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'Man in His Native Noblesse'? Chivalry and the Politics of the Nobility in the Tragedies of George Chapman

by

Glen David Mynott

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Summary

In this thesis I argue that the three plays under consideration - *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* - illustrate Chapman's concern with the role of chivalry in England following the debacle of the Essex Rebellion in 1601. My contention is that, for Chapman, the Essex Rebellion exposed the fragility and the inconsistencies of Elizabethan chivalry and the political threat represented by its preoccupation with martial values.

I suggest that in his plays, Chapman sets out to deconstruct the myth of chivalry by exposing it as a romantic concept which is used by the martial nobility as a means of emphasizing their political rights. The values of chivalry - prowess, honour, loyalty, generosity, courtesy and independence - are shown, by the plays, to be incompatible with the political ambitions of the nobility. By associating themselves with this mythical concept of chivalry, political figures come to identify their factions with the values of chivalry. Chapman, I argue, shows how the myth is established and then exposes it for what it is, by portraying his characters as unable to live up to their expected mythical ideals. Chivalry is stripped of its mythical trappings and exposed as militaristic, aggressive and politically motivated.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first, I consider Chapman alongside the Tacitean historians who were connected with the Essex circle in the 1590s and show how, in *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, the dramatist transformed the providentialist narrative of his source into a play with Tacitean connotations, emphasizing the relationship between chivalry and constitutional political theory. In the second chapter I consider Chapman's interest in chivalry and discuss generally the romantic concept of Elizabethan chivalry and its relationship with the political concerns of the nobility. In Chapters Three to Five I discuss Chapman's portrayal of chivalry and its political implications.

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Abbreviations

This thesis employs a series of abbreviations for frequently cited works and periodicals:

CSP Dom	*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series.*
CSP For	*Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series.*
CSP Ven	*Calendar of State Papers, Venetian Series.*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
ELH	*English Literary History*
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
HLQ	*Huntington Library Quarterly*
HMC (Salisbury)	*Historical Manuscripts Commission, no 9 (Salisbury)*, 24 vols (London: HMSO, 1899-1985).
James	Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; repr. 1988)
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JMRS	*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
MRD	*Medieval and Renaissance Drama*
Parrott	*The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Tragedies*, ed. by T. M. Parrott (London: Routledge, 1910).
PMLA	*Periodical of the Modern Language Association of America*
Poems	*The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. by Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (London: Oxford University Press, 1941).
RD	*Renaissance Drama*
RES	*Research in English Studies*
Rites of Knighthhood	Richard C. McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989).
RQ	*Renaissance Quarterly*

SEL	*Studies in English Literature*
Seventeenth Century Letter Book	*A Seventeenth Century Letter-Book: A Facsimilie of Folger MS. V. a. 321*, ed. by A. R. Braunmuller (London: Associated University Presses, 1983).
Stone	Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965)*
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

Introduction
George Chapman and the Chivalric Myth

> The age of chivalry is gone: that of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.[1]

Most of the critical commentary on Chapman's tragedies has perceived the plays in terms of rigidly dichotomized oppositions: virtuous man confronted with a corrupt court; stoical man against active man and the virtuous king opposed by the rebellious subject. When the plays fail to correspond to this rigid pattern, as is often the case, they are written off as poorly structured or inconsistent.[2] A number of critics have considered Chapman's works from a political perspective with some suggesting that they advocate support for absolute monarchy and others claiming that they offer oppositional readings.[3] The problem with these accounts of Chapman's plays is that they fail to take into account the ambiguities and inconsistencies of the political society in which they are set. Jonathan Dollimore has attempted to come to terms with these inconsistencies by writing of a society of 'decentred' men in which power and wealth are the dominant motivating forces.[4] In this account concepts such as good and bad, virtuous and evil, right and wrong are defined by the dominant group. Men and women are judged in terms of a social hierarchy that places emphasis upon birth, power and wealth. As the centre of power and wealth in the increasingly centralized state of Elizabethan and Jacobean England is the court, the relative value of individuals is determined in regard to their relationship with it. The effect is that access to the court and the centre of power becomes the motivating force for those who are excluded whereas the preservation of position and the enhancement of power determines the actions of those already among the political elite.

I wish to argue that this is the world of Chapman's plays and that his fictional characters, on the whole, emulate their human counterparts in the struggle for power and prestige. His plays do not seek to set out moral guidelines, as is often claimed by critics, but to expose the 'decentred' nature of the political establishment. Chapman's plays show us that the political world is governed by the desire to attain or to hold onto power and that one's perception of the dominant values is determined by one's own position within the social hierarchy. It is the politically marginalized who complain about corruption, not specifically because they wish to promote reform but as a means of coming to terms with their own exclusion from the political centre.

Only in recent years have critics begun to see Chapman as a sophisticated commentator on the intricate workings of the political world. Criticism recognizing his contribution to the demystification of power has been very sparse. Indeed, the only critics of note who have considered Chapman in this light are Jonathan Dollimore, Margot Heinemann and A. R. Braunmuller.[5] Dollimore discusses *Bussy D'Ambois* as a play that 'decentres' its subject by showing 'noblesse to be the effect of policy'; Heinemann sees in the Byron plays an example of the 'doubleness [...] within outlooks and codes' that exists in an unstable society; and Braunmuller offers a perceptive new insight into the interrelationship between the plays and the 'decentred' political world.[6]

My intention in this thesis is to make an advance on the work begun by these critics and to offer a new political reading of Chapman's tragedies by considering them in relation to the dramatist's concerns with the role of chivalry in England after the fall of Essex. The plays I will be discussing, *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* all have as their central characters figures from recent French history who were associated with chivalric or martial values. At least three of them, Bussy, Byron and King

Henry IV were well known in England and highly esteemed for their achievements during the campaigns of the French Wars of Religion.

Newsletters, reporting the military campaigns of Henry IV in the early 1590s, glorified the chivalric escapades of the Protestant king on horseback to the extent that reality was often confused with the fictional rendering of the knightly deeds of chivalric romances. In a similar fashion the chivalric iconography with which younger members of the nobility came to associate themselves during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was constructed upon an idealization of the past which owed more to romance than to history. Although there is little doubt that some members of the nobility genuinely believed in the cult of honour, with its emphasis upon loyalty between friends and comrades, its fragility was exposed by the attempted Essex coup of 1601, when survival and self-interest were the motivating forces behind the actions of Essex's followers before and after the unsuccessful rising. What the Essex rebellion seemed to show was that this romantic concept of chivalry was primarily a disguise used to associate the nobility with fictional heroes and with the glorified military successes achieved in some chivalric golden age. Often, the nobility themselves became confused with their disguise or image, playing out their constructed role with sincerity. However, at times of crisis the reality of men struggling for survival and political power shattered the image.

Chivalry was used by the Elizabethan nobility as a means of emphasizing their status and their hereditary rights through an attempt to associate themselves with the prestige, political influence and financial independence of their ancestors. In the increasingly centralized Tudor state, in which political and financial power stemmed from the monarch, the concept of an independent nobility was a delusion. Even the two most powerful chivalric figures of Elizabeth's reign, the Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Essex, were dependent on the grace of the queen for their political influence. Leicester, raised from a position of relative obscurity shortly after the queen's accession to the throne, recognized the importance of retaining the queen's favour. When she objected to plans to have him created Governor of Flushing Leicester, having gauged the extent of the queen's displeasure, refused the office. Essex, on the other hand, failed to recognize or accept, until too late, the extent of his dependency on the queen. After his expulsion from court and the loss of his state pension he realized that he would not be able to maintain the entourage which gave him his prestige and influence. Faced with political and financial destruction Essex was driven to rebellion by the hope of restoring his fortunes and preserving his power base. The fraud of chivalry was likewise exposed in the military campaigns of both Leicester and Essex. The chivalric displays and tiltyard successes can be contrasted with the military failures. Leicester proved a disastrous military leader during his brief campaign in the Netherlands in the mid 1580s and Essex, while hero-worshipped by the populace for his deeds at Lisbon, Rouen, Cadiz and in the Azores, achieved little of military significance and had his failures as a military commander finally exposed during the Irish campaign of 1599.

Chapman's tragedies, influenced significantly by the fall of Essex, portray chivalry as a political tool. Chapman shows how a mythical concept of chivalry is established to glorify the past at the expense of the present. Military prestige is combined with virtue and honour to build up a mythical picture of a past generation of nobility that is contrasted with the present 'decentred' political world. In the course of the plays the myth is deconstructed and exposed as a form of political discourse used to advance the interests of court factions.

By associating themselves with the chivalric myth political figures came to identify their factions with the values of chivalry. Chapman shows how the myth is established and then exposes it for what it is by portraying his characters as unable to live up to their expected mythical ideals. Virtue is shown to be incompatible with the martial values of chivalry as Bussy, Byron and even Clermont perceive honour in terms of a cult of violence and personal glory. Chivalric honour is seen to be primarily that of the battlefield, the motivation for the heroic achievements which enhance the status of the warrior. Far from being motivated by virtue, Bussy and Byron, like the rivals they condemn, are driven on by ambition for power. Bussy, given the opportunity to 'rise at court' uses his constructed image to challenge the existing power structure. However, his sense of honour and glory is of a military nature and, unable to refuse a challenge even when the odds are against him, he becomes an easy target for his more politically astute enemies. Byron builds up a mythological image of his own military achievements and contrasts the honour and glory of the battlefield with the political pragmatism of peace-time government. His military values out of place in a peaceful world, he proposes to re-create a situation of war in order to re-establish his prestige and significance. Like Bussy he is motivated by personal ambition and will drive France back into a destructive war to satisfy his own concept of glory. Clermont is constructed into an image of virtuous chivalric hero by Guise, who wishes to associate himself with the mythical concept of chivalry he has fashioned for his friend in order to further his own political ambitions. However, Clermont's virtue and his stoical independence are compromised by his friendship with Guise and by the psychological confusion between his constructed ideals and his inherent desire to participate in the active political world.

Chapman exposes chivalry as primarily a martial set of values which is endowed with idealistic qualities in order to equate physical power with moral virtue and political rectitude. He shows how the concept of chivalry is used for political ends to promote the ambitions of the politically marginalized or to enhance the authority of the monarch and the established hierarchy. He endorses the criticism, made by his central characters, of the moral degeneracy and machiavellian intrigue which are effects of the existing power structure by exposing governments and politicians as motivated primarily by self-interest. Chivalry, nevertheless, is not a solution but an effect of the problem. The Golden Age idealism associated with chivalry was used to manipulate romantic sensibilities in order to advance the political ambitions and personal desire for glory of a small social elite. Its glorification of war threatened the stability and the economic interests of the country as a whole in order to re-establish a fictional golden age of military glory and social order.

The Division of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters with the first two considering the cultural and political environment of Chapman's plays and the final three discussing *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* in terms of chivalry and the politics of the nobility. In Chapter One I discuss Chapman as a historical dramatist and consider him alongside the new Tacitean historians who emerged in England in the early 1590s. My aim is to associate Chapman, in opposition to more traditional studies, with the political scepticism of the historians and dramatists of the period who were influenced by the writings of Tacitus. As I explain, Chapman's portrayal of the 'decentred' state and his demystification of chivalry are products of the Tacitean movement. Like other Taciteans he uses history to draw analogies with the present and to expose political activity as determined largely by private and factional interests. I begin the chapter with a discussion of Tacitean historiography in which I consider its emergence during the Renaissance and its contribution to a new understanding of the political decision-making process. I proceed to discuss two examples of Tacitean historiography in England, Sir John Savile's translation of Tacitus's *Histories* and Sir John Hayward's *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, as a means of illustrating the methodology of the new history and the controversy that surrounded it. The Taciteans sought to demystify the workings of state by showing governments and monarchs to be motivated by *raison d'état* rather than by religious and moral guidelines. Furthermore, they attempted to comment on the present political situation by drawing parallels with the past, and they offered an 'objective' political commentary by considering conflicts between monarchs and nobility solely in terms of politics rather than of good and evil. For the discussion of Tacitean historiography I draw on the work of Peter Burke, Kenneth Schellhase, J. H. M. Salmon, Malcolm Smuts and David Womersley.[7] This discussion is followed by a brief study of three plays which can be seen to have been influenced by the new historical methodology. The plays are Shakespeare's *King Richard II*, Jonson's *Sejanus: His Fall* and Daniel's *Philotas*. I show how the three plays comment on recent political events and bring before public view the 'decentred' state at work. Chapman's tragedies can be set alongside these plays as dramatizations of history which question assumptions about the role of morality in the political world. Having claimed for Chapman a place among historians and dramatists who were writing in the Tacitean mode, the chapter examines the process by which he transforms Grimeston's providentialist prose account of Byron's conspiracy into an objective dramatic portrayal of the political concerns confronting king and nobility.

The second chapter outlines the English political environment of

Chapman's plays by considering the nobility's concern with preserving their status and privileges during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and their exploitation of chivalric iconography as a means of enhancing or re-emphasizing their position in the social hierarchy. The chapter explains how the nobility, confronted by the loss of financial and political power, re-assessed their relationship with the monarch and claimed the native rights that, it was argued, belonged to them on account of their birth and tenure of office. I consider the romantic origins of Elizabethan chivalry, the political significance of chivalric pageantry and the fragility of the chivalric compromise between queen and nobility. The final section describes how the fall of the Earl of Essex exposed the weaknesses of the cult of honour and the dangers inherent in chivalry's predominantly martial values. As will be shown the fall of Essex and what it represented is the major concern of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*. In addition to the work of Richard McCoy to which I am greatly indebted for much of the information in the chapter, I also draw on the work of Mervyn James and Lawrence Stone for my discussions of the cult of honour and the social and political concerns of the nobility.[8]

The third chapter discusses the inter-relationship between chivalry and politics in *Bussy D'Ambois*. The chapter begins by considering Chapman's source material and the significance of his choice of a legendary figure from recent French history as the central character of the play. It progresses to discuss the play in terms of the displacement of the nobility, the hierarchical nature of the court, the myth of the chivalric golden age, the chivalric compromise, the deconstruction of Bussy's 'noblesse', and ends by considering the significance of the central character's death.

The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron continues the theme of political displacement and shows how Byron creates a mythical image of his past achievements so as to emphasize the extent of his fall from war hero to the forgotten man at court. The fourth chapter thus considers the transition from a wartime environment to a time of peace for a war hero who has spent the majority of his adult life on the battlefield, seeking prestige and honour through his deeds. This is followed by a discussion of how the play responds to constitutional issues by opposing the king's absolutist views with Byron's belief in subaltern majesty. Finally, the chapter looks at the means by which the play rejects the militaristic values represented by Byron and warns of the dangers of the mythologization of war.

My final chapter considers the portrayal of the chivalric myth in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. There I analyse the way in which Chapman portrays the creation, for political purposes, of a constructed myth of chivalry and then explodes it by showing Clermont to be unable to live up to the image of virtue that has been created for him.

Notes to Introduction

1. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by William B. Todd (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959; repr. 1968), p. 91.
2. Commentaries which fall into these categories include *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Tragedies*, ed. by T. M. Parrott (London: Routledge, 1910); Jean Jacquot,*George Chapman, 1559-1634: Sa Vie, Sa Poésie, Son Théâtre, Sa Pensée* (Paris: Société d'Edition les Belles Lettres, 1951); Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman: Renaissance Ethics in Action* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1954); Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1960), pp. 47-83; Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order* (London: Methuen, 1962; repr. 1979), pp. 19-49; Eugene Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962); Waith, *Ideas of Greatness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 37-58; Richard Ide, *Possessed with Greatness: The Heroic Tragedies of Chapman and Shakespeare* (London: Scolar Press, 1980).
3. Commentaries claiming pro-absolutist readings for the plays include Edward D. Kennedy, 'James I and Chapman's Byron Plays', *JEGP*, 64 (1965), 677-690; Leonard Goldstein, *George Chapman: Aspects of Decadence in Early Seventeenth Century Drama*, 2 vols., Jacobean Drama Studies no. 31 (Salzburg: Universitat Salzburg, 1975); Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1983). Among those suggesting oppositional readings is Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-1642* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).
4. Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contempories* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984; repr. 1986) pp. 153-246.
5. Dollimore, pp. 182-8; Margot Heinemann, 'Political Drama' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 161-205 (188-90); A. R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992).
6. Dollimore, p. 186; Heinemann, p. 162.
7. Peter Burke, 'Tacitism' in *Tacitus*, ed. by T. A. Dorey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 149-71; Kenneth C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1976); J. H. M. Salmon, 'Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England' in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. by Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 169-88; Malcolm Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c.1590-1630' in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 21-43; David Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Elizabethan Texts' *RES*, 42 (1991), 313-42.
8. Richard C. McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1989); Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; repr. 1988); Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

Chapter One
Chapman and the Tacitean Dramatization of History

> History must be detached from the image that satisfied it for so long, and through which it found its anthropological justification: that of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documentation [...] that exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized form. The document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally memory; history is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.[1]

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I intend to link Chapman with the group of Tacitean writers who were associated with the Essex circle in the 1590s and to consider his Byron plays alongside the works of other dramatists who presented history in a Tacitean manner

In the 1590s a new approach to the writing of history appeared in England and became associated with the circle surrounding the Earl of Essex. The *new* history had arrived from the continent and was based on the historiographical works of the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD55-c. 115). Tacitus's republican sympathies and the connection between the English Taciteans and the Earl of Essex gave the *new* history an oppositional context that was not entirely justified by its generally objective rendering of history.

The Taciteans were primarily interested with affairs of state and wrote history with a view to presenting analogies with the present. They sought to demystify the political world by portraying it as motivated by ambition and self-interest rather than by morality and virtue. Affairs of state they claimed could only be understood in terms of politics, with the decision-making process being determined by factional or group interest. They rejected the providentialist view of history which inferred that the social order was established by God and that rebellion was irreligious and would provoke God's displeasure. Whereas providentialist historians portrayed rebels as ungodly and self-seeking enemies of the state, the Taciteans were prepared to accept that rebellion could often be justified in political terms. Monarchs, on the other hand, ran the risk of being confronted with rebellion not because they were immoral but because they failed in the art of politics. Weak or tyrannical kings who failed to earn the respect or the love of their subjects were the likely victims of rebellion. The Taciteans, on the whole, were objective or disengaged in their approach to history and considered events solely in terms of politics. Leading historical figures were praised for their strengths and political judgement and criticized for weaknesses and poor judgement. *virtu* and popularity was commended, self-interest and political duplicity was exposed.

Although they presented history objectively the Taciteans' concern with affairs of state rendered them suspicious to the authorities and open to accusations of subversive intent. The association of the English Taciteans with the Essex circle gave their writings an additional political context. Their tendency to praise military achievements and military heroes at the expense of statesmen and to write about rebellions and conspiracies led by popular noblemen, created the suspicion that they were seeking to establish parallels between these figures and their patron.

In England, the methodology of the *new* history was not the sole preserve of historians but was used for the dramatization of history on the stage. I will show in the course of this chapter how Shakespeare, Jonson and Daniel made use of Tacitism in their plays in order to raise issues of contemporary political relevance. My main concern in the chapter is to associate Chapman with this group of Tacitean writers and to suggest that his choice of historical subject - France during and immediately after the French Wars of Religion - is influenced by his connections with Essex and the wish to raise issues of contemporary significance concerning the relationship between the political establishment and the martial nobility.

Following a discussion of the development of the *new* history and its introduction in England, its associations with the Essex Circle and the political significance of Hayward's *Henrie IIII* I will consider the Tacitean connotations of Jonson's *Sejanus* and Daniel's *Philotas*. Having established a literary context for Chapman's Tacitism I will, in the final section of the chapter, consider the way in which he transforms Grimeston's providentialist account of Byron's conspiracy into a Tacitean play that dramatises objectively the conflict between king and nobility and raises analogies with the Essex coup and contemporary constitutional issues.

1.2 The Development of Tacitean Methods of Historiography

1.2.1 Tacitean Historiography

The reputation of Tacitus rests primarily on his *Annals* (eighteen books of which eleven and part of a twelfth survive) and his *Histories* (twelve books of which four and part of a fifth survive). These works provide an account of the history of Imperial Rome from the death of Augustus (AD14) to the end of the Flavian dynasty (AD96). Tacitus's writings cover a period of arbitrary and tyrannical government in Rome and serve as a commentary upon the hidden motives of those holding power in the past, in order to demystify authority and help his readers to withstand the oppressive climate of the current times. Tacitus, who had republican sympathies, was writing at a time when the Roman Senate had lost all its real political power and important decisions were being taken privately by the emperor and his associates.

The method used by Tacitus served three main purposes. Firstly, to emphasise precise political parallels between past and present. Secondly, to expose the ruthlessness and amorality of politics through penetrating analysis of the causes and motives behind major events. Thirdly, to present a politically neutral stance by commenting objectively on characters and events.

Tacitus's writings had dangerous political connotations. While seemingly objective, his approach to history, particularly his analysis of the motives behind political decisions, could be seen as subversive because it questioned the actions of emperors and made them accountable to general scrutiny. It implied that important decisions were made on the whim of an individual and to safeguard or advance the interests of a small political oligarchy. The underlying theme of Tacitus's writing is that Imperial rule is prone to tyranny at its worst and abuse at its best.

As we shall see, it was the questioning nature of Tacitism that caused concern among the authorities and conservative writers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the wrong hands, Tacitism could prove a dangerous political tool. In the 1590s it was the connection between Tacitean writers in England and the Earl of Essex that provoked the interest of the Privy Council. Generally, the authorities disapproved of Tacitism because of its associations with machiavellianism. Tacitus like Machiavelli revealed the secret 'mysteries of state'. This was considered undesirable because it would serve to demythologize the projected image of rulers 'as semi-divine images of God, in harmony with natural order'.[2]

1.2.2 The Resurgence of Tacitism in Europe

In discussing the emergence of Tacitism in Renaissance Europe I rely largely on the work of Peter Burke, Kenneth C. Schellhase and J. H. M. Salmon.[3]

Little known during the Middle-Ages, Tacitus was rediscovered by Boccaccio in the fourteenth century. There followed frequent references to his work by Humanist writers, such as Leonardo Bruni and Lorenzo Valla, in the early fifteenth century and his works were printed in 1470 with the exception of the first six books of the *Annals* which, newly discovered, were published in 1515.

Tacitus's reputation for the first three quarters of the sixteenth century was a mixed one. He was criticised for writing bad Latin (Alciati described his style as a 'thicket of thorns') and for referring to Christians as 'notoriously depraved' (Budé described him as 'the most wicked of writers'). On the other hand he was praised for his political wisdom by, among others, Vives, Machiavelli and Guicciardini.[4] Machiavelli's *The Prince* and *The Discourses* were influenced by Tacitean methodology to the extent that by the end of the sixteenth century critics of Tacitus, such as Giovanni Botero, were denouncing his work as disguised machiavellianism.[5]

The most important European apologist for Tacitus was the Dutch Humanist, Justus Lipsius (1547-1606). In a series of lectures entitled *Oratio* delivered at Jena in 1572, Lipsius recommended the historical methodology of Tacitus and compared the Duke of Alba (the Spanish governor of the Netherlands) with Tacitus's Tiberius.[6] (Lipsius's lectures were published in 1607, the year following his death). In 1575 he published a definitive Latin edition of Tacitus's works and in 1589 an original political treatise based on Tacitus entitled *Politicorum, sive civilis* *doctrinae libri sex.*[7] The latter was translated into English five years later as *The Six Books of Politics.*

French Huguenot writers of the late sixteenth century were likewise influenced by Tacitus. Hotman's *Francogallia* and the anonymous *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* followed the inference of Tacitus by suggesting that rebellion against a monarch was not necessarily morally reprehensible and unjustifiable. These writers, like Tacitus, presented resistance as a solely political act which should be seen in the context of political events and not judged in terms of religious morality.[8]

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there were many different interpretations of Tacitus among European scholars. Some praised him for his objectivity and for establishing guidelines for good government. Others criticised him for separating politics from morality, and denounced his work as surrogate machiavellianism which could be used by princes to impose tyrannical governments.

The French Humanist Bodin admired Tacitus because he wrote from practical experience of government. In his *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566) Bodin praised Tacitus for his lack of lies, the purity and gravity of his style, his careful use of documents, his skill in narrative and his critical analysis. He claimed that Tacitus had provided an ideal constitution and showed how monarchies ought to work as well as how one particular monarchy actually did work.[9]

Lipsius admired Tacitus's writings because he demystified the moral authority of monarchy and showed individual subjects what tyranny was in order to enable them to escape its consequences.[10] The Frenchman, Antoine Muret, in his series of lectures, *Opera Omnia* (1580) claimed that it was princes and not tyrants who profited from reading Tacitus. He argued that through reading Tacitus subjects would learn how to put up with tyrants and that princes would be taught how to overcome their defects. Muret agreed with Lipsius that Tacitus was a skilled decipherer of the secrets of state and showed princes to be motivated primarily by political expediency.[11]

Guicciardini in his *Ricordi* of 1576 claimed that Tacitus had revealed neutrally to rulers and subjects the techniques of tyranny and the pathways of prudence but feared that his work could be used as a handbook for tyrants.[12] The Italian Giovanni Botero in his book *Della Ragion di Stato*, published in 1589, agreed with Machiavelli in suggesting that political actions could be justified only in terms of politics and that moral right was only a consideration when it did not conflict with political expediency. Nevertheless, he condemned Tacitus as one who offered evil advice to princes.[13]

The French Huguenot theologian and classicist Isaac Casaubon in his *Preface to Polybius* in 1609 claimed that Tacitus was a corrupting influence upon 'young men'. He rejected the relevance of Tacitus to Renaissance Europe: '[...] to stress the viability of the *Annals* as a guide through modern corridors of power is to imply that the princes of Renaissance Europe are tyrants in the mould of Tiberius or Nero'[14]

By the end of the sixteenth century Tacitus had become fashionable throughout Europe. Peter Burke claims that in the sixteenth century the *Annals* and *Histories* went through at least forty-five editions and Kenneth Schellhase has recorded about sixty main publications in whole or in part of the works of Tacitus by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The trend continued into the seventeenth century with sixty-seven editions of Tacitus's works being published between 1600 and 1649.[15] By the end of the sixteenth century Tacitus had been translated into Italian, French, German and English.[16]

1.2.3 Sir Henry Savile and the English Translation of Tacitus's *Histories*

Tacitean ideas seem to have arrived in England much later than on the continent. Although Blair Worden claims that Tacitus was known to the Sidney family in the late 1570s it was not until the 1580s that Tacitism became fashionable at Oxford, and Savile's translation of the *Histories* did not appear until 1591.[17] The vogue for Tacitism soon spread to the court where two of the leading Oxford Taciteans held employment. Henry Cuffe, an Oxford professor of Greek became the personal secretary of the Earl of Essex and Henry Savile, Warden of Merton College Oxford, a protégé of Essex's, served as the queen's tutor in Greek.[18]

In 1591 Sir Henry Savile published his translation of the first four books of Tacitus's *Historiae* and *The Agricola*. Savile's was the first English translation of Tacitus. Along with the *Historiae* and *The Agricola* Savile added a short original piece entitled *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba* which filled a gap in Tacitus's extant works corresponding to the lost final chapters of the *Annals*. The following commentary on Savile's *Tacitus* is based largely on the work of David Womersley and Malcolm Smuts.[19]

Savile's book was dedicated to the queen and opened with an epistle from 'A.B. to the Reader' which commented on the calamities of civil war brought on by a disputed succession.

> In these four books of the story thou shalt see all the miseries of a torn and declining state [...] If thou mislike their wars be thankful for thine own peace; if thou dost abhor their tyrannies, love and reverence thine own wise, just and excellent Prince.[20]

As the queen had no direct heir and refused to name her successor the epistle could be seen as an attempt to draw analogies between the civil wars that followed Nero's death and the present situation in England.

Furthermore, the epistle was attributed to the Earl of Essex by Ben Jonson and Edmund Bolton.[21] The suggestion that Essex may have written the epistle and Savile's own association with the Essex circle gives the work an added political dimension which is not clearly apparent from the text itself.

The most interesting section of Savile's book is *The Ende of Nero* in which he praises Julius Vindex, the leader of a rebellion against the Emperor Nero. By praising Vindex for his military prowess and his *virtu* Savile could be seen to be emphasizing analogies between him and Essex: particularly as this was a work produced under a patron who aspired to become England's greatest general.

Furthermore, *The Ende of Nero* covers a significant period of Roman history: the period between A.D.66 and 1 January 69 which contained the successful rebellion against Nero. Although he used various Roman sources for this section Savile took advantage of the gaps in Tacitus's work to introduce his own conjecture on the motives of the leading participants. As Francis Bacon later claimed:

> [...] he that undertaketh the story of a time, especially of any length, cannot but meet with many blanks and spaces which he must be forced to fill up out of his own wit and conjecture.[22]

An example of this method is the praise lavished on Julius Vindex following his suicide. Unlike earlier Tudor histories Vindex's rebellion is justified by his author and not denounced as a self-motivated and evil attempt to overturn the status quo. Vindex's motives, according to David Womersley, have no classical source and Savile's description is 'pure interjection'.[23]

> This ende had Julius Vindex, a man in the course of this action more vertuous than fortunate; who having no armie provided, no legion, no souldier in charge, whiles others more able lookt on, first entred the lists, chalenging a Prince upholden with thirty legions, rooted in the Empire by fower descents of ancestours,

> and fourteen yeares continuance of raigne, not upon private despaire to set in combustion the state, not to revenge disgrace or dishonour, nor to establish his own soveraignety, things which have mooved most men to attempt; but to redeeme his cuntrey from tyranny and bondage, which onely respect he regarded so much, that in respect he regarded nothing his owne life or security [...] And though in this action fortune gave vertue the checke, and by a strange accident, which mans wisdome could not foresee, overturned the enterprise, yet must wee confesse, that Vindex first stirred the stone, which rowling along tumbled Nero out of his seate.[24]

The significance of Savile's eulogy on Vindex's motives is that rebellion or resistance can be justified in certain circumstances. This is a huge departure from the established views on rebellion in Elizabethan England as expressed in the chronicles and the Homilies on Obedience.[25]

Savile resists making moral comments on his characters and analyses events solely in relation to political context. An example of this is his portrayal of Nero who is condemned not so much for his moral transgressions but for his political failures. Savile's Nero has brought catastrophe upon himself by his political ineptitude:

> Thus Nero, a Prince in life contemptible, and hatefull in governement, having thereby disarmed himselfe both of the love and feare of his subjects, ended his daies the eightth of June in the one and thirtieth yeare of his age, and fourteenth of his Empire, at the first having ruled the state with reasonable liking, insomuch that Traian was wonted to saie, that even good Princes were short of Neroes five yeares: but after breaking forth into all infamous behaviour, and detestable oppressions and cruelties, and beeing withall a Prince weake in action, not of vertue sufficient to upholde his vices by might, he was at the length thus overthrowen.[26]

In this passage Nero's fall is attributed not to his moral degeneracy but to his failure to follow Machiavelli's advice of instilling fear in his subjects.[27]

Savile's volume continues with a commentary on the civil wars that followed Nero's death and ended in the extinction of the Claudian dynasty. During this period three emperors (Galba, Otho and Vilellius) were deposed and murdered before the final triumph of Vespasian who is portrayed by Tacitus in an unsympathetic light.

Savile ends his volume of Tacitus with a translation of *The Agricola*. This piece is a laudatory biography of Tacitus's father-in-law, a Roman military commander, who retired from politics in order to avoid provoking the jealousy of Domitian, who had succeeded Vespasian and Titus as Emperor. Agricola died shortly after his retirement amid rumours that he had been poisoned by the Emperor.

The significance of Savile's Tacitus is that it is the first history of its kind written in English; it demystifies the notion of moral authority by showing the political hierarchy to be motivated primarily by political expediency; and suggests that rebellions can sometimes be justified on a political basis. Furthermore, the epistle, attributed to the Earl of Essex, serves to make analogies between Roman history and Elizabethan England. Of course, it would be absurd to suggest that Essex was planning his rebellion in 1591 or that he and Savile could have had any idea of what would happen ten years later. However, Essex could be alluding to the dangers of a possible succession crisis in England on the queen's death and using Savile's text as a means of persuading the queen to settle the succession before it was too late.

In 1591 Savile's *Tacitus* was not considered a dangerous text and was dedicated to the queen. However, following Essex's rebellion in 1601 the book was seen in a different light and Savile's association with Essex's circle rendered it suspicious. The result was that Savile was implicated in the rebellion on account of the book and placed under temporary restraint.[28] It is evidence of the concern over the influence of written history on rebellious spirits that a book published ten years previously could be suspected of having been motivated by support for Essex's cause.

Allusion to the Earl of Essex was to remain a sensitive issue into the next reign. As will be seen Hayward's *Henry IIII*, which openly encouraged parallels to be drawn between Bolingbroke and Essex, ran into trouble with the Privy Council after Essex's return from Ireland, and its author was later imprisoned in the Tower on the charge of inciting Essex to rebel. Jonson's *Sejanus* and Daniel's *Philotas* were also suspected of referring to the Essex rising despite the denials of the dramatists. In the years following Essex's failed coup the whole topic of rebellions and conspiracies of the nobility was seen in a new post-Essex light. Plays about rebellious war heroes were seen inevitably in the context of the Essex rising and the authorities were suspicious of any attempts to portray these heroes in a sympathetic manner. Although Essex's son and his former supporters had been reconciled with the new administration in 1603 and were restored to their titles and privileges, the issue remained sensitive because of the involvement in Essex's downfall of some of James's government, notably Robert Cecil, Francis Bacon and the Earl of Suffolk. Sensitive portrayals of Essex would of course reflect badly on their role in his fall. The issue remained alive and current and dramatists such as Daniel and Jonson deliberately chose to write plays about episodes in classical history which contained similarities with the Essex affair. Where history failed them these dramatists would follow the Tacitean method of inventing speeches for their characters in which their actions were justified.

Chapman's choice of the Duke of Byron as the central character of his play in 1608 openly drew on already established parallels between the Frenchman and Essex. Letters from John Chamberlain and Robert Cecil in 1602 emphasize the similarities between the Essex coup and Byron's conspiracy, and a pamphlet published shortly after Byron's execution which gives an account of his conspiracy, trial and execution suggests that his death was a matter of public interest because of its obvious parallels with

Essex's. These similarities will be considered in more detail in Chapter Four (pages 179-84). Chapman's play openly emphasized the similarities between his hero and Essex through textual reference and possibly through stage representation. Chapman had been intimate with the Essex Circle in the late 1590s and had dedicated *The Seaven Bookes of the Iliades* and *Achilles' Shield* to the Earl in 1598 and praised his success at Cadiz in *Hero and Leander* (see pages 47-8). As will be seen later in this chapter Chapman, in 1608, remained sympathetic to Essex although considering his rebellion to be misguided. In the Byron plays he adopts Tacitean methodology to attribute invented speeches to Byron in which the rebel attempts to justify his conspiracy on grounds of political discontent and the desire to protect the constitutional rights of the nobility from the absolutist aims of the monarch. Chapman's play, although acknowledging that its hero is misguided on many issues, transforms Byron and by implication Essex into defenders of constitutional rights against the increasing power of the monarchy. As will later be seen Chapman's play ran into problems over censorship and passages were evidently cut before publication. However, surprisingly the textual allusions to Essex remain. This might suggest that the Privy Council, who were involved in the censorship of the play, did not consider it to be overly sympathetic to Essex, but thought that it justified the action taken against Byron and the English earl.

1.2.4. English Tacitism and the Essex Circle

Tacitean historiography became increasingly popular in the 1590s, particularly among the Essex circle. Its leading proponents all seem to have had associations with Essex. In addition to Savile and Henry Cuffe the most noted Taciteans were Henry Wotton, Francis Bacon, Richard

Greeneway, William Camden and Sir John Hayward, all of whom had some link with the Essex circle.[29] Furthermore, Chapman, as I have shown, and his fellow poet/dramatist Samuel Daniel, who were influenced by Tacitean methodology, also had connections with the Essex circle.

