Tragedy and the Ethics of Resistance Rights in Early Modern French Theater

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Dedication

For my brothers, Ben and Jeff,
who have long been faithful partners in conversation and curiosity

Abstract

In Robert Garnier's tragedy *Les Juives* (1583), King Nabuchodonosor makes a grand entrance, singing his own praises: "I walk like the Gods, and from the shining sun's rise until its set, none can match my Royal splendor." Nabuchodonosor's blindness to any limitations on his power marks him as a tyrant. In early modern France, identifying tyrannical excess and distinguishing it from the proper exercise of sovereignty was crucial because while subjects had a duty to obey the sovereign, they also had the right to resist a tyrant. During the French Wars of Religion (1562-98), theologians and political theorists vigorously debated the limits and possibilities of what historians have since identified as the *droit de résistance.* This dissertation argues that early modern tragedy participated in and extended these debates. Although Protestants and Catholics disagreed on theological matters during the sixteenth-century religious wars, they shared a tendency to link individual and collective justifications for resistance to tyranny. Protestants and Catholics alike identified the individual's subjective relationship to the divine as ground on which the sovereign should not tread. Likewise, Protestants and Catholics connected the vindication of the individual's subjective freedom to concerns about collective authority and communal salvation**.** In the aftermath of the religious wars, debate about the *droit de résistance* diminished, as absolutist theories and practices relegated freedom of conscience to the private realm and separated it from questions of the public good. Dramas by Robert Garnier, Jean de Rotrou, Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, however, picked up and reintegrated these questions. Attending to how tragedies

that were first composed, performed, and published between 1570 and 1700 maintain ties between personal complaint and collective lament, I demonstrate how the *droit de résistance* enjoyed a long afterlife in early modern theater. By locating the *droit de résistance*'s persistence in tragedy, I suggest that this genre carries a political concern that has been under-examined. Whereas tragedy has long been read as a genre that is ultimately preoccupied with the exercise of sovereign power, this dissertation underscores how tragedy rehearses and reimagines the possible forms of legitimate opposition.

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Introduction: The Emergence and Afterlife of the Early Modern *Droit de Résistance*

In 1793, Gilbert Romme, a deputy to the French Legislative Assembly from Puy-le-Dôme, was tasked with analyzing proposals for a new declaration of rights. Many of these proposals included a right to resistance from oppression or tyranny. There was some disagreement, however, about the nature of such a right. Some proposals suggested that the "droit de la résistance à l'oppression" should be considered a "moyen legal."[1] According to this approach, the terms and conditions of resistance would be inscribed into the legal norms of the state. In other words, it would ultimately be up to the state to determine which claims of resistance were legal and legitimate. Other proposals took an opposing view, insisting that the right to resist oppression should not be considered a right in the legal sense. Instead, they argued that resistance from oppression was a duty, which should remain "délégalisé."[2] Writing on April 17, Romme seems to endorse the latter view, stating that the right of resistance or insurrection was not a legal right, but rather, "un droit religieux et sacré qui émane de la souvraineté populaire."[3] He argues, however, that this sacred right or duty should be included in official documents as a warning against the possibility of oppression by officers of the law.

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[1] Alessandro Fontana, "Du droit de résistance au devoir de l'insurrection," *Le Droit de résistance, XII^e^-XX^e^ siècle,* ed. Jean-Claude Zancarini (Fontenay Saint-Cloud: ENS Éditions, 2000), 21.

[2] It is Maximilien de Robespierre who uses the word "délegalisé" when describing the nature of the right of resistance to oppression. Article XXX of the constitution that he proposed in April 1793 also states: "Assujettir à des formes légales la résistance à l'oppression, est le dernier raffinement de la tyrannie." Fontana points out that the divergent conceptions of the relationship between resistance and the law marks a difference in the political philosophies of the Girondin and Jacobin factions. Whereas the Girondin proposals envisaged the need to place limits on claims to the *droit de résistance* in order to maintain social order, their Jacobin counterparts maintained that putting such limits in place would be antithetical to this right's fundamental character as an unregulated safeguard against the law itself. For the Jacobins, Fontana explains, the "droit de résistance est devenu…l'insurrection pure et simple" (22).

[3] Quoted in Fontana, 22.

Romme also suggests that the right of resistance or of insurrection should be commemorated in a more spectacular way. He writes: "En reconnaissance et pour donner une leçon aux nations et aux générations futures, une statue devrait être élévée à l'insurrection, et placée comme une sentinelle auprès de la statue de la liberté, afin de rappeler au peuple ses droits, et aux ambitieux le châtiment qui attend les usurpateurs."[4] Romme most likely refers to the statue of liberty that was erected in 1792 to replace an equestrian statue of Louis XV.[5] The statue of liberty, which stood at the Place de la Révolution, was a key fixture in several revolutionary festivals and processions, such as the *Fête de l'Unité et de l'Indivisibilité de la République*.[6] While emblems of liberty remained central to revolutionary iconography, emblems of insurrection or resistance seem to have met a different fate. Romme's proposed statue of insurrection, which would have stood as a twin sentinel alongside that of liberty, was never constructed.

The different fates of these two statues parallel the divergent fates of the concepts they commemorate. The declaration of a right to liberty, or to individual freedom is often celebrated as central to the Revolution's legacy, along with rights of property and security. In contrast, the declaration of the people's right to resist is not often cited among the Revolution's great achievements. Although the *droit de résistance* was the subject of much debate for the revolutionary deputies, and although it was mentioned in foundational documents such as the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*

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[4] Quoted in Fontana, 22.
[5] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 96-7.
[6] Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 180-81.

(1789), the right of resistance remained more of a political possibility than a clearly delineated legal concept.[7] Romme's unconstructed statue thus serves as a fitting monument to the *droit de résistance* as an idea. Unlike a physical statue of wood, stone, or metal, this monument exists only through its potentiality. Romme's proposed statue suggests that in order to account for the *droit de résistance,* we must look beyond the rights and freedoms that the law clearly codifies, and beyond the monuments that celebrate these rights and freedoms. In order to account for the *droit de résistance* we must examine political possibilities that remain hypothetical and tentative, and explore the cultural sites and modes of expression that commemorate these possibilities. It is through hypothetical declarations and theoretical monuments that the *droit de résistance* persists.

This dissertation argues that early modern political tragedy serves as a kind of theoretical monument to the *droit de résistance* by participating in a debate about this right that precedes the revolutionary deputies' dispute. During the French Wars of Religion (1562-98), theologians and political theorists from both the Protestant and the Catholic sides of the confessional divide claimed the right of resistance in order to justify opposition to the monarchy's authority. These oppositional claims took on a very particular structure. Although Protestants and Catholics disagreed on theological matters during the religious wars, they shared a tendency to link individual and collective justifications for resistance. Theorists and theologians of both confessions identified the

[7] Article II of the *Déclaration* states, "Le but de toute association politique est la conservation des droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l'homme. Ces droits sont la liberté, la propriété, la sûreté et la résistance à l'oppression," Assemblée Nationale. *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* [1789]*, Les Droits de l'Homme,* ed. Jean-Jacques Gandini (Paris: Librio, 1998), 21.

individual subject's relationship to the divine as ground on which the sovereign should not tread. Likewise, Protestants and Catholics similarly linked the vindication of the individual subject's freedom to notions of popular sovereignty.[8] For both sides of the conflict, to claim the *droit de résistance* was thus to claim a connection between subjective liberty and collective authority.[9] The specific contours of this connection, however, remained highly contested. Many sixteenth-century texts provide accounts of this theoretical connection between subjective liberty and collective authority, from sermons to pamphlets, from theological tracts to political treatises. What is less clear in these texts, however, is how such a theoretical connection could shape and structure the physical and emotional interactions between individual subjects and collectives. *Tragedy and the Ethics of Resistance Rights in Early Modern French Theater* suggests that dramas by Robert Garnier, Jean de Rotrou, Pierre Corneille, and Jean Racine, which were first composed, performed, and published between 1570 and 1700, bring the *droit de*

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[8] Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "individual subject" to denote a single member of a collective. This term is in dialogue with many other terms that will appear in the following chapters. In sixteenth-century resistance theory, a single member of a people is often referred to as a *singuli* in Latin, and a *particulier*, or *homme privé* in French. English translations and critical studies of sixteenth-century resistance theory tend to render these terms as "private subject," "private person," or "private citizen." While I often use these terms while discussing Huguenot and Catholic resistance theory, I tend to use "individual subject" more broadly. "Individual subject" better captures how the attributes and capacities ascribed to single members of collectives often exceed the limits of these single members and attach them to others. At times, when discussing the dual structure of the *droit de résistance*, I use the phrase "individual and collective claims" to avoid the slightly more wieldy "claims of individual subjects and collectives." I use a number of adjectives more or less interchangeably to describe the attributes, capacities, and claims of individual subjects: "particular," "personal," "specific," "singular," and "subjective." I use the term "private" to describe a claim or a space that is explicitly positioned in opposition to a public claim or space. Finally, it is important to note that in this study, the "individual subject" is not the "modern subject" or "modern individual." Whereas the modern subject or individual is considered to be autonomous and detached, the "individual subject" remains constitutively bound to others.

[9] I will discuss the differences between Huguenot resistance theories and those of their Catholic counterparts in greater detail in the pages that follow. For an overview of resistance theories in early modern France, as well as in early modern Europe more broadly, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. 2, The Age of Reformation* [1978] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 190-358.

résistance's political potential more fully into relief by demonstrating how individual subjects and collectives are physically and affectively bound together, and by emphasizing how these entities are implicated in each other's oppositional claims.

In addition to elaborating the particular ways in which the *droit de résistance* configures the relationships between individual subjects and collectives, the tragedies examined in this study also complicate accounts of the *droit de résistance*'s history within early modern thought. Whereas the *droit de résistance* was frequently claimed and hotly debated during the religious wars, claims to this right diminished in the wars' aftermath and much of the debate subsided. As Paul Scott has noted, in the passage from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, "the political orthodoxy" shifted increasingly toward absolutism.[10] This shift in political orthodoxy made opposition to the monarchy's authority more difficult to justify. During the sixteenth century, to claim the *droit de résistance* was to claim that the monarch has failed to uphold divine law, and had thus rendered his rule illegitimate. When theories of absolutism came to dominate political thought during the seventeenth century, however, claims that the monarch had failed to uphold divine law were rendered theoretically impossible. Seventeenth-century theorists of absolutism maintained that the king has unique access to divine direction.[11] Subjects were thus in no position to question whether the monarch upholds divine law, or to make legitimate charges of tyranny.

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[10] Paul Scott, "Resistance Theories, Orthodoxy and Subversion in Early Modern French Studies," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 21.1 (1999): 57-74.

[11] See, for example, Cardin Le Bret, *De la souveraineté du roy* (1632) and Pierre Le Moyne, *De l'art de regner*" (1665). On the rise of absolutist theory during the seventeenth century, see Ellen McClure, *Sunspots and the Sun King: Sovereignty and Mediation in Seventeenth-Century France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

As theories of absolutism became increasingly dominant during the seventeenth century, the *droit de résistance* seems to have so thoroughly disappeared from French political thought that the debate about this concept during the eighteenth-century Revolution had to take its terms from other national traditions. Fontana argues that the revolutionary deputies were more in dialogue with debates surrounding the English Civil War and the American Revolution than those surrounding the religious wars in France.[12] The absolutist seventeenth century thus seems to mark a moment of rupture in the history of the French *droit de résistance. Tragedy and the Ethics of Resistance Rights* seeks to complicate this view of the seventeenth century as a period of rupture by suggesting that tragedy continued to explore the limits and possibilities of the *droit de résistance,* even after theories of absolutism gained theoretical hegemony.

To read tragedies by Garnier, Rotrou, Corneille, and Racine as works that sustain the *droit de résistance* is to suggest that these dramas carry a political concern that has been under-examined. Seventeenth-century tragedy in particular has long been read as a genre that is ultimately concerned with the exercise of sovereign power, and with absolutism in particular.[13] Several scholars have examined how Louis XIII's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, sought control over dramatic production and printing in order to secure the theater as a site that reinforced the king's strength. When viewed as a genre with close ties to the king, tragedy seems to support a theory of absolute monarchy, whether it stages strong or weak sovereigns, whether it offers portraits of good kings or

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[12] Fontana, 18-19.

[13] On tragedy's relationship to absolutism, see Timothy Murray, "Richelieu's Theater: The Mirror of a Prince, *Renaissance Drama* 8 (1977): 275-97, and Déborah Blocker, *Instituer un 'art': Politiques du théâtre dans la France du premier XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009).

bad tyrants. Tragedies that feature strong, just kings are thought to reflect the actual monarch's glory. In contrast, tragedies that feature weak kings or bad tyrants serve as negative examples that underscore the actual monarch's glory.

More recently, scholars have called attention to the ways in which tragic theater exposes the fissures and contradictions in absolutist theory. Hélène Bilis argues that dramas by Rotrou and Corneille disrupt fictions of dynastic continuity that are projected by ceremonies of royal succession.[14] For her part, Ellen McClure explores how the figure of the diplomat in Corneille and Racine's theater challenges absolutist conceptions of the king as a singular source of power.[15] Other scholars have worked to complicate tragedy's long-standing association with absolutism by exploring the genre's relationship to other forms of political thought and action. Katherine Ibbett, for example, argues that Corneille's drama raises questions about the maintenance of power, and thus gives strong expression to a political philosophy that is typically associated with the writing of Machiavelli.[16] Together, these recent studies insist that tragedy does not merely promote fantasies of absolute monarchs, but also places absolutism, as well as other theories of sovereignty and power, into question.

Tragedy and the Ethics of Resistance Rights participates in the critical effort to broaden our understanding of tragedy's relationship to sovereign power. However, this dissertation moves away from an examination of the different forms of kinship and governance, and focuses instead how tragedy imagines the shape and structure of

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[14] Hélène Bilis, "Passing On: Dynastic Succession and the King's Body in French Tragedy, 1637-1749," Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 2008.
[15] McClure, 193-249.
[16] Katherine Ibbett, *The Style of the State in French Theater, 1630–1660* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

resistance. If tragedy were only concerned with kingship, than its only contribution to the elaboration of a *droit de résistance* would be to contain or coopt this right. Fontana explains this apparent limit, writing that tragedy's *mise en scène* of dysfunctional or unjust kings who misuse and abuse their power serves as a form of "*containment* d'un droit dangereux et de mise en garde contre les abus."[17] Recasting tragedy as a genre with a set of oppositional concerns that exist alongside its acknowledged preoccupation with sovereign power, I argue that tragedy stages the *droit de résistance* in ways that are never fully contained or reabsorbed. In order to demonstrate how tragedy both sustains and transforms the right of resistance, we must first understand how this concept emerged within early modern theological and political thought and how it structured opposition. To that end, the following section examines in more detail the major lines of debate surrounding the possibility of legitimate resistance during the religious wars. I then address how the rise of absolutism in the aftermath of the religious wars made the *droit de résistance* difficult to claim, a historical development that resulted in the virtual disappearance of this concept from political discourse. Finally, I outline how subsequent chapters locate an afterlife of the *droit de résistance* within tragedy.

Identifying Tyranny, Theorizing Resistance

In Act II, of Robert Garnier's tragedy *Les Juives* (1583), King Nabuchodonosor makes a grand entrance, singing his own praises:

Pareil aux Dieux je marche, et depuis le réveil

[17] Fontanta, 26 (original emphasis).

Du Soleil blondissant jusques à son sommeil,

Nul ne se parangonne à ma grandeur Royale.

En puissance et en biens Jupiter seul m'egale (II, 181-84).[18]

Nabuchodonosor's blindness to any divine limitations on his temporal power marks him as a tyrant. In early modern France, identifying tyrannical excess and distinguishing it from the proper exercise of sovereignty was crucial because while subjects had a duty to obey the sovereign, they also had the right to resist a tyrant. Debates about resistance during the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion were thus inextricable from debates about tyranny. It was the identification of tyranny that legitimized claims to the *droit de résistance.* Of course, the question of tyranny did not originate during the early modern period. Sixteenth-century concerns about the proper limits on the king's authority joined centuries-long discussions of what constitutes tyranny and what should be done to address it. During antiquity, republican philosophers, such as Cicero and Tacitus, outlined the dangers of tyranny and enumerated the justifications for tyrannicide.[19] Ancient literature also took up the conditions and consequences of tyranny. One of the central issues in Sophocles' *Antigone* (441 BCE), to take a famous example, is whether Creon acts in accordance with his legitimate powers as a king, or whether he unjustly exceeds these powers. In short, the problem of sovereign excess enjoys a long history.

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[18] Robert Garnier, *Les Juives,* ed. Robert Lebègue (Paris: Société Les Belles Lettres, 1949). Throughout this dissertation, I often cite editions such as Lebègue's, in which the text is modernized but retains some sixteenth-century conventions. When quoting directly from sixteenth-century editions, however, I provide my own modernizations.

[19] See, for example, Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. E.M. Atkins, trans. M.T. Griffins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Although typologies of good kings and bad tyrants differ across genres and periods, two principle forms of unjust rule consistently appear. The first, tyranny of usurpation, occurs through conquest: a foreign king who exerts control over a conquered population may be considered a tyrant. The second, tyranny by oppression or exercise, occurs through conduct: a king who legitimately inherits the throne or is elected to power, becomes a tyrant by abusing his authority.[20] What constitutes an abuse of authority? A charge frequently leveled at tyrants is that they privilege personal gain or glory over the common good. Tyrants of exercise are also identified by their tendency to mete out especially harsh punishments, which often exceed notions of justice and contradict understandings of divine or natural law. The severity of Creon's refusal to bury Polynices, for example, opens the king up to charges of tyranny. In addition to placing their own interests over the people's and to delivering excessively harsh punishments, tyrants of exercise are also known for violating the natural liberty of their subjects. In republican theories of antiquity, a citizen's innate freedom is something that a sovereign respects and a tyrant ignores.[21]

During the sixteenth century, the idea that a king would infringe upon subjective liberty took on a specifically religious dimension, in large part due to the Reformation and to the spread of Protestant theology and political theory across Europe. Martin Luther and John Calvin both stress the primacy of the individual subject's relationship to God

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[20] For more on this distinction, as well as a comprehensive typology of tyranny's forms, see Mario Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001).
[21] See J.H.M. Salmon, "Cicero and Tacitus in Sixteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 85.2 (1980): 307-31.

throughout their writing.[22] Their emphasis on the individual subject's capacity to receive divine guidance bolstered critiques of clerical hierarchy and church practices. As has been well documented, these critiques contributed to the proliferation of vernacular translations of the Bible, as well as to calls for a changes to religious services away from ceremonial displays of symbols towards more inwardly focused periods of contemplation.[23] The Reformation's shift towards the individual subject's private beliefs also affected discussions of tyranny. During this period, an individual subject's personal relationship to the divine became closely linked to the idea of freedom of conscience. A king who attempted to dictate or to circumscribe religious belief was thought to infringe upon the subject's freedom of conscience and could thus be labeled a tyrant of exercise.[24]

As the religious wars continued, the question of how to react to a tyrannical or unjust king became just as widely debated as the distinction between the king and the tyrant itself. Indeed, these two questions are often considered alongside each other in many theological and political texts. As a result, theoretical considerations of kingship and tyranny from this period also explored the limits and possibilities of opposition. Historians such as Quentin Skinner have suggested that the early modern right of resistance or *droit de résistance* emerged from these debates.[25] Elaborated over numerous sermons, pamphlets, treatises, and literary texts, the early modern *droit de résistance* took

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[22] See, for example, Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[23] On the differences between Protestant and Catholic religious practices, as well as the social and political consequences of these differences, see Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[24] On the conjunction between Reformation theology and resistance theory, see John Witte Jr., *The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[25] Skinner, 302-58.

on a particular structure that, as I have noted, linked individual and collective opposition to tyranny. As we will see, this structure represents something of a paradox, vesting the impetus for resistance in the individual subject, but the authority for resistance within the people as a whole.

In the French tradition, the individual and the collective components of the *droit de résistance* both find their roots in the writings of Calvin and his successors. In his *Institution de la religion chrétienne* (1559), Calvin argues that individual subjects owe primary allegiance to God, rather than to temporal authorities. Each subject, he maintains, possesses a spiritual freedom of conscience upon which the monarch should not infringe. Throughout the *Institution,* Calvin uses the terms *particulier* and *homme privé* when discussing the individual subject's spiritual freedom.[26] Although the *particulier* or private person may possess a spiritual, subjective freedom, a tyrannical violation of this freedom does not itself authorize resistance. In other words, for Calvin, subjective freedom does not directly translate into political rights of resistance for individual subjects. Indeed, when discussing resistance, Calvin often makes a distinction between members of the general population, or private subjects, and the lower magistrates, who hold offices within the temporal government. He argues that private subjects should not directly oppose the temporal authority of superior magistrates or kings. Instead, if these authorities threatened physical security and personal liberty, private subjects should "disobey quietly, move away quickly, or suffer patiently and prayerfully until directed

[26] John Witte Jr., who explores Calvin's contribution to early modern rights discourse, tends to use the terms "private persons," "private subjects" or "private citizens," when discussing Calvin's *particuler* or *homme privé* (39-56).

and protected by lower magistrates."[27] For Calvin, it is up to the lower magistrates (*les magistrats subalternes*) to resist or to organize the resistance of private citizens. In addition to outlining the grounds for opposition, one of Calvin's concerns is the maintenance of a well-regulated community that adheres closely to a code of Christian conduct. To authorize any private citizen to resist would be to introduce too much instability into community life.[28] By authorizing the lower magistrates to act on behalf of the wider population, however, Calvin allows for resistance to tyranny in a way that preserves the social order and avoids general revolt.

Calvin's formulations exerted a strong influence on the Huguenot resistance theory that developed in subsequent decades. Theodore de Bèze, for example, a Huguenot theologian and political theorist, took up and extended several of Calvin's arguments about legitimate opposition. In his *Du Droit des magistrats* (1574), de Bèze reiterates Calvin's conception of the individual subject's liberty of conscience. He also seconds Calvin's position that the lower magistrates should either resist on behalf of the people, or organize the people in resistance, maintaining that "[No] private citizen [*particulier*] is entitled on his own private authority to oppose the tyrant with violence against violence."[29] To authorize private persons to resist on their own behalf would be to invite chaos and instability, opening the door to the possibility of "a thousand tyrants" instead of one.[30] De Bèze's work thus reiterates the paradox already present in Calvin's

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[27] Witte Jr., 115. Witte Jr. summarizes Calvin's writing on possible modes of resistance found in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559): book 1, chapters 15-18.
[28] See, for example, Witte Jr., 47-70.
[29] Quoted in Witte Jr., 133.
[30] Quoted in Witte Jr., 133.

writing. Although the private subject possesses personal liberties and freedoms, he or she is not permitted to resist actively if a tyrant violates these liberties and freedoms. Instead, the violation of personal liberty must become a matter of collective concern.

De Bèze legitimizes this collective concern, or the idea that lower magistrates might articulate and organize resistance on their subjects' behalf by mobilizing theories of popular sovereignty. During the sixteenth century, considerations of the limits of sovereign power frequently intersected with theories of popular sovereignty. These theories countered prevailing notions of the French monarch as the *Rex Christianissimus*, or the "most Christian King."[31] Juridical practices and ceremonial rituals of the time worked to shore up the idea that the French king was God's earthly appointee, a position that afforded the monarch a quasi-divine status. This status rendered accusations of tyranny difficult to levy and dangerous to sustain, as authority flowed from God to king, and the king then ruled over his subjects. In contrast, theories of popular sovereignty offer a rather different organization of divine and earthly power by figuring the relationship between God and the people as primary. The people then secondarily appoint or elect a king to govern them. These theories often harken back to an originary moment that precedes the dynastic monarchies of Renaissance Europe. For example, in his *Francogallia* (1573), the Huguenot political theorist François Hotman chronicles how the ancient Franks and Gauls join together to appoint Childeric, son of Merovech as their king. For Hotman, this election serves as France's originary event, and strengthens the

[31] Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

notion that "the French monarchy was elective rather than hereditary."[32] De Bèze similarly vests sovereignty in the people as a whole, and argues that divine authority flows from God to the people, who appoint then their temporal leaders and consent to their rule.[33] If these leaders become tyrants, it is up to the people as a collective to resist. Authorizing the lower magistrates rather than private individuals to organize resistance is thus in keeping with the idea that the people hold power together.

By suggesting that the king receives his authority from the people and that the people receive authority from God, theories of popular sovereignty rendered the king's faith and fidelity a matter of public speculation and concern. During the sixteenth century, the monarch's religious beliefs and practices were thought of as legitimate grounds for critique and invited charges of tyranny and sovereign excess. In other words, kings as well as subjects could be charged with heresy. As a result, warring factions of Protestants and Catholics not only accused each other of holding heretical beliefs, but members of each side also brought accusations of heresy against the crown. Such accusations were especially leveled during the final years of Charles IX's reign (1572-75) and during the reign of Henri III (1575-89). In the years following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, Protestant leaders and pamphleteers were increasingly vocal about their dissatisfaction with the crown's often hesitant and feeble protection. Their rhetorical objections were accompanied by more overtly rebellious actions. After the massacre, the decimated Protestant communities elected elders and representatives to a general assembly, which established a kind of republic within the kingdom, or a "state

[32] Holt, 101.
[33] Witte Jr., 137.

within a state."[34] By electing their own leadership, the Huguenots directly challenged the spiritual—as well as the temporal—authority of the King and his administration. From the other side of the confessional divide, members of the Catholic league argued that by not stamping out Protestantism once and for all, Henri III violated his coronation oath to preserve the kingdom under one faith in a united Gallician church. Violating this oath, they argued, constituted a form of heresy.[35] Political and theological writings by Catholics and Protestants often levied such charges of monarchical heresy, or suggested that the monarch had fallen under the influence of heretical counselors.

One of the most widely circulated political treatises of this period was the *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, which was first published anonymously in 1579.[36] The treatise's text, as well as the many commentaries that offer interpretations of it, framed much of the debate surrounding the *droit de résistance* in the final decades of the religious wars. First appearing in Latin, the *Vindiciae* was subsequently reprinted on numerous occasions, often accompanying editions of Machiavelli's *Prince*. French translations of the *Vindiciae,* which begin to appear in 1580, are also frequently printed with French translations of Machiavelli's *Prince.*[37] The pairing of these two texts is

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[34] Holt, 99-100.
[35] Holt, 123-55. See also Frederic J. Baumgartner, *Radical Reactionaries: The Political Thought of the French Catholic League* (Geneva: Droz, 1976).
[36] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos* [1579], ed. and trans. George Garnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3. George Garnett provides a helpful summary of the authorship controversy, "Introduction," lv-lxxvi. I quote from Garnett's English translation because his edition has a critical apparatus, which includes a glossary of the terms used in the Latin original. A photographic reprint of the 1581 French translation was published in 1979. I plan to consult this edition for future work: *Vindiciae contra tyrannos. Traduction française de 1581,* ed. A. Jouanna, J. Perrin, M. Soulié, A Tournon, and H. Weber (Geneva, 1979).
[37] Garnett, lxxxiv-lxxxviii. The *Vindiciae* was also frequently printed along with Theodore de Bèze's *Du Droit des magistrats* (1574).

thought to stem from a provocation made in the preface of the *Vindiciae*, wherein the author promises to provide a refutation of Machiavellian ideas. If Machiavelli describes a form of political action divorced from virtue and moral principles, the author of the *Vindiciae* promises to outline political action derived from virtue and principle. He writes:

> Whatever is asserted in these investigations is demonstrated to be the case by the clear illustrations of Holy Scripture, not by twisted ones; confirmed by the teachings of moral and political science, and of nature, and by the precepts of laws, the pronouncements of jurisconsults, and the rescripts of emperors; supplemented by the customs and practices of diverse nations; and presented for inspection as though in a mirror in the various striking examples furnished by various historians.[38]

George Garnett has pointed out that the author of the *Vindiciae* does not make good on his promise to systematically refute Machiavelli. The author does, however, articulate a coherent theory of resistance that is grounded in biblical and historical precedent. Widely celebrated and denigrated, this theory of resistance became a major touchstone in subsequent debates about the possibility of legitimate opposition.

The *Vindiciae* is divided into four *quaestiones,* or questions, which outline the moral and legal ties that bind the people, the church, the king, and God:

I. Whether subjects be bound, or ought to obey princes who command anything against the law of God.

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[38] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 10. Garnet also quotes this prefatory promise, xxii.

II. Whether it be lawful to resist a prince wishing to abrogate the law of God and devastate the church: also by whom, how, and to what extent.

III. Whether, and to what extent, it be lawful to resist a prince who is oppressing or ruining the commonwealth: also by whom, how, and by what right it may be allowed.

IV. Whether neighbouring princes may be right, or ought to render assistance to subjects of other princes who are being persecuted on account of pure religion, or oppressed by manifest tyranny.[39]

In response to the first *quaestio*, the *Vindiciae* argues that subjects are not bound to obey princes who violate the laws of God. Like other Huguenot political treatises of the period, such as Hotman's *Francogallia*, the *Vindiciae* asserts that God's relationship to the people is primary. The king merely serves as an administrator of God's authority on earth.

In response to the second and third *quaestiones*, the *Vindiciae* asserts that if the king fails to uphold divine law, the people can—and should—resist. Who resists and how become more complicated concern. In keeping with the formulations of Calvin and Bèze, the *Vindiciae* explains that private individuals (*singuli*) cannot themselves take action against the king. Instead, action must come from the people as a whole, corporate body (*universitas*). The *Vindiciae* also corroborates the argument of other Huguenot treatises that it is up to lower magistrates or public officials (*universi*) to organize and lead the opposition to the king, opposition that the people's collective relationship to God

[39] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 5.

authorizes. This dynamic between private persons, public officials, the people, king, and God is reiterated throughout the *Vindiciae*. In the third *quaestio*, for example, the author writes:

> We have proved, then, that all kings receive their royal dignity from the people; that the whole people is more powerful than, and superior to, the king; that the king is only the supreme minister and agent of the kingdom, and the emperor of the empire, but the people truly lord. It follows, therefore, that a tyrant commits a felony against the people, as lord of the fief; that he is guilty of high treason against the kingdom or empire, and is a rebel…Thus, says Bartolus, he could be deposed by a superior or more justly punished according to the Julian law on public force. For the superior is the whole people, or those who represent it—the electors, palatines, patricians, the assembly of the estates, and the rest. And if the tyrant has proceeded so far that he cannot be expelled without armed force, then it will obviously be lawful for them to call the people to arms, to conscript an army, and to move against him with force, guile, and every stratagem of war, as if one who has been judged enemy of the country and commonwealth.[40]

Situating the people as the true lord of the kingdom and positioning the king as "only the supreme minister or agent," the *Vindiciae* establishes a legal basis on which the people may take up arms against the king. The treatise also makes clear that it is up to the "superiors" or representatives to lead this taking up of arms. The language in this passage underscores a persistent tension in the *Vindiciae.* On the one hand, the author is very

[40] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 156.

clear about the hierarchy of authority that orders the people, the public officials, and the king. On the other hand, his list of possible "superiors" includes a number of different kinds of public officials, ending with "and the rest." The author thus clearly defines the role of the superiors, but leaves some room for interpretation about exactly who may it. In other words, the people require an intermediary in order to resist, but that intermediary may take different forms. In the fourth *quaestio*, the intermediary takes the form of a foreign or neighboring prince. The *Vindiciae* argues that neighboring princes may, in some cases, intervene on behalf of a people who are subjected to the tyranny of their own prince.

The reception history of the *Vindiciae* suggests that the category of the intermediary was also interpreted in ways that seemed to justify more radical forms of resistance. Although the *Vindiciae* defines intermediaries as superiors whose public role allows them to act in a capacity other than that of the particular or private individual, the treatise was celebrated and feared as a text that sanctioned tyrannicide by private individuals. Reportedly, the treatise garnered such a dangerous reputation that Henri III actively sought to determine its author's identity.[41] The *Vindiciae'*s scandalous reputation can in part be explained by its treatment of the central paradox in Huguenot resistance theory, which, as we have seen, endows individual subjects with liberty of conscience, but vests the capacity for resistance in the people's collective sovereignty. George Garnett explains that the treatise attempts to systematically wrestle with the relationship between subjective liberty and collective sovereignty. For example, the *Vindiciae's*

[41] Garnett, xix.

author cites the biblical examples of Jehu and Ehud, who single-handedly deliver a population from a tyrant. Whereas the actions of these biblical figures might seem like those of private individuals, who literally take matters of tyranny into their own hands, the treatise labels them "extraordinary liberators" who act through God's direction. These figures thus fulfill a similar role to that of the lower magistrates or electors, who act on the people's behalf rather than as private individuals. However, as Garnett notes, it is "very difficult to verify claims of a divine vocation," and while the *Vindiciae* ratifies these particular, quite "extraordinary," examples, it is easy to see how the treatise gained a reputation for authorizing tyrannicide by private individuals more broadly.[42] By situating biblical figures like Jehu and Ehud as agents of the people's resistance, the *Vindiciae* suggests that an intermediary might be an individual who does not hold public office, but who nevertheless acts on behalf of the entire people. In other words, the line between the actions of a private individual and of a 'superior' or intermediary is more ambiguous within the treatise than it might initially seem.

Greatly contributing to the *Vindiciae*'s more radical reputation was the text's adoption by members of the Catholic League. Language from the treatise appeared in pamphlets associated with the League, which explicitly called for private individuals to take up arms against a tyrannical or heretical monarch. In addition, Jean Boucher, a Catholic priest and theologian, reproduced entire sections of the *Vindiciae* word for word in his polemical treatise *De Justa Henrici Tertii* (1589).[43] Expanding upon Huguenot resistance theory, Boucher's treatise argues for the removal of Henri III for the good of

[42] Garnett, xxix-xxx.
[43] Garnett, xx.

the Gallican church and the people. This treatise, however, goes beyond the calls for resistance in the *Vindiciae,* stating that private individuals had a right—as well as a duty—to take up arms against the king. Boucher's incorporation of whole sections from the *Vindiciae* also demonstrates how Huguenot resistance theories crossed the confessional divide to undergird Catholic theories of legitimate opposition. Christian Biet explains, however, that as Boucher and other members of the Catholic League adopted Huguenot resistance theories, they fundamentally reversed a key element of these theories. The Huguenots maintained that a tyrant's breach of his subjects' private freedoms justified collective resistance. In contrast, Biet explains that for members of the Catholic League:

> Tout sujet est menacé de damnation éternelle s'il montre une connivence, même passive, avec le tyran. Un particulier peut donc être l'exécuteur de la sentence de mort contre le tyran qui a violé la loi de Dieu et qui a été déposé par l'autorité spirituelle. Quand le tyran s'apprête à châtier son peuple...il ne s'agit plus simplement de légitime défense individuelle, mais un geste salvateur effectué pour le salut de l'ensemble de la communauté.[44]

In other words, a king's perceived violation of the common good could justify a private individual's resistance. Taken up by the Catholic league, the *Vindiciae* acquired new, and as Biet suggests, more radical possibilities for resistance.[45] Whereas the *Vindiciae's* author takes pains to circumscribe who might legitimately carry out an act of tyrannicide,

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[44] Christian Biet, "Notice à *Cléophon*," *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France (XVI^e^-XVII^e^ siècle)*, ed. Christian Biet (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 881.
[45] Christian Biet, "Notice à *Cléophon*," 881.

limiting this act to public officials or extraordinary liberators, the Catholic league's interpretation suggested that anyone concerned about his own soul or about the community's salvation might legitimately kill the king.

The malleability of resistance theories made them all the more dangerous to the crown, as they were taken up by multiple factions in the ongoing conflict. Indeed, it is precisely the spread of the *Vindiciae*'s message (or perceived message) that the Catholic cleric Jean Baricave laments in his *Defense de la monarchie française*, published in 1614. Undertaking a line-by-line refutation of the *Vindiciae,* Baricave argues that this text was ultimately responsible for the assassination of Henri IV in 1610. He writes that the *Vindiciae*'s "infernal doctrine had placed in the hand of that monster Ravaillac the cunning dagger with which he pierced the heart of the invincible Henri IV."[46] Holding the *Vindiciae* responsible for Henri IV's assassination by a Catholic zealot, Baricave suggests that this "Calvinist" treatise leaves the door wide open for sedition and anarchy.[47] Ravaillac's act was so troubling to Baricave (and others) because it demonstrated how a private individual could claim to act on behalf of the people as a whole. Ravaillac may have thought of himself as an "extraordinary liberator," but there was no way to verify his claims. Baricave's condemnation of Ravaillac indicates how the distinction between an act of extraordinary liberation and an act of sedition was largely a question of perspective and interpretation.

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[46] Quoted in Garnett, xx.

[47] Garnett, xx. Ravaillac was also thought by some to be inspired by Jesuit treatises that provided theoretical justifications for regicide. See Christian Biet, "Notice à la *Tragédie sur la mort du roi Henri le Grand,*" *Le Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants,* ed. Christian Biet (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 940-41.

As we have seen, the malleability of resistance theories during the religious wars was in part the result of differences between Catholic and Protestant thought. However, this malleability was also indicative of a certain porosity that existed during this period between matters of the private individual's conscience and conceptions of the people as a whole. Despite the efforts of resistance theorists to consider the individual subject's liberty of conscience and the people's sovereignty as distinct concepts with precise points of conjuncture, these notions were so thoroughly intertwined that their relationship could not be precisely circumscribed. In other words, during the religious wars, liberty of conscience could not be considered apart from conceptions of the community as a spiritual whole. As Mack P. Holt has argued, the very idea of religion in the sixteenth century is that of "a body of believers rather than the more modern definition of a body of beliefs."[48] If the community was understood as a body of believers, then each subject's conscience directly affected the integrity of the people as a whole, as well as prospects for communal salvation. As a result, Catholics and Protestants mutually regarded each other's beliefs as heretical and dangerous. Religious violence during this period was thus aimed at purging the community of corrupting beliefs for the sake of the common good. In other words, private belief constantly impinged upon public life.[49] Theoretical efforts to distinguish matters of the individual subject's conscience and matters of the common good thus did not hold up in practice.

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[48] Holt, 2.

[49] See Barbara Diefendorf, "Rites of Repair: Restoring Community in the French Religious Wars," *Ritual Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France*, eds. Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts, and Andrew Spicer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 30-51.

