide from *souveraineté* to sovereign that I noted in Bodin has become, in the intervening years, complete" (48).

aspects of the monarch's rule rather than on the legal ones. Senault realizes that he is neither a political theorist nor a jurist, as he states very plainly in his preface, but neither does he consider himself unqualified to address this subject. He is already familiar with passions, having published *De l'usage des passions* in 1641. And as opposed to Loyseau, who chose to keep religion and politics neatly separate, Senault contends that it is not a conflict of interest to mix morality and politics, as he finds it of utmost importance for France to have a Christian king, and thus the church must play a key role in the welfare of the state:

> Les pères de l'Eglise qui les avaient soigneusement étudiés ont fait des Livres de Politique, aussi bien que de Morale; Ils ont cru qu'en formant un Prince, ils travaillaient au bonheur de tout son Empire; et qu'ils réglaient tous les Peuples, en réglant sa seule personne. (Préface NP)

Senault claims to strengthen the validity of his position by mixing biblical references with citations from Aristotle, Plutarch, and Seneca (although much more literally and less critically than the politologues) so that his argument is not purely ecclesiastically based.

The objective of *Le monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* is to describe the ideal king. As Senault states in his preface: "J'ai dessin d'y former un parfait Monarque, et de lui représenter toutes les obligations que lui impose la grandeur de son auguste qualité" (NP). Written directly to Louis XIV, this text seeks to create a portrait of the "parfait Souverain" by giving examples from different kings of the past to create a perfect whole.[38] In his *Epitre au Roi,* Senault expresses his desire that his work will serve as a mirror in which the monarch will not see his face, but the qualities that make him a good ruler:

[38] In his introduction to *De l'art de régner*, likewise dedicated to Louis XIV, Pierre Le Moyne states the same purpose (to paint a portrait of the king).

> C'est un miroir fidèle dans lequel Elle [votre Majesté] pourra voir non pas les traits de son visage, qui donne du respect et de l'amour à tous ceux qui le regardent; mais les vertus de son âme, et ces rares qualités qui la font si glorieusement régner dans la France. (NP)

The idea of a mirror that does not show the king's face highlights the importance of the duality of the king's body, and of the rejection of the physical in favor of the political, right from the beginning of Senault's text. It is also meant to be a healing mirror, erasing potential faults as it reveals them. For every counterexample of sovereignty that is given, there is positive example to offset it, which should allow the king to see a more perfect reflection of himself. Despite this pedagogical aspect of *Le monarque*, Senault does not claim to be criticizing Louis XIV or telling him what to do, insisting, "Je ne me suis point érigé en censeur" (NP). (He certainly does not want to be accused of lèse-majesté!) His goal is to respectfully encourage the king to strive continually to overcome himself in order to rule his country.

Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain is divided into eight parts, with each one addressing the king's responsibilities towards a different entity or group of people. Senault summarizes the structure of his text in his preface: "J'ai considéré le Prince dans la Religion, dans sa Personne, dans son Etat, dans son Conseil, et dans ses Armées, et je lui ai représenté tous les différents devoirs en ces différentes occasions" (NP). Of these domains, the three most relevant to this study are the king's duties toward God (*traité* III), towards himself (*traité* IV), and towards his subjects (*traité* V). Before addressing these chapters in detail, it is important to note that just because Senault's sovereign has greater responsibilities does not mean he is no longer absolute. This statement may seem contradictory, but Senault devotes the first two books

of *Le Monarque* to a description of the indivisible majesty of kingship. Like Loyseau, he uses the metaphor of the sun to describe the relationship between a single sovereign and his people:[39]

> La Terre obéit au Ciel, et toutes ses productions reconnaissent le soleil pour leur Souverain; les Fleurs et les Plantes ouvrent leur sein pour recevoir ses influences quand il paraît, elles le ferment quand il se retire; et il est aisé de juger que ce bel Astre est leur Roi. (I.i, 2)

Senault also later recognizes that whereas a single sun warms and illuminates the planet, the heat from multiple suns would consume it in flames. "Ainsi que l'univers serait consumé par la chaleur de deux soleils, un Royaume serait opprimé par la puissance de deux souverains" (I.v, 25). Senault is firmly in favor of a monarchy governed by one absolute king. As had been stated by Terrevermeille several centuries earlier, he reaffirms that the kingdom is one body that requires the guidance of a single *caput* in order to function: "Le Royaume est un grand corps, et comme celui-ci ne peut être animé que par un seul esprit, celui-là ne peut être gouverné que par un seul Souverain" (I.v, 25). So the king remains an absolute sovereign, in spite of his newly ascribed *devoirs*. He can decide the fate of his kingdom of his own unique volition, and his voice can carry his commands to the boundaries of his realm. He has power over the life and death of his subjects, over their happiness or misery.[40] Senault compares the status of kingship to a supernatural power in the first book of *Le Monarque*:

> Comme un seul Ange est assez fort pour donner le branle à tout un Ciel, un Prince seul est assez puissant pour donner le mouvement à tout son Royaume, et pour

[39] Le Moyne further develops the solar allegory, using illustrations (*devises*) in which the power of the king is represented by the sun. For a detailed explanation of the function of this imagery, see Anne-E. Spica, "Représentation du pouvoir, pouvoir de la représentation: *De l'art de régner* de Pierre Le Moyne," *PFSCL* (2014).
[40] *Le Monarque* I.viii, 49-50.

> remuer toutes les parties qui le composent par un seul de ses Commandements. (I.viii, 48)

Thus although he refers to the corporeal model of sovereignty, he also paradoxically suggests that the king can act independently of his subjects, inferring that the *caput* no longer needs the consent of the body parts to make them move. This is why it becomes even more important that in order to act in accordance with his political body, the monarch must hold himself accountable to God, himself, and his subjects so that he does not contort his political body in the wrong direction. With all the earthly power in the world at his fingertips, it is up to the Prince himself to remember that he is not a god, and that his power comes from God, and that as such he must not abuse it, lest it be taken away from him.

Senault believes that piety is one of the most essential qualities of a true sovereign. The king is, first and foremost, *le roi très Chrétien*.[41] He is, as all the jurists have heretofore agreed, a subject of God, and relies on him as the source of his power. Yet Senault departs from his secular predecessors in stating that the monarch should not only be submissive to God, but that he should also seek to know and understand God, and maintain constant communication with him. This is Senault's definition of piety, which provides his foundation of politics. He states simply in *traité* III: "Il n'y peut avoir de solide Politique, où il n'y a point de solide Piété" (III.i, 125). True piety (which is rare, according to Senault) works in favor of the king's sovereign status. If he honors God, God will reward him by blessing his reign and prospering the kingdom. Likewise, a lack of piety (or false piety) will result in confusion and destruction of his kingdom. Piety aids sovereignty because it is the enemy of the physical body – it keeps the king's conscience clear, helps him listen to reason, and wards off the influence of passions:

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[41] *Le Monarque* I.iv, 84. See also Le Moyne, *De l'art de régner*, Seconde partie, Discours I.

> Elle [la Piété] règle la Personne des Souverains, et en leur donnant un empire sur toutes leurs passions. Elle empêche que la Colère ne les emporte à quelque punition trop sévère; que l'Ambition ne les engage, sous prétexte d'une fausse gloire, dans quelques guerres injustes; que l'Avarice ne leur fasse faire des levées extraordinaires que leur Peuple ne puisse porter; que l'Incontinence ne les brûle de ses flammes, et n'ouvre leurs yeux pour voir quelque Beauté que se rende la Maîtresse de leurs cœurs; que la Paresse qui est le vice de tous les Grands, ne les retienne dans leur Palais, et ne leur fasse abandonner le Timon de leur Etat. (III.iii, 143)

Not only is piety useful for controlling passions, it also distills the king's entourage and helps him to choose wise counsel. In the eighth chapter, Senault advises that a godly monarch will not suffer flatterers, naysayers, or mockers of religion in his presence, so that he will not be manipulated by them.

In addition to his duties to God, Senault's monarch has an even longer laundry list of responsibilities to himself, and this is where his text becomes a fascinating interpretation of the seventeenth century concept of the sovereign double body, especially as it will relate to theater. For this is where it becomes completely original in relation to the juricentric concept of sovereignty. Whereas Bodin, Loyseau, and Le Bret all affirmed that the primary marker of sovereignty was to make law, Senault contends in *traité* IV of *Le Monarque* that it is more important for the king to rule over himself before he can give law to his subjects:

> Quoi que l'intérêt public doit être toujours préféré à l'intérêt particulier, et que le Prince soit plus obligé à son Etat qu'à sa Personne; Il faut néanmoins qu'il essaye à se former lui-même avant que de former ses Sujets; qu'il apprenne la Morale,

> avant que d'apprendre la Politique, et qu'il se fasse homme de bien, avant que de se faire grand Monarque. (IV.i, 183-84)

The quality of goodness (*bonté*) is emphasized here. It seems simple, but Senault insists that it is not to be overlooked.[42] It must go hand in hand with grandeur, for one without the other is useless: "Car un Roi qui a de la bonté, et n'a pas de Puissance, devient le mépris de tous les méchants; et un Roi qui a de la puissance, et n'a point de bonté, devient la terreur de tous les Bons" (IV.i, 186). The king who wins the love of his subjects by his goodness wins them permanently, and they will not waver in their loyalty to him. Therefore being good is not synonymous with being weak, but with considering the best interests of the state ahead of the desires of the self.

Senault returns to passions in *traité* IV. The second chapter is devoted to the importance of the rejection of passions. Senault warns, as did Bodin in the *Six livres* almost a century beforehand, and as Le Moyne will continue to do several years later in *De l'art de régner*, that a king who cannot control himself cannot rule. A monarch can be master of the world and yet remained enslaved to himself:

> Il [le véritable Souverain] doit travailler soigneusement à se dompter lui-même, avant que de songer à dompter les autres. Il faut qu'il se persuade fortement qu'un Prince, qui n'écoute pas la Raison est incapable de gouverner, et qu'il commettra autant de fautes, qu'il donnera de Commandements, s'il n'obéit à cette Reine, qui doit conduire tous les Monarques du monde. Mais pour écouter ses avis, il faut qu'il règle les passions de son Ame, et qu'il y apaise les orages qu'elles y ont excités. (IV.ii, 193)

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[42] Le Moyne agrees with the importance of *bonté*, as stated in *De l'art de régner,* Troisième partie, Discours VI, "Des Moyens que l'Art de régner doit tirer de la bonté."

A true sovereign must be able to listen to reason, and he can only do this if he has mastered his passions. And Senault never claims that this task is easy! On the contrary, he refers to the struggle against the king's physical body as a personal war, "une guerre domestique" (194), in which the king himself must do all the fighting. As the absolute authority in the realm, with the power of life and death over his subjects, only he is powerful enough to defeat himself. But as with any war, a victory over passions must involve casualties. Senault acknowledges that a king, being connected to his physical body, cannot reject its desires without effectively killing a part of himself: "Car les passions étant une partie de nous-mêmes, leur vie est attachée à la nôtre, et par un étrange destin elles ne sauraient mourir, que nous ne mourions avec elles" (IV.ii, 196). Thus, Senault equates the rejection of passions with a symbolic act of suicide. He does not deny, however, that the physical body of the king has certain uses, but those are to imitate divine splendor and communicate a sense of majesty, tempered by humility, in the likeness of Christ. A king should have a certain look and presence about his person, more specifically about his face, that immediately commands the respect and fear of his people without him having to speak a word. Senault refers to this as *éclat,*[43] and the effect it should produce on his subjects is that of *éblouissement,* or total amazement. He should be able to quiet revolts with a single look, and to defend himself from attack without the presence of bodyguards.

> Il faut qu'on voie briller un certain éclat sur son visage, qui donne du respect à ses Sujets; qu'il paraisse une vivacité dans ses yeux qui éblouisse ceux qui le regardent, et que l'on remarque en son port, une Majesté qui inspire de la crainte dans l'âme de ceux qui l'abordent. (IV.iii, 199)

[43] Note that Loyseau had also referred to the transmission of the king's power as an *éclat* (see page 22 of this chapter).

Since his majesty radiates from his person, he must be sure to temper it from within by modesty so that he is admired by the people instead of pridefully admiring himself.[44]

But Senault's demands for the king's responsibilities toward his dual person become still more demanding and problematic. For although he should not be self-seeking and should never act in his own interests, neither should he ignore his *gloire*, which is his reputation that remains behind after his physical death.[45] Obtaining glory can be dangerous, as it inspires a king to seek recognition for his own accomplishments. But it is also important for the perpetuity of the political body, as it transcends time and space to achieve a certain sense of immortality and bring the monarch closer to divinity: "La Gloire des Monarques et une ombre de l'immortalité de Dieu; qu'ils renaissent après leur mort par la Renommée" (IV.iv, 211). In order to avoid being motivated by personal interest, the glory of the Christian king should be inspired by virtue, piety, and *bonté*. He should try to earn treasures in heaven, but he should also maximize the impact of his appearance in public, so that his subjects will think of his glorious political body rather than his imperfect physical body. Senault recognizes the importance of spectacle as an element of royal power.

As part of the king's rejection of passions, Senault insists that he enjoy the pleasures of the flesh in moderation. This was also a requirement of the prince in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*,[46] which was also written by a man of the Catholic Church, and it adheres to other philosophical texts of the mid-seventeenth century, such as Pierre Gassendi's *Traité de la philosophie d'Epicure* (1649). According to Senault, the monarch must be careful not to overindulge in food and drink during festivities, as this weakens the resistance against the

[44] This need for modesty to temper the passion of pride is confirmed by Le Moyne in *De l'art de régner*, Seconde partie, Discours III, Article I, "De la modération de l'orgueil par la modestie."
[45] *Le Monarque* IV.iv.
[46] *Policraticus* IV.iii, Nederman 35.

physical body and eases the entry of passions.[47] He can enjoy hunting, gaming, and dancing as long as he can remain emotionally detached from them,[48] but Senault counsels against *galanterie*, because desire for a woman can compromise his sovereignty. A king in love forgets his political body, and submits himself to his mistress!

> Car en premier lieu, ils [les Rois] perdent beaucoup de temps auprès des femmes qu'ils aiment; et il est très difficile, qu'un Souverain qui a de la passion dans la tête, s'occupe beaucoup des affaires de son Royaume. Il renonce au Gouvernement de son Etat, dès qu'il devient amoureux; et cette passion impérieuse ne permet pas qu'il se partage entre sa Maîtresse et ses Sujets…Dès que le Prince s'attache au service d'une Maîtresse, il cesse d'être Souverain; et descendant de son Trône, il se met en quelque façon sous les pieds de celle qu'il aime. (IV.viii, 243-44)

Senault warns the king against amorous passion by detailing the biblical examples of Samson, David, and Solomon, who all fell prey to their love of women.[49] In any case, whether he is lovesick or not, the king is discouraged from adultery and fornication as they interfere with the procreation of legitimate heirs to the throne, which is one of the responsibilities he owes to his subjects.

Regarding the duties of the king towards his people, Senault echoes the thoughts of Bodin in the *Six livres de la République*, stating that the relationship between sovereign and subjects is a reciprocal one. They need him to govern them just as he needs them to be able to

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[47] *Le Monarque* IV.vii, 229.
[48] *Le Monarque* IV.viii, "Du divertissement."
[49] Pierre Le Moyne uses these same biblical examples as caution against romantic love in *De l'art de régner*, Seconde partie, Discours III, Article VI, "De la modération de l'Amour et du Plaisir: Combien elle est difficile, et particulièrement aux Princes" (161-63).

enforce his power and assume his political body. This mutual obligation does not in any way diminish the sovereignty of the Prince, but rather reaffirms it:

> Ces Maximes ne détruisent point l'autorité du Prince, mais l'établissent; ne renversent point son Trône, mais l'affermissent; ne sont point d'outrage à son indépendance, mais la comblent de gloire; parce que le Souverain gagnant le cœur de ses Sujets par sa bonté, il les intéresse dans sa conservation; les attache à sa Personne par des chaines amoureuses, que rien ne peut rompre, et règne sur eux plus absolument par sa douceur, que les autres n'y peuvent régner par leur autorité absolue. (V.i, 255)

The king provides his wisdom and protection in exchange for their service and obedience. The monarch also owes justice to his subjects. According to Senault, justice is the heart of the political body,[50,51] and the source of all other virtues. Part of this justice is exercising clemency, and knowing when to choose life over death (as he has a right over both). As the king is the symbolic father figure of the people, and as no father wants to put his children to death, no matter their crime, death should be a last resort of justice after other means of corrections have been tried, as Senault writes in the fifth *traité*: "Son plus bel éloge, c'est celui de Père du peuple; ce nom lui doit apprendre que la Clémence lui est nécessaire, et qu'il pardonne à ses enfants, quand il pardonne à ses Sujets" (V.iv, 279). Also, as his subjects are a part of his political body, the king cannot punish one of its members without also hurting himself:

> Vous êtes, lui disait-il, le Chef de la République, et la République est votre corps; vous êtes si étroitement liés ensemble, qu'on ne saurait vous diviser sans vous

[50] *Le Monarque* V.iii, 264.
[51] See also Le Moyne, Troisième partie, Discours II.

> perdre: Jugez donc par là combien la Clémence vous est nécessaire, puisqu'en pensant pardonner aux autres, vous vous pardonnez à vous-mêmes. (V.iii, 279)

If denying the passions of the physical body constitutes an act of suicide, killing a member of the political body constitutes an act of amputation. If the member is diseased and can potentially infect the entire body, it is sometimes necessary to remove it, but it is still painful. And when it coincides with the best interest of the state, forgiveness of a guilty subject adds to the glory of a sovereign. But he should be careful not to pardon too readily or too often: the king in his prudence should discern which subjects deserve to be pardoned and which ones deserve to be punished so that his severity will not be questioned.[52]

The final point I wish to elaborate in my summary of Senault are his views on tyranny, for it is important to note the evolution of the concept of the tyrant during the eighty-five years since Bodin's *Six livres de la République*. I have previously mentioned that neither Loyseau nor Le Bret discuss tyranny in their texts, as they consider it outside of their field of study. But Senault chooses to address tyranny in detail in Book I of *Le monarque*, and he is much more critical of the tyrant than Bodin. Whereas Bodin states that the term "tyrant" is often misused and is historically not always synonymous with oppression, Senault labels tyranny as a "peste publique" (I.iii, 9), which is universally despised.[53] And whereas Bodin argues that there are varying degrees of tyranny (*tyran d'usurpation* versus *tyran d'exercice*) and that it is not a permanent status, Senault does not leave any room for the tyrant to grow or change. He believes that a ruler who has obtained his status by violence must continue to use violence to maintain his

[52] For Le Moyne's thoughts on clemency, which he considers to be an essential sovereign right (as did Senault and all of his predecessors), see *De l'art de régner* Troisième partie, Discours V.

[53] The use of the term "peste publique" aligns him with John of Salisbury, who we have already noted refers to the tyrant as a public enemy.

power, and therefore that a *tyran d'usurpation* must also be a *tyran d'exercice*.[54,55] "Le Tyran conserve par la violence ce qu'il a acquis par la force; et sa puissance n'étant fondée que sur l'injustice, il est contraint de défendre ses anciens crimes par de nouveaux" (I.iv, 18). Tyranny is a source of disorder and confusion (the most frequently reoccurring negative buzz words for Senault) in the realm, as it overturns the natural stability of monarchy. It is a deformation of sovereign rights, governed by the will of the tyrant himself rather than by the justice of his political body.

> En effet la Tyrannie est la source de tous les malheurs, la confusion de tous les Gouvernements, et le désordre de toutes les Républiques…Elle renverse la Monarchie, quand elle oppose un sujet rebelle à un Souverain légitime; qu'elle lui persuade de renoncer à la justice, pour ne suivre que sont intérêt et plaisir; et que l'ayant mis sur le trône par la violence et par l'injustice, Elle lui fait croire que le droit des Souverains ne consiste qu'en la force; que leur volonté est la loi de tous leurs sujets, et qu'ils peuvent disposer comme bon leur semble de leurs biens, de leurs honneurs, et de leurs vies. (I.iii, 10)

If it has heretofore been established that the political body is inseparable from the state, which inspires the king's natural desire to protect his realm, the tyrant is incapable of acting in the best interest of his people, for he is not organically connected to them. He can only act in accordance with his own personal desires. Because the tyrant does not share the paternal relationship with his subjects as a true sovereign does, he does not love them, nor does he feel the need to defend

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[54] This is where Senault is most critical of Aristotle, whom he otherwise cites as "le plus sage des Politiques". (I.iv, 14) He does not agree with Aristotle's views (also Bodin's) that a tyrant can transform into a legitimate monarch.
[55] It is also important to note here that Le Moyne sides more closely with Bodin than with Senault on the subject of tyranny in *De l'art de régner*, marking its most significant departure from *Le Monarque.* Like Bodin, Le Moyne believes that a tyrant can be courageous and govern well, but that he cannot truly exercise justice for his subjects since, not being naturally linked to his political body, it is more difficult for him to separate himself from his physical body. (Troisième partie, Discours II, Article I, 255-59).

them. On the contrary, Senault contends that he is afraid of them. The tyrant is an insecure ruler who is always unhappy in spite of his power:

> Ne vous imaginez pas pourtant qu'il soit heureux au milieu de ses victoires. Il tremble toujours, quelque bon succès que la fortune donne à ses dessins…dans le sein même de la Paix il ne goûte pas la douceur ni le plaisir du repos. Sa conscience, qui sert de ministre à la Justice divine, le tourmente nuit et jour. (I.iii, 12-13)

Knowing that he does not command the loyalty of the people, the tyrant maintains his rule by fear, sowing chaos and destruction, and glorying in the terror of his subjects and his enemies alike (and seeing no difference between the two!):

> S'il appréhende quelque conspiration contre sa personne, il se tient renfermé dans son Palais, où il ne médite que des vengeances et des meurtres: Si la haine et la fureur lui inspirent du courage, il sort de sa tannière comme une bête farouche, suivi de ses satellites, et va porter dans la ville, la terreur, la confusion, et le carnage. S'il obtient quelque avantage fur ses ennemis, il se baigne dans leur sang, il marche sur leurs corps, et il triomphe de la misère et de la calamité publique. (I.iii, 12)

From Senault's description of this bloodthirsty and paranoid oppressor, it becomes evident that the conception of tyranny has shifted from a misunderstood sub-category of sovereignty to its polar opposite, and from a type of political body to a monstrous accordance of absolute power to the physical body of the tyrant.

From Theory to Tragedy: The Political and Aesthetic Importance of Theater in the French Seventeenth Century

Through my summary of the above theoretical works, I hope that it has become clear how the sovereign's double body has developed and taken on new meaning over the course of the French seventeenth century. The king's political body that was established during the late Middle Ages expands its power during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, until it envelops the entire state. Which in turn necessitates the rejection of the physical body to accommodate the increasing authority vested in the political body, creating the potential for conflict within the double person of the king. It is into this internal struggle between *corps physique* and *corps politique* that seventeenth-century theater intervenes, and this intersection is the focal point of my study. As a means of transition from political theory into dramatic literature, I would like to take a moment to situate the role of theatre during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, and to define tragedy as understood and appreciated by a seventeenth-century audience.

In my previous summary of Cardin Le Bret's *De la souveraineté du roi* (1632), I explained how the absolute monarch's political body encompassed every aspect of his domain.[56] As evidence of this expanding influence, Le Bret's treatise specifically mentions the king's ownership of rivers, mines, forests, and universities. But the scope of royal power would soon be extended to include artistic production in France with the establishment of the Académie française in 1635. Young talent in both visual arts and literature was gradually identified, evaluated, and brought under the protection of the monarchy. This system of patronage is most notable during the reign of Louis XIV, as is very well detailed by Jean-Marie Apostolidès in *Le roi-machine: spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV*:

[56] See Chapter 1 of the present study, 28.

> Le mouvement académique au XVIIème siècle se présente comme une entreprise de confiscation et de transformation du savoir par l'Etat. Les différents arts monopolisés par les académies vont traduire l'imaginaire du corps du roi en peinture, en sculpture ou en poésie. (34)

This process of artistic appropriation had begun under Cardinal Richelieu during the second half of the reign of Louis XIII. For example, consider the Abbé d'Aubignac's *La Pratique du théâtre*, a neoclassical guidebook that provides a rigorous list of rules to be observed by dramatists for the composition and representation of their plays. Although this treatise was not published until 1657, and thus had its greatest impact on the works of Racine, it had been originally commissioned by Richelieu twenty years beforehand. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the genre of theatre, which had historically been associated with the Church (miracle plays and mysteries) or with the people (farce) during the Middle Ages, was becoming intrinsically linked to the king as an extension of his political body and an agent of his glory. All "official" theatrical performances became part of the permanent endeavor to glorify the king.

If we consider the theatre as a political stage, whose production was monitored by the crown, we can appreciate its use as a pedagogical tool that creates a mediatory space between sovereign and subject, reinforcing the social hierarchy.[57] It was, of course, a means of entertainment and a source of pleasure, especially as performed during festivities at Versailles before Louis XIV and his courtiers. D'Aubignac acknowledges in the first chapter of *La Pratique du théâtre* that this art form contributes to "la joie publique" (38). Yet he stresses in this same chapter that theatre is useful for the moral instruction of the people, guiding them towards virtue and away from idleness and rebellion, and thereby maintaining the health and prosperity of the political body: "Il ne faut pas s'imaginer pourtant, que les Spectacles ne

[57] *Le roi-machine* 155.

puissent rien donner qu'une splendeur vaine et inutile. C'est une secrète instruction des choses les plus [utiles] <nécessaires> au Peuple et les plus difficiles à lui persuader" (39). For this reason, D'Aubignac believes that the best thing a monarch can do for his subjects is to give them quality entertainment. He cites the example of the Roman emperors, who brought their traditional games and spectacles into conquered territories as a means of convincing their new subjects that Roman rule was beneficial instead of tyrannical.[58] Through performance, the people can more readily understand and accept their role and the role of the king in society.

D'Aubignac's views on the function of theater echo the ideas proposed by Aristotle in the fourth chapter of his *Poetics*.[59] According to Aristotle, theatre is a form of mimesis, which comes naturally to humans from childhood and from which they draw not only pleasure but also understanding. "It is for this reason that men enjoy looking at images, because what happens is that, as they contemplate them, they apply their understanding and reasoning to each element" (34). Just as children "play house" to learn about adult behavior, so drama is meant to be an imitation of human action that edifies as it instructs.

Now that theater has been situated in its sociopolitical context, I would like to address the specifics of tragedy by continuing with Aristotle's *Poetics*. Although this text dates from approximately 330-335 B.C., it is essential to an understanding of seventeenth-century French tragedy, which is widely characterized by a reemergence of Classical theatrical parameters. This neo-classicism is evident not only in the Abbé D'Aubignac's reverence for Aristotle, but also in the prevalence of translations and commentaries on Aristotelian philosophy throughout Europe

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[58] *La Pratique du théâtre* 43-44.

[59] D'Aubignac considers the study of Aristotle's *Poetics* to be a canonical text for the instruction of dramatists (*La Pratique du théâtre* 74), an opinion with which Corneille disagrees in the dédicace to his comedy *La Suivante* (1633-34): "Savoir les règles, et entendre le secret de les apprivoiser adroitement avec notre théâtre, ce sont deux sciences bien différentes; et peut-être que pour faire maintenant réussir une pièce, ce n'est pas assez d'avoir étudié dans les livres d'Aristote et d'Horace" (Ed. Georges Couton 1980, 387).

dating from the Renaissance, such as the *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata, et sposta* by Lodovico Castelvetro, published in Italy in 1570. In her 2009 book *Racine, ou l'alchimie du tragique,* Sylvaine Guyot succinctly summarizes the general alignment of the Racinian definition of tragedy with that of Aristotle:

> Si la définition de la tragédie est l'objet de débats tout au long du XVIIème siècle, la plupart des théoriciens s'accordent, dans la lignée d'Aristote, sur certains traits essentiels au genre: des personnages de haut rang (princes, rois, ou héros qui garantissent la dignité de la fable et la noblesse du ton); la composition de l'action (le retournement de bonheur en malheur provoqué par une faute du protagoniste); les émotions à produire chez le spectateur (la frayeur et la pitié); et la vraisemblance de la représentation (une imitation qui emporte la "créance" du spectateur). (Guyot 32)

Aristotle's definition of tragedy is found in the sixth chapter of *Poetics*, and can be dissected and developed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature and purpose of the art form. Let us examine it in detail:

> Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude – in language which is garnished in various forms in its different parts – in the mode of dramatic enactment, not narrative – and through the arousal of pity and fear effecting the catharsis of such emotions. (37)

If the action of tragedy is firstly defined by Aristotle as serious, this requirement is reflected in the subject choice of seventeenth-century tragic plays. The majority of the tragedies composed in France during this time (and all of the tragedies analyzed in the present study) are based on stories from antiquity, hence the prevalence of king-characters. If the action of a play does not

take place in ancient Greece or Rome, or if it is based on a more recent historical period, it certainly does not occur in France, but rather in Spain (Corneille's *Le Cid*) or in the Middle East (Racine's *Bazajet*).

Aristotle's "serious" tragedy is also interpreted by seventeenth-century dramatists as meaning "known." The work of the tragic poet was neither in the creation of a new story nor in its literal re-telling, but in the dramatic re-imagining of a famous moment into an original plot structure. Jean-Marie Apostolidès confirms in *Le prince sacrifié*: "C'est moins un drame nouveau qu'on vient chercher que la récitation d'une histoire connue" (44). For example, consider Corneille's *Horace* (1640). In the battle between Rome and Alba, the audience knows that Rome will win. What they do not know (and the *nouveauté* that Corneille provides for them) is information about the conflicting relationships between the Horace and Curiace families, or about the fury that Camille will experience at the death of her lover. Here, Corneille transforms a preexisting "serious" situation by incorporating a deeper analysis of the inner workings of the characters, particularly of their passions.

Finally, seventeenth-century tragedy can also be considered "serious" in that it generally observes the rule of *bienséances*, choosing only to imitate noble actions, and minimizing displays of violence and immorality on the stage.

Next, Aristotle specifies that the action of tragedy should be not only serious but also complete, an idea that he later explains in chapters VIII-X of *Poetics*. To summarize, he states that the theatrical representation should consist of a single unified action that includes a beginning, middle, and end, all of which evolve organically from one another. All events and characters should contribute to the development and resolution of this action. This Aristotelian principle of unity of action is developed by modern interpretors of *Poetics* to include unities of

time and place, and together these three unities help to structure the plots of the majority of seventeenth-century French tragedies, meaning that the story generally unfolds within a single day and takes place in a confined location. D'Aubignac is rigorous in his insistence on unities in *La Pratique du théâtre*, linking it to the ultimate dramatic objective of achieving *vraisemblance*. Meaning that the tragic situation, although clearly ficticious, must be real-seeming to the audience. In his 2003 book *Passions tragiques et règles classiques*, Georges Forestier defines the neoclassical concept of *vraisemblance* as a perfected imitation of reality that seeks to engage the spectators so completely that they forget they are in a theatre: "Il faut amener le public à prendre l'action théâtrale non pour une fiction, mais pour la vérité; il faut créer une illusion de vérité. Or pour qu'il y ait illusion de vérité, le public doit oublier qu'il est au théâtre" (Forestier 83). This focus on verisimilitude in theatre precedes D'Aubignac: it had gained in importance during the first half of the 17th century in the writings of Jean Chapelain (1595-1674). A poet, literary critic, and founding member of the Académie Française, Chapelain had encouraged adherence to the three unities as a means of creating a convincing mimesis of life. Anne Duprat summarizes his views on unities (which are shared by D'Aubignac) in *Vraisemblances: poétique et théorie de la fiction de Cinquecento à Jean Chapelain*:

> C'est pourquoi il faut s'efforcer de conformer entièrement les règles qui régissent l'univers fictif à celles de la représentation, de façon à placer le spectateur comme dans les conditions d'une expérience réelle. Le respect des unités du poème dramatique permet de produire l'illusion mimétique au théâtre, comme le font les lois de la perspective en peinture. (322)

In order to produce the desired effect of catharsis on the spectator, the circumstances must be believable within the scope of the theatrical representation.

Which brings us to the second part of Aristotle's definition of tragedy, which is the evocation and purgation of pity and fear among the audience members. Tragedy must be a moving experience, for therein lies its purpose and pleasure. Because the spectators are feeling these emotions through mimesis and not in reality, they should be able to release and enjoy them, as is plainly stated in chapter XIV of *Poetics*: "The poet ought to provide the pleasure which derives from pity and fear by means of mimesis" (46). According to Aristotle, the most effective way to achieve this catharsis is by incorporating the dramatic elements of *peripeteia* and recognition into the tragic plot structure, both of which are defined in Chapter XI. *Peripeteia* can be characterized as an abrupt reversal of the situation, for example, transitioning from fortune into misfortune, or from safety into peril. Recognition is "a change from ignorance to knowledge, bringing the characters into either a close bond, or enmity, with one another, and concerning matters which bear on their prosperity or affliction" (43). As Aristotle considers these circumstances most conducive to producing pity and fear, he recommends that a good tragedy must include moments of reversal, recognition, or both.

Another way in which tragedy strives to elicit an emotional response from the audience is through the portrayal of passions. Aristotle does not elaborate on the role of passions in *Poetics*, but it is a theme that is widely explored by seventeenth-century dramatists (as well as in other literary genres of the time period)[60] and represents an evolution of Aristotelian doctrine into modern theatre. D'Aubignac categorizes passion as one of the three bases for the choice of a tragic subject in the second book of *La Pratique du théâtre*:

[60] The study of passions in the French seventeenth-century is certainly not limited to theatre. The subject of passions is specifically addressed in the philosophical writings of Guillaume du Vair (1556-1621), René Descartes (*Les passions de l'âme*, 1649), and Jean de La Bruyère (*Caractères*, 1690). The effect of passions is also famously portrayed in the seventeenth-century novel, particularly in the works of Madeleine de Scudéry (*Clélie*, 1654) and Madame de Lafayette (*La Princesse de Clèves*, 1678).

> Le choix donc qu'on en doit faire, c'est de considérer si une Histoire est fondée sur l'une de ces trois choses; ou sur une belle Passion, comme ont été *La Marianne* et *Le Cid*; ou sur une belle Intrigue, comme *Le Prince déguisé* et *Cléomédon*; ou sur un Spectacle extraordinaire, come *Cyminde* ou *Les deux Victimes*. (111-12)

Passion complements *peripeteia* and recognition to provide an in-depth understanding of the characters' motives and feelings. A focus on passions allows the spectator to react not only to the events that occur, but also to why they occur. In the above citation, D'Aubignac mentions Tristan L'Hermite's *La Marianne* (1636) as an example of a passion-based tragedy. In this play, we witness a reversal of fortune when Marianne is executed, and a moment of recognition when Hérode realizes the horrific act that he has just authorized. But we also experience Hérode's emotional turmoil leading up to and following her death, making his unstable rage more terrifying and his loss more pitiful. His passion increases the impact of the tragic event.[61] D'Aubignac affirms that passion is a useful tool to add complexity to an otherwise simple (or well-known) story and to engage the audience on a more profound level:

> Les autres sont de passions, quand d'un petit fonds le Poète tire ingénieusement de quoi soutenir le Théâtre par de grands sentiments, et que sur des rencontres presque naturelles à son sujet, il trouve occasion de porter ses Acteurs dans des mouvements nobles, violents et extraordinaires: ce qui ravit les Spectateurs en faisant toujours sur leur âme quelque nouvelle impression. (118)

The final point I wish to make about tragedy concerns Aristotle's prescription for the tragic character or hero. As the action of tragic drama has already been defined as having "a certain magnitude," the main characters generally hold a position of power and influence.

[61] Hérode's tragic function in *La Marianne* is examined in detail in Chapter 2 of the present study.

D'Aubignac refers to the tragic hero as an "illustre personnage" (136). The higher a character is placed at the beginning of the play, the greater his potential for *peripeteia*. The tragic hero also preferably has bonded relationships (*philoï*), whether through kinship or friendship, with other characters in the story.[62] These relationships can be tested and severed to instill pity and fear. Most importantly, a tragic character can neither be completely bad nor completely good. Aristotle contends in chapter XIII of *Poetics* that watching a virtuous man fall into undeserved misfortune is repulsive rather than tragic, and watching an evil man suffer because of his actions is fair and therefore does not evoke pity. So in order to draw on the emotions of the spectator, a character must possess a certain degree of good qualities along with a tragic flaw that contributes to his circumstances:

> Such a man is one who is not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into affliction not because of evil and wickedness, but because of a certain fallibility (*hamartia*). He will belong to the class of those who enjoy great esteem and prosperity, such as Oedipus, Thyestus, and outstanding men from such families. (44)

An effective tragic character must be relatable in his imperfection, so that in spite of his elevated social status, the audience can sympathize with him as he is confronted with an ethical choice. And when is character is a king who is endowed with the rights and responsibilities heretofore described in this chapter, the consequences of his choice (more specifically, of the choice between the physical and political bodies) become all the more potentially tragic. As Pierre Le Moyne aptly observes in the second book of *De l'art de régner*, where he equates the demise of a sovereign to a natural disaster:

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[62] The relationship between sovereign and subject mimics the bond between father and child.