Henry Wotton's knowledge of Tacitus can be seen from his letters in which he occasionally quotes from *The Histories* and *The Annales.* Furthermore, Wotton's remarks on the reading of history display an awareness of Tacitean methodology:

> In readings of history, a soldier should draw the platform of battles he meets with, plot the squadrons, and order the whole frame as he finds it written, so he shall print it firmly in his mind and apt his mind for actions. A politique should find the chronicles of personages and apply them to some of the court he lives in, which will likewise confirm his memory and give scope and matter for conjecture and invention. A friend to confer reading together most necessary.[30]

Francis Bacon was another prominent proponent of the Tacitean approach to history who was associated closely with Essex in the 1590s. Many of his writings, notably the *Essays*, published in 1597, 1612 and 1625, the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), and the *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* (1622) are influenced by Tacitus's methods. Bacon's knowledge of Tacitus is illustrated further by the occasion in 1599 when the queen asked him whether he thought Hayward's *Henrie IIII* was treasonable. Bacon replied that the book contained no treason 'but very much felony' because Hayward had stolen many of his 'sentences and conceits out of Cornelius Tacitus'. [31]

In 1598 Richard Greneway published his translation of Tacitus's *Annales* and *The Germania* with a dedication to Essex. In the dedication Greneway compared Essex with Vespasian, the Roman military commander who became Emperor. This could have been considered a rather dangerous allusion in its political context (the queen was sixty-five and had no direct heirs).

Was Greneway implying that Essex might succeed the queen? Three years previously a book had been published and dedicated to Essex entitled *A Conference on the Next Succession to the Crown of England.* Its author's name was given as R. Doleman, which is believed to be a pseudonym of the Catholic conspirator Robert Parsons. This book claims that Essex, due to his alleged descent from Thomas of Woodstock, a son of King Edward III, was entitled to be king or at least to have some role in deciding the succession when the queen died. The book caused concern to the queen and her ministers and Essex quickly dissociated himself from its conclusions.[32] Greneway's dedication was allowed to stand and his translations were later in the same year published in a single volume with Savile's *Tacitus*.

William Camden is a further example of a Tacitean associated with the Essex circle. Edwin B. Benjamin has shown that Camden's account of Essex's conspiracy and trial is written in a Tacitean manner and that earlier the historian had compared Essex with the tragic Roman hero Germanicus.[33]

Although Tacitism is not in itself oppositional or anti-monarchist its near monopoly by the Essex circle in 1590s England placed it in a pro-Essex context. Essex's increasingly marginal position at court, his opposition to peace with Spain, his views on the political role of the nobility and his popularity in the city of London led to new anti-government interpretations being placed upon the Tacitean writings with which he was associated.

1.3. The Rewriting of History: The Tragedy of Richard II

1.3.1. 'I am Richard the Second': Hayward's *King Henrie IIII* and the Essex Rebellion

The most famous or notorious example of Tacitean historiography was Sir John Hayward's *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, published in 1599. Despite its title the book was primarily an account of the deposition and death of Richard II and only covered the first year of the reign of Henry IV. Hayward's raw material was commonplace. The deposition of Richard II had been described in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, Daniel's *Civil Wars*, the chronicles of Halle and Holinshed and had been the subject of a play by Shakespeare.[34] However, Hayward's treatment of the subject was very different from that of the chronicles. The latter had offered a providentialist interpretation of Richard's deposition suggesting that although the rebellion against him could be justified because he was a poor king his deposition and murder had much deeper consequences which were realised in the Wars of the Roses. In effect the sins of the people who had acquiesced in Richard's fall were punished later in the century by the sufferings of civil war. Hayward rejects this interpretation and follows Tacitean methodology to argue that Richard's deposition should only be considered in terms of politics.

As F. J. Levy has written, Hayward's *Henrie IIII* was 'the first realization in England of a history in which the causes of events were seen in terms of the interrelationship of politics and character rather than in terms of the working out of God's providence'.[35] The main differences between Hayward and earlier historians in their account of the subject was that Hayward claimed Richard's fall to be due to his own poor judgement:

his inability to sustain either the love or the fear of his subjects. Furthermore, he inserted speeches and events with which to fill in the gaps of his sources, for example Arundel's speech justifying Bolingbroke's rebellion and Arundel's debate with the Bishop of Carlisle over the legitimacy of Richard's deposition. He also inserted references to Bolingbroke's popularity and to Richard's irregular means of raising money and levying taxes. Finally Hayward's dedication of the book to Essex could be seen to suggest parallels between the events covered in the history and the present day.

Hayward's dedication stresses the comparison between Essex and Bolingbroke:

> To the most illustrious and most honoured Robert, Earl of Essex and Eu, Earl Marshal of England, Viscount of Hereford and Bourchier [...]
>
> To the best and most noble, says Euripedes, at which thought you first and almost only came to mind, most illustrious Earl, whose name, should it shine on our Henry's forehead, he would more happily and more safely go forth among the people. For you are great indeed, both in present judgement and in expectation of future time, in whom once blind fortune can seem now to have regained her sight, since she moves to heap with honours a man distinguished in all virtues.[36]

In addition to comparing the popularity of Essex with that of Bolingbroke, Hayward refers to Essex by the title Viscount Hereford, thus enhancing the comparison with Bolingbroke who had been Earl of Hereford before succeeding to the dukedom of Lancaster. What was also controversial about the dedication was the suggestion that Essex shared Bolingbroke's expectations. What exactly Hayward meant by Essex's 'expectation of future time' is unclear but in the context of other dedications to Essex, comparing him to military leaders who became rulers, one cannot blame the Privy Council for interpreting it as an endorsement of Essex's supposed ambitions to be king.

By implication, if Essex was Bolingbroke then the queen must have been Richard the Second and the Cecilians his corrupt ministers. These allusions, however, were hardly new. As early as 1578 Sir Francis Knollys had found that the phrase 'Richard the Secondes men' was being used regularly in regard to the favourites at Elizabeth's court.[37] Ten years later the Lord Chamberlain, Henry Carey, 1st Lord Hunsdon, protested his own political virtue with the comment 'I was never one of Richard II's men'.[38] Essex emphasized the low birth and cowardly disposition of his political antagonists at court in much the same terms as Hayward used to describe Bushy, Bagot and Green: 'Judge you', Essex told Robert Sidney, '[...] whether it can be grief to a man descended as I am, to be trodden underfoot by such base upstarts'.[39] That the queen was aware of the parallels being made between her and Richard II is borne out by the familiar story of the conversation she had with William Lambarde in August 1601. The queen is alleged to have said 'I am Richard II. Know ye not that?' and then to have complained that 'this tragedy was played 40tie times in open streets and houses'.[40] Whether she was referring to Hayward's history, Shakespeare's play, some other version or a combination of different accounts of the tragedy is unclear.

Hayward's history emphasized the distinction between a martial nobility who were denied effective political influence and the low-born favourites of the king who used their influence to satisfy their personal pleasure and to bar the natural elite, the nobility from access to the king. Mervyn James argues that those members of the nobility who bound themselves to the cause of Bolingbroke had many parallels with the circle surrounding Essex. He suggests that Hayward's history was presented 'in terms familiar to any honour culture. On the one hand, there is the natural political élite, selected by lineally inherited status; opposed to it the oppressive and corrupting influence of an upstart, and therefore unnatural, régime, installed by a dishonourable and tyrannical monarch. Honour provides both the motivation and the bond of élite solidarity required for the correction of the resulting distortion in the proper political order.'[41] If Bolingbroke and the nobility are to be identified with Essex and his circle it follows that Richard's lowly born favourites Bushy, Bagot and Green should be seen to allude to Robert Cecil and his following.

Considering the political context in which Hayward's book was published, its associations with Essex and the dedication emphasizing allusions to the present, it is perhaps surprising that no immediate action was taken against the dedication or the book. The first edition published by John Wolfe in January 1599 encountered little opposition although the queen expressed her concern about the book to Francis Bacon. The book was popular and the limited edition of 1000 copies was soon sold out. Manning claims that the book's popularity was due to 'Hayward's apparent political encouragement of an ambitious but controversial earl' and 'its potentially allusive subject matter'.[42] Essex had objected to the dedication but too late, it seems, to have prevented its inclusion in the first edition. Although the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered that the dedication should be cut out of the book many were sold or distributed before the order came into effect.[43] It was later suggested at Essex's trial, by Robert Cecil, that he (Essex) had deliberately waited until it was too late before objecting to the dedication. This way the dedication would be printed and if objections were raised Essex would be in a position to deny responsibility.[44]

However, the second edition printed in April 1599 with Hayward's 'Epistle Apologeticall' was suppressed by the authorities and all copies were ordered to be burnt.[45] At the time no further action was taken against the author. Not until July 1600, eighteen months after its initial publication, did the book and its author undergo severe examination from the Star Chamber. By this date Essex had staged his dramatic and unauthorized return from Ireland, had been charged with desertion and disobeying orders, banned from the court and placed under house arrest. It seems that in the context of these events Hayward's book and dedication were seen from a different perspective. Alternatively it could be argued that prior to Essex's fall from favour the Privy Council were afraid of the consequences of making a political issue of a book that had been published under his protection.

On 11 July 1600 Hayward was called before the Star Chamber to answer questions about the book and was remanded to the Tower two days later.[46] On 22 January 1601, shortly before Essex's uprising, Hayward was re-examined. The main accusations against him concerned the dedication, the timing of the book (shortly before Essex's departure to Ireland), his choice of history (Essex was commonly associated with Bolingbroke), and his insertion of speeches which had no historical source.[47] The following month Hayward's book played a part in the prosecution against Essex after the earl's attempted coup.[48] Hayward naturally denied that he told past history in the light of contemporary politics but of course this was not the real issue. Elizabethan history in general was written with regard to contemporary politics. Hayward's problem, as Braunmuller has argued, was that his history told the wrong story.[49] His methodology was questionable because it challenged the established view that history provided evidence that events were dependent on the workings of providence and that rebellion was naturally evil and always punished by God.

The content of Hayward's History is not transparently subversive. It is as critical of Bolingbroke as it is of Richard. Both protagonists are considered almost entirely in political terms: Richard is deposed because he is an unpopular and weak king, Bolingbroke leads a rebellion against him because he is a political opportunist who happens to be in the right place at the right time. The result is an objective account of the workings of state. John Chamberlain, for one, could find nothing controversial about

Hayward's book. In a letter to his friend Dudley Carleton, enclosed with a copy of the book, Chamberlain writes in March 1599:

> [...] for lack of better matter I send you three or four toys to pass away the time [...] The treatise of Henry the fourth is reasonably well written. The author is a young man of Cambridge toward the civil law. Here hath been much descanting about it, why such a story should come out at this time, and many exceptions taken, especially to the epistle which was a short thing in Latin dedicated to the Earl of Essex, and objected to him in good earnest, whereupon there was a commandment that it should be cut out of the book, yet I have got you a transcript of it that you may pick out the offence if you can. For my part, I can find no such bugswords, but that everything is as it is taken.[50]

The main problem for Hayward was the dedication to Essex which emphasizes the parallels between the earl and Bolingbroke. In the context of a dedication to a noble patron of a book on Richard II it could hardly be considered subversive. Savile and Greneway had already drawn parallels between Essex and popular martial heroes without controversy, the queen had been compared with Richard II since at least 1578 and readers such as Chamberlain could find nothing offensive about it. However, it was published at a particularly difficult time which provided it with a new context. The relationship between Essex and the queen had become increasingly adversarial. There were strong differences between them on foreign policy. The Queen and Cecil wished to make peace with Spain whereas Essex wanted to see greater commitment to the war effort.[51] Furthermore, Essex's popular image as chivalric hero along with his military ambitions were becoming increasingly threatening and troublesome to the queen. Finally, Essex was about to lead a large army to Ireland in the role of Lord Deputy. That Hayward's dedication of such a book to Essex at such a time was, at least, controversial can be seen by the queen's initial anger with the book and her suspicion that it contained treason and by Essex's reluctance to openly acknowledge the dedication. Hayward's book seems to have got caught up in events that provided it with a new reading. The controversy over the book was to get worse following Essex's early return from Ireland. In the light of Essex's desertion of his post in Ireland, his forced entry into the queen's bedchamber, his subsequent trial, disgrace and rebellion a new interpretation could be given to the events depicted in the history. Hayward was unfortunate. If Essex had not disobeyed orders in returning from Ireland, Hayward would not have been called before the Star Chamber to answer charges of treason and incitement to rebellion and would not have spent three years imprisoned in the Tower. Once Essex's influence at court had diminished, Hayward's book became a weapon in the hands of his rivals who wished to find evidence by which the earl could be convicted of treason and at the very least prevented from ever again acquiring influence at court.

1.3.2. Shakespeare's *King Richard II*

Shakespeare's *King Richard II* which has many similarities with Hayward's book was probably the play performed by the Lord Chamberlain's company at the request of some of Essex's supporters on the eve of his rebellion. Whereas Hayward's book led to the author's imprisonment in the Tower from July 1600 until the accession of James I in March 1603, Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men do not seem to have received any punishment whatsoever. I would like, at this point, to consider Shakespeare's play in the light of the controversy surrounding Hayward's *Henrie IIII*. Shakespeare's play is interesting in this context because of the similarities it has with Hayward's book in the way that it handles the events leading up to Richard's deposition. The play's objectivity, its implied allusions to the present, and its use of invented speeches to justify the actions of the main characters and to comment on events are all characteristics of Tacitean Historiography. The play, then, can appropriately be set alongside Hayward's history not just because they both deal with the same subject but because they both present it in a Tacitean manner. *Richard II*, unlike Shakespeare's earlier history plays (with the exception of *King John*) can be seen as an example of a drama with Tacitean connotations. In this sense it is a forerunner to the historical tragedies of Jonson, Daniel and Chapman.

The similarities between Shakespeare's text and Hayward's history has received little attention since Albright's articles in 1927 and 1931.[52] Albright recognized that the two texts had much in common and concluded that Shakespeare's play must have been based on a manuscript of Hayward's history. She bases her findings on a claim by Hayward at his first examination that he had contemplated writing on the subject 'a dozen years before' and infers that he may have written his history some years before he published it.[53] However, Hayward later confessed that he had only begun writing the book a year before publication.[54] The similarities, nevertheless, are quite striking.

Shakespeare, like Hayward, inserts speeches which have no historical source. For example his references to the popularity of Bolingbroke:

> How he did seem to dive into their hearts
> With humble and familiar courtesy,
> What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
> Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles ...
> Off goes his bonnet to an oysterwench.
> A brace of draymen bid God speed him well
> And had the tribute of his supple knee,
> With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends',
> As were our England in reversion his,
> And he our subjects' next degree in hope.
> (*King Richard II* I. 4. 25-28, 31-36)[55]

Shakespeare also inserts John of Gaunt's deathbed speech in which the dying duke speaks out against Richard's policy of farming out the land to tax barons in order to raise money to pay for his own pleasure and to provide gifts for his favourites. (II. 1. 93-114.). Furthermore, it is Richard's policy of taxing the nobility which is partly responsible for their eagerness to support the cause of Bolingbroke. (II. 1. 249-50). It was Hayward's reference to Richard's taxation policies which was used by his examiners as evidence that he was alluding, in his history, to the present. Shakespeare's Richard, like Hayward's, falls from power because he is incompetent and loses both the love and fear of his subjects. His deposition is not the result of his immorality but has more practical causes. He loses the support of his nobility by ignoring their claims to high office and by granting their privileges to his low-born favourites. By confiscating the title and lands which are due by descent to Bolingbroke he provides a royal figurehead and a justification for rebellion. Shakespeare like Hayward provides an objective account of events. Richard is a poor king who overtaxes his subjects and squanders his resources, but we sympathize with his human qualities as he comes to recognize his own failings in the second half of the play. Bolingbroke, on the other hand, is an able and pragmatic politician who will make a better king than Richard, but is portrayed as an unsympathetic character. His implication in the murder of Richard at the end of the play shows him to be skilled in the art of *realpolitik* but lacking sensitivity.

Many of the episodes that the two texts have in common can be found in Daniel's *The First Fowre Bookes of the Civile Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke*, published in 1595. This could suggest that both Shakespeare and Hayward used Daniel's poem as a major source for their work. Daniel was himself a Tacitean who had links with Essex.

Much has been written about the performance of a play about Richard II by the Lord Chamberlain's Men on the day before Essex's attempted coup, most notably the exchange between Evelyn May Albright and Ray Heffner in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[56] Albright suggested that it was

Shakespeare's play which had been performed on the eve of the rebellion and which had 'been performed 40tie times in open streets and houses'. Furthermore she claimed that the play was based on a manuscript of Hayward's history and was indirectly associated with the Essex circle. Heffner, in response, claims that there is no evidence of any connection between Shakespeare's play, Essex and Hayward. He suggests that the 'tragedy' the queen complained about was more likely to have been a pageant based on Hayward's book.

In recent years critics have been equally divided over the subversive nature of the performance of the play on Saturday 7 February 1601 (Essex's attempted coup took place on 8 February.) New Historicist and Cultural Materialist critics, notably Stephen Greenblatt and Jonathan Dollimore, have claimed that the performance of the play was a politically subversive act: 'After all, someone on the eve of a rebellion thought the play sufficiently seditious to warrant squandering two pounds on the players, and the Queen understood the performance as a threat.'[57]

More recently Leeds Barroll has claimed that too much significance has been attached to this performance.[58] He rejects the conclusion reached by Greenblatt and Dollimore by contrasting the authorities' lenient treatment of the Lord Chamberlain's men, who were responsible for the performance of February 1601, with the severity of Hayward's punishment. It can be deduced from this, he claims, that the Privy Council were much more concerned with the subversive intent of Hayward's book than they were with a play performed in the Public Playhouse.[59]

The inconsistency of the Star Chamber's responses to the play and Hayward's book does seem problematic. It is plausible, however, that the respective connections of Hayward and the Lord Chamberlain's men may account for their different treatments. It was Hayward's connection with the Essex circle and his dedicatory epistle that condemned him at a time when everything and everyone associated with Essex was under suspicion. The Lord Chamberlain's men, on the other hand, did not have any clear outward links with Essex. Furthermore, the actors may have been protected by their patron George Carey, second Lord Hunsdon. The Careys had a strong record of loyalty to the queen. Whatever the reasons for the neglect of the Star Chamber to prosecute the Lord Chamberlain's men, it seems that in February 1601 the authorities were more concerned with finding evidence to condemn Essex and his circle than to worry about a company of actors who may unwittingly have been involved on the margin of the rebellion.

Although there is no certain evidence that the play performed on the 7th February 1601 was Shakespeare's, the Lord Chamberlain's men and the testimony of Augustine Phillips at Essex's trial provides a connection between Shakespeare's play and the performance in question. Augustine Phillips, an actor in the company, told the court that the players had originally objected to the request to perform the play on the grounds that it was 'so old and so long out of use that they should have small or no company at it.'[60] This description is more likely to apply to Shakespeare's play, which was probably first performed in 1595, than to a recent dramatization of Hayward's book.

One of the most controversial issues of the play is the so-called deposition scene (IV. 1). It is unknown whether this scene would have been performed with the rest of the play (if indeed it was Shakespeare's play) in the production commissioned by followers of Essex on the eve of the rebellion. The scene was excluded from the first three published editions of the play in 1597 and 1598 and included for the first time in the fourth quarto published in 1608. However, its exclusion from the published text does not necessarily imply that it wasn't performed. If its exclusion from the printed editions was due to censorship, as is implied by Andrew Gurr and Stephen Greenblatt, it does not necessarily follow that it must have been excluded from staged performances, as separate bodies were responsible for censoring performance and printed texts.[61] Performance texts came under the jurisdiction of the Master of the Revels, an official in the Lord Chamberlain's office, whereas printed texts came under the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical committee headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. There is no reason to believe that these two offices worked in unison or that they applied the same criteria to censorship of texts. Furthermore, as Shakespeare's company came under the protection of the Lord Chamberlain it is not inconceivable that this official could, when it suited him, ignore potentially subversive material. Greenblatt cites the censorship of the scene in the printed text, as early as 1597, as evidence of its perceived subversiveness. The problem with this is that we cannot know for certain that it was censored in 1597. We should not reject the possibility that the reason for the scene's exclusion in 1597 and 1598 was that it was a later addition to the play. Richard Dutton reminds us that the abdication scene in Marlowe's *Edward II* was allowed in print in 1594 and 1598.[62] If Shakespeare's abdication scene had not been written by 1598 it raises a question about when it was first added to the play: could it have been in 1599, at the time when Essex was accused of frequently visiting performances of a play on this subject or in 1601 when his supporters commissioned the eve of rebellion performance? However, unless new evidence is uncovered we can do no more than speculate about whether or not the play performed in 1601 was Shakespeare's and about the form in which it was presented.

To conclude, Shakespeare's play contains many of the attributes of Tacitean history and has much in common with Hayward's book. Both writers fill the gaps in their sources with additional material, speculate on the motives of the main characters and make allusions to the concerns of the day (such as monopolies). Furthermore, events are seen from more than one point of view. Although the rebellion of Bolingbroke and the nobility is justified politically on the grounds of Richard's failures and weaknesses, Bolingbroke is nevertheless exposed as a cold and calculating political schemer who has set his mind to winning and securing the crown. Both texts could also be seen to allude directly to the political situation of the day. This, however, is more the case with Hayward's book because of its dedicatory epistle drawing parallels between Essex and Bolingbroke. Although it seems likely that Shakespeare's play was doing the same, it was done more subtly and there is no substantial evidence to suggest that the parallels were anything more than coincidence.

1.4 Tacitism on the Jacobean Stage

Tacitus's methodology for portraying historical events was adopted by dramatists writing about history. I have already suggested that Shakespeare's *King Richard II* shows some of the characteristics of Tacitean historiography. Furthermore, A. R. Braunmuller has shown in his essay on 'King John and Historiography' that Shakespeare used the Tacitean model for this play, particularly in his invention or re-invention of 'The Bastard'. Shakespeare invents speeches for 'The Bastard' giving him the role of objective commentator on the motives behind the political events that occur in the play.[63]

In this section I would like to consider briefly two Jacobean plays based on classical history which make use of the historical methods established by Tacitus. I have chosen Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* because they have many similarities with Chapman's tragedies and because of their implied allusions to Essex. Daniel had connections with the Essex circle in the 1590s and dedicated the first edition of *The Civil Wars* to the earl, whom he praised as the incarnation of chivalric heroism. His connections with Essex are significantly strong. In the mid 1580s he had been employed as an agent in France by Essex's father-in-law, Sir Francis Walsingham. In the early 1590s he entered the literary circle of Mary, Countess of Pembroke with which Essex had strong links. His later patrons included Fulke Greville and Charles Blount (Lord Mountjoy) both close associates of Essex. Although there are no direct connections between Jonson and Essex, Jonson was associated with the Countess of Pembroke's circle and numbered among his patrons Lucy, Countess of Bedford, Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland (whose husbands were members of Essex's inner circle) and Sir Robert Sidney, a close friend of Essex's. Tom Cain has recently suggested that in *Poetaster* Jonson perhaps shows himself as sympathetic to Essex by mocking as an over-reaction the accusations of treason made against him during his first trial.[64] The play itself certainly shows that Jonson's sympathies lay with the nobility, implying, perhaps, that he considered Essex to be the victim of the political intrigue of his social inferiors.

Both, *Sejanus* and *Philotas* are concerned with conflicts between government and the nobility in which the nobility are the victims of machiavellian ministers. The subject of both plays suggests allusions to the fall of Essex.

1.4.1 *Sejanus His Fall*

Jonson's *Sejanus*, first performed in 1603 according to the title page of the folio edition of Jonson's *Works*, possesses many of the characteristics of Tacitean historiography. This is not particularly surprising considering that Jonson's main source is the fourth book of Tacitus's *Annals*. Jonson's play draws parallels between classical history and contemporary political issues and demystifies authority by showing the

Emperor, his closest followers and the Senate to be primarily concerned with political survival, rather than with acting on moral or religious principles. The play, as I will show, lacks the neutrality that is a customary trait of Tacitus but exposes the weaknesses of the opposition to the tyrannical regime as well as the degeneracy of Tiberius and Sejanus. The overall effect is of continuing moral decline. At the end of the play, Sejanus has fallen from power but Tiberius remains as Emperor and the equally unsavoury Macro is installed as Sejanus's replacement.

The play can also be read in the context of the conflict between old nobility and 'parvenues' with the Germanicans representing the traditional nobility and Sejanus and Macro the lowly-born upstarts. Rome's decline into tyranny is shown to run parallel with the nobility's loss of political influence. The Germanicans, who frequently look back with nostalgia to Rome's glorious past, claim that the moral and political decline of the country is due to the isolation of the nobility from their traditional place in government. This is the argument used by Byron to justify his conspiracy in Chapman's play and it is also echoed in the complaints of Essex against the increasing dominance of the Cecilians on Elizabeth's council. The Germanicans represent the last hope of restoring Rome to its position of moral ascendancy but with the death of Germanicus they are left headless and impotent. It should be recalled that Camden had compared Germanicus to Essex. If Jonson was aware of this comparison he could be referring to the rebellion and death of Essex as symbolic of the political decline in England.

In the remainder of this section I will consider the play as an example of Tacitean historiography. Jonson uses the Germanican historian Cordus to remind his audience that one purpose of history is to draw parallels between the past and the present. Jonson's Cordus is a Tacitean historiographer who writes about the past in order to comment on current political events. His conviction for writing treason, by commenting adversely on the present day under the disguise of history, and the order given by the Senate for his Annals to be burnt suggest parallels with Hayward. In the first act, Cordus tells Silius and Sabinus that he has considered comparing Germanicus with Alexander the Great:

> I thought once,
> Considering their forms, age, manner of deaths,
> The nearness of the places where they fell,
> T'have paralleled him with great Alexander:
> For both were of best feature, of high race,
> Yeared but to thirty, and in foreign lands,
> By their own people, alike made away.
> (Act I, 136-42)[65]

The significance of Cordus's comparison is not only to emphasize Germanicus's military achievements but to raise questions concerning his death, perhaps to implicate Tiberius and Sejanus in his murder.

Later Sejanus refers to Cordus as:

> ... a writing fellow they have got
> To gather notes of the precedent times,
> And make them into annals - a most tart
> And bitter spirit, I hear, who under colour
> Of praising those, doth tax the present state,
> Censures the men, the actions, leaves no trick,
> No practice unexamined, parallels
> The times, the governments; a professed champion
> For the old liberty -
> (Act II, 304-12)

When accused in the Senate of writing history in order to criticise the present government Cordus defends himself, in a speech that Jonson translated in its entirety from Tacitus (*Annals* IV, xxxiv-xxxv), by giving examples of earlier historians who praised Brutus and Cassius but were not punished by Augustus. He claims that comparisons between the past and the present are only given validity when the authorities make an issue of them:

> ... for such obloquies,
> If they despisèd be, they die suppressed,

> But if with rage acknowledged, they are confessed.
> (Act III, 439-41)

The effect of these passages is to provide the audience with an insight into Jonson's view of the role of history. Jonson like Cordus is using history to comment on current events. This is enhanced by Jonson's disclaimer in his preface 'To the Readers':

> ... lest in some nice nostril the quotations might savour affected, I do let you know that I abhor nothing more; and have only done it to show my integrity in the story, and save myself in those common torturers that bring all wit to the rack; whose noses are ever like swine spoiling and rooting up the Muses' gardens, and their whole bodies, like moles, as blindly working under earth to cast any - the least - hills upon virtue.[66]

Furthermore, Philip Ayres has suggested that the trial scenes in *Sejanus* are an allusion to the treason trials of 1603. He makes a link between the trial of Silius in the play and the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh in November 1603.[67] Raleigh had been imprisoned in the Tower on 17 July 1603 on suspicion of conspiring with Lord Cobham and Count Aremberg (the ambassador from the Archduke of Austria) to replace James I with his cousin Arabella Stuart. Silius, like Raleigh, is a military commander on trial for conspiracy and for treasonous dealings with the enemy he had been fighting against. As with the Raleigh trial, the evidence against Silius seems dubious. As he, like Raleigh, is tried by his enemies, questions are raised about the partiality of the trial. Ayres comments in some detail on the parallels between the two trials.[68]

Apart from specific allusions, which are always questionable, the play can be considered Tacitean in the way that it depicts the workings of government. Tiberius and Sejanus eliminate their enemies - the Germanicans - by employing informers and by corrupting justice. Virtue is suspected and the Senate has sacrificed its independence for security: it has become an instrument of Tiberius's tyrannical government and carries out without question the wishes of the Emperor and his favourite. In the final act individual senators change their allegiance from Sejanus to Macro when they realize that Sejanus has lost the trust of Tiberius. The machiavellian Emperor maintains control while he is outside Rome by sending ambiguous letters to the Senate which leaves them uncertain about the position of Sejanus.

In one important aspect Jonson rejects the Tacitean approach. In order to emphasize the conflict between evil and virtue Jonson simplifies and categorizes his main characters. As Richard Dutton has argued Jonson revises the historical record to 'bring about a much clearer confrontation than occurs in any of the sources between the forces of evil (Tiberius, Sejanus, Macro, Caligula) and the forces of virtue (Germanicans and Stoics)'.[69] The result is that Sejanus, who in Tacitus is a blunt, ambitious soldier, emerges in the play as a devious machiavel whereas Tiberius, who Tacitus admits was well-meaning although weak and corrupted by absolute power, is portrayed as a master of 'realpolitik'.[70]

Despite the emphasis on the conflict between good and evil in Jonson's play there is no indication that evil will be punished. Sejanus's fall from power is due to a political mistake not to his immorality. His mistake is to ask Tiberius for Livia's hand in marriage. Tiberius's 'H'mh?' betrays his suspicion of Sejanus's ambition. When he next appears on stage it is to employ Macro to spy on Sejanus (III, 701-7).

Sejanus's fall does not leave the audience with any sense of hope at the end of the play. Tiberius remains firmly in control and his new favourite Macro seems to offer little improvement on Sejanus. The failure and the virtual extinction of the Germanicans, by the end of the play, suggests that there is no viable alternative to the tyrannous regime that is still in place.

1.4.2. *Philotas*

Samuel Daniel's *Philotas*, first performed in 1604, incorporates most of the characteristics of Tacitean Historiography. With the help of a chorus it offers an objective account of events, demystifies authority and offers parallels between history and contemporary politics.

Daniel, as I have shown, had connections with the Essex circle in the 1590s. His appearance before the Privy Council, in January 1605, to answer questions about *Philotas* would seem to suggest that his associations and sympathy with Essex were still under suspicion. The content of the play, dealing with the fall and execution of a powerful member of the nobility enhanced the suspicions of the Privy Council which charged him with having commented seditiously on the trial and execution of Essex.[71] Daniel denied the accusations and in a letter to Robert Cecil protested that his only intention in writing the play was the literary ambition to 'reduce the stage from idlenes to those grave presentiments of antiquitie used by the wisest nations' and to give a just account of 'those times' and of human behaviour.[72] In the second edition of the play, published in 1607, Daniel prefixed an apology which attempts to distance the play from analogies with Essex.[73] However, such disclaimers often have the effect of endorsing the analogy that the author is claiming to deny.

Daniel protests his innocence too strongly. His known associations with Essex and his decision to write a play about the involvement of a powerful member of the nobility in a conspiracy against the monarch, three years after the execution of Essex, makes it almost certain that Daniel intended to link Philotas with Essex. Brents Stirling and Laurence Michel have argued that Daniel deliberately tampers with his historical sources in order to emphasize the parallels with Essex.[74] Joan Rees, on the other hand, challenges this view by insisting that Daniel follows closely his two main sources (*The Historie of Quintus Curtius, conteyning the Actes of the Greate Alexander*, Book VI, chaps. 7-11, translated by John Brende in 1553; and Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*).[75]

Despite Rees's reservations the parallels with Essex seem quite explicit. Philotas, a member of the nobility, despairs at Alexander's dependency on low-born ministers and claims that the building up of his own following is in order to defend himself from his enemies. It is Alexander's ministers - Craterus and Ephestion - who work for Philotas's downfall and persuade the Emperor to bring him to trial. Philotas denies the charges against him at his trial but like Essex finally confesses and implicates his friends in the conspiracy. The chorus, representing public opinion, in the final act moves from praising Philotas for his nobility to condemning him for his treason and the dishonourable betrayal of his friends.

The trial scene has similarities with the trial of Silius in *Sejanus* and like the latter probably makes allusion to the Raleigh trial rather than Essex's. In the trial Philotas is condemned on circumstantial evidence by a court that has determined his guilt before he is permitted to speak.

Despite the allusions to Essex, events in the play are portrayed objectively and the ending remains inconclusive. Although the methods used by Craterus, Ephestion and Perdiceas to bring about Philotas's downfall are morally questionable, they are determined by reason of state. Philotas's failure to warn the king of the attempt against his life raises questions about his loyalty. By building up a large retinue for himself and boasting to his followers that Alexander owes his kingdom to him and his father, Philotas is making himself a target of suspicion. The end of the play is inconclusive and we are left uncertain of Philotas's innocence or guilt. Is what he confesses the truth or has he been broken by torture to the extent that he will confess whatever his enemies demand in order to end his suffering?

Daniel attempts to preserve the objectivity of his sources through the use of a Greek Chorus representing the opinions of 'the vulgar'. The Chorus remains outside the action and changes its views in accordance with developments. The Chorus is, at first, sympathetic to Philotas because he is the popular hero, successful in battle and adorned with the noble graces. At the same time, it is suspicious of Craterus and Ephestion and the other counsellors who are disdainful of the people and exercise great power in secret. However, while recognizing that the latter 'cloathe their private hate / In those faire colours of the publike good' they are aware of the danger to the state represented by Philotas:

> [...] States have ever had far more unrest
> By spirits of worth, then men of meaner skill;
> And find, that those do alwayes better prove,
> Wh'are equall to imployment, not above.
> (III, 1164-7)[76]

In the final scene the Nuncius reports to the Chorus on Philotas's torture, confession and death. The Chorus, at first, praises Philotas's bravery under torture and his refusal to confess, but when the Nuncius reports his later confession and the betrayal of his father and friends the Chorus revokes its praise:

> O would we had not heard his latter jarre:
> This all his former straines of worth doth marre.
> Before this last, his spirits [stout] commends,
> But now he is unpitied of his friends.
> (V, 2218-21)

The Chorus ends the play by agreeing with the Nuncius that the death of

Philotas is justified if it was necessary in order to safeguard the king, but is worried that his death will create room for a new ambitious favourite to emerge.

Philotas, in much the same way as *Sejanus*, demystifies the workings of the state. Alexander and his ministers are for the most part seen to be serving their own interests under the disguise of working for the good of the state. Philotas's fall from power is the result of his ambition and his failure to warn the king of the attempt on his life. Philotas remains throughout an ambiguous character. Although politically ambitious, the truth of his final confession is uncertain. Nevertheless, the extent of his confession, in which he implicates father and friends in the plot against Alexander, raises questions about his loyalty, whether to family, friends or king. The play is set in a political world in which kings and ministers are dependent on informers, corrupt trials, and devious practices in order to safeguard or to enhance their positions.

1.5. Chapman and the Reconstruction of French History

Through the use of Tacitean methodology Chapman manages, in his plays, to transform his source material in order to dramatize objectively the conflict between king and nobility and to portray the political hierarchy as concerned primarily with power, place and image. Through a discussion of the additions he makes to his main historical source in *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* I will show how Chapman transforms the providentialist narrative of Edward Grimeston into a play that offers an objective account of the Byron conspiracy and raises contemporary issues about the relationship between king and nobility.

1.5.1. Chapman's Tacitism

Chapman's tragedies conform to the general expectations of Tacitean Historiography. In this respect they demystify the apparatus of government by analyzing the motives that influence the decisions of the political hierarchy and by decoding political discourse. Furthermore, they present history as an analogy for contemporary political issues with the aim of offering 'material instructions' for the audience by providing an objective dramatization of statecraft.[77] The main characters in each of Chapman's plays represent a different perspective on the events of the play.

It is worth mentioning here, that Chapman, like Savile, Hayward and Daniel had known links with the Earl of Essex. The extent of the connection is difficult to prove but in 1598 he seems to have made a determined effort to win the patronage of the Earl. In that year he dedicated two of his Homeric translations to Essex: *The Seaven Bookes of the Iliades* and *Achilles' Shield*. In the 'Epistle Dedicatory' to *The Seaven Bookes* he attempts to compare Essex's noble and active virtues with those of Achilles:

> Most true Achilles, whom by sacred prophecy Homer did but prefigure in his admirable object, and in whose unmatched virtues shine the dignities of the soul, and the whole excellence of royal humanity, let not the peasant-common politics of the world, that count all things servile and simple, that pamper not their private sensualities, burying quick in their filthy sepulchres of earth the whole bodies and souls of honour, virtue, and piety, stir your divine temper from perseverance in godlike pursuit of eternity.[78]

The epistle seems to be an attempt to warn Essex against becoming involved in domestic politics but to give his whole attention to seeking military glory. Essex should be warned by the example of Achilles' dispute with Agamemnon from becoming embroiled in disputes with the queen. The implication is that at a time of crisis in Ireland Essex's abilities are required to lead a military campaign against the Irish rebels. Just as Troy could not fall without the presence of Achilles (or his son Neoptolemus) it is implied that Ireland cannot be tamed without the presence of Essex.