In the wake of the religious wars and in the aftermath of Henri IV's assassination, theories of absolutism worked to create a more impermeable separation between private belief and public life. Following the religious wars, theories of resistance diminished as theories of absolutism gained strength. Seventeenth-century treatises that attempted to shore up the monarchy's power by positioning the king as "the image of God on earth," took their cue from Jean Bodin's *Les six livres de la république* (1580).[50] Against the theories of popular sovereignty that circulated in France during the sixteenth century, Bodin maintained that the king received his authority directly from God. Given this divine right, the king did not require the people to function as an intermediary between him and God. Arguing that sovereignty could not be shared between entities, Bodin insisted that the king held a power that existed independently from the people's approval.[51]

By separating the people's approval and the king's authority, Bodin invalidated the people's ability to raise charges of tyranny. As we have seen, the charge of tyranny was crucial to the articulation of resistance. Whereas good sovereigns could not be legitimately opposed, resistance to tyranny was justified. Theoretically, if subjects could not raise charges of tyranny then they could not legitimately resist. In *Les six livres de la république,* Bodin argues that the category of tyranny had been misused to the point of being meaningless. Providing descriptions of the theoretical differences between kings and tyrants, he writes that "le roi se conforme aux lois de nature, et le tyran les foule aux

[50] Ellen McClure discusses the importance of Bodin's treatise to the subsequent theories of absolutism in *Sunspots and the Sun King,* 27-35.
[51] McClure, 35.

pieds. L'en entretient la pieté, la justice, et la foi; l'autre n'a ny Dieu, ny foi, ny loi."[52] He goes on to explain, however, that because perceptions of piety, fidelity, justice, and natural law varied wildly, the distinction between a king and a tyrant was impossible to maintain. Glossing Bodin's assertion, Ellen McClure remarks that during the Wars of Religion, "almost anyone disagreeing with the king's actions could accuse the king of tyranny."[53] In other words, if expressing piety and upholding natural law was what distinguished the king from the tyrant, and if there was no stable definition of either piety or natural law, than any king could be a tyrant and any tyrant, a king. This prospect seemed especially dangerous at a historical moment when tyrannicide was considered to be a possible means of resistance. Bodin writes:

> O qu'il y auroit de tyrans s'il estoit licite de les tuer; celuy qui tire trop de subsides seroit tyran, comme le vulgaire l'entend: celuy qui command contre le gré du people seroit tyran, ainsi qu'Aristote le definit és Politiques: celuy qui auroit gardes pour la seurté de sa vie seroit tyran: celuy qui feroit mourir les conjurés contre son estat seroit tyran. Et comment seroyent les bons Princes asseurés de leur vie?[54]

By raising the possibility that even "les bons Princes" who merely take steps to assure their own security could be labeled tyrants, Bodin suggests that the charge of tyranny is essentially meaningless. If charges of tyranny question a monarch's legitimacy, Bodin questions the legitimacy of those who would make such charges by calling attention to

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[52] Quoted in McClure, 35.
[53] McClure, 35.
[54] Quoted in McClure, 35.

the arbitrary nature of their claims. Given the inherent instability of public conceptions of piety, and of perceptions of a monarch's adherence to natural law, the king's authority cannot, for Bodin, depend upon the people's approval, but is instead secured by a sovereign power that is unitary, perpetual, and divinely legitimized.[55] Uniquely privy to God's will, the king's authority on earth is thus theoretically absolute.

Absolutist theories such as Bodin's gained strength in the wake of the Wars of Religion in ways that altered individual subjects' relationship to the sovereign. Not only did the category of tyranny lose its political force, but the rise of absolutism also helped to create a centralized state, which was designed to limit the influence of private belief on public life. Reinhart Koselleck writes that "The princely state, supported by the military and the bureaucracy, developed a supra-religious, rationalistic field of action…."[56] The development of this "supra-religious, rationalistic field of action" effectively privatized the religious beliefs of both the sovereign and his subjects.

If the monarch enjoyed a unique relationship to the divine, and thus stood as the highest temporal authority, than his piety was not open for public debate.[57] Similarly, the question of the individual subject's piety, as well as his or her liberty of conscience, was removed from public debate in the aftermath of the religious wars. Liberty of conscience remained the subject's prerogative, but theories of absolutism, as well as the state practices that these theories engendered, divorced subjective liberty from notions of the

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[55] McClure, 26-36.
[56] Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* [1958] (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 16.
[57] Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis,* 20. See also, W.J. Stankiewicz, *Politics and Religion in Seventeenth-Century France: A Study of Political Ideas from the Monarchomachs to Bayle, as Reflected in the Toleration Controversy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 136-61.

common good. Whereas during the sixteenth century internal belief could spark external resistance, the consolidation of the absolutist state during the seventeenth century demanded a "clean break between the internal and the external."[58] In order to navigate this political landscape, Koselleck maintains, "A prudent man withdraws into the secret chambers of his heart, where he remains his own judge, but external actions are to be submitted to the ruler's judgment and jurisdiction. The voice of conscience must never emerge, outwardly it must be put to sleep."[59]

By separating the internal beliefs from the external actions of both sovereigns and subjects, absolutist theories and practices altered the ability of individual subjects to claim legitimate resistance. The privatization of the sovereign's piety deflated potential charges of heresy. When subjects could not legitimately call the king a heretic, cries of tyranny and calls for tyrannicide on behalf of the common good lost much of their political amplitude. In addition, by confining the individual subject's liberty of conscience to the "secret chambers of his heart" absolutism cut its ties to notions of popular sovereignty. As we have seen, the ties between the individual subject's conscience and popular sovereignty authorized the people as a whole to resist tyrannical infringements upon subjective freedom. By some accounts, these ties also authorized individual subjects to resist tyrannical threats to the common good. In cutting the ties between subjective and collective justifications of opposition, however, absolutism effectively dismantled the conceptual framework surrounding the *droit de résistance.*

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[58] Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 19.
[59] Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 19. See also, Anna Maria Battista, "Morale 'privée' et utilitarisme politique en France au XVII^{e} siècle," In *Le pouvoir de la raison d'État: Recherches Politiques,* ed. Christian Lazzeri and Dominique Reynié (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 191-230.

This right, which allowed for a large measure of porosity between subjective and collective claims, could no longer be legitimately marshaled.

Historical Rupture, Dramatic Continuity

In spite of absolutist theory's hold on political discourse, tragedy sustains the *droit de résistance* by maintaining the connections between individual liberty and collective authority and by continuing to explore the political potential of these connections. By continuing to explore the political potential of the *droit de résistance* even after the rise of absolutism, tragedy complicates the division between theory and action that has marked historical accounts of opposition in early modern France. Nannerl Keohane articulates the commonly held position that during the seventeenth century there was "no coherent theory of opposition."[60] She writes that "during the first half of the seventeenth century, rebellion was common in France and theories of rebellion almost unknown. Even during the Fronde, in the 1650s, little that deserves the name of theory appeared to justify what was being done."[61] Whereas theories of resistance and resistant action coexisted during the sixteenth century, it seems that during the seventeenth century, resistant actions persisted, but the theories did not. Maintaining that tragedy continues to explore the structural contours and possible permutations of the *droit de résistance*, this dissertation suggests that the seventeenth century does indeed contain a

[60] Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 20. I cite Keohane in particular on this point because she marks the division between theories and acts of resistance so strongly and clearly. See also, Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 107-31.
[61] Keohane, 20.

theory of resistance, a theory that is elaborated through dramatic action. Put another way, the dramas included in this study blur the line between action and theory. They are not themselves instances of rebellion or forms of political protest. They are, however, sites that continue to rehearse the *droit de résistance.* This is not to suggest a kind of continual repetition of the same. Instead, much as a rehearsal for a performance is a kind of exploration of what is possible under a given set of circumstances, tragedy's rehearsal of the *droit de résistance* explores this concept's range and potential permutations.

In order to emphasize how dramas rehearse resistance theory, this dissertation reads tragedy as a dramatic genre that exists "between poetry and performance," to borrow W.B. Worthen's formulation.[62] Worthen contests the idea that the dramatic text serves as an inert document that provides a blueprint for performance, or which supplies information to be performed.[63] He maintains instead that dramatic writing is "writing for use, an instrument."[64] Understanding dramatic writing as an instrument allows us to understand the text as material already infused with the constraints and possibilities of performance. Worthen offers the example of stage directions as a way of understanding what he calls the "agency of dramatic writing."[65] In some dramatic traditions, stage directions incorporate specific modes of action within the text. Worthen argues, however, that the agency of dramatic writing can be understood much more broadly, asserting that plays are "often responsive to the uses of performance in more searching ways [than stage directions], attending to the various pressures of bodies and of space that will

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[62] W.B. Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1-34.
[63] Worthen, 1-34.
[64] Worthen, xviii.
[65] Worthen, xv.

remake writing into doing."[66] By training our critical attention on the scene of theater, Worthen explains, "We can gain access to drama's ways of allegorizing the action it at once encodes and enables to take place."[67] In other words, dramatic writing both influences and is influenced by stage practices and other forms of embodiment. Neither text nor performance exists as a primary artifact that the other must copy, transcribe or reproduce. Instead, dramatic writing both captures and creates an organization of bodies.

The political tragedies examined in this dissertation "enable and encode" an organization of bodies that evokes the *droit de résistance*. They feature characters who articulate their opposition to tyranny on the basis of their liberty of conscience, their subjective freedom, or their personal beliefs and sentiments. Some of these characters also boast about personal strength whether physical or moral. All of the dramas suggest that these characters' subjective liberties and personal strengths are endorsed or bolstered by the political force of a collective. In some cases, the collective takes the form of a staged chorus. In others, the collective is a people*,* or *peuple,* which while not staged, nonetheless impinges upon the dramatic action. Some dramas feature multiple choruses, or a staged chorus and an unseen people. Although the specific dynamic of each tragedy varies, they all explore how the collective shapes the individual character's constitution as a political subject by exerting forms of physical or affective influence. Furthermore, these tragedies also demonstrate how the collective's political potential is mediated through the speech and actions of staged characters.

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[66] Worthen, xv.
[67] Worthen, xv.

Chapter One provides a model for reading early modern dramas as sites that rehearse the *droit de résistance.* The chapter first situates this ongoing rehearsal as part of tragedy's broader engagement with the religious wars and their aftermath. I then undertake a longer examination of two dramas: Garnier's *Cornélie* (1574) and Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* (1644). Both center on Cornélie's grief for her slain husband, the Roman general Pompée who had shared power with César before becoming César's rival. Emphasizing the specificity of their shared heroine's objections to César's tyranny, the dramas also bring into relief how her specific claims are bolstered by the communal complaints of the Roman people. Likewise, both dramas situate Pompée's legacy and his physical remains as the common ground on which Cornélie and the Roman people base their claims. Garnier's drama is contemporaneous with the debate about resistance theory that took place during the Wars of Religion. In contrast, Corneille's drama is composed, performed, and published long after this concept seems to have disappeared from political thought. Examining these dramas together allows us to see how tragedy sustains the *droit de résistance* despite its apparent disappearance, as well as how tragedy's rehearsal of this right changes over time.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four build upon the model of reading established in the first chapter, examining other dramas in which subjective claims are complicated and strengthened by collective attachments. Chapter Two focuses on two early modern versions of *Antigone*, the first by Garnier (1580) and the second by Jean de Rotrou (1639). Much like the heroine of *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée*, Antigone articulates an opposition to tyranny that is based in her specific attachment to a slain family member.

Whereas Cornélie resists César's authority following the death of her husband, Antigone resists Créon's after the death of her brother. Although the integrity of Cornélie's opposition is never questioned, Antigone's troubled legacy and excessive attachment to her brother call her virtue into question and raise doubts about the legitimacy of her contentions. In both dramas, the interventions of staged choruses and the unseen Theban people ratify the heroine's claims. These versions of *Antigone* thus illustrate how some assertions of subjective virtue require collective corroboration.

Chapter Three argues that two dramas by Corneille stage a similar requirement, nuancing conceptions of the Cornelian hero as supremely self-sufficient. *Nicomède* (1651) and *Suréna* (1674) feature heroes who project an immense amount of individual prowess. Nicomède and Suréna do not only win wars for their respective sovereigns, but they appear as masters of their own will. Each hero's resistance seems to derive from his unique capacity for self-control and extraordinary inner strength. However, the dramas complicate this portrait by demonstrating that the hero's self-sufficiency depends upon the attention and admiration of others. *Nicomède* and *Suréna* suggest that heroism does not result from one extraordinary subject's action, but instead emerges through collective contestation. By emphasizing the collective constitution of heroism, this chapter underscores how the *droit de résistance* persists, even as a cultural paradigm that favors individual liberty and fortitude seems to have left it behind.

Chapter Four examines how the structure of the *droit de résistance* similarly alters our perception of the figure of the savior in Jean Racine's biblical tragedies. *Esther* (1689) and *Athalie* (1691) feature characters who are positioned to secure the future of

their people through the revelation of their true identities. Both tragedies figure the savior's exceptional purity and innocence as potent weapons against an oppressive sovereign. Once openly acknowledged, however, the savior's purity and innocence risk corruption by forces that exceed him or her, from troubling familial legacies to the seductive pull of popular approval. The public exposure of the savior's virtue thus threatens to corrupt it. The interplay of private virtue and public corruption in these tragedies demonstrates that the flow of influence between savior and people is multidirectional. One does not merely secure the other's safety and salvation. Instead, these entities influence each other in ways that make it difficult to locate stable boundaries between them.

By highlighting how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tragedy positions the strength and power of individual characters as attributes that are secured through ties to other characters and collectives, *Tragedy and the Ethics of Resistance Rights* also seeks to intervene in contemporary debates about the modern individual's rights and capacities. Scholars have long located the origins of the modern individual in seventeenth-century philosophy and literature.[68] Furthermore, seventeenth-century tragedy has been positioned as a cultural site that helps to construct the modern individual as a subject who is free from attachment and who exercises sovereignty over him or herself.[69] What this dissertation argues, however, is that in several moments when the modern individual

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[68] See, for example, Dalia Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[69] See, for example, Hélène Merlin-Kajman, *L'absolutisme dans les lettres et la théorie des deux corps: Passions et politique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000). I will discuss Merlin-Kajman's argument in more detail in Chapter Three.

seems to emerge within tragedy, he or she is neither autonomous nor detached, but instead remains co-implicated in networks of action and influence. In addition to arguing that dramas by Garnier, Rotrou, Corneille, and Racine provide a literary afterlife for the *droit de résistance,* I also highlight the ways in which these early modern dramas help to nuance modern and contemporary notions of autonomy and relationality.

Chapter One: Singular Grief, Shared Lament, and the Steadfast Mourner

Sixteenth-century theories of resistance were not general calls for revolt and rebellion. Instead, these theories attempted to circumscribe the specific conditions necessary for opposition to be legitimate. Some of these conditions had to do with the nature of the sovereign and the manner in which he exercised his power. If a king ruled justly, fairly, and out of concern for the common good, than resistance against him was considered illegitimate. To act against such a king would have been to commit an act of sedition. However, if a king ruled unjustly, or for personal gain, legitimate resistance was possible. Of course, the determination of whether a king acted justly or tyrannically was often a matter of perspective. A king who perceived himself to act on behalf of the common good may have appeared to some of his subjects as a tyrant in pursuit of his own benefit. Likewise, subjects who accused the king of tyranny in order to justify their opposition were often perceived as seditious by their king and his supporters. As a result, claims of legitimate resistance against a tyrant were open to interpretation and contestation.

In addition to raising questions about what kind of sovereign could justly be opposed, sixteenth-century resistance theories also attempted to define the kind of subject who was authorized to mount this opposition. As we have seen, notions of popular sovereignty endowed the people as whole, corporate body with the power to remove a tyrant from the throne. This collective power, however, had to be exercised by intermediaries who could organize and lead the people's resistance. Huguenot treatises, such as the *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos* state that these intermediaries had to be public

officials, such as lower magistrates. The *Vindiciae* also accepts that on rare occasions the intermediary could be an "extraordinary liberator" who does not occupy a public office, but delivers a people from tyranny as a solitary agent of divine will. These Huguenot theories maintained that intermediaries acted in the service of the people, rather than as private individuals. In contrast, Catholic interpretations of resistance theory suggested that a private individual could act as an intermediary and resist a tyrant directly if this individual felt that the tyrant's beliefs and actions threatened the community's salvation. Theories from both sides of the confessional divide thus positioned the intermediary as a point of contact between individual and collective justifications for resistance.

Early modern tragedy participated in the debate about legitimate resistance by exploring the forms that the intermediary might take and by examining how this figure joins together notions of subjective freedom and collective authority. Rather than adopt either the Huguenot or the Catholic conceptions of the intermediary, tragedy instead played on ambiguities raised by the theoretical disputes about this figure. Reflecting on who might serve as an intermediary, many dramas consider the ways in which these figures speak and act on the people's behalf. Furthermore, these drama situate their intermediaries within networks of action and influence, bringing into relief how these figures relate to other characters and collectives. Attending to how tragedy "enables and encodes" (to borrow Worthen's formulation once more) the patterns of interaction that attach intermediaries to other entities allows us to better understand how the figure of the intermediary serves as a site on which claims to the *droit de résistance* are negotiated and rendered legitimate.

Robert Garnier's *Cornélie* (1574) and Pierre Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* (1644) model how tragedy explores the role of the intermediary by delving into instances of opposition to Julius Cesar during Rome's civil wars. These wars were widely cited in sixteenth-century debates about tyranny and resistance. The *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, for example, bestows high praise on the Romans who opposed Cesar. In its third *quaestio*, the *Vindiciae* draws a sharp contrast between this case of Roman opposition and the actions of the Bible's King Zedekiah, who attempted to oppose Nebuchadnezzar.[70] Although it casts both Nebuchadnezzar and Cesar as tyrants, the *Vindiciae* argues that resistance to the Babylonian king was illegitimate, but that resistance to the Roman emperor was justified. In order to explain the difference between these two cases, the treatise appeals to the notion of prior consent, stating that "King Zedekiah was condemned and punished together with the whole people, who, after formally rendering fealty, defected from Nebuchadnezzar, although unprovoked by any wrong."[71] Once a tyrant's terms have been accepted, the treatise argues, resistance to tyranny is no longer just. The *Vindiciae* then turns its attention to the actions of the Roman leaders who immediately opposed Julius Cesar's tyrannical quest for power:

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[70] Throughout the dissertation, I use English spelling conventions when discussing characters or figures as they appear in English editions of texts. I use French conventions when referring to characters of French dramas.

[71] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 152. Zedekiah had been appointed King of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and had not initially objected to the Babylonian king's idolatrous ways. Eventually, however, Zedekiah attempted to flee Nebuchadnezzar's rule and to save the Jewish people from pagan idolatry. Garnier's tragedy *Les Juives* focuses on the aftermath of Sédécie's (Zedekiah's) attempt to lead his people out of Jerusalem and away from Nabuchodonosor's (Nebuchadnezzar's) rule. After capturing the King of Judah and his followers, Nabuchodonosor has Sédécie's children killed and Sédécie blinded. In his preface, Garnier relates the fate of the Jewish people in the drama to the horrors of the France's religious wars. He writes, "Or vous ay-je representé les souspirables calamitez d'un peuple, qui a comme nous abandonné son Dieu," *Les Juives,* 10.

> Thus Pompey, Cato, Cicero, and others, performed the office of good citizens by snatching up weapons against Cesar when he was overturning the commonwealth; and there can be no excuse for those whose inactivity meant that these efforts resulted in no happy conclusion at all.[72]

Although Cesar succeeded in seizing Rome for himself, opposition to his tyranny continued, with others eventually leading the charge against him. The *Vindiciae* goes on to state that "Brutus, Cassius, Casca, and others, who killed Cesar while the affair was still raging, could not be charged [with sedition]."[73] By contrasting the respective campaigns against Cesar and Nebuchadnezzar, the *Vindiciae* emphasizes that resistance to tyranny must be sustained in order to remain legitimate.

In these passages, the *Vindiciae* focuses on the taking up of arms as the primary means of sustaining opposition. Pompey and the other Roman leaders raised armies against Cesar, or as in Cicero's case, they explicitly called for armed resistance. Through their brave and bold actions, these leaders serve as exemplars of the kind intermediaries required by Huguenot resistance theory. When Cesar's tyranny threatened the liberty of all Romans, these generals and politicians organized resistance by drawing on their role as public figures. It was thus not only their resolute fortitude, but also their public positions, which made their campaign legitimate. Garnier's *Cornélie* and Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* add another figure to the *Vindiciae*'s list of intermediaries: Pompée's steadfast widow, Cornélie. Insisting on her interminable grief over the loss of Pompée,

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[72] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 152.
[73] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 153.

Cornélie refuses to end her mourning and recognize César's rule. Much like the valiant leaders cited by the *Vindiciae*, Cornélie sustains opposition to César. Unlike these leaders, however, she mounts her resistance through grief rather than arms. Focusing on Cornélie's interminable grief, these early modern dramas echo the *Vindiciae*'s prescription that resistance must be sustained, while imagining a form of sustained resistance not considered by the treatise itself.

As we have seen, in the *Vindiciae*, it is a public position that authorizes intermediaries to resist. In *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée*, however, it is Cornélie's physical and affective attachments that condition and legitimate her opposition. Throughout Garnier's drama, Cornélie deplores César's actions and maintains that however much the tyrant's power grows in Rome, it will never overtake her heart. Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* offers a similar portrait of the great general's widow. This tragedy drama centers on César's efforts to use Pompée's death as a means of gaining more influence in Egypt. Cornélie, however, opposes these efforts by situating herself as a successor to Pompée's glory. Both dramas focus on Cornélie's heart as a legitimate locus of resistance. Her heart connects her to Pompée and this connection drives her ongoing opposition. Furthermore, in both dramas, Cornélie's connection to Pompée ultimately binds her claims to the general laments of the Roman people. The dramas thus position Cornélie as a site where individual and collective claims meet. In other words, her role as an intermediary is secured through her attachments to Pompée and the people.

By positioning Cornélie as an intermediary, these dramas indicate how early modern tragedy began to rehearse the *droit de résistance* during the religious wars and continued this rehearsal well into the seventeenth century. Garnier's *Cornélie* was first published in 1574, at a time when resistance theories were widely advanced and contested. In contrast, *La Mort de Pompée* was first performed during the 1642-43 season and published in 1644, at a time when absolutism dominated political discourse. The resonances between the dramas suggest how the *droit de résistance* survives, even after the rise of absolutism seems to have made resistance theory obsolete in seventeenth-century political thought. This is not to suggest that there are no differences between these two dramas, or that their rehearsal of the *droit de résistance* is without variation. On the contrary, *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée* at times differ significantly, particularly when it comes to their respective figuration of the Roman people. In Garnier's drama, a chorus of Roman women represents the people and join its collective laments to Cornélie's claims. In contrast, Corneille's drama does not feature a chorus. *La Mort de Pompée*'s Cornélie instead invokes the Roman people's strength, incorporating them into the drama's action. In this later tragedy, the heroine stands in for the unseen people, asserting their collective authority.

The relationship between *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée* brings into relief how the *droit de résistance* survives not only the rise of absolutism, but also the evolution of tragedy as a genre. In many ways, both dramas adhere to the dominant poetic conventions of their historical moments. Whereas Garnier's drama can be read as a humanist tragedy, characteristic of the sixteenth century, Corneille's drama can be understood as a

"classical," "neoclassical," or "regular" tragedy, typical of the seventeenth.[74] The appearance of a chorus in *Cornélie*, for example, is consistent with the tradition of its time.[75] Likewise, the lack of a chorus in *La Mort de Pompée* is unsurprising, given that these collective entities were relatively rare on the seventeenth-century stage.[76] The two dramas are also typical of their times in other ways. *Cornélie*, like many sixteenth-century tragedies, contains several long monologues and choral odes. There is relatively little dramatic action.[77] Instead, the characters and chorus exchange speeches and tirades about the condition of Rome since César took power. In contrast, *La Mort de Pompée* features fewer monologues and more dialogue between characters. This later drama also clearly complies with the neoclassical unities of time, place, and action.[78] Furthermore, in Corneille's tragedy, as in many neoclassical tragedies, the denouement seems to favor the

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[74] Whereas the term "classical" is often used by scholars to discuss dramas by Corneille and Racine, John Lyons explains in *Kingdom of Disorder* that the term "classical" is anachronistic. He writes, "Seventeenth-century French culture did not use the term *classicism* to describe the contemporary changes in literature and the arts. Instead, critics and theorists used the term *régulier* to indicate the change that occurred in the theater at the time of Corneille" (1). Lyons goes on to argue that the notion of regularity was less stable than has previously been suggested. He explains that the so-called rules of seventeenth-century tragedy, which include unities of time, place, and action, as well as standards of decorum and verisimilitude, were not really fixed aesthetic prescriptions, but were instead contested preoccupations and cultural concerns, *Kingdom of Disorder: The Theory of Tragedy in Classical France* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992), 1-42.

[75] Indeed, many humanist tragedies feature multiple choruses. For example, in Garnier's *Antigone* (1580), which I will discuss in Chapter Two, there are three different choruses who comment on and participate in the drama's action. On the role of choruses in sixteenth-century tragedy, see Gillian Jondorf, *French Renaissance Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 65-86.

[76] Jean Racine's biblical tragedies, *Esther* (1689) and *Athalie* (1691), which I will examine in Chapter Four, both include choruses and are notable exceptions to the trend away from staged

[77] Madeleine Lazard, *Le théâtre en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), 99-117.

[78] Corneille argues that *La Mort de Pompée* respects these three unities in his retrospective "Examen," which was published in 1660 as part of his complete theatrical works to that date. This edition also included Corneille's three essays on dramatic theory, namely the *Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique,* the *Discours de la tragédie,* and the *Discours des trois unités.* For a longer discussion of the role of the unities in Corneille's theater and in seventeenth-century dramatic theory more broadly, see Lyons, *Kingdom of Disorder*, 141-202.

consolidation of sovereign power.[79] At the end of *La Mort de Pompée*, which takes place in Egypt, César orchestrates a funeral for Pompée and installs Cléopâtre on the Egyptian throne, resolving the political crisis that drives the drama's plot. Garnier's tragedy imagines no such denouement. Instead, the political crisis announced at the beginning of *Cornélie* remains unchanged at the drama's end. César is still a tyrant and Rome continues to resist. Each drama's end thus seems to fit the political climate of its time, with the difference between them marking how notions of popular sovereignty seemed to give way to more absolutist conceptions of monarchical rule.

However, reading *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée* together underscores how the genre of tragedy retained a set of oppositional concerns, even as its compositional and stage practices shifted and even as it became more closely associated with forms of monarchical authority. In other words, the political concerns of sixteenth-century tragedies informed those of their seventeenth-century counterparts. Gillian Jondorf has argued that foregrounding the influence of sixteenth-century tragedies on later dramas allows us to appreciate the continuities between the two periods without reinforcing a long-standing teleology. Renaissance dramas, she explains, have often been understood as "irregular" precursors that eventually gave way to glorious expressions of classicism. Rather than judge sixteenth-century tragedies by how they hold up to standards that were put in place during a later period, Jondorf maintains that we should instead explore how

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[79] On the idea that the political crises of many classical tragedies are resolved through the reassertion of monarchical order, see Christian Biet, "Résistance et tragédie classique. Dire l'ordre et le désordre." *Le Droit de Résistance, XII^e^-XX^e^ siècle,* ed. Jean-Claude Zancarini (Fontenay Saint-Cloud: ENS Éditions, 2000): 153-72

seventeenth-century tragedies take up the questions, considerations, and formal elements of the sixteenth century.

Taking Jondorf's methodological suggestion, this chapter examines *La Mort de Pompée* as a kind of successor to *Cornélie*, while acknowledging the differences between them. In addition to sharing a cast of characters (at least partially), the two tragedies draw from some of the same sources, including Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Corneille also borrows from Garnier's drama, particularly in scenes that center on Cornélie's grief.[80] As we will see, *La Mort de Pompée* takes up and transforms the earlier drama's figuration of Cornélie as an intermediary. Situating Corneille's drama as a successor to Garnier's calls attention to how seventeenth-century tragedy remained concerned with the possibility of legitimate resistance. Before examining *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée* in more detail, it is first necessary situate these dramas within tragedy's broader engagement with the religious wars. Tragedy's abiding concern with the *droit de résistance* allowed the genre to continue the work of commemoration and remembrance that it began during these conflicts.

Staging the Civil Wars

The history of French tragedy is deeply intertwined with the sixteenth-century religious wars. Vernacular tragedy emerged in France during the 1530s and 1540s, when dramas by Euripides, Seneca, and Sophocles began to be translated into French along

[80] John E. Matzke, "The Sources of Corneille's Tragedy *La Mort de Pompée*," *MLN* 15.5 (1900): 149-51.

with editions of Aristotle's *Poetics.*[81] Translations of ancient models led to original compositions, which often reworked Greek and Roman subjects and sources. During this period, rhetoricians asserted that this ancient genre was particularly well suited for the moral character of France itself.[82] Greek and Roman tragedies communicated the grandeur of these ancient civilizations. Translating, adapting, and reconfiguring these works was in part a means of claiming the ancients' past for France's present. Greek and Roman tragedy also warns of civil war as a threat to grandeur, chronicling how it devastates populations and engenders crises of authority. For French dramatists, tragedy offered an ideal poetic space from which to lament their own nation's condition of civil war and call attention to its disastrous consequences.[83] The dramatist Jean de la Taille, for example, draws strong connections between the internecine conflicts of antiquity and the bloody clashes that were ravaging France in his *De l'art de la tragédie* (1572), arguing that the genre of tragedy effectively depicted the "horrible disasters once brought upon France by our civil wars."[84]

Several dramatists and dramatic theorists echoed de la Taille's sentiment, including Robert Garnier. In many of his prefaces and other paratextual materials, Garnier points out that the content of his tragedies, which often took up scenes of civil war and conflict, seemed to match contemporary events in France. In the dedicatory preface to *La Troade* (1579), for example, Garnier begs pardon for presenting his

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[81] Lazard, 93-7. See also Timothy Reiss, "1553, March: The Origin and Development of French Tragedy," *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 207.
[82] Reiss, 207.
[83] Andrea Frisch, "French Tragedy and the Civil Wars," *MLQ* 67.3 (2006): 287-98.
[84] Quoted in Reiss, 208.

audience with such a grim, "poème," noting that it depicts "les malheurs lamentables des princes, avec les saccagements des peuples."[85] He goes on to state, however, that these "malheurs lamentables des princes" and "saccagements des peuples" should offer his audience a measure of consolation, given their similarity to the events still ravaging France. He writes, "les passions de tels sujets nous sont déjà si ordinaires que les exemples anciens nous devront dorénavant server de consolation en nos particuliers et domestiques encombres." [86] Marc Bizer suggests that the representation of civil conflict in Troy would have provided some consolation for Garnier's readers and spectators because this ancient conflict eventually gave way to grandeur. He explains:

> The reference to the destruction of Troy clearly implies a very grave situation in France. However, the point of the example is that the destruction of Troy was not definitive, but rather foreshadowed a far greater glory than that of the Greeks, one that eventually triumphed over Rome by culminating in a flourishing French monarchy.[87]

In other words, depicting the past violence of Troy's civil war allowed Garnier to lament the violence of France's present, as well as to hold out the promise of France's future glory. In the preface to *Cornélie*, Garnier makes a similar comparison between his country's civil wars and those of ancient Rome, writing that this "poème," is "trop propre

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[85] Robert Garnier, "À Révérend Père en Dieu M. Regnaud de Beaune…," *La Troade* (Paris: Robert Étienne, 1579), n.pag.. My modernization. Also quoted in Marc Bizer, "Garnier's *La Troade* between Homeric Fiction and French History: The Question of Moral Authority," *Romance Notes* 46.3 (2006): 331.
[86] Garnier, " À Révérend Père en Dieu M. Regnaud de Beaune…," n.pag..
[87] Bizer, 332.

aux malheurs de notre siècle."[88] Margaret McGowan notes that for Garnier, Rome's example is both celebratory and cautionary. Like Rome, France is understood to be a site of greatness and glory. However, civil strife threatens to destroy France's glory, much as civil conflict once threatened Rome.[89] In Garnier's theater, the ancient concerns of Rome and Troy are thus directly related to France's current problems.

If the conflicts of ancient tragedy were seen as particularly well suited to sixteenth-century France, then the conflicts of sixteenth-century France were likewise seen as fitting subjects for the genre of tragedy. Several tragedies commemorate specific events that took place during the religious wars. For example, François Chantelouve's *Tragédie de Coligny* (1575) and Pierre de Mathieu's *La Guisade* (1589) respectively depict the assassinations of a Protestant admiral and a Catholic duke. The dramatization of these incidents highlights the perceived correspondence between historical event and literary expression during this period. In sixteenth-century lexicon the word "*tragédie*" can refer either to an actual event or to a theatrical representation.[90] Andrea Frisch points out that playwrights and historians often established a correlation between these two meanings, describing the tragic events occurring throughout France as worthy of being represented in tragic dramas. Pierre de Matthieu, for example, writes in his *Histoire des derniers troubles de France* (1594) that "des sanglantes tragédies, des monstrueuses rebellions, des meurdres, des assassinats…la France doit estre le Theatre où l'on

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[88] Robert Garnier, "À Monseigneur de Rambouillet…," *Cornélie* (Paris: Robert Étienne, 1574), 3 verso. All citations of *Cornélie* are from this edition. Modernizations are my own.
[89] Margaret McGowan, "The Presence of Rome in Some Plays by Robert Garnier," *Myth and its Making in the French Theater,* eds. E. Freeman, H. Mason, M. O'Regan, and S.W. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 12-29.
[90] Frisch, 289-91.

representera des spectacles effroyables."[91] Figuring France itself as a theatrical space, De Matthieu's formulation reinforces the idea that the spectacular instances of violence and unrest that were plaguing the nation were appropriate for the tragic stage.

Representing contemporary events and ancient clashes, sixteenth-century tragedy offered a literary space through which to raise questions about the causes and consequences of civil strife. Dramas of this period adopted a range of aesthetic approaches when addressing the political uncertainty and widespread violence associated with the civil war. Humanist tragedy tended to focus on lamentation and on the aftermath of violence not directly viewed on stage.[92] Christian Biet has identified a contrasting theatrical tradition, a "théâtre de la cruauté," or "théâtre macabre," which was more explicitly violent and bloody. He writes, "Contrairement à la tragédie humaniste, la mort n'est plus dans ce théâtre une substance secrète, un événement silencieux et invisible, mais un arrachement à la vie, une 'mort théâtrale', c'est-à dire pour les spectateurs d'alors une **'**mort vivante.'[93] Despite their aesthetic differences, this "théâtre de la cruauté" and humanist tragedy both brought the violence and devastation of the religious wars into sharp relief.

By underscoring this widespread violence and devastation, tragedy commemorated the ongoing conflicts. Some dramas, as we have seen, memorialized specific events, such as an assassination. Others more broadly observed the problems

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[91] Quoted in Frisch, 290.
[92] Christian Biet, "Introduction," *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France (XVI^e^-XVII^e^ siècle),* ed. Christian Biet (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006): xxvii. On the role of lamentation and the production of pathos in Garnier's theater, see Florence Dobby-Poirson, *Le Pathétique dans le théâtre de Robert Garnier* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006).
[93] Biet, "Introduction," xxvii.

driving the conflicts, raising issues of tyrannical excess and the interpretation of divine will. Although they adopted several different approaches to the religious wars, sixteenth-century dramas thus participated in a shared work of remembrance. When Henri IV promulgated the *Édit de Nantes* in 1598, however, he decreed that the wars could no longer be remembered. The conflicts had to be forgotten in order for the peace to be maintained. The edict's first two articles outline this mandate to forget:

> I. Premièrement, que la mémoire de toutes choses passées d'une part et d'autre, depuis le commencement du mois de mars 1585 jusqu'à notre avènement à la couronne et durant les autres troubles précédents et à leur occasion, demeurera éteinte et assoupie, comme de chose non advenue. Et ne sera loisible ni permis à nos procureurs généraux, ni autres personnes quelconques, publiques ni privées, en quelque temps, ni pour quelque occasion que ce soit, en faire mention, procès ou poursuite en aucunes cours ou juridictions que ce soit.
>
> II. Défendons à tous nos sujets, de quelque état et qualité qu'ils soient d'en renouveler la mémoire, s'attaquer, ressentir, injurier, ni provoquer l'un l'autre par reproche de ce qui s'est passé, pour quelque cause et prétexte que ce soit, en disputer, contester, quereller ni s'outrager ou s'offenser de fait ou de parole, mais se contenir et vivre paisiblement ensemble comme

> frères, amis et concitoyens, sur peine aux contrevenants d'être punis comme infracteurs de paix et perturbateurs du repos public.[94]

The edict declares that instead of being seen as occasions for remembrance and reflection, these events should be treated as "chose[s] non advenue[s].[95] The edict thus seems to announce an end to the work of commemoration performed by political tragedies during the sixteenth century.

Despite the edict's definitive tone, however, tragedy remained a cultural site where the conflicts were commemorated and explored. Biet points out that tragedy continued to lament the social and political problems raised by the civil wars and notes that the genre also continued to represent specific acts of violence associated with these conflicts. He writes that "malgré l'interdiction [de l'Édit], la littérature et le théâtre ne renoncent pas à figurer les événements tragiques à peine passées et, lorsqu'ils vont dans le sens de la politique royale, ils ne sont ni interdits de publication ni interdits de représentation."[96] There was thus a considerable gap between the edict's language and its effects. However, it is important to note that although French tragedy continued the work of remembrance it began in sixteenth century, many of its poetic structures and stage practices shifted over time, though often in subtle ways.

This subtle evolution can be seen, for example, in tragedy's presentation of historical assassinations. In the decades following the *Édit de Nantes*, tragedy continued

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[94] Quoted in Biet, "Introduction," xxxvii.
[95] Frisch points out that the *Édit de Nantes*' language echoes that of earlier *édits de pacification* that were promulgated during the sixteenth-century religious wars. She also notes that "the call to obliterate memories of France's tragic history appears in every subsequent edict of pacification...[making] its final appearance in Louis XIV's preamble to the Edict of Fontainbleau, which revoked that of Nantes" (299).
[96] Biet, "Introduction," xxxviii.

to raise questions about regicide—or tyrannicide—as a means of resistance, but these questions had to be approached with care. Biet examines how two dramas published in the aftermath of the religious wars take up instances of regicide. Jacques de Fonteny's *Cléophon*: *Tragédie conforme et semblable à celles que la France a vues durant les Guerres Civiles*, which was published in 1600 and likely performed during the same year, depicts the 1589 assassination of Henri III. Claude Billard's *Tragédie sur la mort du roi Henri le Grand*, which was most likely performed in 1610 and published in 1612, represents the assassination of Henri IV. Biet explains that the two tragedies employ different compositional strategies and stage practices to address these politically fraught events. Fonteny's tragedy stages the king's assassination, but Hellenizes all of the characters' names and other references. Offering a *drame à clef*, instead of staging characters who carry the names of Henri III or of his assassin, Jacques Clément, the tragedy places some distance between itself and the historical king's death.[97] In contrast, Billard assigns the characters in his tragedy historical names, directly representing Henri IV, Marie de Medici, the dauphin, and officers of the court. Although members of the royal family and their entourage are explicitly named as characters, Billard's drama does not stage the king's assassination. As Biet notes, "Cette acmé de la tragédie est cependant reléguée hors scène et le spectateur, transporté dans une salle du Louvre, apprend le régicide en même temps que la reine, par la rumeur venue de l'extérieur du palais."[98] Both dramas explore the causes and consequences of these historical events without directly representing the deaths of Henri III or Henri IV.

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[97] Christian Biet, "Notice à *Cléophon*," 880-90.
[98] Christian Biet, "Notice à la *Tragédie sur la mort du roi Henri le Grand,*" 945.