> Ils [les Princes] ne peuvent tomber que de haut, et avec suite. Il en est comme des Colosses qui ne font que de grandes ombres et de grandes chutes: comme des Sapins qui ne sont point abattus sans abattre: comme des Montagnes qui ne tombent point qu'elles n'entrainent tout un Pays après elles. Un Particulier peut tomber sans être suivi de personne: un Prince ne tombe jamais, que tout un Monde ne se trouve enveloppé dans sa chute. (II.ii, 106)

An absolute monarch can only make absolute mistakes, and dramatists of the time period learned to capitalize on this problematic.

"Meurs, Octave!": Corneille's *Cinna* and the Theatrical Representation of the Sovereign's Double Body

To give an example of this link between sovereignty and theater, I present a analysis of one of Pierre Corneille's *Cinna* (1641), in order to demonstrate how the representation of kingship was used to create powerful and successful drama. In this Roman tragedy, the corporeal duality of the sovereign is communicated through the onstage transformation of the insecure despot Octave into the merciful emperor Auguste.

It is immediately evident in *Cinna* that the king-character possesses a double body, because he has two names. He is indicated in the text (and in the play's subtitle) as Auguste, but he refers to himself as Octave. At the beginning of the play, this emperor's sovereign status can be characterized as despotic. He did not inherit the throne, but he has conquered the Roman Empire and its inhabitants as the spoils of the civil war that followed the assassination of Julius Caesar. Let us briefly review what the politologues had to say about despotic monarchy. Jean Bodin and Charles Loyseau both recognize a despot as being fully sovereign, although they disagree about the stability of this form of government. Bodin states in Book II of the *Six livres*

de la République that a despotic king, although he has obtained his power by force rather than by succession, can still reign as a just and virtuous monarch once his sovereignty has been established. Loyseau contends in the second chapter of his *Traité des seigneuries* that despotic monarchies constitute a flagrant violation of natural law. According to Loyseau, a usurper who has ascended to the throne by violent means and who holds his subjects as his property cannot possibly respect divine and natural law, which makes his rule more synonymous with tyranny than with sovereignty.[63]

To go back to the play, Octave's adopted daughter Emilie would agree with Loyseau. She despises Octave as a murderous tyrant, and with good reason, for her father Toranius was one of the victims of his warfare. Her lover Cinna, however, initially echoes the ideas of Bodin, telling the emperor in Act II Scene I that Rome belongs rightfully to him, and that the bloodshed of war is not a crime, as long as the oppression of the people does not continue into times of peace:

> N'imprimez pas, Seigneur, cette honteuse marque
> A ces rares vertus qui vous ont fait Monarque ;
> Vous l'êtes justement, et c'est sans attentat
> Que vous avez changé la forme de l'Etat.
> Rome est dessous vos lois par le droit de la guerre
> Qui sous les lois de Rome a mis toute la Terre,
> Vos armes l'ont conquis, et tous les conquérants,
> Pour être usurpateurs, ne sont pas des Tyrans.
> Quand ils ont sous leurs lois asservi des Provinces,
> Gouvernant justement ils s'en font justes Princes. (II.i 417-26)

[63] Loyseau's position on despotism is later supported by Senault in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain.*

These words, while comforting to Octave, are problematized by the fact that Cinna is secretly plotting to assassinate him in order to please Emilie (a detail of which the audience is already aware). Yet his *éloge* must not be accepted as meaningless flattery, for it functions as foreshadowing of the evolution of Octave's sovereign status over the course of the play.

In any case, in addition to the accusations and insurgency surrounding him, Octave himself is insecure in his political body, and he expresses an initial reticence to accept his indivisible sovereign responsibilities. In Act II Scene I, he offers to share power with Cinna and Maxime, restoring Rome as a popular state. He also wants to be their friend:

> Ne considérez point cette grandeur suprême,
> Odieuse aux Romains, et pésante à moi-même,
> Traitez-moi comme ami, non comme Souverain?
> Rome, Auguste, l'Etat, tout est en votre main. (II.i 397-400)

To any of the political theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this is a clear violation of sovereignty. The king does not share his authority with anyone. He nominates and listens to a wise counsel, but he ultimately makes all political decisions for himself. The hesitancy and emotional attachment demonstrated in this citation are indicative of the preeminence of the physical body of Octave, trying to assert its influence over his *corps politique*.

It is this same physical body that is hurt in the fourth act when Octave discovers that his closest confidants have been conspiring against him, planning to terminate his physical body and thereby dismember his newly established empire. Not only is Octave angry, he is genuinely shocked and anguished, as is evident from his reaction to Euphorbe's report:

Quoi ! Mes plus chers amis ! Quoi ! Cinna ! Quoi ! Maxime !
Les deux que j'honorais d'une si haute estime,
A qui j'ouvrais mon cœur, et dont j'avais fais choix
Pour les plus importants, et plus nobles emplois !
Après qu'entre leurs mains j'ai remis mon Empire,
Pour m'arracher le jour l'un et l'autre conspirent ! (IV.i 1083-86)

He is so dismayed he can barely speak. In his analysis of the play, C.M. Gossip summarizes this emotional effect of Cinna and Emilie's betrayal on the character of Octave: "The conspiracy is for him as much of a huge disappointment as it is a monstrous crime. The faithlessness of his friends and adoptive daughter hits hard" (76).

Octave is a victim of passion. Thus far, the reign of "Auguste" has consisted of vengeful subjects trying to end his life and undermine his sovereignty, to the point where he is willing to relinquish it voluntarily. Now the threat against his person is coming from his loved ones. In order to stop the cycle of pain and suffering, what is a despot to do? He could kill the traitors – Cardin Le Bret would say that death is an appropriate punishment for the crime of *lèse-majesté,*[64] especially when the king makes the laws and holds the power of life and death over his subjects. Or would it be in the better interest of Rome for him to kill himself?

In Act IV Scene II, he chooses the latter option, in a sense. This scene is a monologue that is also a dialogue between Octave (the man) and Auguste (the king). He is tormented and confused, and does not know whether to punish the insurgents or punish his own past wrongdoings. Ralph Albanese remarks that in the absence of a trustworthy interlocutor, the king-character has no choice but to confront himself:

[64] *De la souveraineté du roi* IV.vi.

> Désorienté et seul, voire ahuri face à ce spectacle d'ingratitude, Auguste ne peut plus, dès lors, s'en remettre à autrui…Mû par un désespoir stupéfiant, l'empereur s'engage dans une lutte contre son propre passé criminel, c'est-à-dire, son identité octavienne. (Albanese 264)

The conflicted emperor is battling his dual nature, and effectively willing half of himself to die:

> Octave, n'attends plus le coup d'un nouveau Brute,
> Meurs, et dérobe-lui la gloire de ta chute,
> Meurs, tu ferais pour vivre un lâche et vain effort
> Si tant de gens de cœur font des vœux pour ta mort,
> Et si tout ce que Rome a d'illustre jeunesse
> Pour te faire périr tour à tour s'intéresse :
> Meurs, puisque c'est un mal que tu ne peux pas guérir,
> Meurs enfin, puisqu'il faut, ou tout perdre, ou mourir. (IV.ii 1169-76)

Octave has an endless list of ambitious enemies. Octave has a guilty conscience about his despotic ascension to the throne. Octave wants to be loved, not conspired against. And over the course of this scene, Auguste is realizing that the first person who needs to die is Octave. He must die to himself in order for Rome to live. This idea corresponds with Jean-François Senault's argument in *Le Monarque ou les devoirs du souverain* that a true rejection of passions requires an act of quasi-suicide.[65] But by overcoming his human weakness, Octave liberates the political body of Auguste. Free from guilt and anger, Auguste can act in accordance with his sovereign justice, which, being inseparable from the state, will always act in its best interest. And what is best for Rome in this case is not to punish, as the injured Octave would desire, but to set an example by stopping the violence where it began – with himself. Auguste accepts the wise

[65] See page 39 of the present study.

counsel of his wife Livie, who advises him in the subsequent scene that forgiveness may be the most effective way to win the loyalty of his subjects, and that clemency may strengthen his political body rather than making him appear weak: "C'est régner sur vous-même, et par un noble choix / Pratiquer la vertu la plus digne des Rois" (IV.iii 1241-42).

Livie is not alone in this idea. As I have proven in my analyses of Bodin, Le Bret, and Senault, one of the primary marks of sovereignty is the willingness to forgive offenses committed against the king's own person. Thus, by pardoning the rebels, Auguste reaffirms his sovereignty by creating loyal subjects who will be as committed to serving him as they had been to despising Octave. Even the vengeful Emilie cannot help but be moved by his mercy, expressing her admiration for him in Act V Scene III:

> Ma haine va mourir, que j'ai crue immortelle,
> Elle est morte, et ce cœur devient Sujet fidèle,
> Et prenant désormais cette haine en horreur,
> L'ardeur de vous servir succède à sa fureur. (V.iii 1725-28)

This despot, rather than morphing into a tyrant, has been transfigured into a true king by reigning over himself, which in turn allows him to reign over his people in love rather than in fear. Having cast off his physical body, he is finally secure in his political body, and can exercise his absolute power for the good of the empire, as should be the goal of every sovereign monarch.

Through its portrayal of Octave/Auguste, Corneille's *Cinna* (which is subtitled *La Clémence d'Auguste*) provides a sterling representation of the sovereign's double body in the French seventeenth century, demonstrating a remarkable cohesiveness with the theoretical texts of the time period. This feat becomes all the more impressive when one considers its literary context within the genre of theatre – both the playwright and the actor must communicate a sense

of this transformation onstage while the spectator is watching a single physical body perform. The actor must convincingly relinquish his passions while actually retaining his presence onstage, just as the real king must reign in his immortal *corps politique* while still inhabiting his *corps physique*. In the case of Auguste, the king-character's recognition of his political body reduces the tragic element of *Cinna*'s *dénouement* – no one dies during the action of the play except (figuratively) Octave. It could even be argued that, because of Octave's metamorphosis into Auguste, *Cinna* does not qualify as a real tragedy. As Antoine Soare suggests in "*Cinna* ou la clémence au deuxième degré," this tragedy's peaceful ending teeters on the edge of tragi-comic since order is re-established to the situation. For, as Bodin, Loyseau, Le Bret, and Senault all argue in their texts, when the king is good, the realm will flourish. This Cornelian model of the sovereign's double body introduces a question that I plan to address in the following chapters of my study: if the theatrical representation of a good king creates a vehicle for successful tragedy in the seventeenth century, how much more successful, then, is the dramatic interpretation of a sovereign who isn't? For not all tragic king-characters are as heroic as Auguste. Whereas *Cinna* portrays a true sovereign who succeeds in overcoming his *hamartia*, many official theatrical performances during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV tell the stories of monarchs who fail to conquer their own physical bodies, as Apostolidès notes in *Le prince sacrifié*:

> Si l'on a reconnu depuis longtemps dans certaines œuvres des allusions à Louis XIII ou Louis XIV, les monarques mis en scène ne sont pas semblables à ceux qui règnent effectivement. Ils ne peuvent même pas se poser en modèles, puisque le théâtre montre aussi bien des rois faibles et dépossédés de leur couronne que des tyrans. (9)

These flawed kings are present in some of the most memorable and successful plays of the time period. Which presents a paradox: in an era during which theatre was intended to glorify the king and reinforce the legitimacy of his absolute power, why was the anti-sovereign such a meaningful and effective force in tragic drama? What was his function, in both a dramatic and sociopolitical context? If the goal of the art form was to please the king and serve as a reflection of his sovereignty, why aren't all king-characters like Auguste, who possesses the humanity of a tragic hero but who ultimately triumphs and earns the admiration of his subjects? Or why not like Tulle in *Horace* or Don Fernand in *Le Cid*, who arrive in the final act as a royal *deus ex machina* to administer justice and restore order to their respective tragic situations? If tragedy is a mimesis of life, as Aristotle claims, why not always display the sovereign in the illuminated eternal glory of his political body, as he should be according to the political theorists we have heretofore studied, and as his image is typically represented in painting and sculpture of the seventeenth century?[66]

I propose a three-part response to these questions, the first part of which is very simple – because it is more entertaining. It is important to note that by making this argument, I certainly do not mean to discredit the entertainment value of *Cinna, Horace*, or *Le Cid*! But just as today's television spectators enjoy violence and scandal, so the audiences of the time period preferred passion to peace. Jean-François Senault, who, like Bossuet, was very critical of theatre and did not recommend it as a worthwhile form of entertainment for the prince, laments in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* that positive moral instruction is often overlooked in favor of vice, giving the example of Chimène's actions in *Le Cid*:

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[66] As described by Louis Marin in "The Portrait of the King's Glorious Body". *Food for Thought (La Parole Mangée),* 1989.

> L'homme est entièrement perverti depuis le péché; les mauvais exemples lui plaisent plus que les bons, parce qu'ils sont plus conformes à son humeur; et quand on lui représente sur le Théâtre le Vice avec ses laideurs, et la Vertu avec ses beautés, il a bien plus d'inclination pour celui-là que pour celle-ci. (IV.vii, 233)

I am confident that Corneille would not agree with Senault's pessimistic outlook, and neither would D'Aubignac, whose position on the morality of theatre has already been established. But it remains true that transgression and disorder hold a certain universal appeal. In Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, the Shakespeare-loving John the Savage sums it up succinctly with his observation that: "Stability isn't nearly so spectacular as instability" (199).

Secondly, the character of the tyrannical king lends itself more easily to the Aristotelian emotional responses of pity and fear. According to the theory of absolute monarchy, if a kingdom is encompassed fully within the protection of the sovereign's political body, whom do the subjects pity, and what do they fear? I hinted in my analysis of *Cinna* that because of Octave/Auguste's metamorphosis, the play is not purely tragic. The death of Emilie's father, which occurs prior to the action, is absolved through the symbolic "death" of Octave, and the story ends with a rare absence of cadavers. However, D'Aubignac would disagree that this happy ending makes *Cinna* un-tragic. In the tenth chapter of the second book of *La Pratique du théâtre*, he claims that a tragedy can end well as long as it contains the other required elements of the genre:

> Plusieurs se sont imaginés que le mot de Tragique ne signifiait jamais qu'une aventure funeste et sanglante; et qu'un poème dramatique ne pouvait être nommé Tragédie, si la Catastrophe ne contenait la mort ou l'infortune des principaux

> Personnages: mais c'est à tort, étant certain que ce terme ne veut rien dire sinon une Chose magnifique, sérieuse, grave et convenable aux agitations et aux grands revers de la fortune des Princes; et qu'une pièce de théâtre porte ce nom de Tragédie seulement en considération des Incidents et des personnes dont elle représente la vie, et non pas à raison de la Catastrophe. (211)

Jean Racine would later echo D'Aubignac's sentiments in his 1671 préface to *Bérénice*:

> Ce n'est point une nécessité qu'il y ait du sang et des morts dans une Tragédie; il suffit que l'Action en soit grande, que les Acteurs en soient héroïques, que les Passions y soient excitées, et que tout s'y ressente de cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir de la Tragédie. (qtd. in Forestier 3)

In light of these statements, I do not contend that the presence of a good king-character negates the possibility of tragedy. After all, under the reign of Tulle, Horace is able to kill the three Curiaces along with his sister. My argument is rather that a true sovereign will soften the tragic outcome, intervening (as does Tulle) on behalf of his subjects to repair damage to the political body. However, if the king is unaware or unresponsive to his political body, the people have no such security. Thus the audience can more easily pity the subjects of a tyrant and fear his wrath. Or they can pity and fear the tyrant himself if his character is portrayed, as Aristotle suggests, with a grain of goodness or an insurmountable tragic flaw.

Finally, the theatrical representation of the passionate king is important because, through the character's active transgression of the principles of the sovereign double body, tragic drama creates its own version of homage to the true king. By portraying the monarch as he should not be, it illuminates him as he is. Seventeenth-century tragedies present an *image en creux* of

sovereignty. Once again, Senault provides a brilliant explanation when he compares tyranny to legitimate monarchy in the first book of *Le Monarque*:

> S'il est vrai que toutes les choses du monde n'éclatent jamais davantage que quand elles sont opposées à leurs contraires, je ne saurais donner plus de lustre à la Monarchie, qu'en lui opposant la Tyrannie, puisque de tous les Gouvernements du monde, il n'y en a point qui soient plus différents, ni plus contraires. (I.iv, 16)

This idea translates into theatre as well as theory – when he is juxtaposed with a weak or villainous onstage ruler, the audience can acknowledge and appreciate the majesty of the actual sovereign. Also, it is important to note that, although the passionate king may win the day in tragedy, his actions are never valorized. D'Aubignac stresses the importance of creating drama that conforms to the morals of the audience, which he considers to be a major component of both *vraisemblance* and *bienséances*. Whereas ancient Athens was a popular state, where the audience loved to see the cruelty of tyrants and the rebellion of the people against an evil ruler, the king of France is loved and respected:

> Au lieu que parmi nous le respect et l'amour que nous avons pour nos Princes, ne peut permettre que l'on donne au Public ces spectacles pleins d'horreur; nous ne voulons point croire que les Rois puissent être méchants, ni souffrir que leurs sujets, quoiqu'en apparence maltraités, touchent leurs Personnes sacrées, ne se rebellent contre leur Puissance, non pas même en peinture; et je crois pas que l'on puisse faire assassiner un Tyran sur notre théâtre avec applaudissement. (120)

The portrayal of the anti-sovereign, therefore, must not be in the spirit of undermining the actual king, or the play would not succeed – neither for the spectators who are subjects of his political

body, nor for the dramatist whose livelihood is maintained by the crown. With that in mind, let us examine some of these infamous tragic rulers in detail.

CHAPTER 2

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PASSIONATE KING IN BAROQUE TRAGEDY

In his founding study on the literature of the French Baroque period, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France* (1954), Jean Rousset summarizes the Baroque aesthetic as:

> Le monde des formes en mouvement, des identités instables, dans un univers en métamorphose conçu à l'image d'un homme lui aussi en voie de changement et de rupture, pris de vertige entre ce qu'il est et ce qu'il paraît être, entre son masque et son visage. (229)

Rousset paradoxically defines the concept of "Baroque" by its inherent undefinabilty, by the fluidity of its transition between illusion and reality, between what is and what appears to be. He also loosely situates the literary French Baroque movement between 1580 and 1665 (from Montaigne to Corneille), with its *années charnières* occurring between 1625-30. This chapter presents three analyses of king-characters from tragedies that can be considered Baroque, both by their imagery and by their chronology: "Le Roi" in Théophile de Viau's *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* (1623), Hérode in Tristan L'Hermite's *La Marianne* (1636), and Cléopâtre in Corneille's *Rodogune* (1647). Contrary to *Cinna*, in which it is Octave's recognition and acceptance of his political body Auguste that facilitates the play's *dénouement*, the king-characters examined here will be defined by their failure to overcome the passions of their *corps physique* and reign in the justice of their *corps politique.* My analysis of each passionate sovereign will address two primary questions: 1. What are this character's specific transgressions of his/her sovereign double body in comparison to the theoretical definition of the

ideal absolute monarch? 2. What is the dramatic function of these transgressions in each play? My objective is to demonstrate how the representation of the passionate sovereign contributes to the effectiveness of these tragedies and conforms to the non-conformity of the French Baroque aesthetic.

The Nameless Tyrant: "Le Roi" in Théophile de Viau's *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* (1623)[67]

Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé is the sole dramatic work composed during the short life of Théophile de Viau (1590-1626), who is more widely known and studied for his poetry and his "libertinage." Viau adapted his tragedy from a story originally contained in Book IV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The Ovidian version tells the tale of two young Babylonian lovers who, having been forbidden to marry by their feuding families, whisper their love through a crack in the wall that separates their houses. They plan an escape together, but their reunion at the tomb of Ninus is interrupted by the arrival of a hungry lioness that chases Thisbe away and leaves bloody traces at the meeting site, causing Pyramus to believe that his beloved has been devoured. Heartbroken, he falls on his sword and dies. Thisbe returns to Ninus' tomb to find her lover dead, and she kills herself on top of his lifeless body. This tragedy was the subject of numerous French reinterpretations prior to Théophile's, most notably in the anonymous romance *Piramus*, written in the twelfth century. The Ovidian legend is also said to be the inspiration for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), due to its shared themes of family conflict and tragic misunderstanding that lead to double suicide.

Like Shakespeare's tragedy, *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* is, as is suggested in its title, a story about ill-fated love. But whereas Shakespeare supplements his

[67] The year of publication for this play is 1623, but it is believed to have been originally performed in 1621 (Schérer 1209).

drama with the interactions of Montagues and Capulets, Théophile de Viau chooses to minimize the importance of the lovers' families. His text is significantly shorter,[68] and the parental roles (Pyrame's father Narbal and Thisbé's mother), never directly confront their children or one another, speaking instead to their respective confidants. Viau also increases the importance of the king-character, who did not figure into the original Ovidian myth. Whereas Shakespeare's Prince Escalus of Verona exists primarily to reconcile the families after the deaths of Romeo and Juliet (a function which likens him to the Cornelian king-characters Tulle and Don Fernand), Théophile's "Le Roi" serves a very different purpose in *Pyrame et Thisbé*. He is still a secondary character, being present in only two scenes, but his role is crucial to the development of the play's action.

It is important to note from the start that "Le Roi" is a character without a name. As Jacques Scherer remarks in his analysis of the play: "Où règne ce roi? La pièce dédaigne de le dire" (1212). The audience does not know who he is, what territory he rules, or how he obtained his sovereign status. We can infer that it is Babylon from the story's origins in Ovid, but Théophile never mentions it specifically. Madeleine Bertaud suggests that the omission of Le Roi's name and history could be a simple oversight of a young and inexperienced dramatist, and that perhaps Viau did not consider this invented character's development necessary to the love story's plot.[69] I contend that Le Roi's anonymity presents him as a symbol of political power in the absence of a political body, since he is completely dominated by the desires of his physical body, and unjustly wields his authority to fulfill his personal interests. For his character is not a true ruler, but rather a rival of Pyrame for the love of Thisbé, and a catalyst for the tragic demise of both lovers.

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[68] *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* is a five-act tragedy in 1234 verses, whereas and *Romeo and Juliet* has 3058 verses. (For a French comparison, Corneille's *Le Cid* has 1866 lines.)

[69] Bertaud, Madeleine. "Roi et sujets dans *Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* de Théophile de Viau," 142.

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of Le Roi's violations of his sovereign responsibilities, I would like to examine the first scene of the play, as it introduces an idea that will be essential in understanding the king-character's actions. Act I Scene I is a dialogue between Thisbé and her elderly governess Bersiane, during which she speaks of her love for Pyrame and of the conflict that exists between the consuming passion of youth and the reason that comes with age. According to Thisbé, the capacity to love is what separates humans from animals:

> Il est vrai que la mort que ton amour me livre
> Est aussi seulement ce que j'appelle vivre :
> Nos esprits sans l'amour assoupis et pesants,
> Comme dans un sommeil passent nos jeunes ans ;
> Auparavant qu'aimer on ne sait point l'usage
> Du mouvement des sens ni des traits du visage ;
> Sans cette passion les plus lourds animaux
> Connaîtraient mieux que nous et les biens et les maux. (I.i 9-17)

Thisbé's love for Pyrame is what gives her life and brings her death. Her passion is essential to her humanity. The spectator must keep this message in mind when Le Roi will make his entrance two scenes later: passion is a purely human emotion. It elevates people above other beings, but it also keeps them from listening to reason. Although Bersiane's advice that Thisbé respect her family's wishes is prudent, Thisbé finds it repugnant. Likewise, when the king is subject to the same mortal passion, it prevents the wisdom of his political body from mastering his humanity.

We first meet Le Roi in Act I Scene III, where he angrily laments his unrequited love for Thisbé to his counselor Syllar. When the audience encounters this character, it is immediately apparent that he is aware of his sovereign authority, and that he understands and exercises his rights as king. We do not know whether Le Roi obtained his power through hereditary succession or despotic ascension, but unlike Octave in *Cinna*, who is reluctant to accept his role as sovereign, Le Roi clearly claims and relishes his status as an absolute monarch. He knows that he is not subject to human law, as he boasts to Syllar: "Tu sais que la justice est au-dessous du Roi" (I.iii 194). Literally, the law is beneath him. He also invokes the divine right of kings, whose power is god-given and who should live as an imitation of the gods on earth:

LE ROI

Les grands Rois doivent vivre à l'exemple des Dieux.

SYLLAR

Aussi vous ont-ils faits leurs lieutenants en terre. (I.iii 198-99)

Because "Le Roi" is conscious of his position and of the rights that it entails, he is all the more incensed that Thisbé does not respond to his favor. He is the supreme authority in the realm, and she spurns him for one of his subjects:

La qualité de Roi, l'éclat de ma fortune,

Au lieu de l'attirer, la choque et l'importune.

Elle aime mieux, ignoble et honteuse qu'elle est,

Un simple citoyen. (I.iii 171-74a)

Le Roi's *éclat* does not impress Thisbé, who is blinded by her love for Pyrame. This rejection provokes him to pervert his royal power and undermine the paternal sovereign/subject

relationship in order to possess her. If he cannot win Thisbé's affection by his status as king, he will force her to love him by eliminating the competition and killing Pyrame. He abuses the two rights of sovereignty he assumes in Act I Scene III (*supra*), being above the law and being the earthly example of divine power, in order to justify the satisfaction of his own desires rather than for the good of his kingdom. Since Le Roi is above the law and has the power over life and death, he believes that he can legally execute an innocent subject without reason. If Pyrame has made him jealous, then that is his crime. The king embodies the law, so Pyrame's death would fall within the law as long as the king authorizes it. This rationalization is evident in Le Roi's statement in Act I Scene III:

> Pyrame est en ce rang,[70] sa mort est légitime,
> Car déplaire à son Roi, c'est avoir fait un crime.
> Il n'est pas innocent. Ceux que la loi du sort
> Rend mal voulus du Prince, ils sont dignes de mort. (I.iii 207-10)

As for living according to a godly example, Le Roi distorts this right by considering it in reference to the ancient deities, who were capricious and violent. In opposition to the seventeenth-century proponents of absolute monarchy, who based their theories on the imitation of the Christian God's love and mercy that earns the loyalty and adoration of his subjects, Le Roi strives to be feared. Like the Roman gods whose example he cites, he plans to act on his anger at will in order to inspire terror and submission.

> Leur colère [des Dieux] à son gré fait tomber le tonnerre,
> Et quoiqu'ils soient portés, ce semble, à nous chérir,
> Pour montrer leur puissance ils nous font tous mourir ;

[70] The rank to which Le Roi refers in verse 207 is "Ceux qui ne me plaisent pas" (v. 206), see also subsequent citation.

> Et moi je tiens du Ciel ma meilleure partie,
> Mon âme avec les Dieux a de la sympathie ;
> J'aime que tout me craigne, et crois que le trépas
> Toujours est juste à ceux qui ne me plaisent pas. (I.iii 200-06)

Le Roi may or may not have begun his reign as a *tyran d'usurpation*, but he uses his status as king to become a *tyran d'exercice*, ignoring the justice of his political body and deliberately thwarting his power to serve his passion.

In spite of his political power, which he employs to its full advantage, Le Roi is ironically powerless against his human emotions. When he orders Syllar to assassinate Pyrame at the end of Act I Scene III, it is actually his love that speaks the final word: "Mon amour l'a conclu. Ce tyran implacable / En donne avec moi l'arrêt irrévocable" (I.iii 211-12). Le Roi may be tyrannizing his subjects, but he admits that his passion is tyrannizing him. His desire plays an active role in his decision-making process. This idea is echoed at other moments with other characters in the play: for example, in the previous scene, when Pyrame's father Narbal expresses his frustration at his son's defiance, his confidant Lidias reminds him that reason is no match for passion: "On ne saurait dompter la passion humaine: / Contre Amour la raison est importune et vaine" (I.ii 107-08). Le Roi is no exception to this weakness. He is incapable of overcoming his physical body. As Jean-François Senault warns in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain*, a king in love is no longer master of himself or his realm:

> Il est très difficile, qu'un Souverain qui a de la passion dans la tête, s'occupe beaucoup des affaires de son Royaume. Il renonce au Gouvernement de son Etat, dés qu'il devient amoureux; et cette passion impérieuse ne permet pas qu'il se partage entre sa Maîtresse et ses Sujets. (IV.viii 243)

Let us proceed to Act III Scene II, Le Roi's second and final scene in the play, during which he receives news from a messenger who had been sent to woo Thisbé on his behalf. To his dismay, he learns that she has refused to acknowledge the messenger's presence. In addition to being angry and jealous of her preference for Pyrame, he is now ashamed: "A cet affront, le sang au visage me monte. / Que ma condition souffre aujourd'hui de honte" (III.ii 649-50). Le Roi realizes that although he commands total political power over the kingdom, he is impotent in love. He cannot make Thisbé love him any more than he can he control his desire for her. He is mortified to discover that he is vulnerable to the same vulgar passions as his subjects:

> Traiter si rudement la passion d'un roi !
> Faut-il que nous ayons, fils des Dieux que nous sommes,
> Le sentiment semblable au vulgaire des hommes ?
> Ingrate ! si faut-il que je te mette un jour
> Dans le choix d'éprouver ma haine ou mon amour.
> Tu sauras que je règne, et que la tyrannie
> Me peut bien accorder ce que l'Amour me nie.
> Ce beau fils dépêché, si ton cœur ne démord,
> Tu te pourras bien voir sa compagne à la mort. (III.ii 660-68)

Le Roi may be humiliated, but as his words indicate, he knows that he still has one trump card to play. Since he still possesses the administrative authority to make Pyrame die, he becomes firmer in his resolve to kill him. If the capacity for violence is his only advantage, he is determined to use it, even against Thisbé should she continue to reject him once Pyrame has been eliminated. At this point, not only does Le Roi abuse the sovereign/subject relationship

because of passion, but he also begins to neglect his own *gloire*. Pyrame has already escaped one furtive ambush attempt by the Le Roi's henchmen, which led to the death of Deuxis and the revelation of the assassination plot. Now Le Roi commands Syllar to finish the deed openly. He wants Pyrame killed that very night, in his sleep, in the name of the king:

> Non, non, mon jugement n'est plus sur la balance.
> Syllar, tous mes conseils vont à la violence.
> Retente une autre fois encore tout le dessein,
> Va dans son lit lui mettre un poignard dans le sein,
> Dis que c'est de ma part, fais-toi donner main-forte
> Pour forcer la maison ; dis que c'est moi, n'importe,
> Controuve quelque crime afin de l'accuser ;
> En mon nom tu pourras tout dire et tout oser. (III.ii 695-708)

Le Roi no longer cares that he is personally endorsing murder, nor does he try to justify it as law. He is willing to forcefully enter a private residence and slay his rival in a dishonorable fashion in order to get what he wants and to reinforce his supremacy over Pyrame and Thisbé. According to Bodin and Senault, a monarch should be careful to maintain his reputation and preserve his name to ensure the perpetuity of his political body.[71] His glory should be part of his responsibility to himself and his people. Clearly Le Roi is being reckless with his reputation and is thereby further compromising his sovereignty.

The final way in which Le Roi chooses his physical body over his political body is by appointing poor counsel. The seventeenth-century theorists of absolutism clearly agree that a monarch should ultimately make all decisions himself. Yet, as the king cannot be everywhere at once nor efficiently govern every aspect of the kingdom alone, they also insist that the king

[71] *Les Six livres de la République* I.viii; *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* IV.iv.

nominate wise and faithful ministers to advise him respectfully in the exercise of his power.[72] For example, in the *Catéchisme Royal*, Philippe Fortin de la Hoguette compares the king's counsel to the clothing of the political body (Assaf 62). His counselors should be an adornment that protects him and adds to his glory. Yet in *Pyrame et Thisbé*, Le Roi does not want to be advised. He wants an enabler, someone who will approve his indulgence in the passions of his physical body.[73] His minister Syllar is both weak and corrupt. When Le Roi announces his plan to kill Pyrame, Syllar makes one feeble attempt to dissuade him, saying: "Mais toujours vous savez que l'équité vaut mieux…" (I.iii 197). Syllar knows that the king's actions are unjust. But he also realizes that he will be paid well to acquiesce to the king's wishes, and for this reason he prefers to remain silent. Rather than protest against Le Roi's "violent désirs" (222) and encourage him to remain in his political body, Syllar fails in his duty as advisor, blindly accepting his task and absolving himself of all responsibility:

> Puisque c'est un dessein qu'on ne peut divertir,
> À quel prix que ce soit, il en faut donc sortir.
> Sire, me voici l'âme et la main toute prête
> À quoi que vos desseins aient destiné ma tête. (I.iii 225-28)

He will not challenge the king, partly because he does not think Le Roi will heed his advice, and partly because he fears for his own life if he does not obey. His associate Deuxis is a (slightly) more respectable character who recognizes that the king's order is prompted by human passion rather than divine authority. As such, he hesitates to attack Pyrame, arguing that he will be punished in the afterlife if he commits an action that is against the gods' justice, even if

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[72] *Les cinq livres du droit des offices*, I.vi.

[73] Le Roi's desire to have his passions validated by his minister is echoed in the conversation between Pyrame and Disarque in Act I Scene IV, where Pyrame insists that his friend support him in his passion (265-66), even if Disarque sees that it will have deadly consequences. The difference is that Pyrame is not a king, and so he does not have a political body to protect. He can be careless with his safety, but a good king must not do this!

authorized by a king. Syllar responds to Deuxis' conviction by telling him that there is essentially nothing they can do to counteract the king's wishes, or to keep Le Roi from ending their lives if they resist him, citing the sovereign's power over life and death:

> Pour nous exterminer quand ils en ont envie,
> Les Rois ont cent moyens pour nous ôter la vie ;
> Nos jours sont dans leurs mains, ils les peuvent finir,
> Ils peuvent le plus juste innocemment punir ;
> Quelque tort que ce soit, quand un roi nous accuse,
> Sa grande autorité ne manque point d'excuse ;
> Contre le Prince, aux droits, il ne se faut fier :
> Le prétexte plus faux le peut justifier. (III.i 557-64)

Swayed by fear and by the promise of payment, Deuxis reluctantly concedes to tyranny, redeeming himself only in his final moments of life when he reveals the king's treachery to Pyrame, spurring the latter's hasty decision to flee.

Which brings us to the function of this passionate king-character in the action of the play. When Pyrame discovers that his life is in immediate danger, he realizes that he must leave the kingdom at once. This sense of urgency has a dual purpose – for the tragic development and *vraisemblance* of the story, it does not give Pyrame and Thisbé time to plan their escape thoughtfully, leading them to try to reunite in the sinister obscurity of nightfall,[74] where vision is distorted and wild predators are roaming. On a dramatic structural level, the king's attack and the lovers' flight help to precipitate the action of the play to keep it within twenty-four hours so that it respects the unity of time. If Pyrame and Thisbé had waited for their parents' animosity to

[74] The use of night to represent disorder and confusion is a recurring motif in Baroque literature. See Souiller, Didier, "L'expérience de la nuit dans la littérature européenne baroque."

chase them from their homes, it may have taken years. But because Le Roi threatens Pyrame's life (and indirectly Thisbé's, as his death would leave her vulnerable to Le Roi's violent seduction), they decide to tempt fate together. And Théophile makes it very clear in Act III Scene I that they are fleeing from the king and not their families. After having successfully defended himself against Deuxis and Syllar, Pyrame declares a state of emergency:

> Au reste, il faut fuir, c'est le meilleur conseil,
> Sans faire plus ici ni repos, ni sommeil.
> Quand le courroux des Rois fait éclater leurs âmes,
> C'est pis dix mille fois que torrents et que flammes.
> Il faut s'ôter de là, mais de nécessité.
> Thisbé, vous m'en avez souvent sollicité,
> Vous m'avez dit cent fois que vous seriez heureuse
> De suivre loin d'ici ma fortune amoureuse,
> Que vous craigniez ce prince, et que de son amour
> Quelque malheur au nôtre arriverait un jour. (III.i 635-44)

Verses 637-39 specify that it is because of Le Roi's *courroux* that they must flee immediately. Pyrame also mentions in verse 643 that Thisbé fears the king, a fear that she herself will repeat in Act IV Scene I. Here, her words mirror Pyrame's, as if to reinforce that Le Roi is the catalyst for their departure:

> Le conseil en est pris sans attendre à demain,
> Il faut résolument s'affranchir de sa main.
> Je serai bien heureuse, ayant de la Fortune
> Et disgrâce et faveur avecque toi commune,

Lorsque je n'aurai plus d'espions à flatter,

Que je n'aurai parents ni mère à redouter. (IV.i 723-28)

When Thisbé says "s'affranchir de *sa* main" in verse 724, Le Roi is the substantive of the possessive adjective. He is the most present threat to their love. At this point, her parents are an afterthought. Guido Saba agrees in his book *Théophile de Viau: un poète rebelle* that Le Roi's passion serves as the motor for the subsequent events of the play. "Les deux amants décident donc de s'enfuir non pour échapper à l'interdiction des deux familles, mais pour se soustraire au pouvoir abusif du souverain" (129). His violent abuse of sovereign power catapults Pyrame and Thisbé directly into the tragic misunderstanding, because his lack of control over his physical body has prompted them to make an unwise decision. Madeleine Bertaud goes so far as to consider Le Roi responsible for their deaths (Bertaud 139). However, I find this argument ambitious, since he does not actually kill them. After the third act, Le Roi disappears from the play, and the lovers die by their own hands, consistent with the Ovidian story. Thus the king is indirectly responsible. Le Roi can be characterized as a *préparatif*, as defined by D'Aubignac in Book II Chapter VIII of *La Pratique du théâtre.* He is a propelling force that helps direct the action towards its *dénouement*, and not a part of the *dénouement* itself.