In the same year Chapman praised Essex's success at Cadiz in *Hero and Leander*. Cadiz is described as:

> Th' *Iberian* citie that wars hand did strike
> By English force in princely *Essex* guide,
> When peace assur'd her towres hand fortifide;
> And golden-fingred *India* had bestowd
> Such wealth on her, that strength and Empire flowd
> Into her Turrets; and her virgin waste
> The wealthie girdle of the sea embraste.[79]

Chapman made no further dedications to Essex after 1598. This is probably due to Essex's fall from favour and arrest in 1599 rather than Chapman's failure to receive patronage. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, Chapman's interest in chivalry and Essex is continued in his choice of subjects for his tragic plays.

Whereas Jonson and Daniel turned to classical history to provide the setting for their tragedies, Chapman found examples of the political conflict he wished to portray closer to home, in recent French history. The French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) and the conspiracies of the nobility centred around the Duc de Biron in 1602 and the d'Entragues family in 1604, offered examples of the political instability that was the result of a combination of weak government, powerful nobility and religious conflict. Furthermore, it provided Chapman with an opportunity to consider the relationship between monarch and nobility and to expose the nobility's perpetuation of the chivalric myth as a form of political discourse. As will be shown in later chapters, leading players in the Religious Wars, including King Henry IV, the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Biron, associated themselves with chivalric values and had portraits painted of themselves in armour and on horseback in order to present themselves as the popular heroes of chivalric romance. In addition they never let pass an opportunity to display their military talents on the battlefield and to enhance their personal honours by participating in skirmishes in which the odds were weighted against them. Not only did these figures take on the appearance of fictional heroes but were also attributed with their uncompromising virtue. As will be explained in the next chapter the use of chivalric iconography identified the nobility with a past 'Golden Age' of adventure and military success and stressed their importance within the social hierarchy.

Chapman's plays, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, expose the nobility's chivalric associations as either misdirected or misleading. The plays separate the modern reality of chivalry from its fictional ideal. The political alliances which are made in the plays and the characters' perceptions of themselves and of others are seen to be motivated primarily by self-interest.

1.5.2. Tacitist Methodology: Chapman's Dramatization of Grimeston

Much has been written, since F. S. Boas's article in 1903, on Chapman's dependency on Edward Grimeston for the source material of *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*. Most recently John Margeson in the Revels edition of the play writes:

> Chapman used Grimeston as Shakespeare used North's Plutarch, at times with great freedom, compressing scattered material into a single scene, omitting, shaping, enlarging; at times following his source closely, echoing the very language of the original. In general terms, he based *The Conspiracy* on widely separated passages from over two hundred pages of Grimeston's text, whereas for *The Tragedy* he used the detailed and dramatic account

> Grimeston gave of Byron's downfall, trial and execution in fifty pages of text.[80]

Nevertheless, Margeson does recognize that 'There are a number of passages in the two plays which cannot be traced to Grimeston, or which are merely hinted at in Grimeston'.[81] It is the latter that will be the focus of discussion in this section, as it is in these passages that Chapman displays his wish to create a dramatic history in the Tacitean manner.

Little is known about Edward Grimeston, the translator. He was probably the second son of the Edward Grimeston who was secretary to the English Ambassador in Paris in 1587.[82] Most of the information we have on Grimeston comes from the dedicatory letters to patrons and addresses to readers which are attached to his translations. We know that he was employed in some diplomatic capacity in France from the dedicatory letters he prefixed to *The General Inventorie* in 1607, *The Low Country Commonwealth* (1609), and *The Estates, Empires and Principalities of the World* (1615). In the first of these, dedicated to the Earls of Suffolk and Salisbury, he speaks of having retired to 'private and domesticke cares' after 'some yeares expence in France for the Publike service of the State'. In 1609 it seems that he returned to France as he claims to have written *The Low Country Commonwealth* 'in such houres, as I could well spare, from my more necessarie imployments, since my coming into France.' In his 'Epistle to the Earl of Suffolk' prefixed to *The Estates, Empires and Principalities of the World* in 1615 he provides further detail of his service: 'After eight yeares spent for the publique service of this Estate, in France, seeing my Starre without light in our Horizon, and the hopes of my service, or of further imployments dead, I retired my selfe to this fruitlesse course of life [i.e. translation] to the end I might deceive the hours of my idle time, and leave some testimonie to the world of my lives imployment'.[83]

Grimeston's first translations were published in 1604. From this date until his final published translation in 1635 he produced nineteen different translations, predominantly histories of France, Spain and the Netherlands.

Other information on Grimeston comes from the *Journals of the House of Commons*. An entry for March 1610 shows that Edward Grimeston was sworn in as Sergeant at Arms to wait upon the Speaker at the time of Parliament. Grimeston probably received this post through the patronage of the Earl of Suffolk to whom he dedicated many of his translations. In his dedication to *The Estates, Empires and Principalities of the World* Grimeston praised Suffolk for 'countenancing my poore and weake labours, in bringing me againe into the world, and giving me new life'.[84] This is an office he seems to have held for thirty years, as the final reference to him mentions his attendance at the opening session of the Long Parliament in November 1640.[85]

The first edition of Grimeston's *A General Inventorie of the History of France* was published by George Eld in 1607. Grimeston translated events up to 1598 from Jean de Serres's *Inventaire General de L'Histoire de France*, and the final seven years covered by the book, from the works of Pierre Matthieu and Palma Cayet.[86]

In his address 'To the Reader' Grimeston gives his reasons for the translation. Firstly, to free himself from 'the imputation of idlenesse'. Secondly, 'to give some content unto such as either by their travell abroad, or by their industrie at home, have not attained unto the knowledge of the Tongue, to read it in the originall'. Finally, to encourage patriotism among his countrymen who seeing 'the Sundry Battailes woon by our Kings of England against the French, and the worthie exploits of the English, during their warres with France [...] may bee incited to the like resolutions upon the like occasions'.[87] The implication of Grimeston's final reason is that he is writing an orthodox rather than an objective account of events. Events are viewed from the perspective of the monarch and the ruling group as can be seen from his narrative of the relations between Henry IV and the Duke of Byron. However, as a translator Grimeston is hindered by the royalist stance of his sources as he indicates in the 'Address to the Reader'. He claims that Jean de Serres:

> ... had vowed to note every accident of State and warre briefely and truely. Besides, you must consider that he was a Frenchman: and although he would not altogether smother and conceale those things, which might any way eclipse the glory of his nation, least he should be taxed to have fayled in these two excellent vertues required in an Historiographer, Truth and integritte, without passion, yet happily he hath reported them as sparingly as he could.[88]

This passage betrays Grimeston's own patriotic sympathies in his satisfaction that Serres reported 'sparingly' those events that 'might any way eclipse the glory' of the nation. It seems that Grimeston believed historians should be selective about what they relate and in his case he would prefer to include only those events that enhance the 'glory' of the nation. We see a further example of his concern with the careful selectivity of history when he defends himself from the criticism of not having translated Pierre Matthieu's work in its entirety, instead of using it to supplement the work of Jean de Serres. He writes of Matthieu:

> I found many things written by him that were not fit to be inserted, and some things belonging unto the Historie, related by others, whereof he makes no mention.[89]

A General Inventorie was popular in England and had sold out by 1611 when Grimeston was asked to prepare a second edition. For the second edition he altered the title to *A General Historie of France written by John de Serres unto the year 1598. Much augmented and continued unto the present out of the most approoved authors that have written of that subject*. The book was increased to 1419 pages and the narrative extended to the coronation of Louis XIII in 1610.

As I have already suggested Grimeston's account of Byron's conspiracy was written from the perspective of the ascendancy. Although Byron was praised for his military achievements during the Wars of Religion, his discontent with the political status quo was put down to frustrated personal ambition and he was denounced by the author for conspiring against the virtuous king and threatening the peace of the kingdom. No attempt was made to consider deeper motives for Byron's actions nor to put his conspiracy into the context of the general discontent of the nobility in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the king's own motives and actions were left unquestioned and he was presented as an exemplary manifestation of morality and justice.

In his account of the conspiracy, Grimeston portrayed historical events as a simple conflict between good and evil in which the latter was inevitably vanquished by the moral supremacy of virtuous authority. Viewing history retrospectively the distinction between good and evil was supposedly apparent throughout, to all who took the trouble to consider events closely. An example of this approach can be seen in Grimeston's description of Byron. Although he is praised for his valour in battle, he is portrayed, on the whole, as a dark, unsociable figure whose political ambitions unbalanced his judgement:

> This Marshall had goodly parts, communicable to fewe, his Valour was admirable, and happy in all his incounters; of an invincible Courage, infatigable and never tired with any toyle, continuing ordinarily fifteene dayes together on horse-backe. He was not inclined to voluptuousnesse, nor much to the love of women, sober ynough, the which began to quench that furious humour, as Intemperancy and greatnesse increased, or that Rest did moderate his boyling passions. He was extremely Vaine-glorious, yea sometimes he would refuse his meate, and content himselfe with little to feede his Fantasie with Glory and Vanity. He was of a meane stature, Blacke, reasonable grosse, hollow eyd, and rough in speech and conversation. He was adventurous in War, Ambitious beyond all measure. The excesse of his ambition made him to brave it without judgement. He became so presumptuous, as

> he thought that the King, nor France could not subsist without him.[90]

Chapman's plays, although heavily dependent on Grimeston, offer a different perspective on events. Through the addition of a set of speeches attributed to Byron the plays tend to advance Byron's point of view alongside that of the king. In these speeches Byron justifies his conspiracy against the king on the grounds that the king has proved unfaithful in religion and has betrayed the loyalty of his nobility by advancing the political influence of non-nobles at their expense. In addition, Chapman's king is shown on occasions to act deviously, while his ministers are sycophantic characters who are motivated solely by political expediency. Chapman makes no moral judgements on his characters. The king and his ministers are not condemned for their activities but rather they are seen to be doing what is necessary to protect the crown and prevent the threat of a renewal of war. The major difference in Chapman's portrayal of the king is that he deconstructs the mystic, godlike image of kingship that is upheld by Grimeston.

An early example of Chapman's shift of perspective can be seen in the use he makes of Grimeston's description of Byron. Taking the passage almost directly from his source Chapman gives the speech to Roncas (*Cons.* I. 1. 61-82).[91] This transference of Grimeston's description of Byron to Roncas changes its context. Roncas is Savoy's ambassador in France and his description of Byron is part of an attempt to persuade the Duke that Byron would be a fit instrument through which to draw France back into war against Spain. What was originally put across as an objective description of Byron by Grimeston has taken on a different perspective in the play, as a politically motivated account by a character representing a specific political interest. It is also noticeable that Chapman drops the reference to Byron being of 'meane stature, Blacke, reasonable grosse, hollow eyd, and rough in speech and conversation'.

Of equal significance to Chapman's deployment of his source material are his additions. Four speeches that Chapman invents for Byron or adapts from classical sources serve the purpose of offering a new perspective on Byron's conspiracy by providing a degree of justification for the marshal's discontent.

In the first of these speeches (*The Cons*, III. 2. 227-43) Byron complains to the king about his neglect of the nobility and his advancement of low-born sycophants. This speech emphasises the complaint of the nobility that in times of peace their service is forgotten and they are displaced in the favour of the king by new men who retain their position through flattery. Byron distinguishes between the independent spirit of the traditional nobility and the dependency on the king of his non-noble ministers. The concerns raised by Byron would have been familiar to many of the English nobility who during the reigns of Elizabeth and James had seen a growth in the financial power of the central state at the expense of their own financial independence. At times of peace the nobility, in general, were dependent on the monarch for office and financial rewards. Under Elizabeth and James they often found themselves isolated on their estates and forced to settle for largely ceremonial offices. Byron's discontent at the political displacement of the nobility reflects the concern of the Earl of Essex in the 1590s.

The second of Byron's additional speeches comes at the beginning of *The Tragedy* (*Trag*. I. 2. 2-35). It echoes the concerns of the previous speech and represents Byron sharing his fears with D'Auvergne and La Fin. Byron considers the 'sensual peace' to be responsible for the social upheaval that he believes is occurring in France. Having spent all his adult life in military campaigns he is unable to come to terms with peace and his own exclusion from the king's closest councils. In a time of peace the king, of necessity, seeks advice from those who are skilled in the day to day running of the political state, just as during the wars he had sought the advice of Byron and the other nobility who were trained in the accomplishments of battle. Byron is unable to accept his new role and the break-up of the social order to which he is accustomed. The certainties of status that had existed for him during the wars were not to be found in a France that was at peace. Unskilled in the arts of peace Byron can only look towards war as the means of restoring a sense of his own political significance. Byron's condemnation of the effects of peace would have found sympathetic ears in England among those who had opposed the peace with Spain that had been established by the Treaty of London in 1604. One such opponent of peace was Sir William Browne who wrote to Robert Cecil in August 1604 to express his distrust of the Spanish:

> I would we had kept the old pathway of our late Queen, for then our old enemy and now new reconciled friend, would have been at death's door, and christendom no more have feared his usurping ambitions.[92]

Furthermore, the nobility in England, with the exception of the Howard family, was beginning to realize that its new role was to be a ceremonial rather than a political one. Like Byron they considered that the country's apparent moral and military decline was due to the idle habits that were encouraged by peace. Fulke Greville, who was excluded from political office for most of James's reign, contrasted the honour, nobility and virtue of Sidney with the degenerate servants of James I whom he considered to be merely 'creatures' of the king: 'children of favour and chance'. It was not surprising, Greville thought, given such advisers, that James should have sacrificed the Protestant foreign policy inherited from his predecessor to 'the deceiving shadow of peace' with Spain.[93]

The moral decline of authority is the issue of the third of Byron's additional speeches (*Trag.* III. 1. 1-48). Once again he justifies rebellion against the king on the grounds that he has been released from his allegiance by the king's lack of honour and integrity. The gist of his speech is that a king who has betrayed his nobility has no rights to their loyalty. Byron sees his relationship with the king in terms of a feudal constitution that demands loyalty from the king to the nobility as well as vice-versa. Byron is here upholding the theory of Subaltern Majesty which will be discussed in Chapter Two. Byron proceeds to blame what he considers to be the moral degeneration of the country on the king's own political and religious duplicity. When subjects see their king 'playing both ways with religion' it is no surprise that they too should dispense with traditional moral teachings. When the king's virtue comes under question from his subjects then 'the lamp of all authority goes out/And all the blaze of princes is extinct'. In effect Byron blames the king's machiavellianism for the demystification of the monarchy that leads to the break-down of moral authority and social order. It is significant that a few lines later D'Escures arrives from the king to persuade Byron to return to court, by offering false assurances.

The last of Byron's four additional speeches occurs at the beginning of Act IV of *The Tragedy* (*Trag.* IV. 1. 1-24). Taking up the theme of earlier speeches Byron considers the detrimental effect of peace on the nobility. The idleness and pleasure to which they devote their time will lead to their decline and the loss of their political influence. Eventually the authority of the monarch will exist unchallenged. The effect of the speech is to attack the passiveness of the nobility who Byron claims have made no attempt to defend their constitutional rights. In a pun on their concern with honours (line 14) he implies that the nobility are dishonouring themselves by satisfying their self-esteem with the largely ceremonial honours that are distributed by the king. Byron implies that these honours are a form of payment to the nobility in order to keep their pockets full while their traditional rights are taken away. Byron fears the consequences of this upon the kingdom. When the rights of the nobility have been rescinded there will be no one to check the power of the king: the result being possible tyranny. The constitutional issues raised in this speech would have been of interest to Chapman's English audience.

The effect of these four speeches that Chapman has added to his main source is to justify Byron's conspiracy in terms of his own political position. He is not the moral retrograde depicted by Grimeston who rebels against a virtuous king in order to satisfy his own ambitions but is motivated by what he considers to be political necessity.

Other additions made by Chapman serve to demystify Grimeston's virtuous monarch by showing him to be motivated not by purely moral reasons but, like Byron, by political necessity. The means he uses to safeguard his position, however justified, are machiavellian and the ministers he appoints to advise him are sycophantic place men who are not limited in their actions or advice by any moral boundaries. Their very presence at the court serves to justify Byron's complaints.

The king in his two speeches on the responsibilities of kingship (*Trag.* IV. 2. 63-85 & V. 1. 48-65) sets himself up as a judge upon the moral behaviour of others. In the context of the king's proceedings against Byron these speeches come across as hypocritical. As the second of the speeches is made to an ambassadorial audience the effect is to emphasise the distinction between the moral public face of the monarchy and the private intrigues of the man who is king.

Henry who had previously denounced La Fin as 'La Fiend' employs him as an *agent-provocateur* to draw Byron into rebellion, betray his trust and testify against him. He is later used by the king along with other ministers to offer Byron false assurances in order to lure him away from his military stronghold at Dijon and back to court. When planning this manoeuvre the king shows his willingness to accept political expediency by not only employing La Fin but by urging that the letters sent to Byron, assuring him that the conspiracy had not been discovered, should be sent 'By some choice friend of his, or by his brother'.

Following Byron's arrest the king determines on a public show trial in order to satisfy the world of Byron's guilt. As is implied by the king's speech this is little more than a ceremonial device to disguise the questionable nature of the evidence against Byron (based on the testimony of an *agent-provocateur*) by the show of justice.

> My subjects and the world shall know my power
> And my authority by law's usual course
> Dares punish, not the devilish heads of treason,
> But their confederates, be they ne'er so dreadful.
> The decent ceremonies of my laws
> And their solemnities shall be observed,
> With all their sternness and severity.
> (*Trag*. IV. 2. 41-7)

Although the peers refuse to sit in judgement on Byron, the trial continues under the direction of the Chancellor who has already proved himself an enemy of the marshal. The corruption of the trial, as Chapman portrays it, has similarities with those of Philotas in Daniel's play and Silius in Jonson's *Sejanus*. Along with Daniel and Jonson, Chapman may well have been influenced by the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh. The similarities between all four trial scenes offer an interesting subject for discussion in another paper.

Chapman had earlier developed the role of the Chancellor as one of the machiavellian advisors to the king whose presence at court has inspired Byron's wrath. He maintains files on those subjects whom he suspects of wrongdoing in order to have a hold over them which can be put to use at a later date. He retains the letters, implicating other members of the nobility in Byron's conspiracy, even though the king has made it clear that he will only use those which name Byron alone:

> My lord, my purpose is to guard all these
> So safely from the sight of any other
> That in my doublet I will have them sewed,
> Without discovering them to mine own eyes
> Till need or opportunity requires.
> (*Trag.* I. 3. 76-80.)

The king's other leading minister, Janin, is involved in the attempt to persuade Byron to return to court and later urges the king to execute him without trial on the grounds that:

> Princes, you know, are masters of their laws,
> And may resolve them to what forms they please,
> So all conclude in justice.
> (*Trag.* IV. 2. 31-3.)

The effect of Chapman's additions to his main source, as I have already suggested, serves to redirect the balance of Grimeston's prose account. Chapman like other Tacitean historiographers sets out to rewrite history from an objective political perspective as opposed to the orthodox accounts that perceive history from the perspective of the ascendant group. It should be stressed that the Byron plays do not justify the hero's conspiracy at the expense of the king but show both protagonists to be motivated by political concerns. The plays challenge a reading of history that considers events in terms of good versus evil.

Other aspects of the Byron plays, including analogies with the Essex rebellion and censorship, although related to Tacitism, will be discussed in Chapter Four.

1.6. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to consider the development of Tacitean historiography in England during the 1590s and early 1600s, to consider its political significance in the context of the Essex rebellion and to show how dramatists used the new approach to history as a means of demystifying the political apparatus of the day by detaching state policy from the religious and moralistic discourse to which it was frequently attached.

Furthermore, I have shown how Chapman in the Byron plays, by taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the medium of drama (for example the presentation of characters and assignment of speeches) and by making additions to his main source, recreated the conflict between Byron and Henry IV in a Tacitean manner. The significance of this will be seen in later chapters when I consider Chapman's decoding of chivalric and courtly discourse through a close study of his French tragedies.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Tavistock, 1972; repr. London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7.
2. David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 172.
3. Peter Burke, 'Tacitism'; Kenneth C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought*; J. H. M. Salmon, 'Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England'
4. Burke, p. 149.
5. Schellhase, p. 128.
6. Schellhase, pp. 118-9; Burke, p. 161.
7. Burke, p. 150; Alan T. Bradford, 'Stuart Absolutism and the "Utility" of Tacitus', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46 (1983), 127-55 (p. 127); Malcolm Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c.1590-1630', (note 18, p. 327).
8. Schellhase, p. 119; David Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Elizabethan Texts', 326-30.
9. Schellhase, pp. 110-11, 120.
10. Schellhase, pp. 120-1.
11. Schellhase, pp. 121-2.
12. Schellhase, pp. 121, 127.
13. Schellhase, pp. 123-4, 127.
14. Bradford, p. 129.
15. Burke, p. 150; Schellhase, p.14. C17th figures taken from Burke. For fuller statistics see Peter Burke, 'A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians 1450-1700', *History and Theory*, 5 (1966), 135-52 (137).
16. Schellhase, pp. 15-16.
17. Blair Worden, 'Classical Republicanism and the Puritan Revolution' in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, ed. by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 182-200 (pp. 185-90).
18. Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics', p. 25.
19. Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus'; Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics'.
20. Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics', p. 26.
21. Ben Jonson, *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* in *Ben Jonson* ed. by C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925-52), i, pp. 132-51 (p. 142); Edmund Bolton, *Hypercritica* in *Ancient Critical Essays Upon English Poets and Poesy*, ed. by Joseph Haslewood, 2 vols. (London: Robert Triphook, 1815), ii, 254.
22. Francis Bacon, *The Proficience and Advancement of Learning: Divine and Humane* (1605), in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. by J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. D. Heath (London: Longman, 1857-90), iii. 335.
23. Womersley, p. 318.
24. Quoted from Womersley, p. 318.
25. An example of the latter is the *Homilie Against Disobedience and Wilfull Rebellion*, published in 1571.
26. Quotation from Womersley, pp. 323-4.
27. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. & ed. by George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961; repr. 1986), p. 96.
28. Order was made by the Privy Council for the arrest of Savile on 14 Feb 1601. However, Savile's confinement was of short duration as he had returned to his post as Provost of Eton College by 20 March 1601 when order was made for Essex's son to return to Eton 'to be by him [Savile] brought up and taught in that colledge'. *CSP Dom 1598-1601*, p. 590; *Acts of the Privy Council 1600-1*, pp. 157; 229-30.
29. Salmon, 'Seneca and Tacitus', p. 172.

30. Logan Pearsall Smith, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), ii, pp. 110, 199, 211, 395, 494.

31. Burke, p. 155.

32. Robert Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex* (New York and London: Weidenfeld, 1971), p. 124; McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood*, p. 101.

33. Edwin B. Benjamin, 'Sir John Hayward and Tacitus' *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 8 (1957), 275-6 (276); William Camden, *Annales, or the History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth*, trans. by R. Norton, 3rd edition (London, 1635), pp. 532 & 536.

34. *Mirror for Magistrates*, published in 1559, 1563, 1571, 1578 & 1587; Samuel Daniel, *The Civil Wars Between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York*, published in 1595, 1599 and 1601-2; Edward Halle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York*, published in 1550; Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, published in 1587; Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, probably first performed in 1595.

35. F. J. Levy, 'Hayward, Daniel and the Beginnings of Politic History in England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50 (1987), 1-34 (2-3).

36. *The First and Second Parts of John Hayward's The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, ed. by John J. Manning, Camden 4th series, vol 42 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1991), p. 61.

37. *Queen Elizabeth and Her Times*, ed. by Thomas Wright, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), ii, p. 75, Manning, p. 21.

38. Quoted from Manning, p. 21.

39. Quoted from James, p. 423.

40. *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. by John Nichols, 3 vols (London: Nichols, 1823), iii, p. 552.

41. James, pp. 422-3.

42. Manning, p. 19.

43. Manning, p. 19.

44. Cecil claimed in the Star Chamber that Essex had 'kept the book 14 days to peruse, and when he knew how many copies were dispersed, sent to the metropolitan to have it called in as a dangerous book'. *PRO SP* 12/278, no. 54; Manning, p. 33.

45. Manning, pp. 23-5.

46. Manning, pp. 28-9.

47. Manning, pp. 31-2.

48. Manning, pp. 33-4.

49. A. R. Braunmuller, 'King John and Historiography', *English Literary History*, 55 (1988), 309-32 (323).

50. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols, ed. by N. E. McClure (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939), i, p. 70.

51. Camden, p. 493

52. E. M. Albright, 'Shakespeare's Richard II and the Essex Conspiracy', *PMLA* 42 (1927), 686-728; 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Hayward's History of Henry IV and the Essex Conspiracy', *PMLA*, 46 (1931), 694-719.

53. Albright (1927), 709.

54. E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), i, p. 356.

55. William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. by Andrew Gurr (Cambridge University Press (New Cambridge Shakespeare), 1984; repr. 1992). All quotations are from this edition and line references appear in the text.

56. Albright (1927); Roy Heffner, 'Shakespeare, Hayward and Essex', *PMLA* 45 (1930), 754-80; Albright (1931).

57. Stephen Greenblatt, '*The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*', *Genre* 15 (1982), 1-2; Jonathan Dollimore, 'Introduction: Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism' in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 8.

58. Leeds Barroll, 'A New History for Shakespeare and His Time', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988), pp. 441-64.
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60. *CSP Dom 1598-1601*, p. 435.
61. Gurr, p. 9; Greenblatt, 1-2.
62. Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 124.
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68. Ayres, ed., *Sejanus*, pp. 20-2.
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70. Dutton, *Ben Jonson*, p. 57.
71. Ref in *CSP Dom 1603-10*, p.182.
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Chapter Two

Man's 'Native and Legall Freedom': Chivalry and the Politics of the 'Ancient' Nobility

> ... since I am free
> (Offending no just law), let no law make
> By any wrong it does, my life her slave:
> When I am wrong'd and that law fails to right me,
> Let me be King myself (as man was made)
> And do a justice that exceeds the law:
> ...
> Who to himself is law, no law doth need,
> Offends no king, and is a King indeed.
> (*Bussy D'Ambois* II i 194-9, 203-4)[1]

2.1. Introduction - Chapman and Chivalry

In the previous chapter I set out to place Chapman among the Tacitean writers who were connected with the Essex Circle in the late 1590s and showed him to belong to a group of dramatists whose history plays adapted many of the characteristics of Tacitean historiography. Having considered Chapman's literary affiliations I would now like to look at his connections with the nobility and his interest in chivalry, through a discussion of the political concerns that are the central theme of his plays.

His interest in chivalry and his sympathies with the nobility can be traced in the early Homeric translations in which he emphasizes those aspects of Achilles' character which are pertinent to Essex. As John Briggs has shown:

> ... his choice of books in his first edition of Homer [*The Seaven Bookes*] seems to have been made from topical as well as aesthetic consideration. The seven books (1, 2, and 7-11) highlight the story of Achilles in a way which amplifies its applicability to Essex in 1598, while it also focuses the action for an effective abbreviation of Homer.[2]

Briggs claims that Chapman modifies Homer's text to emphasize and exaggerate specific parallels between Achilles and Essex. Achilles' divine ancestry becomes royal ancestry and he is praised as 'a king's heire' who has all the qualities of leadership. Achilles' conflict with Agamemnon over Briseis is transformed by Chapman into the complaint of the unrewarded soldier:

> O thou possest with impudence, that in command of men
> Affectst the brute mind of a Fox, for so thou fill thy denne
> With forced or betrayed spoiles thou feelest no sence of shame!
> What souldier can take any spirite to put on (for thy fame)
> Contempt of violence and death, or in the open field
> Or secret ambush, when the heyre his hie desert should yield
> Is beforehand condemned to glut thy gulfe of avarice?[3]

Achilles is transformed by Chapman in these early translations in order to appeal to Essex's martial interests and to encourage the earl to emulate Achilles by winning military glory.

Chapman's interest in chivalry, as I will show in the course of this thesis, continued into the first decade of the seventeenth century and the role of chivalry and its connection with the political interests of the nobility is, I will argue, the central theme of his tragedies. It is likely that during this period Chapman held some position in the household of Prince Henry, to whom he dedicated *Teares of Peace*, *The Twelve Books of the Iliads* (both 1609) and *The Iliads of Homer, Prince of Poets* (1611). Henry's interest in chivalry has been well documented by Roy Strong, Graham Parry and J. W. Williamson among others.[4] Until recently critics had accepted E. K. Chambers's assertion that Chapman had served Prince Henry as 'sewer-in-ordinary'.[5] This claim had been based on an anonymous petition in the Folger Manuscript Va 321 from someone who had served 'above Nine yeares ye late Prince Henry in place of a sewer in Ordinarie' but has now lost his place.[6] Although surrounded in the manuscript by authentic Chapman letters there is no evidence for attributing this petition to him. A. R. Braunmuller has indicated that 'no surviving list of Prince Henry's household from the earliest in the domestic state papers (10 October 1605) to the latest (ca. April 1613) mentions Chapman, although other sewers (who earned twenty pounds annually) and members of the household above and below stairs are amply documented'.[7] It is possible, however, that the dramatist is, as Roy Strong has suggested, the '"Mr Chapman" who received cloth for the Prince's funeral in the capacity of one of the "Gentlemen extraordinarie servauntes to the Prince"'.[8] Braunmuller points out that 'a gentleman extraordinary received livery but no fixed salary and paid only occasional "extra-ordinary", attendance upon the Prince'[9]. This position, it is suggested, fits well with Chapman's references to the Prince's request that he complete the Homeric translations, his years of unpaid work on the project, the Prince's promise of three hundred pounds and the death-bed promise of a life pension.[10]

Whatever position Chapman may have held in the household of Prince Henry there is little doubt about his familiarity with the circle of artists, poets and aristocrats who attended Henry's court. Among those with whom he is known to have been familiar is Inigo Jones, who collaborated with him on *The Memorable Masque* for the wedding festivities of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Frederick of the Palatinate in 1613, and to whom he dedicated his translation of *Musaeus* in 1616. Following Chapman's death in 1634, Jones erected, at his own expense, a funeral monument to the dramatist at St. Giles-in-the-Fields in London. The poet Michael Drayton, also a client of Prince Henry, wrote a commendatory verse for Chapman's *Hesiod* translation and praised him as 'the most curious maker of them all' in his verse epistle 'of Poets and Poesie' in 1627. To Sir Henry Fanshawe, the close friend of Henry, Chapman presented an inscribed copy of his twelve books of the *Odysseys* in 1614. Furthermore, Chapman addressed many of the sonnets prefixed to the *Iliads* to those members of the nobility who frequented Henry's court, notably the Earls of

Southampton, Pembroke and Arundel.[11]

I would now like to consider the constitutional concerns of the nobility in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England and their use of chivalry as a means of promoting 'native rights' and establishing a nostalgic chivalric 'golden age'. As will be shown in the thesis these issues are central to the understanding of Chapman's tragedies.

It will be seen, in this chapter, how the weaknesses, inconsistencies and dangers of combining 'Native' Rights with chivalry were exposed by the Earl of Essex's attempted coup. The chapter will commence with a consideration of the problems confronting the Renaissance nobility and then look at the politics of the Ancient Constitution; the role of chivalry in aristocratic politics; the Essex Rebellion; the political re-alignment of 1603; and finish with a brief consideration of the changing nature of chivalry under James I. In discussing the role of chivalry and the concerns of the nobility I draw significantly on the work of Richard McCoy, Mervyn James and Lawrence Stone[12]

I have concentrated primarily upon the last two decades of Queen Elizabeth's reign and have made the Earl of Essex the central character of the chapter. The reason for this is that Essex epitomizes the Renaissance chivalric ideal in England, and his fall illustrates most of the weaknesses of Elizabethan Chivalry. Furthermore, Essex represents the fusion of literary qualities with real life just as Chapman's Tragedies merge history with fictional representation. In addition to this, Essex is clearly the most significant single influence upon Chapman's portrayal of chivalry in *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron.* I have made only passing reference to the Cleves-Julich crisis of 1609-10 because, as it is contextually central to *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, I considered it more appropriate for discussion in Chapter Five.

2.2 The Changing Face of the Nobility

The more active spirits among the Elizabethan and Jacobean nobility, confronted by the increased power and influence of the monarchy, and discontented with the lack of opportunities to build up wealth and influence through war, turned to chivalric display and iconography in an attempt to re-establish or reinforce their traditional position at the top of the political hierarchy of the day.

The early Tudor monarchs Henry VII and Henry VIII had set out to curtail the independent feudal power bases of the landed aristocracy through the careful control of political patronage. Under the Tudors patronage and political office was centred around the court and distributed equitably among loyal servants of the regime. In addition they built up factions among lesser established families in the Northern territories in an attempt to restrict the large feudal empires of the Percys, the Nevilles and the Dacres.

As David Loades has shown, a court based aristocracy of men, such as Charles Brandon, Thomas Boleyn and William Paulet, was built up and gradually replaced the great landed magnates who had played a major role in the civil wars of the fifteenth century. For the new nobility, dignities and wealth were rewards for services rendered to the monarchy, and they had neither the will nor the 'manred' (the men a lord could call on in wartime) for independent action. By the end of Henry VIII's reign such men were in the ascendancy and the older type of provincial magnate, such as the Earls of Shrewsbury, Derby and Arundel, were drawn into a similar dependence on the monarch by the attractive lure of office and monastic land.[13]

The administrative reforms of Henry VII and Henry VIII were based on the policy of rewarding loyal service with grants of office and land, and punishing disloyalty through fines, control of wardships and attainders.

As wealth and office were centred around the court and offered in return for political service those members of the landed nobility who failed to cooperate found themselves cut off from political and financial power.

Queen Elizabeth continued the policy of her father and grandfather by rewarding service, although not over generously, and punishing severely any challenge to her authority. There were no great patronage brokers during Elizabeth's reign although there was always an inner circle of favoured courtiers, whose recommendations were listened to when appointments were to be made, and who were allowed to reward their followers within reasonable limits.[14]

David Loades has suggested that as aristocratic lifestyles changed and the size of noble retinues and households declined, royal service became the only career option for an ambitious gentleman. Although knighthoods could still be earned on the field of battle they were increasingly the rewards of industrious bureaucrats, successful lawyers and loyal county families.[15]

Those members of the aristocracy who were, or who considered themselves, excluded from the court hierarchy directed their anger upon influential office holders of inferior birth. It was objected that they had been excluded from their rightful positions in government by the political manoeuverings of upstarts, who were responsible for all the social ills affecting the country through the bad advice that they gave the monarch. During the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 one of the demands made of the king was that he should dismiss the 'low-born' councillors who surrounded him, particularly Thomas Cromwell and Sir Richard Rich. Similar demands were made during the reign of Elizabeth. The leaders of the Northern Rebellion in 1569 and the Earl of Essex in 1601 claimed that they had been driven into rebellion by the queen's preference for low-born ministers, notably the Cecils.[16]

With the competition for office and patronage becoming increasingly more difficult under Elizabeth, limits on the bounty available meant that not all who sought it could be satisfied. This led to a growing concern among the nobility - aristocracy and gentry - to protect their status from dilution by new creations. Chivalry with its emphasis upon lineage and military leadership provided a means of distinguishing between the noble of long descent and the 'parvenue'; between those whose families had won their status through military engagement and were the natural leaders in times of war, and those who had been granted their honours for non-combative services. The former distinguished themselves as the 'native nobility' and claimed the constitutional rights that they considered themselves to have inherited along with their noble status. These constitutional rights were associated with the feudal relationship between king and nobility, which was one of mutual loyalty and obligation.