By placing some distance between historical and staged events, Fonteny's *Cléophon* and Billard's *Tragédie sur la mort du roi Henri le Grand* participate in a broader shift within the genre of tragedy toward less spectacular, more sublimated forms of violence**.** As Biet (and others) have shown, during the seventeenth century, acts of violence were more often reported than directly staged.[99] In this respect, seventeenth-century tragedies, such as those by Corneille and Racine, tended to draw upon the humanist tradition, which focused on the lamentation of unseen or off-staged violence and set dramatic action in an ancient past. Andrea Frisch argues, however, that unlike in humanist tragedies, the connection between the ancient past and French history in seventeenth-century tragedies tended to be more abstract. Frisch describes this shift in terms of the spectators' implication in the dramatic action. When viewing sixteenth-century dramas, the spectator was encouraged to identify either with a particular character, or with the general situation depicted on stage. As noted, for example, in Garnier's theater the lamentation of civil strife in Troy and Rome was thought to pertain directly to contemporary events in France. In contrast, Frisch maintains that "Corneille and his contemporaries [including Racine] make no claim that the tragedies played out in the theater have a special connection to French history: consequently, the historicity of the French public that watches them remains unacknowledged."[100] Dramatic theory of the seventeenth century, Frisch argues, posited a spectatorial public that was "less and less implicated in the drama onstage."[101] In other words, staged conflict was less likely to

[99] Biet, "Introduction," v-xlvii. See also Frisch, "French Tragedy and the Civil Wars."
[100] Frisch, 308.
[101] Frisch, 309.

reflect directly on the sixteenth-century religious wars or the civil conflicts that continued in the seventeenth century.

With more distance placed between staged conflict and the events of France's recent past and present, the primary role of tragedy seems to have shifted from away from commemoration toward the production of "aesthetic enjoyment."[102] During the seventeenth century, tragedy was increasingly understood as a genre that should please its spectators and offer them moral instruction. During the sixteenth century commemoration was not necessarily thought to prevent pleasure and instruction—although these goals were often in tension. Seventeenth-century dramatic theory, however, insisted that commemoration was antithetical to enjoyment and edification.[103] Dramatists and theoreticians maintained that a close proximity between real and staged events would cause spectators pain. Spectators in pain, they contended, were less likely to experience pleasure or receive moral instruction.[104] In light of this widely held theoretical supposition, the religious wars—and the civil strife that marked their aftermath—had to be suppressed in order for drama to achieve its prescribed aims. Frisch argues that dramatic theory shifted in part as a result of the mandate to forget the religious wars that was expressed in documents such as the *Édit de Nantes* and that pervaded seventeenth-

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[102] Frisch 304.

[103] Frisch notes, for example, that Jean de la Taille negotiates a "commitment to [tragedy's] contemporary relevance" with a concern about making spectators too sorrowful in his 1572 *De l'art de la tragédie* (303). Although he emphasizes tragedy's bearing on his contemporary moment, de la Taille also states that it is better to "descrire le Malheur d'autruy que le nostre" (Quoted in Frisch 303). No such negotiation is needed for a seventeenth-century theorist such as René Rapin, who does not share de la Taille's "commitment to contemporary relevance." Rapin suggests instead that tragedy's ability to elicit pleasure is predicated on its ability to evoke universal, rather than historically specific, situations and sentiments. Frisch explains, "Rapin's tragic pleasure is born of the absolute elision of questions of personal, social, and historical identity…he makes no mention of an explicitly French audience and a particular historical subject" (309).

[104] Frisch, 304.

century culture and political thought. Although the *Édit de Nantes* did not directly banish the religious wars from drama, Frisch suggests that the edict contributed to a general climate of amnesia, a climate in which seventeenth-century drama participated.[105]

Tragedy's commemorative work would thus seem to have ended as the repeated injunctions to forget the religious wars eventually took hold. As noted, however, tragedy continued to raise many of the political questions at the heart of the religious wars, such as: What are the marks of tyranny? Who may resist a tyrant? What are the acceptable modes of opposition? Furthermore, many seventeenth-century dramas positioned characters and collectives in ways that tested the limits and possibilities of resistance theory, picking up and extending the considerations raised by sixteenth-century dramas. Together, *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée* demonstrate how tragedy remained a site of commemoration and remembrance. By situating Cornélie as a figure who refuses to end her opposition and set aside her grief these dramas refuse to set aside the political possibilities advanced during the civil wars.

Cornélie's Grief, Rome's Lament

Cornélie opens on the city of Rome in crisis. While previously content to share power, César has since conspired against his allies and subjected the Roman people to his tyrannical rule. Potential rivals to César's authority have either been killed or have been driven out of the city. Beginning in such a state, much of Garnier's drama centers on the consequences of César's tyranny for city's inhabitants, as well as for Cornélie. Like many

[105] Frisch, 298-304.

sixteenth-century tragedies, Garnier's *Cornélie* features several long monologues. The first two acts consist primarily of monologues by Ciceron and Cornélie respectively, both of which are followed by choral odes. Alternating between monologue and choral ode, the structure of these first two acts suggests that César's tyranny is a problem for individual Romans, as well as for the inhabitants of the city as a whole.

In Act III it becomes clear that César's tyranny is evident to everyone except César himself. Absent during the first two acts, César enters a stage that has been set with a portrait of him as a tyrant. As a result, his first monologue, which begins as an encomium to Rome and ends as a speech of self-praise, is jarring in both tone and content. Portraying himself as a great ruler who seeks to secure Rome's glory, César is utterly oblivious to his tyrannical reputation:

> Ô Superbe Cité, qui va levant le front
> Sur toutes les Cités de ce grand monde rond:
> Et dont l'honneur gagné par victoires fameuses
> Epouvante du ciel les voutes lumineuses!
> Ô sourcilleuse tours! Ô coustaux décorez!
> Ô palais orgueilleux! Ô temples honorez!
> Ô vous murs, que les dieux ont maçonné eux-mêmes,
> Eux-mêmes étouffé de mille diadèmes,
> Et ne sentez-vous point de plaisir en vos cœurs.
> De voir votre César, le vainqueur des vainqueurs? (IV, 30 verso-31 recto).

Fusing his own glory with the architecture of the city itself, César figures his rule as beneficial to the city's inhabitants. His military strength stands as another monument to Rome's greatness, along with its towers, temples, and walls. César's presumption that his status as "le vainqueur des vainqueurs" causes pleasure in the Roman people's hearts, stands in sharp contrast to the complaints expressed in the drama's first two acts. In Ciceron's opening monologue, for example, he states that the Roman people's hearts have been "sous un Tyran…abâtardis" (I, 9 recto). This earlier monologue undermines César's claims to act on behalf of the people, suggesting that the ruler instead acts for his own benefit. By boasting of his personal strength and glory in Act III, César thus unwittingly adds to the chorus of voices that casts him as a tyrant.

Entirely sure of his glory—and of the pleasure that it brings Rome—César does not concern himself with the possibility of the Roman people's opposition. His counselor and supporter Marc Antoine does raise this concern, however. Marc Antoine explains to César that he fears "ceux qui méchants / Ne vous ayant peut vaincre ouvertement aux champs, / Brassent secrètement en leur âme couarde / De vous meurtrir à l'aise, en ne vous donnant garde" (IV, 31 verso-32 recto). Marc Antoine specifically cautions against the secretive dissent that could fester within the "âme couarde" of some citizens and eventually result in a *coup d'état*. He identifies each citizen's *âme* as an interior site where resistance may originate and suggests that the possibility of opposition may easily move beyond this secret, interior place, resulting in concerted action against César's rule. By expressing his concerns, Marc Antoine points toward the porosity between private

belief or sentiment and public action, which marked so much of sixteenth-century resistance theory.

Previous readers of Garnier's *Cornélie* have noted that the drama foregrounds themes of political authority and protest. Gillian Jondorf, for example, points out that *Cornélie* (as well as many of Garnier's other dramas) foregrounds the problem of tyranny and acknowledges the interior freedom of individual subjects.[106] What has remained under-examined, however, is the structure of opposition, or the way in which Garnier's drama configures characters and collectives in a way that sustains the *droit de résistance*. To argue that Garnier's drama proposes a specific configuration of individual and collective bodies is not to make a claim about how the drama was performed. Although many humanist tragedies were staged in scholarly establishments or at the homes of prominent nobles and court officials, it is unclear whether *Cornélie* was ever performed during the sixteenth century. Rather than attempt to reconstruct a specific scene of performance, it is instead necessary to highlight the ways in which Garnier's dramatic writing captures and creates a set of interactions that, when taken together, rehearse the *droit de résistance*. Focusing on *Cornélie*'s corporeal imagery and its figuration of physical contact brings into view how the drama situates Pompée's widow as an intermediary who helps sustain Rome's opposition to César.

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[106] Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 137-40. Curtis Perry examines how Thomas Kyd's translation of Garnier's *Cornélie* takes up questions of republicanism and monarchical authority in the English context, "The Uneasy Republicanism of Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia*," *Criticism* 48.4 (2006): 535-55.

Cornélie's role as an intermediary is not apparent at the outset of the drama. Instead, it Ciceron who first serves as the people's intermediary, explaining how César has violated his subjects' liberty:

Voyant sous un Tyran nos cœurs abâtardis
Lâchement soupirer, voyant nos âmes pleines
De vergogne endurer milles hontes vilenies.
Méchante Ambition, des courages plus hauts
Poison enraciné, tu nous trames ces maux!
Tu renverses nos lois, mortelle convoitise
Et de nos libres cœurs arraches la franchise (I, 9 recto-verso)

Condemning Ambition as a force that produces tyranny, Ciceron's verses also outline the nature of Roman freedom. Referencing the hearts and souls of Roman citizens, he depicts their liberty as fundamentally interior. The common condition of all Roman citizens, these verses suggest, is the freedom that they each enjoy in their hearts. César has thus violated the liberty of each Roman citizen and of the Roman people as a whole.

When Cornélie enters in the second act, she does not join Ciceron in decrying the general loss of liberty for all Romans. Instead, she focuses on the particularity of her own loss. Cornélie emphasizes her status as Pompée's widow, and thus as the widow of one of César's most formidable rivals. Furthermore, she underscores that she is also the widow of Crasse, another roman general who had once formed a triumvirate along with César and Pompée. Surviving both of her husbands, and left to experience César's tyranny,

Cornélie's only wish is to die. The drama's entire second act consists of Cornélie's laments, which are often directed at the gods:

Voulez-vous arroser mes angoisses cruelles,
Les voulez-vous nourrir de larmes éternelles
Mes yeux, & voulez-vous que faute de tarir
Vos renaissants pleurs, je ne puisse mourir?
Faites couler le sang de mes tortices veines
Par vos tuyaux cavez, deux larmeuses fontaines:
Et si bien épuisez mon corps de sa liqueur,
Que l'âme contumace abandonne mon cœur (II, 12 verso).

Begging the gods for death, Cornélie describes a kind of emptying out of her self. She asks that the unceasing tears flowing from her eyes be replaced with the blood of her veins. Draining her body of its blood, she suggests, will allow her "âme contumace" to leave her heart. What she desires is a mortal body left with neither blood nor soul.

For Cornélie, to be alive in the wake of her husbands' deaths represents something of a scandal or a mistake. Surviving Pompée is particularly troubling to her, given that she experienced his assassination as partially her own:

Je l'ay vue, j'y étais, & presque entre mes bras
Il sentit le poignard, & tomba mort à bas.
Lors le sang me gela dans mes errantes veines,
Le poil me hérissa, comme aspics dans les plaines:
Ma voix se cacha morte au gosier, & le poux

En mon froid estomac doubla ses faibles coups (II, 15 verso).

More than merely witnessing Pompée's death, Cornélie also experiences it, physically feeling the blows to his body. Her desire for death is thus in part a desire to rectify the incongruous situation of her continued life. She has already died and yet goes on living.[107] Throughout the drama, Cornélie continues to wish for a death that has already taken place.

The heroine's unceasing mourning separates her objections to César's rule from those of Ciceron and the rest of the city. When Ciceron urges her to curb her lamentations, suggesting that—gods willing—César will eventually experience a change of fortune, Cornélie responds that her interlocutor has missed her true source of sadness:

Les bons Dieux pourront bien remettre en liberté
Si tôt qu'il leur plaira, notre pauvre Cité.
Mais las! Ils ne sauront, en eussent-ils envie,
Ranimer à Pompée une seconde vie (II, 15 recto).

Acknowledging the common plight of the city, Cornélie distinguishes this plight from her very particular loss of Pompée. Later in their dialogue, Ciceron again attempts to curb Cornélie's tears, arguing that her loss is shared, rather than singular: "Madame il ne faut pas vous transporter ainsi, / Vous souffrez de l'angoisse, hé qui n'en souffre ainsi? / Le désastre est commun…" (II, 16 recto). Pointing out that nearly everyone has lost a family member to César's plots, Ciceron suggests that the shared suffering of the entire

[107] Emily Wilson examines the concept of "living too long" as a common trope in ancient and early modern literature in *Mocked with Death: Tragic Overliving from Sophocles to Milton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

population should ease Cornélie's pain. Cornélie argues in response that the common condition of mourning does not remove the specificity of her anguish: "Moindre n'est mon tourment, ni moindre ma douleur / Pour voir à tout le monde un semblable malheur" (II, 16 recto). Cornélie acknowledges that the whole city suffers, but she maintains the particularity of her grief.

The particularity of Cornélie's grief and her relatively extreme reactions sets her apart from the condition of the people as a whole, a condition which is articulated through Ciceron's speeches and the chorus's laments. Cornélie clearly shares much with the rest of Rome's inhabitants. Like most Romans, she has lost family members, and like all Romans, she claims an interior liberty exempt from César's tyranny. Despite this shared condition, she never allows her own singular grief to be subsumed into or substituted for that of the whole. As the drama progresses, however, Cornélie does join her particular complaints to those of the Roman people, grounding this juncture in the notion of a shared future.

The future begins to emerge in the drama as a space of shared freedom through Ciceron, who shifts tactics from waiting for a change in César's fortune to hoping for a brave subject to rise up and assassinate the tyrant.[108] In Act IV, Cassie further advances this hope, arguing to Decime Brute that César's many wrongs justify his assassination:

C'est trop longtemps souffert, c'est par trop enduré,
L'on dû avoir déjà mille fois conjuré,
Mille fois pris le fer, mille mis fois en pièces

[108] Garnier, *Cornélie,* 22 verso.

Ce Tyran, pour venger nos publiques détresses (IV, 29 recto).

For Cassie, resistance is not only legitimate, but overdue. A future plan to conspire against César would rectify past and present inaction. In addition, Cassie argues that such a plan would be undertaken in the service of the public good. The choral ode that follows Cassie's argument bolsters many of his claims, reiterating César's tyranny and predicting that whoever acts against him will win the people's thanks and favor:

Son renom porté par la gloire
Sur l'aile des siècles futurs
Franchira les tombeaux obscurs
D'une perdurable mémoire.
Les peuples qui viendront après
Lui feront des honneurs sacrez
Et chaque an la jeunesse tendre
Ira le chef de fleurs orné,
Chanter au beau tour retourné
Dessus son héroïque cendre (IV, 29 verso).

The chorus suggests that he who rises up against the tyrant will not only be celebrated by Rome's current inhabitants, but by future generations as well. His courageous act, they argue, will be remembered as an important moment of common history that the people will celebrate by commemorating the hero's remains.

The fusion of past and future, or of remains and potentiality is precisely what pulls Cornélie's grief toward the people's common cause. Her list of personal complaints

against César grows in the final act, when she learns that her father, Scipion died during his failed military campaign against César's forces. This news sets off a new round of mourning for Cornélie. She is now not only twice widowed, but fatherless. She laments in particular the loss of Pompée and Scipion, both of whom mounted active opposition to César. In the wake of this new loss, however, the tenor of Cornélie's grief shifts. She joins her grief to that of the people, enlisting the chorus in her renewed laments: "Pleurons Dames pleurons, nous n'avons autres armes / Contre notre malheur qu'un long torrent de larmes" (V, 40 recto). For Cornélie, lamentation represents a form of opposition, an idea that the drama reinforces through the rhyme "armes/larmes." The chorus quickly agrees to participate in Cornélie's campaign, responding:

> Nous te pleurons Pompée, ô la gloire Romaine,
> Et de la liberté de la défense certaine:
> Ta vie était la nôtre & le tombeau noirci
> Qui t'enveloppe mort nous enveloppe aussi (V, 40, recto).

Praising Pompée's glory, the chorus echoes the temporal structure of life and death that Cornélie articulates in the second act. The chorus yokes its life to that of Pompée, and claims to share his tomb. They thus claim to have already lost their collective life. Their lamentations, however, are ongoing, and stretch into the future. The chorus's promise to mourn Pompée, "Nous te pleurons Pompée," becomes a refrain in drama's last scene. Just as Cornélie argued that she had already died with Pompée, but could not wait to join him in death, the chorus claims to share his tomb, while pledging to commemorate his life through their ongoing, interminable tears.

By inviting the chorus to add their tears to hers, Cornélie binds her particular loss to the general lament of Rome. At previous moments in the drama, such a stance seemed unacceptable. Cornélie maintained that her specific loss could not be subsumed within the city's general plight. When she calls upon the chorus to join her lament, however, Cornélie does not propose to leave her particular grief behind. Nor she does quite add her voice to that of the chorus. Rather, she suggests that she and the chorus might cry alongside one another in order to commemorate Pompée as both a husband and a Roman general. These two modes of lamentation, the singular and the plural, converge at the resting place of Pompée's body. Echoing the chorus, we might say that Pompée's tomb envelops them all, or wraps them all up together.

After the chorus claims to occupy and to be encompassed by Pompée's "tombeau noirci," Cornélie articulates how she plans to survive her husband and father in order to eventually add her remains to theirs:

> Mon Père je vivrai, je vivrai mon Epoux,
> Pour faire vos tombeaux, & pour pleurer sur vous,
> Languissante, chétive, & mes pleurs fumeuses
> Baigner plaintivement vos cendres généreuses:
> Puis sans humeur, sans force, emplissant de sanglots
> Les vases bien heureux qui vous tiendront enclos,
> Je vomirai ma vie, & tombant légère Ombre,
> Des esprits de là-bas j'irai croître le nombre (V, 40 verso).

Projecting her own death into the future, Cornélie outlines a mode of survival based on commemoration. In these, the drama's final lines, Cornélie proposes once again to empty herself out. Having already lost her *cœur* and *âme* in the moment of Pompée's death, she now proposes to succeed him by releasing all of her tears, and then eventually rejoining the remains of her body to his. By projecting her own physical death into the future and by dedicating the remainder of her life to Pompée's remains, Cornélie refuses to give herself over to César's tyranny. She maintains that tyranny cannot legitimately infringe upon the liberty of her heart and soul, and thus cannot break her bond with Pompée. By combining her tears with those of the chorus, she suggests how her opposition might survive her physical death.

Garnier's drama ends on a moment of suspension, with the promise of ongoing resistance. Much like much the valiant leaders that the *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos* recognizes as intermediaries, Cornélie sustains Rome's resistance, as well as her own. Whereas figures such as Pompée and Cicero rally the people through military might and political rhetoric, however, Cornélie invites the chorus to join her in grief. She works to sustain opposition through the commemoration of Pompée's life and legacy. By foregrounding Cornélie's grief, and by situating this grief in relation to a chorus of lamenting Roman women, the drama suggests that women might serve as intermediaries through their role as widows and mourners. This is a possibility that the *Vindiciae* itself leaves unexplored. When the *Vindiciae* mentions female figures it is usually to critique

them as tyrannical usurpers of power.[109] It also cites the biblical prophetess Deborah as an example of an extraordinary liberator who, acting as an agent of divine will, displays uncommon military might.[110] Cornélie fits neither of these roles. Although the *Vindiciae* does not explore the possibility of a steadfast mourner as a kind of intermediary, the reception history of this treatise indicates that the category was not closed, but was instead the subject of much discussion and debate. Positioning Cornélie as a figure who maintains Rome's opposition to César through the interminable grief that binds her to Pompée, Garnier's drama contributes to this discussion and debate. Rather than merely illustrate the *droit de résistance* as articulated by a political treatise, the drama instead expands this concept's potential by demonstrating how individual and collective opposition persists through a kind of shared lamentation.

By focusing on the corporeal connections between Cornélie, Pompée, and the chorus, Garnier's drama also underscores how the body of the intermediary becomes a locus of legitimate resistance. Whereas the *Vindiciae* asserts that legitimacy is established through the public position that an intermediary occupies, the drama instead establishes Cornélie's legitimacy by insisting on her physical and affective ties to Pompée and his remains. *La Mort de Pompée* further explores the idea that intermediary's body operates

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[109] For example, the *Vindiciae* states during a longer discussion about tyranny of usurpation: "And there also women who occupy kingdoms which, by ancestral laws, are accustomed to descend only to males; or who snatch the administration for themselves, as Athaliah did in Judah, Semiramis in Assyria, Agrippina in the Roman empire under her son Nero, Mammaea under Alexander Severus, Semiamira under Heliogabalus, and several Brunhildas in the Frankish kingdom" (142). Garnett explains that the reference to Brunhilda was interpreted as an "implicit attack on Catherine de Medici," and notes that this comparison was a commonplace during the 1570s, *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos,* 143, n. 507.

[110] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, 51-2.

as a site of resistance and contestation by incorporating the collective dimension of the *droit de résistance* into Cornélie's speech and actions.

Pompée's Remains, Cornélie's Glory

Whereas Garnier's *Cornélie* ends on a moment of suspended resistance, Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* seems to end on a moment of consolidated power. Corneille's drama takes place in Egypt, rather than in Rome, and focuses primarily on the power struggle between Ptolomée and Cléopâtre in the wake of their father's death. Both siblings seek Rome's favor. The drama opens as Ptolomée consults his advisers about whether to offer Pompée safe harbor, or whether to assassinate him in attempt to win César's approval. As the play's title suggests, the arguments for assassination win out. Pompée never appears on stage. Instead, his death is reported in the second act. Despite his absence, Pompée drives much of the tragedy's plot. Indeed, in his "Examen" of the drama Corneille situates Pompée at the center of the action: "Il y a quelque chose d'extraordinaire dans le titre de ce poème, qui porte le nom d'un héros qui n'y parle point; mais il ne laisse pas d'en être en quelque sorte le principal acteur, puisque sa morte est la cause unique de tout ce qui s'y passe."[111] The machinations of the staged characters, including César and Cornélie, revolve around this "principal acteur," as they seek to advance their own interests by gaining control over Pompée's memory. Many of the drama's readers have noted that César emerges triumphant from the battle to shape

[111] Pierre Corneille, "Examen," *Œuvres Complètes,* ed. André Stegmann (Paris: Seuil, 1963), 316. All citations of *La Mort de Pompée* are from this edition.

Pompée's legacy by staging an official funeral for his former rival. [112] The drama complicates this seemingly triumphant ending, however, through Cornélie's resistant speech and actions.

Although she does not appear in the final scene, Cornélie disrupts the finality of the denouement by declaring that Pompée's family and followers will rise up against César in the future. Serge Doubrovsky mentions Cornélie's continued resistance, but notes an apparent discrepancy in her claims and capacities: "Cornélie, sa veuve, prétend continuer la lutte, mais elle n'en a pas les moyens."[113] Pompée's widow neither flees nor takes up arms against César. However, as we have seen in *Cornélie*, there are other possible means of resistance, such as the refusal to set aside one's grief. Echoing the singular grief of Garnier's heroine and the shared lament of Rome, the Cornélie of *La Mort de Pompée* turns her unforgettable loss into a promise of future vengeance.

Whereas in Garnier's drama several characters, including Cornélie, argue that César holds his subjects captive by enslaving their hearts through his tyranny, in Corneille's drama, César makes Cornélie a more literal captive by keeping her in Egypt following Pompée's assassination. Lamenting her captivity, Corneille's heroine, like Garnier's, regrets that she lives too long, and maintains that she should have died along with Pompée:

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[112] See, for example, Serge Doubrovsky, *Corneille et la dialectique du héros* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 273-81. Doubrovsky reads César's actions in the final scene as a gesture of magnanimity toward a formal rival. For Doubrovsky, César is thus similar to Auguste, the Roman emperor of Corneille's *Cinna*, who generously forgives those who have conspired against him. See also, Richard Goodkin, *Birth Marks: The Tragedy of Primogeniture in Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille, and Jean Racine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 78-96. Goodkin reads this final scene as marking a passage from one era to another, with Pompée figuring the old order, of "inherited debts and benefits" and César figuring "the forces of the present," which include political ambition and calculation.

[113] Doubrovsky, 278.

J'ai vu mourir Pompée, et ne l'ai pas suivi,
Et bien que le moyen m'en aye été ravi,
Qu'une pitié cruelle à mes douleurs profondes
M'aye ôte le secours et du fer et des ondes,
Je dois rougir pourtant, après un tel malheur,
De n'avoir pu mourir d'un excès de douleur.
Ma mort était ma gloire, et le destin m'en prive
Pour croître mes malheurs et me voir ta captive (III, iv, 995-1002).

The physicality of this speech differs considerably from its counterpart in Garnier's play. Specifically, these verses put more distance between Cornélie's body and Pompée's. Corneille's heroine does not proclaim physically to feel the blows within her own body. This heroine does not claim already to have died and yet go on living. Instead, she expresses shame at having watched Pompée die and at having failed to follow him in death. This Cornélie's survival marks a lack of courage, and thus a lack of glory.

Garnier's drama centers on the heroine's struggle to decide what to make of her survival. As we have seen, that drama ultimately ends with Cornélie's pledge to commemorate her fallen husband and father, a pledge that she allows the chorus to share. In *La Mort de Pompée*, however, Cornélie's course of action is immediately clear: she must work to recuperate her fallen glory. She attempts to accomplish this task by insisting on her origins and pedigree:

Je te l'ai déjà dit, César, je suis Romaine;
Et quoique ta captive, un cœur comme le mien

De peur de s'oublier ne te demande rien.

Ordonne, et sans vouloir qu'il tremble ou s'humilie,

Souviens-toi seulement que je suis Cornélie (III, iv, 1022-26)

In these verses, which read as both compliant and defiant, Cornélie reiterates her recognition of César's authority while also preserving her heart as a space that he cannot control. He can give orders, she suggests, and can restrict her physical movements, but should refrain from making demands on her heart. The heart emerges in these verses as that which is proper to Cornélie. Importantly, her heart belongs to her primarily as a "Romaine" rather than as Pompée's widow. Cornélie's claim in these verses emphasizes civic belonging rather than an unrecoverable personal loss.

In the final act of *La Mort de Pompée,* Cornélie is given an urn containing Pompée's ashes.[114] Her continued grasp on the urn signals her effort to honor her husband's glorious legacy and to prevent this legacy from being coopted by Cléopâtre or César. The Egyptian princess and Roman emperor both attempt to manipulate Pompée's legacy to their own ends. For her part, Cléopâtre suggests that Cornélie might moderate her calls for vengeance, intimating that the two women have interests and aims in common. But Cornélie will have none of this logic, refusing to settle for a vengeance half-pursed and responding to Cléopâtre, "Comme nos intérêts, nos sentiments diffèrent" (V, ii, 1574). César also attempts to control Pompée's legacy. While Pompée still lived, César considered him a rival. After Pompée's death, however, César works to turn

[114] As Matzke notes, Cornélie is given a similar urn in Garnier's drama. However, in this earlier drama, it is Pompée's tomb that serves as the primary focal point for Cornélie's grief. The urn becomes much more important in Corneille's tragedy (151).

Pompée's memory to his advantage. The official funeral that César stages for his former rival coincides with Cléopâtre's ascension to the Egyptian throne. César announces this double ceremony in the drama's final lines: "Couronne Cléopâtre et m'apaise Pompée, / Élève à l'une un trône et l'autre des autels, / Et jure à tous les deux des respects immortels" (V, v, 1810-12). Speaking the drama's final lines, César seems to have the last word on how Pompée will be remembered. Honoring Cléopâtre and commemorating Pompée, he frames the glory of his current ally and formal rival as part of his own strength.

Given that César speaks the drama's last lines, Cornélie cannot contradict his assertions the way she contradicted Cléopâtre's. However, in the penultimate scene, Cornélie delivers a tirade that undermines the apparent finality of César's subsequent declaration. Against César's suggestion that the official funeral will "apaise" or pacify Pompée's sprit, Cornélie argues that nothing short of vengeance will properly honor her husband or calm his spirit:

> Non pas, César, non pas à Rome encor:
> Il faut que ta défaite et que tes funérailles
> A cette cendre aimée en ouvrent les murailles,
> Et quoiqu'elle la tienne aussi chère que moi,
> Elle n'y droit rentrer qu'en triomphant de toi.
> Je la porte en Afrique et c'est là que j'espère
> Que les fils de Pompée et Caton et mon père,
> Secondés par l'effort d'un Roi plus généreux,

Ainsi que la justice auront le sort pour eux.

C'est là que tu verras sur la terre et sur l'onde

Les débris de Pharsale armer un autre monde,

Et c'est là que j'irai, pour hâter tes malheurs,

Porter de rang en rang ces cendres et mes pleurs (V, iv, 1701-12).

Forced to bide her time in Egypt, Cornélie makes certain her future resistance. Extending beyond the time of the play, Cornélie's speech interrupts César's ending. César's assurances in the final lines that Pompée has been duly honored are thus preemptively contradicted by Cornélie's pronouncements.

Corneille's heroine echoes Garnier's by articulating her work of commemoration as a form of survival. However, the two heroines' respective work of commemoration differs in tone. Garnier's Cornélie joins the chorus in lamentation and pledges to maintain her tears until she finally dies. She thus opposes César's tyranny by commemorating Pompée. In contrast, Corneille's heroine makes her commemoration into an explicit call for vengeance. Describing how Pompée's family and followers will rise up to avenge him, she places herself in the middle of the action. She will appear alongside Pompée's most valiant defenders, carrying his ashes "de rang en rang." Although this Cornélie, like Garnier's, speaks of her interminable tears, she departs from her predecessor's example by figuring these tears as a central part of a military campaign. Maintaining her grip on Pompée's ashes, Corneille's heroine articulates her future glory. Pledging her continued resistance, Cornélie dedicates the remainder of her life to commemoration. In addition to preserving her husband's memory, however, Cornélie's commemoration also serves as a

means of recuperating the honor she lost by surviving him. Whereas Garnier's Cornélie continues living despite her irrevocable loss, Corneille's heroine works to convert her loss into her honor. Put another way, Garnier's Cornélie speaks primarily as a grieving widow while Corneille's heroine speaks primarily as a Roman.

By speaking as a Roman and by insisting that Pompée's followers will join her opposition to César, this Cornélie suggests that her calls for vengeance exceed her singular interests. Her plan to avenge Pompée is in the service of Rome. Although the Roman people are not figured, they are implicated in the drama. Jondorf explains that seventeenth-century tragedies without a chorus relied on individual characters to communicate public opinion or sentiment.[115] Jondorf cites Corneille's *Horace* as a particularly salient example of this practice, noting that in the final act *le viel* Horace states "Rome tout entière a parlé par ma bouche" (V, ii, 1482).[116] *Le viel* Horace claims that people speak through him. In *La Mort de Pompée*, Cornélie does not explicitly state that the people speak through her, nor does she quite claim to speak for them. Instead, by imagining herself at the head of what was once Pompée's army and by drawing strength from her civic virtue, she positions herself as a worthy captain of the people's opposition. Pledging to organize and maintain Rome's resistance as well as her own, Cornélie incorporates the Roman people into the drama. She operates as a staged mediator—or intermediary—of the unseen people's potential.

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[115] Jondorf, *French Renaissance Tragedy,* 69.
[116] Quoted in Jondorf, *French Renaissance Tragedy,* 69.

Conclusion

By adding Cornélie to the *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos'* list of intermediaries, *La Mort de Pompée* and *Cornélie* complicate some of the distinctions between Huguenot and Catholic resistance theory. The configuration of bodies in Garnier's drama more closely resembles Huguenot theories, as outlined in the *Vindiciae*. As noted, Garnier's drama expresses individual and collective dimensions of the *droit de résistance* through Cornélie and the chorus respectively. Common sorrow over the loss of Pompée binds these two entities together and Cornélie emerges as an intermediary by inviting the chorus to participate in her ongoing commemoration. In contrast, the configuration of bodies in *La Mort de Pompée* more closely resembles resistance theories articulated by members of the Catholic League, such as Jean Boucher. According to these theories, the individual, private subject could take action if he or she perceived a threat to the common good. This version of resistance theory required no magistrate or public official to authorize opposition. Instead, the private individual could act as a self-authorizing intermediary by implicating the common good in his or her personal claims. However, in terms of the tenor of Cornélie's claims, the dramas seem to switch confessional affinities. The emphasis on Cornélie's civic virtue in Corneille's drama is more in keeping with a Huguenot conception of the intermediary, whereas the emphasis on Cornélie's personal sentiment in Garnier's drama is more in keeping with a Catholic conception of what spurs legitimate resistance. Rather than strictly adhere to one confession's theory of resistance, the dramas instead pull from both sides, rearranging each of their structures and categories.

In *Cornélie* and *La Mort de Pompée*, the heroine's personal attachment to Pompée allows her to sustain Rome's opposition. By exploring the connections between Cornélie's personal attachment and her public position, the dramas indicate how the figure of intermediary joins together the private the public, the individual and the collective. Many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tragedies similarly position the figure of the intermediary as the site on which the individual and collective dimensions of the *droit de résistance* are brought together and contested. Subsequent chapters continue to investigate how tragedy reworks the role of the intermediary. In many cases, a character who articulates subjective or individual claims emerges as an intermediary through familial ties or romantic attachments—much as Cornélie assumes her role through her ties to Pompée. Through this ongoing examination of the intermediary's possible form and constitution, early modern tragedy insists on the porosity between notions of subjective freedom and the common good, a porosity that was necessary for claims of legitimate resistance. Many dramas extend the personal, particular, or subjective claims of an individual character beyond his or her boundaries as a single entity. These dramas also express collective concerns and preferences through the speech and actions of individual characters.

Focusing on these forms of porosity or permeability allows us to see how tragedy continued to rehearse resistance theory even after the religious wars seemed to recede from public memory and absolutism came to dominate political thought. As compositional and stage practices evolved during the seventeenth century, the *droit de résistance* endured, often in more vestigial or sublimated forms. Tragedy's ongoing

rehearsal of resistance theory thus echoes the temporality of Cornélie's survival. Inextricably bound to Pompée's remains, Cornélie's opposition extends into the future.

Attending to what remains as tragedy evolves will become increasingly important in the next chapter, as we examine Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* (1580) and Jean de Rotrou's *Antigone*. Antigone is a tragic heroine who has often been understood as a precursor of the modern individual, or as a herald of the modern individual's rights. Chapter Two suggests instead that her individual claims cannot be separated from the communal concerns of her family and of Thebes. Rather than stand alone for the individual rights to come, this heroine instead participates in the *droit de résistance*'s survival.

Chapter Two: Personal Attachment, Public Complaint, and the Early Modern Antigone

Robert Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* (1580) opens with a tender scene between father and daughter. Antigone and Œdipe enter together slowly, with Antigone leading her blind father by the hand. Supporting the weight of the disgraced Œdipe's body, Antigone urges him to return to Thebes and put an end to the conflict between her brothers. Having discovered his crimes of incest and parricide, Œdipe had renounced his crown, exiled himself from the city, and declared that in his absence, Ætéocle and Polynice would rule "successivement d'an en an."[117] Of course, Œdipe's plan overlooked a key characteristic of sovereign power: it is difficult to share. When Ætéocle refused to cede the throne after his year as king, Polynice declared war. In the first act of Garnier's drama, Antigone attempts to pull her father back to Thebes before this fraternal war destroys the entire city:

> Quand vous n'auriez, mon pere, autre cause de vivre,
> Que pour Thebes defendre et la rendre delivre
> Des combats fraternels, vous ne devez mourir,
> Ains vous jours prolonger pour Thebes secourir :
> Vous pouvez amortir cette guerre enflammee,
> Seul vous avez puissance en l'une et l'autre armee :
> Des mains de vos enfants vous pouvez arracher

[117] Robert Garnier, "Argument d'Antigone," *Antigone ou la Pieté,* ed. Jean-Dominique Beaudin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 59.

Le fer desja tiré pour s'entredehacher (I, 325-31).[118]

By imploring Œdipe to exercise his influence over Polynice and Ætéocle, Antigone articulates how the fate of her father and city are profoundly intertwined. Only Œdipe, she suggests, has the capacity to make her brothers lay down their arms. Œdipe alone might save Thebes from total devastation.

Although Antigone's lines insist on the specificity of Œdipe's influence, this scene also points us toward the drama's wider preoccupation with the relationship of the royal family to Thebes. Grasping her father by the arm, Antigone literalizes a gesture that the drama will repeat and rework as it explores the dynamic between family and city, ruler and ruled. Lamenting her brothers' tight hold on their weapons, Antigone's speech attunes us to the hand as a symbol of power. After all, the hand holds the scepter, that striking emblem of sovereign authority and control. Placed gently on her father's arm, Antigone's gesture also introduces us to the hand as a symbol of familial devotion. Communicating familial attachment and political power, the forms of reach in Garnier's tragedy are both literally embodied, as in Antigone's opening gesture, and more abstract, as in the powerful impression that Œdipe's return would presumably have over his warring sons. In other words, the drama suggests that its characters are swayed not only by each other's physical touch, but also by the push and pull of affective influence. While the Theban people may not hold the scepter or make claims to the throne, the drama's emphasis on affective influence allows them to participate in this push and pull as well.

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[118] *Antigone ou la Pieté,* ed. Jean-Dominique Beaudin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997). All citations from Garnier's drama are from this edition.

Through the interventions of staged choruses, along with invocations of their collective voice, the Theban people impinge upon the drama's actions and impress their concerns and preferences upon the royal characters.

Held together through forms of physical and affective influence, this network of people and family shapes what we might call the "early modern Antigone." Appearing in Garnier's 1580 drama, as well as in a drama by Jean de Rotrou that was first performed in 1637, the early modern Antigone makes claims that are thoroughly personal and subjective. Antigone's claims in both are thus similar to those of Cornélie, especially the Cornélie in Garnier's drama. Similar in structure, Antigone's claims carry a different valence from Cornélie's. When Pompée's widow asserts her subjective freedom and personal attachment to her slain husband, the legitimacy of her assertions is not in question. In contrast, when Antigone, asserts her subjective freedom and personal attachment to her bother, the legitimacy of her assertions is placed in doubt. Cornélie seems to act appropriately, given her role as Pompée's widow, his surviving "époux noble et digne moitié."[119] Antigone, however, opposes Créon on behalf of a brother rather than a husband. Whether or not her attachment to Polynice justifies her claims, or whether this attachment instead confirms her family's unseemly legacy, is a central question of both early modern versions of the tragedy.

The questions surrounding Antigone's claims point to a problem in sixteenth-century resistance theory. As we have seen, articulations of the *droit de résistance* rested in part on the individual subject's liberty of conscience. During the religious wars, liberty

[119] Corneille, *La Mort de Pompée*, III, iv, 1027.

of conscience was thought to safeguard private belief. For Protestants, this safeguard was necessary in order to prevent sovereigns from regulating matters of faith. Private belief, was not, however, considered by itself to be an acceptable justification for active resistance to tyranny. And yet, as the reception of the *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos* suggests, private belief and matters of conscience were nonetheless mobilized as justifications for resistance. With the rise of Leaguer resistance theory, opposition based on a private perception of the common good became a spiritual demand. The problem with private belief is that its virtue is difficult to verify, especially during a time of religious conflict. If an individual subject could resist based on a private belief about the common good, who but this individual subject could ratify his interpretation of the common good?

Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* and Rotrou's *Antigone* address this problem by having the collective voice of Theban people ratify Antigone's singular claims. As in many versions of the myth, Antigone labels her uncle Créon a tyrant in these early modern dramas, claiming that his refusal to bury Polynice constitutes an infraction of divine law. In so doing, she makes the sovereign's adherence to divine authority a matter of public debate. In both works, Antigone's claims remain hers alone, but they require the Theban people's endorsement. By linking Antigone's attachment to forms of public complaint, the dramas address the problem of legitimacy that resistance theory poses.