I also argue that this nameless passionate king plays a more complex role than that of a simple catalyst of tragic action. Because if Théophile had only needed to push Pyrame and Thisbé out of the nest to die, he didn't need a tyrant to do it. He already has the character of Narbal, Pyrame's tyrannical father. Like Le Roi, Narbal (who appears only in Act I Scene II with his confidant Lidias) is furious at Pyrame's defiance of his paternal authority. As the sovereign of the family, his commands should be obeyed without question within the domain of the *res privata*. Théophile could have developed Narbal's character, who could have placed an

ultimatum on Pyrame to marry someone of his father's choosing, provoking the lovers' desperate flight. Yet the dramaturge deliberately expands his cast and departs from Ovid to include Le Roi. Why? I believe that this anti-sovereign's function is not only to make the situation more fearful by his tyrannical threats against the couple, but also to make his tragedy more pitiful by absolving the responsibility of the parental characters for their children's deaths, and allowing for the possibility of reconciliation that is ruptured by the violent intervention of the king. This function is apparent in Act IV Scene II, when Thisbé's mother (who, like Narbal, only has one scene with an anonymous confidant) wakes from a nightmare about her daughter. In this *songe baroque*,[75] Thisbé's mother is rebuked by her daughter's mutilated corpse. Shaken by this disturbing vision, she decides to relent to Thisbé's passion and allow her to marry Pyrame, telling her confidant: "Assure-toi d'avoir désormais le plaisir / De me voir indulgente à son jeune désir" (IV.ii 909-10). Because of this development, the audience softens towards the parents and hardens towards the king. Thus the lovers' plight becomes infinitely more pitiful. If only they had been able to wait until tomorrow, the situation could have been resolved! But because of Le Roi's amorous fury, they could not, and the families will never be united. By severing the political body and annihilating the possibility of its unity, Le Roi's character demonstrates the antithesis of sovereign responsibility. His behavior can be contrasted with the Cornelian king-character of Tulle in *Horace*, who is responsible for mending the family conflict between the Horaces and the Curiaces. Tulle commands in the final lines of *Horace* that Camille's and Curiace's bodies be placed in the same tomb. By doing this, he re-stabilizes the political body under his justice. In a similar manner, Prince Escalus strives to make peace between the grieving

[75] The recollection of a vivid waking dream is an excellent example of the Baroque aesthetic in dramatic literature. It projects powerful (and often gruesome) descriptive imagery while still respecting *bienséances*, since the image is being described through verse instead of being displayed onstage. We will see this technique again in Tristan L'Hermite's *La Marianne*.

Montagues and Capulets at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*. Le Roi does the opposite in *Pyrame and Thisbé* – he exacerbates the preexisting tension between parents and offspring through his implication in the lovers' deaths. By pursuing his own passion rather than desiring the well-being of his subjects, he amputates members of his political body, and allies the audience with the lovers' families.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, despite his consuming passion, Le Roi never returns to the stage to mourn Thisbé. As I have already mentioned, once he gives the order to slay Pyrame in his bed, he exits the scene, and the audience never witnesses his reaction to the news of his rival's and his beloved's death. This infers that his interest in Thisbé is not true love, but carnal desire, which aligns his character even more closely with the description of the physical body. As a self-seeking tyrant dominated by his passions, he yearns to possess the one thing that is denied to him. Once Thisbé's body is destroyed, eliminating the threat to his self-control, I believe it is safe to say that he will no longer want her

The Pathological Husband: Hérode in Tristan L'Hermite's *La Marianne* (1636)

Whereas "Le Roi" of Viau's tragedy is a one-dimensional secondary character whose tyrannical desire to possess Thisbé is indirectly responsible for the play's *dénouement*, my next example of the Baroque anti-sovereign is a more complex primary character whose transgression against his political body is undeniably responsible for the tragic outcome of François Tristan L'Hermite's (1601-55) *La Marianne.*[76] Published in 1636 and dedicated to Tristan's patron Gaston d'Orléans (1608-60), the brother of Louis XIII, this tragedy recounts the biblical legend of the relationship between the Edomite king Herod the Great (c. 74 BCE – c. 4 BCE) and his Hasmonean queen Mariamne. The original story is found in books XIV and XV of Flavius Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, which was translated into French in the fourteenth century

[76] Alternate spellings of this title in French are "Mariane" and "Mariamne."

under the reign of Charles V. It had already been the subject of a French tragedy at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Alexandre Hardy in 1610, a representation of which Tristan was aware.[77] He states in his *avertissement au lecteur* that this story is well known, but that he wishes to reinterpret it in the style and spirit of the Baroque tragedy, as a "peinture parlante." His goal is to paint a more detailed picture of the emotions of the characters, and primarily of the person of Hérode:

> J'ai seulement voulu décrire avec un peu de bienséance les divers sentiments d'un tyran courageux et spirituel, les artifices d'une femme envieuse et vindicative, et la constance d'une Reine dont la vertu méritait un plus favorable destin. Et j'ai dépeint tout cela de la manière que j'ai cru pouvoir mieux réussir dans la perspective du théâtre…en un temps où l'on fait plus d'état des beautés qui sont naturelles que de celles qui sont fardées. (Ed. Scherer 264)

The action of the play can be summarized as follows: Hérode, who has acquired the kingdom of Judea from the Roman emperor, is tormented by his unrequited love for his captive queen Marianne, who openly despises him for having killed her family (most notably her younger brother Aristobule) upon his despotic ascension to the throne. Hérode's siblings, Phérore and Salomé, attempt to persuade the king that Marianne is dangerous and should be executed, but Hérode hesitates to kill her. Salomé forms a plot with her *échanson* in order to falsely accuse Marianne of planning to poison Hérode. Marianne is put on trial, during which Hérode exonerates her, then accuses her of adultery with his servant Soême, then has Soême and Marianne's eunuch put to death. Influenced by his brother and sister, Hérode reluctantly decides

[77] According to N.M. Bernardin in *Un précurseur de Racine*, Tristan L'Hermite composed two poems that were contained in the 1625 edition of Hardy's *Théâtre*, the second volume of which contained his version of the tragedy. While modern critics are uncertain whether or not Tristan had seen Hardy's *Marianne* performed, this is considered sufficient evidence to assume his exposure to it in print.

to execute his beloved Marianne. She dies nobly with the full sympathy of the Jewish people, and Hérode becomes mad with regret after realizing the atrocity he has committed.

Although Tristan entitles his tragedy *La Marianne*, its title character is far less present onstage than her husband Hérode, who speaks 49% of the 1812 lines of the play.[78] Tristan's interpretation of this biblical tyrant is fascinating. King Herod is well-established in both history and literature as a bloodthirsty ruler. According to Josephus, he ordered the deaths of not only Mariamne and the Hasmonean royal family, but also of two of their children, Alexander and Aristobulus. He was also responsible for the massacre of the Innocents in 4 BCE, at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ.[79] Tristan does not deny this, referring to Hérode in his *avertissement* as a "prince sanguinaire." And yet, in his subsequent description of this character as a "tyran courageux et spirituel" (*supra*), it is clear that Tristan admires Hérode in spite of his violence. This is also true of Josephus, who lauds his military and political skill as much as he criticizes his cruelty.[80] This king-character is not simply a murderous abuser of power like "Le Roi" in *Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé*, but rather a complex anti-hero who possesses a tragic flaw – he is hopelessly in love with his wife. Hérode's pathological obsession with the proud and defiant Marianne propels him in a downward spiral from despotic monarchy to tyranny as his passions conquer his political body. We have already examined how Corneille's *Cinna* portrays the metamorphosis of the *tyran d'usurpation* Octave into the true sovereign Auguste through the rejection of his physical body. Tristan's *Marianne* shows the opposite process in the person of Hérode, who transforms over the course of the play from a *tyran d'usurpation* into a

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[78] As approximated by Nina Ekstein in her article "Language, Power, and Gender in Tristan's *La Marianne* and *La mort de Sénèque*."

[79] The biblical account of this atrocity can be found in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 2, verse 16 (NIV): "When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi."

[80] As noted by Jacques Schérer in the *notice* of the Pléiade edition of *La Marianne* (1317).

full-blown *tyran d'exercice* because of his submission to the passion of love, which impairs the function of his political body.

Before we discuss Hérode's specific transgressions against his political body, I would like to examine the nature of his love for Marianne and the dynamic that exists between them. It is important to recognize that Marianne vehemently hates Hérode, and she does not care who knows it. She cannot forgive him for his past crimes against her family, and she does not believe that he loves her. In Act II Scene I, her first scene in the play, she calls him a "monstre abominable" (348), a "barbare" (360), and a "meurtrier" (361). She boldly speaks out against Hérode to her lady-in-waiting Dina, which would constitute an act of lèse-majesté by *médisance* according to the writings of Cardin Le Bret.[81] Marianne would rather die than remain subject to his desires, and she refuses future sexual contact when he sends for her. She has no loyalty to Hérode other than the children they have together, for whose security she justifiably fears in the event of her death. She is unyielding to his tenderness for her. And yet, in spite of her unforgiving hatred, Hérode adores her. In Act I Scene III, when Phérore and Salomé accuse Marianne of being "une roche" (i.e., an ice queen), Hérode responds by speaking of her beauty:

> Si le divin objet dont je suis idolâtre,
> Passe pour un rocher, c'est un rocher d'albâtre,
> Un écueil agréable, où l'on voit éclater
> Tout ce que la Nature a fait pour me tenter.
> Il n'est point de rubis vermeils comme sa bouche,
> Qui mêle un esprit d'ambre à tout ce qu'elle touche,
> Et l'éclat de ses yeux veut que mes sentiments
> Les mettent pour le moins au rang des diamants. (I.iii 271-78)

[81] *De la souveraineté du roi* IV.vi.

But Hérode's attraction for Marianne transcends the physical, a quality which immediately distinguishes him from "Le Roi." He admires her spirit along with her beauty. His siblings complain that she is insolent and disrespectful (298, 312), but Hérode views her behavior as a sign of her queenliness:

> Je vois beaucoup d'orgueil en ses beautés divines :
> Mais on voit rarement des roses sans épines.
> Et puis il est bien juste à dire vérité
> Qu'elle garde entre vous un peu de majesté :
> Mille Rois glorieux sont ses dignes ancêtres,
> Et l'on peut la nommer la fille de nos Maîtres. (I.iii 291-96)

Where Phérore and Salomé see disdain and sedition, Hérode sees strength and royalty. He is depressed by Marianne's rejection and angered by her resistance, and he does not understand how she can share his bed and feel no love for him (234), but he remains besotted with her. His servant Soême describes him as bewitched (336), for he acts as though he is under an enchantment. He is also insanely jealous. Prior to the action of the play, when he had to leave Judea on a military expedition, Hérode secretly commanded Soême to execute Marianne if he were killed on the battlefield, because he could not stand the thought of another man ever having her.[82] In this, he does resemble "Le Roi!" Hérode's words and actions indicate that his love for Marianne is genuine, but it is also maniacal and unhealthy. He is trying to maintain a position of sovereignty while letting himself be emotionally dominated by an insubordinate subject, a situation that destabilizes his political body. As Jean-François Senault states in *Le monarque ou les devoirs du souverain,* a king compromises his absolute power when he chooses to love a woman:

[82] Soême had revealed this plan to Marianne, further fueling her hatred and resentment of Hérode.

> Dés que le Prince s'attache au service d'une Maîtresse, il cesse d'être Souverain; et descendant de son Trône, il se met en quelque façon sous les pieds de celle qu'il aime. (IV.viii, 244)

Hérode, in true tragic hero fashion, does not realize that his passion is detrimental to his political power. He admits in Act I Scene III that his marriage is unhappy, and that he is greatly troubled because of Marianne. But he claims that his monarchy is secure. He has the support of Rome, and he has established such a strong military reputation that none of the surrounding countries would dare attack him. Love (physical) and Fortune (political) are two ever-present opposing forces in his life:

> Ô bonheur imparfait ! ô rigueur importune,
> J'ai pour mes compagnons l'Amour et la Fortune ;
> Ils ne me quittent point, ils suivent tous mes pas :
> Mais l'un m'est favorable et l'autre ne l'est pas.
> L'un fait qu'à tout un peuple je commande,
> Et l'autre me refuse un cœur que je demande. (I.iii 205-10)

According to Hérode, his political body flourishes while his physical body suffers, and this pain keeps him from fully enjoying the prosperity of his political accomplishments. But he does not believe that this makes him an inadequate ruler. He defends himself by citing King David and Marc Antony, who were great kings and passionate lovers (245-58).[83] But he could not be more wrong. Over the course of the play, his love for Marianne diminishes his capacity to reign and incurs tragic consequences, as can be seen through an analysis of his crimes against his own sovereignty.

[83] Jean-François Senault and Pierre Le Moyne both refer to David's passion for Bathsheba in their theoretical writings when admonishing the king to abstain from love of women (*Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* IV.viii, *De l'art de régner* II.iii).

The first way in which Hérode's passion betrays his sovereignty is by perpetuating his guilt for past misdeeds, and thereby preventing his transition from a despotic ruler into an equitable monarch. As we have already seen in the first chapter of this study, Jean Bodin states in *Les Six livres de la République* that a despot can become a true king once his sovereign status has been established.[84] The tragic representation of such a transformation has already been documented in my analysis of Octave/Auguste in *Cinna*. In order to become the emperor Auguste, Octave had to rid himself of his own guilt. But Hérode in *La Marianne* is incapable of self-absolution because the woman he desperately loves cannot forgive him. As a result, he is haunted by grisly specters of his violent past, and of the people he had to eliminate in his quest to become the uncontested king. When the spectator encounters Hérode for the first time in Act I Scene I, he is visibly disturbed upon awaking from a nightmare. He had dreamt of Marianne's younger brother Aristobule, whose waterlogged rotting corpse had attacked him for his injustice against the Hasmonean royal family.[85] This *songe baroque*, the style of which is reminiscent of the fourth act of *Pyrame et Thisbé*, leaves Hérode deeply shaken, and he views it as a premonition of a future misfortune:

> Mon esprit est troublé du songe que j'ai fait ;
> Il m'en revient sans cesse une idée importune,
> Qui ne doit m'avertir que de quelque infortune :
> C'est un avant-coureur de quelque adversité. (I.ii 26-29)

His brother Phérore must talk him down from the dream in Scene II, insisting that it means nothing. But the substance of the dream, given in detail in Scene III, shows that Hérode is still

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[84] *Les Six livres de la République* II.ii.

[85] According to Josephus, Herod staged a "drowning accident" for Aristobulus III, hence the waterlogged corpse. The young high priest was famous for his beauty, which Marianne recalls in Act II Scene I. Tristan's gory and distorted portrayal of Aristobule in Hérode's dream is shocking in its contrast to his physical appearance during his life.

troubled by his past crimes, and that it is his love for Marianne that keeps leading him back to the bloody pond. He recounts his dream to his siblings:

> Je me suis trouvé seul dans un bois écarté,
> Où l'horreur habitait avec l'obscurité,
> Lorsqu'une voix plaintive a percé les ténèbres,
> Appelant « Marianne », avec des tons funèbres.
> J'ai couru vers le lieu d'où le bruit s'épandait,
> Suivant dans ce transport l'Amour qui me guidait,
> Et qui semblait encor m'avoir prêté ses ailes,
> Pour atteindre plus tôt ce miracle des Belles.
> Mes pas m'ont amené sur le bord d'un étang,
> Dont j'ai trouvé les eaux toutes rouges de sang ;
> Il est tombé dessus un éclat de tonnerre,
> J'ai senti sous mes pieds un tremblement de terre,
> Et dessus ce rivage, environné d'effroi,
> Le jeune Aristobule a paru devant moi. (I.iii 93-106)

In verses 95-100 of this monologue, it is evident that Hérode is guided by his passion. His love for Marianne is an active force, propelling him to a place where he hopes to find her but instead finds a shadow from his past that reminds him of his criminal ascension to power. When Hérode lets himself be directed by love, he is driven backwards in his progression towards sovereignty. And when he tries to strike Aristobule to end his harangue, he discovers that he cannot touch the

phantom.[86] His physical force cannot dispel his guilt. In focusing on his love for Marianne, Hérode is constantly reminded of his wrongdoings. The dead bodies that prevent the possibility of a harmonious partnership between the spouses also prevent Hérode's incarnation of his adopted political body. Again, it is the opposite of the process that occurs in *Cinna*, where Auguste, having forgiven himself and embraced his political body, is reaffirmed by Emilie's forgiveness and submission. Hérode, dominated by the love of his physical body for Marianne, cannot obtain her forgiveness and is therefore unable to forgive himself, an insecurity that manifests itself in his unconscious and perpetuates his status as a usurper.[87]

In addition to keeping him mired in guilt, Hérode's passion for Marianne also weakens him physically. Although he is renowned throughout the Roman Empire as a strong and fearsome warrior, in Tristan's tragedy he is presented as a very sick man – his unrequited love triggers anxiety, which makes him weak and ill. He is, quite literally, a lovesick king. For example, when he wakes abruptly from his dream at the beginning of the play, he is sweaty and out of breath, exclaiming with dismay: "Mais quoi? Le front me sue, et je suis hors d'haleine" (I.i 11). Hérode is introduced to the spectator in a physically agitated state, which immediately suggests the supremacy of his physical body. In the same way, in the final act of the play, his physical body is too weak to support the weight of his emotions. When he learns of Marianne's death in Act V Scene II, he collapses. Tristan's *didascalie* specifies between verses 1442 and 1443: "Hérode tombe en foiblesse." Hérode's servant Narbal expresses his fear that the king's sadness will be the cause of his physical death:

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[86] In Chapter VI of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he qualifies that dream sequences involving impeded movement, when "One's hand is raised to avenge an insult, and its strength fails" (311) as being closely allied to anxiety.

[87] It is interesting to note that in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain*, Senault describes a tyrant as being tormented "nuit et jour" by his guilty conscience (See citation on page 45 of the present study). This characteristic is in keeping with Hérode's recurring nightmares.

Il devient tout changé, le voilà qui succombe,

Le coup de cette mort le mettra dans la tombe.

Voici le triste effet qui fut prévu de tous ;

Hé ! Sire, ouvrez les yeux, et revenez à vous ! (V.ii 1443-46)

Hérode returns to consciousness, but only briefly – after trying unsuccessfully to fall on Narbal's sword, he retains a pale, wild-eyed look, described by Phérore as "le teint tout pâle, et les yeux égarés" (V.iii 1665). At the end of the last scene, Hérode's body finally gives out. Overcome by grief and regret, he faints again, and has to be carried offstage to be revived. The captain of his guards summarizes his pitiful state:

La force lui défaut, et le teint lui pâlit,

Il est évanoui, portons-le sur un lit.

Possible que des sens il reprendra l'usage,

Quand on aura jeté de l'eau sur son visage. (V.iii 1801-04)

The play's main character is too incapacitated to speak its final lines, which are spoken by Narbal instead. Hérode begins and ends the action of *La Marianne* in bed, completely vulnerable. In his weakened condition, Hérode cannot make decisions of state, and he must rely on others to take care of him.

Which brings us to the third way in which Hérode's physical body interferes with the assumption of his political body – due to his weakness and distress, he becomes increasingly dependent on others. He is emotionally dependent on Marianne, repeating on numerous occasions throughout the play that his fate is subject to her love. For example, in Act III Scene II, he tells her during her trial: "Vois de quelle façon mon sort dépend du tien" (III.ii 905).[88]

[88] Cardin Le Bret would say that this dependence constitutes an inappropriate position of authority for the wife of an absolute monarch. In Book I, Chapter VI of *De la souveraineté du roi*, he claims that the queen should have power

More alarmingly, Hérode also begins to rely heavily on the counsel of his brother and sister, and thereby shares his absolute power. Tristan does not provide much insight in *La Marianne* about the personal agenda of Phérore and Salomé. We know that they despise Marianne and that they want Hérode to kill her, but we do not know exactly why. It is unclear whether they are genuinely concerned about their brother's well-being, or if they are jealous of Marianne's place in his heart, or if they have secret ambitions to gain political power for themselves. They claim that they are trying to protect Hérode from danger, and in a way their concern is justified, for although Marianne is not truly plotting to kill Hérode, the king's obsession with her is detrimental to his health and to the stability of their dynasty. Yet the spectator is aware that Phérore and Salomé are willing to use dishonest means to rid the kingdom of Marianne, and for this reason they are untrustworthy characters. Especially Salomé, who boasts to her *échanson* in Act II Scene III that she knows how to manipulate her gullible brother:

> Tu sais bien que le Roi croit assez de léger,
> Et que c'est un esprit que je sais ménager.
> Ton rapport va surprendre une âme défiante,
> Crédule, furieuse, et fort impatiente.
> Dans ce troublé excité, si tu fais ton devoir,
> Il mordra l'hameçon sans s'en apercevoir. (II.iii 581-86)

Salomé knows that in Hérode's unstable emotional state, he will readily believe the *échanson*'s fabricated account of Marianne's attempt to poison him. She capitalizes on the anger and vulnerability that were provoked by Marianne's diatribe of rejection to intensify the king's rage and animosity towards his wife. She and Phérore work relentlessly together to convince Hérode

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only through the king – other than having the honor of being a vessel for his successors, she is merely a subject like any other. The role of the queen will be further developed in my analysis of Cléopâtre in Corneille's *Rodogune*.

to have Marianne executed, even after Hérode forgives her for her falsified crimes. And in Act IV Scene I, they finally wear him down. He consents, saying: "Bien, qu'on l'ôte, qu'on l'ôte" (IV.i 1232b). It is important to note Hérode's use of the personal pronoun "on" in this statement, rather than the "je", which indicates a collective rather than an individual decision. The sovereign is not deciding to execute Marianne of his own supreme authority, but rather conceding to the wishes of two of his subjects. This should not happen, no matter how highly Phérore and Salomé are ranked. The king should listen to them and decide for himself, listening to his inner sense of justice. Hérode's submission to their influence proves to be a disastrous violation of sovereignty. Marianne's death, unwanted by Hérode himself, ricochets back to destroy him because he has tied his life to hers.

Hérode's passion also prevents him from exercising justice, stripping him of one of his primary rights of sovereignty. In the third act of *La Marianne*, when he learns of his wife's supposed plot to assassinate him, Hérode assembles his counsel and puts her on trial. The presence of the tribunal in the play suggests that he is trying to do the right thing by following the juridical process and holding her accountable to the law. The king desires that she be punished appropriately for a "noir attentat / Formé contre ma tête et le corps de l'État" (III.ii 777b-78). If there is a gangrenous member in his political body, he knows that he must amputate it, as he tells his counsel: "Observant de l'État la blessure inhumaine, / Ôtons-en la partie où parait la gangrène" (III.i 743-44). For a moment, it seems that his reason is triumphing over his passion. *Lèse-majesté* is a serious crime with fatal consequences if Marianne is convicted, and Hérode is justified in prosecuting her. But he is still very angry, and his anger causes him to reject the sensible advice proposed by the two judges, who recommend withholding her sentence

until more concrete evidence of poison can be provided. He becomes indignant, insisting that the *échanson's* testimony is sufficient evidence to convict her:

SADOC, JUGE

Ou qu'elle soit au moins confinée en prison,

En cas que l'on ne puisse avérer le poison.

HÉRODE

Il semble que la chose est assez avérée ;

Quoi ? n'en avons-nous pas une preuve assurée ?

Les attentats passés et les discours présents,

Pour éclaircir ce fait, sont-ils pas suffisants ? (III.ii 841-46)

As king, Hérode is the only person with the power to pardon Marianne or lighten her punishment. But as a jilted husband, his passion knows no mercy. That is, until she begins to cry, lamenting the sad future of her children without her. Upon seeing the tears of his beloved, Hérode's anger dissipates immediately:

Au point que mon courroux était le plus aigri,

Par le cours de ses pleurs mon cœur s'est attendri.

Il semble que l'Amour qui se rend son complice

Déchire le bandeau que porte ma justice,

Afin qu'en la voyant je lui puisse accorder

Le pardon que pour elle il me vient demander.

Déjà mon âme incline à la miséricorde.

Tu demandes sa grâce, Amour, je te l'accorde :

. . . . . .

Veuille essuyer tes yeux, objet rare et charmant.
La qualité de Roi cède à celle d'Amant ;
Ma justice pouvait à mes lois te soumettre,
Mais mon affection ne le saurait permettre. (III.ii 877-84, 893-96)

At first, Hérode's anger desires to convict Marianne. Now, his love exonerates her. Throughout the entire "legal" proceeding of Act III, his pure sovereign justice is inactive, and her fate is decided by the volatility of his emotions. And as Hérode's passion escalates, it becomes increasingly unpredictable and misleading. For when Marianne does not offer him her love in exchange for his clemency, he immediately accuses her again, this time of committing adultery with Soême (an accusation which is completely unfounded and unsupported). Overcome by jealousy and paranoia, he has both Soême and Marianne's eunuch put to death on the spot without trial, and throws his wife back into prison. This is the moment where Hérode truly becomes a *tyran d'exercice*, for he abandons justice and lashes out in violence. He even admits that he is transported by passion:

Voyant pour mon malheur tant de maux assemblés,
De colère et d'horreur tous mes sens sont troublés ;
La fureur me saisit, et ce cruel outrage
Me mettant hors de moi m'abandonne à la rage. (III.ii 965-68)

He is aware that he is no longer acting as a sovereign should, but he is too wounded to care at this point. He only wishes to inflict pain on those who have betrayed him, and he uses his power to avenge himself on innocent subjects. In other words, Hérode begins acting more like "Le Roi" of *Pyrame et Thisbé*. In *De l'art de régner*, the Jesuit Pierre Le Moyne defines a tyrant as having full political power without justice:

> Quand on parle de la Justice du Prince, on parle d'une Vertu qui est le propre caractère de la Principauté; et qui distingue le Prince d'avec le Sujet et le Tyran…Les Tyrans mêmes ne sont pas Tyrans faute de Valeur ni de Prudence. On en a vu de braves et de magnanimes: on en a vu de fort prudents et de fort adroits: mais on n'en vit jamais de juste. (III.ii, p. 255-56)

Le Moyne argues that a tyrannical ruler, being unconnected to his political body, does not possess the capacity to exercise justice over his subjects. In this way Hérode, consumed by his physical body, proves himself a tyrant through his inability to act as a fair judge.

As a despotic monarch, Hérode loses his vital connection to his subjects by severing his living link to them, which is Marianne. Their marriage was political in nature, meant to solidify Hérode's legitimacy as ruler of Judea. When he kills her unjustly, he essentially decapitates his own political body. In Act IV, Marianne dies with the full support of the people, who cry out against her death. Just before her march to the execution block, the concierge of the prison informs her of their collective distress:

> MARIANNE
>
> D'où vient qu'en me parlant tu parais si troublé ?
>
> LE CONCIERGE
>
> D'avoir vu là dehors tout le peuple assemblé,
>
> Dont les cris et les pleurs sont de mauvais présage
>
> Pour Votre Majesté. (IV.iii 1275-78a)

Any sense of loyalty the people may have had to Hérode dies with Marianne. Once she is gone, he must continue to subjugate them by fear, a power dynamic that is characterized by all the political theorists we have studied as being purely tyrannical. This is a position that Hérode

resents. Knowing that his fearful subjects will not rise against him and avenge their queen, he turns against his own political body in disgust. He curses his subjects for their timidity in Act V Scene III:

> Vous, peuples oppressés spectateurs de mes crimes,
> Qui portez tant d'amour à vos Rois légitimes,
> Montrez de cette ardeur un véritable effet,
> Employant votre zèle à punir mon forfait.
> Venez, venez venger sur un Tyran profane
> La mort de votre belle et chaste Marianne ;
> Punissez aujourd'hui mon injuste rigueur,
> Accourez me plonger des poignards dans le cœur,
> Apaisez de mon sang votre innocente Reine
> Que je viens d'immoler à ma cruelle haine.
> Mais vous n'en ferez rien, timide Nation,
> Qui n'osez entreprendre une belle action,
> . . . . . .
> Témoins de sa bassesse et de ma violence,
> Cieux qui voyez le tort que souffre l'innocence,
> Versez sur ce climat un malheur infini.
> Punissez ces ingrats qui ne m'ont point puni. (V.iii 1599-1610, 1615-18)

Hérode's monologue implores the heavens to punish the Jewish people, to bring war, plague, and famine on them, to abolish their religion and obliterate their kingdom. It is all too clear that he

hates them as only a tyrant can.[89] The sole object of his love was Marianne, and after her death, he completely rejects the sovereign/subject relationship. His words reflect the polar opposite of the principles of sovereignty, which requires the constant paternal love of the monarch for his people, and the ultimate goal of maintaining the health and stability of the political body. Hérode's behavior can once again be contrasted with that of Octave in Act IV of *Cinna*, who wills his physical body to die so that he can reign as Auguste and become united with his people. Hérode, in a spectacular failure of kingship, prays for the death of his political body along with his suffering physical body. Without Marianne, he wants neither to live nor to be king.

As the above excerpt suggests, not only does Hérode transform into an alarmingly tyrannical ruler after the execution of Marianne, but he also becomes incapable of rational thought. This is the final way in which his passion triumphs over his sovereignty – he is literally driven mad by grief and regret. In the final scene of Act V, he loses touch with reality, alternately forgetting that Marianne is dead and asking that she be brought to him, then realizing what he has done and weeping bitterly. He insists that a temple be built to honor her memory, then has a vision of her ascending into heaven. His entourage can only watch helplessly in horror as their king's sanity vacillates and he retreats into himself, chasing his siblings from his presence. Narbal comments: "La douleur de ce Prince est sans comparaison, / Le trouble de son âme offusque sa raison" (V.iii 1733-34). The captain of his guards agrees that Hérode is "en frénésie" (1744). They seem almost relieved when he finally passes out, hoping that he will return to reason once awakened. In the final lines of the play, Narbal stands as witness to the tragic downfall of a great ruler:

> Ô prince pitoyable en tes grandes douleurs !
>
> Toi-même es l'Artisan de tes propres malheurs,

[89] In *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* I.iii, Senault specifies that a tyrant despises his people.

Ton amour, tes soupçons, ta crainte et ta colère
Ont offusqué ta gloire, et causé ta misère :
Tu sais donner des lois à tant de Nations,
Et ne sais pas régner dessus tes passions,
Mais les meilleurs esprits font des fautes extrêmes,
Et les Rois bien souvent sont esclaves d'eux-mêmes. (V.iii 1805-12)

He recognizes, as does the audience, that Hérode is the author of his own misery, and that even a king can be brought down by passion.

Now that we have examined the extensive list of Hérode's transgressions against his political body because of love, we must return to the fundamental question of the present analysis – what is the theatrical function of this king-character's onstage degeneration from despotic monarch into pathological tyrant? Tristan's portrayal of Hérode serves a dual purpose – to complexify the emotive reaction among the spectators by mingling fear with pity, and indirectly to construct a feminine hero in the person of Marianne. Firstly, it is undeniable that Marianne's plight is pitiful, and that her death constitutes part of the tragic *dénouement* of the play. For although her character is hateful and defiant towards Hérode, she did not commit the crimes for which she was accused, and thus does not deserve to die. It could easily be argued that her condemnation and execution evoke pity in this tragedy, and that Hérode's violence and instability evoke fear. But this interpretation would be too simple. It is true that the violent transports of this mercurial king-character are terrifying. Madness and absolute power form a lethal combination that easily lends itself to fear. But yet it is also clear that Tristan intends for the spectator to pity Hérode, as he is labeled by Narbal in the final verses as a "prince pitoyable". Hérode is blameworthy for the events of the play, but he truly loves Marianne. Even the devious

Salomé recognizes in Act IV Scene I that her brother is the victim of an "amour véritable" (1143). He does not gloat in Marianne's death, but regrets it profoundly. It breaks him physically, emotionally, and mentally, and it is impossible to hate a broken man. N.M. Bernardin agrees: "Malgré tous ses crimes, il [Hérode] peut rester encore digne de notre pitié, comme Hermione, comme Phèdre, par la sincérité de la passion dont il est lui-même la première, sinon la plus touchante victime" (347). Hérode is humbled to the point where the spectators are left wishing he could have had the opportunity to change, or that Marianne would have chosen to forgive and love him. Instead, they know from history and legend that he will awaken from his swoon to remain a tyrannical monster until the end of his long reign. By handicapping his king-character with a genuine (though obsessive) love for his wife, Tristan delivers a double dose of pity alongside a generous helping of fear.

In the same way that Tristan transfers part of the pitiful aspect of his tragedy from Marianne (the victim) to Hérode (the aggressor), he also transposes part of the sovereign role from Hérode to Marianne in order to create an unforgettable female hero. Over the course of the play, Marianne demonstrates certain qualities that would typically be attributed to the ideal monarch. For example, she rejects her physical body and concentrates on maintaining her integrity. Just before her death, in Act IV Scene II,[90] she affirms that Hérode may do as he wishes with her body, but that her heart will remain true to her family:

> Un absolu pouvoir rend mon corps prisonnier :
> Mais en quelque péril que le malheur m'engage,
> J'aurai cet avantage
> Que mon cœur pour le moins se rendra le dernier. (IV.ii 1241-44)

[90] This scene distinguishes itself poetically from all other scenes in *La Marianne* because it is written in hexasyllables rather than alexandrines, increasing its emotional impact. Another example of this technique is Rodrigue's monologue in *Le Cid* I.vi.

She is able to separate herself from her physical body as Hérode fails to do. In the same scene, she also speaks directly to God, addressing him as her "souveraine puissance" (1263). Like a Christian king, she recognizes God as her sole sovereign. According to Noémi Hepp, Marianne's religious devotion endows her with the specific heroic values that Hérode does not possess:

> On voit comment, ici, sont réunis dans le rapport loyal à Dieu les vertus héroïques: maîtrise des passions (la tristesse et la joie) par la force et la tempérance, constance (un résolu penser) et liberté intérieure (l'oppression ne justifie pas une conduite qui appellerait le reproche): toutes les vertus dont Hérode est dépourvu. (309)

Marianne is also conscientious of her *renommée*, and of the reputation that will remain among her people when she is gone. In Act IV Scene V, she goes boldly to her death, realizing that her *éclat* will not diminish:

> L'aveugle cruauté dont tu me fais la guerre
> Va détruire de moi ce qui n'est rien que terre :
> Mais mon âme immortelle et mon nom glorieux,
> Malgré les mouvements de ton cœur furieux
> Et toute ta Maison contre moi conjurée,
> Obtiendront un éclat d'éternelle durée. (IV.v 1351-56)

Even in her hour of death, she is unshaken by anger or fear. Rather than falling victim to passions, she is constant in her resolve. Finally, whereas Hérode cannot be the symbolic father figure to his people as he must do in order to reign as sovereign, Marianne's character is

maternal. As she expresses several times during the play, her only regret in death is for her children, whom she loves and confides to divine protection in Act IV Scene V:

> En cet heureux départ si quelque ennui me presse,
> Il vient de la pitié des enfants que je laisse,
> Qui dans la défaveur et l'abandonnement
> Seront pour mon sujet traités indignement.
> Ils restent sans appui, mais, ô grand Dieu, j'espère
> Que tu leur serviras de support et de Père
> Et que pour les conduire en ce temps dangereux,
> Ta haute providence ouvrira l'œil sur eux. (IV.v 1319-26)

Instead of dwelling on her own misfortune, she prays for the well-being of her children. Through her portrayal of the selfless mother, Marianne earns the admiration of the audience. Hérode might succeed in ending her life, but she wins, gaining the honorable reunion with her departed family that she desires.[91] Her victory is confirmed in the final scene of the play, when the grief-stricken Hérode essentially recognizes her as his sovereign:

> Je devais t'estimer par-dessus toutes choses,
> Tu ne devais jamais marcher que sur des roses,
> Et tes grandes vertus, et tes rares beautés
> Devaient toujours régner dessus mes volontés. (V.iii 1783-86)

[91] The reversal of power roles that is caused by Hérode's execution of Marianne is similar to the situation we encounter in Act V of Corneille's *Horace*. Horace, like Marianne, wishes to die, but the king Tulle makes him live to serve Rome, reaffirming himself as the absolute sovereign who decides between life and death. Hérode fails to see that by killing Marianne, he is actually conceding her sovereignty over him.