As Ernst Kantorowicz and J.G.A. Pocock have shown, the constitutional rights that the nobility claimed had their origins in the relationship between Saxon kings and their nobility. It was argued that Henry I had accepted the constitutional rights of the nobility by calling a Parliament, and that King John had confirmed them by signing *Magna Carta* in 1215. Ever since, monarchs had regularly summoned parliaments made up of nobility and commoners for the purpose of making laws. This was cited as evidence that English monarchs were not absolute but ruled only through the consent of the people. In addition, the nobility claimed that they were the representatives of the people, and that they had originally been appointed or elected by them to protect their common interests from tyrannical monarchs. The implication of this was that the nobility had received their authority, independent of the monarch, from the people.[17]

The reality however was that the relationship between king and nobility was one of interdependence. Medieval kings would rely upon the landed nobility to raise armies from among their 'manred' in times of war and to police their regions at other times. In return they were given land, offices and financial rewards. At times of weak and unpopular monarchy the nobility could unite and impose its will upon the king or, as with Edward II and Richard II, use its military power to depose him. The Wars of the Roses in the second half of the fifteenth century had emphasised the divisions within the nobility, and provided the Tudors with the opportunity of breaking up the independent power bases of the landed aristocracy by making them more dependent on royal patronage. A provincial aristocracy was essential for the smooth running of the kingdom, for who else could police the regions with the same effectiveness and at as little cost? However, the Wars of the Roses had shown the dangers that could result from a financially independent provincial aristocracy.

Under Elizabeth, chivalry offered a means of reaching a compromise between monarchical authority and the 'native rights' of the nobility. For a largely court-centred nobility chivalric display represented a means of identifying the modern aristocrat with his powerful medieval prototype and of stressing his historical role as defender of the kingdom. In addition it helped to evoke nostalgic reminiscences of past battles such as Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt in which the nobility of the day fought heroically alongside Edward the Black Prince and Henry V. Furthermore, it represented a show of force, a brotherhood of like-minded aristocrats who would resist any attempts to limit their hereditary jurisdiction and rights. Finally, it served as a display of wealth and power by the social hierarchy of the day, who wished to emphasise the exclusiveness of their number and the distinction between themselves and the 'dative' nobility (those who had received their nobility as a reward for political or administrative service to the monarch). For relatively new aristocrats, who could only trace their noble ancestry back two or three generations, it offered a means of attaining the social acceptance of their peers. This was the case for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, whose noble ancestry stretched back only two generations. For Leicester, chivalry also provided a means of re-entering court society following his release from the Tower in 1555.[18]

For the queen, as Roy Strong explains in great detail, chivalry came to symbolise an aristocracy that were united in their allegiance to their monarch. Furthermore, the chivalric pageantry of her court came to symbolise a return to the glories of a mythical past associated with the legend of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. The achievements of her knights were done in her honour and to emphasise her greatness and power. The Accession Day tilts that Strong thinks unlikely to have begun 'much before 1572' and the annual ceremony of the Garter knights were central to the cult of Gloriana that Elizabeth aspired to and which reached its peak in the 1580s.[19]

2.3. The Renaissance Nobility

2.3.1 The Creation of a New Nobility

The increased social mobility of the Tudor period led to rapid change in land ownership with more people buying land from the profits of careers in public office, trade or the law. Land ownership was an effective symbol of social status emphasising a sense of belonging and permanence. The new landowners soon sought to enhance their social status even further by acquiring coats of arms and creating pedigrees for themselves which would establish, unquestionably, their long-standing connections with the locality. Coats of arms and pedigrees (the certificates of gentility) were the responsibility of the College of Heralds. Between 1560 and 1599 about 2,320 grants were made, resulting in a huge increase in the number of gentry.[20] The promotion to gentry status of seemingly unworthy aspirants led to complaints about corruption within the College of Heralds. Sir Thomas Smith complained that 'gentlemen be made good cheap in England' and included almost anyone who could live without manual labour. Bulstrode Whitelocke remarked that 'if a man be rich, though unknown from where he came, the officers at arms can easily be persuaded for a gratuity, to afford him the title and arms of a gentleman'.[21] Lawrence Stone points out that 'since the heralds made their living by the issue of these certificates of gentility, and since the number of aspirants was increasing at a tremendous pace, it is hardly surprising if a large element of venality soon crept in'.[22]

Although Henry VII had refused to elevate any new men to the peerage his policy was reversed during the next two reigns. Between the accession of Henry VIII in 1509 and the death of Edward VI in 1553 'some forty-seven titles had been created, restored or resumed, the great majority representing the elevation of successful soldiers and administrators after 1529'.[23] These new peers were looked upon with a degree of suspicion and contempt by the traditional aristocracy. In the early 1560s Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester was accused of being 'a new upstart' by the Earl of Sussex and the Duke of Norfolk on the grounds that he was only third generation nobility. (Leicester's grandfather Edmund Dudley had claimed to be descended from the Baronial Dudley family, but his ancestry was disputed.)[24] Elizabeth was more frugal in the grants of peerages than her immediate predecessors. Of the eighteen peerages which she created, revived or recognized only two belonged to families without ancestral claims. These were the peerages bestowed on Lord Burghley and Lord Compton. James I was more generous with the creation of peerages and between 1603 and 1612 created thirty-one. Of these, seven had been revived or restored. The process by which some of the candidates for peerages were chosen under James led to criticism and there were accusations that titles were sold for financial profit.[25]

The bestowing of knighthoods was a further means of rewarding loyalty. Between 1537 and 1558, as Lawrence Stone has shown, there were 374 creations, most of these during the wars with France. By the time Elizabeth came to the throne, Stone estimates that there would have been about 600 in the country. Between 1558 and 1583 Elizabeth created about 330 new knights of whom 69 were Irish. Even so, Stone suggests, the total number in the country must have fallen to about 300 by 1583. From 1584 to 1603 the number of creations was a relatively large 547. However, 354 of these were created during the Irish wars and Essex's military campaigns. The uneven distribution of knighthoods caused ill-feeling among the wealthy gentry. In 1600 Thomas Wilson estimated that there were about 500 knights in England not accounting for Essex's knights, 'many of them hardly good gentlemen'.[26] Essex's bestowing of knighthoods upon 'low-born adventurers' may have caused concern among the gentry but not to the extent that King James I's creations did.

Within four months of his accession, on 24 March 1603, James had created 906 knights. By December 1604 England could claim 1,161 new knights which meant that the total number of knights was three times what it had been at James's accession. The problem with James's creations, for the gentry, was not just the dilution of the honour by the sheer weight of numbers but the quality, or rather lack of quality, of the recipients. There was in addition scope for corruption and some of James's Scottish entourage sold recommendations for knighthoods. Stone refers to Henry Gawdy who had heard that an attorney nicknamed 'nimblechappes' had been knighted for £7. 10s.[27] The result was that the knightage fell into disrepute. Stone quotes a contemporary joke of how 'two walking espyed one a farr off; the one demanded what he scholde be, the other answered he seemed to be a gentleman. No, I warrant you, says the other, I think he is but a knight'.[28] The newly created knights were soon the butt of stage humour in plays such as *Bussy D'Ambois*, *Eastward Ho*, and *The Alchemist*.

2.3.2 'Native' Nobility and the importance of Lineage

The numerous additions, during the period, to the knightage, gentry and peerage initiated a conservative reaction among the old nobility to distinguish themselves from new creations who were of dubious or non-noble origins. A convincing pedigree became a necessity for admission to the ranks of the 'native' nobility. According to Stone, 'genuine genealogy was cultivated by the older gentry to reassure themselves of their innate superiority over the upstarts' whereas 'bogus genealogy was cultivated by the new gentry in an effort to clothe their social nakedness'[29]

The Cecils and the Sidneys represent two instances of newly created peers manufacturing bogus genealogies for themselves in order to disguise their humble origins. Katherine Duncan-Jones has shown how Lord Burghley, on his elevation to the peerage, changed the Welsh spelling of his name 'Sitsyllt' to the Norman sounding Cecil in order to associate his family with the ancient nobility.[30] With a similar motive in mind, Sir Henry Sidney, in 1568, employed Robert Cooke (who through the patronage of Sidney's brother-in-law, the Earl of Leicester, had been created Clarenceaux King of Arms) to create for his family a fictitious genealogy tracing the family back to a mythical William de Sidne, who came from Anjou with Henry II and was appointed to the office of chamberlain.[31] The Sidney ancestry remained questionable and was undermined on the famous occasion, in 1579, when the queen intervened to forbid a duel between Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Oxford on the grounds of Sidney's inferior social status.[32] When as late as 1613 Robert Sidney, by now Viscount Lisle, informed the Earl of Northampton that the king had authorised Lisle's son's reversion to an unnamed office, on the grounds that it had been invested in his father and himself for almost sixty years, Northampton disdainfully commented that this was most likely 'the term of their first coming into Kent which before never heard of them'.[33]

It was because Sir Philip Sidney's strongest claims to nobility came from his mother's Dudley ancestry that he was so concerned with defending the Earl of Leicester's nobility. In 1584 he wrote his *Defence of the Earl of Leicester* which Katherine Duncan-Jones claims 'is one of the most vivid expressions of the widespread concerns of the Elizabethans to demonstrate, often by gross distortions of the evidence, that those who had most political power were also those of most ancient nobility'.[34] The *Defence of the Earl of Leicester* was written as a reply to the anonymous *Leicester's Commonwealth*, published in Paris in 1584, which not only accused Leicester of the murder of his wife, treason, adultery and atheism but proclaimed his lack of long standing nobility.[35] Sidney's defence of Leicester's nobility takes as its basis a genealogy that Cooke had produced for Leicester in 1583, tracing his descent from old aristocratic families such as the Beauchamps, the Talbots and the Grays.[36]

2.3.3. The Attempts of the Nobility to Control Social Change

In order to stem social mobility and to prevent the conferring of noble or gentry status upon aspirants of dubious or non-noble origins, the ancient nobility claimed self-authentication: the right to have the final decision over whether coats of arms should be bestowed upon a claimant and whether such a claimant's genealogy was authentic. This role was claimed as one of the ancient rights of the office of Earl Marshal. As it was the abuse of power within the College of Heralds that was primarily responsible for the granting of Coats of Arms and the creation of bogus pedigrees it was essential, if these practices were to be stopped, for the Earl Marshal to assert his authority over the college. In 1568 the Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk, drew up a set of orders prohibiting new grants of arms without a joint decision by the three kings of arms - Garter, Clarenceaux and Norroy - as well as the warrant of the Earl Marshal. Richard McCoy sees this as 'an attempt by the leader of the "Ancient aristocracy" to restrict and purify its ranks and gain control over the distribution of honours'.[37]

Norfolk's proposals were never fully implemented and when the Earl of Essex was created Earl Marshal in December 1597, Norfolk's brother, Lord Henry Howard was employed to develop and implement his brother's plans. In his treatise, 'A Brief Discourse on the Right Use of Giving Arms' Howard complains about the 'giving of arms to upstarts hungry for prestige by heralds hungry for money'.[38] Howard's treatise had two objectives: reform of the College of Heralds and the restriction of social mobility. Howard upheld the authority of the Earl Marshal to oversee the heralds and criticised the latters' attempts to give arms without supervision. He attacked the inflation of honours complaining: 'of merchants chiefly in this place because their spawn hath multiplied above all other fishes in the lake, their seeds increased faster ... but my reason reacheth other occupations also of proportionable unworthiness'.[39]

Howard's interest in the College of Heralds continued during the reign of James I. As Earl of Northampton he was appointed a commissioner for the Earl Marshalship in February 1604. He employed the solicitor general, John Dodderidge (an eminent common lawyer) to conduct research on the customary role of the Herald's office. Dodderidge's report, 'A Consideration of the office and duty of an herald in England drawn out of sundry observations [...] at the instance of Henry Earl of Northampton in August 1605' claimed that heralds had no jurisdiction independent of the Earl Marshal.[40] He concluded that no new arms could be granted without the consent of the Earl Marshal except by the three kings of arms, who each year were to deliver to him a book containing all the patents and new grants of arms that they had made. Dodderidge pointed out that the jurisdiction of the Earl Marshal's court in all matters concerned with battles and arms was acknowledged by the common law judges as 'the law of the land concerning those causes and affairs'.[41]

The conclusions reached by Northampton's researches were expressed in his 'Certain Rules to be prescribed and ever preserved for the reformation of all abuses and corruptions that have crept into the office of arms and for the prevention of all means which may bring in the like hereafter'.[42] This document reinforced the jurisdiction of the Earl Marshal by stating that no arms were to be given without his consent, all orders were to be recorded, and the fees of the heralds were to be regularised in order to prevent abuses.

Northampton implemented his reforms by calling in all the arms that had been granted since 1568, when his brother had first established that none should be given without the Earl Marshal's consent.[43] Northampton's intention, however, was not to end the giving of arms but to control the recipients by ensuring that they were only given to genuine claimants.

Considering Northampton's endeavours to impose control and limitations over the granting of Coats of Arms it may seem inconsistent for him to have been involved in the establishment of the hereditary title of Baronet in 1611. The title was to be sold to subjects who had an income of at least £1,000 per year and was offered at £1,095 to 'worthy persons' nominated by Northampton and the Earl of Salisbury. In the first three years of the scheme £90,885 was raised. Northampton justified the sale of Baronetages by claiming that it was properly regulated by Salisbury and himself and that unworthy candidates for the honour would not be considered.[44] Even so, this is evidently an example of principles giving way to the financial practicalities of office.

2.3.4 The 'Native' Rights of the Nobility

Further to establishing rights over the distribution of honours, the nobility claimed that the state of being noble was inherent and could not be bestowed on non-nobles even by the monarch. By the same argument it could not be taken away except in cases of proven cowardice or treason. The old nobility made distinction between their own 'Native' or inherent nobility and the 'Dative' nobility that derived from the monarch and owed its being to his/her goodwill. The implication was that the 'Native' nobility owed their status to birth and were not dependent for it on anyone including the king, whereas the 'dative' nobility were dependent on the king who had bestowed the honour of nobility upon them. As we will see later, the term 'native' was seen to confer legal and constitutional rights.

When the office of Earl Marshal was bestowed on the Earl of Essex in 1597, Essex wrote to Robert Cecil demanding that the patent for the office be rewritten. He complained, 'I am praised for two innocent virtues, where they are active virtues and not negative that should draw on a prince to bestow a Marshal's office'.[45] Essex's concern was with the appearance that he was being granted the Earl Marshalship by the queen's grace whereas he considered it to be a just reward for his military achievements, particularly at Cadiz. Essex here touches on what Richard McCoy refers to as 'one of the fundamental contradictions at the heart of aristocratic status; the latent conflict between inherent distinction and that bestowed by the monarch - "native" and "dative" honour'. Essex insists that his own 'active' virtues precede and determine the honours given by the monarch.[46]

Essex's views on nobility were echoed twenty-five years later (1622) in Henry Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman*.[47] Peacham's allegiance to the old nobility had been formed by his position in the household of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (significantly Arundel had been appointed Earl Marshal in 1621) and his book was dedicated to one of Arundel's sons (William Howard). Peacham stressed the 'inherent' and 'natural' character of nobility which was inherited not conferred. The monarch's role as the distributor of honour was played down by Peacham who claimed that 'honours and titles externally conferred are but attendant upon desert, and are but as apparell, and the drapery to a beautifull body'.[48] He goes on to suggest that nobles ought to claim social pre-eminence and political influence and that they should be given office in preference to commoners. Peacham emphasises the military qualities of the nobility and praises the competitiveness of the honour code as the essence of nobility.[49]

The ancient nobility found an unlikely champion in Sir Francis Bacon who in his essay, *of Nobility*, emphasised the distinction between 'native' and 'dative' nobility: 'how much more to behold an ancient noble family which hath stood against the waves and weathers of time. For new nobility is but the act of power, but ancient nobility is the act of time'.[50]

It has already been suggested that the term 'native' implied legal and constitutional rights. If the status of the 'native' nobility was, as they claimed, inherent rather than conferred by the monarch, the implication was that the monarch could not legally deprive an errant nobleman of his birthright. The consequence of this was that noble status and hereditary honours came to be seen as inalienable and 'indelible'.[51] William Camden noted that the character 'indelebilis' of the titled baron was asserted in a trial held in the Court of Chivalry in 1597.[52] Recent evidence of the 'indelible' nature of nobility occurred in the early 1960s when Viscount Stansgate (Tony Benn) attempted to renounce his peerage. This only became possible following an act of Parliament in 1963. More recently we have seen the unsuccessful attempt of the Duke of Marlborough to disinherit his eldest son, the Marquis of Blandford.

The significance of the 'indelible' nature of nobility was its implication that the nobility was not dependent on the monarch for its honours but had inherited them in much the same way as the monarch inherited the crown. The monarch effectively could not dismiss a member of the hereditary peerage without raising questions about the legitimacy of his/her own status. If the nobility could be deprived of hereditary rights then so too could the monarch. In Shakespeare's *Richard the Second* the Duke of York recognizes Richard's action in depriving Bolingbroke of his inheritance as Duke of Lancaster as a possible precedent for the usurpation of his own title:

> Take Herford's rights away and take from time
> His charters and his customary rights.
> Let not tomorrow then ensue today.
> Be not thyself. For how art thou a king
> But by fair sequence and succession?[53]

According to Fulke Greville, Sidney appealed to the 'native' rights of the nobility when the queen intervened to prevent him from fighting a duel with the Earl of Oxford. Sidney challenged the queen's intervention (which she made on the grounds that he was of inferior social rank to Oxford) by appealing to a precedent dating from the time of Henry VIII. For Greville, Sidney 'left an authentical president [precedent] to after ages, that howsoever tyrants allow of no scope, stamp or standard, but their own will; yet with princes there is a latitude for subjects to reserve native and legall freedom, by paying humble tribute in manner, though not in matter to them'.[54] The significance of Greville's claim was the coded message that although the nobility gave public display of service and honour to the monarch, in reality they had inherited legal rights over which the monarch had no authority.

2.3.5 The Theory of Subaltern Majesty

The degree of independence which was established by the principle of 'native' rights was developed into the theory of subaltern majesty. The essence of the theory was that monarchies were not absolute but conditional and that a monarch - the superior magistrate - was bound by the law of the kingdom. The king was not so much the owner as the guardian of the kingdom and an individual king was not permitted to act against the interests of the kingdom or to set preconditions upon his successors. This was the argument made by John of Gaunt in his 'sceptred isle' speech in *Richard II* (II. 1.31-68)

The division of the king into two bodies, the 'body natural' which was fallible and prone to age, illness and death, and the 'Body politic' which was unerring and immortal, was established in the Middle-ages. The purpose of the legal distinction between the king's two bodies was to end the ambiguity between the institution of monarchy, which was seen as absolute, and the individual king, who was prone to the errors of man. It is significant that the doctrine of the king's two bodies, or in this specific case the queen's two bodies, was restated in England in 1561 by the Catholic lawyer Edmund Plowden in support of the succession claims of Mary, Queen of Scots. Legal arguments opposing Mary's succession were based on the view that individual kings had a legal right to alter the succession and the constitution by statute. In his will Henry VIII had revoked the succession rights of the descendants of his eldest sister, Margaret (Mary's grandmother) in favour of the descendants of his younger sister, Mary. The essence of Plowden's argument is that an individual king doesn't have the right to alter the succession to the 'body politic' and that as the 'body politic' is immortal it cannot leave a will. Indirectly the concept of the 'king's two bodies' distinguishes between the personal property of the king with which he can do as he pleases, and the 'body politic' of which he is merely the guardian.[55]

The theory of subaltern majesty claimed that the individual king is only in temporary possession of the kingdom and that although he is the superior magistrate he is not free to do as he pleases. The king rules not in his own interest but on behalf of the people and his power is limited by the conditions imposed by the people. These conditions take the form of the coronation oath and the Common Law of the land. Just as the king inherits the rights and duties of the supreme magistrate so, it is argued, the 'native' nobility inherits the rights and duties of the 'inferior' magistrate. The power of individual members of the nobility was inferior to that of the king, but collectively the nobility could impose limitations on the king's will and resist it if necessary. In the doctrine of Subaltern majesty the nobility have the right and duty to resist a tyrannous king, through force if necessary.

The theory of subaltern majesty may have come to the Elizabethan nobility via French Huguenot treatises of the 1570s. As Calvin had refused to recognize the legitimacy of Protestant resistance against the French king unless it came under the direction of the inferior magistrates, Huguenot political theorists had set out to establish the constitutional rights and duties of the nobility to defend the people from tyrannous monarchs.[56]

The most important of the Huguenot treatises were François Hotman's *Francogallia* (1573), Theodore de Beza's *Right of Magistrates* (1574), and the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, usually attributed to Philippe du Plessis-Mornay (1579).[57] All three documents claimed that the rights of the people (by the people it is usually meant the nobility and the Estates-General) and the limitations on the monarchy were established in the Ancient Constitution of France. The Ancient Constitution, however, existed only in theory, as it was an unwritten constitution. The implication of the documents is that liberties that had been established in the earliest days of the kingdom could not be revoked and were still binding. For if the king had originally been installed with conditions, neither he nor his successors could subsequently go back on those conditions.

The three documents claimed that kings were originally elected by the people to defend their laws and constitution. Although the king was the supreme magistrate the people as a whole, it was claimed, were greater than the king. At the same time as they elected the king the people had elected or appointed lesser magistrates to safeguard their laws and rights from tyranny. The lesser magistrates, it was argued, were the officers of the kingdom: the nobility and the elected representatives of the Estates General. Their power as individuals was inferior to the king's but collectively they had greater authority. The officers of the kingdom, it was stressed, were distinguishable from the officers of the king. Whereas the latter owed their loyalty to the king, the former were bound to protect the people from whom they received their authority. Their loyalty was first and foremost to the kingdom. According to the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* the traditional officers of the kingdom of France were the marshals; the admirals; the chancellor; the treasurers 'as well as others, all of whom, at one time, could be created only in a public council of the Three Estates of the clergy, nobility and people'.[58] Furthermore, it is emphasised that a monarch should choose his advisers from among his nobility.[59] If the king acted contrary to God's law or broke his oath to rule in accordance with the law of the land, the lesser magistrates had a duty to resist his commands or even imprison him until the Estates General could meet and decide upon a course of action. The Estates General in which the king met with the representatives of the three estates was perceived as the supreme law making body in France.

Unsurprisingly, due to censorship *Francogallia, Right of Magistrates* and the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* were not available in English editions until 1648.[60] There was however, a Latin version of the *Vindiciae* published in Edinburgh in 1579 and an English excerpt, published by John Wolfe, under the title *Apology for Christian Souldiours* in 1588.[61] Despite censorship, the close proximity of France to England and its accessibility for aristocrats and statesmen, meant that it was not too difficult for the English nobility to get hold of French editions of the treatises. It should also be borne in mind that the writers of the treatises had contacts in England. François Hotman corresponded with Lord Burghley and his son Jean was, for a while, secretary to the Earl of Leicester in the Netherlands and an informant of Sir Francis Walsingham's. Mornay and Hugh Languet corresponded with Walsingham and Sir Philip Sidney.[62]

Although it seems likely that French political thought influenced English theories of subaltern majesty, England had its own 'ancient constitution' with evidence of limitations upon monarchical power. *Magna Carta*, for example, served as evidence of a king recognizing the rights of the nobility, and the monarch's coronation oath could be seen as a binding contract between king and people.

The English 'ancient constitution' like its French counterpart was largely a mythical creation which was used to legitimize various customs and traditions. Of course, in reality there was no evidence of an 'ancient constitution', certainly no written evidence. It was, in effect, a means of imposing constitutional restraints upon the monarch. English constitutionalists had an advantage over their French equivalents. Unlike France, England was governed by common law which meant that the law originally was not written but operated through custom and tradition. If a custom or tradition could be proved to have existed since 'time immemorial' it was claimed as evidence for its inclusion in the original constitution and was therefore considered as binding upon subsequent generations. The term 'time immemorial' referred to that period in the past beyond which it was not possible to trace the origins of a custom or tradition.[63]

The 'Ancient Constitution' became a justification for the re-establishment of old customs and laws which were no longer in use. That they were no longer customary did not invalidate them. It was argued that one generation did not have the right to set preconditions upon the next. If at some point in history the people had relinquished their rights either voluntarily or under force, future generations were not bound by their decision. The effect of these arguments was the demand among the ancient nobility in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to commission antiquaries such as Robert Cotton, Sir John Dodderidge and Francis Legh to conduct research into the traditional rights of noble office and of the nobility. The purpose was to discover powers and rights that could be reclaimed by the nobility on the grounds that they were part of the original constitution.[64]

I have already shown how the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Essex and the Earl of Northampton commissioned research into the jurisdiction of the Earl Marshal's office in order to establish control over the granting of arms. Further research was commissioned into the Earl Marshal's constitutional role. David Starkey has discovered a copy of the *Modus Tenendi Parliamentum* among the papers of either the 3rd or 4th Duke of Norfolk. This document claims that the Steward, the Constable and the Earl Marshal had the power to call a parliamentary commission if there was a dispute between the king and some of the nobility. Starkey suggests that the document could be seen as a missing link between medieval and seventeenth century constitutional theories.[65]

Sir Robert Cotton was commissioned by Essex and Northampton to carry out research into the historical rights that were attached to noble office. An anonymous tract among Cotton's papers, referred to by McCoy, 'advocates that the position of Earl Marshal should be formally combined with that of the lapsed office of Constable and then argues that Essex is entitled by descent, as well as virtue, to the office of constable "whensoever it shall please her highness to restore to bloode what in former tymes was houlden dew to posterity"'.[66]

The antiquary, Francis Legh, claimed in his 'The Antiquary and Office of the Constable of England' that during the reign of Henry VIII 'it hath bin a common saying that the Constable of England by virtue of his office may arrest the king'.[67] This view had been advocated in the 1530s by the Tudor constitutionalist Thomas Starkey. In the *Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset* he claims that: 'our old ancestors, the institutors of our laws and order of our ream [realm] considering well this same tyranny, and for the avoiding of the same ordained a Constable of England, to counterpaise [counterpoise] the authority of the prince and temper the same - giving him authority to call a Parliament in such case as the Prince would run into any tyranny of his own heady judgement'.[68]

2.3.6. Sir Philip Sidney and Subaltern Majesty in *Arcadia*

The 'native rights' of the nobility were referred to frequently at times of confrontation, notably by Sidney and Essex. We have already seen how, according to Greville, Sidney claimed his 'native and legall' right to defend his honour against the Earl of Oxford. In the same year (1579) Sidney, in his open letter to the queen objecting to her proposed marriage to the Duke of Alençon, takes upon himself, as a member of the nobility, the right to offer advice to the queen however unpopular. The letter, 'To Queen Elizabeth touching her Marriage with Monsieur', serves to warn the queen that the loyalty and love of her subjects was not unconditional: 'virtue and justice are the only bonds of the people's love. And as for that point, many princes have lost their crowns, whose own children were manifest successors'.[69] A lesser man, the pamphleteer John Stubbs, lost his right hand for expressing similar sentiments.

In the justification for his rebellion in Book Three of Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, Amphialus draws on theories of subaltern majesty, emphasising the constitutional role of the nobility. However, *Arcadia* exposes, through Amphialus, the weaknesses and inconsistencies of subaltern majesty. Although Amphialus may have been justified in calling the king to account for his mismanagement of the kingdom, he permits his own ambition and personal emotions to become confused with what he considers to be the duty of an officer of the kingdom. As will be shown in the commentary on Chapman's plays, it is this inconsistency between personal ambition and public duty, and between courtly discourse and political expediency, that exposes the limitations of subaltern majesty. Amphialus claims that his captivity of the two princesses and resistance of Basilius's authority had been provoked by the latter's mismanagement of the kingdom:

> ... so now finding that his uncle had not only given over care of government, but had put it into the hands of Philanax (a man neither in birth comparable to many, nor for his corrupt, proud, and partial dealing, liked of any) but beside, had set his daughters (in whom the whole estate, as next heirs thereunto, had no less interest than himself) in so unfit and ill-guarded a place, as it was not only dangerous for their persons but (if they should be conveyed to any foreign country) to the whole commonwealth pernicious: that therefore he had brought them into this strong castle of his, which way, if it might seem strange, they were to consider that new necessities require new remedies; but there they should be served and honoured as belonged to their greatness until by the general assembly of the estates it should be determined how they should to their best (both private and public) advantage be matched: vowing all faith and duty both to

> the father and children, never by him to be violated. But if in the meantime, before the estates could be assembled, he should be assailed, he would then for his own defence take arms; desiring all that either tendered the dangerous case of their country or in their hearts loved justice to defend him in this just action. And if the prince should command them otherwise, yet to know that therein he was no more to be obeyed than if he should call for poison to hurt himself withal; since all that was done was done for his service, howsoever he might (seduced by Philanax) interpret of it: he protesting that whatsoever he should do for his own defence should be against Philanax, and no way against Basilius.[70]

Amphialus's justification and his subsequent action raises doubts about whether the nobility can adequately separate their personal and factional interests from the public role they claim. The question to be considered here, is whether Amphialus's action in imprisoning the princesses and resisting the authority of the king is precipitated by the desire to safeguard the country or by personal ambition. It seems inconceivable that he can be offering 'faith and duty' to Basilius or his daughters when he challenges the authority of one and imprisons the others. It becomes evident later, that one of the princesses, Philoclea, must marry him before she and her sister are released. This is the marriage, it seems, that is to the 'best advantage' of the commonwealth. Although he attempts to deflect his aggression onto Philanax, this is just an attempt to justify rebellion. As Philanax's authority comes from the king who appointed him, Amphialus by challenging him is indirectly confronting the authority of the king.

2.3.7. Attempts to preserve 'Native Rights'

Amphialus's justification had an historical precedent in the Proclamation of Ripon which was issued by the leaders of the Northern Rebellion in November 1569. They claimed that they had been driven to defend nobility, religion and the kingdom from the 'new upstarts' who had misled the queen:

> Forasmuch as divers evil-disposed persons about the Queen's majesty have, by their subtle and crafty dealing to advance themselves, overcome in this our realm the true and Catholic religion towards God and by the same abused the Queen, disordered the realm and now lastly seek and procure the destruction of the nobility, we therefore have gathered ourselves together to resist by force, and the rather by the help of God and you good people, to seek redress of those things amiss, with restoring of all ancient customs and liberties to God's church and this whole realme ... .[71]

The Northern Rebels, through this proclamation, identify their own interests with the well-being of the state. Chapman's Byron uses similar arguments in defence of an independent nobility against the increasingly centralized and authoritarian state. In similar fashion the Earl of Essex claimed at his trial that he was driven to rebellion by the law of nature and his constitutional duty as Earl Marshal to defend the kingdom from the 'base upstarts' who had misled the queen and were threatening to turn England over to Spain.[72]

Essex had earlier raised the question of the relationship between monarch and nobility in a letter to Sir Thomas Egerton, in which he claimed there had to be a 'proportion' between the queen and her nobility that would constitute a balance of power:

> what I owe as a subject I know, and what as an Earle, and Marshall of England: to serve as a servant and a slave I know not: if I should acknowledge my selfe guilty, I should be injurious to the truth, and to God the author of truth. I have received wounds all my body over. Having received this scandall, flatly it is impietie to serve. Cannot Princes erre? Can they not wrong their subjects? Is any earthly power infinite?[73]

The view of Sidney, the Northern Rebels and Essex that legal rights were inherent in noble birth was endorsed by the Earl of Northampton. On being appointed a privy councillor by King James in 1603 he stated with some relief that at last he had risen 'to the place by birth my due, from which I was ejected rather by the wrongs of others than mine own desserts'.[74]

During the reign of Elizabeth he had been 'forced to live below the compass of [his] birth'.[75]

Northampton, not willing to risk his own position by speaking openly, used a form of coded rhetoric on public occasions to hint at limitations on monarchical power. In his speech to the House of Lords on 26 March 1604 Northampton, while outwardly endorsing the King's absolute authority simultaneously imposed limitations upon it. In praising the king he took the opportunity to lay out his own personal vision of the relationship between king and Lords. He emphasised the king's special regard for the nobility claiming that the king had shown himself particularly keen to ensure the employment of the highest born in the highest offices. He referred to 'the many scions of true noble houses planted at the council board, upon our saviour's own presumption that thistles cannot bring forth figs'. Finally, Northampton stressed the king's liberality, 'granting to you [the nobility] whatsoever without over great enfeebling of his state'.[76] In effect, the king was absolute and deserved the praise and obedience of his subjects because he placed the nobility in the highest offices (unlike his predecessor) and because he was generous to his nobility. Beneath the surface this was a speech that was creating a compromise between monarchical power and noble rights. If the nobility were restored to the positions of influence that had belonged to their forefathers then they would be loyal and obedient servants of the king.

Northampton through the use of rhetoric could be said to have restored the understanding or compromise that had existed between monarch and nobility before the Essex rebellion.

2.4 Elizabethan Chivalry

Chivalry, as Chapman's plays imply, is connected with constitutional issues. Its associations with independent knight errantry and with the Baronial power of the Middle-Ages gave it a symbolic significance for the Elizabethan knight in defence of his 'native rights'.

The Elizabethan compromise between monarch and nobility had its basis in chivalric iconography, ritual and pageantry as well as in the refined language of the courtier. Arthur Marotti has suggested that 'poems and speeches at royal tilts and entertainments as well as complimentary letters and verse all expressed social, political and economic suits in the language of love, metaphorizing the ambition Elizabethans paradoxically valued and condemned'. He goes on to make the point that Sidney and other Petrarchan sonneteers used the sonnet sequence 'as a form of mediation between socioeconomic and sociopolitical desires and the constraints of the established order'.[77] Nevertheless, the Elizabethan compromise had been a very fragile one and the image of the queen surrounded by her knights was fraught with danger, as Francis Bacon implied in a letter to Essex written in October 1596.[78] Its failure was implicit in the Essex rebellion of 1601. Before considering the reasons for the failure of the Elizabethan chivalric compromise it is important that we take a brief look at the cult of chivalry at the court of Queen Elizabeth.

2.4.1 Chivalry as social elitism

Chivalry and knighthood were historically associated with the nobility. The attraction of chivalry for the nobility was that it stressed the importance of lineage. As Maurice Keen has shown it was generally believed in the thirteenth century that a man who could not point to knights in his ancestry should be considered ineligible for knighthood.[79] The rule for admission to the order of the Knight Templars, in the thirteenth century, insisted that no one would be admitted to the order unless he could prove 'that he is the true son of a knight and a lady of gentle blood, and that he is descended on the father's side from a line of knights'.[80]

Apart from having a good lineage a knight was expected to be accomplished in military pursuits. He was expected to defend his dependants and to fight alongside his king in battles against foreign foes. It was his duty to seek individual honour in the service of his king. According to the chivalric treatises of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the military element of knighthood was associated with skill in horsemanship specifically. This was a costly expertise which would have been hard to acquire for one not born of a good lineage.

Chivalry was identifiable with knighthood. According to the *OED* the word was derived from the Old French *chevalerie*, meaning knighthood, horse-soldiery or cavalry. From the thirteenth century chivalry was synonymous with the display of bravery or prowess in war. In the early seventeenth century the word was still seen by some exclusively in terms of military achievement. John Bullokar defined chivalry in 1616 as 'knighthood: the knowledge of a knight or nobleman in feats of arms'.[81] However, during the course of the sixteenth century the knight was, to some extent, becoming 'demilitarized' and values other than military ones were coming to be expected of him. This is what Sydney Anglo refers to as 'the transmutation of [the] knight into courtier or gentleman'.[82] Treatises outlining correct court behaviour became popular, most notably Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano*, which was translated into English as *The Book of the Courtier* by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561. Castiglione's courtier remained recognizable as a knight. Skill and bravery in battle were still to be his principal concerns, but were to be seen in the greater context of advancement at court. The military values advocated by Castiglione seem to be showy and anachronistic and have more to do with improving the personal image of the courtier than with achieving any worthwhile military objective.

The traditional role of the knight had become largely anachronistic in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Improvements in military techniques, weaponry and campaign strategies meant that the knight in armour seeking one to one combat was generally redundant. The sword was no match for gunpowder. Although courtier soldiers, such as Sidney, Essex and Raleigh, deliberately sought for honour in feats of personal prowess and bravery, this could be put down to romanticism and competitiveness and not to soldiering ability.[83]

The Elizabethan nobility who identified themselves with 'the chivalric tradition' were not particularly concerned with the practicalities of warfare. Primarily, they identified themselves with a nostalgic view of the past in which their ancestors performed heroics in battle in the service of king and country. At a time when their former political power had largely diminished and knighthoods were being bestowed on men of lowly origin, the nobility constructed an image of knight errantry for themselves which owed more to romantic fiction than historical research. It was an attempt to identify themselves with the glories of the past and to contrast this mythical past with the grey realities of the present day. The danger was that reality was often confused with myth and history with romantic fiction.