Through their elaboration of the *droit de résistance*, Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* and Rotrou's *Antigone* disrupt some of the terms that structure ongoing debates about Antigone's importance within political theory and philosophy, which turn on

modern distinctions between the ethical and the political, the individual and the state, and the family and the state. Often taking Sophocles' *Antigone* as a point of departure, these debates cast its eponymous heroine as a figure who champions kinship bonds, singular desires, or individual rights. What these divergent conceptions of Antigone share is a tendency to remove her from the scene of theater. In other words, Antigone often circulates within political theory and philosophy as an isolated tragic figure, rather than as a character embedded within a drama. Critiquing this tendency, Patchen Markell notes that Antigone and Creon serve as complementary parts of a tragic action that exceeds them both. Productively suggesting that we resituate Antigone within the structure of tragedy, Markell argues that the text of Sophocles' drama offers insight into the problem of recognition in modern political thought.[120] However, we might further disrupt the tendency to isolate Antigone by reading Garnier and Rotrou's tragedies as forms of dramatic writing that require us to situate Antigone in relation to her familial attachments and her civic concerns. Taking up these early modern tragedies, which are in dialogue with Sophocles' drama, but which possess their own dramatic structures, allows us to return Antigone to the scene of theater, while affording us some distance from the modern readings of Sophocles that press so heavily on contemporary considerations of this figure.

Resituating Antigone as a character within drama brings into relief how her speech and actions are constituted through those of other characters, choruses, and even those of the off-staged Theban people. In drama, action does not belong to one character

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[120] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 85.

or entity alone, but instead is shared or "dislocated," to borrow a term from Bruno Latour. Indeed, is precisely to drama that Latour turns in order to illustrate the idea of dislocated action and overlapping agencies:

> Play-acting puts us immediately into a thick imbroglio where the question of who is carrying out the action has become unfathomable. As soon as the play starts […] nothing is certain: Is this for real? Is it fake? Does the audience's reaction count? What about the lighting? What is the backstage crew doing? Is the playwright's message faithfully transported or hopelessly bungled? Is the character carried over? And if so by what? What are the partners doing? Where is the prompter? If we accept to unfold the metaphor, the very word actor directs our attention to a complete dislocation of the action, warning us that it is not a coherent, controlled, well-rounded and clean-edged affair. By definition, action is *dislocated.* Action is borrowed, distributed, suggested, influenced, dominated, betrayed, translated (original emphasis).[121]

Distributing the action among the staged entities and unseen forces, Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* and Rotrou's *Antigone* bring into relief how personal complaints and public laments are profoundly co-implicated. Rather than propose an Antigone who single-handedly advocates for the *droit de résistance*, these dramas instead put forward an Antigone who participates in the collective articulation of this right. The *droit de résistance* is thus not vested in Antigone, or in any other character or entity, but rather in the very structure of the dramas. Before examining this collective articulation of the *droit*

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[121] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* [2005] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46.

de résistance, we will first consider in more detail some well-known modern conceptions of Antigone. As we will see, Garnier and Rotrou's tragedies cut across the divisions on which such conceptions depend.

Modern Antigones

Antigone has often been associated with the modern individual's emergence during the eighteenth century. Within the pages of the *Encyclopédie* (1752-71), for example, the chevalier Louis de Jaucourt heralds Sophocles' Antigone for obeying her own sense of justice in opposition to sovereign decree. In the article "Sujet," Jaucourt considers how an individual should react when his obligation to the sovereign conflicts with his own understanding of right and wrong. Is it possible, Jaucourt wonders, to maintain one's innocence while carrying out an unjust order? Contra Hobbes, who argues that acting as an agent of the sovereign would absolve the subject of guilt, Jaucourt ultimately decides that when faced with an unjust order, one should not obey, but instead "montrer un noble courage, refuser de l'exécuter, & resister de toutes ses forces à l'injustice, parce qu'il vaut mieux obéir à Dieu qu'aux hommes, quel que soit leur rang sur la terre." For Jaucourt, obedience to God and fidelity to justice override the subject's obligation to the sovereign. The chevalier argues that Sophocles' Antigone exemplifies this "noble courage," citing her burial of Polynice in defiance of Créon's edict:

> 'Je ne croyois pas, dit Antigone à Créon, roi de Thebes, que les édits d'un homme mortel tel que vous, eussent tant de force qu'il dûssent l'emporter sur les lois des dieux mêmes, lois non écrites à la vérité, mais certaines & immuables; car elles ne

> sont pas d'hier ni d'aujourd'hui; on les trouve établies de tems immémorial; personne ne sait quand elles ont commencé; je ne devois donc pas par crainte d'aucun homme, m'exposer, en les violant, à la punition des dieux.' C'est un beau passage de Sophocle, *Tragédie d'Antigone, vers. 463.*[122]

For Jaucourt, who wrote many of the articles on law and jurisprudence for the *Encyclopédie*, recognition of this hierarchy of laws makes Antigone an enduring model of the ideal subject. Her defense of "les lois des dieux mêmes" operates in this context as an assertion of natural law's primacy over any mortal government.

Looking beyond the *Encyclopédie*, we find other examples of how Antigone has come to stand as a classical prefiguration of the modern individual. In *Le Mythe d'Antigone,* Simone Fraisse argues that "La protestation d'Antigone, qui ose agir selon son cœur malgré l'oppression sociale, est génératrice de l'individualisme moderne, celui de Rousseau qui croit que la conscience est un instinct divin, celui de Kant pour qui la loi morale est inscrite dans le cœur de chaque homme."[123] Fraisse also notes the affinity of Sophocles' Antigone with the rights of man as formally declared at the end of the eighteenth century.[124] Like Antigone's "lois des dieux mêmes," the rights of man are proclaimed timeless and immutable in the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du*

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[122] Louis de Jaucourt, "Sujet," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.,* eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, ed. Robert Morrissey (2013). In this entry, Jaucourt references a biblical verse that was a commonplace in early modern debates about the *droit de résistance*. The verse, from Acts II 29:5, in which the Apostle Peter states that it is "better to obey God rather than men," is cited in Huguenot treatises in particular. As Daniel Brewer has pointed out, whereas Jaucourt's biographical relationship to Protestantism remains a subject of debate, Jaucourt's writing suggests intellectual ties to some aspects of Protestant thought, "Encyclopedic Transfers and the Internationalization of Intellectual Work: Louis de Jaucourt," n.d., 1-27.

[123] Simone Fraisse, *Le Mythe d'Antigone* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1974), 93.

[124] Fraisse, 104.

citoyen (1789). And just as Antigone's claim (as cited by Jaucourt) rests on her subjective perception of justice, so the rights proclaimed in the *Déclaration* rest upon a notion of the individual subject's autonomy and capacity for self-determination. Given these parallels it is easy to see how Antigone's example has been associated with notions of the liberal, modern individual whose inalienable rights were formally recognized during the eighteenth century.

The association of Antigone with the modern individual has had no small amount of staying power within the French tradition. After surveying the many dramatic and critical inflections of this figure across centuries of French cultural history, Fraisse concludes that "Pour les Français en particulier, Antigone sera toujours la fille de la Révolution."[125] This legacy also extends beyond the French tradition, contributing to a broader trend in modern and contemporary political theory and philosophy that understands Antigone as an autonomous, solitary political dissident. Bonnie Honig summarizes this trend, writing that it casts Antigone as a "heroic conscientious objector who on political grounds violates an unjust law, challenges a powerful sovereign, and all by herself dares speak truth to power. This is the legalists' Antigone, invariably paired, whether or not to her advantage, with Socrates, that other famous civil disobedient."[126] Within this framework, the subjective perception of justice that Jaucourt so admired in Antigone's example (the "Je" in her "Je ne croyais pas") becomes the heroine's defining characteristic. Whereas freedom of conscience as claimed through the early modern *droit de résistance* linked the individual subject to a broader community, Antigone's subjective

[125] Fraisse, 167.
[126] Bonnie Honig, *Antigone, Interrupted* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 7.

perception of justice as articulated through the modern, legalist framework has an isolating effect. This Antigone stands up for justice, alone.

As Honig notes, the legalist view of Antigone as a solitary civil disobedient that seems to emerge during the eighteenth century positions this heroine against a powerful sovereign. In Sophocles' drama, this sovereign is Creon, her uncle, who has taken power after her brothers kill each other while warring over the Theban throne. It is Creon who has decided that Eteocles will receive an official state burial (an honor befitting a Theban king), and that Polynices will be left unburied (a dishonor befitting a traitor who raised a foreign army in order to usurp the throne). Just as Antigone's example has migrated into new contexts and taken on different inflections, so has the sovereign power she opposes. If within the legalist framework Antigone has come to resemble a modern individual, Creon has come to represent the modern state. In this context their conflict maps onto a tension between natural and positive law, with Antigone standing for the former and Creon, the latter. Reading Sophocles' Creon as a champion of national interest, or *raison d'état,* Fraisse remarks that "Entre l'Etat et l'individu, entre l'ordre et la justice, l'accord est fragile, il ne peut jamais être qu'une trêve. A fortiori quand l'individu s'autorise de l'autonomie de sa conscience. Car dans la constitution d'une collectivité, rien n'est plus déconcertant que le droit naturel."[127] The alignment of Creon with the state further underscores the conception of Antigone as a lone dissenter, because such a configuration positions Antigone against the collective. By vigorously defending her liberty of conscience, this Antigone acts in her own self-interest, rather than in the interest of the

[127] Fraisse, 94.

state or of the community, two entities which are here understood as synonymous. In other words, she represents the natural liberty of the individual in opposition to the state's laws or community's norms.

Of course, this Antigone—the heroic, the solitary, the self-interested—is not the only Antigone in modern poltical theory and philosophy. Another trend defines her as an exemplary incarnation of familial devotion. In this line of thought, Antigone's defiance of Creon is not a mark of solitude or of autonomous heroism, but rather a sign of devotion to her brother. After all, it is *in burying Polynices* that Antigone transgresses Creon's edict. The portrayal of Antigone as a picture of sisterly devotion is most closely associated with G.W.F. Hegel, whose account of the conflict between familiy and state in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807) is often read as a gloss on the conflcit between Antigone and Creon. For Hegel, a woman's burial of her male family member constitutes an ethical act that secures his particularity. As a result, the act of burial works against the state, which instead understands him as a replaceable citizen.

By burying her kin, woman thus takes up the familiy's particular interests against those of the state, or the broader community. Judith Butler notes that Hegel "variably" uses the terms community, government, and state to name the entity in conflict with the family.[128] Uniting these terms as the "public sphere," Butler reminds us that for Hegel, the conflcit between this sphere and the family is dialectical. She writes, "The public sphere…only acquires its existence through *interfering* with the happiness of the family; thus, it creates for itself 'an internal enemy – womankind in general. Womankind – the

[128] Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* [2000] (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 35.

everlasting irony [in the life] of the community' (288, 352)."[129] Exemplifying "Womankind" as "the everlasting irony of the community," the Antigone of Hegel's formulation marks a continual turning away from the common interests of the public sphere in favor of the private interests of the family. As Butler explains, Hegel's Antigone thus remains a "prepolitical subject," forever representing the "internal enemy" or other of the public sphere.[130]

The differences between Hegel's Antigone and the legalist Antigone point us toward some persistant patterns in modern conceptions of this figure. The legalist framework renders Antigone solitary and political. In contrast, Hegel's Antigone (or the Womankind she represents) is not solitary, but rather appears deeply devoted to the family. This private attachment, however, makes her into an ethical rather than a political figure. Our options seem to be for a political, autonomous Antigone, or for a non-political, attached Antigone. For all of their significant differences, however, both options position Antigone against the community. Antigone the lone political hero or conscientious objector champions individual liberty over the common good. Antigone the devoted sister champions the private interests of the family over those of the larger community. Furthermore, in both of these cases, the community and the common good are understood as coextensive with the state.

Another framework aligns Antigone with a community that is not co-extensive with the state, but rather exceeds and precedes the state, encompassing all of humanity. This third framework, which Honig terms the "mortalist humanist," takes Antigone's

[129] Butler, 34-35.
[130] Butler, 34-35.

familial devotion as a point of departure, but it understands her devotion as a mark of human universality rather than familial particularity. In this case, Antigone's burial of Polynices functions as a gesture of mourning, and the common experience of mourning binds all humans together. Honig argues that mortalist humanists tend to position Antigone as a "lamenter of the dead, a grieving sister/mother/daughter/ whose cries for her brother accentuate a sense of loss said to be familiar to all humans, instancing a universal that is pointedly poised against time-bound, divisive, and merely political distinctions between friend and enemy."[131] If the Hegelian framework opposes Antigone to the political by aligning her with the private interests of the family, the mortalist humanist framework has the same effect by aligning her with the universal experience of all mankind.[132] Despite this difference, there is some commonality between the mortalist humanist trend and an earlier step in Hegel's dialectic, in which woman (Antigone) returns the dead to nature and to the entire human community.

Surveying these trends – the legalist, the Hegelian, the mortalist humanist – we see that an emphasis on Antigone's attachments, whether they correspond to the family or to all of humanity, tend to occlude the political potential of their speech and actions. Butler and Honig have both critiqued this tendency, arguing on the contrary that these

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[131] Honig, 7. See also Honig's chapter "Tragedy, Maternalism, Ethics: Toward an Agonistic Humanism," 17-35. I adopt a different typology of Antigones from Honig's, although I am clearly drawing from her organization of the field. Whereas I consider the legalist, Hegelian, and mortalist humanist Antigones, Honig does not treat Hegel's Antigone as its own framework. Honig's three frameworks, or trends, are the legalist, the mortalist humanist and the Lacanian or psychoanalytic. Honig argues that this third trend positions Antigone as "a monstrous creature of desire unbound by the ordinary satisfactions of everyday life and therefore willing, even passionately eager, to die for her cause" (7). I do not include this psychoanalytic framework in my typology because it is less pertinent to my main interest in Antigone's potential political force and her relationship to the community.

[132] For more on this point, as well as on the other places in Hegel's writing where Antigone is referenced, see George Steiner, *Antigones* [1984] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 19-42.

attachments undergird Antigone's capacity for political disruption. In *Antigone's Claim,* Butler suggests that Antigone wields the language of sovereignty, acting out a perverse familial legacy in ways that trouble canonical interpretations (including Hegel's), which often position her as an incarnation of a pure, pre-political kinship. More recently, in *Antigone, Interrupted*, Honig proposes an agonistic partisan Antigone, who acts conspiratorially in cooperation with her sister Ismene. Together, Butler's and Honig's work suggests that is not Sophocles' drama as such that necessitates a choice between a solitary, political Antigone, and a devoted, ethical Antigone, but rather a persistent set of reading practices and interpretive biases that impose these categories.

Informed by Butler and Honig's readings of Sophocles' text and its dramaturgical potential, this chapter seeks in part to carry futher their shared aim of working against these categories. Unlike Butler and Honig, however, I attempt to trouble the modern receptions of Antigone by turning away from Sophocles' tragedy and toward the early modern dramas of Garnier and Rotrou. Composed and performed before modern divisions between the ethical and the political and between the individual and the community are put into place, these dramas offer an Antigone whose subjective claims are constituted by attachments to her family and ratified by the people of Thebes. In both Garnier and Rotrou, the Theban people function as a community that is neither co-extensive with the state, nor representative of all humanitiy. The people are instead a specific, bounded population with political preferences. Tethering the people's claims to those of Antigone, these dramas stage the early modern *droit de résistance*. Through the performance of this right, Garnier and Rotrou offer an interpretation of this classical

figure that departs from modern categorizations within political theory and philosophy but still addresses contemporary concerns with these fields. In particular, these dramas provide insight into how subjective freedom and forms of belonging can operate in concert. First considering how the structure of these dramas eschews divisions between the ethical and the political, or between a solitary and an attached Antigone, this chapter then examines how each drama raises Antigone's subjective claims and authorizes these claims through the Theban people's approval.

Early Modern *Antigone*s

First published and performed within sixty years of each other, Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* (1580) and Rotrou's *Antigone* (1637-39) draw from many of the same sources, incorporating elements of Aeschylus, Euripides, Seneca, and Statius' versions of the myth. As I have noted above, Rotrou also draws from Garnier's tragedy directly, as well as from another sixteenth-century version by the Italian dramatist Luigi Alamanni.[133] Working from this plurality of sources, Garnier and Rotrou do not simply mimic the dramatic arc established by Sophocles' *Antigone.* Whereas Sophocles' drama opens as Antigone receives the news of Creon's edict, both early modern versions begin at an earlier point in the family's story. As we have seen, Garnier's tragedy opens with Antigone leading Œdipe through the wilderness after his self-blinding and abdication.

[133] For further discussion of Garnier's sources, see Jean-Dominique Beaudin, "Introduction," *Antigone ou la Pieté,* ed. Jean-Dominique Beaudin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 7-54. For a discussion of Rotrou's sources, see Bénédicte Louvat, "Introduction" to *Antigone* in *Théâtre choisi*, ed. Bénédicte Louvat, Pierre Pasquier, and Marianne Béthery (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2007), 199-249. Rotrou's drama was first performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1637. It is uncertain whether Garnier's drama was performed during the sixteenth century. Beaudin argues, however, that the composition of the text suggests that Garnier certainly had performance in mind (53).

Rotrou's begins with Jocaste lamenting that Ætéocle and Polynice have not managed to share the throne as Œdipe had envisioned. Both dramas go on to treat Antigone's reactions to the brothers' fatal duel and to conclude with Antigone's defiance of Créon. Garnier and Rotrou thus cover two conflicts in one drama, a construction that serves to link Antigone's resistance to the many misfortunes of her family and city.

Linking the two conflicts, Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* and Rotrou's *Antigone* hold together what seem like two sides of their eponymous heroine: the devoted daughter/sister and the dissident. We have already seen how conceptions of Antigone as a tragic figure in political theory and philosophy tend to take up one of these sides. Simone Fraisse also notes the appearance of these two Antigones within drama, a duality that she traces to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* respectively:

> Dans *Œdipe à Colone*, Antigone est le type de fille aimante et pieuse, qui apaise et réconcilie. Modèle édifiant, elle suscite l'admiration, quelles que soient les circonstances où le poète a choisi de la faire évoluer. Elle ne diffère pas en essence d'Ismène, conçue comme son double: les deux sœurs pleurent la mort d'Œdipe en un Chœur alterné, comme elles pleureraient ensemble sur chacun des malheurs attachés à leur race. Dans *Antigone,* la jeune fille n'existe qu'en fonction d'une situation bien définie. Sans une loi à violer, sans un tyran à braver, elle ne serait plus Antigone.[134]

Fraisse goes on to suggest that the different portraits of Antigone from within Sophocles' œuvre afford this character "une double postérité" within French literary and cultural

[134] Fraisse, 14-15.

history, arguing that subsequent dramatic interpretations have tended to favor one over the other.[135] Fraisse aligns Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* with the devoted Antigone, noting how Garnier "[tire] de beaux effets" from a touching scene of affection between Antigone and Œdipe that appears in *Œdipe à Colone*, as well as in the *Phéniciennes* of both Seneca and Euripides. However, as I have noted, Garnier's tragedy also stages the conflict between Antigone and Creon, presenting Antigone the dissident as well as Antigone the devotee. More than merely presenting both of these roles, the drama firmly establishes their mutual constitution and eschews the very idea that they might be separated. Rotrou's drama performs a similar work, offering an Antigone whose inextricable attachments to family and people inform her objections to sovereign power.

The frontispiece that accompanies early editions of Rotrou's drama illustrates this close relationship between Antigone's objections to Créon's edict and the misfortunes of her family and city.[136] Engraved by Claude Vignon and Michel Lasne, the frontispiece depicts Jocaste in the left foreground as she attempts to pull apart her warring sons. The right background shows the final confrontation between Créon and his son Hémon, which takes place over the body of Antigone. These two scenes of parental alarm serve as bookends for the plot, depicting a tragic action that is both at its beginning and near its end:

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[135] Fraisse, 15-17. Tracing the historical periods during which one side or another of this dual lineage seemed to be in vogue, Fraisse suggests that during the Renaissance and nineteenth century the devoted Antigone reigned. In contrast, during eighteenth and twentieth centuries, the dissident Antigone who speaks out as "la voix du faible contre le puissant" was more in favor.

[136] The frontispiece appears in editions from 1639 and 1640 that were published under the direction of Antoine de Sommaville (Louvat 254).

Figure 1: ***Antigone,*** **Frontispiece 1640**

The many outstretched arms in the image create a kind of visual tension, pulling the scenes apart even as they remain tied together. It is impossible to see Jocaste's outstretched arm restraining her son in the foreground without also seeing Créon's raised arm imploring his son in the background. The impossibility of viewing the image's foreground without the background seems to suggest a linear passage from one conflict to the other. However, it is likewise impossible to see the background without passing through the foreground, an optic that suggests a continual repetition and a lack of any final resolution. The image thus refuses a chronological passage from one scene to another, suggesting instead a kind of perpetual suspension that underscores the enmeshment of Antigone's opposition to Créon and the communal crisis that her brothers' conflict engenders.

Holding these two conflicts in suspense the frontispiece alerts us to the outstretched arm as a key gestural motif. In both dramas, characters and entities reach toward each other, attempting to exert their influence. No one or group acts alone, but rather all are pushed and pulled by the physical tug of another's arm, or by the affective sway of another's laments. Within Rotrou's drama, Antigone reaches most explicitly toward Polynice. In Garnier's her reach extends first toward Œdipe, and second toward Polynice. Her outstretched arms function as corporeal manifestations of her attempts to move her father and brother, both physically and emotionally. These gestures also signal how she is moved by them. In both dramas Antigone's reach and grip attach her to her family's troubled legacy. Rather than only function as signs of Antigone's apparent piety

and virtue—as has previously been suggested—these gestures also raise questions about the legitimacy of Antigone's claims. As we will see, the crisis of legitimacy that these gestures engender is ultimately mediated by the interventons of staged choruses and the unseen Theban people.

Corrupting Piety

In Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté*, the heroine seems to exert a unifying effect on what might otherwise feel like a diffuse or sprawling drama. Although the drama presents a number of events in the family's history, all of these events dilate around Antigone's "pieté."[137] Derived from the Latin concept *pietas*, "la pieté" is a capacious concept that encompasses religious, familial, and patriotic devotion. During the sixteenth century, the idea of piety often overlapped with that of pity or compassion. Fraisse explains, "Piété fraternelle qui se confond avec la pitié, les deux mots qui procèdent du même radical étant au XVI^{e} encore mêlés dans l'usage. En ensevelissant son frère, Antigone se montre 'piteuse' ou 'pitoyable,' c'est-à-dire qu'elle pratique la charité."[138] In Garnier's drama, the charity or compassion that Antigone expresses includes a particularly Christian dimension. Piety thus operates as an elastic concept that allows the drama to harmonize pagan values with Christian virtues.[139] The elasticity of "la pieté" renders Antigone a "point convergent" or "pôle affectif" that pulls together the drama's affective registers

[137] As Fraisse points out, Garnier's tragedy is "la seule qui présente pour le théâtre l'histoire d'Antigone dans sa continuité" (22). Jean-Dominique Beaudin underscores that the actor playing Antigone would remain on stage during nearly the entire duration of the drama (39). Fraisse and Beaudin are in part responding to Émile Faguet's assertion that Garnier's drama lacks unity, an assertion that he makes in *La Tragédie française au seizième siècle* (Paris: Librairie Universitaire, 1894), 38.
[138] Fraisse, 24.
[139]Steiner, 139-40.

and the elements of its plot.[140] As we will see, however, piety also pushes Antigone toward other characters in ways that call into question her unifying virtue.

The tragedy highlights Antigone's "pieté" in the first act by contrasting her virtues with Œdipe's vices. The act begins as the father-daughter pair enters, with Antigone slowly leading Œdipe by the hand.[141] As Œdipe's first lines indicate, Antigone's filial gesture operates as a sign of her piety: "Toy, qui ton pere aveugle et courbé de vieillesse / Conduis si constamment, mon soustien, mon addresse" (I, 1-2). The lines do not merely offer a portrait of Antigone's piety, they also signal the distinction between father and daughter. Antigone is constant and upright, whereas Œdipe is bent over and falters. Such physical distinctions as these have a clear moral valence, which the drama develops further as the act progresses. Antigone's physical steadfastness operates as the outward sign of her rectitude, just as Œdipe's sloped posture marks not only his age, but also the bent nature of his past conduct. Although Œdipe lauds Antigone's fidelity, he also urges her to leave his side and return to Thebes alone. When Antigone refuses and maintains her constant grip, Œdipe explains that he fears a repetition of his incestuous union with Jocaste if Antigone remains:

> [….] penses-tu qu'il me reste
> Encore un parricide et encore un inceste?
> J'en ay peur, j'en ay peur, ma fille laisse moy:
> Le crime maternel me fait craindre pour toy (I, 49-52).

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[140] Beaudin, 40; Fraisse, 22.
[141] Dobby-Poirson notes that this slow, deliberate pace would have produced maximum emotional effect on the drama's spectators (234).

Œdipe's warning suggests that Antigone's grasp on her father, the very gesture that communicates her piety, also signals its possible corruption.[142]

In terms of the plot, Œdipe's fears do not come to pass: Antigone eventually releases his hand and returns to Thebes. But the drama's language complicates this separation, suggesting a persistent form of influence between them. The continued emphasis on their physical and moral distinction works paradoxically to create a kind of anxiety about the permeability between her purity and his corruption. The more the tragedy contrasts Antigone with Œdipe, the more their qualities attach to one another through rhymes and other resonances. For example, pleading with Antigone to leave in yet another instance, Œdipe says:

> Pourquoy me serres-tu de ta virgeale main
> Ma dextre parricide, et mon bras inhumain,
> Taché du mesme sang qui me donna naissance ?
> Mechante, abominable et pestifere engence ! (I, 99-103)

The verses clearly identify a difference between Antigone's hand and Œdipe's arm, labeling hers "virgeale" and his "inhumain." The rhyme between "main" and "inhumain," however, complicates this distinction, associating Antigone's hand with the less desirable characteristics of Œdipe's arm. Worried about this corrupting association, Œdipe points out that his "bras inhumain" is, like the rest of his body, stained with his cursed blood. He begs Antigone to release his arm for fear of contamination. And yet, is not Antigone born

[142] Dobby-Poirson reads Œdipe's worry as an instance of appropriate parenting: "Seul, Œdipe garde présentes à l'esprit ses responsabilités de père: il engage Antigone à l'abandonner par crainte d'un nouvel inceste" (143).

of the same blood? Does she not also carry this incestuous legacy? Œdipe himself raises these questions, wondering "Se peut-il faire helas! qu'un lict incestueux / Ait peu jamais produire un enfant si vertueux" (I, 87-88). Like the rhyme of "main" and "inhumain" the pair of "vertueux" and "incestueux" communicates a certain anxiety about the distinction between father and daughter. Œdipe argues that the blood of his birth continues to course through him, working out its effects. Suggesting how his influence may extend beyond the release of her grip, the drama implies that his legacy contaminates her virtue.

Much of the disagreement between father and daughter takes up precisely the question of persistent influence. When Œdipe is not urging Antigone to let go and leave, he is deploring his cursed fate and rehearing his crimes. Whereas Œdipe maintains that these crimes forever mark him, Antigone holds up the possibility of redemption: "Vostre malheur est grand, mais un cœur genereux / Surmonte tout malheur, et n'est point malheureux" (I, 123-24). Their disagreement turns on whether one's heritage and previous acts can be overcome, as well as on whether one can successfully detach from family and former self. Antigone's verses express the possibility of detachment, locating responsibility and blame in the individual will. The drama thus creates a kind of clash between gesture and speech: Antigone extolls the freedom of the individual will even as she refuses to relinquish her grip on Œdipe. With Antigone articulating the possibility of individual redemption, their disagreement maps onto the drama's intermingled value

systems: the tragic and the Christian. Antigone answers Œdipe's tragic fatalism with a kind of Christian hope.[143]

Whereas this idea of Christian hope would seem to allow Antigone to shake off Œdipe's lingering influence, or to preserve her piety even while grasping his cursed body, the Christian valences of her gesture in fact deepens the anxiety surrounding her legacy and devotion. Composed and published during the Wars of Religion, Garnier's drama appears at a time of intense theological battles and physical conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. Notably, Antigone's piety has been linked to both sides of the conflict. For Beaudin, Antigone clearly articulates a Catholic point of view. Glossing the argument between Antigone and Créon, Beaudin writes, "Il ne nous semble pas exagéré de dire que cette controverse est un écho du débat qui opposait catholiques et calvinistes: Antigone, en affirmant le rôle de la liberté de l'homme dans le choix du mal ou du bien, ne peut se résoudre à l'idée d'une condamnation originelle et définitive de l'individu."[144] Aligning Antigone's Catholicism with Garnier's, Beaudin continues, "Garnier, en bon catholique, ne saurait adhérer à l'idée de réprobation divine à l'égard de l'individu avant même sa naissance."[145] Gillian Jondorf also remarks on Antigone's insistence on the individual's liberty, but aligns this insistence with Protestant positions. Jondorf argues that "in *Antigone,* Garnier shows sympathy for the freedom of individual conscience; in the sixteenth century this would seem an almost Protestant viewpoint, for Antigone follows her own judgment entirely in deciding where her duty lies and what God requires

[143] To underscore this point, Beaudin proposes alternate titles for Garnier's tragedy: "*Antigone se dressent contre la malédiction de la famille d'Œdipe"* and "*Antigone luttant pour la justice et la piété*" (39).
[144] Beaudin, 22.
[145] Beaudin, 22.

of her."[146] I cite these divergent views not with the aim of adjudicating between them, but rather in order to point out that they share a similar structure: both suggest how expressions of piety attach individuals to communities.

Jondorf and Beaudin underscore Antigone's freedom of conscience by linking her speech to communities that are constituted along religious lines. In both cases, her proclaimed independence is what renders her position either Catholic or Protestant. As we have seen, the drama's interplay of language and gesture highlights Antigone's inseparability from her family's legacy, even while insisting on her independent virtue. Similarly, accounts of the possible historical resonances of Antigone's piety tie her to confessional communities, all the while emphasizing her claims of subjective freedom. Articulating a kind of freedom through attachment, these claims illustrate a constitutive feature of the religious conflict: the deep connections between assertions of religious freedom and concerns about collective salvation.[147] During this historical moment, Catholics and Protestants regarded each other's claims as threats to the spiritual well-being of the community. Religious violence during the sixteenth century was thus not quite (or not only) a clash of communities, but rather a conflict about the proper constitution of the community. Barbara Diefendorf explains, "Despite their religious differences, Protestants and Catholics held to an ideal community in which the sacred and the civic were joined. Members of both faiths nevertheless believed that the social body had been dangerously corrupted and could only be restored by purging the errors that

[146] Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century*, 104-05.
[147] Diefendorf, "Rites of Repair: Restoring Community in the French Religious Wars," 35.

defiled it."[148] In this context, acts of piety, such as attending a particular service or worshiping with certain objects, took on a dual significance. From one side of the confessional divide a gesture of piety would have operated as a sign of faith and virtue. From the opposing side the same gesture would signal sin and corruption. Piety and corruption were thus transmutable qualities that could shift with changes in perspective.

The anxiety surrounding piety during the religious wars helps us to understand the troubling duality of Antigone's gesture within Garnier's drama. On the one hand, Antigone comes across as a pure and innocent character, who attempts to pull her father toward redemption while expressing faith in the powers of the individual will. On the other hand, Antigone's grip on Œdipe raises questions about his hold on her, suggesting how his legacy may shape her actions. Just as an act of faith during the sixteenth century might have been seen as both pious and corrupt, Antigone's outstretched arm marks her fidelity, but renders its virtue uncertain. The sustained bond between father and daughter thus illustrates how piety and corruption remain intertwined. Rather than stabilize virtue by uniting the drama's elements and themes in her expression of filial love and devotion, Antigone's gesture instead disrupts the very idea of a stable or constant virtue.

The instability of Antigone's virtue carries over into her political claims. She justifies her burial of Polynice by appealing to divine law. But how are these appeals themselves adjudicated? Just as pious gestures held dual valences during the religious wars, so did invocations of the divine. Part of what made the subject's freedom of

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[148] Diefendorf, "Rites of Repair: Restoring Community in the French Religious Wars," 34. For more on the concept of the common good and the stress that this concept underwent during the religious wars, see Hélène Merlin-Kajman, *Public et littérature en France au XVII^e siècle* [1994] (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004), 14-87.

conscience so politically dangerous during this time was that anyone could theoretically claim to act on behalf of divine law and rally the support of sympathizers. Koselleck explains this problem, noting that "As a result of the split in ecclesiastical unity, the entire social order became unhinged…High treason and the struggle for the common good became interchangeable concepts, depending on the point of view of the ascendant fashion."[149] By foregrounding Antigone's outstretched arm and by suggesting that she may transmit her family's troubled legacy, Garnier's drama casts doubt over Antigone's subsequent assertions and raises questions about her proclaimed adherence to divine law. Although Rotrou's drama seems on one level to resolve these questions and to confirm her claims, this later version of the tragedy in fact deepens the crisis of legitimacy that Antigone's familial bonds engender. Whereas an unstable conception of piety haunts Garnier's play, in Rotrou's, it is an unstable conception of nature – and of natural law – that is of highest concern.

Questioning Nature

Appearing after the Wars of Religion, Rotrou's *Antigone* (1637-39) focuses on the political dangers and consequences of a situation in which the ideal of a common good has been irreparably broken. Christian Biet explains that this problem haunted France in the period following the religious conflict. He writes, "Dans cette période qui suit les guerres de religion, et qu'on qualifiera plus tard de 'baroque,' on est en droit de considérer qu'aucune des lois de référence ne peut être totalement partagée par tous les

[149] Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis,* 17.

citoyens."[150] Beginning with the conflict between Ætéocle and Polynice, Rotrou's tragedy considers how the brothers' competing claims to the throne produce a situation in which authority and law are contestable. Although Œdipe does not appear on stage in this version, his legacy nonetheless impinges on the scene. The drama raises the suggestion that Œdipe's influence is to blame for their conflict. It is Créon who most explicitly voices this possibility by repeatedly invoking Œdipe's incest and parricide and framing the drama's events as consequences of these past infractions.

Antigone explicitly rejects this suggestion. When Créon blames Œdipe and his cursed sons for the loss of his youngest son Ménécée (who leaps to his death in an act of self-sacrifice), Antigone objects, arguing that Œdipe has already sufficiently paid for his crimes:

> Œdipe, quoi? tes yeux par tes mains arrachés,
> Tes mânes, part ta mort, de ton corps détachés,
> Ton Sceptre abandonné, tout ton Royaume en armes,
> Tes enfants divisés, nos soupirs et nos larmes
> Ne peuvent faire encor qu'un innocent péché,
> Moins de toi, que du sort ne te soit reproché ? (I, 4, 133-38)[151]

The idea that Œdipe should be detached from his children's crimes is communicated not only through the overall content of Antigone's lines, but also through the series of actions that these lines contain: "arrachés," "détachés," "abandonné," "divisés." Whereas

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[150] Christian Biet, "Droit divin, droit naturel, et droit humain dans *Antigone* de Jean Rotrou," *Littératures Classiques* 17 (1992): 66.
[151] Jean de Rotrou, *Antigone, Théâtre choisi*, ed. Bénédicte Louvat, Pierre Pasquier and Marianne Béthery (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2007). All citations of Rotrou are from this edition.

Garnier's heroine held out the possibility of Œdipe's redemption, suggesting that he might separate himself from his past crimes, Rotrou's focuses on how Œdipe has already paid for his sins and thus should not be held accountable for those of his children.

And yet, despite its heroine's protests, Rotrou's drama continually suggests that Œdipe's crimes influence his offspring. In the tragedy's opening scene, Jocaste suggests that Polynice and Ætéocle may be propelled by a corrupting familial legacy through references to their incestuous origins. In this scene, she decries the preparations for war between her sons and their armies:

> Allons tôt, c'est trop d'ordre, en ce désordre extrême:
> Ce poil mal ordonné, cette confusion,
> Me sera bienséante en cette occasion;
> Nature, confonds-les, c'est ici ton office,
> Tout dépend de toi seule, et rien de l'artifice:
> Viens te montrer, mon sein, qui les as allaités,
> Avancez-vous, mes bras, qui les avez portés:
> Toi, flanc incestueux, dont ils ont pris naissance,
> Viens, s'ils ont du respect, faire voir ta puissance (I, 1, 8-16).

Calling upon Nature to prevent the impending fraternal hostilities, Jocaste's speech arrives at the central paradox of the brothers' situation. Given their filial bond, their conflict appears unnatural, and yet perfectly suited to their incestuous nature. Jocaste offers herself as nature's conduit, naming in particular her "sein," flanc," and "bras," all parts of the body with a strong maternal charge, suggesting a kind of life force that flows

to her sons. Jocaste thus invokes a natural, maternal influence, but she also acknowledges that the incestuous union which produced them puts their relationship to nature into question.[152]

The brothers' questionable relationship to nature underscores the tragedy's broader concern with plural conceptions of natural law. As Christian Biet remarks, "ce qui frappe, à la lecture de cette pièce, c'est la multiplicité des occurrences du mot 'nature.' Diversement employé, ce mot réfère aussi bien à la loi naturelle qui interdit le meurtre, à la loi lignagère qui met un héritier royal en position de régner, à l'amour maternel, à la fidélité qu'une sœur doit à son frère et à la nature du pouvoir."[153] For Biet, Antigone's devotion to her brother Polynice and her consequent objection to Créon constitutes a re-grounding of divine and natural law that resolves this situation of instability. Although she, like her brothers, is born from an incestuous union, Antigone's virtuous opposition constitutes a kind of expiation of her family's acts. Her defense of her brother and martyr-like self-sacrifice allows her to secure the principles of nature and duty. Antigone does seem to revalorize natural law, as Biet suggests, but her relationship to nature, like that of her brothers, nonetheless retains much of its questionable inheritance. Although Antigone rejects Œdipe's influence, the drama presents her attachment to Polynice in ways that exceed and trouble the natural. Elaborating the particularity of this attachment, Rotrou's tragedy puts forward an Antigone whose claims are more unsettling than has previously been acknowledged.

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[152] Biet underscores this paradox, remarking that in Rotrou's drama, "la loi de la nature se trouve avoir été bafouée par celle qui la défend" ("Droit divin, droit naturel, et droit humain dans *Antigone* de Jean Rotrou," 77).

[153] Biet, "Droit divin, droit naturel, et droit humain dans *Antigone* de Jean Rotrou," 69-70.

For Hémon, the special bond between brother and sister affords Polynice a measure of protection on the battlefield. Hémon confesses to Antigone that he has refrained from killing Polynice, even though her brother poses a threat to Thebes:

Son corps semble à dessein s'offrir à mon épée:
Mais loin d'oser sur lui tenter aucun effort,
J'ai paré mille coups qui lui portaient la mort.
L'amitié qui vous joint autant que la naissance,
M'a fait contre nous même embrasser sa défense:
Il conserve en sa vie un bien qui vous est dû,
Bien mieux que sa valeur vous l'avez défendu,
Vous étiez son bouclier au milieu des alarmes,
Et vous l'avez sauvé, seule, absente, et sans armes (I, 4, 196-204).