Hérode regrets not having esteemed her above all things. In this sense, the character of Marianne, heroic in her opposition to the tyrant, functions as an allegory of the political body that is sacrificed by the king-character in an unsuccessful attempt to satisfy his violent passion.

The Vengeful Queen: Cléopâtre in Corneille's *Rodogune* (1647)[92]

The final passionate sovereign that I wish to discuss in this chapter comes from Corneille's tragedy *Rodogune*. Like *La Marianne*, *Rodogune* is a historically and biblically based play that takes place in the Middle East rather than in Ancient Greece or Rome. Corneille adapted its story primarily from the writings of Appian of Alexandria (c. 95-165 AD), as well as from Justin's *Historiae Philippicae* (c. 2nd-4th century AD), the first book of the Maccabees, and Flavius Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, all of which recount pieces of the history of the Syrian wars. In the play's *Examen*, however, Corneille claims that *Rodogune* is largely of his own invention, and that he used these historical sources only to provide a backdrop for the action. For this reason, he considers it to be one of his most original works (and also one of his favorites).[93]

Aristotle would be pleased with the action of *Rodogune*, which is unified and yet extremely complex, incorporating multiple instances of peripeteia and recognition while still respecting the unities of time and place. The events of the play can be summarized as follows: the scene opens on a momentous day for the kingdom of Syria, on which the queen regent Cléopâtre, widow of Démétrius Nicanor, will announce the heretofore undisclosed birth order of

[92] First performed in 1645 and published in 1647.

[93] Corneille writes in his *Examen* (1660-1682) of *Rodogune*: "On m'a souvent fait une question à la cour: quel était celui de mes poèmes que j'estimais le plus; et j'ai trouvé tous ceux qui me l'ont faite si prévenus en faveur de *Cinna*, ou du *Cid*, que je n'ai jamais osé déclarer toute la tendresse que j'ai toujours eue pour celui-ci…Peut-être y entre-t-il un peu d'amour-propre, en ce que cette tragédie me semble un peu plus à moi que celles qui l'ont précédée, à cause des incidents surprenants qui sont purement de mon invention et n'avaient jamais été vus au théâtre."

her adult twin sons Antiochus and Séleucus.[94] The one who is declared the eldest will be crowned king of Syria and marry the Parthian princess Rodogune, who had been the intended[95] second wife of the deceased Nicanor (he had been killed by Cléopâtre upon his return from a long period of captivity by the Parthians during which he was presumed dead). Antiochus and Séleucus are determined to maintain their fraternal bond despite their impending change of fortunes, and they are both in love with Rodogune. They would each gladly give up the throne in exchange for her hand in marriage. Their mother Cléopâtre, who has been nursing a secret enmity for Rodogune ever since her husband brought her back from Parthe, informs her sons that the one who murders the princess to avenge their father's infidelity will be named his successor. Antiochus and Séleucus are horrified by this assignment – neither of them is willing to become a murderer in order to become king. They approach Rodogune together to ask her to choose one of them, and the other brother will cede the throne to her preferred husband. Rodogune, who secretly loves Antiochus but is suspicious of the queen, responds that she will marry whichever one kills Cléopâtre. Séleucus abdicates, repulsed by the violence of these two women, and Cléopâtre promptly has him assassinated. With her revenge plot thwarted by her disappointing sons, she poisons the nuptial cup that will be shared by Antiochus and Rodogune at their wedding ceremony. The marriage is in full swing when Timagène rushes onto the scene, announcing the news of Séleucus's murder. When the integrity of the cup is suspected, Cléopâtre drinks first, hoping to gain the trust of Antiochus and Rodogune so that they will follow suit. But the poison works too quickly, and its fatal effect on Cléopâtre becomes evident

[94] This is an example of Corneille's originality – according to history, Antiochus and Séleucus were brothers, but Corneille chose to make them twins, creating a crisis of sovereignty and heightening the suspense of the play, as the spectator anticipates the revelation of which brother will become king.

[95] Appian of Alexandria writes that Démétrius Nicanor was wed to Rodogune during his captivity by the Parthians. Corneille changed this historical detail, making Rodogune his fiancée in order to abide by *bienséance*. The sons would have been guilty of incest if they had been in love with their stepmother, and that would not have been acceptable to a seventeenth-century audience.

before Antiochus can take a sip. With a final curse upon the couple and their progeny, Cléopâtre staggers offstage to die, while Antiochus and Rodogune are left to transform their wedding day into a day of mourning for a dead brother and mother.

At the end of the play, it is Antiochus who technically holds the title of king of Syria. Whether by birthright or by the death of his brother,[96] he is the rightful heir of Démétrius Nicanor according to Salic law. And Antiochus would definitely qualify as a passionate monarch along with "Le Roi" of *Pyrame et Thisbé* and Hérode of *La Marianne*, since his desire to reign is superseded by his love for Rodogune. But Antiochus, despite being the legitimate king-character in this tragedy, is not the transgressive sovereign whose importance I wish to examine. My analysis of *Rodogune* will be concentrated instead on his tyrannical mother Cléopâtre. The classification of Cléopâtre as a tyrant is no novelty to literary criticism of this play. Her character marks such a departure from the traditional model of the virtuous Cornelian king (Don Fernand, Tulle, Auguste) that she has captivated the interest of many scholars. For example, in his article "La vérité tyrannique," John D. Lyons defines Cléopâtre as both a *tyran d'usurpation* and a *tyran d'exercice*:

> Cléopâtre est tyran, et cela selon plusieurs critères. Tout d'abord, elle continue à exercer le pouvoir en tant que régente alors que ses fils sont arrivés à la majorité. Elle continue, et veut continuer, à régner. Elle est donc "tyran d'origine", ou usurpatrice. Cléopâtre est aussi tyran en ce sens qu'elle règne injustement, et en violant les lois et les traditions de Syrie. Elle est ainsi "tyran d'exercice" et oppresseur. (62)

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[96] The audience is never completely sure. Cléopâtre tells Séleucus in Act IV Scene IV that he was born before his brother, "Le Trône était à toi par le droit de naissance" (1419), but she has proven herself so untrustworthy by this point in the play that it is difficult to believe her, especially since she is trying to manipulate him one last time before killing him off.

As this citation clearly states, Cléopâtre fits the definition of a tyrant to the letter. But for the purpose of this study, which is based on seventeenth-century political theories of the sovereign's double body, my inclusion of a woman in a list of king-characters merits a certain justification. For if we return briefly to the politologues whose writings I summarized in my first chapter, they are all adamant that a woman cannot be king.

In the sixth book of *Les Six livres de la République*, Jean Bodin specifies that only males should be considered for hereditary succession, as female rule is a violation of the natural law that should structure the ideal commonwealth:

> J'ai dit aussi que la Monarchie doit seulement être dévolue aux mâles, attendu que la Gynecocratie est droitement contre les lois de la nature, qui a donné aux hommes la force, la prudence, les armes, le commandement, et l'a ôté aux femmes. (VI.v, 233)

Bodin goes on to give the examples of several unfortunate dynasties *tombées en quenouille*. The verb used in this idiomatic expression implies that a kingdom cannot legally pass to a woman, but rather that it must *fall* into feminine hands. In the absence of a male heir for hereditary succession, Bodin believes that it is preferable to resort to election than to let a woman rule.

Charles Loyseau does not elaborate on female sovereignty any more than he does tyrannical sovereignty, i.e., he chooses to reject and dismiss it. In his *Cinq livres du droit des offices*, Loyseau simply cites Bodin, adding that a woman monarch is equivalent to a usurper:

> Finalement les Monarchies, selon leur vrai droit et propre nature, ne doivent appartenir aux femmes, encore moins que les Offices…Aussi Bodin au pénultième chapitre du dernier livre, prouve que c'est le droit commun des

> Monarchies de ne tomber en quenouille: et que ce qui s'observe autrement en quelques-uns, est par usurpation. (II.ii, 102)

Cardin Le Bret gives the most detailed description of the sovereign rights of women (or of their lack thereof) in the first book of *De la souveraineté du roi*. In chapter IV, he lists one of the three pillars of Salic law as being inaccessible to female offspring.[97] Like his predecessors, Le Bret invokes natural law, saying that women were created weaker in body and spirit and less suited to combat. In chapter VI, he describes the responsibilities of the queen, warning that they should not extend beyond the confines of the *res privata*: "Qu'elles [les Reines] se mêlent seulement de l'économie privée et domestique de leur maison" (I.vi, 22). Le Bret argues that if a woman is given public power, she will inevitably abuse it, for the female sex is ambitious and incapable of moderation:

> Aussi serait-il fort dangereux que les femmes de cette qualité [les Reines], eussent une puissance égale à leurs maris; d'autant que leur naturel ambitieux ne les laisserait point en repos, qu'elles n'eussent usurpé les avantages du commandement souverain, et réduit enfin leurs maris sous leur empire…Certes, la faiblesse de leur esprit ne leur permet pas de demeurer toujours dans la modération, lors qu'elles se voient élevées à ce haut degré d'honneur. Elles se laissent incontinent emporter à l'insolence et à la vanité, qui leur donne cette présomption d'elles-mêmes: qu'elles estiment qu'on leur fait injure, si elles ne commandent absolument. (I.vi, 22)

[97] The other two pillars are hereditary succession and ascension in order of consanguinity with the reigning king: "Or des termes et du sens de cette loi, l'on tire trois maximes qui sont comme autant de fortes colonnes, sur qui cette Monarchie est fermement appuyée. La première, que ce Royaume se confère par droit successif. La seconde, que les femmes sont incapables de parvenir à la Couronne: Et la dernière, que les mâles succèdent indéfiniment, et en quelque degré de parenté qu'ils soient éloignés." (*De la souveraineté du roi* I.iv,12)

The queen should, therefore, be accorded no political power except through the king as he deems appropriate. She may advise him at his request, as Livie famously did for Auguste, or participate in regency during his absence if authorized, but she may not command of her own authority. She is still a royal subject, although she has the honorable position of being the vessel of the physical body of the next king. Upon the death of her husband's physical body, she receives nothing, since his political body (and his perpetual symbolic marriage to the state) is passed directly to his successor. She may serve as temporary regent during the minority of her child, but she is not automatically entitled to do so. Essentially, for Le Bret, the queen has no claim to sovereignty.

Jean-François Senault is slightly more gracious towards women in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain*. In traité I chapter VII, he acknowledges the merit of Queen Elizabeth I of England as well as of the excellent regencies of Blanche de Castille and Anne d'Autriche.[98] Senault writes that women, while physically weaker than men, can sometimes exceed them in virtue. However, in order to compensate for their weakness, many women have learned to be cunning:

> Les femmes sont plus capables de finesse que de prudence, et de cruauté que de force. Ils [les Politiques] s'imaginent que la Nature qui leur a dénié le courage leur a donné la fourberie, et que le remède étant pire que le mal, elles sont également à craindre et dans leur dissimulation et dans leur faiblesse: Ils se persuadent que les femmes non seulement ne peuvent soutenir les travaux qui accompagnent la Souveraineté; mais que quand elles y sont admises, ou appelées, leur conduite est ambitieuse et cruelle; et que tenant quelque chose de ce serpent

[98] It is important to remember that Senault's text was published in 1661, whereas Corneille's *Rodugune* dates from the early years of Anne d'Autriche's regency (1643-1651). Although Senault's perspective is interesting and noteworthy, its date makes it slightly less relevant to this play than the opinions of Bodin, Loyseau, and Le Bret.

> qui séduisit leur première mère, elles sont fatales à leur Empire, et funestes à leurs Sujets. (I.vii, 44)

For this reason (which echoes the fears previously expressed by Le Bret), women are dangerous and not to be trusted readily.[99] In any case, Senault agrees with the other jurists that a female ruler would not be appropriate for the throne of France, since the people have long been accustomed to male succession as one of their fundamental laws.

With this in mind, let us return to *Rodogune*, and address an important question to determine the sovereign status of Cléopâtre: do the legal prescriptions of absolutist France apply to Corneille's Syria? In Act II Scene II, it can be confirmed that they do. Cléopâtre laments to her confidante Laonice that her people are hesitant to follow a woman into battle, a sentiment that necessitated her second marriage to Nicanor's brother Antiochus[100] (she is his widow as well) after the king was falsely presumed dead:

> Toi qui connais ce peuple et sais qu'aux Champs de Mars
> Lâchement d'une femme il suit les étendards,
> Que sans Antiochus Tryphon m'eût dépouillée,
> Que sous lui son ardeur fut soudain réveillée. (II.ii 489-92)

Cléopâtre could not rule as an unmarried woman because her subjects insisted on a masculine king. Her status as queen regent did not give her the power to command an army. Bodin would approve of such a rejection of gynecocracy by the people, as he notes in the *Six livres* that the members of a virtuous commonwealth will not risk the danger of autonomous feminine rule, even by the queen: "Si la Reine demeure sans mari, qui est le cas de la vraie Gynecocratie, l'état est exposé au danger des étrangers ou des sujets: car si le peuple est généreux, et de bon cœur, il

[99] An unsurprising comment coming from a priest.
[100] There are two characters named Antiochus in *Rodogune*: Nicanor's brother (deceased) and his son with Cléopâtre.

portera impatiemment que la femme commande" (VI.v, 234).[101] Yet despite these indications that Cléopâtre is not a monarch, she occupies a position of absolute sovereignty in *Rodogune* because of the exceptional circumstances in which Corneille has situated her character—namely that she is a widow with twin sons who have reached majority. Widowhood is in itself a position of increased freedom for women of the time period, as Anne M. Menke observes in "The Widow Who Would Be Queen: The Subversion of Patriarchal Monarchy in *Rodogune* and *Andromaque*:"

> Widowhood is the period of a woman's greatest liberty, and hence of the greatest possible threat to a social order predicated on her containment. If she is childless, or her children are young, she is temporarily the *oîkodespotès* or (tyrannic) head of house. She is in control of not only the household finances, but also of her body, being able for the first time legally able to decide for herself whom, if indeed, she will (re)marry. A woman with this kind of authority is especially dangerous if she is queen. (205)

To add to Cléopâtre's empowered status as a widow, Corneille chooses to portray Antiochus and Séleucus as twins, giving their mother an authority that would typically be unattainable for her sex in a patriarchal political order. Since she is the only one who knows which son was born first, she alone can name the next king. The law of male primogeniture is suspended, waiting on her revelation, as Laonice explains in the first scene of the play:

> Ce grand jour est venu, mon frère, où notre Reine
> Cessant de plus tenir la Couronne incertaine
> Doit rompre aux yeux de tous son silence obstiné,
> De deux princes gémeaux nous déclarer l'aîné ;

[101] We shall see that this is not the case in 1667 with Racine's *Andromaque*.

Et l'avantage seul d'un moment de naissance,

Dont elle a jusqu'ici caché la connaissance,

Mettant au plus heureux le sceptre dans la main,

Va faire l'un Sujet, et l'autre Souverain. (I.i 7-14)

As long as Cléopâtre holds that secret, she has the final word in the kingdom, and thus becomes its sovereign. Hélène Merlin remarks: "Avec le secret, la loi cesse d'être publique, et elle échappe à sa propre légalité" (49). Cléopâtre's rule is further enabled by the passivity of her lovesick sons, who do not want to accept their birthright. Antiochus and Séleucus's sole motivation for the crown is marriage to Rodogune, otherwise they are perfectly happy to let their mother maintain her authority, as they tell her in turn in Act II Scene III:

ANTIOCHUS

Nous attendons le Sceptre avec même espérance,

Mais si nous l'attendons, c'est sans impatience,

Nous pouvons sans régner vivre tous deux contents,

C'est le fruit de vos soins, jouissez-en longtemps. (II.iii 599-603)

SELEUCUS

J'ajouterai, Madame, à ce qu'a dit mon frère

Que bien qu'avec plaisir, et l'un, et l'autre espère,

L'ambition n'est pas notre plus grand désir.

Régnez, nous le verrons tous deux avec plaisir,

Et c'est bien la raison que pour tant de puissance

Nous vous rendions du moins un peu d'obéissance,

Et que celui de nous dont le Ciel a fait choix

Sous votre illustre exemple apprenne l'art des Rois. (II.iii 607-14)

Their shared hesitancy is grist to Cléopâtre's mill! Antiochus and Séleucus' twin-ness, coupled with their reluctance to exercise their role as princes, creates a surrogate through which Cléopâtre can construct a political body despite the handicap of her femininity. In this state of limbo she is king. But her sovereign status is not sustainable, especially considering that Cléopâtre, like the tragic monarchs we have already studied, is ruling according to the passions of her [feminine] physical body.

Now that Cléopâtre's sovereign status has been justified, let us examine her specific transgressions against her forged political body, and determine their function in Corneille's tragedy. The first way in which Cléopâtre violates the principles of sovereignty, a tyrannical characteristic that John D. Lyons has already identified in his previously cited article, is by extending the life of her temporary political body by means of deceit and manipulation. She does not enter the scene until the second act, but the spectator learns her history over the course of the first act through the voices of the other characters. The confidants Laonice and Timagène explain to the audience how Cléopâtre, believing her husband was dead, sent her sons to be fostered in Egypt for their safety and married Nicanor's brother out of necessity (I.i 35-51). After her second husband was defeated in battle against the Parthians, Cléopâtre was devastated by the surprise return of Nicanor with a new future queen by his side (I.iv 227-34). Fearing that her sons would be disinherited by his offspring with Rodogune, she had Nicanor ambushed and killed on his way home to Syria, and Rodogune was taken hostage and treated cruelly (I.iv 249-70). Now, her hate and jealousy have reputedly abated, and her sons have been brought home so that the eldest can inherit the throne and marry Rodogune, establishing an alliance with Parthe.

This is the impression that we receive of Cléopâtre before we actually meet her: she is described as a fiercely protective mother who has been wronged by her unfaithful husband. Her violent actions are forgivable because of the injustices committed against her. In short, Cléopâtre had a right to be angry – hell hath no fury like a woman scorned! Laonice defends her queen in Act I Scene V, when Rodogune expresses her suspicion of the queen's intentions:

Ah, Madame, je jure
Que par ce faux soupçon vous lui faites injure.
Vous devez oublier un désespoir jaloux,
Où força son courage un infidèle époux. (I.v 327b-30)

At the end of the first act, the audience feels a certain degree of pity for Cléopâtre because of how she has been presented to them through the testimony of her entourage. But then, in Act II, she reveals her true self, and our perspective changes completely. When Cléopâtre arrives onstage, alone, the first words out of her mouth confirm the suspicions of Rodogune:

Serments fallacieux, salutaire contrainte,
Que m'imposa la force, et qu'accepta ma crainte,
Heureux déguisements d'un immortel courroux,
Vains fantômes d'état, évanouissez-vous. (II.i 395-98)

Everything we have learned about the queen so far has been a lie. Cléopâtre has been living a disguised life. Her outward acquiescence towards her son's coronation and marriage is an act of dissimulation to hide her hate and ambition. While it initially appears that all of her past actions had been motivated by her desire to preserve the throne for her children and make peace for her realm, her only objectives are to prolong her personal reign and satisfy her consuming hatred for

Rodogune. In Act II Scene II, she boasts to Laonice that she has used her sons to extend the duration of her regency, and has intentionally withheld their birth order as long as possible:

> Apprends, ma confidente, apprends à me connaître.
> Si je cache en quel rang le ciel les a fait naître,
> Vois, vois que tant que l'ordre en demeure douteux,
> Aucun des deux ne règne et je règne pour eux.
> Quoique ce soit un bien que l'un et l'autre attende,
> De crainte de le perdre, aucun ne le demande,
> Cependant je possède, et leur droit incertain
> Me laisse avec leur sort leur sceptre dans la main.
> Voilà mon grand secret. (II.ii 443-51a)

Cléopâtre realizes that as long as Nicanor's successor remains uncertain, she holds the scepter (which she refers to with the possessive "mon sceptre" in v. 422), and she has no intention of relinquishing it. She knows that her sons are reluctant to learn her secret, each fearing to be unseated by the other. And she admits that she sent them away not to protect them, but to give herself more freedom to reign in their absence, so that she could manipulate their uncle with the constant threat of bringing the legitimate princes home:

> Il [Antiochus] occupait leur trône, et craignait leur présence,
> Et cette juste crainte assurait ma puissance.
> Mes ordres en étaient de point en point suivis
> Quand je le menaçais du retour de mes fils,
> Voyant ce foudre prêt à suivre ma colère,
> Quoi qu'il me plût oser, il n'osait pas me déplaire,

Et content malgré lui du vain titre de Roi,

S'il régnait au lieu d'eux, ce n'était que sous moi. (II.ii 455-62)

She used her second husband as a surrogate political body until his death, and she intends to do the same with one of her sons. They have been raised by her family in a foreign country with no connection to Syria, and Cléopâtre is relying on their political inexperience in order to be able to reverse the role that a queen should have according to absolutist political theory – rather than being the bearer of the future sovereign, she wants to impregnate her political body into the physical agent of one of her sons, and she will choose the twin who she finds most willing to accomplish that agency. Furthermore, she confesses to Laonice that she did not spare Rodogune's life out of mercy or a desire for peace, but out of pure necessity so that she could keep the Parthians at bay long enough for her to re-amass an army under her puppet king. Now that she is poised to strike, it is time for Rodogune to die. Laonice's reaction to this shocking revelation mirrors the reaction of the audience: "Je vous connaissais mal" (II.ii 503).

Cléopâtre's first two scenes in the play place her in immediate opposition to the portrait of the virtuous monarch. Not only does she proclaim herself as a usurper of the sovereign power that should be vested into one of her grown sons, but she is also actively lying to her subjects, which is a violation of the sovereign's honor and integrity. In *Les Six livres de la République*, Jean Bodin advises that although an absolute monarch is technically above the law, it is in his best interest to keep his word to his people[102] and to honor any treaties or alliances he has made with other states.[103] Pierre Le Moyne consecrates an entire *discours* of *De l'art de régner* to the importance of maintaining "la bonne foi".[104] By concealing her hatred and ambition under a

[102] *Les Six livres de la République* I.viii.
[103] *Les Six livres de la République* V.vi.
[104] *De l'art de régner*, Troisième Partie, Discours IV, Art. I-XII.

mask of forgiveness, Cléopâtre is abusing the trust of her subjects and therefore degrading her sovereign status into that of a *tyran d'exercice*.

In addition to resorting to dishonest means to maintain her political power, Cléopâtre also rejects the laws of nature by her lack of maternal love. We have already established that a king should be a symbolic father to his people, and that the sovereign/subject relationship should mimic the unconditional selfless love of the parent/child relationship. Cléopâtre's treatment of her sons Antiochus and Séleucus indicates that she is incapable of this kind of love (long before she actually decides to kill them). From the beginning of the play it becomes clear that she does not know or understand her children, for she cannot identify with their virtue. She recognizes their weakness and indecision (she has nurtured that!), but she arrogantly assumes that they are as power-hungry as she is. When she offers the crown in exchange for the death of Rodogune in Act II Scene III, she does not count on their love for the princess or for each other. Séleucus interprets his mother's proposition as evidence that she does not actually love them, despite her vehement insistence that "Mon amour pour vous fit tout ce que je fis." (II.iii 562):

> De ses pleurs tant vantés je découvre le fard,
> Nous avons en son cœur, vous, et moi, peu de part,
> Elle fait bien sonner ce grand amour de mère,
> Mais elle seule enfin s'aime et se considère,
> Et quoi que nous étale un langage si doux,
> Elle a tout fait pour elle, et n'a rien fait pour nous. (II.iv 733-38)

Séleucus's indignation is justified by Cléopâtre's reaction to their reticence. For once they refuse to accomplish her revenge, Antiochus and Séleucus are useless to their mother. When she resolves to kill them in the final scene of the fourth act (another monologue, for she is still

publicly feigning support of Antiochus' marriage to Rodogune), she deliberately rejects any shred of motherly affection that binds her to her children, and wills herself to eliminate them to get to Rodogune:

> Je sais bien qu'en l'état où tous deux je les vois
> Il me les faut percer, pour aller jusqu'à toi :
> Mais n'importe, mes mains sur le père enhardies
> Pour un bras refusé sauront prendre deux vies,
> Leurs jours également sont pour moi dangereux,
> J'ai commencé par lui, j'achèverai par eux.
> Sors de mon cœur, Nature, ou fais qu'ils m'obéissent,
> Fais-les servir ma haine, ou consens qu'ils périssent. (IV.vii 1485-92)

Cléopâtre is choosing to end her own dynasty in cold blood, with minimal regret. This act of infanticide, which earns her the title of "cette seconde Médée" in Corneille's *dédicace* of the play, is a glaring violation of the sovereign's political body because it negates the perpetuity of hereditary succession. Rather than naming an heir to inherit the kingdom, she decides to spill royal blood[105] to avenge offenses committed against her person. By severing the biological connection that binds her with her two sons (the people she should naturally strive to protect above all others), Cléopâtre demonstrates that she does not love anyone but herself.[106]

What we have learned about Cléopâtre's character thus far can easily be used to define her as an abuser of sovereign power who is motivated by her own personal agenda, but these

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[105] Charles Loyseau states in the seventh chapter of his *Traité des ordres et simples dignités* that royal blood (even of lesser princes) should be conserved at all costs, hence his insistence that princes refrain from dueling and tournaments.

[106] Cléopâtre's disregard for natural law is further emphasized by Antiochus' respect for it. In Act III Scene IV, when Séleucus is expressing his distaste for his mother, Antiochus rebukes him, saying "Gardons plus de respect aux droits de la Nature" (III.iv 687). Even after he knows that his mother has attempted to poison him, he tries to help her in her physical distress: "N'importe, elle est ma mère, il faut la secourir" (V.iv 1810).

shortcomings do not yet qualify her as a passionate king. From this perspective, her calculating nature makes her seem almost devoid of passion. Her manipulation of Syria's sovereignty crisis proves that she is cunning (like Senault's female ruler), and her detached disposal of her sons proves that she is cold. Yet Cléopâtre substitutes her unnatural lack of maternal love with a perverse love for power, and this ruthless ambition is the first of her two destructive passions. She relishes her position as sovereign, referring to the crown and its benefits in Act II Scene II as: "Délices de mon cœur" (476). Jean-Luc Gallardo identifies Cléopâtre's desire for power as a source of pleasure equivalent to *jouissance*.[107] She certainly loves the crown enough to kill for it, and to keep it from passing to Rodogune at all costs. In Act II Scene I, her first monologue of the play, she states plainly that this love (and not love for her sons, as the kingdom presumes) prompted her to kill Démétrius Nicanor: "Vois jusqu'où m'emporta l'amour du Diadème, / Vois quel sang il me coûte, et tremble pour toi-même" (II.i 423-24).[108] In her subsequent dialogue with Laonice, Cléopâtre also claims that Nicanor's fatal transgression was not marrying another woman, but bringing Rodogune back to Syria and threatening to de-stabilize the queen's usurped political body. The offense was not committed against her relationship with her husband, because her romantic relationship is with her scepter.[109] She would not have cared about Nicanor's marriage to Rodogune if they had only stayed in Parthe:

> Je te dirai bien plus. Sans violence aucune
>
> J'aurais vu Nicanor épouser Rodogune,
>
> Si content de lui plaire, et de me dédaigner,
>
> Il eût vécu chez elle, en me laissant régner :

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[107] Jean-Luc Gallardo, *Les délices du pouvoir: Corneille,* Cinna, Rodogune, Nicomède, 112.
[108] Cléopâtre's interlocutor is an imaginary Rodogune in this solo scene.
[109] In *Les Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Gilbert Durand identifies the sceptre as a phallic image (152).

Son retour me fâchait plus que son Hymenée,

Et j'aurais pu l'aimer, s'il ne l'eût couronnée. (II.ii 463-68)

Rodogune's potential to dismember Cléopâtre's forged political body is the source of the queen's jealous hatred, which is the second of her tragic passions (and the one that ultimately leads to her downfall). Over the course of the play, Cléopâtre's desire to punish Rodogune evolves to overshadow her ambition, and she becomes reckless with her political body. Like Hérode in *La Marianne*, who begs to die and curses the Jewish people in his anguish after the death of his beloved wife, Corneille's tyrannical queen is as mad with hate as Tristan's pathological monarch is mad with love. In Act V Scene I, after she has already killed Séleucus and she is anticipating the deaths of Antiochus and Rodogune, Cléopâtre acknowledges her personal choice to "crown her hatred" (1524). The same queen who will lie, cheat, and kill to maintain her sovereign status ultimately relinquishes her hard-won political body to her own passions. Her need for vengeance has trumped her desire to reign, and she is willing to sacrifice her kingdom as long as Rodogune goes down first:

Qui se venge à demi court lui-même à sa peine,

Il faut, ou condamner, ou couronner sa haine.

Dût le Peuple en fureur pour ses maîtres nouveaux

De mon sang odieux arroser leurs tombeaux,

Dût le Parthe vengeur me trouver sans défense,

Dût le Ciel égaler le supplice à l'offense,

Trône, à t'abandonner je ne puis consentir.

Par un coup de tonnerre il vaut mieux en sortir,

Il vaut mieux mériter le sort le plus étrange :

Tombe sur moi le Ciel, pourvu que je me venge,

J'en recevrai le coup d'un visage remis,

Il est doux de périr après ses ennemis,

Et de quelque rigueur que le Destin me traite,

Je perds moins à mourir, qu'à vivre leur Sujette. (V.i 1523-36)

Cléopâtre claims in verse 1529 that she cannot abandon the throne, yet she also paradoxically does not care if she is killed after Rodogune, or what happens to Syria after she dies. She only wants to hold onto her power until she is avenged, and then the devil can take it. Her initial desire to maintain her sovereign status is replaced by her rage. It is this passion that prompts her to drink her own poisoned cup so that Antiochus and Rodogune will trust it. As Georges Couton states in his *notice* of the play, "Haine et ambition se sont conjuguées pour l'amener à se détruire pour détruire" (1285). Unable to secure her political body despite her nefarious efforts, she responds to its impending demise by attacking the physical body before the political can be seized from her. She dies by her own hand, but she dies as king. In this Cléopâtre accomplishes what Hérode of *La Marianne* is incapable of doing: whereas he tries to kill himself and cannot, she succeeds. Is this because, as the politologues suggest, her physical body is weaker? Or is it rather because her physical body separates itself more easily from the political, since the latter was never rightfully hers to begin with?

While Corneille manages to create an avatar of the sovereign double body in the person of Cléopâtre in spite of her sex, he also makes sure that this character doubly betrays the sovereign status he has accorded to her. Cléopâtre fails as a sovereign because of her lack of virtue (integrity and maternal love), which qualifies her as tyrant, and she fails as a sovereign because of her passion (love of power and hatred), which incites her to commit both murder and

suicide. As the twin-ness of Antiochus and Séleucus sets up the sovereignty crisis presented in *Rodogune*, the dual failure of Cléopâtre to act as a true "king" contributes to the effectiveness of Corneille's tragedy. The transgression of this character against the principles of sovereignty evokes fear and pity from the spectator by means of illusion and disorder.

The action of *Rodogune* is structured around a secret. From the very first lines of the play, the audience, like the Syrian people, is waiting for a revelation from Cléopâtre regarding the birth order of her sons. But the secret that is revealed is not the secret that the audience was anticipating: the secret is the true identity of Cléopâtre, of her hate and ambition, of her infidelity to her intermediary role as queen regent. She is not who she seems to the rest of the cast (with the exception of Rodogune and eventually Laonice). Her double body is actually a duplicitous body. Here we see the author of *L'Illusion comique* reinterpreting his *théâtre dans le théâtre* in tragic drama—Cléopâtre is an actor within the play. She is playing queen mother when she is truly a vengeful tyrant. And the spectators can engage in the plot on a deeper level because they are privy to her secret: they listen to her lie to her sons about how much she loves them in Act II Scene III, they see her cry crocodile tears in response to Antiochus's plea for mercy in Act IV Scene III, they know who is responsible for Séleucus's death, and they know the nuptial cup is poisoned. They are aware that there is not one shred of truth to her rhetoric, and this awareness leads them to pity the innocent characters who believe her, while fearing the tragic outcome that will inevitably result from her murderous schemes. They are waiting for the revelation of her real secret, which builds suspense in preparation for the play's dénouement. Cléopâtre is an illusion of sovereign power, and this illusion is not publicly shattered until the final scene, in which she is unable to contain the effects of the poison. Rodogune describes the transformation of Cléopâtre's face:

Seigneur, voyez ses yeux

Déjà tout égarés, troublés, et furieux,

Cette affreuse sueur qui court sur son visage,

Cette gorge qui s'enfle. Ah, bons Dieux, quelle rage !

Pour vous perdre après elle, elle a voulu périr. (V.iv, v. 1805b-09)

In Cléopâtre's final moments, both her pain and her rage explode onto her face, so that outside finally resembles the inside. Catherine Guillot emphasizes that it is essential for the passion to manifest itself in the actor's facial expression, so that the reconciliation of the illusion with the truth creates uncontestable recognition on the part of the other characters onstage, and catharsis on the part of the spectator.[110]

In addition to soliciting an emotional response from the audience by means of illusion and revelation, Cléopâtre's anti-sovereign behavior also contributes to the tragic aspect of *Rodogune* because it brings disorder on the kingdom. By abusing absolute power, killing one of her sons, and then killing herself, she leaves Syria in a state of uncertainty. Her death has undone any semblance of order that she had attempted to establish before being defeated by passion. The play ends in total confusion, and according to Jean-François Senault in *Le monarque ou les devoirs du souverain*, such confusion and disorder are the products of tyranny.[111] By usurping the political body from her husbands and sons, perverting her appropriated authority to accomplish her own personal desires, and ending her own life when she realizes the impossibility of her objective, Cléopâtre creates chaos, and in the genre of theatre, chaos equals tragedy. When the curtain falls, the wedding ceremony is incomplete, and the kingdom is in the hands of an untrained prince who has demonstrated throughout the play that he

[110] See Catherine Guillot's 2003 PFSCL article: "Théâtralisation des passions et catharsis: le personnage de Cléopâtre dans le frontispice, signé Charles Le Brun, pour la Rodogune de Corneille."

[111] See citation from *Le monarque* in Chapter 1 (44) of the present study.

is all too willing to be commanded by a woman, whether it is his mother or Rodogune. Antiochus' life has been spared, so there is no interregnum, but Cléopâtre has succeeded in de-stabilizing him and in essentially handing the kingdom over to a foreign princess (a situation which we will encounter again in Racine's *Andromaque*). In the last line of the play, Antiochus commends the future of Syria to the gods, an unsettling disengagement that does not bode well for his assumption of sovereign authority.

I would like to end my analysis of Cléopâtre with a famous citation from Corneille's *Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique*, written thirteen years after the publication of *Rodogune*. In this excerpt, Corneille expresses an admiration for his villainous queen-character despite her criminality:

> Cléopâtre dans *Rodogune* est très méchante, il n'y a point de parricide qui lui fasse horreur, pourvu qu'il la puisse conserver sur un trône qu'elle préfère à toutes choses, tant son attachement à la domination est violent; mais tous ses crimes sont accompagnés d'une grandeur d'âme, qui a quelque chose de si haut, qu'en même temps qu'on déteste ses actions, on admire la source dont elles partent. (129)

Corneille's statement is reminiscent of the admiration expressed by Tristan L'Hermite for his representation of Hérode in the *avertissement* of *La Marianne*. For whereas Tristan does not condone Hérode's violence, he respects both his courage and the sincerity of his passion for Marianne. In the case of Cléopâtre, Corneille claims that her one redeeming quality is her iron-fisted resolve to being completely evil. She does not commit crimes reluctantly or with regret, as Hérode does, but rather embraces her tyranny wholeheartedly. And she does so in a different way than "Le Roi" of *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé*, who is simply tyrannical

without a grain of allure for the spectator. Cléopâtre embodies the tyrant with a dramatic style that Hélène Merlin-Kajman characterizes as seductive:

> Éloquence sophistique mais si puissante, si puissamment séductrice, rattachant magnifiquement, dans un jeu de métaphores et oxymores "baroques," le caractère solaire de la vertu royale à la nuit du secret d'Etat. Ainsi le public pourra jouir des "figures" sans être dupe. (44)

Simply put, Cléopâtre is a piece of work, a character we love to hate (as opposed to Hérode, who is a character we hate to love). Her proud portrayal of the anti-sovereign draws the audience members in at the same time as her actions repulse them, and her unrepentant cruelty, mingled with feminine panache and Cornelian eloquence, makes the play unforgettable.