Elizabethan chivalry was predominantly an exclusive club open only to those of armigerous descent. Its membership was composed mainly of the young courtier knights of Elizabeth's court, although there were exceptions such as Sir Henry Lee (born in 1533). The purpose of Elizabethan chivalry for the aristocracy was that it served to emphasize their position in the social hierarchy, to identify them with the military prowess of their ancestors and with a romantic historical myth, and to portray their political might. They could see in themselves the armed barons who had forced King John to sign *Magna Carta* and to recognize their political rights.

Chivalric orders such as the Order of the Garter offered a means of controlling entry to the exclusive club. It was also, of course, as we will see later, a means by which the monarch could bind the aristocracy into a common brotherhood of chivalry that swore allegiance to the king or queen. When King James proposed to elect the Earl of Salisbury to the Order in 1606 there was considerable opposition on the grounds that Salisbury was a 'parvenue' and not of armigerous descent. According to the Venetian ambassador (Zorzi Giustinian) the kings of France and Denmark who were both members of the Order 'have declared that, unless the Order is kept pure by the election of those only whose nobility of blood and rank are eminent, they will resign.'[84]

Although essentially exclusive, chivalry did however, paradoxically, provide the means by which those of questionable lineage such as the Earl of Leicester and Sir Philip Sidney could assimilate themselves into the aristocracy. Through the use of chivalric iconography and participation in tilts and entertainments both Leicester and Sidney were able to associate themselves with the myth of the chivalric past. Sidney, following his heroic death at Zutphen in 1586, actually became part of the chivalric myth.[85] The Earl of Salisbury when he was finally admitted to the Order of the Garter commissioned a spectacular display of pageantry for his inauguration. The Venetian ambassador described the occasion:

> The pomp was such that the like of it is not in the memory of man; indeed all confess that it surpassed the ceremony of the very king's coronation; so great is the power of this minister. All envy of him is now dead; no one seeks aught but to win his favour [...][86]

2.4.2 The Earl of Leicester and Chivalric Pageantry

The Earl of Leicester is a notable example of a courtier, of relatively recent noble ancestry, who used chivalric pageantry and iconography to enhance his status. By the mid-1570s he had become one of the wealthiest and most powerful figures in the land.

Richard McCoy has shown how Leicester used chivalric iconography and pageantry to re-establish his position at court in 1555 and to pursue the favours of Queen Elizabeth in the 1560s and 1570s.[87] Robert Dudley and his brothers Ambrose and Henry were released from the Tower and pardoned in the winter of 1554-5 for their involvement in the attempt to prevent Mary's accession to the throne in 1553. In the same year the three brothers entered one of a series of tournaments which had been arranged by King Philip in order to overcome the antipathy between English and Spanish lords. McCoy maintains that participation in this tournament represented the Dudleys' re-admittance to the social elite and offered them an opportunity to transform themselves from fortunate survivors into patriotic chivalric heroes. When the text of the tournament was published in 1560 at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, along with illustrations of Robert and Ambrose holding their own in tilts against members of established aristocratic families, such as the Howards and the Radcliffes, it served to emphasize the Dudleys' parity with the leading peers of the realm. Taken out of its historical context the Anglo-Spanish tournament 'becomes a defiant assertion of English patriotism' with the Spanish 'reduced to chivalric pilgrims come "to this cowrte of England" not as its overlords but as knights errant who must be instructed in the demanding requirements of English knighthood.'[88] The effect is to transform the Dudleys from traitors into patriotic heroes.

In the 1560s Robert Dudley used chivalric pageants to dramatize his marital ambitions towards Queen Elizabeth. At the Inner Temple revels of Christmas 1561-2 Dudley as the knight Pallaphilos, champion of Queen Pallas (an obvious allusion to Elizabeth) and 'high Constable marshall of the Knights Templars' presided over the induction of the knights, a great banquet and tournament, and a series of pageants. In the pageants Perseus rescues Andromeda, and Desire courts and marries Dame Beauty.[89] In March 1565 following a tournament in which Dudley led the challengers, a drama was performed 'On the question of marriage, discussed between Juno and Diana, Juno advocating marriage and Diana chastity. Jupiter gave a verdict in favour of matrimony'. In November of the same year, Dudley (by now Earl of Leicester) organized a tournament at Westminster to celebrate the marriage of his brother Ambrose (now Earl of Warwick) to Anne Russell. McCoy explains how 'after giving the bride in marriage, the Earl of Leicester defended the new couple against a group of knights accompanied by Amazons, fitting opponents to marriage. The opponents aligned themselves with the Queen by fixing their shields on posts below her window and stationing themselves at the tiltyard's "upper Ende next to the Queene".'[90]

The most splendid pageant that Leicester arranged for the queen was 'The Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth' in the summer of 1575. The show 'combined Arthurian pageantry, courtly compliment, and rustic sport in a motley extravaganza lasting more than two weeks'.[91] The entertainments, containing a prominent marital theme, which were written by the poet George Gascoigne, met with only limited success as the queen attempted to divert the by now rather formal suit of Leicester.

Leicester's use of chivalry for purposes of self-promotion brought political and financial success. By 1575 Leicester and Lord Burghley were the two most powerful men on the Privy Council, and Leicester's income from offices and court grants was approaching £4 000 a year, considerably in excess of his landed revenues which stood at around £3 000.[92] Furthermore, Leicester had built up a military stronghold at Kenilworth Castle which put him on a par with the great landed magnates of the Middle-Ages. In the mid 1570s his castle was 'fortified and equipped with over 100 guns and enough small arms for 200 horse and 500 foot'.[93]

Leicester made further use of chivalric pageantry during his governorship of the Netherlands between 1585 and 1587. Roy Strong and J.A. van Dorsten have described in detail the chivalric displays that Leicester arranged to mark his new appointment.[94] However, the failures of the Netherlands campaign exposed the emptiness of Leicester's chivalric associations. The campaign proved, in the words of one of his contemporaries, that: 'Leicester was no great soldier, his nature being more inclinable to ease and delights of the court than to service in the field: though now and then for ambition or hope of gain he would undertake great attempts, as may appear by his wars in the Low Countries, where he spent a great part of the time of his abode in shows of triumph and feasting'.[95]

Leicester's magnificence and chivalric pageantry may all have been show without substance, but it served to raise him from imprisonment and attainder in 1555 to a position of predominance by 1575. Leicester serves as an example of chivalry being used to raise and enhance the social esteem of the peerage and in his case, in particular, to extinguish the doubts over his noble status and win acceptance from his peers. His failure as a soldier serves to emphasize the distinction made earlier between the realities of warfare and a romantic chivalry based on a nostalgic past. As we will see the failure to recognize this distinction becomes more significant during the campaigns of the Earl of Essex in the 1590s.

2.4.3. The Chivalric Myth

As has already been suggested Elizabethan chivalry was based on a code of behaviour and a cult of honour that owed more to literature than to history. In a recent article Richard Cooper suggested that in sixteenth century France history was often confused with historical romance.[96] It would seem unlikely that this confusion was exclusive to France. Eugene Waith, Edith McShane, Anne Falke and Mark Rose have all written on the popularity of the Chivalric Romance in England during the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries.[97]

In his attempt to define chivalry, Maurice Keen recognises that it 'remains a word elusive of definition, tonal rather than precise in its implications'. The difficulty is due to its being used 'in the Middle Ages with different meanings and shades of meaning by different writers and in different contexts'.[98] Keen's three sources for attempting a definition of chivalry are Courtly Romances, Clerical writings which commented on the role of knights in a Christian society, and Chivalric Treatises. The problem Keen faces is that none of the material that comes under these headings is attempting to define chivalry or describe it in any way. All are concerned with promoting an ideal vision of chivalry from an individual or institutional perspective.

Richard Cooper discusses the popularity of the chivalric romance in France during the sixteenth century and suggests that fictional characters were often mistaken by readers for historical figures. Military heroes of the day were often identified with the heroes of the romances and expected to act accordingly. As we will see some of Essex's antics in battle were modelled on the heroics of fictional heroes. Cooper divides the Courtly Romances popular in France during the sixteenth century into five different types.[99] Firstly, the *Chansons de geste* (e.g. *Chanson de Roland* and

Godefroi de Bouillon). These were heroic poems originally composed in French in the eleventh century or earlier and centred around stories of Charlemagne and his twelve peers. Secondly, the *romans d'aventures* (e.g. *John of Bordeaux, Richard sans peur* and *Robert le Diable*). Originally written in French these tales related the exploits of individual knights errant. Thirdly, the Arthurian Romances (e.g. Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec and Enide, Cligés, Yvain, Lancelot* and *Perceval*). These date from around the twelfth century in France and relate the deeds of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round table. In England, Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* published by Caxton in 1485 offered a contemporary version of these stories. Fourthly, the *Romans d'antiquité* (e.g. *Roman d'Alexandre*, and Wace's *Roman de Brut*). These dated from the twelfth century and offered chivalric treatment of classical and biblical subjects. The fifth type of courtly romance and the most popular in the sixteenth century was the prose romance (e.g. *Amadis de Gaule, Palladine of England* and *Palmerin d'Oliva*). These were contemporary Spanish romances which were translated into English and French in the mid sixteenth century. A sixth type, which was popular in England in the 1590s, is the chivalric poem. The most notable examples of this type are Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, which was translated into English by Sir John Harington in 1591, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-6) and Sidney's prose poem, *The Arcadia*, which was first published in 1590. In addition to the prose and verse romances of the sixteenth century, chivalric romance was a popular theme on the English stage. Betty J. Littleton claims that between 1570 and 1585 'almost one third of the plays which were produced and / or printed [...] were based on romance material'.[100]

The courtly romances were not based on fact, as they sometimes claimed to be, and were not a reliable guide to medieval knight errantry. The aim of many of these authors was to contrast a fictional past with a morally lax present and the heroes of these tales were put forward as the ideal representatives of chivalry. The aim even in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was to recreate a nostalgic past in which elusive moral values were seemingly upheld. In his preface to Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* Caxton sets out his aim in publishing the work.

> And I, according to my copy, have done set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour; and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates, of what estate or degree they be of, that shall see and read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and to follow the same, wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness and chivalries. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown.[101]

Richard Cooper explains how the Sixteenth Century French translators of the prose romances attempted to present their work as re-writings of ancient Gallic history with relevance to modern day France:

> ... Herberay [the French translator of the first book of *Amadis*] proclaims that his purpose in launching the *Amadis* cycle in France was to 'exalter la Gaule, en laquelle passe de present un siecle bien heureux'. *Gerard d'Euphrate* seeks to disseminate knowledge of ancient Gaul, when under the early French kings the state was well ordered: Gaul was noted and revered for its military prowess, its liberty, justice, clemency, for the obedience of its subjects, for the eradication of vices and abuses, (not forgetting a timely reminder to the dedicatee of the liberality of Gallic princes).[102]

Overall, the courtly romances produced a fictional and idealized portrayal of chivalry. The values that the romances attribute to knighthood are military prowess; loyalty (to monarch, family, friends and dependants); generosity; courtesy (incorporating the code of courtly love); and 'franchise' (the independent spirit which is the result of the combination of good birth with virtue).

A further means of enhancing the chivalric myth was the publication or re-publication of treatises on chivalry which stated the duties of the knight. These too were idealistic but they had the effect of implying that all knights once followed the code laid out in the treatises. They remained popular during the sixteenth century and Richard Cooper's 'Outline Bibliography of Works on Chivalry published in France Before 1600' lists twenty-five titles and seventy-three editions of treatises on chivalry, nobility and honour.[103]

Maurice Keen rightly claims that chivalry eludes definition. This is because it is largely a fictional concept and an ideal that varies, slightly, from one writer to the next. Whenever we try to look beyond the simple definition, such as the one provided by Bullokar, we run into difficulties. This was the weakness of Elizabethan chivalry: it was an attempt to recreate a Golden Age of chivalry that had never existed but had been created by the ideals of generations of literary practitioners. It was an antique fallacy which had little place beyond the showgrounds of the Elizabethan court but which was constructed into a way of life and an ideology by certain members of the nobility. Mervyn James has argued convincingly along the lines that a strong code of honour had existed among the nobility since the Middle-Ages. However, he also recognizes that there are many instances of noblemen who betrayed their close friends, their monarchs and even members of their own families.[104] The divisions and the changing allegiances of magnates (the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of Clarence are two notable examples) during the Wars of the Roses serve to cast doubts upon how seriously the code of honour was upheld, particularly at times of crisis. Evidence that accumulates from noble behaviour would seem to suggest that the code of honour was primarily another form of noble discourse which was related to chivalric pageantry and had its origins in literature. Although upheld by some, it was often cast aside when political advantage was at stake. The Essex rebellion highlighted the weaknesses in the cult of honour. Although Essex's behaviour and judgements can be seen to have been determined largely by the honour code (he even refused to take advantage of Cecil's absence in France in 1598 because of a promise he had made to his rival), when put to the test loyalties were shown to be wanting.[105] Leading Essexians, such as Lord Mountjoy and Robert Sidney, drew back from ultimate rebellion and former Essex followers, such as Ferdinando Gorges, queued up to give evidence at the subsequent trial against their former benefactor, in order to save their own skins. Essex's later confession in which he implicated those on the fringes of the rebellion such as Sir Henry Neville, his sister Penelope Devereux and his secretary Henry Cuffe, was the final repudiation of honour.

The chivalric associations of the Elizabethans lacked substance and were primarily connected with pageantry and the Tilt-yard. This is not surprising, considering that they were attempting to emulate a largely fictional ideal. The extent to which the Elizabethan nobility deliberately made use of myth in order to promote their own cause, through identification with a romantic past, and the extent to which leading figures, such as Sidney and Essex became incorporated into their image is a matter that will be discussed, in relation to Chapman's plays, in the following chapters.

The prime example of the fictional nature of Elizabethan chivalry is the Earl of Essex whose popularity was due largely to his image as the courtier knight. Essex's military achievements were negligible but became confused through iconographical links with the accomplishments of the knights of romantic literature. Essex seems to have emphasised the role of errant knight at the expense of military leadership. His own personal honour, based on empty gestures came to take priority over his responsibility to his troops. His antics in battle owed more to the battle scenes in Sidney's *Arcadia* than to military strategy.

The personal challenges issued by Essex at Lisbon, Rouen and in Ireland seem to have been lifted from romantic fiction. Similar challenges are made to Amphialus in Book Three of *Arcadia*. Amphialus, who cannot be restrained from seeking honour in meaningless combat, accepts challenges from a number of the king's knights. The first to challenge him is Phalantus. Amphialus readily accepts although strategically he has nothing to gain but everything to lose from the combat, as is pointed out by his old governor, who complains that Amphialus 'would rather affect the glory of a private fighter than of a wise general'.[106] The contest with Phalantus is followed by a sequence of similar combats as individual knights queue up to win personal honour by defeating Amphialus. Amphialus's eventual defeat at the hands of Musidorus leads to his suicide, the defeat of the rebels and the release of the princesses. Amphialus's death and the defeat of the rebels is the direct result of the knight's obsession with satisfying personal honour.

Essex, during his military campaigns, imitates Amphialus by putting personal honour before strategy. During the campaign in Lisbon in 1589 it was reported that Essex 'rode alone to the city gates and drove his pike deep into their wood. "What Spaniard would dare adventure forth to break a lance in dispute over the honour of his mistress Queen Elizabeth?" he challenged. But the garrison thought it safer to court their ladies with amorous discourses than to have their loves written on their breasts with the point of his English spear'.[107] In similar fashion, during his participation at the siege of Rouen between October and December 1591, Essex sent a personal challenge to Villars, the governor of Rouen: 'If you wish to engage in personal combat on foot, or horse, I will maintain that the cause of King Henry is more just than that of your League, and that my mistress is more beautiful than yours'. Villars declined the challenge on the grounds of his responsibility as governor.[108] While in Ireland in 1599 Essex offered a further challenge to the Earl of Tyrone: 'If thy master have any confidence either in the justness of his cause or in the goodness and number of his men, or in his own virtue, of all which he vainly glorieth, he will meet me in the field so far advanced beyond the head of his kerne as myself shall be separated from the front of my troops, where he will parley in the fashion that best becometh soldiers'. Once again Essex's challenge went unheeded.[109] Essex's storybook heroics may have had little place on the battlefield but they contributed to his image as the knight hero and satisfied the expectations of knighthood aroused by romantic fiction.

On top of the empty heroics came the competitiveness. Francis Bacon claimed that: 'They that are glorious must needs be factious, for all bravery stands upon comparisons. They must needs be violent to make good their own vaunts. Neither can they be secret, and therefore not effectual, but according to the French proverb, *Beaucoup de bruit, peu de fruit: much bruit, little fruit*'.[110] Essex's campaigns to Cadiz (1596) and the Azores (1597) were rendered militarily ineffective by his competition for honour with Lord Charles Howard of Effingham and Sir Walter Raleigh respectively.[111] When Howard was created Earl of Nottingham in 1597, in recognition of his achievements at Cadiz, Essex felt that his own achievements were being slighted and that by honouring Howard the queen was in effect dishonouring him. Essex responded by challenging the new earl to a duel but was appeased when offered the post of Earl Marshal.[112]

Furthermore, Essex took advantage of the Sidney myth. Sidney's reckless death resulting from wounds received in battle against the Spanish at Zutphen in 1586 had all the appearance of an heroic death. Sidney became a symbol for chivalric romanticism and his life was appropriated and fictionalised by writers seeking a modern day hero. Sidney's death was romanticised by Fulke Greville in his *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*.[113]

John Buxton refers to the elegies and ballads celebrating Sidney's life which appeared shortly after his death. Other writers such as Sir Walter Raleigh (*Epitaph*) and Thomas Nashe (dedication of *The Anatomy of Absurdity*) celebrated Sidney not so much for his achievements as for his image.[114] Arthur Golding in his dedication of *The Trueness of the Christian Religion* (1587) to the Earl of Leicester, declared that Sidney died 'the honourablest death that could be desired, and best beseeming a Christian knight, whereby he hath worthily won to himself immortal fame among the godly, and left example worthy of imitation to others of his calling'.[115]

Essex made use of the Sidney myth by promoting himself as Sidney's successor. He had inherited Sidney's 'best sword' in the latter's will, giving the appearance of being Sidney's chosen heir.[116] Furthermore, in Spring 1590 Essex married Sidney's widow, Frances Walsingham in what Robert Lacey describes as a 'chivalrous, charmingly medieval conceit'.[117] The marriage enhanced the image of Essex and Sidney as brothers in arms and confirmed Essex not only as successor to Sidney but to the leadership of the Walsingham-Leicester faction at court. Significantly Essex also employed as his personal secretary William Temple, who had held a similar position under Sidney.

Essex laid claim to Sidney's chivalric inheritance at the Accession Day tilt of 1590. The tilt marked the occasion of Sir Henry Lee's retirement as the Queen's Champion and the succession of the Earl of Cumberland. Roy Strong has suggested that Essex would have been the new champion had not his marriage to Frances Sidney (née Walsingham) come to light at the time of Lee's retirement.[118] Essex, nevertheless, overshadowed both Lee and Cumberland. He appeared as if part of a funeral cortège and 'yclad in mightie Armes of mourners hue' in honour of Sir Philip Sidney 'whose successor he / In love and armes had ever vowed to be'.[119] Richard McCoy considers Essex's entry to have been an aggressive assertion of loyalty to the memory of Sidney, who it should be recalled was never one of the queen's favourites. Essex is here promoting himself as the inheritor of the martyred hero Sidney and as a rival champion to the Earl of Cumberland.[120]

2.4.4. The Chivalric Compromise

Elizabethan chivalry has been generally considered to have formed the basis of a fragile compromise between obedience to the monarch and an assertion of the 'native' rights of the nobility. As Richard McCoy explains:

> Its ceremonial forms constitute a kind of cultural resolution of one of the central contradictions of Elizabethan politics, the conflict between honor and obedience, the 'customary rights' of knighthood and the duty to 'right royal majesty'. Through its conventions of feudal loyalty and romantic devotion, Elizabethan chivalry affirmed Tudor sovereignty. At the same time, it glorified aristocratic militarism and traditional notions of honor and autonomy. The chivalric ideology thus combined deference and aggression, accommodating these dangerously incompatible, often contradictory impulses within its codes and customs. When chivalric rituals worked, they allowed a compromise between the conflicting interests of the Elizabethan ruling class; this capacity to satisfy both crown and nobility explains the enduring popularity of chivalry in the Sixteenth Century.[121]

The importance of chivalry to the monarch was its emphasis upon a feudalistic sense of primogeniture and loyalty which found expression in the Accession Day tilts and the Garter ceremonies. The tiltyard offered an acceptable arena for the release of aristocratic aggression and aggrandizement and served to contain the potentially dangerous aspirations of the young nobility.[122]

The first of the tilts to be held at Whitehall, according to Roy

Strong, was Philip Sidney's *The Four Foster Children of Desire* in 1581.[123] Richard McCoy claims that Sidney's pageant consciously enacted the chivalric compromise.[124] Performed in the presence of a French delegation, who were in England to negotiate a marriage between the queen and the Duke of Alençon, the pageant addressed the issue directly. In the pageant, four knights assault the Fortress of Perfect Beauty (the queen). However, the fortress proves impregnable, the siege fails and the knights gloriously concede defeat. The message is on two levels. On the first, Sidney and the other three knights (Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor and Fulke Greville) can be seen as offering perhaps, a tactful apology for Sidney's and Leicester's interference in the queen's marriage plans, or more generally, their fealty to the queen. On the other level, the knights could be seen to represent the queen's suitors, and their failure to break into the fortress signifies a denial of the queen to Alençon or any other suitor.[125] The allegory of the pageant offers an example of what Louis Montrose calls 'celebration and insinuation', by complimenting and criticising the queen simultaneously.[126]

A second means of containing aristocratic opposition within chivalric pageantry was the institution of the Order of the Garter. The Garter, like the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece, was established in an attempt to bind the aristocracy into a common brotherhood of chivalry under the monarch. Founded by Edward III in the Fourteenth Century, it was allowed to fall into decline apart from a brief revival under Henry V, until it was revived by Edward IV at the end of the Fifteenth Century. Its revival was continued under the early Tudors and it survived the Reformation with only minimal alterations. Garter ceremonies under Elizabeth were held annually at court on St George's Day. Apart from the annual feast the only other Garter festival was the election and installation of a new knight. Only those of the highest rank were admitted to the order and although in theory candidates were elected by current members of the Order, it was the queen who made the final choice. Garter knights who were involved in conspiracy suffered the disgrace of a ceremonial degradation. The Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland (Northern Rebellion), the Duke of Norfolk (Ridolfi Plot) and the Earl of Essex were ceremonially ejected from the Order.[127]

For the nobility, chivalric pageantry offered not only an opportunity to stress 'native' rights but a means of influencing foreign policy. The nobility, generally, tended to be in favour of military involvement against Catholic Spain. For some, such as Sir Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville, war against Spain could be seen in terms of a religious crusade. Until the mid 1580s the queen's official policy in regard to Spanish imperialism was one of non-involvement although unofficially a blind eye was turned to individual raids upon Spanish colonies and attacks upon Spanish cargo fleets. Sidney, Sir Francis Walsingham and the Earl of Leicester wanted the queen to take a more active role against the Spanish, particularly in support of the Calvinist rebels in the Netherlands.[128] For them chivalric display and tiltyard endeavours offered the opportunity for a romantic glorification of war which would enhance the popularity of their cause. Entertainments such as Sidney's *The Lady of May*, performed at Wanstead in 1578, used allegory to promote a policy of military intervention in the Netherlands. In *The Lady of May*, the queen is offered a choice between two husbands: one an active and virile forester, the other an aged and cautious shepherd. The active forester represented the activist foreign policy of Sidney and Leicester. The queen was supposed to choose the active forester but saw through the device and chose the aged shepherd.[129]

2.5. 'A Dangerous Image': Chivalry and the Essex Revolt

The Essex Rebellion had a significant effect upon Chapman's portrayal of chivalry in his tragedies. The rebellion exposed the dangers of the martial image that Chapman had celebrated in his early Homeric translations and the difficulty of distancing the martial image from the close involvement in 'the peasant-common politics' which he had warned Essex against in the 'Epistle Dedicatory' to *The Seaven Bookes of the Iliads*.[130] Chapman's concern with the political manipulation of chivalry and the martial image is, as will be seen in the following chapters, a major theme of his tragedies.

Essex's rebellion exposed the limitations of Elizabethan chivalry and precipitated the breakdown of the precarious compromise between monarch and aristocracy. The rebellion was by all accounts an aristocratic rebellion. Seven of his fellow conspirators were aristocrats - the Earls of Southampton, Rutland, Sussex, Bedford and Lords Mounteagle, Sandys and Cromwell. In addition to these his following had included Lord Henry Howard (later Earl of Northampton) who was not involved in the rebellion and Lord Mountjoy who backed down from active participation at the last moment.[131]

Essex's 'circle' or following was largely pro-aristocratic and pro-war with Spain. It was confrontational in its attitude and directly opposed the Cecils who were considered 'parvenues' and accused of supporting peace with Spain at any price. It was argued that the Cecils' low-breeding made them unfit to conduct foreign policy because they lacked honour and martial qualities and reduced matters of principle to bare economics.[132] It was Essex who encouraged the confrontational and factional nature of politics in the 1590s by opposing every policy that the Cecils attempted to implement and by challenging appointments to every vacant government or judicial post. By making patronage a factional issue, Essex ironically weakened his own position at court. As Simon Adams explains the pressure put on office holders by patronage disputes 'created a pro-Cecilian alliance of "ins", while Essex's following became something of a coalition of "outs"'.[133] Essex's most politically able followers such as Francis Bacon and Lord Henry Howard eventually recognised that the only way they could gain political office was to join with Cecil.

Essex's party by 1601 was largely a collection of politically isolated losers: malcontents, Roman Catholics and aristocrats. Political discontent was the only thing they had in common which is why when it came to the crunch Essex's revolt was a shambles. Essex lacked a coherent ideology. His foreign policy was of a zealous anti-Catholic, anti-Habsburg nature, yet at home he seemed to be advocating toleration for Catholics.[134] One of his Catholic followers, Charles Blount, claimed later that Essex had promised toleration of religion but also stated that the Earl was 'wont to say that he did not like any man to be troubled for his religion'. Although Blount could be an unreliable source the inclusion of committed Catholics among his followers, notably Charles Danvers, Robert Catesby and Francis Tresham would suggest that there was some truth in Blount's remark.[135] Essex had become all things to all people who had grievances against the government. As I have previously mentioned Essex's party was based on a feudalistic clientage system that was supposedly held together by honour. The reality, however, was that its prime motivation was materialistic. Malcontents banded around Essex because they hoped he would be able to do something for them; to provide them with incomes or to find them places at court.

When Essex's license for the farm of sweet wines was not renewed in October 1600 he realised that he would have to act quickly if he was to retain a political faction. Not only was he facing financial ruin but after a year out of office it could no longer be argued that he was indispensable. On the contrary, Mountjoy was making a success of the Irish campaign, peace with Spain seemed on the horizon and English troops had been victorious in the Netherlands. If Essex remained out of office and without income it would not be long before his following began to drift away and look for a new means of fulfilling their aims. The revolt of February 1601 was a last desperate attempt to secure dominance at court but the stakes were too high for many of his followers who preferred to take a back seat and watch developments. The limitations of the cult of honour were exposed at the sign of crisis. Being loyal to Essex was one thing but being disloyal to the monarch was an entirely different matter and the possible rewards for success could not compensate for the consequences of defeat. At the crunch, material considerations took precedence over honour.

Essex's popularity had been based on a cultivated image of knight errantry. At a time when reading stories of chivalric romance was popular in the cities, Essex became identified or confused with the heroes of fiction. His failures were ignored or forgiven in the light of his image as the handsome courtier/knight leading his troops into honourable battle against the Spanish. At Essex's trial, Bacon compared Essex's attempts to establish his popularity in London with the Duke of Guise's success in cultivating a chivalric persona in Paris.[136] While there are clear analogies between Essex and Guise, the difference between them was that Guise, unlike Essex, had been a great military commander and had had the additional advantage of being perceived as the defender of 'true' religion. Essex had won personal glory in Lisbon, Rouen and Cadiz but his record as a military commander left much to be desired. He had failed to achieve his military objectives at Cadiz and in the Azores and had failed miserably in Ireland. His failure in Ireland was highlighted by the subsequent success of Lord Mountjoy. Although he had tried to make an issue out of religion during his revolt, by claiming that Cecil was in league with the Spanish Catholics, it was not very convincing, particularly as Essex's own following contained a number of Catholics.[137]

Bacon had earlier warned Essex of the 'dangerous image' that he was fashioning for himself. By concentrating on military appointments and forming an entourage made up of former soldiers and those whom he had knighted in battle, Essex could be seen to pose a very real threat to the queen's security. Bacon advised Essex to hide his 'outward show' of greatness and seek civil office.[138] However, Essex's image was dependent on 'outward show' and Bacon's advice was ignored. Essex angered the queen by knighting large numbers of knights on each of his campaigns; twenty-four at Rouen; sixty-eight at Cadiz; and fifty-eight in Ireland.[139] These became derogatively known as 'Essex knights'. John Chamberlain complained to his friend Dudley Carleton:

> ... it is noted as a straunge thinge that a subject in the space of seven or eight yeares (not having ben sixe moneths together in any one action) shold upon so litle service and small desert make more knights than are in all the realme besides, and yt is doubted that yf he continue this course he will shortly bring in tag and rag, cut and longe tayle, and so draw the order into contempt.[140]

What is interesting about this letter is that Essex who openly claims to be concerned about the growing tendency to bestow knighthoods upon 'upstarts', is himself accused of bringing the knightage into disrepute. While Essex might distinguish between knighting merchants and knighting soldiers on the field of battle, it could hardly be argued that all these men had distinguished themselves in campaigns, none of which are renowned for their military achievements. Essex's expedition to Ireland was a military disaster and yet he managed to knight fifty-eight men. It seems that there was no principle in his actions and that his sole concern was in rewarding his friends and followers and in building an armed retinue. Both Richard McCoy and Mervyn James stress the feudal nature of Essex's military patronage involving the expectancy of loyalty and service from newly dubbed knights. James notes that the vast majority of 'Essex knights' became members of his faction and that most of Essex's inner circle - including the Earls of Southampton, Rutland and Sussex and Lords Cromwell and Mounteagle - had been knighted by him.[141]

Essex and his followers frequently went to great lengths to promote Essex's chivalric image and to exaggerate his military achievements. McCoy describes how before Essex's return from Cadiz his agents tried to publish a propagandist account of his achievements entitled *The True Relation of the Action at Cadiz*. The government intervened and banned the report before it could be published, but Anthony Bacon still arranged for manuscript copies to be circulated overseas. Thomas Birch records that at the same time one of Essex's chaplains preached a sermon comparing him 'with the chiefest generals' and stressing his 'honour and valour'.[142]

While he was under house arrest, following his return from Ireland in 1599, attempts were made by his followers to keep his heroic image in the public domain. This was done through the circulation of an engraving by Thomas Cockson, of Essex on horseback surrounded by images of his military campaigns at Rouen, Cadiz, Azores and Ireland. As McCoy suggests the original engraving was probably made before Essex's departure for Ireland in anticipation of a successful campaign, but by being circulated while he was under house arrest it may have helped to sustain his popular reputation. The extent of concern over the sale of copies of the engraving can be seen by the lengths to which the Privy Council went in order to suppress it. Their eventual action was significantly categorical. They decreed that 'hereafter no personage of any noblemann or other person shallbe ingraven and be printed to be putt on sale publiquely, and those prints that are already made to be called in, unlesse your Lordship [the Archbishop of Canterbury] shall first be made acquainted with the same, and thincke meete to allow them'.[143]

Essex had fashioned an image for himself which emphasised knightly independence and which associated him with the military achievements of history and the individual heroics of chivalric romances. It could be argued that he had created himself by taking on the persona of Sidney's successor at the Accession Day tilt of 1590. Essex's choice of an Accession Day tilt for his entry was appropriate, as it could be seen as a formal ceremonial celebration of his own accession - to Sidney's mantle. The extent to which he later manipulated chivalric iconography or it came to manipulate him remains a matter of debate. Did Essex become his own persona to the extent that it was impossible to separate the man from the image? Could he have heeded Bacon's warning and relinquished his 'dangerous Image' or had the image become part of him? There is a hint that he felt bound to his military image in a letter that he wrote to Lord Willoughby in January 1599 before setting out for Ireland: 'I am tied to my own reputation to use no tergiversation'.[144]

2.6. Political Re-alignment under James I

The chivalric movement continued under James but was in a rather fragile state. This was due to the catastrophe of the Essex rebellion, the political reconciliation between Cecil and leading members of the nobility, the king's predilection for aristocratic ministers and the end of the war with Spain. With Lord Henry Howard (a former member of the Essex Circle) and his nephew Lord Thomas Howard being given prominent positions in the new administration, the chivalric movement could no longer be identified with the interests of the nobility in its entirety. Instead it became associated with a group of former Essex followers who remained on the political margins and members of the Puritan nobility, such as the Earl of Pembroke and Sir Fulke Greville, who opposed the king's decision to make peace with Spain. Under the leadership of Prince Henry the martial nobility no longer represented the political threat that they had under Essex and were identified more as a pro-war party than as the advocates of 'Native rights'. Their political significance was minimal until the Cleves-Julich crisis of 1609-10.

Chapman's treatment of chivalry in his tragedies needs to be seen in the context of Essex's failure and the position of chivalry under James. It is portrayed as a nostalgic concept which has been adopted by the politically marginalized nobility in order to promote the re-opening of war, as a means of re-establishing their own political significance and the importance of the martial values that they esteem.

The Essex rebellion took much of the romance out of chivalry by highlighting the limitations of the cult of honour which was openly exposed by Essex's repudiation, after his conviction, of all that he represented. The worst aspect of Essex's confession was that he implicated those who were thought to have been only marginally involved in the revolt. These included his sister Penelope; his secretary, Henry Cuffe; the English Ambassador to France, Sir Henry Neville; and his friends Lord Mountjoy and Lord Sandys. Essex dishonourably blamed his inferiors for enticing him into rebellion through bad advice and appeals to his honour. By publicly admitting that he had lied at his trial he published his own dishonour, and his denunciation of his friends and followers proved his own unfaithfulness and disqualified him from the leadership of honourable men.[145]

Chivalric iconography continued to be used for ceremonial occasions after 1601. Queen Elizabeth went ahead with the Accession Day tilts of

1601 and 1602 and the tilts were continued under King James who saw the political advantage of associating himself with Arthurian mythology. Chivalry under King James became largely incorporated into the pageantry of royal power and was used outwardly to stress the absolute power of the monarch. However, Stephen Orgel and Graham Parry have argued that close reading of the chivalric entertainments and masques, reveals a partially disguised ironic undertone which serves to raise questions about Stuart authority.[146] Between 1610 and 1612 a chivalric movement, under the leadership of Prince Henry and the court aristocracy, attempted to revive the oppositional associations of chivalry in order to advocate a policy of military action against Spain over the Cleves-Julich affair.

There were three main reasons for the change in the nature of chivalry after Essex. Firstly, the Essex rebellion itself: the recognition of chivalry's 'dangerous image' when appropriated by subjects and Essex's public repudiation of honour. Secondly, the agreement of peace with Spain in 1604 and Mountjoy's suppression of the Irish rebellion denied chivalry a foreign outlet for its aggression. Chivalric qualities were of little use during times of peace apart from as an adornment on ceremonial occasions. Thirdly, the political realignment of 1603 brought members of the ancient nobility into government. It is the third point that I wish to discuss in this section.

Under James, Lord Henry and Lord Thomas Howard, two of the most senior members of the nobility, were created Earl of Northampton and Earl of Suffolk respectively, restored to land and property that had been confiscated by the crown at the Duke of Norfolk's attainder in 1572 and made privy councillors. Furthermore, Northampton was appointed Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and Suffolk, Lord Chamberlain. Former Essex supporters were pardoned, released from the Tower, reinstated in their former honours and given ceremonial positions that provided an income if no real power.

Under James the old aristocratic party was largely incorporated into the government apparatus.