Hémon's restraint on Antigone's behalf is expressed as a form of affection and deference. He cedes to Antigone's wishes despite his military duty. Although Antigone is not physically present on the battlefield, this speech incorporates her into the scene of war, figuring her as the "bouclier" that protects Polynice from harm. Notably, Hémon identifies "l'amitié" as much as "naissance" as the force that connects brother and sister. When Antigone responds to Hémon, she confirms this particular attachment, labeling it an "étroite amitié" (210) that exceeds any ordinary mutual concern between siblings, and also admitting that the attachment is far stronger than the sense of sisterly duty she feels

toward Ætéocle. The drama thus characterizes their attachment as more than, or beyond, the natural.[154]

If Antigone's "amitié" is capable of restraining Hémon's sword, might it possibly restrain Polynice's as well? The tragedy positions her "amitié" as holding the power to move Polynice away from his menacing designs. When her brother instead proves unmovable, Antigone laments, "Cette tendre amitié, reçoit donc un refus, / Elle a perdu son droit et ne vous touche plus" (II, 2, 401-02). The lines elaborate a connection between "amitié" and "droit," with each word positioned just before the caesura. Arguing that her affection for Polynice should afford her some influence over his actions, Antigone articulates a personal form of right, which she alone possesses. In addition to presenting conflicts between divine, natural, and human law, Rotrou's *Antigone* also explores the reach of this decidedly personal right, a right that is shaped by personal affection in excess of familial devotion.

The tragedy later reiterates Antigone's close connection to Polynice, emphasizing the particularity of her expressed right to influence his actions and to mourn his death. After the brothers have killed each other, after Créon has refused Polynice burial, and after Antigone has set out to bury him anyway, she hears someone else approaching the body and calls out, "Ce soir est tout à moi, seule j'ai droit ici" (II, 7, 964). The intrusive fellow mourner turns out to be Argie, Polynice's wife. Antigone then yields and the two

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[154] As Steiner explains, Rotrou's use of words like *amitié, tendre, respect, titre d'invincible, ravie, déférence,* all of which "belong to the baroque politics of eros," would have rendered Antigone's speech to and about Polynice both "erotic and sisterly to the seventeenth-century ear" (162).

women bury him together, but their dialogue further establishes the attachment between brother and sister, as Argie states, "Je paraissais sa sœur, et vous sembliez sa femme" (II, 7, 1002). The rhetorical repositioning confirms that what compels Antigone's speech and actions is a surfeit of affection, rather than mere sisterly devotion. During the confrontation with Créon, this affection becomes the strongest justification of Antigone's disobedience. After arguing with Créon about the religious and juridical reasons for her rebellion, citing Polynice's claim to the throne and the gods' imperative to honor his death, Antigone finally rests her case on the special bond between them. She states: "Après tout, je l'aimais, et mon affection / Entreprendrait encor cette sainte action" (IV, 3, 1259-60). With the rhyme of "affection" and "action" adding emphasis to Antigone's final justification, she refuses to engage further with Créon's proposed categories of obedient subject and enemy of the state.

Rotrou's tragedy thus figures this particular affection as the primary motor of Antigone's speech and actions. Antigone does use the language of divine and natural law, but, as we have seen, her relationship to nature remains deeply implicated in her family's questionable legacy. She defends her natural right to bury her brother. But the drama also insists that the bond between brother and sister exceeds the natural. Antigone's defense of her right to bury her brother rests primarily on this extra-natural attachment. It is the tender reach between Antigone and Polynice that trespasses Créon's law and disrupts his order. Defending this attachment above all, Antigone makes the case for a deeply personal right.

Chastening Créon through this personal right and her particular virtue, Antigone does not resolve the conflict about natural law that is posed at the drama's outset. Nor does she reestablish the common good. Instead, she grounds her opposition in the extra-natural bond that she shares with Polynice. As a result, Rotrou's drama continues the crisis of legitimacy that Garnier's raises. In Garnier's tragedy, Antigone's physical pull on Oedipus engenders fear about his corrupting influence over her. In Rotrou's drama Antigone's affective bond with Polynice pushes her to speak and act in defiance of Créon's order. In both cases, Antigone loudly proclaims that her actions are justified, but by focusing on these particular attachments and their destabilizing qualities, the dramas introduce doubt about whether her claims can be trusted. Antigone, both dramas suggest, cannot ratify her own claims. However, the dramas ultimately do propose that despite her troubling connections, Antigone's burial of Polynice is warranted by both natural and divine law. The dramas legitimize this gesture through the approval of the Theban people. In both Garnier and Rotrou, the Theban people are figured as a vocal community with strong political preferences and opinions. By authorizing the Theban people's preferences and allowing them to influence the action, the dramas underscore how this collective entity justifies and bolsters Antigone's resistance.

Authorizing the People

Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* initially presents the Theban people as a population that suffers as Ætéocle and Polynice fight over the throne. In the drama's opening scene, Antigone refers to the people's misfortune as she attempts to pull Œdipe

toward Thebes. Throughout the drama, however, the unfortunate people come to exceed their initial roles as passive sufferers by wielding a kind of political potential through the expression of their affective preferences. In Rotrou's drama the people take on a similar role, joining their objections to those of Antigone. In both dramas, these postures of passive suffering and active complaint are mediated by characters and choruses, given that the people do not appear on stage directly. Examining how the choruses in Garnier's tragedy operate helps us to understand the people's mediated role. The choruses mirror the people's active and passive positions on stage and cite the people's collective voice.[155] Staged characters in both dramas also cite the people's voice, giving additional expression to the objections and desires of the unseen population. Through these practices of mediation and citation, the dramas incorporate the unseen people into the scene.

Garnier's *Antigone ou la Pieté* features three choruses, which represent different segments of the larger Theban people and tend toward different roles in the drama. The *Chœur de Thebains* most closely resembles a Greek chorus by commenting on the action at the end of each act and in between some scenes. The *Chœur de filles* and the *Chœur de Vieillards* represent more specific demographics, corresponding in age and gender to Antigone and Créon, respectively.[156] The *Chœur de filles* often acts like a collective confidante, comforting and reassuring Antigone. The *Chœur de Vieillards* acts as a voice

[155] Rotrou's drama does not feature any choruses.
[156] Jondorf suggests that these choruses would have entered and exited with their respective characters (*French Renaissance Tragedy,* 84).

of reason that encourages Créon to moderate the rigidity of his opinions and decisions.[157] Standing for different segments of the Theban people, the choruses underscore how the actions of the royal family extend beyond the palace and affect the city's inhabitants.

The *Chœur de Thebains* consistently articulates a dynamic in which the royal family acts and the people of Thebes must endure their actions, lamenting in particular the widespread destruction caused by the brothers' conflict. For example, in the second act, the *Chœur de Thebains* exclaims:

> Que l'ardente ambition
> Nous cause d'affliction !
> Qu'elle nous file d'esclandre !
> Si l'alme paix ne descend
> Sur nous peuple perissant,
> Nous verrons Thebes en cendre (II, 596-601).

These verses reinforce the dynamic between family and people, with the chorus repeating the pronoun "nous" as a grammatical object three times in quick succession. The "nous" of the chorus, which in this case encompasses the people of Thebes, only appears as a grammatical subject in the last line, when it observes the city's destruction. The lament suggests that the chorus, and by extension the people, can act only as witnesses to their collective misfortunes.

Elsewhere, the *Chœur de Thebains* chronicles these misfortunes, recounting precisely how the brothers' inability to resolve their dispute will affect the people:

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[157] Dobby-Poirson, 543.

L'un le retient à son pouvoir,

L'autre s'efforce de l'avoir :

Ce pendant le peuple en endure,

C'est luy qui porte tout le faix.

Car encor qu'il n'en puisse mais,

Il leur sert tousjours de pasture.

Mais dedans la campagne bruit,

Nostre beau terroir est destruit :

Le vigneron quitte la vigne,

Le courbe laboureur ses boeus,

Le berger ses pastis herbeus,

Et le morne pescheur sa ligne (II, 972-983).

This choral lamentation produces an alternation between the general suffering of the people and the specific situations of one group or another. The formulation "le peuple en endure," indicates that fraternal conflict implicates the entire population, while those like "Le vigneron quitte la vigne" and "Le berger ses pastis herbeus" depicts the conflict's more localized effects. Through the oscillation between the general and the specific, the universal and the particular, the drama makes the plight of the Theban people vivid and palpable. Inspiring sympathy and pathos, the people exist as passive sufferers who remain at the mercy of the royal family's machinations.

However, this is not the Theban people's only role. Garnier's drama also figures the people as a collective that speaks out, actively voicing opinions and objections. Whereas the *Chœur de Thebains* describes the extent of the people's misfortune, the *Chœur de filles* articulates the reach of its raised voice. When Antigone addresses the citizenry of Thebes in the fourth act, as she prepares to enter the tomb-like cave where she will spend her final days, she asks for witnesses to her plight: "Voyez, ô Citoyens qui Thebes habitez, / Le supreme combat de mes adversitez!" (IV, 2158-59). In response, the *Chœur de filles* assures her that the people of Thebes will not only witness her unjust punishment, but will sing her praises in the future: "Comme à une Deesse, et de mille cantiques / Le peuple honorera vos ombres Plutoniques" (IV, 2176-77). Although not explicitly articulated in political terms, the people's approval of Antigone, as promised by the chorus, carries a political charge by contradicting Créon's disapproval and punishment of her acts.

By promising the people's support and praise, the *Chœur de filles* ties the people's affection to its political potential. The drama cultivates this tie through numerous citations of the people's voice and speculations about their capacities. As the following examples show, it is not only the choruses that invoke the people's power, but also members of the royal family themselves. Indeed, concern about the people's affection and approval enters directly into discussions between Jocaste and her sons, as well as between Créon and his son. In the second act, Jocaste appeals to Polynice's heart, urging him to have pity on the unfortunate inhabitants of his home (whose suffering she describes in great detail). When this tactic has no effect, she turns toward an argument

about the importance of heeding public opinion. She thus shifts her efforts away from Polynice's capacity for pity toward the people's affective preferences. Jocaste suggests that Ætéocle remains on the throne out of deference to the people, stating "Il est plus agréable / Aux citoyens que vous" (II, 914-15). To this citation of public preference, Polynice responds with an expression of his own menacing fortitude: "Et moy plus redoubtable" (II, 916). The rhyme of "agréable" and "redoubtable" arrives at the center of the clemency-rigor debate, a common debate in sixteenth-century political thought that centers on the ideal measure of the people's affection for their sovereign. On the one hand, a sovereign too loved risks losing his authority. On the other hand, a sovereign too feared might become a tyrant.[158] Polynice, who wishes only to be "et craint et obeï" (II, 925), eschews any effort to find a way between these two extremes. Although Polynice dismisses the people's opinion, the drama highlights its importance. Through this debate between mother and son, former queen and would-be sovereign, the drama suggests how the people's preferences might influence sovereign decision.

A parallel discussion in Rotrou's drama further underscores the people's capacity to hold sway over the sovereign through the exercise of their affection.[159] In this version, the clemency-rigor debate takes place over several scenes, as Jocaste pleads with her sons in succession.[160] Ætéocle justifies his refusal to cede the throne to Polynice by citing the people's wishes:

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[158] For a discussion of this debate within Garnier's theater and political writing more generally, see Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century*, 105-21.
[159] Garnier is one of Rotrou's principle sources for this scene. For a breakdown of Rotrou's sources based on act and scene, see Louvat, "Introduction," 213.
[160] Whereas Ætéocle has a speaking role in Rotrou's version, this brother is not figured in Garnier's.

Sur le désir des miens, mon trône se soutient,
Je lui cédais l'Etat, mais l'Etat me retient:
J'étais prêt à quitter le Sceptre qu'on lui nie,
Le peuple aime mon règne et craint sa tyrannie
Je le possède aussi, moins que je ne le sers,
Les honneurs qu'il me rend sont d'honorables fers (I, 3 81-87).

Ætéocle figures the love of *le peuple* as a desirable form of restraint, one that keeps him in power and holds his rule in place. For Polynice, however, this rationale is unacceptable, not only because it denies him his birthright, but also because it gives the people too much power. Rotrou's Polynice thus shares with Garnier's a distain for the people's love. When Jocaste reaffirms the people's affection for Ætéocle and fear of Polynice, the latter responds:

Et moi, moins populaire,
Je tiens indifférent, d'être craint, ou de plaire,
Qui règne, aimé des siens, en est moins absolu:
Cet amour rompt souvent ce qu'il a résolu:
Plus est permis aux Rois, à qui plus on s'oppose,
Une lâche douceur aux mépris les expose;
Le peuple, trop aisé, les lie en les aimant,
Il faut, pour être aimé, régner trop mollement (II, 4, 613-20).

The first line of this speech most succinctly communicates how Polynice is unwilling to accept limits on his rule. "Et moi, moins populaire" not only informs us that the people

prefer Ætéocle, but also suggests the self-centered quality of Polynice's prospective reign through the repetition of "moi, moi[ns]." Beyond marking Polynice as a tyrant, the brothers' dispute describes the potential force of the people. Language from these passages such as "l'amour rompt" (from Polynice) and "l'état retient" (from Ætéocle) figures the people's exercise of its affection through movements of reach and suspension, hold and release.

Although the people stand at a considerable remove from power, and although they do not appear directly on stage, the repeated invocations of their collective voice by characters and choruses endow them with a kind of affective grip. In both dramas, this affective grip rivals Créon's ability to control perceptions of Antigone's dissent. Garnier's Créon justifies his punishment of Antigone by complaining of her excesses, calling her "une audacieuse," "une fille arrogante," as well as "un sujet contumaux," and "contrariant" (IV, 1984-88). By labeling Antigone exceptional and aberrant, Créon attempts to distinguish her from the rest of the inhabitants of Thebes. However, Hémon's response to his father signals that Antigone in fact enjoys the people's support:

> Ceste Vierge exerçant un pitoyable faict
> A contre son vouloir à vos edits forfaict
> Chacun en a pitié, toute la cité pleure,
> Qu'une Royale fille innocentement meure (IV, 1994-97).

Hémon objects to his father that Antigone's burial of her brother engenders the people's pity and prompts the expression of its collective voice. Hémon's subsequent verses reiterate the people's support for Antigone, recounting the "rumeur du peuple" (IV, 2032)

to his father who remains incredulous about the mounting public outcry. When Créon again casts Antigone as excessively proud and deserving of punishment, Hémon interjects, "Ce ne sera pas l'advis de la cité Thebaine" (IV, 2033). The drama thus fills this scene between royal son and father with the reported noise of the people, citing their cries, rumors, and opinions.

In Rotrou's drama, it is Antigone herself who first cites the people's voice to Créon, although in this case, it is the promise of their eventual audible support rather than a citation of their voice that contradicts the king. In what reads as a dare to Créon when he delays ordering her execution, Antigone says:

> Peut-être le temps vous ôterait l'envie,
> Ou l'assurance au moins de nous ôter la vie,
> Le murmure du peuple irait jusques à vous,
> Et pourrait désarmer votre injuste courroux:
> Car, enfin, si la peur ne lui fermait la bouche,
> Vous sauriez à quel point le procédé le touche;
> Mais d'abord un tyran, fait tout ce qui lui plaît,
> On souffre avec respect, on voit, mais on se tait (IV, 3 1229-37).

If Créon does not act swiftly, Antigone warns, the people will lose their fear of the tyrant and loosen their tongues. What is striking here is how the drama figures the "murmure du peuple" as a restraint that will "désarmer" Créon. The rhyme of "bouche" and "touche" reinforces the link between the people's imagined speech and the figurative extent of Créon's power. Antigone's warning also underscores the multivalent possibilities of the

word “touche,” which in these lines refers, of course, to the people’s sympathy for Antigone’s plight, but also recalls the reach of the outstretched arm, which is so prevalent in the drama’s gestural vocabulary. Rotrou’s tragedy thus situates the people’s affective reach within the push and pull of influence that occurs among staged characters.

This unseen collective intervenes in the conflict between sovereign and subject by attaching to Antigone and working to restrain Créon. It is the people’s intervention that disrupts Créon’s portrayal of Antigone as excessive and out-of-bounds. In Rotrou’s drama, just as in Garnier’s, Hémon responds to Créon’s assertion that Antigone is his only rebellious subject by citing the voice of the people: “Seul, je vous dirai donc, que le commun murmure / Accuse votre arrêt d’offenser la nature” (IV, 6, 1385-86). In addition to contradicting his father’s perceived control over the people of Thebes, Hémon’s verses demonstrate how the drama yokes together subjective and collective complaint. Speaking alone, Hémon voices the people’s shared discontent. This interplay of the “Seul” and the “commun” suggests how both dramas authorize the people’s claims as well as Antigone’s. Indeed, it is the people’s solidarity with Antigone, rather than Antigone herself, that seems to establish a shared perception of virtue. Antigone’s attachments to her father and brother function as signs of her virtue even as they raise questions about her legacy. As we have seen, these attachments do not assuage anxieties about competing claims and relative laws, but rather augment such anxieties by making it impossible to untangle piety and corruption, nature and excess. By raising their voices in support of Antigone, however, the people ratify her speech and actions. It is thus the people who secure Antigone’s virtue, rather than Antigone who secures virtue for the city.

A tension remains, however, between the people's support for Antigone's speech and actions and the particularity of her claims. In Garnier's drama, Antigone's care for Œdipe and her burial of Polynice are both cast as solitary gestures. For example, in the first act Antigone distinguishes herself from her brothers and from their efforts to possess the throne. While they fight over this birthright, Antigone claims only Œdipe himself: "Mon seul père je veux, il sera mon partage, / Je ne retiens que luy, c'est mon seul heritage. / Nul ne l'aura de moy, […]" (I, 61-63). These verses delineate Antigone's legacy and articulate a certain possessiveness, reinforcing the particular ties between father and daughter. A similar form of possession characterizes her burial of Polynice. Antigone insists on the solitary nature of this act when Ismène claims to have participated, attempting to share and soften the blame, Antigone refuses this offer of solidarity. Such a rejection of solidarity also takes place in Rotrou's drama, as Antigone refuses to share the blame with either Ismène or Argie (who, as we have seen, does assist with the burial). Although Antigone counters Créon's framing of her as the "seule rebelle" in Thebes by promising that the people will speak out in her favor, her own verses lend some support to this framing by insisting on her particularity through the repetition of the word "seule." Créon's accusation, "Et toi seule, entre tous, n'as pu voir sans te plaindre" (IV, 3, 1237), serves as a variation on the theme established in verses spoken by Antigone herself. What Créon misses however, is that these claims receive broad support while still remaining personal and particular.

The tension between the particularity of Antigone's attachments and the broad support they engender is further underscored by an ambiguous moment at the opening of

Rotrou's third act, when Hémon enters to find Antigone in mourning. Act II ends with the brothers' duel imminent and as Act III begins Antigone seems to learn of the duel's fatal consequences by reading the signs on Hémon's face. His lines suggest that he assumed the noise of the people had alerted her to the news: "Madame, je croyais que la commune plainte / Vous eût déjà livré cette sensible atteinte, / Et fût cause du deuil que je rencontre ici (III, 1, 687-89). Antigone does not confirm whether or not she has heard "la commune plainte," instead asking "Ætéocle est donc mort?" (III, 1, 690). The ambiguity of this moment broadcasts the measure of dissonance in Antigone's relationship to the people. The drama situates the people's support as an index of the justness of Antigone's actions. But it raises doubts about whether she hears their cries. This moment of ambiguity underscores that it is the people who ratify Antigone's questionable virtue. While it is unclear whether she hears them, they clearly hear her and they promote her particular attachments.

Conclusion

By insisting on both the particularity of Antigone's attachments and the broad support that these attachments receive, Garnier and Rotrou's tragedies stage the constituent parts of the *droit de résistance,* and demonstrate how these parts operate in concert. As we have seen, the *droit de résistance*, as debated by sixteenth-century theologians and political theorists linked the individual subject's liberty of conscience to a community's political potential. In the versions of *Antigone* by Garnier and Rotrou, Antigone's articulation of her subjective perception of right and wrong is inextricably

bound up with her familial ties, especially those to her father and brother. Due to these bonds, her subjective assertions that she acts on behalf of divine and natural law do not reground these laws in the wake of civil conflict. Instead of securing her piety and virtue, Antigone's attachments call these qualities into question. It is the Theban people that assuage doubts about Antigone's claims. The people ratify the actions toward which her questionable attachments have pushed her. Although mediated by characters and choruses, the Theban people are not merely passive sufferers and they do not obey orders from Créon without question or complaint. As a result, this community does not merely register and reflect the sovereign's rule. Instead, the Theban people emerge as a collective entity in its own right, with specific political preferences and demands. By tethering the people's preferences to the heroine's claims, the dramas locate the *droit de résistance* in the interactions between Antigone, her family, and the people.

Given the distribution of the *droit de résistance* across characters and collectives, it becomes impossible to consider any one of these entities without the others. As this chapter has explored, the dramas establish the connections between heroine, family, and people through a complex network of physical and affective influences. From Antigone's grasp of Œdipe's arm to the mediated reach of the people's voice, the staged characters and unseen people remain profoundly entangled. Such entanglements further suggest how one entity cannot be separated from the other. Within the dramas, action is co-implicated to the extent that it becomes difficult to tell one pull from another. Does Antigone pull Œdipe back toward Thebes? Or does his legacy pull her toward him?

The muddling of forces and the confusion of influences that takes place in these tragedies suggest how they intervene into ongoing considerations of Antigone's place within political theory and philosophy. Jonathan Strauss has recently suggested that Sophocles' *Antigone* fabricates the notion of a living individual and thus serves as a hinge between Greek and modern conceptions of individuality.[161] As Strauss points out, individuality emerges in Sophocles' *Antigone* through its absence, as Antigone laments both the loss of her brother and the marital happiness that she gives up by burying him.[162] I would argue that the notion of individuality that Sophocles' drama fabricates is thus inextricable from familial and affective bonds. This notion of individuality thus seems to be a far cry from the autonomous and self-possessed individual of modern rights. Garnier and Rotrou's dramas bridge the gulf between these two notions. The early modern Antigone is in full possession of her liberty of conscience, which she proclaims loudly and boldly. However, this liberty of conscience achieves its disruptive force through the interventions of her family and the Theban people. Appearing at a historical moment when the modern individual was beginning to emerge, these dramas suggest how collectives may subtly, but persistently mediate individual rights and freedoms.

The next chapter further explores this subtle dynamic of mediation by examining character-type, who, like Antigone, has often been cast as a precursor to the modern individual: the hero of Corneille's drama. Looking in particular at *Nicomède* (1651) and *Suréna* (1674), we will consider how the claims and capacities of these heroes seem to

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[161] *Private Lives, Public Deaths: Antigone and the Invention of Individuality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).
[162] See, in particular, Strauss' chapter "Inventing Life," 85-100.

derive exclusively from their personal strength. Situating Nicomède and Suréna within each drama's network of influences, however, clarifies how forms of collective action subtend the heroes' strength.

Chapter Three: Individual Strength, Collective Action, and the Cornelian Hero

The final act of Pierre Corneille's *Nicomède* (1651) opens with a speech by Arisnoé, the eponymous hero's stepmother. Throughout the drama, Arisnoé has attempted to persuade her husband, King Prusias of Bithynia, to name her son Attale as the successor to the throne. The younger of Prusias' two sons, Attale would normally have been next-in-line for the throne after Nicomède. However, in part to please Arisnoé and in part to please Rome, which exerted considerable influence in Bithynia, King Prusias has decided to name Attale his successor. Not only has the king decided to upend the order of succession, but he has also decided to throw Nicomède in jail. Solving the king's problem of succession, this decision has led to a different problem: upon hearing the news of Nicomède's imprisonment, the king's subjects have risen up in protest. In the speech that begins the final act, Arisnoé predicts that this popular uprising will not last long:

> J'ai prévu ce tumulte et n'en vois rien à craindre:
> Comme un moment l'allume, un moment peut l'éteindre,
> Et si l'obscurité laisse croître ce bruit,
> Le jour dissipera les vapeurs de la nuit (V, i, 1479-82).[163]

Claiming to have predicted the uprising, which she refers to as a "tumulte," Arisnoé also suggests that the royal family has nothing to fear. Her language reveals how little she thinks of the people's unrest. Arisnoé does not attribute real demands or a plan of action

[163] Pierre Corneille, *Nicomède,* ed. Jean-Pierre Chauveau (Paris: Gallimard, 1999). All citations are from this edition.

to this off-stage collective. Instead, she registers their protest as mere "bruit," and "vapeurs." The unruly people do not even rise to the status of a mob in Arisnoé's description. This "tumulte," she argues, poses no threat, just momentary disruption. But Arisnoé is wrong. The people do have a clear demand: the release of Nicomède. What is more, their uprising eventually reveals itself to pose more of a threat to her designs than she expected.

Arisnoé's underestimation of the unseen Bithynian people illustrates her political miscalculation. It also points toward a persistent mode of reading *Nicomède*, and of Corneille's theater more broadly. Corneille's drama has long been seen as primarily concerned with the expression and commemoration of heroic glory. As a result, the Cornelian hero might seem like an odd figure through which to consider the *droit de résistance*. A character-type lauded for his ability to get things done by relying on the constancy of his will and his physical force, the Cornelian hero stands as a paragon of independent action. However, this chapter suggests that we have underestimated the extent to which heroism is secured by entities beyond the heroes themselves. Taking up *Nicomède,* as well as Corneille's final tragedy, *Suréna,* this chapter challenges the idea that these heroes are self-contained characters who act and speak only of their own accord. Instead, this chapter situates each hero within a network of actors, both onstage and unseen. Situated within these networks, the hero's body functions as more than the center of the hero's will or strength. His body also becomes a site of communal contestation. *Nicomède* and *Suréna* thus sustain the *droit de résistance* by suggesting the inextricability of individual and collective action.

By reading Corneille's dramas for their rehearsal of resistance theory, with its emphasis on permeability and mediation, this chapter gestures toward a model of heroic action that departs from that which Anne-Lise François had identified as the "normative" and "modern." In *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience*, François articulates a critical mode of reading literature in which, as she puts it, "nothing happens."[164] The novels and poems that she takes up, by authors from Madame de Lafayette to Wordsworth, do not adhere to a narrative arc of beginning, middle, and end. Their plots are excessive in their lack of movement or momentum. Their protagonists do not undergo radical transformations, precipitated by a great and consequential action. Instead, François explains that "subjects of these works might appear to be bound to a self-punishing ethics of chastity, renunciation and waste."[165] Rather than read these protagonists as wasteful, or the works in which they appear as "denials of narrative and narratives of denial," however, François argues that they elaborate a particular form of action to which we might attend. She writes:

> Exemplifying a mode of recessive action that takes itself away as it occurs, the novels and poems in question in question locate fulfilment not in narrative fruition but in grace, understood both as a simplicity or slightness of formal means and as a freedom from work, including both the work of self-concealment and self-presentation. The protagonists of these texts do not withhold themselves from the public scene: they present the difference that they make as an open secret, a gift

[164] Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), xv.
[165] François, xv-xvi.

> that does not demand response but is there for the having, as readily taken up as it is set aside.[166]

François' characterization of "recessive action" and its companion trope, the open secret, helps us bring into focus its opposite. In other words, Francois' mode of recessive action helps us better to understand the dominant mode of action, or action *tout court*.

Proposing a mode of recessive action, François suggests that we might think differently about a series of common oppositions: use and waste, narrative fruition and denial, self-presentation and self-concealment, disclosure and privacy, action and passivity. She finds in works such as de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) a way of being that refuses to inhabit one side of these oppositions or another. Instead, François argues that the Princesse, through her inconsequential confessions, articulates the possibility of a kind of in-between-ness. The Princesse de Clèves makes declarations that do not have expected effects and takes actions that do not lead to their supposedly inevitable consequences. François maintains that this mode of recessive action constitutes a refusal of what she calls the "normative bias in favor of the demonstrable, dramatic development and realization of the human powers characteristic of, but not limited to the capitalist investment in value and work and the Enlightenment allegiance to rationalism and unbounded progress."[167] If, following François, we read this "normative bias" as constitutive of a particularly modern demand for the individual subject to make good on his or her capacities and talents through dramatic demonstration, then recessive action, in contrast, eschews the dramatic, the heroic, and the modern.

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[166] François, xvi.
[167] François, xvi.

Given these traits, recessive action would seem to have nothing to do with the heroes that populate Corneille's drama. Not only do these heroes stand at the center of dramatic plots, often undertaking actions that bring these plots to narrative fruition, Cornelian heroes have long been cast as figures that incarnate ideals of individual liberty and modern autonomy. What this persistent portrait of the Cornelian hero obscures, however, is the extent to which many of their actions are undertaken with the cooperation of other characters and collective entities. Put another way, the actions of the Cornelian hero do not only depend on the force of his will or his arm alone. These actions also depend upon the force of those that surround him. Examining the examples of *Nicomède* and *Suréna* in particular we see how two Cornelian heroes lives up to their reputations as self-contained, autonomous actors, as well as how they complicate these reputations. To complicate Nicomède and Suréna as autonomous actors, and to put pressure on the kind of action that they undertake, is not quite to suggest that they are recessive actors after the model that François proposes. Nicomède and Suréna remain, after all, dramatic heroes. Instead, François' critique helps to unsettle the assumptions surrounding these heroes by pointing towards forms of action other than that which typically counts as heroic. In order to show how such forms of action are at work in Corneille's drama, I first examine the traditional portrait of the Cornelian hero in more detail. I then turn to *Nicomède* and *Suréna* specifically, demonstrating how each drama situates its hero as a site of communal negotiation and contestation.

From Aristocratic Ideal to Modern Autonomy

It would be difficult to overstate how central a place the Cornelian hero occupies in literary history, as well as in the cultural imaginary. As John Lyons has noted, the Cornelian hero has achieved the status of myth, a myth that Lyons terms "une malediction qui pèse sur le théâtre de Corneille."[168] Indeed, the weight of this myth has long tipped the interpretive scales away from other concerns and questions. Looming so large, the myth of the Cornelian hero threatens to obscure the differences among Corneille's characters and among the dramas that they populate. Given its considerable freight, however, we cannot simply dispense with this myth. Instead, as Lyons has suggested, examining its characteristics allows us to bring its limitations more fully into view. Looking at the forms of action that the myth extols helps us better to understand the forms of action that it excludes.

At its core, the myth of the Cornelian hero is a myth of individual prowess in both body and mind. To figure the Cornelian hero as an embodiment of an ideal is not a modern invention, or at least not entirely. In his *Caractères* (1688), the seventeenth-century moralist Jean de La Bruyère contrasts Corneille's perceived idealism, with Racine's realism:

> Corneille nous assujetti à ses caractères et à ses idées; Racine descend jusques aux nôtres. Celui-là dépeint les hommes tels qu'ils devraient être, celui-ci les peint tels qu'ils sont. Il y a plus dans le premier qu'on admire; il y a plus dans le second de

[168] John Lyons, "Le mythe du héros cornélian," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 107.2 (2007): 433.

ce que l'on reconnait dans les autres, ou de ce que l'on éprouve dans soi-même.

L'un élève, étonne, maîtrise, instruit; l'autre plaît, remue, touche, pénètre.[169]

As La Bruyère's catalogue of differences between the two dramatists continues, the central claim remains the same: where Racine provides a stirring account of the human condition, Corneille offers an admirable ideal of human potential. La Bruyère did not originate this distinction between the dramatists' work, but his particular formulation has resonated for centuries. In *Le mythe du héros ou le désir d'être dieu* (1970), Phillpe Sellier adds a variation to La Bruyère's theme, arguing that "le héros cornélien n'est pas simplement un homme, puisque c'est un héros. Ce n'est ni l'homme tel qu'il est, ni l'homme tel qu'il devrait être, c'est *l'homme tel qu'il se rêve* dans ses moments d'exaltation."[170] From the seventeenth century to the twentieth, the Cornelian hero incarnates that which mere men can only dream of being.

The heroic ideal encompasses both physical and mental strength. Take the example of Rodrigue, the celebrated hero of *Le Cid* (1636). This drama turns on a conflict of love and duty. Rodrigue loves Chimène and Chimène loves Rodrigue, and their fathers agree that the young lovers can marry. Everything seems to be going well when Rodrigue's father insults Chimène's father and then Chimène's father kills Rodrigue's father in a duel. Rodrigue is then torn between his love for Chimène and his obligation to defend his family's honor by killing her father. He chooses honor, a decision that illustrates his extraordinary ability to master his passion in favor of his duty.

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[169] Jean de La Bruyère, *Les caractères ou les mœurs de ce siècle. Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Julien Benda (Paris: Gallimard, 1951) American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language (Project), 1996. Web.

[170] Quoted in Lyons, 434.

He then leaves Seville, where the drama is set, to win a battle on behalf of his king. In *Morales du grand siècle,* Paul Bénichou argues that Rodrigue's display of personal strength and self-mastery underscores the importance of the "moi" within Corneille's dramaturgy. For Rodrigue to refuse to avenge his father would have been to sully his own honor, corrupting his love for Chimène. In other words, the dictates of familial and personal glory leave him no choice. Bénichou maintains that for Rodrigue, it is not merely his duty, but also his own nobility and pride that are at stake. Bénichou explains, "un sentiment orgueilleux de supériorité est dans Corneille l'auxiliaire indispensable de la rigueur morale."[171] The heroic ideal thus includes a fidelity to one's glory and ambition, as well as physical strength and the ability to order one's passions.

The Cornelian hero's self-possessed strength often puts him in a delicate political situation. On the one hand, his strong arm and steely will are potential assets to his monarch. On the other hand, his physical prowess and independent spirit are potential threats to the monarch's sovereignty. Many of Corneille's most famous tragedies foreground this political tension, staging the sovereign's efforts to harness and contain the hero's power. In *Le Cid*, Rodrigue transforms from a transgressive noble who flouts the king's authority to a national hero who helps bolster the monarch's strength. In *Horace* (1640) and *Cinna* (1641) the eponymous heroes are chastened by their respective kings for their transgressions, but they are also praised and protected as indispensable arms of state power. Many critics have noted parallels between the Cornelian hero's political situation and Corneille's historical moment. Composed and performed during

[171] Paul Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 61.

the decades when absolutism became the dominant political theory, Corneille's dramas illustrate one of this theory's inherent problems: the physical limitations of the king. As Ellen McClure has pointed out, absolutism theoretically vested sole authority within the body of the king. Practically, however, in order to exert his authority, the king required mediators, who occupied a range of positions, from court official to diplomat. The administration of sovereign power thus necessitated more than one body. Working in the sovereign's service, mediators expose the limits of his reach.[172] Many of Corneille's dramas figure the hero as a kind of mediator, who both supports and rivals the king's rule.[173]

Striking such a complicated stance before their kings, Cornelian heroes are often read as representatives of political positions that either precede or succeed the consolidation of the absolutist state. On the one hand, they stand for the aristocratic order that the state's new order threatens to eclipse. On the other hand, they stand for a nascent form of individual autonomy, to which the state will eventually cede. Heroes such as Rodrigue and Horace are seen as particularly strong representatives of the waning aristocratic order. Championing familial honor, they seek vengeance and take action without sovereign approval. Efforts undertaken by Cornelian kings to incorporate their respective hero's strength into the state's service have been interpreted as dramatic parallels of the absolutist state's efforts to channel aristocratic passions and neutralize

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[172] McClure, 1-11.

[173] McClure explicitly figures Suréna, who is himself a diplomat, as a mediator of sovereign authority. I will discuss her reading of *Suréna* in more detail later in this chapter. Michel Prigent also addresses the hero's delicate relationship to the king and state in *Le héros et l'Etat dans la tragédie de Pierre Corneille* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986).

feudal power. As several critics have suggested, the dynamic through which an old aristocratic order gives way to a new statist order appears not only within individual dramas, but also across Corneille's dramatic work as a whole.[174] In earlier dramas, such as *Le Cid*, the hero is vital and the king is relatively weak. Bénichou summaries this contrast, writing that "La loi de l'honneur féodal est ici placée au-dessus de l'autorité royale, d'ailleurs fort mal défendue par le roi lui-même, souverain débonnaire et toujours conciliant."[175] In later dramas, the hero's vitality must compete with the king's relative strength. In *Suréna*, Corneille's final tragedy, the king has the hero killed after failing to control the hero's might. As we will see, Suréna' death is often read as the death of the Cornelian hero as such. The sense of finality surrounding Suréna's demise arises not only because he is chronologically situated as Corneille's last hero, but also because the irresolvable tension between him and his sovereign suggest that the state's power has fully and finally stamped out the aristocratic order.[176]

In addition to serving as a representative of a waning order and figuring the past, the Cornelian hero is also representative of an order to come—a figure of the future. His personal strength and self-possession make him not only the incarnation of an aristocratic ideal, but also a precursor of the modern individual. Hélène Merlin-Kajman has argued that this proto-modern individual emerges as a counter-point to absolutism. Whereas Corneille's kings claim to possess sovereign power uniquely, Merlin-Kajman maintains

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[174] See, for example, Prigent, *Le héros et l'Etat dans la tragédie de Pierre Corneille,* as well as John D. Lyons, *The Tragedy of Origins: Pierre Corneille and Historical Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[175] Bénichou, 73.
[176] See, for example, Serge Doubrovsky, *Corneille et la dialectique du héros*, 431-71.

that many of Corneille's heroes articulate their own form of authority that does not emanate from the king. Although not themselves sovereigns, these heroes speak and act with a sovereignty that they derive from their own capacities.[177] The self-sovereignty of the Cornelian hero, she argues, serves as a model for the independent, autonomous individual of modernity.[178] Mitchell Greenberg has advanced a similar thesis, although his focus is on how the psychological strictures of absolutism engender a form of modern subjectivity. He argues that the "Absolute quest for totality" that is displayed within Corneille's dramas represents a form of psychic violence. This violence, he explains, "is the same violence at the origin of modern Law, and thus of the modern subject."[179] Greenberg and Merlin-Kajman both suggest how the hero outlasts the aristocratic order and becomes a herald of modernity.

Whether he stands for autonomous modern individual or the glorious aristocratic ideal, the Cornelian hero retains a consistent profile. Physically imposing, he is also strong willed. Although he usually recognizes the king's sovereignty, he harbors a personal authority that cannot be fully incorporated into the king's reign. This mythic profile is drawn from a relatively small set of characters. The traits shared by Rodrigue, Horace, Polyeucte, and Nicomède are lauded as the traits of the Cornelian hero *par excellence,* and other heroes are judged according to their standard.[180] Cinna, for example, does not quite inhabit the heroic myth, because instead of making an open

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[177] Hélène Merlin-Kajman, *L'absolutisme dans les lettres et la théorie des deux corps: Passions et politique*, 1-16.
[178] Hélène Merlin-Kajman. "*Cinna*, *Rodogune*, *Nicomède*; Le Roi et le moi." *Littératures* 37 (1997): 67-86.
[179] Mitchell Greenberg, *Corneille and the Ruses of Symmetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 15.
[180] Hélène E. Bilis, "Corneille's Œdipe and the Politics of Seventeenth-Century Royal Succession," *MLN* 125.4 (2010): 886.

demonstration of his strength, he secretly plots against his sovereign.[181] Although the heroic ideal is derived from just a few of Corneille's heroes, this ideal exerts a great deal of interpretive pressure on Corneille's work, not to mention his life. Corneille's later works, many of which explore the limitations of this ideal, are read not only as dramas of the hero's decline, but also as documents of Corneille's waning talent and old age.[182] In other words, the hero's fall represents Corneille's own.