Conclusion

In the three tragedies that I have analyzed in this chapter, *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé*, *La Marianne*, and *Rodogune*, I have demonstrated how the king-characters, through their submission to the passions of the physical body, disrupt the political body and incur tragic consequences through the transgression of their sovereignty, which in turn guides the dramatic action of these plays. In addition to being linked by their thematic commonality, I would like to point out that "Le Roi", Hérode, and Cléopâtre also possess certain characteristics that are representative of the French Baroque aesthetic. In an artistic period that is traditionally defined by its emphasis on complexity, diversity, illusion, instability, movement, and metamorphosis, each of these characters can be considered, in a certain sense, Baroque. "Le Roi's" violent desire to possess Thisbé is an agent of mobility, pushing the lovers from their homes out into the darkness of night, a space that Didier Souiller equates with disorder and

confusion in Baroque literature.[112] Hérode undergoes an onstage transformation from despot to tyrant over the course of *La Marianne*. And Cléopâtre's duplicitous character is a theatrical *trompe-l'œil*, an illusion of order in a state of disorder that does not reveal itself as such until the end of *Rodogune*.

And yet the idea of the portrayal of the passionate king in itself also complements the Baroque aesthetic, according to the theories of the imaginary proposed by Gilbert Durand and developed by Jean-Jacques Wunenburger. In his canonical work *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Durand describes the human imagination as consisting of a diurnal and a nocturnal order. Whereas the nocturnal order creates images that accept mortality and euphemize fear of death, the images created by the diurnal order strive to transcend time and to separate and distinguish themselves from the nocturnal. Durand argues that diurnal imagery is primarily based on antithesis, since light cannot exist without darkness:

> Sémantiquement parlant, on peut dire qu'il n'y a pas de lumière sans ténèbres alors que l'inverse n'est pas vrai: la nuit ayant une existence symbolique autonome. Le Régime Diurne de l'image se définit donc d'une façon générale comme le régime de l'antithèse. (69)

In his 1986 article "L'imaginaire baroque: approche morphologique à partir du structuralisme figuratif de G. Durand", Wunenburger applies Durand's hypothesis of the binary structure of the imagination to redefine Baroque imagery: "Par ailleurs le baroque épouse aussi la syntaxe disséminatoire de l'imaginaire dans la mesure où cette totalisation harmonique s'opère non par emboitement ou réconciliation des contraires, mais par le jeu de leur co-action" (92). Thus the complexity of Baroque art forms is a result of the opposition and interaction of light with darkness. With the portrayal of the passionate sovereign in tragic drama, the contrasting

[112] See Souiller, Didier, "L'expérience de la nuit dans la littérature européenne baroque."

images of the physical and political bodies of the king struggle within a single onstage body as the physical tries to separate from the political and vice versa. The tyrant resists against the incarnation of the traditional model of the ideal sovereign, leading to rupture, instability, and disorder, but creating in the process a sort of theatrical *clair-obscur* in which light and darkness coexist to create harmonic dramaturgy.

This notion of antithesis could also be interpreted in Baroque tragedy as an attempt to reveal the true nature of the king through the mimetic portrayal of his opposite. Wunenburger describes this technique of Baroque expression as the juxtaposition of "le monde" and "l'anti-monde" in the search for truth:

> L'apparente identité de notre monde ne peut révéler sa nature cachée qu'en étant confrontée à son anti-monde, c'est-à-dire son inversion en miroir. Dans ce cas l'imaginaire baroque vise certes à souligner un relativisme anthropologique, mais plus profondément cherche la vérité du monde, non plus dans le tableau unilatéral qui nous est immédiatement accessible, mais dans le choc des mondes à l'endroit et à l'envers. (93)

In this sense, Wunenburger's description of the Baroque aesthetic corresponds to the iconic definition proposed by Jean Rousset a generation earlier: "Dans le monde du trompe-l'œil, il faut le détour de la feinte pour atteindre la réalité" (Rousset 54). A true appreciation of reality requires a passage through its illusatory other. Durand claims in the introduction to "Le sceptre et le glaive" that by portraying evil, representing danger and symbolizing anguish, one is already conquering them by means of the *cogito*. All perils are minimized when they are represented through images (135). Likewise the portrayal of the passionate king in Baroque tragedy presents

a distorted mirror image of sovereignty that challenges the spectator to distill it in order to recognize the king as he truly is.

CHAPTER 3

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PASSIONATE KING IN RACINIAN TRAGEDY

In the first chapter of this study, I demonstrated how the idea of the sovereign double body evolves over the course of the seventeenth century, and I noted a major ideological shift between the death of Louis XIII in 1643 and the beginning of Louis XIV's personal rule in 1661.[113] For example, whereas Le Bret's *De la souveraineté du roi* (1632) focuses on the legitimacy and logistics of the sovereign's absolute power, Senault's *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* (1661) concentrates on refining the king's character and on instructing him to reject his physical body. Now that his *corps politique* is firmly established, the validity of his sovereign status is no longer the primary question. The more pressing objective during the second half of the century is that the king learns to rule over himself and his passions so that he can equitably rule France. The principles of sovereignty evolve from a list of rights to a list of responsibilities, and politics take a back seat to passions.

As this change in perspective is evident in the writings of the politologues between Le Bret and Senault, it can also be observed in tragedy between the works of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine (1639-1699). The portrayal of passions takes on a much greater role in the theatrical representation of the sovereign's double body in Racinian drama than in Baroque drama. According to Alain Viala, Racine was criticized early in his career by his contemporaries (including Corneille) for prioritizing the theme of romantic love over political heroism:

> Dès ses débuts, Saint-Evremond, Corneille, et Subligny ont jugé qu'il faisait la part trop belle aux questions d'amour et pas assez à la relation du héros tragique

[113] See Chapter 1 of the present study, 31-32.

> avec la Cité, avec l'État, en un mot, à la politique: ils l'ont accusé d'être trop galant et pas assez héroïque. (Viala 91)

This characterization of Racine as being more *galant* than political endures into modern literary criticism. Racine is widely hailed as the master of tragic passion: "Le jugement officiel incontesté au sujet de Racine, c'est qu'il est par excellence 'le peintre de la passion'" (Emelina 111). His characters do not typically possess the *volonté* of the Cornelian hero, as Sylvaine Guyot observes in *Racine, ou l'alchimie du tragique*:

> Tandis que Corneille représente la victoire du devoir sur des passions finalement dominées, Racine, lui, met le plus souvent en scène des personnages habités dès le lever du rideau par un *pathos* qui finit soit par renverser tout à fait l'*ethos* héroïque des personnages, soit par le fissurer, l'ébranler, jusqu'à le modifier. (Guyot et al. 67)

Unlike Octave/Auguste, Racine's most memorable tragic characters are not masters of themselves. Rather than triumphantly proclaiming, as does Auguste in the final scene of *Cinna*: "Je suis maître de moi comme de l'Univers" (V.iii 1696), they are more often engaged in a losing battle against their passions, the outcome of which has been predetermined. Given this new perspective, the representation of the passionate king-character inevitably takes on a new signification in Racinian drama.

To explore the evolution of the representation of the sovereign's double body in Classical tragedy, this chapter will focus on three of Racine's king-characters in chronological order. First, I present a comparative analysis of the characters of Oreste and Pyrrhus in *Andromaque* (1667), in order to demonstrate how the passions of a king differ from those of a subject. Next, I

examine the tragic impact of the monarch's use of artifice in *Mithridate* (1673). My third and final analysis addresses the indecision of Agamemnon in the Greek tragedy *Iphigénie* (1674).

A Tale of Two Lovers: Oreste and Pyrrhus in *Andromaque* (1667)

As passions move to the foreground of the dramatic representation in Racinian theatre, the importance of the transgressive sovereign can no longer be simply defined by his submission to passions, but by how his particular passions distinguish him from a list of equally passionate characters. This is why, in order to most effectively examine the function of the king's submission to his physical body in Racine's *Andromaque*,[114] I propose a comparison of the two main male characters, Oreste and Pyrrhus. In this Greek tragedy, which Raymond Picard characterizes as a: "déchaînement fou des passions palpitantes" (237), both men have destructive passions for different women. Neither Oreste nor Pyrrhus is perfect, nor is either purely detestable.[115] Racine pays very close attention to Aristotle when creating his tragic heroes, as he states in his first *Préface* to *Andromaque*:

> Aristote, bien éloigné de nous demander des héros parfaits, veut au contraire que les personnages tragiques, c'est-à-dire ceux dont le malheur fait la catastrophe de la tragédie, ne soient ni tout à fait bons, ni tout à fait méchants. Il ne veut pas qu'ils soient extrêmement bons, parce que la punition d'un homme de bien exciterait plutôt l'indignation que la pitié du spectateur; ni qu'ils soient méchants avec excès, parce qu'on n'a point pitié d'un scélérat. Il faut donc qu'ils aient une

[114] Performed for the first time in 1667 and published December 1667 - January 1668.

[115] In the case of Pyrrhus, Racine admits in his preface to having softened his character as opposed to Virgil or Seneca, in order to make him more sympathetic. "Toute la liberté que j'ai prise, ç'a été d'adoucir un peu la férocité de Pyrrhus, que Sénèque, dans sa *Troade*, et Virgile, dans le second de *l'Enéide*, ont poussée beaucoup plus loin que je n'ai cru le devoir faire" (241). In spite of Racine's changes to Pyrrhus' character, critics of the play still considered him to be overly violent in his threats against Andromaque. An accusation to which Racine responded: "Pyrrhus n'avait pas lu nos romans. Il était violent de son naturel. Et tous les héros ne sont pas faits pour être des Céladons" (242).

> bonté médiocre, c'est-à-dire une vertu capable de faiblesse, et qu'ils tombent dans le malheur par quelque faute qui les fasse plaindre sans les faire détester. (214)

True to the Aristotelian prescription, Pyrrhus and Oreste both struggle with a common *hamartia*, which is their passion for women who do not return their love. The difference between them is that one of these men is a king, and the other one is not. One possesses a double body, and the other does not. Therefore, their passions incur very different consequences to the action of the play, and my comparison highlights the importance of the king-character Pyrrhus's disregard for his political body.

Let us begin with Oreste, who, as I have briefly mentioned, is not a king in Racine's tragedy. He is listed in the cast of characters as a "fils d'Agamemnon", which indicates that he has royal blood, but Oreste is never singled out in *Andromaque* as being either a prince or an heir. Instead, he holds the title of ambassador of the Greek coalition. This humble characterization was noticed and criticized by Subligny, who in his *Folle querelle, ou la critique d'Andromaque* (1668) expressed that the role of ambassador was too simple to be worthy of tragedy.[116] Yet Oreste's position as ambassador is, in its relative insignificance, significant to the tragic aspect of the play, as both Ellen McClure and Timothy Hampton have explained in their articles.[117] As a representative of "the Greeks," Oreste does not possess a political body, but he is an agent of multiple sovereign powers. In Book IV Chapter VIII of *De la souveraineté du roi*, Cardin Le Bret considers the right of *ius legationis* to be one of the primary marks of sovereignty. Since all the kings of the Greek *poleis* cannot simultaneously descend on Epirus to protest against Pyrrhus's protection of Astyanax, Oreste serves as the voice of their collective

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[116] See Racine, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Georges Forestier (1999), vol. 1, 261-62.
[117] For detailed explanations of the importance of diplomacy in seventeenth-century France, see McClure, "Diplomacy and Dementia in Racine's *Andromaque*" (2003), and Hampton, "The Tragedy of Delegation: Diplomatic Action and Tragic Form in Racine's *Andromaque* (2008).

objection and insistence that he relinquish the son of their enemy. Hermione reminds him of this responsibility in Act II Scene II: "Songez à tous ces rois que vous représentez" (508). Yet according to McClure, the plurality of his agency evoked here by Hermione problematizes his role as ambassador, for he does not communicate the power of a single absolute monarch. Oreste speaks for "the Greeks," a political voice that is less clearly heard because it is spoken *en masse*. In the absence of a single sovereign authority, Oreste's ambassadorship is more likely to be compromised by his own personal desire.

From the very first scene of *Andromaque*, the spectator becomes aware that Oreste is an emotionally unstable man. When he encounters his estranged friend Pylade upon his arrival in Epirus, Pylade admits to having been worried for Oreste's safety during their long separation. But ironically, the primary source of Pylade's worries is not Oreste's globetrotting adventurism, but his temperament:

> Surtout je redoutais cette mélancolie
> Où j'ai vu si longtemps votre âme ensevelie.
> Je craignais que le ciel, par un cruel secours,
> Ne vous offrît la mort que vous cherchiez toujours. (I.i 17-20)

Pylade describes his friend as melancholy. Whether Oreste's pervasive sadness is a result of depression or mental illness, he is "diagnosed" by his friend as having always had a death wish (20). From this citation, the audience knows that Oreste's emotional state is fragile, and that he is a danger to the political order that his mission represents.

In Oreste's opinion, however, the source of his dark mood is his unrequited love for Helen's daughter Hermione. He has been enamored with her for years, and when she was promised to Pyrrhus after the defeat of Troy, Oreste was crushed. To forget Hermione, he tried

at first to run away: “traîner de mers en mers ma chaîne et mes ennuis” (44). When that strategy proved ineffective, he tried to fight for the Greeks:

Je pensai que la guerre et la gloire
De soins plus importants rempliraient ma mémoire ;
Que mes sens reprenant leur première vigueur,
L’amour achèverait de sortir de mon cœur. (I.i 61-64)

And after all his resistance, Oreste finds himself in Epirus, charged with obtaining Astyanax for Greece, and confronted with the potential of being reunited with Hermione. Realizing that there is nothing he can do to escape or overcome his passion, Oreste tells Pylade that he has decided to stop fighting and accept whatever fate the gods choose to bestow upon him:

Puisqu’après tant d’efforts ma résistance est vaine,
Je me livre en aveugle au destin qui m’entraîne.
J’aime, je viens chercher Hermione en ces lieux,
La fléchir, l’enlever, ou mourir à ses yeux. (I.i 97-100)

In this oft-cited declaration of the triumph of passions over reason (98), Oreste voluntarily abandons himself to blindly pursue his love for Hermione. He will make her love him, kidnap her, or die trying!

By proclaiming that his primary intention is to follow the destiny of his own personal desires, Oreste minimizes his political agenda in favor of his passion. He makes this very clear in his first dialogue with Hermione in Act II Scene II, throwing himself at her mercy and telling her that she is the only reason for his presence in Epirus, and that he is waiting on her word to determine the course of his future:

Enfin je viens à vous, et je me vois réduit

A chercher dans vos yeux une mort qui me fuit.

Mon désespoir n'attend que leur indifférence :

Ils n'ont qu'à m'interdire un reste d'espérance,

Ils n'ont, pour avancer cette mort où je cours,

Qu'à me dire une fois ce qu'ils m'ont dit toujours.

Voilà, depuis un an, le seul soin qui m'anime.

Madame, c'est à vous de prendre une victime. (II.ii 495-502)

He does not play hard to get or even mention his duty. Oreste places his loyalty to Hermione before his loyalty to "the Greeks:" he is her subject and his love for her is his sovereign. She is the one who must then remind him that he has a mission to fulfill, and that he was not sent to Epirus to fall at her feet and declare his love. He has been appointed as a messenger (Mercury), not as a lover (Eros):

Quittez, Seigneur, quittez ce funeste langage.

A des soins plus pressants la Grèce vous engage.

Que parlez-vous du Scythe et de mes cruautés ?

Songez à tous ces rois que vous représentez.

Faut-il que d'un transport leur vengeance dépende ?

Est-ce le sang d'Oreste enfin qu'on vous demande ?

Dégagez-vous des soins dont vous êtes chargé. (II.ii 505-11)

Hermione gets Oreste back on task, but the nature of his task has changed. She asks him for news of Pyrrhus's decision, because she wants Astyanax surrendered to the Greeks so that she can marry Pyrrhus. By blindly serving his love for Hermione, Oreste is figuratively re-

commissioned as her ambassador, representing her passion for Pyrrhus and eventually her vengeance upon the king.

At the end of the second act of *Andromaque*, Oreste's decision to fully submit to his passion creates a conflict of interest with his agency for Greece. When Pyrrhus declares that he will marry Hermione and hand over Astyanax, and that he wants Oreste to give her away at the ceremony, the latter is faced with an ethical choice. His obedience would be the fulfillment of his ambassadorship, bringing peace to the kings he represents as well as closure to the surviving Greek victims of the Trojan War. But it would leave his passion unsatisfied, which would be a defeat Oreste cannot bring himself to accept. In Act III Scene I, he is in an emotional state that alarms Pylade, who vainly tries to calm him down: "Modérez donc, Seigneur, cette fureur extrême. / Je ne vous connais plus, vous n'êtes plus vous-même" (III.i 709-10). Oreste's melancholy has evolved into a determined rage, and he resolves himself to become a criminal and kidnap Hermione instead of carrying out his mission. He has tried to resist his passion and the gods have not rewarded him, so if they are going to continue to be cruel to him regardless of his innocence, he will merit their anger:

> Que veux-tu? Mais, s'il faut ne te rien déguiser,
> Mon innocence enfin commence à me peser.
> Je ne sais de tout temps quelle injuste puissance
> Laisse le crime en paix et poursuit l'innocence.
> De quelque part sur moi que je tourne les yeux,
> Je ne vois que malheurs qui condamnent les Dieux.
> Méritons leur courroux, justifions leur haine,
> Et que le fruit du crime en précède la peine. (III.i 771-78)

Oreste recognizes that he is not the supreme power, and that he ultimately has no control over his destiny, but he is willing to defy the Greeks (his earthly sovereign authority) and take the situation into his own hands to try and accomplish his personal objective.

Ironically, the crime Oreste is asked to commit in Act IV is not the crime for which he has prepared himself. Because of his rival Pyrrhus's submission to his own passion (which will be presently addressed in detail), an enraged Hermione requests that Oreste assassinate Pyrrhus to prove his love for her. Once again, the ambassador must choose between love and duty. And while he has no reluctance towards betraying his ambassadorship by kidnapping Hermione, he hesitates when confronted with regicide:

ORESTE

Vengeons-nous, j'y consens, mais par d'autres chemins :

Soyons ses ennemis, et non ses assassins ;

Faisons de sa ruine une juste conquête.

Quoi ! pour réponse aux Grecs porterai-je sa tête ?

Et n'ai-je pris sur moi le soin de tout l'État,

Que pour m'en acquitter par un assassinat ?

Souffrez, au nom des dieux, que la Grèce s'explique,

Et qu'il meure chargé de la haine publique.

Souvenez-vous qu'il règne, et qu'un front couronné…

HERMIONE

Ne vous suffit-il pas que je l'ai condamné ?

Ne vous suffit-il pas que ma gloire offensée

Demande une victime à moi seule adressée ;

Qu'Hermione est le prix d'un tyran opprimé;

Que je le hais ; enfin, Seigneur, que je l'aimai? (IV.iii 1179-92)

Pyrrhus may be a traitor to Hermione, but he is still a king, and it is not lawful to kill a legitimate monarch, even when his actions are unjust.[118] Oreste remembers for a moment that he is the son of a king and the representative of many kings. He does not want to be a public assassin, and, more importantly, he knows that Pyrrhus' death (as opposed to his own), would have serious consequences, as he states in verse 1206: "Vous voulez par mes mains renverser un empire?". Hermione's confidante Cléone later validates the nature of his hesitation in Act V Scene II:

Oreste vous adore.

Mais de mille remords son esprit combattu

Croit tantôt son amour et tantôt sa vertu.

Il respecte en Pyrrhus l'honneur du diadème ;

Il respecte en Pyrrhus Achille et Pyrrhus même. (V.ii 1462b-66)

Unmoved by Oreste's dilemma, Hermione contends that Pyrrhus is a tyrant, and that his infidelity to his marriage promise is sufficient to condemn him.[119] And when she challenges Oreste's devotion to her, threatening to do the deed herself and put her own life at risk, eliminating any possibility of their union, Oreste concedes. Over the course of the play, he has repeatedly committed himself to pursuing Hermione at all costs, and this is his opportunity to prove himself faithful to his passion, which finally triumphs over his respect for natural law.

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[118] In the second book of *Les Six livres de la République*, Jean Bodin writes that it is not the right of a subject to attempt upon the life of a sovereign prince, even if his behavior is tyrannical: "Mais le prince est absolument souverain, comme sont les vrais Monarques de France, d'Espagne, d'Angleterre, d'Ecosse, d'Ethiopie, de Turquie, de Perse, de Moschovie desquels la puissance n'est point révoquée en doute, ni la souveraineté mespartie avec les sujets : en ce cas il n'appartient à pas un des sujets en particulier, ni à tous en général d'attenter à l'honneur, ni à la vie du Monarque, soit par voie de fait, soit par voie de justice, ores qu'il eût commis toutes les méchancetés , impiétés, et cruautés qu'on pourrait dire." (II.iv, 75)

[119] Hermione's position would be justified by John of Salisbury in the *Policraticus*, where he states that it is biblically justifiable to kill a public tyrant. (VIII.xx, 206-10)

According to Antoine Soare in his article "La triple mort de Pyrrhus ou *Andromaque* entre le baroque et le classicisme," it is a frequently overlooked detail in the action of *Andromaque* that Oreste does not actually kill Pyrrhus. Soare claims that many critics of the play accept Oreste's gallant declaration to Hermione in Act V Scene IIII: "Vous êtes servie" (1493) as evidence that he is responsible for the murder.[120] Yet upon closer examination of this scene, Oreste clearly states that the Greek soldiers killed Pyrrhus after he defiantly crowned Andromaque, and that, in spite of his ardor and intention, Oreste himself could not find a place to strike because his numerous compatriots surrounded their victim on all sides:

> Il expire ; et nos Grecs irrités
> Ont lavé dans son sang ses infidélités.
> Je vous l'avais promis ; et quoique mon courage
> Se fît de ce complot une funeste image,
> . . . . . .
> L'infidèle s'est vu partout envelopper,
> Et je n'ai pu trouver de place pour frapper. (V.iii 1495-98, 1515-16)

Oreste tries to claim ownership of Pyrrhus's death for himself and for Hermione, insisting that his passion inspired their action: "Mais c'est moi dont l'ardeur leur a servi d'exemple" (1529). But because Pyrrhus dies before Oreste could reach him, he is ultimately unable to communicate Hermione's vengeance.[121] This is why I agree with Soare that the true authorship of the

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[120] See Soare 140-41, where he provides a list of citations from the works of well-known scholars in which they [mis]name Oreste as Pyrrhus' assassin.

[121] In Act IV Scene IV, Hermione had insisted that Oreste assassinate Pyrrhus in her name, and not in the name of Greece (1267-68). Because "nos Grecs irrités" actually kill Pyrrhus, the criminality of regicide remains ambiguous. The Epirean king is attacked by enraged Greek soldiers, but Oreste, who had been chosen as the sole representative of the Greek coalition, does not touch Pyrrhus (despite his intentions). Thus Pyrrhus's murder could be interpreted by the Greek kings as an act of rebellion. This potentially problematic situation is further complicated because Pyrrhus had already relinquished his political body to Andromaque during the marriage ceremony, naming her as his sovereign. From this perspective, the Greeks could argue that they killed the physical body of a traitor, not a king.

assassination is an essential element of the play, especially in determining the effect of Oreste's submission to his passion on the tragic dénouement of *Andromaque*. He becomes a twice-failed ambassador – he has betrayed the Greeks and disappointed Hermione. And to add insult to injury, his "amante insensée" (1545) refuses to return with him to Sparta. Still in love with Pyrrhus, she recoils in disgust from this would-be killer, and runs away to kill herself on the king's mangled corpse. Oreste has nothing to show for all his efforts but the unearned title of murderer.

To conclude my analysis of Oreste, I would like to return to his initial dialogue with Pylade in Act I Scene I, where Oreste boldly declares that he will either make Hermione yield to his passion ("la fléchir"), steal her away ("l'enlever"), or die trying ("mourir à ses yeux"). At the end of *Andromaque*, his passion has reached none of these three goals. Hermione does not fall in love with Oreste: she dies still in love with Pyrrhus. Neither does he force her to leave with him: Hermione insists that she will stay in Epirus (1561-64), a decision that is made irrevocable by her suicide. Finally, Oreste does not succeed in dying: instead, he famously goes mad and has a vision of the Furies. He has renounced his subjectivity (in both a personal and a political sense, as an individual and an ambassador) to pursue Hermione. Ellen McClure characterizes him as: "reduced to his essence, a diplomat without an employer" (243). In his own words, Oreste no longer recognizes himself:

> Je suis, si je l'en crois, un traître, un assassin.
> Est-ce Pyrrhus qui meurt ? et suis-je Oreste enfin ?
> Quoi ? j'étouffe en mon cœur la raison qui m'éclaire,
> J'assassine à regret un roi que je révère,

Je viole en un jour les droits des souverains,

Ceux des ambassadeurs, et tous ceux des humains. (V.iv 1567-72)

After he learns that his only reason for living is dead, his own reason evaporates. Overcome by self-loathing, he desires to join Pyrrhus and Hermione in death, but instead he has a baroque vision of Hermione embracing Pyrrhus's mutilated body, reinforcing his inability to make her return his love, even after he has sacrificed his honor and his sanity for her:

Où sont ces deux amants ? Pour couronner ma joie,

Dans leur sang, dans le mien, il faut que je me noie ;

L'un et l'autre en mourant je les veux regarder :

Réunissons trois cœurs qui n'ont pu s'accorder…

. . . . . .

Quoi, Pyrrhus, je te rencontre encore ?

Trouverai-je partout un rival que j'abhorre ?

Percé de tant de coups, comment t'es-tu sauvé ?

Tiens, tiens, voilà le coup que je t'ai réservé.

Mais que vois-je ? À mes yeux Hermione l'embrasse !

Elle vient l'arracher au coup qui le menace ? (V.v 1621-24, 1629-34)

Oreste's fantasy reenacts the failures he experiences during the play – he cannot kill Pyrrhus, he cannot win Hermione's love, and he cannot die. Although he tries to abandon his life to the "filles d'Enfer" (1637) like he had abandoned his fate to his passion in Act I, he quickly retracts this statement and opts to be tormented by his vision of a hateful Hermione:

Venez, à vos fureurs Oreste s'abandonne.

Mais non, retirez-vous, laissez faire Hermione :

L'ingrate mieux que vous saura me déchirer ;

Et je lui porte enfin mon cœur à dévorer. (V.v 1641-44)

Oreste is too dominated by his passion to accept death. Instead he is unceremoniously shoved onto a boat on his way back to Greece. Pylade speaks the final lines of the play, insisting that their fleet be well away from Epirus before his friend regains his senses:

Il perd le sentiment. Amis, le temps nous presse.

Ménageons les moments que ce transport nous laisse.

Sauvons-le. Nos efforts deviendraient impuissants

S'il reprenait ici sa rage avec ses sens. (V.v 1645-48)

Still under the influence of his psychotic delusion, Oreste is unable to decide for himself whether to stay or go, whether to live or die—Pylade makes that decision for him, further reinforcing Oreste's impotence for action.[122] As I hope it has become evident through this analysis, Oreste's passion affects no one but Oreste. Although he is a very present character onstage, he actually contributes very little to the tragic action of *Andromaque*. For this reason, C.J. Gossip considers Oreste to be a quasi-comic character, comparing him to Molière's Alceste:

> Of course, it would be going much too far to call Oreste comic throughout the play. But then few comic protagonists, as distinct from the figures of farce, ever are…Oreste's one and only concern is love. In itself, passion is not funny; his obsessive pursuit of hopeless love, and the emotional suffering which he appears to both will on himself and enjoy, is. (Gossip 363)

[122] We are immediately reminded of Hérode in *La Marianne*, whose madness in the final scene of the play requires him to be carried offstage to have water thrown on his face, a humiliating and ridiculizing gesture.

While I do not agree that Oreste is funny (I concur more with Catherine Spencer[123] that his misfortune is evocative of pity), I believe that the ineffectiveness of his submission to passion provides an excellent basis for comparison to the passions of the king-character Pyrrhus, highlighting the importance of the latter's tragic function.

Whereas Oreste's obsessive love for Hermione, though moving in itself, is relatively inert in the development of the tragic action of *Andromaque*, Pyrrhus's unrequited love for the title character serves as the motor of the major events of the play. More specifically, the king of Epirus's vacillating submission to his physical body structures the tragedy: his initial transgression against his political body sets the plot in motion, his indecision builds suspense over the course of the play, and his death instigates a chain of tragic events that results in a total reversal of fortune.

Pyrrhus's passion is firstly responsible for summoning Oreste and triggering the action of *Andromaque*. If Pyrrhus were not keeping Astyanax alive in Epirus, Oreste would have never been sent as an ambassador! The king's rebellious behavior has alarmed the many-headed political body of "the Greeks," who feel threatened enough to formally express their discontent about his protection of Hector's son and his delay in marrying Hermione. Oreste explains the Greeks' sentiments to Pylade in Act I Scene I:

> J'entends de tous côtés qu'on menace Pyrrhus ;
> Toute la Grèce éclate en murmures confus ;
> On se plaint qu'oubliant son sang et sa promesse
> Il élève en sa cour l'ennemi de la Grèce,
> . . . . . .
> On dit que peu sensible aux charmes d'Hermione,

[123] See Spencer, *La tragédie du prince* 252.

Mon rival porte ailleurs son cœur et sa couronne ;

Ménélas, sans le croire, en paraît affligé,

Et se plaint d'un hymen si longtemps négligé. (I.i 67-70, 77-80)

Pyrrhus's choice to provide asylum for his captive in Epirus is met with collective disapproval ("de tous côtés") of the independently allied *poleis*, prompting their leaders to unite against him and send a single representative to negotiate the surrender of Astyanax, with Hermione as the token of his acquiescence. According to Roland Barthes, Pyrrhus's refusal to meet the Greeks' demands is indicative of his independence (a position with which Mitchell Greenberg agrees).[124] He is declaring himself as an individual sovereign by severing ties with his father and freeing Epirus from the bloody history of the Trojan War. This argument could potentially be supported by Le Bret, who plainly states in the first book of *De la souveraineté du roi* that a truly sovereign monarch is subject to no other power but God.[125] But I contend that Pyrrhus's protection of Astyanax is not a marker of sovereignty, for his "liberation" from the Greeks is inspired by his passion for Andromaque, i.e., his submission to his physical body. As Oreste observes to Hermione, an external power is influencing Pyrrhus's treatment of Hector's son: "Quelque autre puissance / lui fait du fils d'Hector embrasser la défense" (II.ii 513b-14). This "enfant rebelle" (237) may claim in Act I Scene II that he has the right to do as he wishes with his own captives, and that his resistance stems from his distaste at the idea of avenging the crimes of the father on his innocent child:

Mais à qui prétend-on que je le sacrifie ?

La Grèce a-t-elle encore quelque droit sur sa vie ?

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[124] See Barthes, *Sur Racine*, 84, and Greenberg, *Racine: From Ancient Myth to Tragic Modernity*, 55-56.

[125] *De la souveraineté du roi* I.iii: "Tenons donc pour chose très constant, que nos Rois ne reconnaissent aucun Supérieur que la Majesté Divine, et qu'ainsi on doit dire qu'ils sont pleinement Souverains" (11).

> Et seul de tous les Grecs ne m'est-il pas permis
>
> D'ordonner d'un captif que le sort m'a soumis ? (I.ii 181-84)

But the audience is not so naïve – they are aware that Pyrrhus is actually keeping Astyanax alive to serve his love for Andromaque. He is not taking the moral high road, for he needs the child as a vehicle to manipulate his mother.[126] Pyrrhus's rebellious actions can therefore be interpreted as detrimental to his sovereign status. He isolates Epirus from its allies and rejects peace (Hermione) in favor of a former enemy that has already been defeated and that can offer no support to his political body in return. These are not the actions of a king who keeps the well-being of his kingdom in mind above all things! Bodin and Le Bret agree that a monarch should faithfully uphold foreign alliances that benefit the state:[127]

> Et quant aux traités que les Rois font, ou avec leurs sujets, ou avec les étrangers, soit pour la paix, soit pour la liberté du commerce, soit pour contracter des alliances: il n'y a point de doute qu'ils doivent être observés, avec d'autant plus de fidélité, qu'ils sont plus universels, qu'ils regardent le corps de l'Etat. (Le Bret IV.vii, 306)

Pylade describes Pyrrhus in the first scene of the play as: "un cœur si peu maître de lui" (120) whose erratic behavior cannot be anticipated – he is just as likely to wed Hermione out of spite as he is to violate his marriage promise to her. He may be sovereign over Epirus, but he is not master of himself, as Éléonore M. Zimmermann confirms:

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[126] In this, Pyrrhus has a clear advantage in his seduction of Andromaque over Oreste's pursuit of Hermione: neither of the female characters responds to their love, but Pyrrhus has a bargaining chip. Whereas Oreste can only offer himself to Hermione, Pyrrhus has the power to end Astyanax's life and sever Andromaque's only living memory of her beloved husband. On the other hand, he can also create a political body for Astyanax, allowing Hector to live on. This weakens Andromaque's resolve to reject Pyrrhus, for the absent character of Astyanax reincarnates her love for Hector just as he represents the Greek's hatred of him.

[127] Le Bret, *De la souveraineté du roi* IV.vii. See also Bodin, *Les Six livres de la République*, V.v-vi.

> Pyrrhus, souverain absolu en Epire, jouit d'une liberté d'autant plus totale qu'il se dégage aussi des obligations que pourrait lui imposer son passé. Pourtant il n'est pas vraiment libre : il troque sa liberté contre une dépendance entière d'Andromaque qu'il est incapable, malgré des efforts réitérés, de secouer. (26)

This tension of *corps physique* and *corps politique* creates a catalyst for the tragic action that will follow.

If Pyrrhus's initial act of submission to his passions (withholding Astyanax from the Greeks) is responsible for the *mise en scène* of *Andromaque*, then his subsequent vacillations between sovereign and suitor are used to build suspense leading up to the tragic dénouement.[128] Since he is the only character with political decision-making power, the future of the other three main characters (Oreste, Hermione, and Andromaque) depends on Pyrrhus's actions. Will he honor his political marriage to Hermione and surrender Astyanax, or will he give in to his love for Andromaque and send Hermione home? Pyrrhus wavers between these two options, keeping the spectator guessing until the end of the fourth act. At first, he is firmly resolved to protect Astyanax's life at all costs, telling Oreste in Act I Scene II: "L'Epire sauvera ce que Troie a sauvé" (220), and swearing to Andromaque in Act I Scene IV that he will never yield to the Greeks, even if it means burning his own palace to the ground:

> Madame, mes refus ont prévenu vos larmes,
> Tous les Grecs m'ont déjà menacé de leurs armes ;
> Mais dussent-ils encore, en repassant les eaux,
> Demander votre fils avec mille vaisseaux ;
> Coûtât-il tout le sang qu'Hélène a fait répandre ;

[128] In this, Pyrrhus's character functions as a *préparatif* as defined by D'Aubignac, as did "Le Roi" in Viau's *Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* (See Chapter 2, page 78 of the present study).

Dussé-je après dix ans voir mon palais en cendre,

Je ne balance point, je vole à son secours :

Je défendrai sa vie aux dépens de mes jours. (I.iv 281-88)

But when Andromaque is unwilling to give Pyrrhus her love in exchange for her son's life, denouncing such blackmail as "un-kingly",[129] Pyrrhus's loyalty quickly shifts back to the Greeks. He abandons his role as a besotted lover and decides that he will hate her instead.[130] The same king who was so repulsed at the idea of punishing the son for the crimes of the father suddenly has no problem sacrificing Astyanax's life to punish his mother's ingratitude:

Songez-y bien : il faut désormais que mon cœur,

S'il n'aime avec transport, haïsse avec fureur.