The reasons for this were that James, as Pauline Croft has shown, preferred to be served and surrounded by the Ancient Nobility and by those he trusted.[147] Lord Henry Howard had entered secret negotiations with James on behalf of the Earl of Essex in the late 1590s and continued in this role on behalf of Robert Cecil after 1601, by which time a relationship of trust had been established between Howard and James.[148] When James succeeded to the throne in 1603 he was grateful to Howard and Cecil for having smoothed the way for his accession and chose understandably the two English politicians he knew he could trust as his chief ministers. The release and restoration of those imprisoned for their parts in the Essex rebellion was due partly in honour of Essex, who had urged Elizabeth to recognize James's claim to the throne in the 1590s and partly, one suspects, due to the influence of Northampton (himself, a former follower of Essex). Essex's former followers were soon replaced in the Tower by former enemies of the Earl: Sir Walter Raleigh and Lord Cobham who were implicated by Northampton in a plot with the Spanish to replace James with his cousin Lady Arabella Stuart.

Cecil, although not a member of the aristocracy, was retained at the head of James's government as a reward for his efforts in smoothing James's succession to the throne and in recognition of his ministerial ability and experience. Cecil remained the main source of political patronage, at least until 1610, and was the most influential of James's 'trinity of knaves'(Cecil, Northampton and Suffolk).[149]

James's first administration brought together 'parvenue' and 'ancient nobility', but the relationship was based on mutual need and remained tenuous. James's attempts to have Cecil created a Knight of the Garter in 1606 met with opposition from the aristocracy, and disagreement between

Cecil and Northampton over the control of patronage of the Great Farm in 1607, led to a decline in the relationship between the two.[150]

The factionalism of the 1590s was largely non-existent in the first decade of James's reign. This is not to claim that the state was a unified whole. Opposition frequently came from within the governing body: the Cecil-Howard alliance was based more on convenience than love. Although there was opposition to individual policies such as Anglo-Scottish Union and disagreements over Royal Prerogative and foreign policy there was not any significant, organized factional opposition during this period.[151]

Between 1603 and 1608 one common link between the Howards and Cecil was opposition to the king's Scottish entourage, particularly the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber. The Bedchamber Scots had constant access to the king; a privilege that even Cecil and Northampton were denied.[152] Both objected to the king's lavish expenditure upon the Scots and the means by which they used their access to the king for their own profit, by securing monopolies and by selling recommendations for knighthoods.[153] Dislike of the Scots was widespread among the English nobility, and in 1604 the Earl of Southampton, recently released from the Tower and restored to his earldom, was arrested for allegedly threatening to murder the Earl of Dunbar.[154]

Xenophobic feelings towards the Scots may have led to Cecil and Suffolk encouraging opposition, among the Lower House and in the capital, to the king's proposals for Anglo-Scottish union.[155] The king's support for 'imperfect union' was worrying, as it would have enabled Scots to have the same property rights in England as Englishmen without being subject to the English law.[156] Whether there was a strong principle behind opposition to union or whether it was motivated by xenophobia is a matter of debate. *Hymenaei*, the masque commissioned by Suffolk for the marriage of his daughter, Frances Howard with the Earl of Essex in 1606, contains strong union imagery. However, the question is not so much one of whether or not

Suffolk opposed union but what sort of union he opposed. Edwin Sandys, who had been a client of Cecil's, proposed in the parliamentary session of 1607 a 'perfect union' in which the Scottish body politic would have been incorporated into the English. It is likely that Suffolk and Cecil may well have favoured this imperialist option which would treat the Scots as a conquered race.

Howard (created Earl of Northampton in 1604) helped to bring about a reconciliation between former Essex clients and the new administration. He used his new influence to the benefit of Essex sympathisers among the gentry and brought the families of Miles Sandys and Sir Moyle Finch into his patronage network. At a higher level he helped to restore the fortunes of Sidney's son-in-law, the Earl of Rutland, who had been subjected to a heavy fine for his part in the Essex rebellion..[157]

The personal hatred that developed between Northampton and some other leading members of the former Essex faction - the Earl of Southampton, Sir Robert Sidney and the Earl of Pembroke - was primarily due to differences over religion and peace with Spain. Northampton, although officially Protestant retained family sympathies with Roman Catholicism and was instrumental in the peace process. Southampton, Sidney and Pembroke had Puritan sympathies and believed in the idea of the Protestant crusade.

2.7 Prince Henry and Chivalric Pageantry

Following the occupation of Cleves-Julich by a Habsburg army in 1609 Chivalry once again become associated with a Puritan, pro-war oppositionist movement. In Prince Henry the Puritan nobility had a new figure-head who could be compared with Sidney and Essex.

Prince Henry took a keen interest in chivalric pageantry and military pursuits and was from 1606 frequently a participant in tilts.[158] Henry associated himself with chivalric iconography and soon came to be seen as heir to the mantle of Sidney and Essex.[159] Sydney Anglo suggests that Henry's military activities were encouraged by the king who saw the possibility of political advantage arising from it. He advised the prince to: 'let your self and all your court wear no ordinary armour with your clothes, but such as is knightly and honourable: I mean rapier-swords and daggers'.[160]

Upon becoming Prince of Wales in 1610, Henry was established in his own household at St James's Palace. Frequent visitors at his court included survivors of the former Essex group, and those who wished for a more active foreign policy and to see the king join with Henry IV of France in a large-scale military campaign against Spain. Predominant among his circle were the Earl of Southampton, the young Earl of Essex, the Earl of Pembroke and the Catholic Earl of Arundel (heir to the Dukedom of Norfolk, which remained attainted). To some extent Henry's court became a focal point for those who were opposed to the government's foreign policy but it was also frequented by prominent ministers such as Cecil and Suffolk. Much has been made of Henry's friendships with former Essex followers but it should also be borne in mind that he was on good terms with Cecil, his son Viscount Cranbourne, and his nephew Edward Cecil. Cecil's friendship with Henry and with other members of the Prince's Circle suggests that the divisions between the king's court at Whitehall and Henry's at St. James's Palace are not as clear-cut as Graham Parry and Roy Strong have suggested. Pauline Croft refers to the warm relationship between Henry and Cecil, citing as evidence Henry's confidence in complaining to Cecil and Suffolk about his father's severity towards him. Furthermore, Cecil presented Henry with many well-chosen presents and advised and helped him with his art collection.[161] The extent of the relationship between Cecil and Henry is confirmed by a letter from the Venetian Ambassador in 1611 in which he noted that the prince 'is almost always with the Earl of Salisbury'[162]

Cecil was on close terms with other associates of Prince Henry. G. P. V. Akrigg refers to his friendship with the Earl of Southampton following the latter's release from the Tower in 1603. Cecil and Southampton along with Pembroke and Sir Edwin Sandys were involved in the formation of the Virginia Company in 1609.[163] In 1608 Cecil stood as a godparent, along with Prince Henry and the queen, to a son of the Earl of Arundel.[164] Arundel was not on good terms with his elder relatives, Northampton and Suffolk, who had divided up between themselves the majority of the Norfolk estates. He participated regularly in the Accession Day tilts and was in terms of lineage the head of the ancient nobility.[165]

Furthermore, it was Cecil who seems to have been the inspirer and organizer of the official installation ceremonies for the Prince of Wales in 1610. Cecil saw public spectacle as a means of playing on the popularity of the prince to induce greater willingness from Parliament to contribute towards royal expenditure.[166]

Cecil and to a lesser extent Suffolk, serve as a link between the courts at Whitehall and St James's. The differences between Henry and his father were over foreign policy, with Henry favouring a much more aggressive policy against Spain than his father. The nobility's historical association with war leadership led those who were excluded from the government to favour military involvement against the Catholic Habsburgs on grounds of religious conviction and as a means of attaining office.

Henry's hero-worship of and correspondence with his godfather, Henry IV of France encouraged his interest in military activities. His desire to emulate Henry IV and to fight alongside him against the Habsburgs at the time of the Cleves-Julich crisis perhaps suggests that Henry's designs were directed more against Spanish imperialism than Roman Catholicism *per se.* It shouldn't be forgotten that Henry IV was himself, outwardly, a Catholic prince.

The prince's anti-Spanish sympathies were not out of step with the government. Cecil and Northampton were as much anti-Spanish as the prince. The difference, however, was that Cecil and Northampton were more conscious of the expense and sceptical of the likely success of war against Spain. Nicolo Molin, the Venetian ambassador, had quoted Cecil as saying:

> Had the crown not been in straits for money on account of the late wars, your lordship may trust me that peace would not have been signed; but necessity knows no law. The king it is true, is a lover of quiet, but I don't know how long he will continue so, time will show.[167]

Northampton, in a letter to Sir Charles Cornwallis, the English Ambassador in Spain, complained (in an ironic tone) of the irrationality of those who disapproved of peace with Spain:

> ... though it be true, that by war we are as poor as they, that the realm would give no more, the revenue could afford no more, and that the Queen sold her land by lumps, yet all are now persuaded, that without a peace the King of Spain would have resigned up into the King's hands his whole dominions.[168]

Prince Henry and certain members of the aristocracy, notably the Earl of Pembroke, supported a policy of active military involvement against the Habsburgs over the occupation of Cleves-Julich in 1609. Northampton and Cecil, with the support of the king, preferred to bide their time and pursue a diplomatic resolution. The differences between Prince Henry and the government in 1609-10 were not so much ideological as tactical.

With the prospect of war chivalry became, once again, a means of encouraging support for active military engagement with the enemy. That the Cleves-Julich crisis coincided with Henry's inauguration as Prince of Wales provided the opportunity for military display and pageantry. Ben Jonson's and Inigo Jones's *Prince Henry's Barriers*, performed on 6 January 1610; the Accession Day tilt; the prince's inauguration festivities of June

1610 (including the Queen's Masque - *Tethys's Festival* - by Samuel Daniel and Inigo Jones) all had noticeable chivalric themes.[169]

The assassination of Henry IV in May 1610 and the subsequent withdrawal of Habsburg troops from Juliers restored peace to Europe and made English military intervention unnecessary. The restoration of peace and the death in 1612 of Prince Henry led to a declining interest in chivalry, and in 1622 even the Accession Day tilts were discontinued. Attempts to exploit the myth of Elizabethan chivalry in the war against Spain after 1624 were an embarrassing failure. J.S.A. Adamson has recently suggested that in the 1625 expedition against Cadiz a conscious effort was made to recall Essex's raid of 1596. This was attempted by choosing as joint commanders the descendants of two of Elizabeth's most famous councillors: Burghley's grandson (Sir Edward Cecil) and Essex's son (the 3rd Earl).[170] However, the comparison between the legend of the Elizabethan 'golden age' and the failure of Buckingham's campaigns caused embarrassment. Adamson has shown that in the 1630s Charles I created a new chivalric ideology in which the ideal knight was redefined as the guardian of the Caroline peace.[171]

2.8. Conclusion

Jacobean chivalry was evidently of a different nature to that of the last two decades of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Under Elizabeth chivalry had a two-sided effect. On the one hand chivalric pageantry was used by the queen to emphasise royal power and to promote her image, in terms of Arthurian iconography, as the symbol of the country's unity and solidarity. On the other hand chivalry because of its associations with an aristocratic and feudal past stressed the importance of lineage and 'native' rights. If the queen had acceded to the throne and to the rights that were customarily associated with the monarch on grounds of primogeniture then by the same reasoning the 'ancient' nobility had the right to inherit not only the lands and the titles of their ancestors but the customary rights and privileges that had belonged to them. Elizabethan chivalry became identifiable with the traditional nobility, and was the means by which they could promote their own inherent rights to be involved in the governing process. In the context of the 1580s and 1590s chivalry represented a policy of opposition to the queen's preference for non-noble/parvenue ministers and her reluctance to engage enthusiastically in war with Spain.

The Essex rebellion, the peace with Spain and the political re-alignment under James represented a turning point for chivalry. Under James, chivalry was incorporated, to a large degree, into the establishment. While James could not identify himself with the dashing young heroes of chivalric romance, his eldest son became a fitting inheritor of the chivalric mantle of Sidney and Essex. The threat of renewed hostilities with Spain in 1609-10 briefly revived chivalry's pro-war symbolism and the prince became a figure-head for those who, disappointed with the peace of 1604, saw the opportunity to have another 'crack' at Catholic Spain. Even in 1609-10, however, Chivalry could hardly be attributed with the political significance of the 1590s. This was not another case of the nobility claiming its inherent rights from the monarch, but rather a section of nobility uniting behind the heir to the throne against a foreign enemy. The central role of Prince Henry in the chivalric pageantry of 1610 ensured that chivalry remained firmly incorporated within the hegemony of the Stuart regime.

Notes to Chapter Two

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143. McCoy, 'A Dangerous Image', 325-6; *Acts of the Privy Council* (30 August 1600), ed. by John Roche Dasent, New Series XXX, 1599-1600 (London: HMSO, 1905; repr. Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprints, 1974), pp. 619-20.
144. Earl of Essex to Lord Willoughby, 4 Jan. 1599, *HMC, Salisbury*, ix, p. 10.
145. James, pp. 455-8.
146. Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd*; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).
147. Pauline Croft, 'Robert Cecil and the Early Jacobean Court' in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. by Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 134-47 (p. 140).
148. Peck, p. 19.
149. Alan Haynes, *Robert Cecil: 1st Earl of Salisbury 1563-1612* (London: Peter Owen, 1989), p. 103.
150. Haynes, pp. 189-90, Peck, pp. 131-5.
151. Kevin Sharpe, 'Faction at the Early Stuart Court', *History Today*, 33 (October, 1983), 39-46; Peck.
152. Neil Cuddy, 'Anglo-Scottish Union and the Court of James I, 1603-1625', *TRHS*, 5th series, 39 (1989), 107-24 (111); *CSP Venetian, 1603-7*, p. 33.
153. Croft, p. 144.
154. G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), pp. 140-2; *CSP Venetian, 1603-7*, pp. 165, 168.
155. I have discussed how Salisbury and Suffolk may have encouraged the inclusion of anti-Scottish sentiments in *Eastward Ho* in my unpublished paper, '"Wee are all one Countrymen Now"? *Eastward Ho* and the opposition to Anglo-Scottish Union', presented at the conference on 'Refashioning Ben Jonson', held at the University of Warwick on 7th & 8th January 1995. For the possibilities of a political relationship between Salisbury and Edwin Sandys see Nicholas Tyacke, 'Sir Edwin Sandys and the Cecils: a Client-Patron Relationship', *Historical Research*, 64 (1991), 87-91.
156. Brian P. Levack, *The Formation of the British State: England, Scotland and the Union, 1603-1707* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).
157. Peck, pp. 21, 51-5, 72.
158. Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, p. 66.
159. Strong, *Prince Henry*, pp. 63-70, 14; portraits, pp. 35, 40.
160. Sydney Anglo, 'How to Kill a Man at your Ease: Fencing Books and the Duelling Ethic' in *Chivalry in the Renaissance*, pp. 1-12 (p. 11).
161. Croft, p. 141.
162. Antonio Foscarini to Doge and Senate, 21 Oct. 1611, *CSP Venetian, 1610-13*, p. 227.
163. Akrigg, pp. 141, 152-3, 158-60.
164. Zorzi Giustinian to Doge and Senate, Oct. 9 1608, *CSP Venetian, 1607-*

10, p. 178.

165. The Earl of Arundel converted to the Reformed Church in 1616, shortly before his appointment to the Privy Council.

166. Croft, p. 142.

167. Nicolo Molin to Doge and Senate, 25 Aug. 1604, *CSP Venetian, 1603-7*, p. 176.

168. Ralph Winwood, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I*, ed. by Edmund Sawyer, 3 vols (London: T. Ward, 1725), ii, 91-5; Maurice Lee, *James I and Henri IV: An Essay in English Foreign Policy 1603-1610* (London: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 42.

169. Strong, *Prince Henry*, pp. 141-60; Parry, pp. 70-79.

170. J. S. A. Adamson, 'Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England' in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 161-97 (p. 169).

171. Adamson, p. 170.

Chapter Three

'Man in his Native Noblesse'? Chivalry and the Nobility in *Bussy D'Ambois*

> A man so good, that only would uphold
> Man in his native noblesse, from whose fall
> All our dissensions rise; that in himself
> (Without the outward patches of our frailty,
> Riches and honour) knows he comprehends
> Worth with the greatest: Kings had never borne
> Such boundless eminence over other men,
> Had all maintain'd the spirit and state of D'Ambois.
> (III. 2. 90-7)[1]

3.1. Introduction

The French Wars of Religion (1560-98) provided Chapman with a recent historical context in which to set four plays raising issues relating to chivalry and court politics. Late sixteenth century France provided a background of political instability and sporadic warfare which served to emphasise the dangers of the militaristic nature of Elizabethan and Jacobean chivalry and its encouragement of the quest for personal honour.

At a time of weak monarchy, the nobility in France took the opportunity of increasing its political influence in the regions and claiming constitutional rights from the monarch. Political factions were formed under the leadership of three princes of the blood: the Duc d'Alençon, the Duc de Guise and the King of Navarre. The nobility divided itself among these three factions and the king on grounds of religion but also on the basis of patronage networks and self-interest. Military campaigns involving heroic feats enabled members of the nobility, such as Bussy D'Amboise and the Duc de Biron (the heroes of Chapman's plays), to develop reputations of superhuman proportions which they used to enhance their political influence and build up large territorial power bases.

Chapman considered that events in France could offer 'material instruction' for England at a time when Essex's attempted coup was a recent memory and there were fears that the new king, James I was trying to establish an absolute monarchy.[2] In this and the two subsequent chapters I will be suggesting that the central concern of Chapman's plays is chivalry and its relationship with court politics. My contention is that Chapman's plays expose chivalry as a form of political discourse which is used by the nobility in order to associate itself with traditional chivalric values, such as bravery in battle, honour and virtue. I intend to show how Chapman's plays decode this discourse and deconstruct the myth of traditional chivalric values.

I have divided my discussion of *Bussy D'Ambois* into four sections. In the first I will discuss briefly the life of Bussy D'Amboise and how he became the subject of a legend. In the second I will comment on Chapman's possible sources for information about Bussy and late sixteenth century France, in particular the newsletters that were published in England at the time. In the third section I will consider the proposed dates for the play and the extent to which they could influence interpretation. The fourth and main section, which offers an interpretation of the play, is divided into seven subsections. In the first of these I will analyse the opening scene of the play in order to discuss how Chapman creates for Bussy his image of 'man in his native noblesse' by establishing a set of oppositions between Bussy and the court. In the second, I will show how Bussy's arrival at court brings out its inherent hierarchical nature and how the resulting conflict between Bussy and the values of court, threatens the status quo and disrupts the harmony of the court that was in evidence before his arrival. In the third, I will consider the different perceptions of Bussy that are presented by characters in the play and comment on the nature and effect of these. Fourthly, I will discuss Bussy's relationship with the king as an example of the Elizabethan chivalric compromise between monarch and nobility. In the final three sections I will consider the means by which the play works to deconstruct the chivalric myth and decode its associated discourse, the incompatibility between the description of Bussy as virtuous man and the perceived reality, and the events leading up to the death of Bussy in the final scene.

3.2. Bussy D'Amboise and the Creation of a Legend

There is little in the life of Bussy D'Amboise to suggest that he could be the 'man so good' of Chapman's play.(III. 2. 90). A relatively minor figure during the French Wars of Religion, he became notorious for his duels, love affairs, arrogance and political intrigues. Edward Grimeston refers to him as 'a bloudy, wicked, and a furious man' and Sir Amias Paulet (English Ambassador in France, 1576-9) describes him as a 'wicked' and 'pernicious' man.[3] However, shortly after his death in 1579 stories began to appear about his achievements in battle, his love affair with Françoise de Maridort, the Countess of Montsoreau, and his heroic death while defending the honour of his mistress.

Bussy was born in 1549 and raised at the Valois court, where he became a follower of the Duke of Anjou (later Henry III). Like many young noblemen of the time he was drawn into the Wars of Religion and was raised to the position of company commander at the relatively young age of eighteen. In 1572 he played a part in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, taking the opportunity to murder his cousin, Antoine de Clermont D'Amboise, Marquis of Reynal with whom his family had been engaged in a law suit. Bussy fought alongside the Duke of Anjou at the siege of La Rochelle (February-July 1573) where he was wounded. Later that year he accompanied the Duke of Anjou to Poland when the duke went to take possession of his new kingdom. Early in 1574 Bussy left the service of Anjou (presumably due to lack of preferment) and returned to Paris where he entered the service of Anjou's younger brother the Duke of Alençon. Between May 1574 and January 1575 he fought against the Huguenots at St Lo, Fontenay, Le Compte and Luzignan. On his return to court he acquired a reputation as a quarreller, a duellist and a seducer of women. it was during this period that he supposedly became the lover of Marguerite de Valois, the sister of his patron and wife of the king of Navarre.[4]

Ordered to command a regiment in Guyenne in June 1575 he became involved in a conspiracy in which several regiments loyal to him marched on the court declaring their allegiance to the Duke of Alençon. Bussy was deprived of his command but managed to escape any further punishment. In September 1575 he met at Saumur with the Duke of Alençon, who had escaped from his confinement at court. Alençon promoted Bussy to the rank of colonel and gave him the responsibility of organizing a rebel army. They joined forces with Condé's Huguenot army and prepared for war against the king. The rebellion ended with the Peace of Etigny (known as the Peace of Monsieur) in March 1576.

As a result of the treaty, Bussy received a company of fifty horsemen and the governorship of Anjou. He governed Anjou as if it were a conquered territory, permitting his troops to terrorize the population. Percy Allen describes the hatred with which Bussy and his troops were regarded by the local inhabitants:

> He [Bussy] has at his command troops whose doings, as they pass through the country, inspire unspeakable odium and frantic horror. Fire and sword, rape and pillage, all ruthlessly applied are their methods; and for immunity from reprisals, they must like wolves, hunt and herd together in sufficient numbers. Let the outraged peasants but once get wind of some party, or foraging band of Bussy's men, small enough to be dealt with safely - why then the revenge is swift and thorough. Dead men tell no tales.[5]

Following the complaints of the inhabitants, Bussy was ordered to disband his followers and return to court. He refused and retired to Ponts-de-Ce in protest. In March 1577 he forcibly re-entered Angers, the capital of Anjou, and sacked the town. He began a new reign of terror throughout the province as was reported by the English Ambassador, Sir Amias Paulet:

> He [Bussy] is seised of Angers, Saumur and Le Pont de Cé, and spoils such other towns as refuse him such sums of money as he requires. He has ransomed the town of Mons at 30,000 francs and has spoiled the faubourgs of some other towns.[6]

When commanded to put a stop to the pillaging and lead an army against the Huguenots at La Charité he refused to comply. Bussy's actions created a great deal of uncertainty about his position. As Paulet wrote in a letter to the queen:

> Some think Bussy has secret intelligence with the king to betray those of Brittany, others that he is leagured with the Protestants, the third that he is directed by Monsieur, the last that he stands by himself as a malcontent.[7]

Bussy eventually complied with the king's command and led an army against the Huguenots at Issoire. Following the capitulation of the town he returned to court, early in 1578, where he became involved in a series of quarrels notably with Queylus (one of the king's minions) who made an attempt on his life.

Later that year he joined Alençon in Angers and began organizing a campaign to the Netherlands. Late in 1578 he followed Alençon to the Netherlands where his patron was declared Protector of the Lowlands. It was during this period that Bussy met with Sir Francis Walsingham to discuss the terms for a marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Alençon. Involvement in the Netherlands ended in disgrace when the French troops pillaged the town of Binch which they were supposed to be defending. Some of Alençon's followers attempted to put the blame for the pillaging on Bussy in order to clear their patron.[8] By February 1579 Alençon and Bussy had returned to France. In April, Bussy was back in Anjou, and it was widely believed that Alençon had sacrificed his friend's company in order to make his peace with the king.[9]

It was at this time that Bussy first met Françoise de Maridort, the wife of the Count of Montsoreau. He wooed and seduced her, foolishly boasting of his conquest in a letter to one of his friends. The letter was given to Alençon who passed it on to the king who, in turn, showed it to Montsoreau, urging him to defend his honour. Montsoreau returned home and forced his wife to arrange a rendezvous with Bussy at their castle in Coutancière. When Bussy arrived unarmed (on 19th August 1579) he was ambushed by Montsoreau and some of his followers. Wounded he jumped out of the window and died impaled on an iron gate.

Bussy's death inspired a number of adulatory poems from his friends and he soon acquired legendary status as a great soldier and scholar who gave his life to defend the honour of his mistress. Claire-Eliane Engel refers to some of the epitaphs, songs and obituaries written in French and Latin about Bussy shortly after his death.[10] In one of these entitled 'Dialogue entre Flore et Lysès' Bussy is described as:

> Le mignon de Vénus, le favori de mars
> L'Effroi des nations, les eraint des toutes parls
> Bussi le Beau, le fort, le fendant le terrible,
> Cy-gist assassiné par un juste courroux.[11]

In another he is compared with Mars:

> Ou bien le même Mars qui fut nommé Bussi,
> Le Mars fut assailli et de fer et de flamme,
> De fer par le mari et de feu par la femme.[12]

Bussy's legendary reputation grew. In 1592 Dampmartin wrote *Du Bonheur de la Cour* which takes the form of a dialogue between the author and Bussy, concerning the latter's love for the Countess of Montsoreau. In 1619

François de Rosset wrote in romantic terms of Bussy's death in 'De la Mort Pitoyable du Valeureux Lysis' and in 1621 Pierre de l'Estoile in his *Journal des Choses Memorables Advenues durant tout le Regne de Henri III* praised his valour in battle. Bussy was of:

> ... 'un courage invincible, haut à la main, fier et audacieux, aussi vaillant que son épée; et pour l'age qu'il avoit qui n'etoit que de trente ans, aussi digne de commander a une armee que Capitaine, qui fut en France. Toutefois il lui reproche d'avoir été vicieux et peu craignant Dieu: ce qui causa son malheur n'étant parvenu a la moitié de ses jours, comme il advient aux hommes de sang tels qui lui'.[13]

Bussy later became the romantic hero of Alexandre Dumas's nineteenth century novel *La Dame de Monsoreau*.

As a participant in the Wars of Religion who had taken on legendary status in the years following his death and been identified with many of the characteristics of the chivalric code, Bussy D'Amboise is a perfect subject for a play that works to deconstruct the chivalric myth.

3.3. Chapman's sources of Information about Bussy D'Ambois and the English Reception of Events in France

There is no one known source for *Bussy D'Ambois* but as I have suggested Bussy had taken on legendary status in France and the significant events of his life would have been generally well known. Jean Jacquot claims that Bussy became the subject of an oral tradition in England originating from the time that news of his death was brought to Alençon in England where he was paying court to the queen.[14]

Chapman's plays display an in depth knowledge of recent French history and of the political conflicts and preoccupations of the nobility during and immediately after the Wars of Religion, suggesting that he had recourse to more than just an oral tradition. I would like, at this point, to consider alternative sources of information on French affairs to which Chapman would have had access. He seems to have been on relatively familiar terms with Sir Thomas Walsingham, to whom he dedicated the published version of the Byron plays in 1608, and his wife Audrey, to whom he dedicated *Hero and Leander* in 1598. Sir Thomas was a kinsman of Sir Francis Walsingham, who had been ambassador to Paris at the time of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and had negotiated with Bussy in 1578. Sir Thomas, himself, as Charles Nicholl has shown, was frequently in France between 1580 and 1584.[15] Given the nature of Walsingham's association with France (gathering intelligence for his kinsman) and the period when he was travelling in the country (shortly after Bussy's death) it seems likely that he would have been the recipient of stories concerning the death of Bussy, which he could have relayed to Chapman. A further possible source of information is Chapman's kinsman Edward Grimeston, the translator, whom we know from his dedications spent more than eight years in public service in France.[16] As Grimeston was in the process of translating into English Jean de Serres's *Inventaire General de l'Histoire de France*, he would have been familiar with events surrounding the life of Bussy.

The Duke of Lennox and his brother Esmé Stuart, Lord d'Aubigny are other possible informants. Both were born in France and although Lennox had been raised at James's court in Scotland, d'Aubigny had been educated in France and crossed the Channel only after James's accession to the English throne in 1603. D'Aubigny helped Chapman and Jonson during their difficulties over *Eastward Ho* in 1605: Chapman's letter to the Earl of Suffolk mentions that 'the Lorde Dawbuey' had brought them news of the remission of their punishment.[17] There is also in existence a letter, attributed to Chapman, addressed to Mr Crane, secretary to the Duke of Lennox.[18] John Margeson suggests that 'if the letter is genuine, Lennox was probably the patron who gave Chapman shelter at the time of his difficulties over a performance of the Byron plays'.[19] Lennox and d'Aubigny were first cousins of Henriette d'Entragues (mistress of Henry IV from 1599-1605) and nephews of François de Balsac d'Entragues the survivor of the three-a-side duel fought in 1578, which Chapman uses in his play.

A major source of general information about recent events in France were the numerous newsletters published by John Wolfe and others in the latter part of the sixteenth century and the correspondence of diplomats such as Ralph Winwood and Dudley Carleton. This material provided an insight into the duplicity and competitiveness of French politics which may have influenced Chapman's portrayal of history in the plays.

A. G. Dickens and Clifford Chalmers Huffman have produced useful summaries of material on the French political situation, published in England at the time of the Wars of Religion.[20]

Dickens provides evidence to show that 'the Elizabethans felt vastly more interest in France than in any other foreign country, with the Netherlands running a rather poor second, and the rest lagging far behind'. Excluding literary and theological works Dickens concludes that 250 works on current French affairs were published in England between 1561 and 1600.[21] Predominantly, these works were written from a Huguenot perspective and exaggerated the duplicity and wickedness of the Valois court and the leader of the Catholic nobility, the Duke of Guise. As early as 1562 a pamphlet was published entitled *The destruction and sacke cruelly committed by the Duke of Guyse, in the toune of Vassy*[22] Following the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572 many pamphlets were published associating the king, the queen mother and the Guises with machiavellianism. Perhaps the most significant of these was François Hotman's *De Furoribus Gallicis* which was published in 1573 in three Latin editions and an English version: *A true and plaine report of the furious outrages of Fraunce*.[23] This was later to become the major source for the first half of Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* (1593) in which the Duke of Guise is portrayed as a conventional stage machiavel and the queen mother as an evil schemer who will go to any lengths to retain political power. The other main characters, in the play, Henry III and Henry of Navarre, are represented as political opportunists. Similar pamphlets followed shortly after Hotman's. *The Three Partes of the Commentaries* by Jean de Serres, translated by Thomas Tymme, came out in 1574 and *A Mervaylous discourse upon the lyfe, deedes and behaviours of Katherine de Medicis, Queene Mother* attributed to Henri Estienne was published the following year.[24] The latter is predominantly a commentary on specific accusations against Catherine, of poisonings, bawdry, prodigality, mass slaughters and a variety of other crimes.[25] Similar accusations were made against the Queen Mother in Innocent Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel* published in Geneva in 1576 and translated by Simon Patericke the following year.

Later works strongly supported the king of Navarre and urged him and Henry III to make a pact and join forces to crush the Duke of Guise who, they claimed, sought the crown. Following the assassination of Guise in 1588 the opposition of Huguenot pamphleteers was turned upon his brother the Duke of Mayenne and the Spanish forces whom the Guisards had invited into the country after 1589 to prevent the accession of Henry IV. Between 1588 and 1593 John Wolfe turned French news into an industry, publishing over 50 articles relating to contemporary events in France.[26] Many of these were reports of the battles, speeches and proclamations of Henry IV. Following Henry's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1593 the publications declined considerably. It is difficult to know whether this was due to a fall in Henry's popularity among the English or the staunchly Protestant Wolfe's own reaction to Henry's conversion.

Chapman's plays illustrate an awareness of the general change in attitude towards Henry after 1598. Following Henry's unilateral acceptance of peace with Spain in 1598, breaking the conditions of his alliance with England, attitudes towards him changed considerably. Birch reports that Henry had signed a peace treaty with Spain on 22 April 1598 but laid down the condition that it should not be published until the following month by which time the English commissioners under Robert Cecil, who had come for the French king's assurance that he would not make a separate peace, would have returned to England.[27] Instead of the 'folk-hero' of the English he increasingly came to be seen as a scheming and duplicitous politician who could not be trusted. The letters of the English Ambassadors in France between 1599 and 1604, Sir Henry Neville and Sir Ralph Winwood, depict the king as devious and self-seeking. The main accusations against him are that he was deliberately striving to prevent a successful peace agreement being reached between England and Spain in order to keep both countries dependent on his good-will; he made little attempt to repay the loans he had received from England during the Civil Wars at a time when England desperately needed the money to finance its own wars with Spain; and that he was working against the interests of England and the Protestant religion.[28] Many of the letters in Winwood's collection depict an atmosphere of intrigue and discontent.

In a series of letters written between August 1599 and June 1600 a court informer who went under the alias of John Petit claimed that Henry was preparing to seize the English throne on Elizabeth's death.[29] It is difficult to judge how reliable this information is, but it is evidence of the low esteem in which Henry was held at the time that accusations such as this were considered credible.

The strained relationship between Henry and England continued into the reign of James I. Henry's policy regarding negotiations between England and Spain was to encourage James to continue the war without making any commitments of his own.[30] In addition there were numerous problems between the two countries over trade and the French debt.[31]

Although Henry IV's popularity among the English had declined from its height of 1589-1593 it would be untrue to suggest that he was held in low esteem by everyone of political significance. Much has been made of Prince Henry's continued admiration for him throughout the first decade of the seventeenth century. Graham Parry and Roy Strong have shown that Prince Henry idolized the French King for his military leadership during the 1590s and sought to emulate him by one day leading his own countrymen into battle against the Spanish. Parry mentions that Prince Henry entered into correspondence with the French king as early as 1606 and Strong refers to the suit of armour that the king gave the prince in 1607. Both stress the influence the French King exerted over the prince.[32] On hearing of King Henry's assassination in 1610 the prince is said to have taken to his bed for several days repeating the words, 'My second father is dead'.[33] Generally there was a resurgence in Henry's popularity between 1609 and his death, due to the strong line he appeared to be taking over the Cleves-Julich affair. Following the Habsburg seizure of Juliers in July 1609 Henry allied himself with the Protestant union and prepared for military action to free the city. Rumours circulated that this was just a mask for a much grander expedition aimed against the Spanish, as Henry's army of between 25,000 and 30,000 men was considered excessive for the relief of Juliers.[34] The possibility of a major European assault upon the hated Spanish won the support of the Protestant nobility in England who recognized the opportunity to re-open a war that many thought should not have ended in 1604 and to regain some of the political influence that they had lost since the peace. Henry, once again, became the 'Protestant' hero and his active policy against Habsburg aggression was contrasted favourably with the dithering pacifism of King James.

If Bussy was the perfect hero for Chapman's treatment of chivalry then the background of political intrigue and warfare that was supplied by France was ideal for a series of plays on the subject of the nobility and court politics.

3.4. Proposed Dates for *Bussy D'Ambois*

In order to read the play as a comment on chivalry in the light of the Essex debacle, it is necessary to establish that it was written after 1601 and not in 1596 or 1598 as some commentators have suggested. A later date would also establish a logical transition in Chapman's attitude to chivalry from the celebration of martial values in the Homeric translations of 1598 to the scepticism of the plays.

Most commentators on the play have followed T. M. Parrott in accepting 1604 as the date of composition. They include E. K. Chambers, Robert Ornstein, Nicholas Brooke, Maurice Evans and Albert Tricomi.[35] However, the 1604 date is defended only on the basis of internal evidence. Parrott based his claim on four phrases in the play - the reference to Elizabeth as an 'old queen' (I. 2. 12) which would have been tactless during her lifetime; Bussy's bawdy joke, 'Tis leap-year, Lady' (I. 2. 79), which suggests a performance during the leap year of 1604; and references to James's indiscriminate creation of knights, 'Knight of the new edition' (I. 2. 111), and 'new-denizened Lord' (I. 2. 154). The problem with relying upon internal evidence is that it could well have been added at a later date if the play was revised. As Nicholas Brooke suggests 'the concentration of all internal evidence in one scene' does look suspicious.[36]

Other dates that have been proposed for the play are 1596, 1598 and 1600. Ironically, Parrott's internal evidence could also be used to support a date of 1596 or 1600. 'Old queen' was not necessarily a derogative term; 1596 and 1600 were both leap-years; and the references to the creation of knights could allude to those Essex knighted at Cadiz and in Ireland, commonly known as 'Essex knights'. Nevertheless, on the whole, evidence for these dates is not very convincing. F. S. Boas suggested a date of before 1598 on the basis of two entries in Henslowe's *Diary* in March and November 1598 referring to 'Perowe's sewt which Wm Sley were'. Boas suggested that these entries referred to the costume of Tamyra's maid, Piero. When this theory was revived by Elias Schwartz it was refuted by Robert Ornstein who showed that a Piero or Pierrot's suit is a clown's costume, which Sly a clown actor was likely to have worn.[37] The main argument for a date of 1600 or earlier is based on a phrase from Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601), 'for trusty *Damboys* now the deed is done, Ile pledge his Epigram in wine, Ile swallow it, I, yes'[38]. Ezra Lehman and Schwartz consider this to be an allusion to Chapman's play.[39] However, apart from the name 'Damboys' there is nothing in this allusion that suggests it refers to Chapman's play. As Parrot noted, it could well refer to one of Dekker's and Drayton's lost plays on *The Civil Wars of France* or to some other lost play on the subject of France and Bussy D'Ambois.