Critical emphasis on the heroic myth obscures other forms of action and modes of being on display in Corneille's drama. Noting this persistent obstruction, Katherine Ibbett has recently argued that we might productively examine that which the heroic ideal seems to exclude or leave behind. She suggests that Corneille's drama includes a preoccupation with the figure of the remainder or the *reste*. Ibbett's point of departure is the figure of the old man or aging writer. She suggests that many of Corneille's later tragedies seem to ask: What remains when the prime of youth has passed? She goes on to explain, however, that the remainder or *reste* also takes on a wider significance: "The figure of the remainder…is certainly not the exclusive preserve of the aging writer. Corneille's earliest and most celebrated tragedies are already interested in action at the periphery, in how life happens—or ends—while the principle action takes place elsewhere."[183] To illustrate this point, Ibbett evokes the women of *Horace*, pointing out

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[181] Bilis explains that the emperor Auguste is usually considered the hero of *Cinna* ("Corneille's Œdipe and the Politics of Seventeenth-Century Royal Succession," 877).
[182] Katherine Ibbett notes the tendency to read Corneille's late style as related to his advancing years, "Heroes and History's Remainders: The *Restes* of Pierre Corneille," *MLQ* 69.3 (2008): 347-65.
[183] Ibbett, "Heroes and History's Remainders: The *Restes* of Pierre Corneille," 352.

how they remain "stranded on stage, waiting for men to act."[184] This scene of waiting women in *Horace* displays a stark, gendered dichotomy. Men take action off stage while women stand by, marking time for their return. Ibbett suggests, however, that there is something more going on in this scene, which helps to complicate our understanding of heroic action itself. She writes:

> Although [the women of *Horace*] cannot act, they possess an importance that suggests that heroic action can be understood only in relation to a wider community. In the bodies of these bystanders, *Horace* marks the remainder, signifying a gravely political endurance that nuances our understanding of heroic action. To read heroism properly, Corneille seems to say, we must give room to the loss that accompanies it. The remainder is not, however, merely something left behind, and so it does not merely mark a sense of loss. Without the remainder there would be no way to translate the significance of the heroic into the everyday, there would be no going forward.[185]

By attending to the remainder, Ibbett suggests how we might nuance the heroic ideal. As we have seen, the hero wins praise for his unabashed strength as well as for his autonomy. His physical and moral independence pose a problem for sovereign power. What Ibbett brings into relief, however, is how the heroic ideal only emerges in relation others. In *Nicomède* and *Suréna,* we find that what heroic action seems to leave behind, or to leave in its wake, is the work of mediation conducted by other characters and collectives.

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[184] Ibbett, "Heroes and History's Remainders: The *Restes* of Pierre Corneille," 352.
[185] Ibbett, "Heroes and History's Remainders: The *Restes* of Pierre Corneille," 352.

From Heroic Subject to Object of Admiration

Nicomède's status as a paradigmatic Cornelian hero derives in large part from this character's celebrated openness. The eldest son of Prusias, the king of Bithynia, Nicomède speaks his mind to all, even his father. Nicomède also goes where he pleases. When the drama opens, he has just returned to Bithynia after a long military campaign abroad. A leader of one of his father's armies, Nicomède should be subject to his father's command. Instead of waiting for an order from his father to return home, however, Nicomède instead returns of his own accord. A plot by his stepmother, Arisnoé, precipitates his return. In an attempt to have her own son, Attale, inherit Prusias' throne, Arisnoé sends two henchmen to assassinate Nicomède. But the henchmen betray Arisnoé's confidence and Nicomède discovers the plot. He returns to Bithynia in order to warn his father of Arisnoé's designs.

In addition to this family drama, there is also a complicated diplomatic plot at work in *Nicomède.* King Prusias attempts to strike a balance between retaining some independence from Rome and benefitting from Rome's prowess. A Roman ambassador, Flaminius, also seeks an audience with Prusias in order to deliver Rome's demand that the king name Attale his successor instead of Nicomède. Attale was raised in Rome, and the Romans argue that his reign would be more advantageous to them than Nicomède's. Arisnoé and Rome are thus aligned in their efforts to crown Attale. The drama's plot turns on the king's difficulty in navigating his competing obligations and choosing between his two sons. In comparison to Nicomède's self-assurance and confidence, Prusias' hesitancy and indecision make him seem ineffective and easily manipulated. Part

of what makes Prusias' decision so difficult is that his own authority depends upon Nicomède's strength. It is Nicomède, not Prusias, who fights battles and wins wars. For Prusias to jettison Nicomède in favor of Attale would be for the king to jeopardize his own rule.

Nicomède thus sets up a striking contrast between heroic strength and monarchical weakness. Whereas Prusias laments that he must balance competing obligations and concerns in order to maintain his power, Nicomède argues that sovereignty derives from the self alone. By recognizing the self as the only source of authority, Nicomède articulates one of the drama's paradoxes: he speaks as a sovereign without possessing the throne. As Hélène Merlin-Kajman remarks, "Nicomède, héros exemplaire, héros en qui se concentre toute l'idealité du règne, *n'est pas roi.*"[186] Indeed, Nicomède shows himself to be a better sovereign than the king. When he first appears before his father, Nicomède offers the king a lesson about the true sources of sovereign power. King Prusias admits that he is torn between his fatherly love for Nicomède and his marital obligation to Arisnoé. In political terms, this means that he is caught between naming Nicomède his successor as planned (and as suggested by the laws of primogeniture), and elevating Attale instead, in order to appease both Arisnoé and Rome. Prusias speaks first during this encounter between father and son:

> J'ai tendresse pour toi, j'ai passion pour elle;
> Et je ne veux pas voir cette haine éternelle,
> Ni que des sentiments que j'aime à voir durer

[186] Hélène Merlin-Kajman, "*Cinna, Rodogune, Nicomède;* Le Roi et le moi,*"* 74.

Ne règnent dans mon cœur que pour le déchirer.

J'y veux mettre d'accord l'amour et la nature.

Être père et mari dans cette conjoncture.

NICOMÈDE

Seigneur, voulez-vous bien vous en fier à moi?

Ne soyez l'un ni l'autre.

PRUSIAS

Et que dois-je être?

NICOMÈDE

Roi (IV, iii, 1311-18).

Prusias describes the two pulls on his heart, suggesting that the conflict between his eldest son and his second wife is at an impasse. As both continue to "régne[r]" in his heart, the king cannot rule effectively. Nicomède proposes a solution to this problem, suggesting that his father should renounce the roles of "père" and "mari" in order to be, simply, "Roi." The form of Nicomède's response echoes its content. In the text, the single syllable "Roi" definitively ends their shared alexandrine. Furthermore, we can easily imagine how this syllable might ring out on stage, momentarily arresting the action. Standing alone, "Roi" efficiently reinforces Nicomède's insistence that the king should detach himself from paternal and marital entanglements.

Prusias is not the only family member to whom Nicomède offers a lesson in self-governance. Earlier in the drama, he provides a similar admonishment to Attale. In a further complication of the plot, the half-brothers are competing not only for their father's

throne, but also for same woman's heart. They both love Laodice, the queen of Armenia who has been placed under the protection of King Prusias' court by her father. When Nicomède prompts Attale to justify his claims to Laodice's heart, Attale cites his parentage as well as his Roman education and continued ties to Rome. Nicomède chastises his younger brother for staking his claims on such external sources. In contrast to Attale, Nicomède justifies his right to occupy the Laodice's heart through his own strength alone:

> Prince, faites-moi voir un plus digne rival.
> Si vous aviez dessein d'attaquer cette place,
> Ne vous départez point d'une si noble audace;
> Mais comme à son secours je n'amène que moi,
> Ne la menacez plus de Rome ni du Roi:
> Je la défendrai seul; attaquez-la de même,
> Avec tous les respects qu'on droit au diadème.
> Je veux bien mettre à part avec le nom d'aîné,
> Le rang de votre maître où je suis destiné;
> Et nous verrons ainsi qui fait mieux un brave homme,
> Des leçons d'Annibal, ou de celles de Rome (I, v, 266-76).

Laodice's heart is rendered as a physical place in these verses (echoing a spatial metaphor established earlier in the drama). In particular, her heart becomes a battlefield where the brothers duel, an idea that is underscored by the repetition of "attaquez," as well as by words like "rival," "menacez," and "secours." It is through the defense of this

metaphorical place that Nicomède rejects his royal parentage and scoffs at his Rome's power. Nicomède might easily have taken a different tack and turned Attale's arguments against him. As the older son, Nicomède might have boasted of a stronger tie to the crown and of a right of primogeniture, or *droit de naissance.* Instead, he explicitly proposes to set aside, or "mettre à part" his birthright and rank, arguing that each brother should be judged merely on his ability to act as a "brave home." On this point, Nicomède highlights a difference in their respective training and ideals. Whereas Attale was raised and educated in Rome, Nicomède remained in Bithynia and eventually became a student and admirer of Annibal, the Carthaginian general who resisted Roman rule and paid with his life. By contrasting his commitment to Annibal's legacy with Attale's fidelity to Rome, Nicomède marks a distinction between his freedom and Attale's servitude. Attale is content to receive orders from a foreign power and to derive authority from his father. In contrast, as one of the rhymes in the above passage suggests, the only "Roi" or authority that Nicomède recognizes is the "moi."

Repeating the rhyme "moi/Roi" and reiterating his rejection of the *droit de naissance*, Nicomède insists that sovereignty emanates from the self, rather than from the throne. This insistence has contributed to a historical interpretation of the drama as a paean to the aristocratic ethos that the absolutist state threatens with its consolidation. As Paul Bénichou argues, the drama seems to capture the fantasy that this ethos might persist, a fantasy with particular salience during the years surrounding the Fronde. Whereas historically this rebellion ended in failure, Corneille's tragedy offers the tantalizing possibility of another outcome. Bénichou explains, "*Nicomède* trace donc le

tableau d'une Fronde imaginaire, d'une Fronde qui serait terminée par la victoire et par l'élévation des princes: la Fronde réelle avait comporté à un certain moment de tells espérances. Mais en général il fallait être plus modestes."[187] Reading Corneille's drama in light of the Fronde thus casts Nicomède as a hero who exceeds the limitations of his time, as a rebellious prince who refuses to cede his singular force to the state.

When Nicomède does eventually recognize his father's rule, he does so in a way that seems to preserve his self-reliance. The recognition of his father's sovereignty occurs only after numerous plot twists and reversals of fortune. Despite Nicomède's recommendations, Prusias decides to name Attale as his heir. However, as we have seen, this presents a problem. The Bithynian people have more love for Nicomède than for Prusias, their king. Fearing that Nicomède will rally the people and thus mount a challenge to his father's rule, Prusias has Nicomède imprisoned. Although Nicomède cannot rally the people from prison, his imprisonment nonetheless rallies the people. Their uprising causes confusion in the palace, during which Attale sneaks away, dons a disguise, and releases Nicomède. The hero then appeases the people by appearing before them from a palace balcony. Having calmed the people, Nicomède rejoins the other members of the royal family. Shocked to see his eldest son out from behind bars, Prusias says, "Quoi? me viens-tu braver jusque dans mon palais, / Rebelle?" (V, ix, 1781-82). In response, Nicomède assures the king, "Je viens en bon sujet vous rendre le repos" (V, ix, 1785). Recasting himself from "Rebelle" to "bon sujet," Nicomède recognizes his father's rule. As Hélène Merlin-Kajman has noted, this scene is not one of submission.

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[187] Bénichou, 91.

Rather than submit to his father, Nicomède bestows his approval.[188] The son and subject deigns to accept the rule of his father and monarch. For Nicomède even acts of obedience carry signs of self-reliance.

Merlin-Kajman reads the hero's willing acquiescence as indicative of his modernity. She writes, "Nicomède est bien 'lui seul sa règle,' mais c'est pour se donner l'obéissance pour règle. Autant dire que Nicomède semble annoncer ici la figure moderne de l'*autonomie*, où le sujet est à la fois législateur souverain est assujetti à sa propre loi."[189] If Nicomède prefigures modern *autonomie*, it is because he masters the principles of self-regulation and *générosité* as articulated by René Descartes, the seventeenth-century philosopher perhaps most closely associated with the advent of modern subjectivity.[190] In *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649), Descartes describes *générosité* as the quality expressed by subjects who recognize their capacity to direct their own volition:

> Ainsi je croy que la vraye Generosité, qui fait qu'un homme s' estime au plus haut point qu' il se peut legitimement estimer, consiste seulement, partie en ce qu'il connoist qu'il n'y a rien vertiablement luy appartiene, que cette libre disposition de ces volontés, ny pourquoy il doive estre loüé ou blasmé, sinon pource qu'il en use bien ou mal; & partie en ce qu'il sent en soy mesme une ferme & constante resolution d'en bien user, c'est à dire de ne manquer jamais de volonté, pour

[188] Merlin-Kajman, "*Cinna, Rodogune, Nicomède;* Le Roi et le moi,*"* 75-76.
[189] Merlin-Kajman, "*Cinna, Rodogune, Nicomède;* Le Roi et le moi,*"* 76.
[190] See, for example, Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity*.

> entreprendre & executer toutes les choses qu'il jugera estre les meilleurs. Ce qui est suivre parfaitement la vertu.[191]

For Descartes, *générosité* thus differs considerably from our modern sense of the word. To label someone as generous today is to remark upon her tendency to share what she owns, offering, for example, money, food, or shelter to those in need. In other words, the modern *généreux* is someone who freely gives up her worldly possessions. In contrast, Descartes' *généreux* has no such possessions to give. His only holding is his own will, which cannot be transferred.

Situating *générosité* as the culmination of the ethical system outlined in *Les Passions de l'âme*, Descartes identifies this quality as particularly virtuous on two counts. First, by understanding volition to be his only true possession, the *généreux* values independence and does not un-reflexively let the passions sway him. In other words, he monitors and manages the passions' effect on his body and mind. Second, the *généreux* routinely eschews self-interests, and works in the service of others. Descartes explains:

> Ceux qui sont Genereux…n'estiment rien de plus grand que de faire du bien aux autres hommes, et de mespriser son propre interest pour ce sujet, ils sont tousjours parfaitement courtois, affables et officieux envers un chacun. Et avec cela ils sont entierement maistres de leurs Passions: particulierement des Desirs, de la jalousie, et de l'Envie, à cause qu' il n' y a aucune chose dont l'acquisition ne depende pas d'eux, qu' ils pensent valoir assez pour meriter d'estre beaucoup souhaitée; et de la Haine envers les hommes, à cause qu'ils les estiment tous; et de la Peur, à cause

[191] René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme*, [1649]. ARTFL Electronic Edition, 2009: III, 153.

> que la confiance qu' ils ont en leur vertu, les assure; et en fin de la Colere, à cause que, n'estimant que fort peu toutes les choses qui dependent d'autruy, jamais ils ne donnent tant d'avantage à leurs ennemis, que de reconnoistre qu'ils en sont offencez.[192]

In Descartes' formulation, the *généreux*'s independence does not lead him to avoid interactions with others. He does not retreat into himself, alone with his autonomy. Instead, the *généreux*'s ability to control his reactions to the passions allows him freely to respond to others' needs. *La générosité* thus constitutes a felicitous combination of self-mastery and magnanimity of spirit.

Many readers of *Nicomède* have identified this felicitous combination within its hero. V.L. Sauliner summarizes this critical consensus, noting that "Corneille fait vivre le *généreux* de Descartes."[193] Indeed, Nicomède inhabits this ideal so thoroughly that he inspires others to follow his lead. As R. Darren Gobert suggests, the hero's exemplary virtue propels the drama's action. "*Nicomède*'s dramatic arc involves not a change in its steadfastly generous hero but a transformation of those around him, especially Attale and Prusias, who eventually find themselves situated between [Nicomède] and [Arisnoé], or between 'generosity' and 'hatred.'"[194] By instructing his father and half-brother on how to be a better sovereign and a more self-sufficient son, Nicomède schools them in the ways of *générosité*.

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[192] Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme,* III, 156.
[193] V.L. Sauliner, *La littérature française du siècle classique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 53. Quoted in R. Darren Gobert, *The Mind-Body Stage: Passion and Interaction in the Cartesian Theater* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 55.
[194] Gobert, 56.

In addition to demonstrating how the generous, self-possessed hero serves as a model for others, the drama also displays another pattern of interaction. Nicomède's status as a *généreux* is constituted and sustained by those around him. The actions of staged characters, the off-staged people, and the drama's audience all contribute to the hero's self-construction. In other words, although Nicomède appears as a self-contained *généreux,* this appearance is partially elaborated by the drama's other actors. On one level, this form of concerted action can be understood as part of the machinations of the drama's plot. Nicomède's self-assured acquiescence to his father's rule requires the participation of others. The unruly people, Laodice, and Attale, all make his release from prison possible. However, the concerted construction of the hero takes place on another level as well. The drama situates Nicomède as an object to be admired. In other words, staged characters and the off-staged people secure Nicomède's heroism through their admiration. In *Les Passions de L'âme*, Descartes maintains that admiration is the first of all passions. Within his ethical system, one must pass through admiration in order to understand and inhabit generosity. Keeping Descartes' order in mind, we must pass through the dynamics of admiration in *Nicomède* in order to nuance our understanding of its hero's generosity and autonomy.

In his 1660 *Examen* of *Nicomède,* Corneille foregrounds the importance of admiration, suggesting that members of the audience were struck by Nicomède's self-mastery and magnanimity. Furthermore, Corneille mobilizes Nicomède's striking virtue in order to put forward a conception of the tragic hero that departs from Aristotle's prescriptions:

> Ce héros de ma façon sort un peu des règles de la tragédie, en ce qu'il ne cherche point à faire pitié par l'excès de ces infortunes; mais le succès a montré que la fermeté des grands cœurs, qui n'excite que de l'admiration dans l'âme du spectateur, est quelquefois aussi agréable que la compassion que notre art nous ordonne d'y produire par la représentation de leurs malheurs. Il en fait naître toutefois quelqu'une, mais elle ne va pas jusques à tirer des larmes. Son effet se borne à mettre les auditeurs dans les intérêts de ce prince et à leur faire former des souhaits pour ses prospérités.[195]

Whereas Aristotle argues in the *Poetics* that tragic heroes should be neither too exemplary nor too detestable so that they might inspire pity through their moral mediocrity, Corneille insists that an uncommon virtue can also affect spectators. It is *admiration,* however, rather than pity, that a figure like Nicomède inspires. During the seventeenth century, *admiration* primarily denoted wonder or surprise, rather than esteem or respect. As we will see, however, these two meanings are linked in *Nicomède.* Corneille suggests that a combination of wonder and esteem calibrates the spectators' sensibility, engaging them in Nicomède's interests and investing them in his success.

Corneille further elaborates on the power of *admiration* in a critique of Aristotelian catharsis:

> Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa vertu [la vertu de Nicomède], je trouve une manière de purger les passions dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la

[195] "Examen de *Nicomède,*" ed. André Clanet (Paris: Larousse, 1975), 150.

> crainte. L'amour qu'elle nous donne pour cette vertu que nous admirons nous imprime de la haine pour le vice contraire. La grandeur de courage de Nicomède nous laisse une aversion de la pusillanimité.[196]

By presenting Nicomède's example, the drama inspires pity and purges vice. *Admiration* thus serves as a conduit, transmitting grandeur and generosity beyond the stage. The process of transmitting such virtues as these is corporeal, which Corneille emphasizes through the verb "imprimer." In this context, Nicomède's example is not only metaphorically impressive, it also leaves a physical mark. Admiration of the hero's strength would thus seem to reinforce the importance of Nicomède's self-mastery. His independence and control become the impressive standards that the drama holds up for all to see and revere. However, the dynamics of *admiration* also suggest how this self-sufficient portrait of Nicomède is more complicated than initially meets the eye. The primacy placed on *admiration* points toward Nicomède's dependence on others. In order to secure its hero's admirable autonomy, the drama requires broad participation and recognition.

In Corneille's *Examen*, *admiration* for Nicomède pushes spectators toward virtue and away from vice. Admiration does not itself contain a specific moral content, but instead acts as a conduit. The primary of all the passions, Descartes explains, to feel admiration is to feel wonder or surprise:

> Lors que la premiere rencontre de quelque objet nous surprent, et que nous le jugeons estre nouveau, ou fort different de ce que nous connoissions auparavant,

[196] "Examen de *Nicomède,*" 150.

> ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devoit estre, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes estonnez. Et pour ce que cela peut arriver avant que nous connoissions aucunement si cet objet nous est convenable, ou s'il ne l'est pas, il me semble que l'Admiration est la premiere de toutes les passions. Et elle n'a point de contraire, à cause que, si l'objet qui se presente n'a rien en soy qui nous surprene, nous n'en sommes aucunement émeus, et nous le considerons sans passion.[197]

Having no opposite, *admiration* describes the relationship between subject and object. For a subject to feel *admiration*, she or he must experience wonder or surprise when encountering a given object. For Descartes, to feel *admiration* is thus not necessarily to confer approval or respect, as our current usage implies. As Christian Biet has noted, Cartesian *admiration* is pre-reflective. The moment of encounter arrests the subject and may lead either to stupor and bewilderment, or to rational contemplation. Morally neutral, *admiration* is morally risky. It is thus the reaction to *admiration*, and not *admiration* itself that may lead to the recognition of virtue.[198]

By positioning Nicomède as an object of *admiration*, the drama presents its self-sufficient hero as beholden to others' consideration. Members of the royal family and Bithynian people alike express wonder at Nicomède's strength and interpret this strength as a sign of his virtue. Reflecting upon Nicomède's singular glory, the drama's other characters thus suggest how the hero should be received. The co-construction of

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[197] Descartes, *Passions de L'âme,* II, 53.
[198] Christian Biet, "Plaisirs et dangers de l'admiration," *Littératures Classiques* 32 (1998): 121-34.

Nicomède as a virtuous hero begins with the drama's first lines. Laodice speaks these lines, expressing her pleasure at the sight of Nicomède:

> Après tant de haut faits, il m'est bien doux, Seigneur,
> De voir encor mes yeux régner sur votre cœur;
> De voir, sous les lauriers qui vous couvrent la tête,
> Un si grand conquérant être encor ma conquête (1-4).

Laodice's lines accompany the audience's first encounter with Nicomède. She provides a gloss on the audience's moment of *admiration*, encouraging the passage from wonder to reflection. Providing a description of his military prowess, she also offers a glimpse of his inner virtue. In addition to being worthy of her attention and love, he submits to her "conquête." As her opening speech continues, she details his many points of honor and suggests that it is his virtue that has stoked Rome's fears and provoked Arisnoé's jealousy. Throughout the scene, Laodice encourages Nicomède to be wary of his rivals, but she notes that Nicomède possesses something they do not: the people's approval. "Le peuple ici vous aime et hait ces cœurs infâmes" (I, i, 115). Laodice thus establishes that Nicomède is worthy of the people's love as well as her own, and she posits both romantic and political affection as sources of his strength.

King Prusias confirms Nicomède's strength in the second act, although the king speaks of his son's strength out of fear rather than love. Nicomède's decision to leave his military post without orders from his father is seen as a particularly audacious move. It is a direct affront to the king's power. "Revenir sans mon ordre et se montrer ici!" (II, i,

365), Prusias complains to his attendants. The king goes on to describe the disruption caused by Nicomède's imminent arrival, placing particular emphasis on the visual:

> Il n'est plus mon sujet qu'autant qu'il le veut être;
> Et qui me fait régner en effet est mon maître.
> Pour paraître à mes yeux son mérite est trop grand:
> On n'aime point à voir ceux à qui on doit tant.
> Tout ce qu'il a fait parle au moment qu'il m'approche;
> Et sa seule présence est un secret reproche:
> Elle me dit toujours qu'il m'a fait trois fois roi,
> Que je tiens plus de lui qu'il ne tiendra de moi (II, i, 415-22).

Whereas elsewhere in the drama, Nicomède's rhyme of roi/moi communicates his strength, Prusias' rhyme signals his relative weakness. When Nicomède returns, the king will have to confront the discrepancy in their power. It is Nicomède's sheer appearance, his "seule présence," that makes plain what Prusias would prefer not to see. Without even saying a word, the prince will call Prusias' authority into question and, through his "secret reproche," will make an open secret of the king's borrowed strength. Prusias' concerns instruct the spectators on how to view Nicomède. The king's complaints about his son's prowess build upon Laodice's praise to further construct the drama's portrait of a hero.

Accounts of the people's divergent reactions to Prusias and Nicomède add additional strokes to this heroic portrait. As we have seen, when the people rise up in objection to Nicomède's imprisonment, members of the royal family initially shrug off

the disruption, assuming it will soon pass. As the noise from the streets grows more threatening, however, they take steps to quell the uprising. In the 1660 edition of Corneille's theater, the frontispiece to *Nicomède* depicts an attempt by the king to end the people's revolt and to restore order. Prusias appears on the balcony in the upper-right background, with the bodies of the people looming in the foreground:

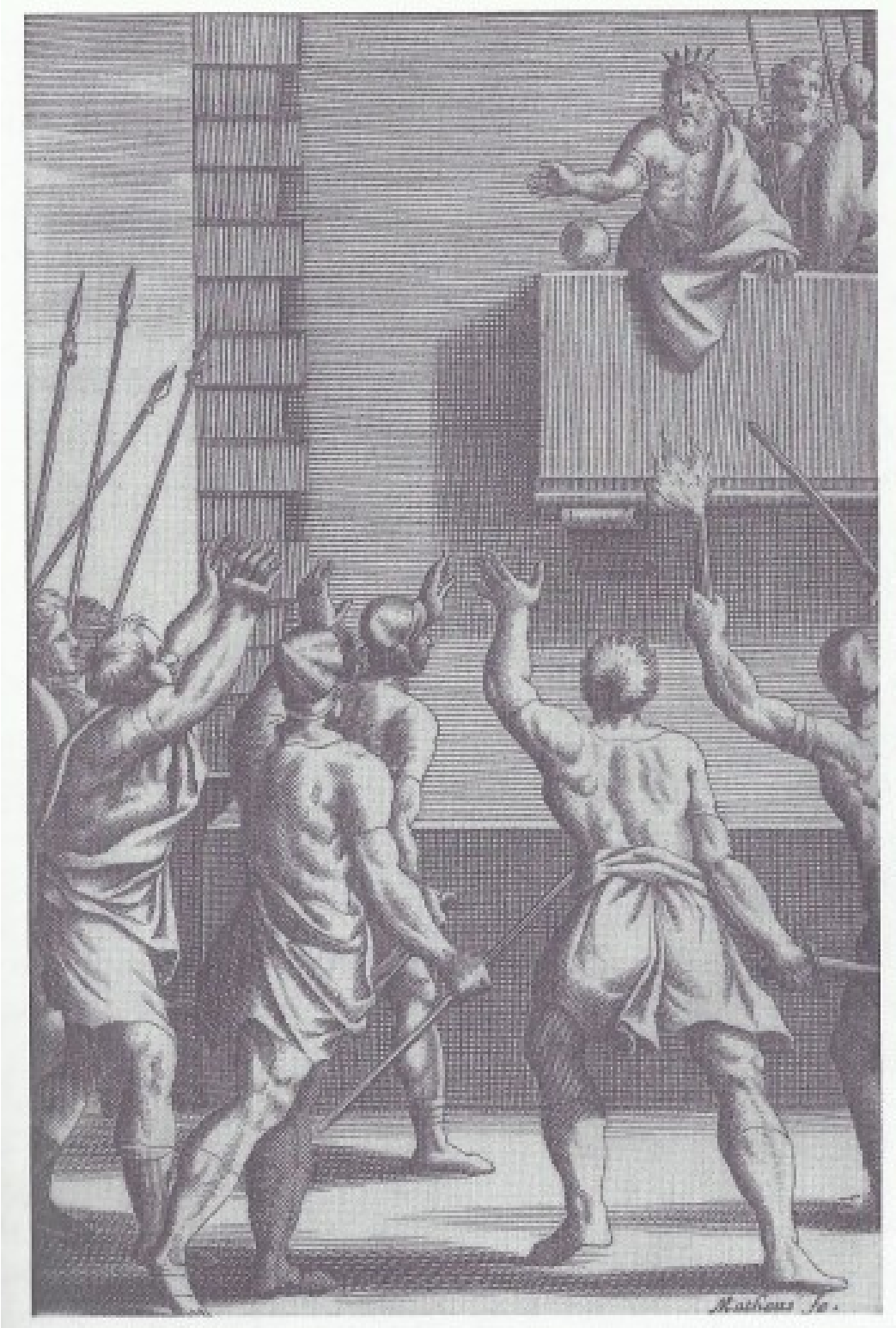

Figure 2 ***Nicomède,*** **Frontispiece 1660**

As Gobert has pointed out, the raised arms of the people mirror that of the king.[199] His outstretched arm is met with theirs, a parallel which communicates their refusal to cede to his authority. As the revolt continues, the people repeatedly demand Nicomède's release and Prusias considers how he could meet their demands by executing Nicomède and then gruesomely displaying his son's severed head:

> Allons, allons le rendre,
> Ce précieux objet, d'une amitié si tendre
> Obéissons, Madame, à ce peuple sans foi
> Qui, las de m'obéir, en veut faire son roi,
> Et, du haut d'un balcon pour calmer la tempête,
> Sur ses nouveaux sujets faisons voler sa tête (V, v, 1583-88).

Planning to make a spectacular demonstration of his own force, Prusias proposes to give the people what they want: a view of Nicomède. His verses reinforce how the drama situates Nicomède as an object to behold. Frustrated with the people's stated affection for his son, Prusias labels Nicomède a "précieux objet." Nicomède's body is thus not only a source of his own strength, but is also a site of political contestation. In the drama's final act, the very possibility of heroic opposition is articulated through the people's demands. The unruly people require a leader and they have deemed Nicomède worthy.

Once released from prison by Attale, Nicomède appears before the people in order to quiet the crowd by making a display of his reversal of fortune. The scene he subsequently reports to the rest of the royal family marks a stark contrast with Prusias'

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[199] Gobert, 64.

earlier appearance, as depicted by the 1660 frontispiece. “Tout est calme, Seigneur,” Nicomède reports to his father, “un moment de ma vue / A soudain apaisé la populace émue” (V, ix, 1779-80). Whereas the people refused to calm themselves when their king appeared on the very same balcony, they immediately come to rest with just one look at their hero. Christian Biet argues that this second (reported) balcony scene constitutes a moment of Cartesian *admiration*. The people are struck with wonder and surprise at the sudden appearance of Nicomède. This moment of *admiration*, however, does not end with morally neutral wonder, but instead immediately transforms into a positive evaluation of Nicomède’s authority. Put another way, the people make a value judgment about Nicomède that is also a political decision. In a move that parallels Nicomède’s approval of his father’s authority at the denouement, the people confer their approval upon Nicomède. As Laodice’s line from the drama’s first scene makes clear, Nicomède has long held the people’s esteem. Their revolt against Prusias and subsequent recognition of Nicomède brings more fully into view how central their ongoing support is to the maintenance of his heroic status.

In contrast to the people, Attale does not begin the drama in support of Nicomède. The two half-brothers are political and romantic rivals. They were educated in different locations and express different opinions about the sources of power. The drama initially portrays Attale as dependent on his father, mother, and Rome. He shares their preferences, and their decisions are his decisions. In the final scene, however, Attale is revealed to be Nicomède’s liberator. When Prusias asks Nicomède how he has escaped, Nicomède explains that a masked man released him and states that this masked man

asked for Nicomède's diamond ring as payment or "gage." As Nicomède recounts the strange conditions of his liberation, Attale produces the ring and confesses to being this mysterious man. Nicomède then expresses his thanks, referring to the ring as an identifying mark:

> Ah! laissez-moi toujours à cette digne marque
> Reconnaître en mon sang un vrai sang de monarque.
> Ce n'est plus des Romains l'esclave ambitieux,
> C'est le libérateur d'un sang si précieux.
> Mon frère, avec mes fers, vous en brisez bien d'autres:
> Ceux du Roi, de la Reine, et les siens et les vôtres: (V, ix, 1823-28).

In this scene, the exchange of the diamond signals the brothers' mutual recognition. As the rhyme of "digne marque" and "sang de monarque" suggests, the diamond ring, a valuable object, functions as the outward sign of Nicomède's inner worth and virtue. By returning the ring, Attale demonstrates that he has recognized Nicomède's "sang si précieux." In turn, Nicomède recognizes Attale as more than a pawn in his mother's quest for power. The structure of these verses further underscores the recognition that occurs between the two brothers. When Nicomède says, "laissez-moi toujours à cette digne marque / Reconnaître en mon sang un vrai sang de monarque," he might refer to himself or to Attale. Exchanged between them, the diamond becomes a symbol of their shared pedigree. As we know, however, for Nicomède, pedigree alone does not make the man. It is by taking action, and specifically by taking action that contradicts the stated wishes of the king, the queen, and Rome, that Attale proves himself worthy of Nicomède's respect.

In this final scene, Nicomède reiterates the importance of self-sovereignty and independent action. The hero offers one more lesson in *générosité*. What accompanies Nicomède's lesson, however, is the diamond ring, a prop that makes concrete the drama's figuration of Nicomède as an object to behold. The ring, as an outward sign of Nicomède's inner virtue, parallels how the hero circulates on stage as "un objet précieux." Laodice, Prusias, Attale, and the people all hold up Nicomède as a virtuous hero. If, as Corneille writes in his *Examen,* Nicomède provokes the audience's *admiration*, it is the non-heroic characters and the off-staged people who suggest that the audience's wonder should lead to esteem. If Nicomède appears as a self-possessed *généreux*, it is in part due to the speech and actions of those that surround him. However boldly Nicomède may reject his birthright and eschew his ties to others, *Nicomède* suggests that these ties remain.

Attending to this remainder allows us to recast Nicomède's characteristic openness. Instead of functioning merely as an indication of his self-sovereignty, Nicomède's openness also serves as a sign of the porosity between the hero and his others. Standing in contrast to Nicomède, Suréna, the hero of Corneille's final tragedy, champions a form of self-enclosure. Whereas Nicomède boldly proclaims the self as the source of his strength, Suréna attempts to secret this strength away. Given this distinction, it would seem that this final Cornelian hero severs the ties between himself and those that surround him. What we find, however, is that the drama maintains these ties, albeit in more subtle and less spectacular ways.

From Private Liberty to Public Menace

The heroes of *Nicomède* and *Suréna* offer a study in contrasts. One is open and frank, the other is guarded and secretive. One speaks boldly, the other speaks cautiously. For all of their differences, they are similarly situated with respect to their sovereigns. Like Nicomède, Suréna possesses great military strength and helps to shore up his sovereign's authority. When the drama opens, Suréna has helped Orode, the king of Parthia, win control over Armenia. Although Orode is the sovereign, he is indebted to Suréna's strength (much as Prusias is indebted to Nicomède's). In addition to his physical might, Suréna also possesses the loyalty of those that he has led in battle. Although they are never staged, the drama makes clear that a band of Suréna's loyal followers remains outside the city walls. Given Suréna's strength and support, Orode attempts to neutralize the hero's power. The king offers his daughter's hand in marriage to Suréna. The hero refuses the king's offer, offending the king. Suréna proclaims himself unworthy of the king's daughter, Mandane. The king suspects, however, that that the hero refuses on other grounds. Fearing sedition, Orode attempts to compel Suréna's obedience and eventually, when this attempt fails, has the hero killed.

Orode is correct that Suréna's refusal of Mandane does not truly spring from the hero's modesty. Instead, Suréna refuses because he is in love with another woman, the Armenian princess Eurydice. What is more, Eurydice returns Suréna's love. The two met when Orode dispatched Suréna as an ambassador to Armenia in an attempt to convince the Armenian king to align himself with Parthia rather than Rome. After Suréna's diplomatic mission fails and the Armenian king sides with Rome, Orode resorts to

military force. The drama begins as Parthia celebrates its military victory and prepares to sign a treaty with Armenia. Orode plans to secure the ties between the two territories by marrying Eurydice to his son, Pacorus. The love between Eurydice and Suréna thus doubly blocks the king's match-making. Suréna refuses the king's daughter and Eurydice resists the king's son. Neither Suréna nor Eurydice discloses their love to the king, however. Instead, they assert their right to interior freedom and thus to a form of privacy.

Suréna's assertion of his privacy has long been read as a sign of his reticence. Rather than mount an open challenge to Orode, Suréna deploys a more secretive form of resistance. When compared to Nicomède's boldness, Suréna's more furtive strategy makes him seem like a hero in decline. For many critics, Suréna's reticence and eventual death represents not only his own decline, but also that of the Cornelian hero as such. Serge Doubrovsky writes "Pour la première fois, dans le théâtre de Corneille, en mourant, le héros ne s'élève pas: il *tombe*…La mort de Suréna, c'est aussi la Mort du Héros."[200] In contrast to this view, Georges Forestier interprets Suréna as a figure of endurance. Noting that Suréna's death is the result of his fidelity to Eurydice, Forestier reads this death as a form of love's persistence and continuity. Underscoring the lovers' pledges to "toujours aimer, toujours souffrir, toujours mourir" (I, iii, 268), Forestier maintains that Suréna and Eurydice "réclament seulement un espace de liberté intérieure pour faire perdurer leur amour désespéré dans le secret, la souffrance et la fidélité du souvenir, espace tout provisoire que la mort attendue ne saurait tardait à révoquer."[201] Love endures, Forestier

[200] Doubrovsky, 467.
[201] Georges Forestier, "Corneille et la tragédie: hypothèses sur l'élaboration de *Suréna*," *Littératures Classiques* 16 (1992): 161.

suggests, because it is interior and secret, providing Eurydice and Suréna a private space away from the pressures of politics.

By emphasizing love's endurance, Forestier pushes us to think of Corneille's final hero as standing for something other than decline. However, Forestier's argument rests on a separation of love and politics, and of the private and the public. He frames Suréna's private love as something that is sheltered from the political machinations of the king. As Ellen McClure points out, within Corneille's drama, such a separation cannot hold. Suréna is the king's ambassador, and thus maintains a highly public position. As an ambassador, the hero must transmit and mediate the king's authority. Eurydice also occupies a public position. Her marriage to the king's son is a provision of the treaty between Armenia and Parthia. Eurydice and Suréna's refusal to marry the king's offspring and their enduring commitment to each other thus cannot be separated from the realm of politics. Put another way, their private claims have a public dimension. The inseparability of love and politics in *Suréna* points us toward the porosity between the hero and those that surround him. Attending to this porosity, we see that Suréna's private love endures in part through its public disclosure.

To say that Suréna's private love has a public dimension is to contradict the hero himself. Suréna and Eurydice both articulate their love as hidden away in the private space of the heart. Furthermore, both Suréna and Eurydice argue that this private space is beyond the king's jurisdiction. In the drama's opening lines, Eurydice asks her *dame d'honneur*, Ormène, to stop listing the elaborate preparations for the treaty between King Orode and her father, as well as for her subsequent wedding to Pacorus:

Ce Traité qu'à deux Rois il a plus d'arrêter,
Et l'on a préféré cette superbe Ville,
Ces murs de Séleucie, aux murs d'Hécatompyle:
La Reine et la Princesse en quittent le séjour,
Pour rendre en ces beaux lieux tout son lustre à la Cour;
Le Rois les mande exprès, le Prince n'attend qu'elles,
Et jamais ces climats n'ont vu pompes si belles.
Mais que servent pour moi tous ces préparatifs,
Si mon cœur est esclave, et tous ces vœux captifs;
Si de tous ces efforts de publique allégresse
Il se fait des sujets de trouble, et de tristesse?
J'aime ailleurs (I, i, 4-15).