Je n'épargnerai rien dans ma juste colère :

Le fils me répondra des mépris de la mère ;

La Grèce me demande, et je ne prétends pas

Mettre toujours ma gloire à sauver des ingrats. (I.iv 367-72)

For a moment, Pyrrhus seems to remember his *gloire*, which had which had obviously been left by the wayside while he was promising to rebuild the walls of Troy and adopt the son of a foreign enemy as his heir (325-32). It appears that Andromaque's rejection, by mocking his foolish attempt at *galanterie*, has made Pyrrhus newly aware of his political obligations, pushing

[129] It is interesting to note that, just as Hermione tries to re-focus Oreste's attention on his ambassadorship in Act II Scene II, Andromaque criticizes Pyrrhus for attempting to earn her love by refusing the Greeks. "Seigneur, que faites-vous, et que dira la Grèce ? / Faut-il qu'un si grand cœur montre tant de faiblesse ? / Voulez-vous qu'un dessein si beau, si généreux, / Passe pour le transport d'un esprit amoureux ?" (I.iv 297-300). She wants desperately for him to save Astyanax, but in order for it to be a noble and heroic gesture that is worthy of the son of Achilles, he must ask for nothing in return. This discourse is repeated in Act III Scene VI, where she laments to Pyrrhus that she had expected more merciful treatment from such a magnanimous king (933-46).

[130] Like Hérode in Tristan's *La Marianne*, Pyrrhus' adoration immediately morphs into violent rage when his beloved rejects him.

him to declare to Oreste in Act II Scene IV that he will wed Hermione and deliver Astyanax to the Greeks:

> Je vous cherchais, Seigneur. Un peu de violence
> M'a fait de vos raisons combattre la puissance,
> Je l'avoue ; et depuis que je vous ai quitté,
> J'en ai senti la force et connu l'équité.
> J'ai songé, comme vous, qu'à la Grèce, à mon père,
> A moi-même, en un mot, je devenais contraire ;
> Que je relevais Troie, et rendais imparfait
> Tout ce qu'a fait Achille et tout ce que j'ai fait.
> Je ne condamne plus un courroux légitime,
> Et l'on vous va, Seigneur, livrer votre victime. (II.iv 605-14)

Pyrrhus dismisses his passion as "un peu de violence" that made him forget himself, but he claims to have overcome it to honor his alliance (to Oreste's chagrin and Hermione's delight). The problem with this seeming recognition of sovereign duty is that Pyrrhus is not being honest. As Jean Rohou states in his analysis of *Andromaque*: "Sa fierté est intense quand il se croit redevenu lui-même. Mais on comprend aussitôt qu'il ne fait que passer de l'aliénation de la passion asservie à celle de la passion dépitée" (Rohou 53). His physical body is still stronger than his political body, as will become evident in the following scene.

Oreste indirectly foreshadows Pyrrhus's dilemma in Act II Scene II, where he warns Hermione that love is not meant to be kept hidden, and that repressed passions will only erupt more violently: "les feux mal couverts n'en éclatent que mieux" (576). This eruption is what happens to Pyrrhus in Act II Scene V, when he is challenged by his confidant about the sincerity

of his decision to forsake Andromaque and marry Hermione. More than any other scene in *Andromaque*, this dialogue between Pyrrhus and Phoenix highlights the struggle between *corps physique* and *corps politique*. Phoenix congratulates the king for having mastered himself, and together they acknowledge the disastrous political repercussions that have been avoided by Pyrrhus's return to reason:

PHOENIX

Ah ! je vous reconnais ; et ce juste courroux,

Ainsi qu'à tous les Grecs, Seigneur, vous rend à vous.

Ce n'est plus le jouet d'une flamme servile :

C'est Pyrrhus, c'est le fils et le rival d'Achille,

Que la gloire à la fin ramène sous ses lois,

Qui triomphe de Troie une seconde fois.

PYRRHUS

Dis plutôt qu'aujourd'hui commence ma victoire.

D'aujourd'hui seulement je jouis de ma gloire ;

Et mon cœur, aussi fier que tu l'as vu soumis,

Croit avoir en l'amour vaincu mille ennemis.

Considère, Phoenix, les troubles que j'évite,

Quelle foule de maux l'amour traîne à sa suite,

Que d'amis, de devoirs j'allais sacrifier,

Quels périls… Un regard m'eût tout fait oublier.

Tous les Grecs conjurés fondaient sur un rebelle.

Je trouvais du plaisir à me perdre pour elle. (II.v 627-42)

Armed with this new perspective of [near]hindsight, Pyrrhus admits that choosing Andromaque would have meant sacrificing his *devoirs*, losing his allies, and putting his kingdom in danger. By renouncing his passion, he regains his sovereign status by prioritizing what is best for his subjects. However, his victory over love is sadly short-lived. Evidence of his repressed desire begins to leak through his façade of self-control, and Phoenix cannot help but notice troubling indications in his discourse. For example, although Pyrrhus claims that he no longer loves Andromaque, he cannot stop talking about her:

PYRRHUS

Trop de haine sépare Andromaque et Pyrrhus.

PHOENIX

Commencez, donc, Seigneur, à ne m'en parler plus. (II.v 663-64)

Pyrrhus wonders if Andromaque will be jealous when he marries Hermione:

Crois-tu, si je l'épouse,

Qu'Andromaque en son cœur n'en sera pas jalouse ? (II.v 669b-70)

And he wants to see her again (just to revel in his hatred, of course):

PYRRHUS

Retournons-y. Je veux la braver à sa vue,

Et donner à ma haine une libre étendue.

Viens voir tous ses attraits, Phoenix, humiliés.

Allons.

PHOENIX

Allez, Seigneur, vous jeter à ses pieds. (II.v 677-80)

In short, Pyrrhus is reasoning like a schoolboy, and as Phoenix's sarcastic response suggests, his "return to himself" is unconvincing. This scene heightens the spectator's anticipation, since it becomes apparent that Pyrrhus's position is not solid, and that his physical body still holds sway over his political body.

When Pyrrhus (looking for Hermione) encounters a weeping Andromaque in Act III Scene VI, his determination to act in accordance with his political body only lasts until he can send Phoenix offstage.[131] As soon as he is alone with Andromaque, he reveals his true self, imploring her to reconsider his offer: "il faut ou périr ou régner" (968). And when she finally agrees to marry him, Pyrrhus is euphoric. He changes his mind again, and this time with minimal regret and no hesitation. He completely casts aside his political body. It could even be argued that he forgets that he is anyone other than Andromaque's lover and Astyanax's guardian. Andromaque's confidant Céphise characterizes Pyrrhus as a man who does not remember his father: "qui ne se souvient plus qu'Achille était son père" (III.viii 990). In *De l'usage des passions* (1641), Jean-François Senault would consider such amnesia to be an effect of the passion of *extase*, as Ehsan Ahmed summarizes in his 2002 article:

> In the case of lovers, *Extase* produces a lack of self-control that opens them up to vulnerability and results in an enslavement to the beloved…The lover identifies himself so completely with the beloved that he takes on her being. (Ahmed 277)

Pyrrhus disassociates himself from his past, and absolves himself of his responsibility to Hermione in Act IV Scene V, where he reminds her that their engagement was a result of their

[131] Without his confidant present, Pyrrhus can speak the truth about his feelings. Phoenix functions as the accountability partner for Pyrrhus's political body: by sending Phoenix away, he is freeing his physical body. He repeats this action at the end of Act IV, sending Phoenix to guard Astyanax so that he is not present for the marriage ceremony. See also Soare 163.

fathers' alliance and not of their own desires. He had hoped to develop feelings for Hermione over time, but Andromaque stole his heart, and he has no choice but to marry her:

Un autre vous dirait que dans les champs troyens
Nos deux pères sans nous formèrent ces liens,
Et que sans consulter ni mon choix ni le vôtre,
Nous fûmes sans amour engagés l'un à l'autre ;
. . . . . .
Je vous reçus en reine, et jusques à ce jour
J'ai cru que mes serments me tiendraient lieu d'amour.
Mais cet amour l'emporte, et par un coup funeste,
Andromaque m'arrache un cœur qu'elle déteste.
L'un par l'autre entraînés, nous courons à l'autel
Nous jurer malgré nous un amour immortel.
Après cela, Madame, éclatez contre un traître,
Qui l'est avec douleur, et qui pourtant veut l'être. (IV.v 1283-86, 1295-1302)

Pyrrhus is a self-avowed happy traitor to his political body. He does not see the deadly anger seething in Hermione as she harangues him for his wavering fidelity:

Quoi ? sans que ni serment ni devoir vous retienne,
Rechercher une Grecque, amant d'une Troyenne ?
Me quitter, me reprendre, et retourner encor
De la fille d'Hélène à la veuve d'Hector,
Couronner tour à tour l'esclave et la princesse,
Immoler Troie aux Grecs, au fils d'Hector la Grèce ? (IV.v 1317-22)

But Hermione's words are lost on Pyrrhus, who by this point is no longer listening to her. He does not see his crime or his vulnerability; in fact, he sees nothing but Andromaque. He does not heed Phoenix's warnings about the threat of vengeance from Oreste and Hermione (1387-92). He sends all of his royal guards to watch over Astyanax (the new future agent of his political body) and leaves his own body unprotected.[132] Hermione's confidant Cléone, who describes Pyrrhus at his marriage ceremony as: "le plus fier des mortels, et le plus amoureux" (1432), best summarizes the king's state of blissful unawareness in Act V Scene II:

> Madame, il ne voit rien. Son salut et sa gloire
> Semblent être avec vous sortis de sa mémoire.
> Sans songer qui le suit, ennemis ou sujets,
> Il poursuit seulement ses amoureux projets (V.ii 1449-52)

Pyrrhus's physical body is triumphant in its victory over his political body, and the fulfillment of his desire has given him tunnel vision. He will not see an attack coming!

Pyrrhus's total blind submission to his passion for Andromaque is reminiscent of Oreste's declaration in the first scene of the play: "je me livre en aveugle au destin qui m'entraîne". But as I mentioned at the beginning of this comparative analysis, there is an essential difference that distinguishes Pyrrhus from Oreste –a king cannot abandon himself to his personal desires without consequence! Pyrrhus's betrayal of his political body leads to his death on the wedding altar. As I have already discussed in my analysis of Oreste, it is ultimately the king's passion (not Oreste's or Hermione's) that prompts the Greeks to slay him. Claude Abraham agrees that Pyrrhus is killed by his allies for treason, and not by his spurned fiancée for infidelity:

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[132] According to Senault in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain* (IV.iii, 199), only a fully sovereign monarch should be able to fearlessly walk among his subjects without bodyguards. His *éclat*, which communicates his sovereignty in his face and through his posture, should serve as sufficient protection against attack or revolt. However, in the case of Pyrrhus, who is being ruled by his physical body, no such security exists.

"Hermione did not dictate Pyrrhus' death, Oreste did not command or execute the sentence. The only passion involved was that of a king executed by his allies for treason" (Abraham 57). Mitchell Greenberg presents a similar argument, stating it is Pyrrhus' forgetfulness of himself (i.e., his political self) that incites his allies to assassinate him: "Pyrrhus, lost to his fantasy vision, falls victim to the outrage of the Greeks, thus offering us the tragic proof that if love is blind, this blindness is also deadly" (Greenberg 73). And Pyrrhus's transgression against his political body is not only responsible for the death of his physical body – his murder creates a domino effect of tragic events, for it compels Hermione to suicide, which in turn leads to the madness of Oreste. More importantly, Pyrrhus's passion has overturned the entire dynamic of the Greek city-states by his voluntary relinquishment of his sovereignty to Andromaque in the moments prior to his death. During the marriage ceremony, he verbally transfers his sovereign authority to her. It is an interesting choice by Racine that Oreste (who functions as the messenger in Act V Scene III) *cites* Pyrrhus directly instead of paraphrasing him or simply describing his actions.[133] The dramaturge wants to make sure that the audience hears the exact words that were spoken to Andromaque before the people as Pyrrhus placed his own crown on her head:

> Enfin, avec transport prenant son diadème,
> Sur le front d'Andromaque il l'a posé lui-même :
> « Je vous donne, a-t-il dit, ma couronne et ma foi !
> Andromaque, régnez sur l'Épire et sur moi,
> Je voue à votre fils une amitié de père ;
> J'en atteste les dieux, je le jure à sa mère :

[133] Racine will rely on this technique again in the final scene of *Iphigénie*, where Ulysse cites the oracle Calchas, who is citing the gods.

Pour tous mes ennemis je déclare les siens,

Et je le reconnais pour le roi des Troyens. » (V.iii 1505-12)

He bestows his political body upon her in a sacred ceremony, and his subjects accept her as queen.[134] The marriage is never consummated, but it is enough to inspire the people to obey her. After Pyrrhus's death, his widow becomes the official sovereign in Epirus. The king has left no legitimate heir that the audience is aware of, and Astyanax is still a child. Andromaque finds herself in a unique position of female sovereignty similar to that of Cléopâtre in Corneille's *Rodogune*. In an unexpected turn of events, the Greeks must flee Epirus immediately to escape the new queen regent's vengeance of her murdered husband:

Il faut partir, Seigneur. Sortons de ce palais,

Ou bien résolvons-nous de n'en sortir jamais.

Nos Grecs pour un moment en défendent la porte ;

Tout le peuple assemblé nous poursuit à main-forte ;

Aux ordres d'Andromaque ici tout est soumis,

Ils la traitent en reine, et nous comme ennemis.

Andromaque elle-même, à Pyrrhus si rebelle,

Lui rend tous les devoirs d'une veuve fidèle,

Commande qu'on le venge, et peut-être sur nous

Veut venger Troie encore et son premier époux. (V.v 1583-92)

The spectator, having been privy to Andromaque's private conversations with Céphise, knows that Pylade's biggest fear (expressed in verses 1591-92) is unfounded. Unlike Corneille's

[134] The people of Epirus are already sympathetic towards Andromaque before Pyrrhus's death, as Cléone describes to Hermione in Act V Scene II: "Andromaque, au travers de mille cris de joie, / Porte jusqu'aux autels le souvenir de Troie" (1437-38). Racine never explains to the audience why they love her, but he introduces the idea of Epirus's public support before Andromaque legally takes over, making the end of the play slightly less *invraisemblable*.

Cléopâtre, Andromaque has no political ambitions. She never wanted to be queen of Epirus! Throughout the play, her sole objective has been to remain faithful to Hector and honor his memory by ensuring the safety of Astyanax. She was willing to sacrifice her own life to accomplish this goal (a selfless attitude that earns the admiration of the audience), but vengeance was not part of her plan. On the contrary, she explicitly forbids Céphise in Act IV Scene I to instruct Astyanax to rise up and avenge his father after her intended suicide. She wants him to recognize and appreciate his ancestors, "Qu'il ait de ses aïeux un souvenir modeste" (IV.i 1121), but she does not want him to continue their war. He is all that remains of the blood of Troy, but Troy is gone. Or at least it was gone, until the king of Epirus fell in love. With Pyrrhus dead and his sovereignty legitimately in the hands of his Trojan widow and her son, as Timothy Reiss observes: "We can indeed see that at the end of the play Epirus has actually become Troy" (Reiss 44). Now Andromaque has the power to avenge Hector if she decides to do so. Not only has Pyrrhus's passion ended a hard-won dynasty, but it has also potentially negated the entire Trojan War.

Curiosity Killed the King: *Mithridate* (1673)

Le vrai moyen d'être trompé, c'est de se croire plus fin que les autres.

–François de La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes* (1664)

The next passionate Racinian king-character I would like to examine is the eponymous monarch from the historical tragedy *Mithridate*, which was first performed in 1672 (the same year that the dramaturge was accepted into the Académie Française) and published in 1673. Racine was at the height of his popularity, as Alain Viala notes: "*Mithridate*, dont le succès ne se démentit pas ensuite, correspond donc au moment où Racine atteint l'apogée de sa gloire" (443). The play is reputed to have been a favorite of Louis XIV, although it is much less frequently

performed by contemporary theater troupes than other Racinian tragedies, and is not typically considered by modern critics to be among Racine's most notable works. This is most likely because *Mithridate* is not characteristically "Racinian" in the sense that its characters are not all defenseless victims of consuming passions and cruel destiny like in *Andromaque* or *Phèdre*. On the contrary, Raymond Picard observes: "Les personnages y sont toujours maîtres d'eux-mêmes, sinon de leur bonheur" (595). Picard contends that the characters in *Mithridate* generally possess a stronger sense of *volonté*, and that fate and destiny play a less important role in the action than the individual decisions of the characters themselves. Such a description could explain why this play has been dubbed the most Cornelian of Racine's tragedies.[135] Historically, the play's release corresponds with the Franco-Dutch War (1672-78), and its dense military subject matter, which includes detailed secondhand descriptions of combat and a 100+ verse monologue by Mithridate about his projected invasion of Rome, would have been more relevant to public interest at the time. As Sylvaine Guyot remarks, Racine's portrayal of the final moments of an aging, defeated, violent Oriental tyrant creates a flattering contrast with the glorious image of Louis XIV's triumphant return from military campaigns in Holland:

> En pleine campagne d'éloges dédiés au roi revenu triomphant, l'ambivalent monarque de Pont fournit un contre-exemple d'emportement et d'imprévoyance (tout à sa jalousie, il se laisse surprendre par l'armée romaine) qui célèbre par contraste la tempérance de Louis XIV. (Guyot 648)

Mithridate coincides with a high point both in the artistic career of Racine and in the political career of Louis XIV. It also provides a very unique representation of the sovereign double body in the person of the king-character.

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[135] As indicated by Sylvaine Guyot in her introduction to *Mithridate*, contained in the 2013 edition of Racine's *Théâtre complet*: "Mithridate a en effet souvent été présenté comme la pièce la plus cornélienne de l'œuvre racinienne" (650).

Racine claims in his *Préface* that the death of Mithridate is "l'action de ma tragédie" (Guyot/Viala 654). This is true in a dual sense because the action begins and ends with the death of the king. The play opens with the unfortunate news that Mithridate, longtime ruler of Pont and sworn enemy of the Roman Empire, has been killed in battle against Pompée. In the wake of his death, his two sons, Pharnace (a treacherous Roman sympathizer) and Xipharès (a courageous warrior) have come to the royal palace of Nymphée to declare their love for Mithridate's intended queen Monime.[136] They have inherited different kingdoms from their father, and Xipharès does not contest his older brother's hereditary right to the throne of Pont, but he refuses to acknowledge Pharnace's claim to Monime's hand in marriage. According to Xipharès, he has loved Monime since before his father and his brother ever saw her, which he feels entitles him with a sort of *droit d'aînesse*. Monime, who has resigned herself to marry Mithridate and honor the wishes of her dead father, reluctantly admits that she loves Xipharès, just in time to receive the news that her fiancé is still alive and is sailing home to marry her. The rival brothers are now guilty of treason against their father! Mithridate, no stranger to deception, is immediately suspicious of his sons' presence in Nymphée. But he is not solely focused on Monime – he is equally determined to avenge his humiliating defeat by the Romans, and, in a monologue of epic proportions, he unveils an intricate strategy to invade the city of Rome and destroy his enemies by striking their vulnerable center. Since Mithridate's forces are depleted, this plan requires an alliance with the Parthians, and Pharnace must conveniently leave immediately to marry a Parthian princess, while Xipharès will accompany his father to Rome.

[136] Monime's character is described on the cast list as "accordée avec Mithridate, et déjà déclarée reine" (Guyot/Viala 656). She is not married to the king, but she wears a visible token of his intention described as a "marque souveraine" (232) and a "diadème" (56), and alternately represented as either a crown, ribbon, or sash, that elevates her social status to that of unofficial queen. The diadem accords her no political power, however, and signifies the king's possession of her as an "esclave couronnée" (255). Historically, Mithridate and Monime were unhappily married, but Racine writes her as a fiancée to respect bienséances, so that her romance with Xipharès is not adulterous or immoral. We have already encountered a similar situation in Corneille's *Rodogune* (Chapter 2, 152).

Pharnace resists his father's commands, denouncing them as the last desperate efforts of a conquered old man. Mithridate promptly has him arrested, accusing him of having secret dealings with the Romans and of his criminal pursuit of Monime. But as a parting shot to his favored brother, Pharnace reveals to Mithridate that Xipharès also loves Monime, and that she loves him in return. Disturbed by the possibility of his faithful son's treachery, Mithridate tests Pharnace's accusation by tricking Monime into admitting her true feelings. When he learns that she and Xipharès are in love, Mithridate is overcome with jealousy (a sentiment which is further exacerbated when Monime, offended by his deception, refuses to marry him). He orders all of Xipharès's loyal soldiers sent away from Nymphée, and he sends a bottle of poison to Monime, which she accepts gratefully. However, the king's vengeance is interrupted by the surprise arrival of the Romans, led by Pharnace! Mithridate rushes offstage to fight his last doomed battle. With the enemy closing in around him from all sides, Mithridate tries unsuccessfully to kill himself with poison, then fights the Romans valiantly until their impending victory prompts him to mortally wound himself with his sword. As his life ebbs away, he is saved by the return of Xipharès at the head of his troops, who comes from behind to rout the Romans.[137] In his final moments, Mithridate recognizes his own error and sends Arbate to stop Monime from taking the poison. And as a reward for his son's fidelity, Mithridate unites Xipharès with Monime before expiring onstage.

Before undertaking an analysis of the evolution of Mithridate's sovereign status in Racine's tragedy, it is important to understand that this monarch is not initially presented as a virtuous Occidental king. In this, Racine stays true to history – like Herod the Great,[138] Mithridates VI of Pontus is well documented as a violent and ruthless (though successful) ruler.

[137] The battle sequence and Mithridate's suicide attempts are recounted secondhand by the royal counselor Arbate in Act V Scene IV.
[138] See Chapter 2, page 82 of the present study.

He is most famously known for having coined the practice of mithridatism, or gradually immunizing oneself to poison by ingesting progressively larger doses over a period of time. History's most enduring memory of Mithridates is, in a sense, that he trusted no one close to him. In his *Préface*, Racine claims to have achieved a realistic portrait of Mithridate's primary characteristics, which are not all positive qualities:

> J'y ai inséré [dans ma tragédie] tout ce qui pouvait mettre à jour les mœurs et les sentiments de ce prince: je veux dire sa haine violente contre les Romains, son grand courage, sa finesse, sa dissimulation, et enfin cette jalousie qui lui était si naturelle, et qui a tant de fois coûté la vie à ses maîtresses. (Guyot/Viala 653)

Racine succeeds in establishing a tyrannical reputation for his king-character prior to his onstage début through numerous testimonies in the first act of *Mithridate*, while he is presumed dead. In Act I Scene I, Xipharès laments to Arbate that his father's love for Monime was not honorable. Whereas Xipharès respects Monime, Mithridate had simply wanted her as part of his harem:

> Il la vit. Mais au lieu d'offrir à ses beautés
> Un hymen, et des vœux dignes d'être écoutés,
> Il crut que sans prétendre une plus haute gloire
> Elle lui céderait une indigne victoire.
> Tu sais par quels efforts il tenta sa vertu,
> Et que lassé d'avoir vainement combattu,
> Absent, mais toujours plein de son amour extrême,
> Il lui fit par tes mains porter son diadème. (I.i 49-56)

The king had tried to seduce her before deciding to marry her, and he had only presented her with his diadem after his sexual advances had been rebuffed. Immediately, through Xipharès's

account, the spectator associates Mithridate's affection for Monime with the desires of the physical body. Xipharès proceeds to tell Arbate that while he had sincerely tried to forget Monime out of respect for his father (and rejection of his mother),[139] he could not help but fear for his beloved's life because of the king's infamous treatment of his former mistresses:

> Que dis-je ? en ce malheur je tremblai pour ses jours,
>
> Je redoutai du roi les cruelles amours.
>
> Tu sais combien de fois ses jalouses tendresses
>
> Ont pris soin d'assurer la mort de ses maîtresses. (I.i 85-88)

Not only is Mithridate portrayed as a sexual predator, but he has also killed multiple women out of jealousy. Furthermore, he has murdered his own children. In Act I Scene V, when Pharnace and Xipharès react to the news that their father is still alive, Pharnace warns that their biological connection to Mithridate will not save them from his wrath:

> Mithridate revient, peut-être inexorable ;
>
> Plus il est malheureux, plus il est redoutable.
>
> Le péril est pressant plus que vous ne pensez.
>
> Nous sommes criminels, et vous le connaissez ;
>
> Rarement l'amitié désarme sa colère,
>
> Ses propres fils n'on point de juge plus sévère,
>
> Et nous l'avons vu même à ses cruels soupçons
>
> Sacrifier deux fils pour de moindres raisons.
>
> Craignons pour vous, pour moi, pour la reine elle-même :
>
> Je la plains d'autant plus que Mithridate l'aime.

[139] Xipharès mother Stratonice had betrayed Mithridate to the Romans, which traumatized Xipharès and made him doggedly loyal to his father in a constant attempt to disassociate himself from his treacherous mother (I.i 61-74).

Amant avec transport, mais jaloux sans retour,

Sa haine va toujours plus loin que son amour.

Ne vous assurez point sur l'amour qu'il vous porte :

Sa jalouse fureur n'en sera que plus forte. (I.v 343-56)

Pharnace does not believe that Mithridate's paternal love will overcome his jealous fury in their favor, which is why he recommends to Xipharès that they overthrow their father together and seek peace with Rome. As these citations from the first act indicate, Racine has succeeded in creating a negative image of Mithridate in his absence – the spectator has a preconceived notion of him as a fearsome tyrant before he has even stepped onstage![140]

And yet, although Racine clearly situates Mithridate as a violent lover and father, he is not portrayed as an ineffective king. He has just been defeated by Pompey, but this defeat comes in the wake of a lifetime of victories and an illustrious military and political career. Mithridate may be ferocious and morally corrupt, but he is not completely blinded by amorous passion like Pyrrhus in *Andromaque*. Love and jealousy have not yet made him lose sight of his sovereign rights and responsibilities. Raymond Picard agrees: "Dans son amour même, il reste ce roi indomptable, l'ennemi des Romains" (598). If anything, Mithridate's character closely resembles the misunderstood Bodinian tyrant as described in the second book of *Les Six livres de la République*. Bodin argues that in uncertain times such as revolution or restoration of territory (as would certainly apply to Mithridate's war against the expansion of the Roman empire), some violence can be necessary to the maintenance of power, and that a severe prince is sometimes better than a mild one:

[140] The establishment of Mithridate's reputation through the testimonies of other characters can be compared to the portrait of Cléopâtre in the first act of *Rodogune*. She is described as a wronged wife and a loving mother until she arrives onstage and proves this impression to be false. Similarly, Mithridate will have to fight against his description as a violent murderer to earn the audience's admiration.

> Et ceux-là [le peuple] s'abusent bien fort, qui vont louant, et adorant la bonté d'un Prince doux, gracieux, courtois, et simple: car telle simplicité sans prudence, est très dangereuse et pernicieuse en un Roi, et beaucoup plus à craindre que la cruauté d'un Prince sévère, chagrin, revêche, avare, et inaccessible. Et semble que nos pères anciens n'ont pas dit ce proverbe sans cause: De méchant homme bon Roi. (II.iv, 65)

In other words, it sometimes takes a tyrant to stand up to tyranny, and Racine singles out Mithridate's courage in his *Préface* (*supra*). Also, because of his status as a Middle-eastern ruler, Mithridate is held to a different standard of behavior. As the legendary nemesis of Rome, he is not expected to ascribe to western values. His dishonest war tactics, which Racine calls "finesse" and "dissimulation" in the *Préface*, are not wholly condemned. On the contrary, Pierre Ronzeaud argues that ruse, when employed in a Machiavellian sense for the greater good of the kingdom (*raison d'état*), can be considered as a legitimate military strategy, especially for an Oriental king![141] Sylvaine Guyot likewise states that: "Mithridate est depuis toujours un maître en dissimulation: la ruse relève de sa coutume" (81). Mithridate's keen use of artifice has undeniably kept him alive. When he arrives in the palace in Act II Scene II, he explains to his sons that he spread rumors of his own death in order to escape the Romans: "Vous avez cru des bruits que j'ai semés moi-même" (428). The king's trickery protects his physical body, but it ultimately endangers his political body, for his deception sets a poisonous chain of events in motion once it leaves the battlefield and enters the palace. Christian Biet observes: "En revenant sur scène par une surprise dûment concertée, Mithridate empoisonne la pièce et le cercle familial en rendant les conduites de tous fautives et traîtresses" (Biet 88). Pharnace was already a traitor,

[141] See Ronzeaud, "Entre Orient et Occident: poétique et politique de la ruse dans *Mithridate,*" 21. See also Viala, "Péril, conseil et secret d'état dans les tragédies romaines de Racine: Racine et Machiavel."

but Xipharès would have never dared to declare his love for Monime while his father was alive, nor would she have responded to him. The false death of the king perpetuates the need for further dissimulation by multiple characters, setting the stage for a tragic misunderstanding. Furthermore, I propose that it is Mithridate's deception of Monime in Act III Scene V, a ruse that is purely motivated by the king's passion rather than by his sovereign responsibility to protect his kingdom, that leads to his actual [second] death and secures the tragic *dénouement* of *Mithridate*. For when the seasoned warrior uses artifice to satisfy his curiosity and calm his personal fears, his heretofore-successful military strategy rebounds on him with tragic consequences.

As I have already mentioned in my summary, after Mithridate banishes Pharnace for treason and insubordination in the third act, the latter responds by vindictively telling his father that Xipharès and Monime are in love (III.ii 991-98). Mithridate does not want to believe it, but Pharnace's accusation rekindles a preexisting insecurity.[142] The king has already expressed to Arbate in Act II Scene III that he is afraid of having Xipharès as a rival,[143] because, unlike Pharnace, Xipharès would be a worthy and formidable adversary:

> Oui, je respire, Arbate, et ma joie est extrême.
> Je tremblais, je l'avoue, et pour un fils que j'aime,
> Et pour moi qui craignais de perdre un tel appui,
> Et d'avoir à combattre un rival tel que lui. (II.iii 511-14)

Mithridate does not want to lose his best ally. In spite of the merciless reputation that precedes him, he admits to having a "tendresse cachée" (468) for Xipharès – he has been won over by his

[142] In *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain*, Jean-François Senault considers insecurity to be one of the primary characteristics of a tyrant. Senault specifically mentions that a tyrant is afraid of the ambitions of his own offspring. (I.iii, 12)

[143] In this scene, Arbate lies to protect Xipharès, contending that he is only in Nymphée for political reasons. Arbate knows that Xipharès will not betray his father, so there is no point in revealing his love for Monime. Arbate is loyal to both father and son: he does not renounce Mithridate, but he defends Xipharès. My interpretation is that Arbate's serves the king's political body, of which he recognizes Xipharès as the legitimate heir.

son's bravery, his hatred of the Romans, and his continual effort to please his father and defy his mother's example. In view of Pharnace's sympathy towards Rome, Mithridate has overridden hereditary succession and named Xipharès his sole heir:

> Oui, mon fils, c'est vous seul sur qui je me repose,
> Vous seul qu'aux grands desseins que mon cœur se propose
> J'ai choisi dès longtemps pour digne compagnon,
> L'héritier de mon sceptre, et surtout de mon nom. (II.v 615-18)

Xipharès is the future agent of Mithridate's political body, and Mithridate needs him (and loves him!). But the king also loves Monime, and he covets her affections. In their first dialogue, when she reverently submits herself to his sovereign authority and the command of her father: "Seigneur, vous pouvez tout. Ceux par qui je respire / Vous ont cédé sur moi leur souverain empire" (II.iv 547-48), Mithridate informs her that her obedience is not sufficient:

> Et moi, tyran d'un cœur qui se refuse au mien,
> Même en vous possédant je ne vous devrai rien.
> Ah ! Madame, est-ce là de quoi me satisfaire ?
> Faut-il que désormais, renonçant à vous plaire,
> Je ne prétende plus qu'à vous tyranniser ? (II.iv 553-57)

In his own words, forcing Monime to marry him out of obligation would make him a *tyran d'exercice*. He wants her love. And when he suspects that she might have given her heart to someone else, he cannot stand the uncertainty. He worries that no one is sincerely faithful to him:

> Quoi ? de quelque côté que je tourne la vue,
> La foi de tous les cœurs est pour moi disparue ?

Tout m'abandonne ailleurs, tout me trahit ici !

Pharnace, amis, maîtresse, et toi, mon fils aussi ! (III.iv 1011-14)

Fearing betrayal from every direction, Mithridate feels an overwhelming need to know the truth,[144] and he decides in Act III Scene IV that he will lie to Monime in order to expose her true sentiments. It is important to notice that he feels no remorse about lying, as ruse has been established as a habitual recourse in his military strategy. On the contrary, Mithridate claims that this artifice is divinely inspired: "Le ciel en ce moment m'inspire un artifice" (1024). However, he fails to recognize that this particular deception is motivated by his own passions – love, jealousy, and fear – and by his inherent mistrust of his family circle. As Jean Dubu remarks in his 1998 article: "Ruse de guerre et manque de bonne foi au sein de la famille ou en amour doivent donc être distingués" (Dubu 262). There is arguably no political justification for the king-character's dissimulation in III.v. Monime has confirmed that she will marry him. Xipharès is preparing to go to Rome and fight in his name. And Pharnace's treason has already been punished (to Mithridate's present knowledge, anyway). Furthermore, the audience knows that the lovers have agreed never to see one another again. In Act II Scene VI, Monime admits her love to Xipharès for: "la première et la dernière fois" (678) because she fully intends to follow her "rigoureux devoir" (676) and marry Mithridate. She tells Xipharès quite plainly that she belongs to the king: "Je ne suis point à vous, je suis à votre père" (700). Xipharès agrees that only the king has the authority to take her away from him: "Et s'il faut qu'un rival la ravisse à ma foi, / Du moins, en expirant, ne la cédons qu'au roi" (II.vi 753-54). Mithridate's son and his bride are both submissive to his absolute power, and they choose to honor their respective duties in spite of their love for each other. So when Mithridate declares his intention to uncover the

[144] Michael O'Regan mentions in *The Mannerist Aesthetic: A Study of Racine's Mithridate* that the verb "savoir" is used more frequently in Mithridate than in any other of Racine's plays (38).

traitor by trickery: “Trompons qui nous trahit” (1031), he is lying to unveil a suspected act of treason against his physical body, not against his political body! His decision to deceive Monime is an act of submission to passions.

The ironic nature of Mithridate’s deception confirms its discordance with the king’s political body – in Act III Scene V, in order to make Monime admit her preference for Xipharès, Mithridate emphasizes the weakness of his own physical body. He laments to Monime that his recent military defeats have made him increasingly aware of his advanced age:

> Jusqu’ici la Fortune et la victoire mêmes
> Cachaient mes cheveux blancs sous trente diadèmes.
> Mais ce temps-là n’est plus. Je régnais, et je fuis.
> Mes ans se sont accrus, mes honneurs sont détruits,
> Et mon front, dépouillé d’un si noble avantage,
> Du temps qui l’a flétri laisse voir tout l’outrage. (III.v 1039-44)

He acknowledges that his physical body is expiring, and that a lifetime of victories cannot preserve him from mortality. Which is why Monime would do better to marry Xipharès, who represents the perpetuation of the king’s political body through succession:

> Je le répète encor : c’est un autre moi-même,
> Un fils victorieux, qui me chérit, que j’aime,
> L’ennemi des Romains, l’héritier et l’appui
> D’un empire et d’un nom qui va renaître en lui. (III.v 1067-70)

Although the audience has been forewarned that Mithridate is lying through his teeth in this scene, they cannot help but be struck by the logic of his proposition. If Xipharès were truly the future agent of the king’s political body and an extension of the sovereign power of Mithridate

himself, the proposed marriage between Xipharès and Monime would make perfect sense. As Richard E. Goodkin observes: "The 'poisoned gifts' of the king are the illusion of simplicity within the larger reality of duplicity" (Goodkin 210). Mithridate is ultimately twisting the reality of his son's succession to protect his own romantic interests, which makes his ruse seem futile and almost ridiculous. Despite the truth in Mithridate's words, his physical body is not yet willing to relinquish its hold on the political body in favor of Xipharès. Volker Schröder confirms: "Incapable d'assumer sa propre mort et d'entrer dès maintenant dans une logique de succession, il [Mithridate] n'est pas prêt à se dépouiller de ce qui lui tient à cœur pour le transmettre à son fils" (Schröder 154).

Monime's confidante Phoedime also indirectly highlights the un-kingliness of Mithridate's behavior. In Act IV Scene I, when Monime begins to suspect that she has been manipulated, Phoedime advises her to trust him. A king would never stoop to such a dishonorable means to extract information:

> Ah ! traitez-le, Madame, avec plus de justice :
> Un grand roi descend-il jusqu'à cet artifice ?
> A prendre ce détour qui l'aurait pu forcer ?
> Sans murmure à l'autel vous l'alliez devancer.
> Voulait-il perdre un fils qu'il aime avec tendresse ?
> Jusqu'ici les effets secondent sa promesse. (IV.i 1147-52)

Phoedime reminds her mistress that Mithridate has no reason to mislead her. She was obediently preceding him to the altar when he interrupted her, and he would not have halted her progression unless he truly meant for her to marry Xipharès. Furthermore, for what purpose would a king seek to incriminate his favored son and proclaimed heir? According to Phoedime, Mithridate has

not yet upheld his promise to send Xipharès to her because both men are busy preparing for their departure for Rome. Clearly he has more pressing matters of state to attend to before he proves true to his word. But Monime is more perceptive than her companion. She had noticed the transformation in Mithridate's face when she finally admitted to him that she and Xipharès loved one another:

MITHRIDATE

Vous l'aimez ?