The lack of external evidence and the weakness of the internal evidence makes *Bussy D'Ambois* a difficult play to date. Personally, I would subscribe to a 1604 date for the play on the following, speculative grounds.

Firstly, the implied criticism of the court and the lavish creation of knights that can be found in the play is a trait of Jacobean plays and not Elizabethan. Criticism of the new knights can be found in *Eastward Ho*, *The Isle of Gulls* and *The Alchemist* but not in plays before 1603. Likewise, the corrupt court became a convention of Jacobean Tragedy and was rare on the Elizabethan stage.

Secondly, the structure and language of the play suggest that it was written for a company of child actors and the private theatres. The strongly classical structure of the play with much of the action taking place off-stage and being reported in choric fashion is more usual in the private theatres than on the public stage. In the second act of *Bussy D'Ambois* a Nuncius gives a long and heroic report of the three-a-side duel, and at the beginning of the final scene, Monsieur and Guise seem to lose their own identities in order to take on the role of Chorus. Furthermore, linguistically it is a difficult play, containing many long speeches which are full of classical and theoretical allusions. Again, this is more in the style of plays performed by the child companies than those on the public stage. Furthermore, we know that by 1607 when the play was first published it had been 'often presented' at the private theatre of St Pauls. The attribution of the play to a child company rules out a date before 1599 when these companies were permitted to re-open.

Thirdly, a composition date of 1596, 1598 or 1600 would give the play a very different political context compared with a date of 1604, as the three earlier dates are prior to Essex's attempted coup. In the context of the early dates the play's sceptical attitude towards Elizabethan chivalry would serve more as a warning to Essex than as a response to his rebellion. The problem with this is that in his dedicatory epistles to Essex of *The Seaven Bookes of the Iliades* and *Achilles' Shield* in 1598 Chapman celebrates the Earl's chivalric virtues and urges him to continue his quest for personal honour. These dedications sit uneasily beside the attitude to chivalry that we see in *Bussy D'Ambois*. Why would Chapman be celebrating chivalric honour in his dedications while at the same time dismissing it as mythical, archaic and wasted energy in the play? The only likely conclusion is that Chapman's view of chivalry was revised as a result of Essex's attempted coup. This would account for Chapman portraying chivalry in a very different manner in 1604 from that of the 1598 dedications.

In the light of the reasons given I would support a composition date for the play of 1604 but acknowledge that my conclusion is based on speculation rather than conclusive evidence.

3.5. Chivalry and Court Politics in *Bussy D'Ambois*

In *Bussy D'Ambois* we see how chivalry is used as a weapon in the power struggle between monarch and nobility. Bussy's martial prowess and his image of 'man in his native noblesse' are used first by Monsieur and later by the King in order to enhance their political power. Both Monsieur and the King establish and promote the myth of Bussy's virtue in order to identify themselves with the qualities that they establish for Bussy. Monsieur sees in Bussy's prowess and his claim to the 'native rights' of the nobility a means of challenging the absolute authority of the monarch, whereas Henry recognizes in Bussy the 'kingly spirit' that he himself lacks. Surrounded by people who praise his merit, Bussy comes to believe in the image that has been fashioned for him and in his own indestructibility. He rises from the obscurity of the 'green retreat' to become the king's 'eagle' and a threat to the status quo of the court. By emphasizing the distinction between his fashioned image and his aggressive behaviour at court the play deconstructs the myth of 'man in his Native noblesse'.

3.5.1. Bussy in the 'Green Retreat'

In the first scene we see Bussy in the 'green retreat', excluded from the court which is the centre of the political and material world. His position can be identified with that of the martial nobility in England following the end of the war with Spain. The centralizing policies of the

Tudors, as has been shown in Chapter Two, by establishing the court as the centre of patronage reduced the independent status of the nobility to one of dependency. For a member of the lesser nobility like Bussy, wealth and position could only be achieved through access to the court, and access could only be gained through the patronage of a powerful courtier. Without a patron Bussy is condemned to his 'green retreat'. His perception of himself and of the court, in the opening scene, is influenced by his exclusion from the political centre. Like those members of the martial nobility who found themselves politically marginalized under James, Bussy contrasts his own perceived virtue and honour with the corruption and dishonour of those who are 'great' at court. Furthermore, he distinguishes between the present morally degenerate times and a chivalric 'golden age', when the martial values to which he adheres were highly esteemed, and when men like him were sought for by kings. Bussy's complaints have many similarities with those expressed by Fulke Greville, in his *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*. Greville, excluded from office during James's reign by the animosity of the Earl of Salisbury, compared James's government and policies unfavourably with those of Queen Elizabeth.[40]

The first scene of the play establishes Bussy's perception of himself as 'native man' excluded from the worldly court by his honesty and virtue.

> Fortune, not Reason, rules the state of things,
> Reward goes backwards, Honour on his head;
> Who is not poor, is monstrous.
> (I. 1. 1-3.)

The government of the state is based on the acquisition of wealth and not on reason, reward is given not on the basis of desert but in accordance with the financial power of the individual or his material worth to prominent statesmen. The only access to court is through a patron who rewards only for self-gain. As wealth is controlled by the court, patronage is the only means of financial independence. Wealth can only be achieved through service at a court in which 'honour' has no place. The result is that only those excluded retain their innocence and virtue, but at the cost of financial independence.

At the court, man is judged in accordance with his position and the power (financial and political) that pertains to it.

> [...] so our tympanous statists
> (In their affected gravity of voice,
> Sourness of countenance, manners' cruelty,
> Authority, wealth, and all the spawn of Fortune)
> Think they bear all the kingdom's worth before them.
> (I. 1. 10-14)

Exclusion from the court in the peace-time world represents not only political isolation and material poverty but lack of social status, as the value or the 'worth' of men is considered only in relation to their office or their position in the court hierarchy.

Monsieur acknowledges the centrality of the court when he arrives in search of Bussy and recognizes that even those who, in their exclusion, are critical of it are ambitious for entry and for political office:

> None loathes the world so much, nor loves to scoff it,
> But gold and grace will make him surfeit of it.
> (I. 1. 52-3.)

As L. B. Smith has suggested, entry to the court was the ambition of most men of noble birth in Tudor and Stuart England, 'no one had a good word for the court, but everybody was frantic to play a part upon that "great theatre" of the world where the dream of politics and power was enacted'.[41] All men have their price, and entry to the court and the political sphere is the only recourse for fulfilment of a 'man of spirit' such as Bussy (I. 1. 46). As Monsieur points out to Bussy, there are only two alternatives: the 'light' of the active world that is centred on the court and the 'lean darkness' of political obscurity in the 'green retreat' (I. 1. 62-3). Bussy accepts Monsieur's patronage because in the court-centred world there is no alternative means of expressing his 'active' values. To be noble means to take an active role, for as Henry Peacham explains, 'they hardly are to be admitted for noble who though of never so excellent parts, consume their light as in a dark lantern in contemplation and stoical retiredness'.[42]

Just as Monsieur's expectations are realized by Bussy's acceptance of his patronage, Bussy's recognition of the material motives of patronage is confirmed:

> So no man riseth by his real merit,
> But when it cries clink in his raiser's spirit.
> (I. 1. 134-5.)

The effect of the scene is to distinguish between the values of 'native man' as represented in Bussy and the worldly self-seeking world of the court. However, this is deceptive as the disparity between the two is seen entirely from the perspective of Bussy's position as outsider. In the opening scene, Bussy's thoughts are influenced by his own exclusion from the political centre as he attempts to reconcile himself to the change in his circumstances brought by peace. It is significant that when we are introduced to the court in the following scene we are given a picture of harmony and order in which the only conflict takes place on the chess board. It is the arrival of Bussy that disrupts the harmony and turns the court into a competitive political arena.

The appearance of Maffé towards the end of the first scene enhances the distinction between the world of the court and the 'green retreat'. The finery of Monsieur's livery, which he wears, makes a strong contrast with the battle-worn costume of Bussy. Accustomed to the values of court he judges others by their outward appearance and is astounded that his master should wish him to bestow 'a thousand crowns' on Bussy. He mistakes Bussy for a poet and a swaggering soldier and is unable to recognize in him any qualities which would be of use to Monsieur. Judging him by his outward appearance Maffé mistakes Bussy for a social inferior and addresses him accordingly. Bussy's question:

> What qualities have you sir (beside your chain
> And velvet jacket)?
> (I. 1. 191-2)

exposes the presumption of Maffé for what it is. However, when Bussy beats Maffé at the end of the scene he is not only punishing him for his presumption but asserting his own social superiority over the steward. Social hierarchy is an important aspect of the court world as Bussy discovers on his arrival, and by beating Maffé he is expressing the same concerns with place and order that are established at court and which the steward had himself assumed. Given preferment, Bussy immediately adopts what he considers to be the values of the court. As Monsieur had acknowledged:

> [...] thou need'st not learn,
> Thou hast the theory, now go there and practise.
> (I. 1. 104-5.)

3.5.2. Bussy and Social Conflict at Court

On his arrival at court Bussy finds himself confronted by its hierarchical structure. Dressed in Monsieur's 'cast suit' he is accepted at court not on account of his merit and by virtue of his 'native rights', but as a client of the King's brother. He finds that he is expected to relinquish his independent spirit and to play his role on the courtly stage. Unable and unwilling to accommodate himself to the courtly fashion he is soon in conflict with a hierarchical system which fails to recognize the martial values which distinguish him above others. Uncomfortable in the role of courtier, Bussy reverts to his 'natural' confrontational and aggressive self and gradually imposes his own martial values upon the court.

Accustomed to the battlefield, Bussy is unskilled in the role of courtier. On arriving at court his lack of courtly presence is an immediate source of amusement to the ladies:

> *Mons*. [...] I have
> here a friend, that I would gladly enter in your Graces.
> *Duch*: If you enter him in our Graces, methinks by his blunt
> behaviour, he should come out of himself.
> *Tam*. Has he never been Courtier, my Lord?
> *Mons*. Never, my Lady.
> *Beaup*. And why did the toy take him in th'head now?
> (I. 2. 72-8.)

His response to the contempt of the ladies is to challenge the artificial discourse of court pleasantries by addressing them in the bawdy terms that would be used to converse with prostitutes.

His challenge to the court conventions and his attempt to woo the Duchess of Guise provokes a conflict with Guise who attempts to assert social superiority over him:

> *Gui*. Sir, know you me?
> *Buss*. My Lord?
> *Gui*. I know not you: whom do you serve?
> *Buss*. Serve, my Lord?
> *Gui*. Go to companion; your courtship's too saucy.
> (I. 2. 88-92.)

Guise objects to Bussy's courtship of his wife but his manner of address expresses the contempt shown to an inferior. Again, Bussy refuses to accept the status that the court has given him and ignores Guise's commands. Confident of his own ability with the sword Bussy aims to provoke Guise to a challenge which would serve as a recognition of social equality. The quarrel ends with Guise's frustration and his defeat at chess. During the course of the play Guise continues to see Bussy as a 'ruffi'n' and an 'upstart' (III. 2. 62. 135).

Following his conflict with Guise, Bussy becomes involved in an argument with three of the king's minions, Barrisor, L'Anou and Pyrrhot. By ridiculing Bussy's appearance in 'Monsieur's cast suit' they can be seen to be establishing a social distinction between themselves and the new arrival (I. 2. 159). Bussy's response is to challenge them to a duel.

Not accepted as an equal by the value system in place at court, Bussy imposes his own aggressive values upon it, challenging the conventions of behaviour and initiating conflict between himself and the social hierarchy that seeks to exclude him. The significance of this scene, for the rest of the play, is that his rejection encourages him to seek the displacement of the values of court and to overthrow a status quo in which he has only an insignificant role. He offers his service to the king and becomes his 'Eagle' who will 'hawk' out all corruption in the state. In a speech that is a direct attack on the political power bases of Guise and Monsieur, Bussy proposes to establish a new status quo in which he will be second only to the king. (III. 2. 21-59.) When Guise and Monsieur attempt to challenge Bussy's right on grounds of his inferior birth he offers to redefine nobility in terms of 'merit' (III. 2. 78).

It is Bussy's threat to disrupt the status quo and challenge the political influence held by Guise and Monsieur that brings about his downfall. Shortly after this episode Guise and Monsieur agree to plot his death:

> He must down,
> Upstarts should never perch too near a crown.
> (III. 2. 134-5.)

3.5.3. Bussy and the Myth of the Chivalric Golden Age

At various stages in the play Monsieur and the king attribute to Bussy the virtues associated with native nobility. Jonathan Dollimore claims that 'they construct for him a conception of himself as innately noble, self-determining and compromised' in order to associate themselves with those values.[43] Bussy, however has already constructed his own persona in the first scene: Monsieur and the king do no more than acknowledge it when it suits them to do so.

The myth of the Golden Age with which Bussy is identified relates to the glorified nostalgic accounts of Elizabeth's reign which were already beginning to circulate in the early years of James's rule. It was promoted by those who were out of favour at court and opposed to the peace with Spain that was finally agreed in 1604. The failures of James were exaggerated by the contrast with a mythical perception of Elizabeth's reign. Greville, for example, was later to contrast James's pacifism with ELizabeth's war-like spirit:

> ... if God had either lengthened the dayes of that worthy Lady who understood him [Spain], or time not neglected her wisedome so suddenly, by exchanging that active, victorious, enriching, and ballancing course of her defensive Wars, for an idle (I feare) deceiving shadow of peace. In which whether we already languish, or live impoverished, whilst he growes potent and rich, by the fatall security of all Christendome, they that shall succeed us, are like to feele, and judge freely.[44]

For Greville and others like him, the end of the war has led to the moral decline of the nobility, and the emphasis at court upon festivity and luxury has led to the degeneration of the country. The mythical values of chivalry are associated with the Elizabethan Age and with such 'heroic' figures as Sidney and Essex. These mythical values of virtue, honour and independence are attributed to Bussy by Monsieur and the King in order to associate themselves with the myth of the Golden Age.

It is the code of values to which Bussy subscribes that attracts Monsieur to seek him out. Although cynical of terms such as virtue and honour (as can be seen from his attempt to seduce Tamyra), Monsieur is well aware of the political advantage of being associated with someone who is esteemed to have these qualities. To this purpose he dresses Bussy in his own livery and defends his right to chivalric justice in the aftermath of the duel. By upholding Bussy's claims to the values associated with inherent nobility he and later the king are endorsing and manipulating the myth of a virtuous golden age.

Following Bussy's argument with Guise over his courting of the Duchess, Monsieur refers to him in heroic terms comparing him with the unconquerable sea:

> His great heart will not down, 'tis like the sea
> That partly by his own internal heat,
> Partly the stars' daily and nightly motion,
> Ardour and light, and partly of the place
> The divers frames, and chiefly by the Moon,
> Bristled with surges, never will be won
> (No, not when th'hearts of all those powers are burst)
> To make retreat into his settled home,
> Till he be crown'd with his own quiet foam.
> (I. 2. 138-46)

Monsieur's aim is to recognize Bussy's martial qualities and his invincibility on the battlefield. In the context of the argument with Guise it seems inappropriate.

Bussy's chivalric reputation is developed in the following scene when the Nuncius describes his deeds in the three-a-side duel:

> I saw fierce D'Ambois, and his two brave friends
> Enter the field, and at their heels their foes;
> Which were the famous soldiers, Barrisor,
> L'Anou, and Pyrrhot, great in deeds of Arms.
> (II. 1. 35-8.)

There follows a detailed account in heroic terms of Bussy's fight against Barrisor and of his revenge against L'Anou for the killing of his second, Brisac. At the end of the duel from which he is the only survivor, he does honour to his dead friends: 'He kiss'd their pale cheeks, and bade both farewell'. The Nuncius concludes by describing him as 'the bravest man the French earth bears'.(II. 1. 136-7). Once again praise of Bussy's valour seems misplaced considering that he was involved in a duel rather than some glorious battle.

Monsieur defends Bussy's participation in the duel by portraying it as a chivalric trial by combat:

> [...] Manly slaughter
> Should never bear th'account of wilful murder;
> It being a spice of justice, where, with life
> Offending past law, equal life is laid
> In equal balance, to scourge that offence
> By law of reputation (which to men
> Exceeds all positive law); and what that leaves
> To true men's valours (not prefixing rights
> Of satisfaction, suited to their wrongs)
> A free man's eminence may supply and take.
> (II. 1. 150-59)

By the third act Bussy has changed his allegiance and 'stand[s] like an Atlas underneath the King' (III. 1. 99). Now it is the king who subscribes to the myth of Bussy as:

> A man so good, that only would uphold
> Man in his native noblesse, from whose fall
> All our dissensions rise; that in himself
> (Without the outward patches of our frailty,
> Riches and honour) knows he comprehends
> Worth with the greatest: Kings had never borne
> Such boundless eminence over other men,
> Had all maintain'd the spirit and state of D'Ambois.
> (III. 2. 90-7)

Once Bussy has changed allegiance, Monsieur no longer has any interest in preserving the myth of Bussy's virtue and 'turns his outward love to inward hate' (III. 1. 111). He inverts his earlier praise of Bussy's character and describes him as 'wild' and 'headstrong' and without principles and virtue. (III. 2. 336-71.) In the final scene Monsieur, confident that the threat posed by Bussy is about to be eliminated, permits himself to assume the role of objective commentator and praises Bussy, once again, for his qualities:

> Young, learned, valiant, virtuous, and full mann'd;
> One on whom Nature spent so rich a hand.
> (V. 3. 38-9)

In the same speech Monsieur attributes his downfall to his inability to give way when confronted with superior forces (an attribute for which he was praised earlier in the play):

> [...] as the winds sing through a hollow tree,
> And (since it lets them pass through) let it stand;
> But a tree solid, since it gives no way
> To their wild rages, they rend up by th'root.
> (V. 3. 42-5.)

Guise, who has nothing to gain from Bussy's arrival at court, unlike Monsieur and the King does not subscribe to the myth of Bussy's chivalric virtues and portrays him negatively throughout the play. He considers him to be an 'upstart', a murderer, and a 'glorious ruffi'n' 'run proud of the king's headlong graces'. Guise's perception of him is as valid as that of the other main characters in the play. All express partial truths about Bussy as seen from the perspective of their own vantage points.

By subscribing to the myth of Bussy as 'man in his native noblesse', Monsieur and the king are effectively creating a form of discourse through which they are portraying a mythical conception of nobility and chivalry as if it was representative of the values adhered to at court and specifically by themselves. By associating themselves with Bussy they are outwardly assuming the values that he is seen to represent.

3.5.4. The Chivalric Compromise

The relationship that is formed between Bussy and the king is representative of the Elizabethan chivalric compromise. As I have shown in Chapter Two chivalric pageantry became a means by which the nobility could be seen to be expressing their 'native rights' while at the same time displaying their loyalty to the monarch.

Following the duel in which he has killed three of the king's minions, Bussy demands his native right to defend his honour against defamation:

> [...] since I am free
> (Offending no just law), let no law make
> By any wrong it does, my life her slave:
> When I am wrong'd and that law fails to right me,
> Let me be King myself (as man was made)
> And do a justice that exceeds the law:
> [...]
> Who to himself is law, no law doth need,
> Offends no King, and is a King indeed.
> (II. 1. 194-9, 203-4)

Like Sir Philip Sidney, when the queen prevented him from fighting a duel with the Earl of Oxford, Bussy claims that there are certain rights which are inherent to noble birth and not subject to the authority of the monarch. Albert Tricomi uses this speech as evidence that Chapman intended Bussy to be seen as an adherent of the natural law theory which acted as a constraint upon the absolute power of kings:

> The tension between the power of princes and the fundamental rights of subjects was a recurring one in English thought. Parliament, for example, rooted its arguments of subjects' rights in immemorial common law; Chapman's Bussy, following a line of Stoic philosophy, in natural rights. Both positions ultimately address the same problem. If subjects must obey the laws of princes, as most seventeenth century thinkers agreed, the only constraint upon such powers must come from a set of prior principles that transcend the laws of princes. For this reason the Commons appealed to the 'unwritten constitution' before kings held sway, when men, they posited, enjoyed their original liberties unfettered. Chapman's Bussy appeals to natural law, which all Englishmen understood no king could rightfully abrogate.[45]

The rights that Bussy claims, however, are not for all men but for the 'native noblesse' and are inherent to noble birth. As a man of noble blood he expects to be treated as an equal by the nobility at court and it is their rejection of his claims to be independent of their hierarchical structure that provokes him into conflict with the establishment.

The king's response to Bussy's demands is the acceptance of a compromise, 'Enjoy what thou entreat'st, we give but ours'. In other words Bussy may, if he wishes, believe in the principle of native rights but the king can only pardon him in accordance with his (the king's) own prerogative. The relationship that is formed at this moment can be seen in the context of Fulke Greville's claim that 'with princes there is a latitude for subjects to reserve native and legall freedom, by paying humble tribute in manner, though not in matter to them'.[46]

The relationship between the king and Bussy is cemented when Bussy becomes the king's 'Eagle'. The king is attracted to the kingly nature of Bussy's native noblesse because, as Dollimore explains, 'subscribing to the myth of transcendent virtue in another permits the ruler to mystify the true extent of his own material power'. 'Encouraged and controlled, Bussy's mythical autonomy' will enhance the authority of the king.[47] As we see, the king, who is essentially weak and ineffective, uses Bussy to 'hawk at' his rival the Duke of Guise. For the first time, with the help of Bussy, the king has the opportunity of imposing his own authority upon his subjects:

> [...] thou shalt be my Eagle,
> And bear my thunder underneath thy wings.
> (III. 2. 4-5.)

Bussy and the king achieve mutual advantage from the relationship. Bussy's mythical autonomy and his reputation for chivalric valour work to enhance the authority of the king. Bussy's association with the king raises his own standing at court and provides him with the means to subdue those (Monsieur and Guise) who had tried to assert their authority and rank over him. In effect this is the Elizabethan chivalric compromise.

3.5.5. The Deconstruction of Bussy's 'Native Noblesse'

In the opening scene Bussy claims that he will 'rise in court with virtue'. From his first arrival at court we see little of this virtue to which he aspires. On his first appearance at court he manages to insult the ladies and become embroiled in disputes with Guise and the king's minions. Although, as I have previously shown, Bussy was reacting against the hierarchical structure of the court, his actions cannot seriously be considered virtuous.

The duel is of particular significance as it is instigated by Bussy's pride and results in the death of five courtiers. The duel was a debased form of chivalric combat which was a major problem for the French government in the sixteenth century and for the English at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was condemned by the church and by the state and was officially a criminal offence. In 1578 Henry III had published a decree against duels and established an obligatory and clearly defined arbitration procedure, and in 1602 Henry IV issued an edict which described all those who took part in duels as 'criminals of *lèse majesté*'.[48] Duelling had become such a serious concern in England by 1613 that the king with the help of the Star Chamber and the Earl Marshal's office took steps to eradicate it. The king published his edict 'Against Private Challenges' (Feb 4 1614), and the Earl of Northampton published an accompanying treatise entitled 'A Publication [...] against Private Combats and Combatants' (Nov, 1613).[49] However, government attitude, both in France and England, was ambivalent and while it wanted to discourage duels it hesitated at punishing those members of the nobility who had participated in them to defend their honours. Francis I had denied 'that man to be worthy who, given the lie would not spurn it with arms'.[50] Henry IV, despite his strongly worded edict against duelling, is not known to have punished anyone for the offence although many were found guilty of breaching the restrictions of the edict. Billaçois claims that 'innumerable witnesses from the reign of Henri IV to that of Louis XIV testify to the fact that the sovereign more or less systematically granted a pardon to those guilty of duelling' and Stone refers to a claim 'that in the first ten years of the seventeenth century the French king granted over 6,000 pardons for the killing of gentlemen in duels'.[51] In England James's edict brought little change to the situation as the king was reluctant to punish the wealthy and influential. Stone shows that 'it was two lowly gentlemen who were picked on as victims for exemplary punishment in Star Chamber, while the peers and courtiers who had set the example continued to be allowed to go free'.[52]

The ambivalent actions of French and English governments towards the duel, suggest that there were grounds for defending the nobility's right to satisfy their honours and to take justice into their own hands. This is what Bussy does when he challenges and kills the king's minions in the three-a-side duel and defends his deed before the king. The Nuncius describes the duel as if it were an heroic battle whereas in reality it is a skirmish fought over a minor point of honour: 'six idle words'.(II. 1. 61). Bussy set on winning personal honour refused Barrisor's offer of 'remission and contrition' and insists on receiving satisfaction by the sword.(II. 1. 62). The result is that not only his three rivals but his two friends Brisac and Melynell are sacrificed for his honour. The effect of the scene is to emphasize the waste of energy and lives which is involved in the search for personal honour. The Nuncius's praise of Bussy's achievements is countered by Guise's response, 'O piteous and horrid murder!'.(II. 1. 105). One concludes that the reality of the situation lies somewhere between these two responses. Bussy's participation in the duel is not an heroic achievement but likewise it is not murder as it can be justified in terms of the code of honour.

Bussy's relationship with Tamyra raises further reservations about his claim to virtue. The relationship is portrayed in terms of the medieval code of Courtly Love. C. S. Lewis describes Courtly Love as 'love of a highly specialized sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery and the Religion of Love'.[53] It was primarily a literary invention which appeared for the first time in the chivalric romances of the thirteenth century. The invention of Courtly Love may, nevertheless, have had some influence upon the conduct code of the nobility. Keith Thomas suggests that this love code provided a solution to the 'potentially anarchic situation' caused by 'the proliferation of a disorderly class of young unmarried knights, ready for violent adventure, military and sexual'.[54] Bussy promises Tamyra, in Courtly Love fashion, to keep their love secret and to offer her his service:

> Sooner shall Torture be the sire to Pleasure,
> And health be grievous to men long time sick,
> Than the dear jewel of your fame in me
> Be made an outcast to your infamy;
> Nor shall my value (sacred to your virtues)
> Only give free course to it, from myself:
> But make it fly out of the mouths of Kings
> In golden vapours, and with awful wings.
> (III. 1. 34-41.)

While the secret adulterous love of another man's wife may be acceptable in terms of the medieval courtly love tradition, it was considered a sign of dishonour in Renaissance society. A husband who discovered that his wife had a lover was expected to redeem his honour by causing the death of his rival. This is the case with Montsurry. Once informed of his wife's adultery he cannot remain in court with honour until he has brought about Bussy's death. Although there is a sense of hypocrisy in Montsurry's behaviour - he condones Monsieur's courting of his wife but punishes her for the liaison with Bussy - he responds in accordance with the values of the day. Bussy's love for Tamyra may be in the tradition of Romantic literature but it is nevertheless adulterous and cannot be perceived as the action of a virtuous man.

The final point against Bussy's virtue is his association with the friar, Comolet and the evocation of the demon, Behemoth. Bussy's friendship with the rather shady friar, who serves as a pander for Tamyra's illicit love, has recourse to secret means of conveyance and the power to evoke demons, raises questions about his godliness and virtue. By his own later evoking of Behemoth, Bussy shows his willingness to place his destiny in the powers of dark spirits.

The effect of these scenes on the play is to create a disparity between the verbal portrayal of Bussy as 'a man so good' who will 'rise in court with virtue' and what is seen of him on the stage. The audience would recognize that the image of Bussy, as constructed by himself and by the king and Monsieur, is mythical and bears no relationship to reality. While most of his actions may be justified in terms of theories relating to the rights and duties of native nobility the play works to distinguish these from their mythical association with the concept of inherent virtue.

3.5.6. The Significance of Child Actors

The use of children's companies (the Children of the Queen's Revels and The Children of Pauls) for the performance of Chapman's play would have added to the process of demystification. The heroic language which is used to describe a character that the audience clearly perceives to be a child or young man, would have created a greater awareness of the disparity between language and perception. R. A. Foakes and Michael Shapiro have both discussed the deliberate creation by dramatists of a 'dual consciousness of the actors as actors and characters' in plays that were written to be performed by child companies.[55] It would be interesting to know how the audience reacted when, following the Nuncius's elevated account of Bussy's heroic deeds in the duel, a young actor (probably Nathan Field, aged seventeen in 1604) arrives on stage to be greeted as the only survivor. The effect of child actors is to create a disparity between language and perception and to emphasize the divide between the myth of Bussy, which is established by the discourse of the play, and the perceived reality.

3.5.7. The Death of Bussy

The final scene which stages the death of Bussy plays a significant part in the process of deconstructing the myth on which Bussy's persona has been created and, indirectly, the mythical perception of Elizabethan chivalry.

Bussy acts in the manner expected of someone representing the chivalric tradition. Despite being warned by Behemoth that he will die if he obeys Tamyra's next summons he is resolved to honour his mistress, even if it brings death:

> Should not my powers obey when she commands,
> My motion must be rebel to my will:
> My will, to life.
> (V. 1. 70-2.)

Committed to the code of Courtly Love his failure to defend the honour of his mistress would be a betrayal of the values on which he has based his life. Honour is more important to Bussy than life itself.

At the beginning of the final scene Monsieur and Guise prepare us for the death of Bussy. The predictability of the code to which he subscribes makes him an easy target for the subtle plots of his enemies. Warned by Tamyra of the ambush that Montsurry has prepared for him, Bussy is inspired by the hope of personal glory:

> Murder'd? I know not what that Hebrew means:
> That word had ne'er been nam'd had all been D'Ambois.
> Murder'd? By heaven he is my murderer
> That shews me not a murderer.
> (V. 3. 76-9.)

Confident in his ability with the sword, there is no adversary Bussy fears in hand-to-hand combat. Having killed one of the ambushers and seen the others run away, either through fear of him or of Comolet's ghost, Bussy calls on Montsurry to act honourably and to face him in single combat:

> [...] Come forth
> And shew your own face in your own affair;
> Take not into your noble veins the blood
> Of these base villains, nor the light reports
> Of blister'd tongues, for clear and weighty truth:
> But me against the world, in pure defence
> Of your rare Lady, to whose spotless name
> I stand here as a bulwark; and project
> A life to her renown, that ever yet
> Hath been untainted even in Envy's eye,
> And where it would protect a sanctuary.
> (V. 3. 100-110.)

Bussy's challenge has many similarities with the calls to combat in Chivalric Romances and with those of Essex at Lisbon, Rouen and in Ireland. Montsurry accepts the challenge but is soon subdued by Bussy who spares his life at the request of Tamyra. Having proved his superiority with the sword Bussy is immediately shot from off-stage and prepares for death. It is unclear who has fired the shot: some of Montsurry's followers or Monsieur and Guise, who are watching the action from above. Bussy's first reaction is to consider his death in terms of his own code of honour:

> [...] O then the coward Fates
> Have maim'd themselves, and ever lost their honour.
> (V. 3. 120-1.)

We have been told already by Behemoth that Monsieur and Guise are 'Fate's ministers' (V. 2. 61-2), and Bussy recognizes their hand in his death. Wishing to die standing like a 'Roman Statue' in the manner of the Emperor Vespasian he attempts to come to terms with his own death.

It is significant that Bussy is killed by the modern instruments of warfare at the moment that he has reached the height of his chivalric achievement. It is his determination to win personal glory against the odds that has brought about his death. The inference from the speeches of Monsieur and Guise at the beginning of the scene is that this persistent pursuit of honour is a waste of energy and of life. Bussy's code of honour and his prowess in combat are no match for the unscrupulous machiavellianism of Monsieur and Guise, and for the instruments of modern warfare. Unlike Bussy, Monsieur and Guise recognize the political advantage of association with chivalric values but do not permit ideals to stand in the way of political pragmatism. We are left with the sense that personal glory and honour are rather antiquated values in the context of a modern politically sophisticated state.

3.6. Conclusion

Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* shows us how the mythical values associated with chivalry and man's native nobility are constructed into a form of discourse by powerful individuals within the state so as to enhance their own political power. As I have shown Bussy represents a chivalric value system that has become debased and displaced in modern society and is manipulated for private gain. The play creates a conflict in the first scene between the values of a displaced martial nobility and the material values of the court. Bussy's attempt to portray this conflict in terms of virtue against corruption is exposed as self-deception in the following scenes. Bussy may be an exponent of the martial values associated with chivalry but his actions cannot be described as virtuous. Like other characters in the play Bussy represents an individual interest: he aims to be accepted into the court which serves as the centre of political influence. Not accepted on his own terms he sets out to displace the established system of values with one based on confrontation and personal glory. His alliance with the king suggests a chivalric compromise which is of mutual benefit to Bussy and Henry. The weakness of the compromise is exposed by the myths of kingship and inherent nobility upon which it is founded, and the promise of political reform is never put into effect. The threat to the status quo which is offered by the friendship between the king and Bussy leads Monsieur and Guise to make arrangements for Bussy's death. The chivalric values which Bussy represents, based on martial prowess and a code of honour which relates specifically to personal combat, are exposed finally as antiquated and impractical

The play deconstructs the chivalric myth by separating martial prowess from the code of virtuous behaviour with which it has become associated and by exposing the weaknesses and archaism of chivalry. Furthermore, the play sets about decoding the discourse that associates nobility with inherent virtue by establishing a distinction between the image of Bussy, as constructed by those who benefit from association with him, and the reality that is seen on the stage.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. All references to the play relate to the Revels Pays edition of the text. *Bussy D'Ambois*, ed. by Nicholas Brooke (London: Methuen, 1964; repr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979). Line references appear in the text.
2. Parrott, ed., p. 77.
3. Grimeston, 1611, p. 818; Letter from Sir Amias Paulet to Lord Burghley, Oct 12 1576, *CSP Foreign 1575-7*, p. 393. I use the spelling D'Amboise for the historical figure and D'Ambois for the central character in Chapman's play.
4. André Joubert, *Louis de Clermont Sieur de Bussy D'Amboise* (Angers: Germain et G. Grassin, 1885), p.5.
5. Percy Allen, *The Plays of Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History* (London: Archer, 1933), pp. 65-6.
6. Letter from Sir Amias Paulet to Sir Francis Walsingham, April 28 1577, *CSP Foreign 1575-7*, p. 567.
7. Letter from Sir Amias Paulet to the queen, May 1577, *CSP Foreign 1575-7*, pp. 586-7.
8. Letter from Jacques Rossel (the Muster-master of Burgundy) to Sir Francis Walsingham, Jan 4 1579, *CSP Foreign 1578-9*, p. 376.
9. Jacquot, p. 125; *CSP Foreign 1578-9*, p. 500.
10. Claire-Eliane Engel, 'Les Sources du *Bussy D'Amboise* de Chapman', *Revue de Littérature Comparée* XII (1932), 587-95.
11. Engel, 592.
The darling of Venus, the favourite of Mars
The dread of nations, devastating them on all fronts
Bussy the handsome, the strong, the arrogant, the fearsome,
who was killed in just anger.
12. Engel, 592.
Or else the same Mars who was called Bussy,
Mars was assailed by fire and by sword,
With sword by the husband and fire by the wife.
13. Pierre de L'Estoile, *Journal de Henri III Roy de France et de Pologne* (1621; new edition, La Haye: Gosse, 1744), p.192.
Bussy was of invincible bravery, proud and daring, the best by hand, also valiant with his sword; and for his age, which was only thirty, as fit to command the army as any leader in France. However, he blamed himself for having been too depraved and too little God-fearing. His tragedy was not having reached the middle of his life, as is usual with noblemen such as he.
14. Jacquot, p. 125.
15. Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning* (London. Jonathan Cape, 1992), pp. 115-7.
16. See Chapter 1, pp. 50-1.
17. *A Seventeenth Century Letter-Book*, p. 374.
18. *A Seventeenth Century Letter-Book*, p. 392.
19. Margeson, ed., pp. 3-4.
20. A. G. Dickens, 'The Elizabethans and St Bartholomew' in *The Massacre of St Bartholomew: Reappraisals and Documents*, ed. by Alfred Soman (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 52-70; Clifford Chalmers Huffman, *Elizabethan Impressions: John Wolfe and his Press* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), esp. pp. 69-98.
21. Dickens, p. 54.
22. S.T.C., 11312.
23. S.T.C., 13844-6 & 13847.
24. S.T.C., 22242 & 10550-51.
25. Dickens, p. 61.