Reiterating the plans for spectacular celebration that her wedding will occasion, Eurydice establishes the drama's geographical setting. In addition to indicating that the action will unfold within the walls of Séleucie, Eurydice also sketches out a separation between the public festivities and her private sentiment, between *cour* and *coeur.* At first, she locates her heart within the confines of the political order, insisting that it is held captive by the surrounding public joy. She then suggests more of a dislocation, ending her complaint with "J'aime ailleurs," to indicate that she loves another.[202] The geographical language of these verses sets up the public and the private as different, although overlapping locations. Setting Eurydice's love elsewhere, the drama introduces the possibility that

[202] This line is reminiscent of Nicomède's claim to occupy Laodice's heart in *Nicomède* (I, v, 267).

private preferences may be entirely sheltered from public view, and thus not subject to the king's control.

As the action unfolds, the tragedy repeatedly positions the heart as the location of private sentiment. Removed from public life and obligation, the heart becomes the location of private or subjective rights. In the second act, Eurydice employs the language of rights when responding to Pacorus' advances. The king's son requests an open declaration of affection from Eurydice, reminding her that the treaty between their fathers mandates their marriage. Eurydice's response outlines the limits of this mandate: "S'il a pu l'une à l'autre engager nos personnes, / Au seul don de la main son droit est limité, / Et mon cœur avec vous n'a point fait de Traité" (II, ii, 502-4). Although the treaty may force her hand, her heart remains a space of personal liberty. Later in the drama, Suréna echoes Eurydice's assertion. After Orode commands that Suréna must either marry Mandane or suffer banishment, Suréna insists that the monarch has no jurisdiction over his heart, enumerating what he owes the sovereign and what he keeps for himself:

> Je lui dois en Sujet tout mon sang, tout mon bien,
> Mais si je lui dois tout, mon cœur ne lui doit rien,
> Et n'en reçoit de lois que comme autant d'outrages,
> Comme autant d'attentats sur de plus doux hommages (V, ii, 1523-26).

Distinguishing his heart from his blood, Suréna refuses to cede his heart's freedom to the king. Suréna elsewhere complains that Orode acts as a "tyran de mon cœur," further reiterating the idea that the king abuses his authority by making demands on his subjects' hearts.

With their focus on the heart as a space that should exist at a remove from the sovereign's control, Suréna and Eurydice echo the claims of Cornélie, the heroine of Garnier's *Cornélie* and Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée*. Cornélie's attachment to Pompée ultimately serves to join her particular grief to the general plight of Rome. In contrast to Cornélie, who openly declares her loss of Pompée and her fundamental liberty, Eurydice and Suréna attempt to separate the condition and contents of their hearts. They openly declare their freedom of their hearts while keeping the object of their love a secret. Their emphasis on internal, private freedom recalls the individual dimension of the *droit de résistance*, but their refusal to openly name their love would seem to distance them from its collective dimension. By openly declaring private, or subjective claims, Cornélie, as well as Antigone and Nicomède, allow for the permeability between entities that the *droit de résistance* requires. By attempting to keep these private claims private, Suréna and Eurydice seem to deny any permeability.

Suréna and Eurydice do, however, celebrate the connection between their hearts. Attending to this connection, we begin to see how their love acquires a more public dimension than they allow. The first time that the private love between Eurydice and Suréna is acknowledged is in the opening scene. After charting the space between her inner torment and the public celebrations, Eurydice describes her initial encounter with Suréna. Suréna arrived in Armenia as Orode's ambassador at the same time as an ambassador from Rome. In addition to competing for the Armenian king's cooperation, these two ambassadors unwittingly compete for Eurydice's favor. Eurydice explains to her attendant Ormène that this contest was in fact no contest at all. Suréna immediately

showed himself to be superior. Eurydice reports to Ormène that Suréna instantly won her heart without saying a word:

> L'autre par les devoirs d'un respect légitime
> Vengeait le sceptre en nous de ce manque d'estime.
> L'amour s'en mêla même, et tout son entretien
> Sembla m'offrir son cœur, et demander le mien:
> Il obtint, et mes yeux que charmait sa présence
> Soudain avec les siens en firent confidence;
> Ces muets truchements surent lui révéler
> Ce que je me forçais à lui dissimuler,
> Et les mêmes regards qui m'expliquaient sa flamme
> S'instruisaient dans les miens du secret de mon âme.
> Ses vœux y rencontraient d'aussi tendres désirs,
> Un accord imprévu confondait nos soupirs,
> Et d'un mot échappé la douceur hasardée
> Trouvait l'âme tous deux toute persuadée (I, i, 45-58).

In these verses, Eurydice confesses her inability to hide her passion from Suréna. She also suggests that his experience paralleled hers. At first sight, they exchange wordless vows, offer each other their hearts, and divulge the secrets of their souls. Between Eurydice and Suréna, love is never hidden, but always disclosed. As Marc Fumaroli suggests, Eurydice and Suréna possess between them "une transparence parfaite."[203]

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[203] Marc Fumaroli, *Héros et Orateurs: Rhétorique et dramaturgie cornéliennes* (Paris: Droz, 1960), 77.

For Fumaroli, this "transparence parfaite" is decidedly apolitical. He argues that their love carries spiritual overtones, calling it the "figure profane de la confiance de l'âme en la loyauté de Dieu, prefiguration de l'union de l'âme à Dieu."[204] This spiritual connection accompanies what Fumaroli identifies as the lovers' distance from and disinterest in worldly concerns and "les jeux sinistres et sordides de la politique."[205] Objecting to this characterization of Suréna and Eurydice, Ellen McClure reminds us that both have very political roles: he, as Orode's ambassador, and she, as the intended wife of Orode's son. Given these public positions, Suréna and Eurydice cannot separate themselves from worldly concerns or political machinations. Instead, as McClure points out, their love interferes in politics by thwarting Orode's designs. In other words, their private love impinges on public life.

In light of this impingement or interference, McClure argues that their love is "opaque" rather than transparent. She writes, "The love that Fumaroli describes as transparent is repeatedly described by Pacorus [the king's son] as an *obstacle* to the greater good of the state."[206] As a diplomat, McClure explains, Suréna *ought* to be a transparent agent of his king's authority. Instead of transmitting Orode's power, however, Suréna blocks this power by refusing to relinquish his love. McClure thus suggests that the drama "speaks the scandal of power," explaining that it exposes the problem of mediation in absolutist theory. Although the sovereign's power "should pass through the state's agents with as few 'obstacles' as possible," these agents have their own

[204] Fumaroli, 77
[205] Fumaroli, 77.
[206] McClure, 245.

"physicality and individuality."[207] The discourse of love that Suréna and Eurydice both articulate, however, shores up their physicality and their individuality.[208]

Although McClure rejects the term "transparence," what she describes as a problem for absolutism is the exposure of its limits. Reading McClure and Fumaroli together, we might describe the love between Suréna and Eurydice as both transparent and opaque. They pose a problem for Orode not just because they obstruct his plans, but also because their obstruction is obvious. Although they reserve their right to interior freedom, the contents of their hearts quickly become apparent to all. In other words, their private liberty is on display for public view. Although Eurydice only directly discloses the love she shares with Suréna to her attendant, Ormène, the drama's other characters are quickly made aware of this love as well. When Eurydice learns that Orode has come to suspect that she loves Suréna, she asks Ormène who informed the king. Ormène responds that no one has informed, but instead suggests if the lovers' "intelligence" is already "à demi découverte" (IV, ii, 1057), it is through their own actions:

> Vous et lui, c'est son crime et le vôtre.
> Il refuse Mandane, et n'en veut aucune autre,
> On sait que vous aimez, on ignore l'Amant,
> Madame, tout cela parle trop clairement (I, ii, 1069-72).

Insisting on their privacy, Eurydice and Suréna cannot help but make their love public. Instead of remaining interior, their love becomes a kind of transparent obstacle, or an open secret, that everyone shares.

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[207] McClure, 244-46.
[208] McClure, 247.

Bringing into relief how the transparency of Eurydice and Suréna obstructs the king's designs, the drama not only exposes the fissures in a theory of absolutism, it also "speaks the scandal" of the *droit de résistance*'s survival in an absolutist context. Pulling their interior freedom into matters of the state and into public view, the drama adds a collective dimension to Eurydice and Suréna's subjective claims. Although absolutism grants individual subjects their interior freedom, it attempts to restrict this freedom to the private sphere. In *Suréna*, subjective liberty extends beyond the confines of the individual subject through the discourse of love. Binding Suréna and Eurydice together, the discourse of love also makes their interior liberty a matter of public concern.

The drama's final scene demonstrates how the disclosure of private liberty threatens the king. Suréna refuses to cede to the king's demands and also refuses to flee or hide. Instead, he confidently maintains that his subjective liberty and service to the king are compatible. The king, however, disagrees, and has Suréna executed in a public square, just outside of the palace. Ormène reports his death to Eurydice, and to his sister Palmis:

> À peine du Palais il sortait dans la rue,
> Qu'une flèche a parti d'une main inconnue,
> Deux autres l'ont suivie, et j'ai vu ce vainqueur,
> Comme si toutes trois l'avaient atteint au cœur
> Dans un ruisseau de sang tomber mort sur la place (V, v, 1713-17).

The "main inconnue" of the king's agent strikes Suréna down in a public square, making an open spectacle of the hero's death. Indeed, Ormène subsequently reports that after the

hero's fall, an anonymous voice cries out, "Qu'on apprît à dédaigner les Rois" (V, v, 1720). Suréna's death seems designed to serve as an example. Openly targeting Suréna's heart, the arrows indicate that Suréna's interior liberty has become a public menace.

The drama suggests that the hero's unwitting failure to respect the absolutist division of the public and the private brings about his demise. However, the drama also indicates that the hero's failure to contain his subjective freedom within his boundaries as an individual subject constitutes a form of endurance. The drama ends with the reactions of Eurydice and Palmis to Ormène's report of Suréna's death. Eurydice immediately wishes to follow Suréna in death, stating, "Généreux Suréna, reçois toute mon âme" (V, v, 1736). For her part, Palmis calls for the cessation of mourning and promises vengeance. Addressing Eurydice, she says:

> Suspendez ces douleurs qui pressent de mourir,
> Grand Dieux, et dans les maux où vous m'avez plongée
> Ne souffrez point ma mort que je ne sois vengée (V, v, 1736-38).

The women who survive Suréna both extend his legacy. As we have seen, Suréna attempts to separate his love from his glory, claiming that the latter is his true threat to the king. By disclosing the love he shares with Eurydice, the drama suggests that love and glory are intertwined. The overlap between the public and the private occasions Suréna's demise. The final speeches of Eurydice and Palmis, however, suggest that both the hero's love and his glory persist, remaining in dialogue with one another.

Conclusion

If Suréna's death marks the death of the Cornelian hero, Eurydice and Palmis mark how heroism endures. Their contrasting verses in the final scene demonstrate how heroism exceeds the hero's bounds. In *Nicomède* and *Suréna*, the hero's actions are interpreted and taken up by other actors, both on stage and unseen. By examining the communal constitution of the Cornelian hero, this chapter has attempted to complicate our understanding of heroic action. As Anne-Lise François has suggested, heroic action is often thought of as an individual's effort to put his or her talents to use.[209] Attending to what Katherine Ibbett calls the hero's remainders, we find that heroic action is something that is collectively elaborated and secured. In the next chapter, we will examine another character-type whose constitution is more communal than may initially seem: the figure of the savior in Racine's biblical tragedies. Whereas in *Nicomède* and *Suréna* the hero's communal constitution helps to secure and sustain his virtue, in the Racine's *Esther* (1689) and *Athalie* (1691), collective attachments and forms of disclosure threaten the savior's innocence and purity.

[209] François, 28.

Chapter Four: Innocence, Irony, and the Racinian Savior

Racine's *Esther* (1689) tells the story of the biblical Queen Esther, whose Jewish identity is hidden from her husband, King Assuérus of Persia. When Assuérus' adviser, Aman, convinces the king to execute all of the Jews in his kingdom, Esther's uncle Mardochée persuades her to reveal her Jewishness, arguing that exposing herself to the king represents their only chance to dissuade him from carrying out Aman's plan. Of course, both Mardochée and Esther are keenly aware that her appeal may fail. The drama is heightened by possibility that the king will cast his wife aside once her identity as a Jew is out in the open. Chancing her life, as well as those of her people, Esther says to her husband:

> J'ose vous implorer, et pour ma propre vie,
> Et pour les tristes jours d'un peuple infortuné,
> Qu'à périr avec moi vous avez condamné (III, iv, 1029-31).[210]

Realizing that the planned massacre of the Jews will cost him his own wife, Assuérus nullifies his order, an action that transforms the political and moral valences associated with being a Jew.

King Assuérus' first reaction to Esther's revelation is incredulity, due to the dissonance he perceives between her apparent character and that of the Jews as a people:

> Vous la fille d'un Juif ? Hé quoi! tout ce que j'aime,
> Cette Esther, l'innocence et la sagesse même,

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[210] Jean Racine, *Esther,* ed. Jean Borie (Paris: Larousse, 1975). All citations of *Esther* are from this edition.

Que je croyais du ciel les plus chères amours,

Dans cette source impure aurait puisé ses jours? (III, iv, 1037-40)

To descend from a Jewish father is to come from an impure source, a source that contrasts sharply with Esther's presumed innocence. Just two short scenes later, however, the king proclaims the Jews to be a people deserving of the same honor and respect as the Persians themselves. The Jews' reversal of fortune remains closely tied up with the king's attachment to Esther. Assuérus resolves the dissonance between her innocence and her impure lineage by removing this impurity through royal decree. Consequently, Esther's apparent character refashions the status of an entire people.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that Esther's "coming out" as a Jew captures something of the fantasies surrounding the act of coming out as gay or lesbian in the twentieth century. Reading Racine's drama, as well as its mention by Proust, Sedgwick writes, "Revelation of identity in the space of intimate love effortlessly overturns an entire public systematics of the natural and the unnatural, the pure and the impure."[211] Sedgwick emphasizes how much Esther's success seductively dramatizes the possibility that a personal coming out might engender the reversal of social stigma on a grand scale. By vulnerably exposing her true self to power, Esther prompts a transformation in the social structure that power enforces. Despite the differences between the Jewish and the sexual closet, Sedgwick explains that she "lingers" with Racine's *Esther* precisely

[211] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 76.

because of its affective force.[212] *Esther's* promise is that coming out disrupts the status quo, creating a better future for the Jews in Assuérus' kingdom.

Esther's community, like many others, gathers around the construction of a common history and the desire to persist into the future. In Racine's drama, the impending violence toward the Jews is characterized by its indiscriminate threat to the future. "Quel carnage de toutes parts!" (316) sings a member of the chorus of young Israelite girls who act as Queen Esther's handmaidens in Act 1, scene 5:

On égorge à la fois les enfants, les vieillards,
Et la sœur et le frère,
Et la fille et la mère,
Le fils dans les bras de son père.
Que le de corps entassés! Que de membres épars,
Privés de sépulture! (I, v, 317-22)

The young Israelite sings of future violence in the present tense, as if the destruction of her people imposes a rhetorical limit. In these lines, the total destruction of a family (la sœur, le frère, la fille, la mère, le fils, son père) stands as a metonym for all the Jews. The scattering of limbs, which literally figures the dissolution of the body, also represents the imminent dissolution of a community, obliterating any possible future. The reversal of fortune that Esther's act precipitates not only saves the day, but the days to come as well.

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[212] Sedgwick writes in detail about the structural specificities of a Jewish closet and a sexual one. Whereas Jewish identity and sexual orientation share a relatively fluid dynamic of secrecy and openness (compared with racial identities such as blackness, which are primarily coded through skin color, for example), they differ with respect to familial legacy. One inherits Jewishness in a way that one does not inherit sexual orientation (75).

In *Esther,* as well as in Racine's *Athalie* (1691)*,* the revelation of an individual character's identity is closely tied up with the community's political future and spiritual salvation. The dramatic action of *Athalie* centers on hidden identity of Joas, a young child who descends from the House of David. Esther and Joas are both figured as saviors who are uniquely able to afford the Jews political security. This chapter examines how the disclosure of the savior's identity paradoxically jeopardizes his or her innocence and purity. In other words, the savior's "coming out," the very act that secures the community's future, also seems to threaten the savior's present. We thus consider how the savior is influenced by those around him or her. Previous chapters have gestured toward the idea that tragedy's continual reenactment and reconfiguration of the *droit de résistance* speaks to current theoretical concerns, such as the constitution of the individual subject and the possibility of action in concert. This chapter undertakes a more sustained engagement with the resonances between early modern and contemporary theories of opposition by placing Racine's biblical tragedies in dialogue with queer theory. As Sedgwick's reference to Esther suggests, queer studies helps bring into relief the promise and perils of self-disclosure in Racine's tragedy. Furthermore, the dynamics of disclosure within Racine's drama helps identify a model of queer futurity.[213]

[213] To read Racine in relation to modern or contemporary questions is not a novel approach. Racine's drama has long been considered to be both profoundly of its time and constitutive of a time to come. Mitchell Greenberg, for example, argues that the interplay of desire and repression in Racine's work stages the strictures of absolutism and produces a nascent conception of the modern individual, *Racine: From Ancient Myth to Tragic Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). Lucien Goldmann turns to Racine's theater as a site that elaborates a "tragic vision" suggestive of the stance that modern man must adopt in God's apparent absence, *Le Dieu caché: étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955).

Queer Temporalities

Within queer studies, attention to questions of temporality has productively highlighted how time and power intertwine in order to regulate bodies, as well as to exert a normative force on the flow of history. To self-fashion or inhabit a form of life that exceeds the established boundaries of this normative force is to experience a kind of embodied temporal dissonance. Elizabeth Freeman writes that "[the] sensation of asynchrony can be viewed as a queer phenomenon – something felt on, with, or as a body, something experienced as a mode of erotic difference or even as a means to express ways of being and connecting that have not yet arrived or never will."[214] The queer in queer temporalities thus operates more as a mode, or a set of stylistic and critical practices, than as an identitary category. Indeed, Carla Freccero writes that the *queer* in queer theory "can be said to act as the interruptive process in the hypostatization or consolidation of identity, by attending instead to inscription and to that which resists being ideologically materialized into the individual."[215] Likewise, the queer that I read in Racine's theater is not individual, although it sometimes coalesces around a particular character. Instead, the queer is a force that operates disruptively, bending the flow of time that the drama's narrative arc seems to represent.

Disruption stands as one of the most common gestures of queer temporalities, despite differences in the critical paradigms employed by its theorists. Queer temporalities highlight the disruptive tendency of desires and affiliations to reach across

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[214] Elizabeth Freeman, "Introduction," Special issue on *Queer Temporalities* of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13.2-3 (2007): 159.
[215] Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 20.

the apparent boundaries of historical periods. Freeman emphasizes how the conjunction of queer studies, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies has brought to the fore how the designation "modern" acts as an arbiter of cultural legibility. She writes that this conjunction has led to a "[(re)turn] to a queer studies among whose definitional moves has been a turn to the 'premodern,' not only to moments in time before the consolidation of homosexual identity in the West, but also to how the gaps and fissures in the 'modern' get displaced backward into a hypersexualized or desexualized 'premodern.'"[216] With this emphasis on gaps, fissures, and displacements, the study of queer temporalities productively disrupts neat divisions between the non-modern and the modern by exposing how modes of acting and feeling that do not fit into "modern" norms nonetheless exist, and how these modes insert pauses and syncopations into the steady, straight beat of modern progress. If, as Fredric Jameson has argued, "We cannot not periodize," Freeman suggests that the study of queer temporalities opens up "possibilities of permeability and recursivity" to the periodizing impulse.[217]

These possibilities have been of particular use in problematizing the present's relationship to the past. For example, Carla Freccero argues that the past permeates the present via a kind of haunting that she calls "queer spectrality." A specific historiographic practice, "queer spectrality" attends to how the ethical demands from the past impinge on the present. This practice gathers together forms of attachment and desire that do not fit

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[216] Freeman, 170. Freeman's intervention is part of a longer critical conversation about periodization and historical continuity that has circulated around Michel Foucault's work on the distinction between acts and identities.

[217] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (New York: Verso, 2002), 29; Freeman, 160.

into history and yet speak to and through the present anyway. "Queer spectrality" is thus not about uncovering a history of non-normative desires, genders, or sexualities across time, but rather about allowing history's non-normative voices to speak over their past silences in the present.[218]

In addition to the past and the present, a third temporal frame also factors into Freccero's notion of queer spectrality: the future. She argues that "a willingness to be haunted" is an ethical stance oriented toward the future as much as the past. Attending to "ghostly returns" constitutes opening oneself up to the other's survival. She thus conceives this ethical stance as a form of passivity, both corporeally and temporally. The stance is corporeally passive because one is possessed by the haunting voices of the past as they return in the present and the future. It is temporally passive because one neither rushes towards the future nor dwells melancholically or nostalgically in the past, but instead marks time in the present. Freccero explains that this ethical stance constitutes "a suspension, a waiting, an attending to the world's arrivals, (through in part, its returns) not as a guarantee or security for action in the present, but as the very force from the past that moves us into the future, like Benjamin's angel, blown backward by a storm."[219]

It is through the ethics of haunting that Freccero imagines a common future between the figures of the past and present. She is careful to characterize this common future as "indeterminable," and resists characterizing it with either inevitable triumph or unworkable melancholy. Freccero's desire to walk a fine line between these two orientations toward the future hints at what Heather Love identifies as emblematic of a

[218] See Freccero's chapter "Queer Spectrality," 69-104.
[219] Freccero, 104.

fundamental question within queer studies, namely, the extent to which forms of injury and oppression have shaped its very constitution and continue to inform its future. Love explains that "homosexual identity continues to be understood as a form of damaged or compromised subjectivity" and that "the characteristic forms of gay freedom are produced in response to this history."[220] This duality, she argues, is "the central turn" of queerness, which structures the subjectivities of individual queers, as well as the methodological drives of queer studies. She continues, "Although many queer critics take exception to the idea of a linear, triumphalist view of history, we are in practice deeply committed to the notion of progress; despite our reservations, we just cannot stop dreaming of a better life for queer people."[221] Love argues that these dreams of betterment tend to minimize the forms of damage and loss that constitute queerness in the first place. The move towards progress often includes the desire to recuperate the past, to form a community with queer figures from other times as a way of constructing a queer history.[222]

As a corrective to this recuperative tendency, Love reads queer figures from the past, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century specifically, who resist these efforts, who turn away from the future, and who remain indifferent to our present desires

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[220] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward*: *Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2-3.
[221] Love, 2-3.
[222] Freeman makes a similar observation in her introduction to the special issue on queer temporalities in *GLQ*. She writes, "While origin stores have been critiqued for quite some time, fewer critics have questioned the progressivist doctrine of the improved tomorrow" (165). She does point out some notable exceptions. Nguyen Tan Hoang exposes the limitations imposed by the "homonormative timeline," which prescribes the ideal moment during which a queer individual "should" come out or find a long-term partner. In addition, Judith Halberstam and José E. Muñoz critique heteronormative understandings of utopia. Arguably the most controversial queer critic of the future is Lee Edelman, whose work I will discuss in more detail below.

to integrate them into a better tomorrow. Following the lead of these figures, Love writes, "Rather than disavowing the history of marginalization and abjection, I suggest we embrace it, exploring the ways it continues to structure queer existence in the present."[223] This embrace is politically necessary given the continued existence of homophobia and other normative paradigms that persistently oppress queer individuals and communities. For Love, to embrace the history of marginalization is not necessarily to give up on "political hope," but she is wary of its seductive promise, writing that hope "achieved at the expense of the past cannot serve the future. The politics of optimism diminishes the suffering of queer historical subjects; at the same time, it blinds us to the continuities between past and present."[224] Thus, although Love reads figures who turn away from their futures, she does not reject the future outright.[225]

Whereas Love leaves open the possibility of an orientation towards the future that would not attempt to overcome the past's constitutive damage, Lee Edelman argues that any concession to the future is essentially anti-queer.[226] For Edelman, any promise, possibility, or hope for the future, however ambivalent and qualified, constitutes a capitulation to an all-encompassing ideology. This totalizing ideology, which Edelman

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[223] Love, 29.
[224] Love, 29.
[225] Like Freccero, Love cites Benjamin's angel as a figure emblematic of this complicated stance, noting how the angel is blown backwards into the future as she surveys the ruins of history. Another important figure for Love is Lot's wife, who turns into a pillar of salt after turning back when fleeing the city of Sodom. "By refusing the destiny that God offers her, Lot's wife is cut off from her family and from the future. In turning back toward this lost world, she herself is lost: she becomes a monument to destruction, and emblem of eternal regret" (5).
[226] On the divergence between her project and Edelman's, Love writes, "Although I share a deep skepticism with Edelman about political appeals to the future, I do not follow him in calling for a voiding of the future. Several of the texts that I consider evince ambivalent attitudes toward the future, but very few are marked by the blank refusals that Edelman describes. I am more interested in the turn to the past than I am in the refusal of the future itself, and this concern puts me into closer dialogue with critics working on shame, melancholia, depression, and pathos—the experience of failure rather than negativity itself" (23).

terms "reproductive futurism," casts the figure of the Child as the bearer of the social good, and the figure of the Queer as its nemesis. The figure of the Child and of the Queer should not be confused with actual children and queers, but rather these designations operate as categories within the ideology that Edelman elaborates and critiques.[227] The Queer figure threatens to corrupt the Child figure, whose innocence and purity society must strive vigilantly to protect. Given that the Child represents the guarantor of society's future, the Queer menaces this future, representing all that would thwart its realization.[228]

Racine's final plays, the biblical tragedies *Esther* and *Athalie*, stage a Queer threat to the Child, and thus to society. In both dramas, the need to protect the Child's innocence in order to secure social continuity drives the plot forward to its end. In both cases, child-like innocence is protected against forces of corruption. Racine's dramas would thus seem to uphold the cultural imperatives of reproductive futurism that Edelman outlines. Indeed, *Esther* and *Athalie* do not at first seem to be likely sites of disruption, queer or otherwise. Commissioned by Louis XIV's wife Madame de Maintenon and performed by pious young women at a school run by Madame de Maintenon in the village of Saint-Cyr, these dramas seem consonant with the Christian virtues that their composition and performance extol.[229] Furthermore, both tragedies close

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[227] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Following Edelman's convention, I capitalize Queer and Child when discussing categories within the ideology of reproductive futurism.

[228] See in particular Edelman's first chapter, "The Future is Kid Stuff," *No Future,* 1-31.

[229] Saint-Cyr is located about four kilometers west of Versailles. Madame de Maintenon established the school for young women between the ages of 8 and 18 from noble families that had lost their fortune. She ran the school with a group of nuns, the *Dames de Saint Louis.* In a subsequent section on the performance history of *Esther*, I discuss in some detail the pedagogical aims of the school and the place of Racine's drama within the curriculum.

with spectacular affirmations of the presence and power of the Judeo-Christian God.[230] In both dramas, the denouement thus suggests obedience rather than disruption. If we switch our emphasis from the narrative structure in *Esther* and *Athalie* to their dramatic structure, however, a different temporality emerges, one that makes the stand-off between apparent virtue and vice, or between the Child and the Queer, less straightforward. Shifting towards dramatic structure allows us to complicate Edelman's formulation, and to imagine possibilities for a queer futurity that disrupts the totality of reproductive futurism.

Imagining these possibilities is crucial, given the need for queer communities to enact their own forms of persistence. This chapter employs as capacious a definition of a "queer community" as possible, acknowledging both the specific relationship that this term has to communities formed around non-normative genders and sexualities, as well as its association with a set of stylistic and critical practices that inform modes of oppositional politics more broadly. By studying forms of persistence that emerge through a kind of queer futurity, this chapter offers a critique of Edelman's delimitation of the Queer's disruptive force, as well as of the political consequences that this delimitation suggests.[231]

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[230] Lucien Goldmann distinguishes *Esther* and *Athalie* from Racine's other tragedies, citing their explicit affirmation of divine power. Whereas Racine's other dramas examine man's crisis in the apparent absence of God, in the biblical dramas, this crisis is resolved by signs of God's will and protection (440-46).

[231] On this point, I join several others who have critiqued Edelman's rejection of Queer survival or politics. For example, Leo Bersani writes on the back-jacket of the paperback edition of *No Future*, "Edelman's extraordinary text is so powerful that we could perhaps reproach him only for not spelling out the mode in which we might survive our necessity to assent to his argument." The need to survive, the importance of the future, the necessity of some degree of political hope, are frequent "goods" marshaled in critiques of Edelman. There is a marked distinction between how persuasive the diagnostic element of his work is in spelling out the ubiquity of reproductive futurism and the force of this ideology's pull, and how

Edelman maintains that reproductive futurism's correspondence with the Symbolic Order permits it to set the scope of politics.[232] In other words, reproductive futurism is not a political ideology, but *the* political ideology. Thus, any political platform or policy conceived by queer activists will inevitably serve the ends of this system.[233] Queer figures are thus condemned to serve reproductive futurism's end, even as they are understood as a threat to these ends. For Edelman, the search for rights and protections (including the right to participate in the protection of the nation) constitutes a devotion to the Child. Regardless of the relationship of actual lesbian and gay people toward children (their own or others'), reproductive futurism unrelentingly casts them negatively as menacing figures who corrupt the Child, and thus threaten the collective future.

Edelman argues that the Queer figure's most effective oppositional strategy is to inhabit the negative position that reproductive futurism ascribes to it. If all politics is future-oriented and Child-invested, the only "political stance" open to the Queer constitutes a rejection of the future. The promise of a better life in the future is merely an assurance that the future will be a repetition of the past and present, as society continually reproduces itself. Notably, although Edelman characterizes the Queer rejection of the future as an "oppositional political stance" he does not offer up a platform or policies because to do so would be to reinvest in the future. He instead understands this stance as

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unsatisfying and/or troubling the proscriptive element of his work is to many of his critics. See, for example, the roundtable discussion with Robert Caserio, Tim Dean, Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," *PMLA* 121.3 (2006): 819-36. For a trenchant exploration of a broader tendency in queer studies to eschew historical teleology, which includes a discussion of Edelman's work, see Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA* 128.1 (2013): 21-39.

[232] John Brenkman critiques what he sees as an untenable equivalency between the psychological and political levels of Edelman's argument. See his "Queer Post-Politics," *Narrative* 10.2 (2002): 174-80.

[233] Edelman, *No Future,* 13.

the object of "an impossible project of imagining." It is thus a stance without content, an empty position that cannot be manipulated towards a goal.[234]

For Edelman, it is the radical negativity in this Queer refusal of politics that grounds any possible disruption of reproductive futurism. In contrast, my reading of Racine's biblical dramas locates the Queer's potential disruption in a futurity that exceeds reproductive futurism's bounds. This futurity is excessive, because instead of patiently waiting its turn, coming after the past and the present in chronological order, it barges in impatiently and bends this order. Taking Edelman's opposition of the Child and the Queer as a point of departure, this chapter demonstrates how *Esther* and *Athalie* ultimately complicate this opposition in ways that suggest a powerful form of persistence. In the sections that follow, I first examine the reception and performance history of *Esther,* exploring the dynamics of innocence and corruption that occupy the drama and its initial presentation at Saint-Cyr. I then turn to *Athalie* in order to bring more fully into relief how corrupt attachments and affiliations create doubt about the savior's purity.

Performing *Esther,* Corrupting Innocence

The first performances of *Esther* took place during the winter of 1689 at *La maison royale de St. Louis,* a boarding school for girls located in the village of Saint-Cyr. Run by Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's second wife, the school at Saint-Cyr received students from noble families whose fortunes had dwindled, and the school functioned in particular as a place of education and refuge for the daughters of military

[234] Edelman, *No Future,* 26.

officers who had died or who had lost a great deal of money through their service to the nation. An official genealogist verified prospective students' noble birth in order to ensure that they came from worthy families.[235] Once admitted, most of the girls entered the school at Saint-Cyr between the ages of seven and twelve, and remained until their twentieth birthday, at which point they either married or entered convents. Madame de Maintenon devised an educational program specifically befitting these young charges, writing that given their fathers' service to the nation, they should be raised "dans les principes d'une veritable et solide piété, et [recevoir] toutes les instructions qui peuvent convenir à leur naissance et à leur sexe."[236]

To further these goals, Madame de Maintenon asked Racine to write a piece for the girls to perform, a request that resulted in *Esther*. Relating Madame de Maintenon's wishes in the drama's preface, Racine explains that he was to create "sur quelque sujet de piété et de morale une espèce de poème, où le chant fût mêlé avec le récit, le tout lié par une action qui rendît la chose plus vive et moins capable d'ennuyer."[237] Correspondingly, Racine's dramatic take on the biblical story of Queen Esther includes choral odes, so that the pupils at Saint-Cyr would have plenty of opportunities for song, as well as recitation. Conceived as a means of instructing and entertaining school girls, the initial staging of *Esther* nevertheless benefited from relatively high production values. Jean-Baptiste Moreau, *maître de musique de la chambre du roi*, composed the music. The girls wore

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[235] See AchilleTaphanel, *Le Théâtre de Saint Cyr* (Paris: Baudry, 1876), 3-4.
[236] Quoted in Taphanel, 4. On the place of Madame de Maintenon's curriculum at Saint Cyr within wider seventeenth-century debates on educating women, see Hélène Jacquemin, *Livres et jeunes filles nobles à Saint-Cyr (1686-1793)* (Paris: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 2007).
[237] Racine, "Préface," *Esther*, 29.

beautiful costumes, and lavish sets created by Jean Berain adorned the room off their dormitories that served as a theater.[238] While in development, the entire endeavor enjoyed the support and attention from Louis XIV, and the king immediately endorsed the end result at the first performance on January 26, 1689. Other illustrious attendees at this initial performance included a select group of nobles and high ranking religious and literary figures. Invitations to attend subsequent performances quickly became highly sought after within noble circles.[239]

Although highly popular in this initial context, *Esther* has not the topped the lists of Racine's greatest dramatic achievements. It is possible that his self-professed dutiful acquiescence to Madame de Maintenon's request for "une espèce de poème" contributed to this critical reception. In any event, *Esther* initially seemed to be a straightforward expression of piety with little of the moral complexity that Racine's other work displayed. This tendency to "sacralize" *Esther* persisted well into the twentieth century, with Racine's mention of Madame de Maintenon's explicitly pious commission often operating as an interpretive last word.[240] Even setting aside the intentions of Racine and his benefactor, the drama does seem on one level to beg this interpretation, especially when one considers the opening monologue, during which a personified La Piété addresses the audience, lauds Louis XIV, and endorses the pious curriculum at St. Cyr:

Du séjour bienheureux de la Divinité

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[238] For extensive detail on the production and its budget, see Taphanel.
[239] Taphanel, 59, 81-89.
[240] Richard Scholar notes this tendency in "'Je ne sais quelle grâce': Esther before Assuérus," *French Studies* 63.3 (2002): 317-27. Scholar explains that the "tendency to 'sacralize' *Esther* unites hostile critics who dismiss the play as simplistic, with those who praise its simplicity" (318).

Je descends dans ce lieu, par la Grâce habité.

L'Innocence s'y plaît, ma compagne éternelle,

Et n'a point sous les cieux d'asile plus fidèle (1-4).

La Piété frames the drama by casting Saint-Cyr as a fitting location to stage the story of Esther, deeming the school worthy of her presence, as well as that of l'Innocence (also personified). It is with the blessings of these two sanctified visitors that the drama unfolds. These blessings have no doubt contributed to the "sacralization" of *Esther*.

To understand Racine's drama as a simple expression of piety is to ignore the inherent contradictions in the text itself, as scholars have more recently pointed out. Richard Scholar explains that the biblical story of Esther contains two different explanations for King Assuérus' favorable reaction to Esther's revelation. One, the Greek version, cites divine intervention and suggests that the faith and prayers of Esther and her people made this providential outcome possible. In contrast, the Hebrew version emphasizes a cycle of vengeance and retribution, explaining the transformation in the Jews' social status as but another revolution of this cycle. Racine's drama, Scholar argues, incorporates elements from both versions and thus presents conflicting notions of grace and providence. Whereas in the Greek account all will is God's will, the Hebrew account makes room for politics. John Campbell argues that the political dimension of the drama should not be decoupled from its presentation of piety and innocence. In a reading that dovetails with Scholar's work on the two books of Esther, Campbell notes how many of the drama's plot points work as either miraculous or mortally calculated. For example, King Assuérus' fortunate selection of Esther as his bride from scores of other candidates

could be the work of Mardochée, her uncle, or of God.[241] Viewed in this light, Esther's exceptionality is manmade as well as divine; it is political as well as pure.[242] Whatever its cause, Assuérus' attachment to Esther has political effects. As we have seen, faced with the incongruity of Esther's apparent purity and the impurity of her Jewish parentage, the king resolves the problem by recasting Jewishness. A certain political malleability is required to preserve the consistency in Esther's character.

How does this less "sacralized" interpretation of *Esther* relate to our understanding of its first performers? After all, the drama itself sets up a kind of mutual correspondence between Esther's character and the institutional character of St. Cyr, through La Piété's praise for both. And the connections between them extend beyond the prologue. In Act I, scene 1, Esther explains to her confidante Élise that she has attempted to assuage her longing for Zion (Sion) by employing a coterie of Jewish handmaidens as her attendants.[243]

> Cependant mon amour pour notre nation
>
> A rempli ce palais de filles de Sion,
>
> Jeunes et tendres fleurs, par le sort agitées,

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[241] See John Campbell, "The Politics of Esther," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 31.1 (2009): 25-35, as well as "The Metamorphoses of Innocence in Racine's *Esther*," *French Seventeenth-Century Literature; Influences and Transformations; Essays in Honor of Christopher J. Gossip* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009): 57-74. Of course, Mardochée could also be thought of as an agent of God, an interpretation that would narrow the space between these two perspectives.

[242] As Campbell points out, to underscore the drama's political dimension is not to suggest (as some have) that *Esther* is a *drame à clef* that might slyly comment on the political and social machinations of Louis XIV and his inner circle ("The Politics of Esther," 27).

[243] This group of women includes Élise, a character whom Racine invents. The drama opens with a recognition scene between Esther and Élise. Esther: "Est-ce toi, chère Élise? O jour trois fois heureux! / Que béni soit le ciel qui te rend à mes vœux, / Toi qui de Benjamin comme moi descendue, / Fus de mes premiers ans la compagne assidue" (I, i, 1-4).

Sous un ciel étranger comme moi transplantées,

Dans un lieu séparé de profanes témoins,

Je mets à les transformer mon étude et mes soins; (I, i, 101-106)

It is possible to read these lines in reference to Madame de Maintenon's conception of Saint-Cyr as a place of piety, removed from the more worldly interests of Versailles, and society more broadly. The correspondence in ethos between *Esther* and Saint-Cyr contributes to the repeated insistence on their suitability for one another. As *Esther* was commissioned expressly for Madame de Maintenon's pupils, performing the play was thought to be a suitable pedagogical activity for them, given that Esther's exemplary character was to be praised and emulated. In turn, the girls at Saint-Cyr were cast as worthy performers of Esther's story, given the virtue attributed to them as Madame de Maintenon's charges. The school girls' presumptive virtue contributed to the drama's popularity, although its favorable reception can also be explained by the social dynamics of the court. Given that the royal couple commissioned, funded, and enjoyed *Esther*, it is not surprising that many nobles coveted admittance and responded favorably to the drama once admitted.