MONIME

Si le sort ne m'eût donnée à vous,

Mon bonheur dépendait de l'avoir pour époux.

Avant que votre amour m'eût envoyé ce gage,

Nous nous aimions…Seigneur, vous changez de visage ! (III.v 1109-12)

From the moment that he receives confirmation of his suspicions, Mithridate can no longer hide his disappointment and his mounting anger: his passion shows on his face and he momentarily breaks "character". After Monime's forced *aveu*, Mithridate tries to mask his surging emotions under a calm exterior while he contemplates his vengeance against the lovers: "Allons. Mais sans montrer un visage offensé, / Dissimulons encor, comme j'ai commencé" (III.vi 1125-26). But the dominance of his physical body is becoming more difficult to conceal. Xipharès, who knows his father well, can see right through his father's façade of paternal affection, as he warns Monime in Act IV Scene II:

Il feint, il me caresse et cache son dessein ;

Mais moi, qui dès l'enfance élevé dans son sein,

De tous ses mouvements ai trop d'intelligence,

J'ai lu dans ses regards sa prochaine vengeance.

Il presse, il fait partir tous ceux dont mon malheur

Pourrait à la révolte exciter la douleur.

De ses fausses bontés j'ai connu la contrainte.

Un mot même d'Arbate a confirmé ma crainte. (IV.ii 1189-96)

Xipharès, warned by Arbate, knows that he must flee immediately, for Mithridate is stealthily sending his support system away in preparation to execute him. Xipharès pleads with Monime to preserve her own life by trying to please the king and not further exciting his anger. But he finds that his formerly submissive princess is far less willing to be obedient. Mithridate's deception has incurred two major consequences – in his quest to undermine Xipharès's power over the army, the king is depriving his kingdom of its most valiant soldiers (a move worthy of Pyrrhus!). Also, Mithridate's dishonesty produces a major change in the behavior of Monime, which will lead the king to question his own sovereign authority.

When Monime realizes that Mithridate took advantage of her naivety in order to trap his own son, and that he plans to exact vengeance on Xipharès, she becomes disgusted by the king. Volker Schröder equates this abuse of sovereign power with rape, a position with which I agree: "Après avoir *volé* Monime à son fils, il va, par jalousie, la *violer*, en la forçant à avouer son amour pour Xipharès. C'est alors seulement que la reine passe de la soumission résignée à la rébellion désespérée" (Schröder 153). Armed with this disturbing revelation of Mithridate's character, Monime rejects Xipharès's insistence that she still marry him as they had agreed, abandoning her earlier resolve to remain loyal to her *devoir*:

MONIME

Quoi ? vous me demandez que j'épouse un barbare

Dont l'odieux amour pour jamais nous sépare ?

XIPHARÈS

Songez que ce matin, soumise à ses souhaits,

Vous deviez l'épouser et ne me voir jamais.

MONIME

Et connaissais-je alors toute sa barbarie ?

Ne voudriez-vous point qu'approuvant sa furie,

Après vous avoir vu tout percé de ses coups,

Je suivisse à l'autel un tyrannique époux ? (IV.ii 1251-58)

Mithridate may have been previously labeled as a tyrant by other characters, but this is the moment where he becomes tyrannical in the eyes of Monime. Whereas she would have conceded to marry a magnanimous warrior-king (even though she did not love him), she will not wed an infanticidal barbarian. Mithridate's disrespect for natural law liberates Monime from her duty to him – she no longer feels obligated to obey. When the king returns to Monime in Act IV Scene IV to escort her to the altar, he ambivalently dismisses his fallacious discourse without any explanation:

J'eus mes raisons alors ; oublions-les, Madame.

Ne songez maintenant qu'à répondre à ma flamme.

Songez que votre cœur est un bien qui m'est dû. (IV.iv 1279-81)

When she initially resists him, Mithridate contends that she is the one who has been treacherous by concealing feelings for Xipharès in her heart. He reminds her that he chose her from among a thousand princesses of higher birth, sacrificing valuable alliances to elevate her to a place of

honor, a "rang glorieux" (1291). He will pardon her treason, but in exchange he orders her to forget Xipharès and obey him:

> Profitez du moment que mon amour vous donne :
> Pour la dernière fois, venez, je vous l'ordonne.
> N'attirez point sur vous des périls superflus,
> Pour un fils insolent que vous ne verrez plus.
> Sans vous parer pour lui d'une foi qui m'est due,
> Perdez-en la mémoire, aussi bien que la vue :
> Et désormais sensible à ma seule bonté,
> Méritez le pardon qui vous est présenté. (IV.iv 1315-22)

The irony of this declaration is that Mithridate commands her to do exactly what she had already decided to do before he had intervened – to forget Xipharès and marry him. If the king had not meddled, she would have remained submissive. But now he has rendered Monime incapable of obedience: she can no longer repress the emotions that his ruse has forced her to recognize:

> Vous seul, Seigneur, vous seul, vous m'avez arrachée
> À cette obéissance où j'étais attachée ;
> Et ce fatal amour dont j'avais triomphé,
> Ce feu que dans l'oubli je croyais étouffé,
> Dont la cause à jamais s'éloignait de ma vue,
> Vos détours l'ont surpris, et m'en ont convaincue.
> Je vous l'ai confessé, je le dois soutenir.
> En vain vous en pourriez perdre le souvenir,

> Et cet aveu honteux, où vous m'avez forcée,
>
> Demeurera toujours présent à ma pensée. (IV.iv 1339-48)

She boldly declines his pardon, offering to accept the punishment for treason herself so that Xipharès's life can be spared. By refusing Mithridate's clemency, which we have already established in the first chapter of this study as being one of the primary markers of sovereignty,[145] Monime implies that he is no longer sovereign. Eléonore Zimmermann aptly summarizes Monime's evolution from "petite fille sage" (75) to rebel subject:

> En exposant traîtreusement l'amour refoulé de Monime pour Xipharès il [Mithridate] rend vain l'effort qu'elle faisait pour vivre selon les normes de conduite qu'elle s'était imposées. Lorsqu'il décide, en outre, de la forcer à l'épouser malgré tout, et de mettre à mort Xipharès, Mithridate, nous l'avons vu, perd pour Monime son masque de représentant de l'autorité légitime… Monime alors se révolte et refuse l'obéissance. (Zimmermann 74-75)

Monime's refusal brings Mithridate to a critical tipping point in his sovereign status. Faced with his military defeat by the Romans, the presumed betrayal of his two sons, and the failure of his amorous pursuits, the king must determine his future course of action. Will he decide to satisfy his passion at the expense of the demise of his future political body, or will he choose to forgive the secret infidelity that he never should have lied to discover? Mithridate confronts the consequences of his curiosity in a Cornelian-style monologue in Act IV Scene V, where, like *Cinna*'s Octave/Auguste, he vacillates between the two poles of his double body. The physical body speaks first – Mithridate (the ruthless Oriental tyrant) wants to punish his sons and Monime, as would be in keeping with his violent nature as described in the first act:

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[145] *Les Six livres de la République* I.ix, *Traité des Seigneuries* XIII, *De la souveraineté du roi* IV.vii, *Le monarque ou les devoirs du souverain* V.iv.

Qui suis-je ? Est-ce Monime ? Et suis-je Mithridate ?

Non, non, plus de pardon, plus d'amour pour l'ingrate.

Ma colère revient, et je me reconnois :

Immolons, en partant, trois ingrats à la fois. (IV.v 1383-86)

But he quickly reminds himself that avenging the offenses committed against his physical body would deprive him of an heir. His passion would be satisfied, but his hard-won dynasty would be destroyed, and there would be no hope for retaliation against Rome. The political body responds:

Mais quelle est ma fureur ? et qu'est-ce que je dis ?

Tu vas sacrifier…qui, malheureux ? Ton fils !

Un fils que Rome craint, qui peut venger son père ?

Pourquoi répandre un sang qui m'est si nécessaire ?

Ah ! Dans l'état funeste où ma chute m'a mis,

Est-ce que mon malheur m'a laissé trop d'amis ?

Songeons plutôt, songeons à gagner sa tendresse :

J'ai besoin d'un vengeur, et non d'une maîtresse.

Quoi ! ne vaut-il pas mieux, puisqu'il faut m'en priver,

La céder à ce fils que je veux conserver ?

Cédons-la. (IV.v 1393-1403a)

Mithridate realizes that at this point in his life, he needs a successor more than he needs a queen. He has already identified Xipharès as "un autre moi-même" (1067). He briefly considers the possibility of abandoning his personal interests and allowing Xipharès to have Monime. But his jealousy is too strong to maintain his this temporary triumph of reason and self-sacrifice. He still

loves Monime, and he does not want to relinquish her. The physical body speaks again, more forcefully this time:

Vains efforts, qui ne font que m'instruire
Des faiblesses d'un cœur qui cherche à se séduire !
Je brûle, je l'adore ; et loin de la bannir…
Ah ! c'est un crime encor dont je la veux punir.
Quelle pitié retient mes sentiments timides ?
N'en ai-je pas déjà puni de moins perfides ?
Ô Monime, ô mon fils ! Inutile courroux ! (IV.v 1403-09)

For Mithridate, strength has traditionally been synonymous with violence, and he views his reluctance to punish as a sign of weakness, rather than as a marker of sovereignty. He has never allowed himself to trust those closest to him, which is why he has taken great care to immune himself to poisons:

Quoi ! des plus chères mains craignant les trahisons,
J'ai pris soin de m'armer contre tous les poisons ;
J'ai su, par une longue et pénible industrie,
Des plus mortels venins prévenir la furie :
Ah ! qu'il eût mieux valu, plus sage et plus heureux,
Et repoussant les traits d'un amour dangereux,
Ne pas laisser remplir d'ardeurs empoisonnées
Un cœur déjà glacé par le froid des années !
De ce trouble fatal par où dois-je sortir ? (IV.v 1413-20)

Over the course of this scene, Mithridate realizes that although he has succeeded in immunizing himself against physical poison, he is not immune to the psychological poison of passion, which can be just as deadly. According to Christian Biet, Mithridate does not know how to practice clemency, because it has never been a part of his repertoire:

> Mithridate est pris, hésitant entre le rachat et la passion qui le constitue, entre la tyrannie longuement pratiquée et la clémence auguste qu'il ne peut que souhaiter. L'intérêt y fait tout : même lorsqu'il s'essaie à pardonner au fils qui l'a trahi, il ne trouve rien de gratuit à cette toute nouvelle magnanimité puisqu'il la justifie par le calcul. Mithridate balance, mais il est défini par son industrie longue et pénible qui l'a littéralement fait. Empoisonné par lui-même pour armer son pouvoir de tyran, il voit qu'il est trop tard pour véritablement se reprendre, se sauver, et viser la rédemption. (Biet 84)

Biet argues that this monologue indicates Mithridate's incapacity to overcome his passions – he is too set in his ways to learn how to forgive. But it is also important to notice that Mithridate's monologue ends with a question: "De ce trouble fatal par où dois-je sortir?", and not with a definitive resolution. And this question remains unresolved when the action of *Mithridate* takes a very Racinian turn, as the protagonist's moment of self-reflection is interrupted by external forces beyond his control. Arbate and Arcas bring the troubling news that Pharnace has turned the remaining soldiers and the Roman army has invaded the port, in short, "Le désordre est partout" (IV.vi 1431). Faced with a crisis situation that requires his immediate attention, Mithridate's opportunity to exercise sovereign *volonté* in life is denied to him! He rushes offstage to meet his imminent death, and hastily decides that all guilty parties (including

Monime) will die with him. But it is in this certitude of death that Mithridate is presented with a final chance of self-mastery.

Only in the death of his physical body is Mithridate finally able to overcome his passions and become a true sovereign. But whereas *Cinna*'s Auguste is able to assume his own political body, Mithridate's triumph is in the recognition of the immortal political body through the succession of his son, who has proven himself worthy to carry on his father's legacy. As Harriet Stone observes: "His moment of strength at the end is, after all, a moment of passing, of yielding to the next generation all that was his" (Stone 275-76). When Mithridate re-enters the stage in the final scene, carried by his soldiers and covered with his own blood and the blood of his enemies, it is evident that the physical body of this king has been vanquished. He no longer possesses a stable kingdom to pass on to Xipharès, but he has been restored to his sovereign status in the eyes of the spectator by his valiant final efforts against the Romans and by his victory over his debilitating passion. As a testament of the transfer of the political body from father to son, Mithridate offers Monime to Xipharès without resentment or jealousy:

> Mais vous [Monime] me tenez lieu d'empire, de couronne ;
> Vous seule me restez : souffrez que je vous donne,
> Madame, et tous ces vœux que j'exigeais de vous,
> Mon cœur pour Xipharès vous les demande tous. (V.v 1671-74)

He dies heroically, free from passions. Because the king-character is able to redeem his transgression and unite the couple in the final act of the play, this "happy ending" of *Mithridate* has often been interpreted as un-tragic. Raymond Picard states in his *notice*: "C'est peut-être ici la tragédie la moins tragique de Racine" (595). Alain Viala agrees in his 2010 edition of Racine's works:

> Cette œuvre est d'ailleurs d'essence peu tragique à proprement parler. Pour sanglante qu'elle soit, la fin n'en est pas désespérée : Mithridate meurt, mais il meurt glorieusement, et après avoir eu la satisfaction de reconnaître la fidélité de Xipharès, à qui il lègue le soin de poursuivre son œuvre en même temps qu'il lui donne la femme aimée, et la satisfaction aussi de voir l'ennemi – Rome – et le traître – Pharnace – en déroute. (Sorel/Viala 444)

While it is true that Xipharès's surprise victory and Mithridate's honorable death end the play on a more positive note, I tend to agree more with Volker Schröder's argument that the outcome of *Mithridate* is more tragic than initially meets the eye. For as Schröder observes, the peace and stability that close the action are only temporary:

> Le roi est mort, vive le roi (et la reine!); mais le royaume lui-même est moribond. Le dénouement de *Mithridate* est tragique, à sa manière, parce que l'ordre politico-moral qui vient d'être momentanément, et comme miraculeusement, rétabli, se trouve aussitôt menacé. Racine ne fait triompher l'amour et la légitimité qu'en soulignant la précarité, sinon la vanité, de ce triomphe. (Schröder 158)

Xipharès and Monime must go into hiding, since Pharnace and the Romans will indubitably re-assemble their forces and return. The legitimate king has been declared, and he has won his queen, but his kingdom is in a state of disorder that certainly qualifies as tragic from a political standpoint. Furthermore, this tragic outcome is profoundly influenced by Mithridate's un-sovereign deception of Monime in the third act. Most obviously because, had the king's jealous insecurity not gotten the better of him, Xipharès and his soldiers would have been in the palace to defend against the attack of the Romans. As Pierre Ronzeaud notes: "La disparition

momentanée du soutien de Xipharès, est, on le sait, liée à la découverte de l'amour de Monime pour celui-ci, grâce au piège qui lui a tendu Mithridate" (Ronzeaud 25). Rather then being compelled to suicide, then rescued from the outside (too late!), Mithridate could have fought alongside Xipharès against Pharnace. The king's death can be traced back to his fatal curiosity. Also, Monime's reaction to Mithridate's death makes the play's dénouement all the more pitiful. Despite his tyrannical treatment of her, she implores him to live. Like Emilie in *Cinna*, she is completely won over:

MONIME

Vivez, Seigneur, vivez, pour le bonheur du monde,

Et pour sa liberté, qui sur vous seul se fonde ;

Vivez pour triompher d'un ennemi vaincu,

Pour venger…

MITHRIDATE

C'en est fait, Madame, et j'ai vécu. (V.v 1675-78)

Monime's forgiveness would not be nearly as touching if she had no offense to forgive, but, as the victim of Mithridate's passion-inspired ruse, her sincere sadness at the his death evokes the pity of the spectator all the while reaffirming the redemption of the king-character.

From Manipulated Monarch to Silent Spectator: Agamemnon in *Iphigénie* (1674)

Whereas Mithridate's romantic love for Monime is a destructive passion that motivates him to jealousy and artifice, his paternal tenderness for Xipharès tempers the violence of his physical body. Racine makes it very clear in *Mithridate* that in addition to needing Xipharès to ensure the survival of his political body, the fierce king-character loves his loyal and courageous son, as he begrudgingly admits in Act II Scene III. This fatherly affection is a "passion" that

respects natural law, and as such it plays an active role in Mithridate's hesitation to exact vengeance upon the lovers, and in his eventual decision to forgive. Paternal love is a positive force in the determination of Mithridate's sovereign status, as it prevents him from a complete submission into tyranny and makes him more admirable to the audience. However, the parent/child relationship, when placed in a different context, can rival amorous passion in its destructive effect on kingship, as Racine demonstrates in his subsequent tragedy *Iphigénie*. Published a year after *Mithridate*, it was performed for the first time on August 18, 1674 at Versailles as part of a series of courtly *divertissements* celebrating Louis XIV's conquest of Franche-Comté.[146] After having spent several years composing primarily Roman and Oriental tragedies (*Britannicus, Bérénice, Bazajet, Mithridate*), *Iphigénie* marks Racine's first return to a Greek subject since *Andromaque*, and his first reinterpretation of Euripides since *La Thébaïde*. Also, spanning thirty-seven scenes over five acts and including 1792 verses, *Iphigénie* is one of the longest and most complex Racinian tragedies.[147]

The major events of *Iphigénie* can be summarized as follows: the action takes place on the shores of Aulide, where the armies of the Greek city-states have assembled under the command of the high king Agamemnon in preparation to sail for Troy. Their assault had been hindered for three months by the stillness of the winds, which has prompted a committee of Greek kings to consult the oracle Calchas and seek the support of the goddess Diana. The gods' response is troubling – in order to stimulate the winds that will guide them to victory over Troy, the gods will require a blood sacrifice of the line of Helen. Calchas specifically names Iphigénie, the beloved daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestre, half-sister of Helen. To appease the

[146] Apostolidès, *Le roi-machine* (127).
[147] Raymond Picard compares the length of *Iphigénie* to *Bérénice* (29 scenes, 1506 verses) and *Andromaque* (28 scenes,1648 verses). *Iphigénie* is only surpassed in length by *Athalie*, which Picard stipulates does not provide a fair comparison because of its chorus.

gods and his fellow rulers, Agamemnon has summoned Iphigénie to Aulide under the false pretense that she will be wed to the demigod warrior Achille before the Greek fleet departs for Troy.[148] This decision pains the king greatly. Although sacrificing his daughter will ensure the Greeks' military victory and secure his sovereign status as "roi des rois" (I.i 81), Agamemnon cannot bear to forsake such a loving and virtuous daughter:

> Ma fille… Ce nom seul, dont les droits sont si saints,
> Sa jeunesse, mon sang, n'est pas ce que je plains.
> Je plains mille vertus, une amour mutuelle,
> Sa piété pour moi, ma tendresse pour elle,
> Un respect qu'en son cœur rien ne peut balancer,
> Et que j'avais promis de mieux récompenser. (I.i 115-20)

In the first scene, he sends his servant Arcas on a secret mission – to prevent Iphigénie from ever setting foot in Aulide. Agamemnon orders Arcas to deliver a letter stating that Achille no longer wishes to marry her, so that neither she nor her mother will ever know the real danger to which he exposed them:

> Va, dis-je, sauve-la de ma propre faiblesse.
> Mais surtout ne va point, par un zèle indiscret,
> Découvrir à ses yeux mon funeste secret.
> Que s'il se peut, ma fille, à jamais abusée,
> Ignore à quel péril je l'avais exposée.
> D'une mère en fureur épargne-moi les cris,
> Et que ta voix s'accorde avec ce que j'écris. (I.i 142-48)

[148] Mithridate is not the only Racinian king-character who resorts to deceiving his family!

From the very first scene, the plot is structured around Agamemnon's indecision – he revokes his initial commitment to sacrifice his child to the Greek cause. But he sends his messenger too late, and an overjoyed Iphigénie arrives in Aulide, accompanied by her mother and the mysterious slave girl Ériphile, who was captured by Achille in Lesbos and who has since fallen in love with her captor.[149] Now that Agamemnon's daughter is on Diana's turf, the king feels a renewed obligation to proceed with the sacrifice as planned. He avoids Iphigénie and Clytemnestre so that they cannot see his distress over the impending "marriage" ceremony, causing both women to wonder how they have offended him. They soon learn the reason for his odd behavior when Arcas confesses Agamemnon's secret plot to sacrifice Iphigénie at the altar. Both Clytemnestre and Achille vehemently refuse to surrender her and rebel against Agamemnon, whereas Iphigénie resolutely accepts her fate in unwavering support of her father. Agamemnon tries one last time to let his beloved daughter escape Aulide in secret, but this final attempt is thwarted by the hateful Ériphile, who reveals the entire situation to Calchas and the Greeks. With tension mounting in the camp and the armies calling in unison for Iphigénie's blood, Agamemnon re-concedes to the sacrifice. The "bride" marches bravely to the altar, but the furious Achille intervenes on her behalf. Flanked by his personal soldiers, he protects Iphigénie from Calchas, and his violent resistance attracts the attention of the gods. Through the voice of the oracle, they amend their previous requirement, and the "fille du sang d'Hélène" (I.i 59) turns out to be none other than Ériphile, illegitimate offspring of a secret union between Helen and Theseus. Ériphile stabs herself to fulfill the prophecy, and the winds miraculously return. Spared by the last-

[149] The character of Ériphile was invented by Racine, who drew his inspiration from the writings of the second-century geographer Pausanius. As he explains in his Préface, his departure from Euripides' version (in which Diana intervenes as a *deux ex machina* to substitute Iphigénie with a doe) is based on adherence to both *bienséances* and *vraisemblance*: "C'est à cet auteur [Pausanius] que je dois l'heureux personnage d'Ériphile, sans lequel je n'aurais jamais osé entreprendre cette tragédie. Quelle apparence que j'eusse souillé la scène par le meurtre abominable d'une personne aussi vertueuse et aussi aimable qu'il fallait représenter Iphigénie? Et quelle apparence encore de dénouer ma tragédie par le secours d'une déesse et d'une machine, et par une métamorphose, qui pouvait bien trouver quelque créance du temps d'Euripide, mais qui serait trop absurde et trop incroyable parmi nous?"

minute substitution of Ériphile's blood for her own, Iphigénie is presented to her grateful mother by her lover and her father, who will seal their renewed alliance through the impending marriage, which will be followed by the armies' departure for Troy.

Even in this brief summary of the storyline of *Iphigénie*, it is evident that Racine places the king-character Agamemnon in a very problematic situation in regards to his sovereignty, for he must choose between being a father and acting as High King over the Greeks. As I specified in the first chapter of this study, the idea of paternal love is inextricably linked to the concept of kingship in seventeenth-century France. The ideal monarch is repeatedly described by theorists of absolutism as a symbolic father to his subjects. This is a legacy from the Christomimetic model of kingship, in which Christ is portrayed as the "Everlasting Father" of his people.[150] For example, as early as the *Policraticus* (c. 1159), John of Salisbury writes that the king: "is father and mother to his subjects" (IV.iii, Nederman 33), because his love for his subjects should be pure and free from carnal desire. Jean Bodin states in the first book of *Les six livres de la République* that the relationship between sovereign and subject should mirror the natural hierarchy that exists between the *pater familias* and the members of his household. The father is "La vraie image du grand Dieu souverain, père universel de toutes choses" (I.iv, 63). He can always be trusted to act in the best interest of his children, and he always seeks to bring honor to his family. Bodin claims that a good father will never abuse his sovereign power over his wife and children within the *res privata*: "Il ne faut pas craindre que les pères abusent de leur puissance" (I.iv, 76). In the same way, the monarch should mimic the selfless love of the father in the *res publica*, always prioritizing the well-being of his subjects through the assumption of his political body. Cardin Le Bret confirms in Book I of *De la souveraineté du roi* that the ultimate goal of the king is to seek to procure the welfare of his people with the same devotion as

[150] Isaiah 9:6.

a father who desires to provide the best life for his children: "de procurer leur bien avec le même zèle, et la même charité, que les pères procurent celui de leurs enfants" (I.i, 2). Jean-François Senault's perspective on the king as a father is of particular relevance to an analysis of *Iphigénie*. In the fifth traité of *Le monarque ou les devoirs du souverain*, Senault argues that the paternal love of the king for his people should inspire clemency: "Son plus bel éloge, c'est celui de Père du peuple; ce nom lui doit apprendre que la Clémence lui est nécessaire, et qu'il pardonne à ses enfants, quand il pardonne à ses Sujets" (V.iv, 279). Just as a father naturally strives to protect his children and to spare them from pain and misfortune, so the monarch should desire to protect his people. This is one of the "lois naturelles" that a true king is bound to uphold. Iphigénie invokes this natural law to defend her father's predicament in the third act: "Quel père de son sang se plaît à se priver?" (III.vi 1015). She cannot imagine that her father would choose to kill her if he had any other choice. Therefore, if he is ordering her death, it must be because his other responsibilities are super-natural.

Which reminds us that the second contingency to absolute monarchy is adherence to divine law: "Tous les princes de la terre sont sujets aux lois de Dieu, et de nature" (Bodin I.viii, 190). The sovereign has obtained his power from God, and he is a subject of God. Although the king is above human law (*legibus solutus*), he must always be submissive to divine authority.

But what must a true sovereign do when divine law contradicts natural law? This is an essential question of *Iphigénie*, where the gods are demanding that a father sacrifice his child in exchange for the military victory of multiple allied nations. It is important to point out that, unlike the dynamic that exists between Mithridate and Xipharès, the relationship between Agamemnon and Iphigénie has nothing to do with succession. Iphigénie is Agamemnon's

daughter, not his heir (he also has a male child, Oreste, who is mentioned in the play).[151] She is not the future agent of the political body, and his attachment to her is pure *philoï*. Like any member of the king's family, she should be no more exempt from his laws than any other subject. In Book I Chapter VII of *De la souveraineté du roi*, Le Bret specifically addresses the role of the king's children: "Ils n'ont aucune autorité publique dans l'État, non plus que les autres sujets" (I.vii, 27). This would be especially true in the case of an elected leader such as Agamemnon, whose subjects include other kings with subjects and families of their own. In *Iphigénie*, Agamemnon recognizes that his daughter should not receive special consideration, asking himself the question: "Ma fille en est-elle à mes lois moins soumise ?" (IV.viii 1438). He is aware that the Greeks' enemy will only be defeated if Iphigénie dies, and he must prove his dedication to the mission in order to maintain his supremacy amongst the other kings. Therefore, the response of the political body would be to sacrifice her and trust the justice and mercy of the gods.[152] However, although Agamemnon's decision to spare Iphigénie would be more in keeping with the interest of his physical body, I argue that it is not his paternal love that undermines his sovereignty. Contrary to the other Racinian king-characters I have analyzed in this study (Pyrrhus and Mithridate), Agamemnon's love for Iphigénie is not a tyrannizing passion. His destructive submission to his corps physique is more a consequence of his lack of autonomy, as Roland Barthes notes in *Sur Racine*:

> En lui, ce ne sont même pas tout à fait l'amour filial et le devoir national qui luttent, ce sont plutôt les pressions publiques…il y a certes un sentiment paternel

[151] It is ironic in Act V Scene IV that Iphigénie tries to console her hysterical mother by telling her to take comfort in Oreste: "Vos yeux me reverront dans Oreste mon frère. / Puisse-t-il être, hélas ! moins funeste à sa mère !" (1657-58). The audience would be familiar enough with *Andromaque* to know that Agamemnon's heir will go mad.

[152] This dilemma of divine versus natural law resembles the story of the biblical patriarch Abraham (Genesis 22), whose willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac was rewarded by God's mercy and blessing. Abraham's obedience was adapted to the French stage by Théodore de Bèze in the humanist tragedy *Abraham sacrifiant* (1550).

(Agamemnon n'est pas un monstre, c'est un médiocre, une âme moyenne), mais ce sentiment a sans cesse besoin de la caution ou de la résistance d'autrui. (113)

Agamemnon does not fail as a king because he loves his daughter, but ultimately because he allows himself be pushed around by the members of his entourage, refusing to make a firm decision of his own *volonté*. In this analysis I will demonstrate how the influence of four of the other characters in *Iphigénie* – Ulysse, Clytemnestre, Achille, and Iphigénie herself – compromise Agamemnon's sovereignty in turn, eventually reducing him to a silent spectator on the political stage of Aulide.

The first secondary character who influences Agamemnon is his fellow Greek king Ulysse, who dispels the initial horror of the oracle's command by reminding the high king of his sovereign responsibilities. In the very first scene of *Iphigénie*, Agamemnon recalls his gut reaction to the gods' condemnation of his daughter:

Surpris, comme tu peux penser,
Je sentis dans mon corps tout mon sang se glacer.
Je demeurai sans voix, et n'en repris l'usage
Que par mille sanglots qui se firent passage.
Je condamnai les dieux, et sans plus rien ouïr,
Fis vœu sur leurs autels de leur désobéir. (I.i 63-68)

The king's physical body responds to the prophecy first – his blood freezes in his veins and he cannot speak except to sob. He decides in that moment that he will not obey the gods. But Ulysse, a character described by Sylvaine Guyot as: "le beau parleur inflexible dans sa défense de l'intérêt public" (733), speaks for the political bodies of the Greeks united under his command:

Ulysse, en apparence, approuvant mes discours,
De ce premier torrent laissa passer le cours.
Mais bientôt, rappelant sa cruelle industrie,
Il me représenta l'honneur et la patrie,
Tout ce peuple, ces rois à mes ordres soumis,
Et l'empire d'Asie à la Grèce promis.
De quel front, immolant tout l'État à ma fille,
Roi sans gloire, j'irais vieillir dans ma famille.
. . . . . .
Je me rendis, Arcas ; et vaincu par Ulysse,
De ma fille, en pleurant, j'ordonnai le supplice. (I.i 71-78, 89-90)

Prior to the action of the play, Ulysse had advised Agamemnon that it was not prudent to sacrifice the certain military victory of several nations in exchange for his daughter's life. Ulysse intervenes in person in Act I Scene III, calling Agamemnon back to his duty once more when he witnesses the king's returning hesitation. Ulysse accuses his fellow ruler of considering his own blood over his sovereign responsibilities:

De ce soupir que faut-il que j'augure ?
Du sang qui se révolte est-ce quelque murmure ?
Croirai-je qu'une nuit a pu vous ébranler ?
Est-ce donc votre cœur qui vient de nous parler ?
Songez-y : vous devez votre fille à la Grèce,
Vous nous l'avez promise ; et sur cette promesse,

Calchas, par tous les Grecs consulté chaque jour,

Leur a prédit des vents l'infaillible retour. (I.iii 281-88)

According to Ulysse, the Greek soldiers have all abandoned their own families to fight for Agamemnon, and it is hypocritical that he is not willing to shed some of his own blood for them in return. Kingship, after all, is ideally a reciprocal relationship:[153]

Vous seul, nous arrachant à de nouvelles flammes,

Nous avez fait laisser nos enfants et nos femmes.

Et quand, de toutes parts assemblés en ces lieux,

L'honneur de vous venger brille seul à nos yeux,

Quand la Grèce, déjà vous donnant son suffrage,

Vous reconnaît l'auteur de ce fameux ouvrage,

Que ses rois, qui pouvaient vous disputer ce rang,

Sont prêts pour vous servir de verser tout leur sang,

Le seul Agamemnon, refusant la victoire,

N'ose d'un peu de sang acheter tant de gloire ? (I.iii 309-18)

Ulysse is arguably in a better position to judge the greater good because he possesses no emotional attachment to Iphigénie. In fact, Agamemnon defends his own weakness by insisting that if Ulysse's own son Télémaque were being called to the altar, he would be more sympathetic to Agamemnon's predicament (323-28). From this perspective, one might conclude that Ulysse has a positive influence on Agamemnon's recognition of his political body. Each time the two kings speak, Agamemnon becomes newly resolved to sacrifice Iphigénie and fulfill his

[153] Loyseau: "C'est une obligation réciproque, comme au sujet d'obéir à son Prince, aussi au Prince de maintenir son sujet: et comme le sujet ne se peut distraire de l'obéissance de son Prince, aussi un Prince ne peut aliéner ses sujets." (*Offices* II.ii, 102)

responsibilities as High King. However, a closer inspection of their interactions reveals that Ulysse's rhetoric has an ultimately negative effect. Firstly, it robs Agamemnon of his own right of sovereign decision. The spectator cannot help but notice that as soon as Ulysse leaves the stage, Agamemnon's conviction wavers. This is because his choice did not originate from his own inner sense of justice: a persuasive advisor imposed it upon him. More importantly, Ulysse manipulates Agamemnon by causing him to valorize his own personal ambition rather than prioritizing the mission that he was elected to command. To return to the first scene of the play, Agamemnon admits to Arcas that after speaking with Ulysse, he was reminded of his desire for power:

> Moi-même (je l'avoue avec quelque pudeur)
> Charmé de mon pouvoir, et plein de ma grandeur,
> Ce nom de roi des rois et de chef de la Grèce
> Chatouillait de mon cœur l'orgueilleuse faiblesse. (I.i 79-82)

Agamemnon is seduced by the prestigious title of king of kings, rather than being motivated by the best interest of the Greek kingdoms. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Ulysse encourages him to sacrifice Iphigénie to his own ambition instead of to Greece. In Act I Scene V, Ulysse presents Agamemnon with an empowering image of Troy in flames and Priam at his feet:

> Pleurez ce sang, pleurez ; ou plutôt, sans pâlir,
> Considérez l'honneur qui doit en rejaillir :
> Voyez tout l'Hellespont blanchissant sous nos rames,
> Et la perfide Troie abandonnée aux flammes,
> Ses peuples dans vos fers, Priam à vos genoux,

Hélène par vos mains rendue à son époux.
Voyez de vos vaisseaux les poupes couronnées
Dans cette même Aulide avec vous retournées,
Et ce triomphe heureux qui s'en va devenir
L'éternel entretien des siècles à venir. (I.v 379-88)

This image redirects Agamemnon from one human weakness to another – away from his daughter but back towards himself, and therefore further away from the actual incarnation of his political body. Ulysse inspires the "soif de régner" for which Clytemnestre will criticize her husband in IV.iv, where she claims that he is sacrificing Iphigénie neither out of devotion to the gods nor out of a sincere desire to avenge his brother Ménélas, but because he wants to maintain his own supremacy:

Mais non ; l'amour d'un frère et son honneur blessé
Sont les moindres des soins dont vous êtes pressé :
Cette soif de régner, que rien ne peut éteindre,
L'orgueil de voir vingt rois vous servir et vous craindre,
Tous les droits de l'empire en vos mains confiés,
Cruel, c'est à ces dieux que vous sacrifiez. (IV.iv 1283-88)

Ulysse, in his attempt to transform the weeping father to into a magnanimous king, is actually encouraging Agamemnon's transformation from a father to a tyrant. It is ironic that in the fifth act, Ulysse tries to redeem Agamemnon in the eyes of Clytemnestre by taking blame for the king's treatment of Iphigénie:

Oui, c'est moi qui longtemps, contre elle et contre vous,
Ai cru devoir, Madame, affermir votre époux ;

Moi qui, jaloux tantôt de l'honneur de nos armes,
Par d'austères conseils ai fait couler vos larmes,
Et qui viens, puisque enfin le ciel est apaisé,
Réparer tout l'ennui que je vous ai causé. (V.vi 1719-24)

While this assumption of responsibility is meant to salvage the damaged relationship between husband and wife, it actually weakens Agamemnon's position as sovereign, disengaging him from the obligation of a upholding a decision that he should have been able to execute by himself.

Ulysse is not the only secondary character who undermines Agamemnon's authority – his queen Clytemnestre also plays a key role. It becomes evident to the spectator in the very first scene of *Iphigénie* that Agamemnon is afraid of his wife. His fear of Clytemnestre serves as part of his motivation to conceal Iphigénie's sacrifice by means of artifice. In I.i, Agamemnon explicitly orders Arcas to ensure the queen's ignorance of the situation: "D'une mère en fureur épargne-moi les cris" (I.i 147). Agamemnon is wary of his wife's fury, and particularly of her voice. And with good reason – Clytemnestre is ferociously protective of Iphigénie, and Agamemnon wants to avoid a confrontation with her at all costs. He knows that she will fight tooth and nail to protect her daughter's life. Since she does not share in Agamemnon's political obligation to Greece, he does not anticipate any sympathy from her for his dilemma. So when Clytemnestre and Iphigénie arrive in Aulide despite his efforts to intercept them, Agamemnon must continue lying to keep his wife in the dark and away from the altar. He tells Ulysse in Act I Scene V: "Et m'aidant à cacher ce funeste mystère, / Laissez-moi de l'autel écarter une mère" (I.v 393-94). When Agamemnon forbids Clytemnestre from attending the marriage ceremony in

III.i, giving her the excuse that a military camp is not a proper place for a queen, her feelings are deeply hurt, but she ultimately chooses to respect his wishes:

> D'où vient que d'un soin si cruel
> L'injuste Agamemnon m'écarte de l'autel ?
> Fier de son nouveau rang, m'ose-t-il méconnaître ?
> Me croit-il à sa suite indigne de paraître ?
> Ou de l'empire encor timide possesseur,
> N'oserait-il d'Hélène ici montrer la sœur ?
> Et pourquoi me cacher ? et par quelle injustice
> Faut-il que sur mon front sa honte rejaillisse ?
> Mais n'importe ; il le veut, et mon cœur s'y résout. (III.ii 819-27)

She does not understand his reasons for excluding her, but she obeys him. However, her obedience evaporates the moment she discovers that her husband has lied to her. When Arcas reveals that the wedding is a ruse for the sacrifice of her daughter, Clytemnestre violently turns against her husband. As John Campbell notes in "Racine's *Iphigénie*: a 'Happy Tragedy'?", the king's poorly executed deception rebounds on him:

> The lash of her moral repugnance (*Race funeste, Bourreau, Barbare, horreur, inhumain*) is sharpened by reminders of his deception (*artifice, feindre, fausse tristesse*)… Agamemnon is thus caught up in a trap that he has unwillingly set for himself. (215)

Like Monime in *Mithridate*, who is freed from her loyalty to the king by her recognition of his deception, Clytemnestre no longer respects Agamemnon as sovereign. She has no political power to overturn Iphigénie's sentence, but she becomes a mouthpiece for sedition and revolt,

making every possible attempt to subvert his authority as both a father and a king. For example, in addition to her accusation that the war is a product of his personal ambition (*supra*), she displaces the role of the father onto Achille, telling him that he is Iphigénie's sole defense: "Elle n'a que vous seul. Vous êtes en ces lieux / Son père, son époux, son asile, ses dieux" (III.v 939-40). Clytemnestre discredits Agamemnon's ability to protect Iphigénie by entrusting her to a stronger man. As Mitchell Greenberg remarks, she essentially emasculates her "perfide époux" (944):

> She unmans him by claiming that he is incapable of defending his own child, thus proving himself to be unworthy of the title "father" that both he and Iphigénie had rather conspicuously used in the preceding speeches. By revealing his inadequacies as a father she simultaneously uncovers his shortcomings as a political leader. (Greenberg 180)

Clytemnestre condemns Agamemnon for having meekly accepted the proclamation of the oracle without ever questioning whether it truly represents the will of the gods. She does not believe that the gods would demand retribution for Helen's infidelity through the murder of her innocent niece, particularly when there is closer blood, including Clytemnestre's own, that could be shed in its place:[154]

> Un oracle fatal ordonne qu'elle expire :
> Un oracle dit-il tout ce qu'il semble dire ?
> Le ciel, le juste ciel, par le meurtre honoré,
> Du sang de l'innocence est-il donc altéré ? (IV.iv 1261-64)

If Agamemnon wants to sacrifice Iphigénie, Clytemnestre challenges him to do it over her own dead body, because she is not afraid of him:

[154] This is foreshadowing for the substitution of Iphigénie's blood with Ériphile's in Act V.

> Non, je ne l'aurai point amenée au supplice,
> Ou vous ferez aux Grecs un double sacrifice.
> Ni crainte ni respect ne m'en peut détacher ;
> De mes bras tout sanglants il faudra l'arracher.
> Aussi barbare époux qu'impitoyable père,
> Venez, si vous l'osez, la ravir à sa mère. (IV.iv 1305-10)

Faced with the vehement defiance of this "mère intrépide" (1433), Agamemnon seems both treacherous and timid. Unable to withstand Clytemnestre's tongue-lashing, which he laments as "les cris que je craignais d'entendre" (IV.v 1314), or to defend his own position, he changes his mind again and tries (unsuccessfully) to smuggle Iphigénie out of Aulide with her mother. He is being cajoled into his political body by Ulysse and harangued back into his physical body by his wife. Mitchell Greenberg's analysis of Iphigénie in *Racine: from Ancient Myth to Tragic Modernity* summarizes this tension between political (Ulysse) and paternal (Clytemnestre) obligations:

> Agamemnon is torn between Ulysses, who along with the never-seen but ever-present high priest Calchas pulls Agamemnon towards renunciation and duty, and, on the other side, his formidable spouse Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra stands as the most vocal advocate of family and the ties of blood, which are in direct conflict with the politics of conquest. It is Clytemnestra who speaks of the very real, unsublimated call of the body, of the visceral attachment of parents and children that Agamemnon must flee if he is not to succumb to his own doubts and fears. (Greenberg 178)

Both sides present a valid argument that could be substantiated as a part of Agamemnon's role as father and sovereign. But Agamemnon himself, caught between a smooth talker and a harpy, has no clear voice of his own.

It is interesting to note that although Agamemnon fears his wife enough to lie to keep her away and to relent to her verbal assault, he seems ironically unafraid of the most fearsome warrior in all of Greece. In Act I Scene I, Arcas questions the king's plan to implicate Achille in the false marriage:

> Et ne craignez-vous point l'impatient Achille ?
> Avez-vous prétendu que, muet et tranquille,
> Ce héros, qu'armera l'amour et la raison,
> Vous laisse pour ce meurtre abuser de son nom ? (I.i 97-100)

Agamemnon does not feel guilty about deceiving Achille. Compared to the potential loss of his beloved daughter, Achille's legendary anger is the least of his worries! As he replies to Arcas, fear of offending Achille is not the source of his reluctance to execute the sacrifice: "Des nœuds plus puissants me retiennent le bras" (I.i 111). However, even though Agamemnon is not intimidated by Achille, this character is essential in highlighting other aspects of Agamemnon's submission to his physical body. As numerous modern critics of *Iphigénie* have observed, Achille's infallible courage in spite of his predicted death at Troy creates a constant contrast with Agamemnon's passive submission to the gods. From the warrior's very first appearance onstage in I.ii, Achille's character represents the antithesis of fear and hesitation:

> Les dieux sont de nos jours les maîtres souverains ;
> Mais, Seigneur, notre gloire est dans nos propres mains,
> Pourquoi nous tourmenter de leurs ordres suprêmes ?

Ne songeons qu'à nous rendre immortels comme eux-mêmes,

Et laissant faire au sort, courons où la valeur

Nous promet un destin aussi grand que le leur. (I.ii 259-64)

In a kingdom where the fate of men (no matter how powerful) is ultimately determined by divine authority, the demigod Achille distinguishes himself as a humanist. He adores Iphigénie, and, like Clytemnestre, he is unwaveringly committed to preserving her life at all costs. He does not care about his own life, the Greeks, or the gods' retribution. As Eléonore Zimmermann describes him: "Il est en fait le seul homme d'action de la pièce" (43). Whereas Ulysse has the power of words, Achille *acts*. He certainly succeeds in making Agamemnon's inaction look weak by comparison. However, I contend that, from a sovereignty perspective, Achille's maverick behavior cannot fairly be contrasted with Agamemnon's indecision. Achille's father Pélée is a king but Achille has not yet assumed a political body, nor will he ever! In light of his superhuman strength and predestination to die at Troy, Achille has more liberty to be reckless with his own safety, and to give in to his passions. He can, in relatively good conscience, put himself in danger without worrying about inflicting the repercussions his actions upon multiple nations. In this sense, Achille is in a different league from Agamemnon.[155] But in addition to highlighting the king's relative passivity, Agamemnon's interactions with Achille reveal a more crippling passion of his physical body: his pride. Achille is understandably indignant upon discovering that his honorable sentiments for Iphigénie have been used to concoct a fallacious marriage ceremony. He accuses Agamemnon of violating natural law (974) by suppressing his parental duty to protect his offspring: "étouffant tout sentiment humain" (IV.vi 1323). Achille

[155] This distinction between Achille and Agamemnon is reminiscent of the difference between Oreste and Pyrrhus that was addressed earlier in this chapter (128-153).

had personally supported his election as high king and fought under Agamemnon's name on multiple occasions, and now his faithful service is being repaid with lies and murder:

> Je n'y vais [à Troie] que pour vous, barbare que vous êtes,
> Pour vous, à qui des Grecs moi seul je ne dois rien,
> Vous, que j'ai fait nommer et leur chef et le mien. (IV.vi 1378-80)

Like Clytemnestre, in the face of Agamemnon's treachery, Achille no longer feels any political loyalty towards him. He claims that the only reason Agamemnon is still alive is because Iphigénie has begged him not to harm her father, as he warns the king in Act IV Scene VI:

> Rendez grâce au seul nœud qui retient ma colère :
> D'Iphigénie encor je respecte le père.
> Peut-être, sans ce nom, le chef de tant de rois
> M'aurait osé braver pour la dernière fois.
> Je ne dis plus qu'un mot, c'est à vous de m'entendre :
> J'ai votre fille ensemble et ma gloire à défendre.
> Pour aller jusqu'au cœur que vous voulez percer,
> Voilà par quels chemins vos coups doivent passer. (IV.vi 1413-20)

Achille defies Agamemnon's authority as both sovereign and as father by presenting his own body as an obstacle to the sacrifice, a challenge which provokes a reaction from the king's physical body. Iphigénie's lover has declared himself as both a rebel subject and a rival father figure, threatening Agamemnon's sovereignty in both the *res publica* and the *res privata.* At this point in the play, Agamemnon was still struggling with his decision to relinquish Iphigénie to Calchas, but Achille's insubordination dissuades him from mercy:

Et voilà ce qui rend sa perte inévitable.

Ma fille toute seule était plus redoutable.

Ton insolent amour, qui croit m'épouvanter,

Vient de hâter le coup que tu veux arrêter.

Ne délibérons plus. Bravons sa violence.

Ma gloire intéressée emporte la balance.

Achille menaçant détermine mon cœur :

Ma pitié semblerait un effet de ma peur. (IV.vii 1421-28)

In this moment, Agamemnon opts to proceed with the sacrifice not because of his respect for the gods or to fulfill his duty to Greece, but because he equates sparing his daughter's life with acknowledging his fear of Achille, and his pride cannot let Achille win. Russell Pfohl agrees:

> Agamemnon, left alone after the angered exit of Achille, gauges anew the value of his daughter's life…The ties of paternal love – which he has earlier claimed to be so much more influential than his concern for Achille – prove weaker than the insatiable demands of his aroused pride, weaker than his hatred. (Pfohl 44)

Even when Agamemnon characteristically overturns this decision in the subsequent scene, he contends that he will spare Iphigénie's life, but that he will not give Achille the satisfaction of bullying him:

Qu'elle vive. Mais quoi ? peu jaloux de ma gloire,

Dois−je au superbe Achille accorder la victoire ?

Son téméraire orgueil, que je vais redoubler,

Croira que je lui cède, et qu'il me fait trembler...

De quel frivole soin mon esprit s'embarrasse ?

Ne puis−je pas d'Achille humilier l'audace ?

Que ma fille à ses yeux soit un sujet d'ennui :

Il l'aime ? Elle vivra pour un autre que lui. (IV.viii 1449-56)

Agamemnon's wounded pride causes him to turn against his daughter – first against her life in IV.vii, and then against her happiness in IV.viii. At the beginning of the fifth act, Iphigénie is not even relieved to learn that she will escape, for she is heartbroken over her forced separation from Achille. In Act V Scene I, she makes the paradoxical statement to her confidant that her father has freed her body only to kill her heart: "Mon père, en me sauvant, ordonne que j'expire" (V.i 1502). The king's hatred for Achille has hardened him to the happiness of the beloved daughter he is risking his kingdom to save. He has finally chosen to act as a father, only to morph into a tyrannical father! I firmly believe that this pride has a profound influence on Agamemnon's un-kingly behavior during the ceremony. Inasmuch as he cannot bear the thought of Iphigénie's death (a sentiment that he has expressed repeatedly throughout the play), neither can he bring himself to come to his rival's aid or speak in his favor when the latter creates an opportunity to save her.

Which brings us finally to the title character herself, who has arguably the greatest influence on her father's submission to his physical body. The spectator meets Iphigénie in Act II Scene II, where she greets Agamemnon with lavish praise for his accomplishments. She is genuinely thrilled to see her father again:

Quel plaisir de vous voir et de vous contempler

Dans ce nouvel éclat dont je vous vois briller !

Quels honneurs ! Quel pouvoir ! Déjà la renommée

Par d'étonnants récits m'en avait informée ;

> Mais que voyant de près ce spectacle charmant,
> Je sens croître ma joie et mon étonnement !
> Dieux ! avec quel amour la Grèce vous révère !
> Quel bonheur de me voir la fille d'un tel père ! (II.ii 539-46)

Agamemnon, meanwhile, has just re-committed to sacrifice her in the wake of Ulysse's persuasion (390-91), and Iphigénie's display of affection is rubbing salt on his wounds and intensifying his paternal guilt. He tries to dismiss her, and she becomes petulant, asking him to be a father instead of a king: "N'osez-vous sans rougir être père un moment?" (II.ii 559). These are just the words that the wavering monarch does not need to hear – he is already having enough difficulty with his decision! However, this is the only time she pushes back against him. Once Iphigénie learns the true reason behind her presence in Aulide, her attitude changes completely. She transforms from bubbly schoolgirl, in awe of her father and hurt by his preoccupation with the responsibilities of kingship, to become Agamemnon's sole supporter in the face of his tragic dilemma. Unlike Clytemnestre, Iphigénie understands that the outcome of an entire war depends on her death. She is aware of the glorious futures for which both her father and her lover are destined, and she is willing to accept her fate in order to ensure their respective *gloires*.[156] As André Cheyns notes, she is able to rise above her own self:[157]

> Pour Iphigénie, enfin, l'oracle est l'occasion de manifester ses qualités de princesse…D'autres valeurs sont plus appréciables que la douceur de vivre et méritent que l'on affronte la mort sans trembler: l'honneur et la gloire de la famille, le respect et l'obéissance qu'elle doit à son père, et l'amour qui l'unit à son bien-aimé. (22)

[156] In this respect, Iphigénie can be compared to Andromaque, who chooses to ensure the survival of Astyanax at the expense of her own life.
[157] For a complementary perspective on Iphigénie's rejection of self, see also Racevskis, *Tragic Passages* (155).

Whereas Agamemnon, the sovereign, hesitates and allows his decision to be influenced by others, Iphigénie remains constant in the face of persuasion. For example, in spite of her love for Achille, she refuses his final offer to protect her in Act V Scene II:

> Songez, Seigneur, songez à ces moissons de gloire
> Qu'à vos vaillantes mains présente la victoire.
> Ce champ si glorieux où vous aspirez tous,
> Si mon sang ne l'arrose, est stérile pour vous. (V.ii 1537-40)

She does not relent to the repeated protestations of her mother and her lover – the same cries that have instilled fear, anger, and indecision in her father do not sway Iphigénie! She goes to the altar of her own volition, armed with the knowledge that she is ultimately serving the Greek cause. Her resignation overrides Agamemnon's indecision: she becomes the sovereign that he cannot be. In this sense, it can be argued that she humbly assumes the political body when she commands Eurybate to escort her offstage to die (1662). This gesture certainly assures the tragic impact of the play on the audience: Iphigénie's bravery and devotion in the face of death elicit admiration and pity, unleashing the "torrents de larmes" among Louis XIV's courtiers for which Racine's tragedy became immediately famous.[158]

Whereas Agamemnon is present in thirteen of the thirty-one scenes contained in Acts I-IV of *Iphigénie*, it is important to notice that he does not have any lines in the fifth act. His presence at the ceremony is noted by Eurybate in V.iii and by Arcas in V.v, but his absence from the stage confirms that this high king is no longer in power. In reaction to the pressure bearing down on him from all sides, Agamemnon essentially shuts down. Unable to decide for himself whether to defy the gods or violate natural law, and thwarted in his two solo attempts to handle

[158] Citation from Barbier d'Aucour as noted by Sylvaine Guyot in her notice of *Iphigénie* (730).

the situation,[159] the king of kings responds by completely relinquishing any semblance of sovereign authority. Calchas, the great Oz of *Iphigénie*, the mouthpiece of the gods, (whose "presence" in the play is all the more ominous because he never actually appears onstage, as John Campbell remarks[160]), has taken over and united the entire army against Iphigénie, as Eurybate confirms to Clytemnestre:

> Ce n'est plus un vain peuple en désordre assemblé ;
>
> C'est d'un zèle fatal tout le camp aveuglé.
>
> Plus de pitié. Calchas seul règne, seul commande :
>
> La piété sévère exige son offrande.
>
> Le roi de son pouvoir se voit déposséder,
>
> Et lui−même au torrent nous contraint de céder. (V.iii 1619-24)

Agamemnon is now a silent bystander to the gods' representative and his daughter's acceptance. His wife's response to his failure to reign, either as a father or a king, sums up the audience's sentiments as well: "Par quelle trahison le cruel m'a décue!" (V.iii 1653) Agamemnon's surrender of his sovereignty in the *res publica* and the *res privata* is indeed disappointing. Even when Achille rushes onstage to stop Calchas, Agamemnon does not intervene (either on the priest's behalf or his daughter's!). Instead, Arcas paints a shameful portrait of the weak king:

> Achille est à l'autel. Calchas est éperdu.
>
> Le fatal sacrifice est encor suspendu.
>
> On se menace, on court, l'air gémit, le fer brille.
>
> Achille fait ranger autour de votre fille
>
> Tous ses amis, pour lui prêts à se dévouer.

[159] Arcas unveils the false marriage scheme in Act III, and Ériphile reveals the secret plot for Iphigénie to escape in Act IV.
[160] See Campbell 218.

> Le triste Agamemnon, qui n'ose l'avouer,
> Pour détourner ses yeux des meurtres qu'il présage,
> Ou pour cacher ses pleurs, s'est voilé le visage. (V.v 1699-1706)

In a pathetic gesture that echoes Euripides's original version of the tragedy, Agamemnon hides his face and says nothing while the drama unfolds around him. By covering his face, he symbolically announces his "choice" to disengage from the theater within the theater. Ehsan Ahmed comments that, at the end of *Iphigénie*, Agamemnon's nonspeaking role is stripped of any function:

> Agamemnon's silence constitutes the space between father and king, a state of indecision which finally leaves the most powerful stripped of all authority. In distinct contrast to Euripides' portrayal of the king, Racine's Agamemnon is displaced from the "play" that he helped to stage. His place in the tragedy becomes senseless, because he can no longer speak. (582)

I agree with Ahmed that the end of *Iphigénie* is extremely problematic from a sovereignty perspective. When the curtain closes, Agamemnon is still king in name – Ulysse prepares Clytemnestre to receive his daughter from the joined hands of her husband and Achille, newly allied after Ériphile's shocking self-sacrifice:

> Des mains d'Agamemnon venez la recevoir.
> Venez : Achille et lui, brûlant de vous revoir,
> Madame, et désormais tous deux d'intelligence,
> Sont prêts à confirmer leur auguste alliance. (V.vi 1787-90)

The gods have been appeased, the winds have returned, and the fleet can now leave for Troy. But this "happy ending" owes no gratitude to sovereign *volonté*. Agamemnon is released of any

responsibility in the *dénouement* because of the actions of Achille and Ériphile. Achille's violent intervention attracts the attention of the gods to the drama unfolding below: "Mais, quoique seul pour elle, Achille furieux / Epouvantait l'armée et partageait les dieux" (V.vi 1735-36). This causes them to re-evaluate the situation and clarify their position through the voice of Calchas, who announces that: "Une autre sang d'Hélène, une autre Iphigénie" (V.vi 1745) will take the princess's place. Hélène's secret daughter Ériphile does not give either Achille, Calchas, or Agamemnon the opportunity to execute her sentence. Empowered (and enraged) by her newfound identity, she accomplishes the sacrifice herself by plunging the sacred dagger into her own chest. It is thus by the actions of other characters that Agamemnon's sovereign status is handed back to him, just as it has been the actions of other characters that have dictated his behavior throughout the play. He has done nothing to merit the political position Racine allows him to maintain.

Agamemnon's troubling inability to rule over his physical body ultimately detracts from the tragic dimension of *Iphigénie*. If he had chosen to act as a father and defy the gods, they may have intervened in his favor, as they did for Achille. On the other hand, if he had chosen to sacrifice her and remain loyal to his political duty, they may have taken pity on him and rewarded his faithfulness. Instead, he abandons his roles as both father and king and loses sympathy with the audience.

Jean-Marie Apostolidès states in *Le prince sacrifié* that at the end of *Iphigénie*, Agamemnon is: "vraiment le monarque, reconnu du ciel et da la terre" (116). Apostolidès claims that the sacrifice of Ériphile successfully severs the *corps politique* from the *corps physique*, so that Agamemnon will heretofore be able to act independently from his role as a father (which will by occupied by Achille). This is an argument with which I respectfully disagree.

Agamemnon finishes neither as a true sovereign nor as a tyrant, but as a puppet king with multiple parties holding the strings. He is only saved from being dispossessed of his sovereign status by the fortuitous death of Ériphile. As my analysis has demonstrated, this wavering king-character has been consistently manipulated throughout the play, a characteristic that diminishes his sovereignty, ultimately causing him to lose dignity and thereby decreasing the tragic effectiveness of *Iphigénie*.

Conclusion

As a final note to this chapter, I would like to point out an important difference in the representation of the transgressive sovereign in Racinian tragedy as opposed to Baroque tragedy. Compared to the three passionate king-characters described in Chapter 2 ("Le Roi", Hérode, and Cléopâtre), Racine's three monarchs are equally incapable of assuming their political bodies. But neither do they succeed in reigning according to their physical bodies. For example, when Pyrrhus chooses to blindly pursue his consuming love for Andromaque, he is immediately killed, setting off a series of tragic political repercussions. In a similar fashion, Mithridate's submission to jealous curiosity leads to his own physical death, and only in his final moments is he able to briefly (and movingly) re-claim his sovereign status in order to relinquish it to his son Xipharès. Finally, Agamemnon, caught between his physical and political bodies, essentially ceases to exist, blending in with the tearful spectators of *Iphigénie*. None of these kings succeed in fully transforming into a monstrous, passion-driven tyrant like the ones we encountered in the earlier plays. In my opinion, this indicates the increased humanity of the Racinian king-character: he has evolved to become more complex than the Baroque illusion of sovereignty. Rather than being portrayed as two sides of a coin contained within a single being – the sovereign and his other, the tyrant – the physical and political bodies are harder to disntinguish from one another.

The king's passions and his person have become, as Senault specifies in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain*, intrinsically linked.[161] Whereas *Cinna*'s Octave/Auguste was able to overcome his physical body without damaging the political, the Racinian characters cannot escape their humanity. This conflict between *corps physique* and *corps politique* is further reinforced by the way in which Racine portrays each of these individual king-chracters onstage. Pyrrhus's authoritative voice falters in the presence of Andromaque, betraying his consuming love for her. Mithridate's speaks his noble declaration of Xipharès's succession while he lies dying, drenched in blood. As Arcas appropriately tells Agamemnon in the first scene of *Iphigénie*: "Mais parmi tant d'honneurs, vous êtes homme enfin" (I.i 32). The passionate sovereign remains essential to the tragic success of Racinian theatre, as the king-character becomes increasingly engaged in a losing struggle against a physical body that has become inseparable from the political.

[161] See Chapter 1 page 39 of the present study.

CONCLUSION: ON THE FOOLISHNESS OF FATHERS

In this dissertation, I have attempted to analyze the evolution of the representation of the transgressive sovereign over half a century: in Baroque and Racinian tragedy, from 1623 (*Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé*) to 1674 (*Iphigénie*). I have endeavored to demonstrate that the idea of the king's double body remains an important element in the determination of tragic drama throughout the French seventeenth century. In each of the plays I have discussed in this study, the king-character's transgression against his political body actively contributes to its catharsis. My literary analyses have emphasized that the failure of the king-character to overcome his physical body is a recurring motif in both Baroque and Racinian tragedy. In this sense, the shared thematic of the passionate monarch unites these two dominant aesthetic currents of seventeenth-century tragic drama, forging a connection by linking the performance of tragedy to the idea of sovereignty, which I have thoroughly examined in light of sixteenth and seventeenth-century treatises.

Jean Racine states in his Préface to *Phèdre* (1677) that the sole purpose of passions in his tragedy is to provoke disorder: "Les passions n'y sont présentées aux yeux que pour montrer tout le désordre dont elles sont causes" (Guyot/Viala 832). Disorder is critical to the success of the tragic representation—without it, there would be no terror or pity—and no tragedy. And when we consider the sensibility of the seventeenth-century audience, who would not have been receptive to chaotic displays of rebellion or violence, passion provides the most effective vehicle to deliver the disorder that triggers catharsis by means of the purgation of pity and fear. In the case of the tragic king-character, his yielding to passions consistently generates disorder by

perverting the justice he is supposed to incarnate. Since the absolute monarch embodies the state, as I have explained in my first chapter, the interference of his physical body with the function of his political body subverts the social order he solely represents, inspiring fear. When sovereign authority submits to the volatility of human desire, whether this passion takes the form of lust, romantic love, ambition, jealousy, insecurity, or indecision, the uncertainty that results is universally terrifying. Corneille, Théophile de Viau, Tristan L'Hermite, and Racine all effectively communicate a sense of this fear to ensure the cathartic success of their tragedies, as Aristotle intended in his *Poetics*. The passionate king-character also evokes pity among the spectators in both Baroque and Racinian tragedy, either by creating a piteous situation for the victims of his passion, as in *Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé* and *Iphigénie*, and/or by causing the audience to pity the tormented monarch's own human vulnerability, as in *La Marianne* and *Mithridate*. In all six plays, the failure of the king to assume his political body is at least partially responsible for eliciting the emotions that are essential to catharsis.

And yet, as the king-character routinely contributes to the success of tragedy throughout the seventeenth century, his tragic avatar also evolves in accordance with the developing image of the king's political body. I explained in the first chapter of this study that the Early Modern theoretical texts seek to define sovereign power and place it fully in the person of the monarch, creating an image of the ideal ruler. Once the sovereign's political body is firmly established, the focus shifts from the validation of royal power to the instruction of the prince to reject the desires of his human body in order to assume and maintain the integrity of his political body. This evolution of ideas manifests itself in the development of the king-character from Baroque tragedy to Classical tragedy.

To confirm this hypothesis, I shall make a final comparison between Viau's "Le Roi" (*Les amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé*, 1623) and Racine's Agamemnon (*Iphigénie*, 1674). Among the six king-characters presented in this study (seven if we include *Cinna's* Octave/Auguste), "Le Roi" and Agamemnon are arguably the two least admirable, for completely different reasons – the former is a merciless tyrant, and the latter is weak. "Le Roi" claims undisputed political authority in his realm, declaring himself exempt from the law, (including, implicitly, from natural law, from which no monarch should be exempt according to all theories of kingship) and equal with the gods. The only condition imposed on his sovereignty is his own tyrannizing passion for Thisbé. Whereas his character's "name" implies power, his conduct represents the antithesis of *le bon plaisir du roi*. He is a physical body reigning in the guise of an absolute political body. "Le Roi" is the inverse image of the ideal sovereign as described by the juricentric political theorists.

When we consider Racine's Agamemnon, on the other hand, his sovereign authority as High King is threatened by both internal and external factors. Not only must he contend with his own love for his daughter, a clear "symptom" of the physical body, but he also falls victim to the influence of fellow kings, family members, and religious leaders, including his formidable potential son-in-law Achille. While "Le Roi" acts decisively and without regret (albeit in pursuit of his personal interests), Agamemnon's character is incapable of upholding a sovereign decision. He is engaged in a human struggle. According to Jean-François Senault in *Le Monarque, ou les devoirs du souverain*, the king must emerge victorious from the clash of physical and political bodies, but Agamemnon ultimately fails to prevail as either High King or father, because he cannot separate the opposing poles of his double body. What I have endeavored to demonstrate through my consecutive analyses of seventeenth-century tragedies is

that the transgressive king-character serves as a progressive representation of who the king *is not* that reflects the changing idea of sovereignty in order to glorify the true king as he is, particularly since Classical tragedy functions as the prime propaganda machine for the reign of Louis XIV.

But just as any evolutionary process is by definition never truly complete, the portrayal of the king-character in tragedy continues to evolve beyond Racine. This is why I would like to conclude my study with a *fin en ouverture*, expanding the scope of my current research in two complementary directions. First, I propose a chronological extension of this project in order to examine the portrayal of the passionate monarch in Post-Classical tragedy (1680-1720), which will complete the reign of Louis XIV and provide a possible segue into eighteenth-century (pre-Enlightenment) texts. I also plan to inversely apply the theories of sovereignty proposed in the first chapter of this dissertation in a parallel study on seventeenth-century comedy that will address the role of the bourgeois father in Molièrian theatre.

Guy Spielmann states in the prologue of his 2002 book *Le Jeu de l'Ordre et du Chaos: comédie et pouvoirs à la fin du règne* that the theatre of the second half of the reign of Louis XIV goes largely unacknowledged, "repoussé dans les marges" (19). The majority of the plays attributed to "Le Grand Siècle" only represent the first two decades of the Sun King's personal reign, which would continue for another twenty-five years after the publication of Racine's final tragedy, *Athalie* (1690). And yet, according to Spielmann, the creative production of this underrated literary period possesses its own aesthetic that refutes its marginalization by contemporary literary critics. In agreement with Spielmann, I would like to support his argument by exploring the evolution of the king-character in Post-Classical tragedy, which can serve as a testament to this period's singularity, particularly since it bears witness to the rupture of the adherence to *bienséances* that had dictated the action of the plays of Corneille and Racine. As

public enthusiasm for Classical theatre waned during the final decades of the seventeenth century and the bourgeoisie began to gain influence, the forbidden *topoi* of violence and immorality were gradually reintroduced to the stage. Nowhere is this development more apparent than in Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon's *Atrée et Thyeste*, first performed at the Comédie Française in 1707. In this grisly reimagining of the Greek myth, Atrée, the king of Argos, is resolved to avenge the adultery of his queen Aérope with his estranged brother Thyeste. In order to accomplish his vengeance, Atrée has raised Plisthène (the love child of Thyeste and Aérope) to adulthood as the sole heir to his throne while secretly plotting his death and the death of Thyeste. He rejects his own legitimate offspring to nurture his diabolical ruse, then assassinates his virtuous successor, intentionally subjecting his kingdom to an unstable future of interregnum. Crébillon's Atrée is a monstrous tyrant who, like the Baroque anti-sovereigns described in the second chapter of this study, willfully perverts his sovereign power to pursue his personal vengeance. In a sense, Atrée echoes Viau's "Le Roi" and Corneille's Cléopâtre, because he shows no remorse about his submission to the passions of his physical body. He combines "Le Roi's" shameless cruelty with Cléopâtre's infanticidal tendencies. But unlike these Baroque tyrants, Crébillon gives Atrée *carte blanche* to enact his long-meditated revenge plot onstage. Whereas Le Roi openly desires to murder the innocent Pyrame but is never successful, Atrée kills Plisthène and serves the infamous "coupe de sang" to his brother Thyeste in the final scene.[162] And unlike Cléopâtre in *Rodogune*, who dies in agony (offstage) after killing Séleucus and attempting to poison Antiochus, Atrée's atrocities go unpunished. He is triumphant at the end of the play, reveling in the realization of his revenge as the curtain falls. As this very brief description suggests, the

[162] The onstage presentation of the bloody cup, while considered unsettling at the time, is still much less gruesome than the original Greek myth, in which Atreus serves Pleisthenes's cooked flesh to an oblivious Thyestes at a "reconciliation feast," and allows his brother to gorge himself before informing him that he has just eaten his own son.

Post-Classical liberation of the dramaturge from *bienséances* allows for a whole new breed of tragic king-character,[163] one that certainly merits further study.

In the same way as the importance of the sovereign's double body endures past the height of French absolutism into early eighteenth century tragedy, it transcends the boundaries of tragic mimesis to create its own avatar in comedy. Not only has my literary research in Baroque and Racinian drama inspired me to venture into Post-Classical tragedy, it has also challenged me to undertake a future book-length study in which I will return to the seventeenth century to analyze the role of the king-character's counterpart in the *res privata*, the comic father. As I specified in my first chapter and reiterated in my analysis of Agamemnon in Racine's *Iphigénie*, the concept of the king is irrevocably linked to the natural example of the father. According to Roman law (which was rigorously evaluated by the French political theorists, especially Bodin), the *pater familias* should have undisputed authority over the members of his household, including the right over life and death, just as a monarch should have absolute power over his subjects. The notion of the father as sovereign is subsequently reinforced by the Biblical origins of the definition of divinely inspired kingship. Christian Biet identifies that in the seventeenth century, the father and the king are united by their shared responsibility to God as earthly representations of his eternal authority: "Le père et le roi, liés par essence au Père souverain, ne pouvaient supporter qu'on attentât à leur puissance, ni à leurs jours" (9). Just as the absolute monarch must act according to the justice of his political body in the best interest of his people, the father should make decisions to ensure the prosperity of his children and the perpetuation of his family name. And as I have demonstrated over the course of this dissertation, when a king-character does not properly exercise his sovereign authority or falls victim to the passions of his physical body, his

[163] Crébillon's *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* (1711), is even bloodier, featuring even more perverted and murderous king-characters, as far away from *bienséances* as one can imagine.

transgression brings about tragic consequences. However, in the comic genre, when a father-character fails to fulfill his responsibilities as "sovereign" of the household, the end result is laughter. This seeming aberration can be explained by the difference between the *res publica* (public sphere, affair of state) and the *res privata* (private family sphere). As Bodin specifies in *Les Six livres de la République*, the *pater familias*'s sovereignty does not extend beyond the boundaries of the household. When a father leaves his home, he ceases to be a sovereign and becomes a public subject:

> Or quand le chef de famille vient à sortir de la maison où il commande pour traiter et négocier avec les autres chefs de famille, de ce qui leur touche à tous en général, alors il dépouille le titre de maître, de chef, de seigneur, pour être compagnon, pair et associé avec les autres; laissant sa famille, pour entrer en la cité; et les affaires domestiques, pour traiter les publiques; et au lieu de seigneur, il s'appelle citoyen; qui n'est autre chose en propres termes, que le franc sujet tenant de la souveraineté d'autrui. (I.vi, 111-112)

For this reason, the transgressions of the father do not affect anyone but the members of his own family. Because Molière's plays take place inside bourgeois homes rather than in royal palaces, the confines of the *res privata* diminish the tragic impact of the father's misconduct. Furthermore, despite the fact that his submission to passions, if unchecked, would lead to the family's ruin (in the words of Francis Assaf: "Toute comédie est enceinte d'une tragédie"), the other characters successfully intercept and deflect any potentially disastrous consequences of the comic father's foolish actions.

In my proposed partner study, I plan to analyze four representations of the passionate father in Molièrian comedy – Harpagon from *L'Avare* (1668), Orgon from *Le Tartuffe* (1669),

M. Jourdain from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670), and Argan from *Le malade imaginaire* (1673). Each of these fathers has his own overarching mania – money, piety, social standing, and hypochondria – and they are all so dominated by their respective obsessions that they prioritize their personal satisfaction over the well-being of their children, most specifically by arranging or wishing for ill-fitting marriages with parties that respond to the father's perverted needs rather than the child's. They categorically abuse their sovereign authority within the family unit. Thankfully, these tyrannical fathers are not as discerning as a monarch should be, since they are blinded by trivial passions. As such, they allow themselves to be manipulated by their family members, and they all get their comeuppance by means of the happy marriage of their child/ren, which they had originally opposed for selfish reasons. Whereas the king-character functions as the motor of seventeenth-century tragedy because no one can thwart his power, the motor of comic action is not the father-character, but rather his entourage.

Through the continuation of my research and analysis of the representation of the king's double body, I strive to illuminate the undeniable link between sovereignty and theatre during all phases of the French absolutist monarchical state. The theatrical representation of the sovereign's double body cannot be confined to a single playwright, or to a single artistic and aesthetic classification, or even to tragedy alone. Not only does this onstage clash of passion and sovereignty, of *corps physique* and *corps politique*, complement and synthesize the theatrical genre of the French seventeenth-century, but it also provides a legitimate perspective on the interaction of literature with history, political theory, and ideology.

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