However calculated or sincere they were (and we will never really know), responses to performances of *Esther* consistently praise the girls for their expression of innocence and their ability to move the audience.[244] And yet, as the performances continued, these two accomplishments strained against one another. *Esther's* effectiveness as a work of drama, which depended on the virtue of its performers, also

[244] Taphanel, 81-9.

threatened to destroy their virtue. Despite its pious commission and biblical sources, *Esther* came under fire for succeeding as theater. The temporality of this success offers a glimpse of the disruptive potential of a queer futurity.

After seeing a performance of *Esther,* Madame de Sévigné writes to her daughter, Madame de Grignan, on February 28, 1689, "Tout y est simple, tout y est innocent, tout y est sublime et touchant. Cette fidélité de l'Histoire sainte donne du respect: tous les chants convenables aux paroles qui sont tirées des Psaumes ou de la Sagesse, et mis dans le sujet, sont d'une beauté qu'on ne soutient pas sans larmes."[245] For Sévigné, tears function as the inevitable reaction to such a spectacle.[246] It is impossible not to be moved by the innocence and simplicity with which the girls deliver this biblical story. In this case, the production's need to move its audience remains in balance with its insistence on the innocence of its performers and the sanctity of its subject matter. In order to maintain this innocent quality, the production must be "touchant," but not overly so. In both letters cited here, Sévigné appeals to simplicity as the quality that will ensure that innocence is not performed so powerfully as to contaminate it.

Finding the right balance of innocence and pathos while performing *Esther* proved a difficult task. Before seeing the drama, Sévigné writes several times of her desire to do so, chronicling the artistic and social buzz that surrounded it. These earlier letters serve as an archive of drama's reception as an expression of piety and as a

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[245] See Madame de Sévigné, *Correspondance, vol. 3* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language (Project), 1996. Web.

[246] Tears and sadness are central to Racine's conception of tragedy. See, for example, his preface 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 tout s'y ressente de cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir de la tragédie."

pedagogical exercise. Sévigné's letters also indicate how theatrical prowess threatened the expression of virtue. In one of the letters that predate her viewing of the drama, Sévigné tells of a casting change that speaks to the ways in which the drama's various social and institutional functions sometimes strained against each other.[247] On February 11, 1689, she writes to her daughter, "On continuera à représenter *Esther.* Madame de Caylus, qui en était la Champmeslé, ne joue plus: elle faisait trop bien, elle était trop touchante; on ne veut plus que la simplicité toute pure de ces petits âmes innocentes."[248] Comparing Madame de Caylus (who happened to be Madame de Maintenon's niece) with Marie Champmeslé**,** one of the more renowned interpreters of Racine's profane drama, de Sévigné suggests that the young woman possessed a theatrical talent that had begun to work against the drama's expression of innocence. The ability of these amateur actresses to affect the audience was "trop touchante" and had disrupted the delicate balance required of the production. To perform innocence too effectively, it seems, is to corrupt it.

Achieving the simplicity of innocence while performing *Esther,* however, proved to be a complicated challenge that would continue to plague the performances. Certain clerics raised objections about the entire endeavor, citing the undesirability of theatrical performance in general, as well as invoking the particular risks of presenting young female bodies that possess the power to move, however innocently.[249] Concern about the play's suitability also arose from the order of women running Saint-Cyr, the *dames de*

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[247] De Sévigné's letters appear often in accounts of the play's reception. Taphanel, for example, devotes a chapter to "Madame de Sévigné à Saint-Cyr," 91-105.
[248] De Sévigné, *Correspondance, vol .3.*
[249]Taphanel, 110-11.

Saint Louis, as well as from Madame de Maintenon herself. A madame de Pérou, who served as the group's annalist, recounts that after the first few performances, the *dames de Louis* mostly abstained from attending, finding their time better served in prayer or other devotional activities. Her accounting of the *dames'* preferences should not, however, be interpreted as a wholesale rejection of the girls' theatrical activities. On the country, she characterizes performances of *Esther* as a pleasure, but an innocent one. Indeed, the performance remains innocent enough that those who do attend "étoient bien plus occupées de sa présence [la présence de Dieu] que tout ce qui s'offroit à leurs yeux."[250] According to Pérou, the spectacle remained innocent precisely because its powers of distraction could be avoided or resisted.

Eventually, however, the performances did become a major distraction if not to the *dames'* devotion, then to the girls' instruction, not only because these performances demanded considerable time and energy, but because girls' attraction to performing and the attention the play afforded them began to affect their comportment. The *dames de Saint Louis* complained that the girls "devinrent fières, dédaigneuses, hautaines, peu dociles." For her part, Madame de Maintenon had trouble disciplining them and coaxing them to do their lessons. Intended as a tool to serve the school's pedagogical aims, *Esther* became an obstacle to attaining them. As a result, Madame de Maintenon reduced the frequency of their performances and more tightly limited their audience.

The story of Esther is the story of an innocence redefined, with the benefits of this operation extending to an entire people. The story of *Esther's* performance is a story of

[250] Quoted in Taphanel, 113.

an innocence that seems always on the verge of being lost, with the potential for its contamination always looming on the horizon and drawing near. The initial performance history of *Esther* thus reads like a series of measures undertaken to protect virtue and ward off its corruption. By some accounts, Madame de Maintenon's commission of the biblical drama was itself a corrective, because her pupils had responded too strongly to profane dramas such as Racine's *Andromaque.*[251] Once performances of *Esther* were underway, Madame de Caylus was so convincing an actress that she threatened the production's innocent simplicity. The performances were so successful that they reportedly seduced men and inspired clerical condemnation. The girls were collectively so taken with performing that they not only missed its pedagogical value, but also jeopardized the wider curriculum at St. Cyr. This series of correctives suggests a need to reign in an activity with a powerful potential. The drama's capacity for instruction was vast, and yet it repeatedly exceeded its initial intentions.

The persistence of this excess and the consistency with which the performances of *Esther* overrun their goals suggest something counterintuitive about the temporality of contagion. We tend to think about efforts to stem contagion as aimed at stopping something that has started, as attempts to contain a menace that threatens the future. The measures taken at Saint-Cyr to contain the frivolity and idleness engendered by theatrical performances seem to operate according to this timeline, with the past, present, and future existing in linear succession. While contagion may spread in succession, however, the

[251] The stories of the girls' over-enthusiastic response to *Andromaque* may be apocryphal. Taphanel writes about them (32-34), citing Madame de Caylus' own memoir, a source that Campbell calls somewhat into question on this point ("The Metamorphoses of Innocence in *Esther,*" 59).

fears that accompany it possess a different temporality. The menace presented by infectious performances of *Esther* might be thought of as simultaneously originary and of the future. Efforts to contain this menace work as prophylactics as well as correctives. These measures attempt to address that which is to come, as well as that which has occurred, binding together future and past in the concerns of the present. The repeated assertions of the girls' innocence, coupled with the often expressed need to protect their virtue, suggest that the threat of contamination is a threat of the future, a future that has already begun.

Athalie and ironic futurity

It is the public disclosure of the girls' virtue that threats to corrupt them, much like the revelation of Esther's Jewishness initially threats her husband's perception of her purity. Whereas King Assuérus shifts the valence of Esther's heritage by proclaiming the Jews a favored people, the corrupting influence of the girls' performance undergoes no such reversal in fortune. Instead of being positively revalorized, the performances end. A few years later, however, Madame de Maintenon commissioned another biblical drama from Racine. Conceived as a corrective to the excesses of *Esther,* the production of *Athalie* boasted no elaborate sets or costumes. Instead, the girls recited Racine's lines and sang to Moreau's music wearing their typical school uniforms during the first performance in 1691 and the few performances that followed.[252] Although Louis XIV and several dignitaries attended these recitations, and rumors circulated that as a tragedy

[252] Taphanel, 108.

Athalie was just as beautiful and well-constructed as *Esther*, Racine's second biblical tragedy did not make nearly as much of a splash on the theatrical and social scenes. Thus, concerns about the suitability of the girls' performance, and about the theater's corrupting influence on their innocence and piety did not circulate the way they had during performances of *Esther*. Such concerns instead reside at the heart of the drama itself. Centering on the need to protect an innocent child, *Athalie* stages an anxiety about the corruption of virtue. Like that of the girls performing *Esther,* the nature of this child's innocence comes across simultaneously as pure and incorruptible, in danger of being corrupted, and already corrupted.

Like *Esther, Athalie* raises concern about the future of the Jewish people. The drama opens seven years into the reign of Athalie, an apostate queen who has turned away from the Jewish temple and welcomed the prophets of Baal into the kingdom of Judah. In the first lines, Abner, an officer of Athalie's court who has nonetheless retained ties with the temple, laments that the queen's pagan idolatry has also led many of her subjects astray. Set within the temple, the drama takes place on Pentecost, the day commemorating the Hebrew God's communication of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai.[253] The setting brings the people's rejection of the temple into particularly sharp relief. Speaking to the temple's high priest, Abner notes that whereas Pentecost used to be celebrated with elaborate decorations, lavish offerings, and an impatient crowd who would throng at the temple gates, this is no longer the case: "L'audace d'une Femme

[253] Pentecost is also a Christian liturgical feast day, commemorating the "birth" of the Church.

arrêtant ce concours / En des jours ténébreux a changé ces beaux jours" (I, i, 13-15).[254] Marking a temporal shift from "des beaux jours" to "des jours ténébreux," Athalie's reign not only casts a shadow over the current celebrations but also impinges on the future.

There appears to be no alternative to Athalie's rule—no possibility of reversing this temporal shift—because she has killed all of her descendants as an act of vengeance and as a means of assuring that her rule will continue unopposed. What is more, Athalie's massacre of her grandchildren seems to engender a crisis in which the truth of prophesy threatens to founder. Although it was foretold that the Messiah would be born from the House of David, this house now seems without descendants. And although Joad, the high priest, continues to express faith that Athalie will one day be challenged and that prophetic truth will be fulfilled, Abner questions how this future promise could possibly be realized. The irony in this scene is that Joad knows that one of Athalie's grandchildren lives, but withholds this information as a way of measuring Abner's loyalty. Not only does this child, who is named Joas, live, but he has been raised in secret within the temple by Joad and his wife, Josabet, who saved him from Athalie's massacre. Masking the child's identity for years, the high priest has carefully planned to reveal that an heir to Athalie lives in order to overthrow her.

The tragedy thus seems to announce a crisis of succession. How will the temple proceed without a legitimate heir to Athalie's throne? And yet the dramatic interest quickly moves away from a question of how to proceed given Joas' apparent death to a concern about how to communicate the news that he lives. For Josabet, there is more risk

[254] Jean Racine, *Athalie,* ed. Georges Forestier (Paris: Gallimard, 2001). All citations of *Athalie* are from this edition.

than reward in openly recognizing Joas. When the high priest announces that the moment for revelation approaches, she responds:

> Doutez-vous qu'Athalie, au premier bruit semé
> Qu'un fils d'Ochosias est ici renfermé,
> De ses fiers Étrangers assemblant les cohortes,
> N'environne le Temple et n'en brise les portes? (I, ii, 217-20)

In these lines, "semé" belongs most clearly to the register of spreading the word, of broadcasting news. And yet we might also note this word's more corporeal connotations, for the verb *semer* pertains not only to the dissemination of information, but also to the sowing of seed, a register associated with reproduction and regeneration.[255] As Josabet's worries suggest, the drama closely intertwines these two registers, tying the suspense about the news that Joas lives with the suspense about what kind of seed he has inherited. After all, as many readers of the drama have pointed out, it is Joas' status as Athalie's grandchild that affords him a legitimate claim to the throne, but this birthright also inspires worry that he might take after his grandmother and similarly turn against the temple.[256]

It is the concern about intergenerational influence that makes Racine's tragedy an ideal site from which to interrogate Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism, which insists that the Child is pure and that the Queer figure threatens to corrupt him. In

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[255] This word also has an important agricultural valence, which the drama frequently invokes. For example, in Act I, Abner figures Joas' blood as having the power to rejuvenate the House of David, which Abner describes as a dry tree in need of nourishment. The play also includes many references to fecundity and harvesting, which Ralph Albanese points out in "Sacred Space and Ironic Polarities in *Athalie,*" *Intersections*, ed. Faith E. Beasley and Kathleen Wine (Tübingen: Narr, 2005): 109-20.

[256] See Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963) and Mitchell Greenberg, *Racine: From Ancient Myth to Tragic Modernity*.

Edelman's formulation, the figures of Child and Queer are diametrically opposed as well as fundamentally interdependent, for within reproductive futurism's dialectic the Queer becomes that which this all-encompassing ideology works against in order to propel itself forward into the future. In order to counter reproductive futurism's pull, Edelman suggests that the Queer figure should embrace its own negativity and reject both the future and politics.

Athalie exemplifies and complicates Edelman's equation of futurism with politics as such. Racine's final tragedy stages a Queer figure—Athalie—who threatens to corrupt the innocence and purity of a Child—Joas—whose protection will ensure a triumphant repetition of the future in the past, which in this case is the fulfillment of divine prophesy and the recuperation of the line of descendants between King David and Christ. And yet the temporality of Joas' relationship to Athalie nuances our understanding of the Child's relationship to the Queer and elaborates a politics of futurity not included in Edelman's formulation. Before examining how Racine's drama complicates this formulation, it is first necessary to consider how Edelman's work brings into relief the particular temporality of Athalie's relationship to her progeny.

By turning against the temple, and by welcoming the prophets of Baal, Athalie threatens the future fulfillment of prophesy. What is more, the massacre of her descendants literalizes the Queer threat to the Child. For Edelman, within the strictures of reproductive futurism, queerness represents not just any threatening force, but the death drive itself. Through its refusal to repeat the Queer thwarts society's self-same

reproduction, because its redundant or excessive desire does not produce anything. Edelman writes that queerness is:

> Empty, excessive, and irreducible, it designates the letter, the formal element, the lifeless machinery responsible for animating the "spirit" of futurity. And as such, as a name for the death drive that always informs the Symbolic order, it also names the jouissance forbidden by, but permeating the Symbolic order itself.[257]

Incarnating the death drive, the Queer marks the excess that reproductive futurism must overcome in order to perpetuate itself and continue to produce meaning.

Although Athalie kills her grandchildren, it is not only, and perhaps not even principally this murderous act that makes her a Queer figure, but rather the power that the act affords her, a power characterized as excessive and horrific. Displaying a form of excess desire, namely a political ambition untethered to prophesy that is deemed out-of bounds and unseemly, she defies a theological and political logic that requires the future to function as a repetition of the past. A mark of this excess is the frequent use of adjectives such as "superbe"—which in this context means proud, haughty, or arrogant—to describe her. Although this excess constitutes a rejection of a divinely authorized vision of the future, it does not represent a rejection of the future as such. Indeed, to her list of excesses we might add the risk that she will live into the future, beyond her more appropriate ends. Juliette Cherbuliez suggests that "Athalie's own living is defined by the deaths that it has exceeded: the description of her bloody acts of murder, the accounts of her mother Jezebel's horrific death, her own relating of her dreams are all excessive

[257] Edelman, *No Future,* 27.

demonstrations that she has lived *beyond* others."[258] The fact that Athalie "lives too long," as Cherbuliez puts it, contributes to her queerness. Instead of ceding to the demands of reproductive futurism, she attempts to survive into the future even while negating its terms.

But Athalie does not survive forever. Her life does not exceed the time of the play, as it is her assassination that brings the drama to an end, allowing for Joas' coronation and a restoration of the future as prophesied. Thus, whereas she can be read as a Queer figure acting in opposition to reproductive futurism's pull, the play's denouement suggests an ultimate triumph of this inevitable pull. And yet to read the play in this way is to ignore how it presents her relationship to Joas, the child whose innocence the temple must protect, and on whose survival providence depends. As we have seen, Joas functions as a Messiah-like figure who will console his people because his innocence and birth will allow him to triumph over Athalie. Although these two qualities, his "innocence" and his "naissance," are often lauded together, their link is far from straightforward, for Joas' birth is precisely that which both legitimizes him as a savior and ties him to Athalie's corrupting lineage.

Whatever duality Joas seems to possess, his remarkable receptivity to the laws of God bodes well for his role as a savoir. As part of his temple education he must copy these laws by hand, a task which he completes dutifully.[259] Athalie herself marvels at

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[258] Juliette Cherbuliez, "La Survie d'Athalie," Presentation to the Society for Interdisciplinary French Seventeenth-Century Studies (2011): 3.

[259] In the drama's preface, Racine defends himself against those who might accuse him of straying from verisimilitude by portraying a young boy of seven or eight who would complete this solemn task so well,

Joas' remarkable piety. Drawn to the temple after having a dream in which an unknown child kills her, Athalie encounters Joas, although she does not know he is Joas. (Nor, for that matter, does he. At this point in the drama, Joas is still unaware of his parentage.) When Athalie asks him how he passes the time, he responds with a list of pious chores and prayers. Athalie's reaction to this profession of piety suggests that her threat to the temple's future stems not only from her attempt to kill her offspring, but also from her attempt to influence the temple's surviving savior: she invites Joas to come live in her palace, assuring him that he may continue to pray to his God.[260]

Although Joas refuses Athalie's invitation, the incident makes the bond between them visible. Cherbuliez argues that Athalie acts as an ideal spectator to Joas; her sensitivity towards him communicates to the audience that he is deserving of pity and compassion.[261] Athalie's sensitivity to Joas also raises the frightening possibility that he might be susceptible to her. That Athalie should be so taken with Joas also suggests that there is something within him other than his apparent piety, something that would mark his affiliation with Athalie rather than his difference from her.

Joas will indeed manifest this "something other," for he will later turn away from the temple and murder the high priest's son Zacharie, with whom he has been raised as a brother. But Joas' murderous act takes place after the time of Racine's drama and after the death of Athalie. The high priest speaks the drama's last words, which explain

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noting that this practice was common in Jewish tradition and holding up the young Dauphin of France as an example of the real possibility of extraordinary piety and studiousness (35).

[260] As Albanese explains, just as the drama opposes Athalie and the high priest, so it contrasts their respective domains. Where the temple is a space of absolute authority and divine truth, the palace is a place of permissiveness and corruption (109-11).

[261] Cherbuliez, 7.

Athalie's downfall as comeuppance for her transgressions and reassert the temple's power over Joas, its ideal student:

> Par cette fin terrible, et due à ses forfaits,
> Apprenez, Roi des Juifs, et n'oubliez jamais,
> Que les Rois dans le Ciel ont un Juge sévère,
> L'Innocence un Vengeur, et l'Orphelin un Père (V, vii, 1813-16).

If these final lines make it possible to read the tragedy as a reassertion of religious authority, they also suggest a different reading, one that accounts for the anxiety surrounding Joas' proclaimed innocence. Beginning at the end, we might read the high priest's command to Joas "n'oubliez jamais" as a sign of this anxiety, for the need make such a command expresses a concern that it will not be followed.

The high priest himself expresses this concern earlier in the drama, in Act III, scene vii, when he foretells that Joas will prove to be both a savior and a menace to his people, relating a vision of a priest—Zacharie—slain in the temple. Later, in Act IV, scene 2, Joad speaks to Joas directly of a dangerous future, emphasizing the role that political necessity will have on the eventual corruption of the child's innocence:

> De l'absolu pouvoir vous ignorez l'ivresse,
> Et des lâches Flatteurs la voix enchanteresse.
> Bientôt ils vous diront, que les plus saintes Lois,
> Maîtresses du vil peuple, obéissent aux Rois,
> Qu'un Roi n'a d'autre frein que sa volonté même;
> Qu'il doit immoler tout à sa grandeur suprême;

Qu'aux larmes, au travail le Peuple est condamné,

Et d'un sceptre de fer veut être gouverné;

Que s'il n'est opprimé, tôt ou tard il opprime.

Ainsi de piège en piège, et d'abîme en abîme,

Corrompant de vos mœurs l'aimable pureté,

Ils vous feront enfin haïr la Vérité,

Vous peindront la vertu sous une affreuse image

Hélas! ils ont des Rois égaré le plus sage (IV, iii, 1388-1402).

In Joad's prophesy, it is the pressures of politics divorced from virtue—as presented by imagined flatterers who may captivate Joas' attention—that threaten to contaminate Joas and turn him away from his role as savior. Joas is thus caught between two notions of fidelity. On the one hand, his role as spiritual savoir demands that he continue faithfully to uphold divine precepts. On the other, his position as the kingdom's heir renders him responsible for mortal governance. Indeed, what the drama presents as the inevitable possibility that Joas will be corrupted by political contingency further connects him to Athalie, whose permissive politics and will to temporal power brought about her betrayal of the temple. It is thus Athalie's excess of political will and lack of spiritual fidelity that represents a danger to her grandson.

Joad's prophesy is a particularly powerful—and often cited—example of the anxieties surrounding Joas' future.[262] But the drama forecasts the corruption of the child's purity well in advance of this prophesy. In Act 1, Josabet worries that his lineage has

[262] Racine mentions this moment in the drama's preface, assuring his readers that these prophetic verses are taken from the Bible in order to assuage potential concerns about false prophesy on stage (37).

tainted him irreparably, casting doubt on the innocence of his birth. She wonders: **"**Qui sait si cet Enfant par leur crime entraîné / Avec eux en naissant ne fut pas condamné?" (I, ii, 237-38). From beginning to end, the drama foreshadows Joas' turning away from the temple, even as it heralds him as the innocent child whose birthright will allow for a successful challenge to Athalie's rule.[263] Joas' duality stands as one set of what Ralph Albanese identifies as the drama's "ironic polarities."[264] It would be tempting to narrativize these polarities, with Joas' innocence characterizing the play's present, and his corruption polluting its future. But to do so would be to miss how thoroughly the drama entangles these two "poles."

Joas loses his innocence in a future that occurs beyond the time of the episode that the play performs, but concern about this loss permeates the drama's present. The "ironic polarities" that characterize Joas thus occur simultaneously, interrupting each other. This mutual interruption occurs throughout the drama, but one of its most striking forms can be found in the choral odes that conclude the first two acts. These odes seem to be songs of praise and piety. And yet they resonate with Joas' corruption, even while proclaiming his innocence:

Ô bienheureux mille fois
L'Enfant que le Seigneur aime,
Qui de bonne heure entend sa voix,
Et que ce Dieu daigne instruire lui-même!

[263] Racine also acknowledges Joas' eventual rejection of the temple and his murder of Zacharie in his preface (38).
[264] See Albanese, "Sacred Space and Ironic Polarities in *Athalie.*"

Loin du monde élevé, de tous les dons des Cieux

Il est orné dès sa naissance,

Et du Méchant l'abord contagieux

N'altère point son innocence (II, ix, 768-75).

In this passage, which the chorus repeats several times, the rhymes "innocence/naissance" and "cieux/contagieux" produce an irony that undercuts the portrait of Joas it seems to present. His innocence mingles with the ambiguity of his birthright. These oppositions afford the odes an ironic potential, a potential that locates anxieties about Joas' future in the present, and that interrupts the drama's seemingly triumphant denouement, its narrative end.

At this end, Joad wins in his struggle against Athalie. Given that the high priest functions as the highest emissary of the Hebrew God on earth, Joad's victory is a divine victory as well. She rushes into the temple looking for Joas, of whose true identity she has finally been made aware. At Joad's command, a legion of Levite soldiers spring out to overtake her in a spectacular *coup de théâtre* that reinforces the sense of divine triumph. But the end of Athalie's final speech disrupts the finality of this divine triumph. Echoing Joad's own concerns about Joas, Athalie says:

Qu'indocile à ton joug, fatigué de ta Loi,

Fidèle du sang d'Achab, qu'il a reçu de moi,

Conforme à son Aïeul, à son Père semblable,

On verra de David l'héritier détestable

Abolir tes honneurs, profaner ton Autel,

Et venger Athalie, Achab, et Jézabel (V, vi, 1785-90).

Athalie's speech reinforces the anxiety surrounding Joas' character. She warns that the boy's turn from God will take place in the future, but she insists that the cause of this future vengeance has already been transmitted to him, through blood.[265] Athalie's threat of Joas' transgression thus stretches into the future, even as it finds its force in the past. More menacing still is the simultaneity with which Athalie articulates Joas' duality. Her speech contrasts Joas as a descendant of David, with Joas as a descendant of Athalie, Achab, and Jézebel. She contaminates all the markers of a pious Joas under the influence of Joad/God ("ton joug, ta Loi, David, tes honneurs, ton Autel"), foretelling another Joas who both will come into being and already exists. Finally, the three rhymes Loi/moi, son père semblable/l'hériter detestable, and Autel/Jézabel economically telegraph the double legacy that Joas carries at any given moment.

Athalie's final speech thus functions remarkably like the choral odes, although her perception of Joas is diametrically opposed to that of the chorus. What the singing chorus of young girls and the vengefully threatening queen have in common is their communication of the irony surrounding Joas' character, an irony that saturates the entire drama. Joas is both completely innocent and already corrupted. And the simultaneity of this contradiction disrupts the drama's triumphant end. For Paul de Man, the power of irony (as a rhetorical trope) to interrupt narrative resides in its continual turning away from apparent meaning. He writes that "any theory of irony is the undoing, the necessary undoing, of any theory of narrative, when irony is precisely what makes it impossible

[265] For a longer discussion of blood ties in Athalie, as well as in Racine's work more broadly, see Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine.*

ever to achieve a theory of narrative that would be consistent."[266] Racine's drama performs this ironic disruption of its own narrative through its characterization of Joas and his relationship to Athalie.

Returning to Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism – which draws from de Man's work on irony – we might see the play as both affirming this ideology and disrupting it. Whereas for Edelman the dialectic of reproductive futurism functions as a totalizing system pitting the figure of the innocent Child against the figure of the corrupt Queer, Racine's drama stages an innocent child who is never just innocent, largely because the futurity of his crime impinges on his purity in the present.[267]

The futurity of Joas' crime makes up an important part of Athalie's legacy, suggesting that queerness disrupts the future by contaminating what is understood as the Child's purity. This suggestion of an ironic queer futurity that disrupts the narrative of reproductive futurism offers a possibility not explored by Edelman, who argues that because futurism positions the Queer negatively as that which acts against the Child, (and thus against the future), the Queer should embrace this negativity in order to maximize its force as an ironic disruption of politics as such. We might remember that for Edelman, rejecting the future necessitates a rejection of politics because for him, all politics is futurist. And yet Athalie's audacity and her superb ambition, her acceptance of religious plurality and her corrupting influence over Joas, all figure a form of politics that does not

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[266] Paul de Man, "The Concept of Irony," *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. and intro. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 179.

[267] The anxiety surrounding Joas' eventual corruption also points towards the idea of original sin (a past fall from present grace), which was important in Jansenist thought. For more on Racine's relationship to Jansenism and the Port-Royal, see Lucien Goldmann, *Le Dieu caché,* 338-446, as well as Paul Bénichou, *Morales du grand siècle,* 176-209. For a more recent take on original sin in Racine's *Phèdre,* see Simon Critchley, "I Want to Die, I Hate My Life—Phaedra's Malaise," *New Literary History* 35.1 (2004): 17-40.

endorse the repetition of the past in the future, but rather exposes the anxieties and uncertainties inherent in this drive to repeat.

It is through Joas' duality—part of the ambiguous legacy that he inherits from Athalie—that Racine's drama stages a queering of the future rather than a queer rejection of the future. It is precisely the inevitability of the future's pull that produces irony in the tragedy. The politics of futurity that makes Joas a not-so-innocent object of contestation stages a continual turning away, whether from a contagious birthright or from a pious education. What we cannot forget is that Joas' irony is double, because despite his betrayal of the temple, his coronation ultimately *does* link the house of David to Christ. Addressing Joas' murder of Zacharie, Racine acknowledges in his preface that "les Prophètes joignent d'ordinaire les consolations aux menaces."[268] For Racine, the child's double irony fits an understanding of the future as revealed by providential history. Both Racine and Edelman work within temporal systems in which the future constitutes a continual repetition of the past. But whereas Edelman locates the moment of possible resistance in an ironic rejection of the future's terms, Racine's drama suggests that disruption resides precisely in the future's ironic duality, and in the anxiety it produces in the past and present.

Conclusion

Racine's drama brings its considerable historical specificity to bear on discussions of society's compulsion to repeat. For Edelman, the force of futurism derives from its

[268] Racine, "Préface," *Athalie,* 38.

unending repetition of the past in the future, a historical continuity that allows him to detect futurism's operations in cultural objects from Shakespeare's Hamlet (~1600) to Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959).[269] What Edelman's retrospective conferral of historical continuity fails to take into account, however, is the particularity with which a given cultural object, particularly one from a nonmodern period, might articulate an understanding of the future. *Athalie* premiered at historical moment in which, as Reinhart Koselleck has argued, a shift was underway in the dominant mode of future-telling, from one of prophesy and prediction to one of progress.[270] Koselleck explains that Christian prophesy and state-interested prediction, which dominated future-telling until the eighteenth century, are mirror images of each other. Each mode functions as a system whereby the signs of the past dictate the inevitabilities of the future. In contrast, Koselleck writes, "Progress opened up a future that transcended the hitherto predictable, natural space of time and experience and hence—propelled by its own dynamic—provoked new, long-term prognoses."[271]

Athalie does not document the transition from prophesy and prediction to progress. But it does expose the anxieties surrounding the certainty of prophesy. Although this would seem to exclude the play from discussions of modern future-telling,

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[269] Edelman reads *Hamlet* as a drama of reproductive futurism in "Against Survival: Queerness in a Time That's Out of Joint," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.2 (2011): 148-70.

[270] See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past*: *On the Semantics of Historical Time* [1979], ed. and trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). See also Ann T. Delehanty, "God's Hand in History: Racine's Athalie as the End of Salvation Historiography," *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* 28.54 (2001): 155-66; and Fabrice Preyat, "L'influence du 'Petit Concile' de Bossuet sur l'*Athalie* de Racine: ou La Christianisation des mœurs sous Louis XIV entre historiographie juive et française," *Racine et l'Histoire*, ed. and intro. Marie-Claude Canova-Green and Alain Viala (Tübingen: Narr, 2004): 129-63.

[271] Koselleck, *Futures Past,* 22.

it is precisely what makes it relevant. For although Koselleck writes of a transition into modernity based on the inauguration of progress, the rhythms and consequences of the prophetic mode have not been entirely eclipsed. These modes might be productively thought of as operating in tandem. The persistence of the prophetic into modernity may help explain the limitations of a progressive politics (queer or otherwise). Racine's theater provides a dramatic space through which to experience the effects of the prophetic and the difficulty of escaping it. What *Athalie* offers in particular is a perversion of the prophetic by heralding a savior who turns away from piety and truth and toward the corrupting influence of his grandmother. Whichever way he turns, he remains bound to one side of his legacy.

Contemporary discussions of queer temporality tend to consider the future in its modern form, and thus to associate it with notions of progress and change. As Sedgwick suggests through her reference to Esther's "coming out," this conception of time puts enormous pressure on the individual subject to secure her community's future by revalorizing the moral valences placed on her affinities and attachments. In contrast, the temporality proposed by *Athalie* eschews the need to revalorize these attachments. Instead, the drama suggests how forms of attachment influence individual subjects and disrupt the apparent imposition of power. In so doing, the drama suggests a futurity for a life that is presently deemed queer, corrupt, or contagious.

Conclusion

Racine's *Athalie* demonstrates how resistance can outlast sovereignty's ostensible triumph. As we have seen, the drama ends with a spectacular *coup de théâtre* that marks the apostate queen's downfall and the high priest's victory. The reversal of political fortune at the drama's denouement seems to signal the end of resistance and the consolidation of sovereign power. Speaking the final lines, Joad outlines the lessons that Joas should take from his grandmother's defeat:

> Par cette fin terrible, et due à ses forfaits,
> Apprenez, Roi des Juifs, et n'oubliez jamais,
> Que les Rois dans le Ciel ont un Juge sévère,
> L'Innocence un Vengeur, et l'Orphelin un Père (V, vii, 1813-16).

However, as noted in the previous chapter, these lines undermine their own finality. By instructing Joas not to forget that innocence will ultimately triumph and that God is his true parent and protector, the high priest suggests that forgetting is possible. Other verses from the drama's beginning to its end further attenuate this triumphant denouement by intimating that Joas, despite his apparent innocence, has already been corrupted by his lineage and legacy.

Extending the possibility of resistance beyond the drama's end, *Athalie* reiterates the temporality of opposition elaborated by Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée*. As examined in Chapter One, Corneille's drama also ends with the apparent consolidation of sovereign power. In the drama's final lines, César declares that Pompée has been properly put to rest by an official state funeral. Pompée's widow, Cornélie, however, disrupts this

glorious ending by maintaining that Pompée's family and followers will not rest until their leader has been properly avenged. Opposition continues despite the imposition of authority. In *La Mort de Pompée* as well as in many of the other dramas examined in this study, the possibility of resistance is sustained by a refusal to forget the past. Corneille's heroine echoes Garnier's Cornélie when she insists that the loss of Pompée drives her ongoing opposition. In the versions of *Antigone* by Garnier and Rotrou, Antigone's rebellious speech and actions are propelled by attachments that both precede and exceed Créon's rule. In early modern tragedy, the refusal to relinquish the past drives resistance into the future.

Through their poetic structures, stage practices, and dramaturgical potential, the dramas examined in this dissertation elaborate forms of opposition that trouble sovereign efforts to delineate between past and present, between an old order and a new. In so doing, these dramas bring into relief how tragedy commemorates the *droit de résistance*. As the memory of the religious wars receded from public memory and as absolutism became the dominant political theory of the seventeenth century, tragedy refused to forget the *droit de résistance* and remained preoccupied with this concept's questions and concerns. Instead of leaving resistance theory behind, as a past possibility foreclosed, tragedy continued to reimagine its potential.

The dramas in this study underscore in particular how the figure of the intermediary operates as a site through which notions of subjective freedom and collective authority are negotiated and contested. Cornélie, Antigone, Nicomède, Suréna, Esther, and Joas are all characters who make claims (or have claims made about them)

that are based on singular attachments, personal rights, or exceptional prowess. These specific claims do not only advance the interests of an individual character, however, but they also bolster forms of collective protest. Garnier's Cornélie invites the chorus of Roman women to join her in lamentation. Antigone invokes the preferences and powers of the Theban population. Nicomède and Suréna spark forms of collective action. Esther and Joas save the Jews from destruction. What the dramas insist on, however, is that while these individual characters support collective claims and work on behalf of the common good, the reverse is also true. Forms of collective authority subtend and strengthen the claims of individual characters. The Theban people, for example, ratify Antigone's claims. Staged characters and unseen collectives establish Nicomède and Suréna as heroes. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tragedy, the people authorize the intermediary as much as the intermediary authorizes the people. By exploring how individual characters and collectives remain co-implicated in each other's assertions and demands, tragedy works against absolutist attempts to separate the individual subject's private liberty from questions of the public good.

Attending to the *droit de résistance*'s persistence in seventeenth-century tragedy also alerts us to the possibility that this seemingly forgotten right may survive in other genres. Whereas explicit claims to the *droit de résistance* seem to diminish in the aftermath of the religious wars, tragedy suggests how the conceptual framework that underpins these claims continues to find expression, though often in more subtle or vestigial forms. Furthermore, by indicating how resistance theory remains in the seventeenth century, tragedy raises questions about how vestiges of this theoretical

tradition might intersect with eighteenth-century notions of individual liberty and popular sovereignty. What configuration of individual and collective bodies do eighteenth-century conceptions of resistance elaborate? Should these configurations be understood as a continuation of or departure from sixteenth-century resistance theories? What theoretical monuments from the eighteenth-century Revolution's ceremonies, debates, and documents might stand alongside Gilbert Romme's proposed *statue d'insurrection*?

Tragedy's rehearsal of the *droit de résistance* also has implications beyond the early modern period. This rehearsal points toward an alternative to the paradigm that dominates contemporary discussion about the conjunction of human rights and literature. This paradigm takes its roots in the eighteenth century and centers on the ability of novels and narratives to bind autonomous subjects together by fostering sympathy or empathy. Lynn Hunt argues, for example, that descriptions of suffering fictional characters in sentimental novels provoked readers' sympathy and encouraged them to recognize different and distant others as possessing a fundamental dignity and desire for autonomy.[272] Other scholars have suggested that a similar model of literary rights advocacy might be deployed in more contemporary contexts. Richard Rorty, for example, maintains that telling "long, sad, sentimental stories," about the predicaments of those who lack rights is a pragmatic and effective means of advancing their cause.[273] Against such celebratory accounts of readers' sentimental education, critics have questioned whether the production of sympathy or empathy has historically led to recognition of

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[272] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2008), 15-36.
[273] Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality," *The Politics of Human Rights*, ed. Obrad Savić (London: Verso, 1999), 80.

autonomy and the expansion of rights. Lynn Festa points out that eighteenth-century writers such as the abbé Raynal raised concerns about the political powers of sympathy, noting that readers moved to tears were not necessarily moved to political action.[274] As Festa and others have argued, scenes of suffering tend to reinforce the distinctions between those with rights and those without. Despite this criticism, however, what I call the "sentimental model" of literary rights advocacy continues to dominate considerations of the relationship between rights and literature.

Early modern tragedy's exploration of resistance theory complicates this sentimental model and opens up different lines of inquiry about literature's relationship to human rights. As noted, the sentimental model rests upon a notion of individual autonomy and requires sympathy or empathy to create connections between individuals. In contrast, resistance theory calls the very idea of individual autonomy into question by demonstrating how individual subjects are constitutively bound together.[275] By testing

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[274] Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 1-13, 205-32. For a critique of the sentimental model in an American context, see Lauren Berlant's analysis of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (one of Rorty's primary examples) and the book's cultural offspring (e.g. Rodger's and Hammerstein's *The King and I*). Berlant demonstrates that these narratives transform the specific pain and suffering of slavery into a more general sadness. She argues that instead of moving readers and audiences to abolish slavery (or fight its legacies), scenes of Uncle Tom and Eliza move them to cry, "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70.3 (1998): 635-68. Lynn Hunt also acknowledges the "limits of empathy," in *Inventing Human Rights.* She writes that "while modern forms of communication have expanded the means of empathizing with others, they have not been able to ensure that humans will act on that fellow feeling" (209-210). Hunt goes on to explain that the gap between feeling and action has marked discussions about the power of empathy since the eighteenth century, noting that "Late eighteenth-century campaigners against slavery, legal torture, and cruel punishment all highlighted cruelty in their emotionally wrenching narratives. They intended to provoke revulsion, but the arousal of sensations through reading and viewing could not always be carefully channeled" (211).

[275] Susan Maslan has recently called attention to eighteenth-century debates about autonomy as a condition for rights. She notes that dramas by Corneille and Marivaux help expose some of the tensions and contradictions inherent in these debates by foregrounding how notions of liberty, obedience, and service overlapped during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, "'Gotta Serve Somebody': Service; Autonomy; Society," *Comparative Literature Studies* 46.1 (2009): 45-74.

and transforming the *droit de résistance*'s conjunction of subjective liberty and collective authority, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dramas underscore the communal dimensions of rights, even rights that are vested in individual liberty and dignity. Recasting early modern tragedy as a site of the *droit de résistance*'s persistence—rather than as a site of the modern individual's emergence—brings into relief how forms of attachment and belonging may continue to haunt modern notions of autonomy and self-reliance.

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