26. Huffman, 'Appendix II', pp. 133-61.
27. Birch, *Memoirs*, ii, p. 372.
28. Winwood, *Memorials of Affairs of State*.
29. *CSP Dom 1598-1601*, pp. 299, 314, 327-8, 330, 413, 442.
30. Maurice Lee, *James I and Henry IV: An Essay in English Foreign Policy 1603-1610* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 19-20, 24.
31. Lee, pp.24, 29-32.
32. Parry, p. 67, Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, pp. 69, 72-3.
33. Strong, p. 76.
34. Lee, p. 166.
35. T.M. Parrott, 'The Date of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*', *Modern Language Review*, 3 (1908), 126-40; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, iii, p. 253; Robert Ornstein, 'The Date of Chapman's Tragedies, Once More', *MP*, 59 (1961), 61-4 (63-4); Brooke, ed., (1964; repr., 1979), pp. lvii-lix; *Bussy D'Ambois*, ed. by Maurice Evans (London: Ernest Benn, 1965; repr. 1981), p. x; Albert H. Tricomi, 'The Dates of the Plays of George Chapman', *ELR*, 12 (1982), 242-66 (252-5).
36. Brooke, p. lviii.
37. *Bussy D'Ambois and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, ed. by F. S. Boas (Boston and London: D. C. Heath, 1905), p. xxi; Elias Schwartz, 'The Dates and Order of Chapman's Tragedies', *MP*,57 (1959), 80-82, (81); Ornstein, 63-4.
38. *Satiromastix*, IV. 1. 138-40. *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1953-1961), i.
39. *The Tragedie of Chabot Admiral of France*, ed. by Ezra Lehman (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1906), p. 11; Schwartz, 82.
40. Greville, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, pp. 162-215.
41. L. B. Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 145.
42. Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman*, p. 12.
43. Dollimore, p. 185.
44. Greville, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, p. 210.
45. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-42*, p. 82.
46. Greville, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, pp. 68-9.
47. Dollimore, p. 186.
48. François Billacois, *The Duel: Its Rise and Fall in Early Modern France*, ed. and trans. by Tristan Selous (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 96, 104.
49. STC 8497; STC 8498.
50. Mervyn James, note 54, p. 322.
51. Billacois, p. 70; Stone, p. 246.
52. Stone, p. 248.
53. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936; repr. 1985), p. 2.
54. Keith Thomas, 'Court in the Act of Love', Review of Georges Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, in *The Guardian 2*, 11 Jan 1994, p. 10.
55. R. A. Foakes, 'Tragedy of the Children's Theatres after 1600: A Challenge to the Adult Stage' in *Elizabethan Theatre II* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 37-59 (p. 41.); Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and their Plays* (New York: Columbia University, 1977), p. 104.

Chapter Four

A 'Vicious' Peace and a 'Virtuous' War: The Displacement of the Nobility and the Glorification of War in *The Conspiracy and The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*

> There is no danger to a man that knows
> What life and death is; there's not any law
> Exceeds his knowledge, neither is it lawful
> That he should stoop to any other law.
> He goes before them and commands them all
> That to himself is a law rational.
> (*Cons*. III. 3. 140-145)[1]

4.1. Introduction

Most of the critical writing on Chapman's two part play, *The Conspiracy* and *The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, has regarded it as portraying a rigid conflict between an ideal king and a rebellious subject.[2] This has often been discussed in terms of morality with the king perceived as the 'standard bearer of moral authority [...] owing his power to virtue (under God) and not to fortune'.[3] Only Margot Heinemann and A. R. Braunmuller in recent years have considered the play in terms of deeper issues of contemporary political conflict.[4] I agree with the general thesis of Heinemann and Braunmuller that the play is primarily concerned with raising questions about the nature of political and social change at the beginning of the seventeenth century. As a Tacitean, Chapman is interested in history as a means of exposing the workings of government by distinguishing between the political expediency upon which decisions are made and the morality and godliness with which statesmen and monarchs liked to justify their acts. The conflict in the play is not that of a virtuous king and a misguided, rebellious subject who sets out to 'sacrifice his very country to his gigantic ego', and the play does not stress 'the importance of obedience to the established order'[5] Chapman's king is not virtuous but pragmatic and is prepared to go to any lengths to preserve peace and to ensure the continuation of his line. Byron, on the other hand, is not a Marlovian over-reacher but a nobleman who has difficulty in reconciling himself or his class with the social and political change that is a consequence of peace. The conflict in the play is not between right and wrong but between two rights as seen from different perspectives. The play is structured in order to present what Margot Heinemann calls a 'doubleness' of vision and we are not asked to judge between the characters but to understand both points of view. My intention, in the course of this chapter, is to offer a reading of Chapman's two part play relating it to the social and political concerns of the nobility in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England.

The chapter is divided into five sections. I will begin with an outline of the life of Charles de Gontaut, the Duke of Biron (upon whom Chapman's hero is based) in which I will consider his conspiracy in the context of French politics at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[6] In the second section I will consider the interest and reaction to Biron's death from an English perspective. The third section will discuss the date of Chapman's play and his source material and the fourth section, the performance of the play by the Children of Blackfriars, and censorship of the play. The final section which analyses the play in the context of chivalry and politics is divided into three subsections. In the first of these I will consider the transition from war to peace and how it creates conflict between Henry and Byron. The second will discuss opposing views of 'royal man': on the one hand the absolutist leanings of the king on the other the 'Subaltern Majesty' of Byron. The final section will consider the aggressive militarism of Byron and his failure to establish a chivalric compromise between public recognition of the king's authority and his own adherence to the native rights of the nobility.

4.2. Charles de Gontaut, Duke of Biron: From War Hero to Traitor

Charles de Gontaut, Duke of Biron provided Chapman with a notable example from recent history of a powerful nobleman who had won glory and fame in war and, unable to come to terms with peace, pursued militaristic aims to the point of conspiracy against his king. His military leadership and achievements during the 1590s made him the embodiment of Renaissance chivalry and his conspiracy and execution in the immediate post-war years converted him into a symbol of the displacement of the nobility in peace-time society. His achievements, the nature of his death, his renown in England and the similarities between him and the Earl of Essex make him an appropriate hero for a play that is concerned with the role of the nobility and chivalry in modern society.

The Gontaut family was one of the oldest in France and had ruled the country around Biron since the eleventh century. Charles, born in 1562, spent the first thirty-six years of his life surrounded by political and religious conflict and sporadic outbreaks of war. According to his biographer Charles de Montigny he was 'a victim of this disastrous period where religious faith served mostly as a pretext for partizan politics [and] by the age of sixteen he had already changed his religion twice'.[7] His father Armand de Gontaut as Marshal of France was one of Henry III's most senior military commanders and was frequently commissioned to lead the king's armies against the Huguenots. However, having Huguenot sympathies of his own and recognizing that Henry of Navarre could well be a future king of France, Armand deliberately deployed his armies so as to keep the Huguenots at a distance without destroying them. Armand was also influenced by practicalities and recognized that his political and economic significance was dependent on the continuation of war: the rout of the Huguenots would be of no advantage to him or to his clientage. The same practical concerns governed him when following the assassination of Henry III in 1589 he recognized the accession of Henry IV and commanded his armies against those of the Catholic League and their Spanish allies. In his *Letters and documents* he reports an incident, following his victory at the Battle of Ivry in March 1590, in which his son sought assistance to complete the rout of the Leaguers. 'What', shouted Armand at his son, 'would you send us back to plant cabbages at Biron?'[8]

Charles rose to prominence as a military commander in the campaigns of Henry IV during the 1590s and not only succeeded his father as a marshal of France but was created Duke of Biron by the king. Montigny's description of Biron shows him to have combined the qualities of the battle-hardened soldier with the smooth-talking courtier:

> An iron man in the camp, he had endured without complaint the most cruel privations; a courtier when it was needful, he was more alert than any other captain of his time to bend to the demands of etiquette. None knew better than he how to give fire to the soldier on the field of battle; none knew better than he how to fill the delicate duties of the ambassador. At ease in the vernacular of the barrackroom, he became as mannered in his expression as an old courtier when at the pompous and literary English court. A gambler as was then the fashion, he knew how to lose vast sums like a great lord. And a rare thing in those times he was learned.[9]

Others noted his vanity and boastfulness. Edward Grimeston described him as 'extremely vaine-glorious' to the extent that he would sometimes 'refuse his meate, and content himselfe with little to feede his fantasie with glory and vanity'[10] In the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* he is described as 'vain, flighty, opinionated, presumptuous' and elsewhere, as 'vain, fickle and treacherous'.[11] Byron competed with the king for honour during the campaigns of the 1590s and at Amiens expressed his disgust when the king arrived at the moment of victory to share the honour.[12] Henry was clearly very fond of Biron and praised him to Sully:

> I know all the marshal's ways of talking, and one should not always take all his bragging, threats, exclamations and pretensions too literally, but put up with them as from a man who can't stop insulting everyone and praising himself excessively for doing well when he finds opportunities seated in the saddle, sword in hand; for I have seen him do an infinite number of good actions in the middle of the grossest spitefulness, recriminations and threats.[13]

At the battle of Fontaine Française in 1595 the king risked his life in order to rescue Biron who had got himself into difficulties in search of personal honour.[14] Biron, however, frequently complained about the ingratitude of the king. Montigny reports that when he was given the rank of marshal he declared that 'he would willingly have given up the marshal's commission for a good hack worth fifty silver pieces'.[15] In addition to the rank of marshal he was given the governorship of Burgundy. Henry in France like Elizabeth in England was sparing with rewards and honours and cautious to ensure that subjects did not become too powerful.

Discontented with lack of reward and unable to reconcile himself to peace following a lifetime of war, Biron entered, from 1598, into a series of intrigues with other nobles and with the Duke of Savoy and Count Fuentes (commander of the Spanish armies in Italy). By 1602 this had become a large-scale conspiracy which involved many of the traditional nobility, including the Constable of France, the Duc de Montpensier, the Comte d'Auvergne, the Duc d'Epernon, the Duc de Bouillon, the Comte de Soissons and the Prince de Joinville.[16] The conspiracy was the result of dissatisfaction with the king's policy of centralization and their own political displacement. Their position had become largely ceremonial and they were not invited to participate in the king's council.[17] In addition, it was suggested that the king had brought dishonour on the country and himself in the last years of the Wars of Religion by purchasing the loyalty and support of aristocrats sympathetic to the Catholic League. The nobility were equally unhappy with the settlement the king made with the Duke of Savoy following the short war over the Marquisate of Saluzzo in 1600. The king had abandoned his claims on Saluzzo in return for territories which he considered to be of greater financial value. Winwood reported that 'almost all they which are of the religion, as well as the Nobility, who more regard the honour of France than the profit of the king's purse do hold it for a shamefull and dishonourable treaty'. He claimed that the general opinion among the nobility was that this was a 'bargain, better befitting a merchant or private man, than an honourable treaty, beseeming the greatness of so mighty a king'.[18]

Biron's conspiracy was betrayed to the king by La Fin, one of the conspirators. Biron privately confessed his guilt to the king at Lyon and was given an unofficial pardon. When the details of the conspiracy resurfaced officially, Biron rejected the king's demands for a public confession. His refusal to re-apply for a pardon which he believed the king had already granted at Lyon led to a public trial in which the unofficial pardon was not accepted. Biron was violently aggrieved to find himself sentenced to execution for offences which he believed the king had already excused him. Montigny suggests that the king chose to let formal justice be done because Biron refused to humiliate himself before the world and by doing so end the claim he affected to parity in honour with the king.[19] Biron was made the scape-goat for the conspiracy and executed at the Bastille on 31 July 1602.

The extent of the conspiracy in which Biron was involved illustrates the serious discontent among the nobility with the policies of Henry IV and emphasises the difficulties of reconciling the nobility to a peace-time role after thirty eight years of civil war. Used to playing a prominent role in military campaigns and being on the King's council they found it difficult to come to terms with the lesser role that was expected from them after 1598. Biron's conspiracy was not the only attempted rebellion against Henry IV's government. Two years later Biron's friend the Comte d'Auvergne in alliance with his stepfather François de Balsac d'Entragues and his half-sister, the king's mistress Henriette d'Entragues, plotted with Spain to have Henriette's three year old son by the king recognized as heir to the throne. Auvergne and François were only saved from execution by the intervention of their kinsman the Duke of Lennox.

4.3. English Interest in the News of Byron's Death

The execution of Biron was of some interest and concern to English statesmen and doubts were raised about the king's motives for executing one of the most prominent aristocrats in France. Sir Robert Drury, who was visiting Paris two months after Biron's execution, wrote to Sir Robert Cecil: 'There is no news on the stage, but that of the Marshal de Biron; statesmen justify the king, but the multitude speak very ill of his proceedings; I do not presume to censure princes' actions'.[20] The last phrase of Drury's letter expresses ironically his own doubts about the justice of Biron's execution. In November Biron's death was still current news and John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton (secretary to the English Ambassador in Paris) expressing doubts about its justification and setting it alongside the execution of Essex and the assassination of Gowrie:

> Another observation came to my remembraunce in reading his proces, of three straunge disasters befallen three great men [Earl of Gowrie, Earl of Essex, Duc de Biron], in three neighbour countries in three years successively (this you see passes tres sequuntur tria) and all theyre cases so intricate, specially the two straungers, and theyre persons and services so magnified, that a great part of the world rests unsatisfied in theyre

> deaths, and will not be perswaded against theyre deserts by any undeservings'.[21]

Robert Cecil, who had himself been criticized for his role in the fall of Essex, also privately expressed reservations about Biron's execution:

> Only of this, let me speak to you in private, that although Byron had offended the law and died justly, yet considering the practices were old and no overt act followed, nor any pregnant accuser of more worth than De: la: Fin, who had his pardon now for all the sins that a man could reckon, yet if the life of the Earl of Essex had been taken away upon no more demonstrative proofs, they that would scandalise that justice (where the treasons were seen and felt) would more uncharitably have censured the proceedings in things which are less visible. I will here conclude the narration of this story that *Qui stat, caveat ne cadat*.[22]

These letters imply that their writers were not convinced of Biron's guilt and seem to question the motives behind the king's willingness to sacrifice his former friend. It is possible that the king wished to make Biron's death an example for other factious nobles or, as Montigny implies, had grown envious of Biron's claims to parity of honour. Following the disgrace of Henriette d'Entragues, two years later, another reason for Henry's action surfaced. When her papers were searched they were found to include 'a number of love letters and also a portrait of Marshal de Biron'.[23] Could the king have discovered in 1602 that Biron was a rival for the affections of his mistress?

Biron would have been well known to the English public. Some had fought alongside him in Henry IV's campaigns against the Leaguers and the Spanish. During the 1590s Elizabeth had sent Expeditionary forces under the command of the Earl of Essex and Sir John Norris to support Henry's military campaigns. The large number of newsletters, published in England, describing Henry's military campaigns in the 1590s has been discussed in the previous chapter. Inevitably the newsletters reported the heroic deeds of Biron. From about 1595 Biron was portrayed on the English stage as

Berowne in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. Connections between this play and Henry's court at Nerac have been drawn persuasively by Hugh Richmond.[24] In September 1601 (ten months before his execution) Biron arrived in England on an embassy from Henry to Queen Elizabeth. He was met at Dover and escorted to Gravesend on behalf of the Privy council by Sir Thomas Walsingham, to whom Chapman later dedicated the printed edition of his play.[25] It was during this visit that the queen, according to the French historian Pierre Matthieu, is supposed to have warned Biron of the dangers of treason and to have shown him the decaying head of Essex on Tower Hill:

> La Royne ayant fait veoir au Duc de Biron plusieurs prevues de sa grandeur, et de son affection luy monstra un estrange exemple de la justice. C'estoiént pensé à troubler son estat et entre autres celle du Comte d'Essex, pour la punition du quel sa justice avoit vaincu son courage et forcé toutes ses affections.[26]

Camden, in his *Annales*, denies that this event ever took place.[27]

This incident,true or merely rumoured, the similarities of their lives and the violent nature of their deaths served to create parallels between Biron and Essex. Both had the reputation of being great military commanders and had served alongside each other during the siege of Rouen in 1591. They were prominent members of the aristocracy who spoke out in defence of the native rights of their class. Biron as a marshal of France and Essex as Earl Marshal of England held powerful military offices which, it was claimed, carried ancient rights of jurisdiction. Both had come to be associated with the romantic ideals of chivalry and were among the first to praise their own military achievements. Furthermore, they were held in high regard by their respective monarchs, were critical of their lack of reward and worried about their increasing political isolation. Finally, both conspired against their monarchs and died as traitors on the block.

The parallels between the two would not have gone unnoticed. Chapman deliberately emphasises them in a series of incidents in his play. Byron himself makes two direct comparisons between himself and Essex. In the first he refers to the death of Essex's horse:

> The matchless Earl of Essex, who some make,
> In their most sure divinings of my death,
> A parallel with me in life and fortune,
> Had one horse likewise that the very hour
> He suffered death, being well the night before,
> Died in his pasture.
> (*Trag*. IV. 1. 133-8.)

In the second he recalls what Queen Elizabeth had told him about Essex's refusal to ask for mercy:

> [...] The Queen of England
> Told me that if the wilful Earl of Essex
> Had used submission, and but asked her mercy,
> She would have given it, past resumption.
> (*Trag*. V. 3. 139-42.)

A further example of Chapman inviting his audience to see parallels between Essex and Byron comes in the scene when Byron is restrained twice by D'Auvergne from drawing his pistol on the king (*Cons*. V. 1. 154.1; V. 2. 29.1). This could well have reminded some of the audience of the famous episode when Essex was restrained from drawing his sword on the queen after she had given him 'a cuffe on the eare' following a disagreement in the Privy Council.[28] One other possible allusion, noted by Margeson, comes when Byron complains about the nobility's refusal to defend their native rights. He asks 'who will stir / To tell authority that it doth err?' (*Trag*. IV. 1. 19-20). In similar fashion Essex had written to Sir Thomas Egerton following a quarrel with the queen asking, 'Cannot Princes erre? Can they not wrong their subjects? Is any earthly power infinite?'[29] There is the additional possibility that the actors may have strengthened the allusion to Essex through costume and the imitation of Essex's mannerisms.

In his *Diary* for September 1602 Henslowe refers to a play about 'berowne' for which he required a 'blacke sewt of satten' and 'a scafowld'.[30] In this earlier play about Biron it seems that the company went to some lengths to acquire a black satin costume similar to the one worn by Biron during his embassy. However, the company could have been equally concerned with cementing allusions to Essex who at his execution, according to G. B. Harrison, was 'dressed all in black, with a gown of wrought velvet, a suit of satin, and a black hat'.[31] Chapman's company could well have followed the example of Henslowe's in acquiring a black satin costume for the actor playing Byron.

Chapman was not the only writer interested in Biron or in emphasizing parallels between him and Essex. Apart from the lost 'berowne' play of 1602 there were other publications relating events that led to his death. Two weeks after his execution a pamphlet was published in English entitled *A True and Perfect Discourse of the Practises and Treasons of Marshall Biron Together with the Particulars of his Arraignment and Execution, faithfully translated out of the French*.[32] This short pamphlet begins with the presentation of a petition to the king, by Biron's friends, asking him to pardon the marshal, and is followed by the king's reply refusing the request but promising to accept the decision of the court. There follows a summary of the court's judgement against Biron and of his involvement in the conspiracy. The second half of the book takes the form of three letters. The first is supposedly from Biron to the king asking for mercy; the second is from the king to the governor of Calais informing him of Biron's execution; and the final letter describes the trial and execution. The concern among the authorities in England about the possible subversiveness of this pamphlet is illustrated by a letter from the Bishop of London informing Cecil about its distribution and promising to 'commit the party to prison, and burn as many of them [the pamphlets] as I can find'.[33] The loss of Henslowe's 'berowne' play may imply that this too was banned by the authorities and the play scripts burnt. Five years later (1607) a book was published in French directly drawing parallels between Essex and Biron. It was entitled *Histoire de la Vie et Mort du Comte d'Essex avec un discours Grave et Eloquent de la Royne d'Angleterre au Duc de Biron sur ce Subject. La Conspiration, Prison, Jugement, Testament et Mort du Duc du Biron. Trahison Mort et Procez de Nicolas Loste, Prison du Comte D'Auvergne et de Madame la Marquise de Vernueil.* As the title suggests this book begins with a summary of Essex's rebellion and execution and proceeds to a report of the warning against rebellion that the queen was supposed to have given to Biron when he visited England. In the second part it describes the conspiracy, trial and execution of Biron and in the final section, the rebellion of Count d'Auvergne and Henriette d'Entragues in 1604. Furthermore, Grimeston's *A General Inventorie of the History of France*, published in 1607, gave disproportionate consideration to recent events in France, particularly the campaigns of Henry IV and the events leading up to the arrest of Biron. The trial and execution were described in considerable detail.

It can be concluded that the Duke of Biron was well known to the English at the time of his death in 1602 and still of some considerable interest at the time of Chapman's play in 1608. Furthermore, it is reasonably safe to assume that the English were accustomed to having Biron set alongside the Earl of Essex and that the audience of Chapman's play would have had no difficulty in recognizing Essex in the portrayal of Biron. By choosing to write a play about Biron, Chapman was not just dramatizing a topical issue but, through the connection with Essex, raising more general concerns about the political role of the nobility, the extent of the king's authority and the nature of contemporary politics.

4.4. The Date of Chapman's play and his use of Source Material

It is generally accepted that Chapman's two-part play was written and first performed between 1607 and 1608 and that his main source was Edward Grimeston's *A General Inventorie of the History of France*. The play was entered in the Stationers Register on 5 June 1608 and published in the 1608 quarto as 'Acted lately' at the Blackfriars. Furthermore, a letter from the French ambassador dated 8 April 1608 complaining about a recent performance of the play and Chapman's detailed borrowings from Grimeston's *History* (not published until 1607) provide strong evidence for a date of 1607/1608.

There have, nevertheless, been some claims for an earlier date. Allardyce Nicoll and Elias Schwartz have suggested a date of between 1604 and 1605 on the basis of references to Byron in *Northward Ho* (acted 1605) by Dekker and Webster.[34] There are three main arguments for a pre-1607 dating of the play. The first is the reference in Henslowe's *Diary* to a play called 'Berowne' or 'burone' in September 1602. There is no evidence, however, to support the view that this is an early version of Chapman's play. Although Chapman had written plays for Henslowe's company in the 1590s and was frequently mentioned in his *Diary* between 16 May 1598 and 24 October 1599 there is no later connection between the two. All his extant plays from 1601 were written for the children's company, The Children of the Chapel, who were later to become the Children of the Queen's Revels. It would be somewhat inconsistent for Chapman to have written a tragedy for Henslowe during a period in which he was writing comedies for the children's company, and as there is no other connection between Henslowe and Chapman at this time it seems unlikely. Furthermore, Chapman's play, as has been suggested, closely follows Grimeston's book which was not published until 1607. As Grimeston's own French sources were not published until 1605 it would not even have been possible for Chapman to have looked at the manuscript. The story of Biron was well known in England and a play could have been written in 1602 without any recourse to a written source, but the extent of Chapman's borrowings from Grimeston make it virtually impossible for it to have been his play.

The second argument for an earlier date is based on the claim that the character of Bellamont in *Northward Ho* is a caricature of Chapman. Bellamont claims to know Biron intimately and is writing a tragedy of 'Astianax'. The inference of Schwartz and Nicoll is that Dekker and Webster must have known Chapman's play in order to make their allusions. The problem with this theory is that *Northward Ho* does not allude directly to Chapman's tragedies and it seems more likely that the authors chose the names of Biron and Epernon because they were well known figures from the French court. Furthermore, as Robert Ornstein has argued, Bellamont could just as easily be a parody of Michael Drayton as George Chapman.[35] Drayton had written plays, now lost, on the *Civil Wars of France*.

The third argument depends on the interpretation of the phrase 'thrice allowance of the Counsaile for the presentment' that occurs in a letter probably written by Chapman to Sir George Buc. The letter claims that the the Council's thrice given permission for the presentation of the play should be sufficient reason for allowing the play to be printed. However, the letter does not make clear whether permission had been given for three performances in a short span of time, for three performances over a number of years or three times for a single presentation.[36]

Although it would be convenient in terms of topicality to be able to show that Chapman's play was written in 1602 all the evidence points to a first performance between 1607 and 1608. This date does not detract from the play's political context as the events relating to the executions of Biron and Essex were still topical at this later date, and the deeper concerns of the play, such as the constitutional rights of the nobility and the extent of the king's power, remained live issues.

Since F. S. Boas's article in 1903 showed the extent of Chapman's dependency on Grimeston's *General Inventory* there has been little doubt that this was the major source for the play.[37] As was shown in Chapter One, Chapman does occasionally add to his source by developing incidents which are only hinted at in Grimeston and by introducing speeches of his own. The latter on the whole tend to relate to constitutional and political issues. This would suggest, as I will explain later, that Chapman was primarily interested in French history as a means of raising issues of political significance to England.

4.5. The Children of Blackfriars and Problems of Censorship

Chapman's Byron play was performed by the Children of Blackfriars who had developed a reputation in the early years of James's reign for staging controversial topical plays. In order to consider the problem of censorship in regard to Chapman's play it is necessary to see it in the context of other plays staged by the company. Known variously as the Children of the Queen's Revels, the Children of the Revels and the Children of Blackfriars the company performed a series of controversial plays between 1604 and 1608.

In February 1604 the company previously known as the Children of the Chapel were brought under the patronage of Queen Anne and renamed the Children of the Queen's Revels. Unlike the other London companies the Revels Children did not (initially at least) come under the authority of the Master of the Revels but were, instead, answerable to an appointee of the queen, the poet and dramatist Samuel Daniel. It is difficult to know for how long Daniel retained his position. Richard Dutton raises the possibility that he may have been replaced following his appearance before the Privy Council in January 1605 to answer charges of treason relating to his play *Philotas*. If this was the case did censorship of the company revert to the Master of the Revels or was it assumed by some other personage at the queen's court, for example her Lord Chamberlain Robert Sidney? There is no existing patent that mentions any change so it is difficult to provide answers to these questions.[38] Irrespective of censorship the company managed to establish a record for performing controversial plays in the five years from 1604. Tricomi suggests that 'such a record corroborates the impression that their anticourt satires were not a matter of accidentally produced peccant plays but of a repertory substantially comprised of controversial, even subversive satires'.[39]

In the first year under their new patron, Queen Anne, the company performed Daniel's *Philotas* (which made allusions to the trials of Essex and Raleigh), *The Dutch Courtesan* (which was accused of having been written 'to corrupt English Conditions' and of alluding unfavourably to the king's Scottish followers), Marston's *The Fawn* (which contained anti-Scottish elements), and *Bussy D'Ambois* (which also made allusions to the Scots.)[40] In 1605 they performed Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive* (which satirized the Earl of Nottingham's embassy to Spain), Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (satirizing the 'courtly Scots'), and most famously *Eastward Ho* (which made disparaging allusions to the Scots). Following complaints from one of the king's Scottish followers, Sir James Murray, at least two of the three dramatists responsible for the last of these (Jonson and Chapman) were imprisoned for a short spell. In 1606 the company got into further trouble with the authorities when they performed John Day's *Isle of Gulls*. Day's play was based on Sidney's *Arcadia* but raised obvious analogies with the king and his favours to the Scots. Sir Edward Hoby claimed that, in *The Isle of Gulls*, 'from the highest to the lowest, all men's parts were acted of two divers nations'. The two nations were undoubtedly those of England and Scotland.[41] Furthermore, the play made an unpleasant attack upon the Earl of Salisbury by making an issue of his physical deformity.[42] According to Hoby numerous members of the acting company were committed to Bridewell for their part in the play. Chambers and Tricomi suggest that as a result of this play the company lost the queen's patronage and were forced to change their name to the Children of Blackfriars.[43] Furthermore following a decree of 7 November 1606 the Chapel choristers were dissociated from the Blackfriars actors. The decree permitted the continued impressment of children for singing in the choir but not for acting in plays.[44] The company seem to have had a relatively trouble free year in 1607 before again becoming deeply embroiled in controversy the following year over their Byron plays and a play about the king's mines.

The action taken against Chapman's Byron plays seems to have been the result of a complaint made by the French ambassador, Antoine Lefèvre de la Boderie in March 1608. In a letter to the Marquis de Sillery dated 8 April 1608 he explains the nature of his complaint:

> About mid-Lent those very actors whom I had had barred from playing the history of the late Marshal de Biron, noting all the court to be away, did so nonetheless, and not only that but introduced into it the Queen and Madame de Verneuil, the former treating that lady very ill verbally and giving her a slap on the face. Having been informed of this some days after the event, immediately I went to see the Earl of Salisbury and made a complaint to him that not only were these members of the troupe contravening the prohibition made against them but they were adding to it things not only more serious but which had nothing to do with the Marshal de Biron and furthermore were all false, at which in truth he showed great anger. And at once he sent orders to arrest them. However only three were found, who were at once put in prison where they are still; but the principal culprit, the author, escaped.[45]

De la Boderie goes on to mention a play about the king's mine in Scotland in which the king is made to 'rail against heaven over the flight of a bird and have a gentleman beaten for calling off his dogs' and in which he is portrayed 'as drunk at least once a day'. De la Boderie reports that the king's response was to punish the actors and make a 'diligent search' for the author and to prohibit 'the further performance of any plays whatsoever in London'. The intended action against the company is confirmed in a letter from Sir Thomas Lake to the Earl of Salisbury in which he refers to the players who have offended in 'the matters of France' and 'the matter of the Mynes' and states that the king's wish is that they should 'never play more', that they should be dissolved and that 'the maker' should be punished.[46] It is difficult to know whether the king's wrath was directed against Chapman's play or the play about the Scottish mines. However, his anger seems to have abated quickly and the London theatre companies, which had suffered closure due to the king's anger with the Blackfriars Company, were soon re-opened after the payment of a fine.[47] The Blackfriars children were likewise soon rehabilitated and by Christmas 1608 they were performing at court.[48]

De la Boderie seems to have had two main complaints against the performance of Chapman's play. Firstly, that the company had taken the opportunity of the court's absence to perform a play that had previously been 'barred' at the ambassador's request because, one suspects, of its politically sensitive content and its portrayal of the current King and Queen of France. Secondly, they had added new scenes, notably an episode in which the Queen of France had given the king's mistress a slap on the face, which the ambassador complained 'were all false'. It is not clear whether these scenes were added by Chapman or by the players themselves but de la Boderie clearly held the dramatist to be the main culprit and Chapman was forced to go into hiding in order to escape imprisonment. There is a surviving letter believed to have been written by Chapman to the secretary of the Duke of Lennox offering thanks for the 'shelter' extended to him in 'the Austeritie of the offended tyme'.[49]

A second letter believed to be by Chapman provides additional information about the incident.[50] In this letter, probably addressed to Sir George Buc (who was responsible for licensing plays for print), Chapman complains about the delay in granting a license for the printing of 'those two partes'. The writer then refers to the protests of the French ambassador and denies responsibility for the offending scenes: 'I see not myne owne plaies; Nor carrie the Actors Tongues in my Mouthe'. The letter does nevertheless confuse the issue somewhat. Chapman's suggestion that the difficulties he had faced over the play related to the inclusion in performance of 'the two or three lynes you crost', seems to contradict the inference of the ambassador's letter that the play had been prohibited in its entirety. It is possible to conclude that the ambassador's first objection had come after the play was originally licensed and that following his complaint it had been withdrawn and re-submitted for inspection, on which occasion the 'two or three lynes' had been removed. One suspects however, that Chapman is not being entirely truthful in claiming that it is only 'two or three lynes' that have been censored. Following the grant of a new license the play may have been re-staged with the new offending scenes for which Chapman denies responsibility. This would have initiated the ambassador's second complaint and the king's subsequent action against the company. Chapman's reference to 'the thrice allowance of the Counsaile for the presentment' might imply that the play was granted a third license and subsequently performed. Furthermore, Chapman implies that there are two copies of the play in existence, presumably the one he had originally written and one with the controversial additions.[51]

Considering the controversy surrounding the play it is surprising that permission for the play's performance was granted three times by the Privy Council and that there had only been objections raised against 'two or three lynes'. The real subversiveness of the play as de la Boderie recognized was that it presumed to comment on 'contemporary affairs'. The play represented on stage, the current King and Queen of France and dealt with events leading to the execution for treason of one of the country's most prominent figures. Furthermore, the play's allusions to the Essex rebellion were clear for all to see.

The authorities' willingness to overlook these matters can be assumed from their permission to allow the play to be published in June 1608 (it was entered in the Stationers Register on 5 June 1608). We know that the printed edition was censored from Chapman's reference in the dedicatory epistle to 'these poor dismembered poems' and by certain weaknesses in the play's structure. There are two main examples of censorship. The first is the very short fourth act of *The Conspiracy* in which Crequi reports the meeting between Byron and Queen Elizabeth. The restructuring of the scene has been done clumsily, suggesting that originally the scene represented Elizabeth and Byron on stage, followed by an interchange between Byron and the 'eminent councillor'. Much of Crequi's narration is written in direct speech as if spoken by the characters themselves rather than in the more appropriate reported speech. At one point Crequi refers to himself, 'then spake she to Crequi and Prince D'Auvergne [...]' (*Cons*. IV. 1. 156) This seems to have been a stage direction or part of a different report in the original version.

The second major cut comes at the end of the first act and the beginning of the second act in *The Tragedy*. There is no indication of the beginning of Act II and a council scene merges into a masque representing the reconcilement of the queen and the king's mistress. As the estrangement between the two has not been shown it is quite probable that the missing scene is that to which de la Boderie had objected, featuring the quarrel between the two women.

As has been suggested, it does seem strange, considering the subject of the play, that the authorities were prepared to allow it into print. It can only be concluded that they did not consider its subject to be subversive and perhaps perceived the play to be offering a favourable portrayal of Henry IV and kingship in general.

4.6. Chivalry and the Displacement of the Nobility in *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*

This section discusses Chapman's portrayal of chivalry and the martial nobility in the two part Byron play. It will consider how Chapman, as a Tacitean, portrays the conflict between monarch and nobility from a dual perspective although finally emphasizing the dangers of the over-powerful subject and the limitations of martial values in a peace time society.

4.6.1. From the Field of Battle to the Court

From his very first appearance in the play Byron is perceived as a great war hero who is out of sorts with the present times. Having lived all of his life up to this point in a war-torn society and having spent the majority of his adult years on military campaigns, Byron has become conditioned to war and the values of the battlefield. Trained, as befitting a nobleman, in the arts of warfare, he was raised by his father with the intent that they would fight side by side in the Wars of Religion. As a great soldier Byron is held in high esteem during the period of war and even the king seeks out his company and advice. For him war represents a social order in which everything is as it should be. A great soldier from an old aristocratic family, during the war he is very much at the top of the social order and on the battlefield the equal of kings.

At the opening of the play, Byron finds himself for the first time in his thirty-six year life in a society without warfare. He recognizes that he is no longer at the top of the social tree and is expected to share honours with political advisers who did not take an active part in the wars. In addition, he realizes that he has little to offer to the new political society and that his significance has declined as that of the king's new ministers has risen. His role has become largely ceremonial: to be the figurehead of embassies (Brussels and London) in which the real negotiations are handled by lesser men, more skilled in the arts of diplomacy than those of the battlefield. Furthermore, he is disconcerted by the decline of the values which he esteems: courage, prowess, honour, loyalty and action. He looks down with contempt upon what he considers to be the idleness of courtiers and the duplicity of modern politics. Byron considers himself to be displaced in modern society and looks back retrospectively to a golden age of warfare in which his achievements stood out above those of others and his own chivalric values were held in esteem.

La Fin represents for Byron, at the opening of the play, the unrewarded and neglected soldier. He recognizes in La Fin what he himself could become if society continues as it is. La Fin has been banished from the court because he was using his position to extort money from the king's subjects. He is set up as an example of the warrior who has prospered during the war but finds himself in financial difficulty now that peace has been declared. He claims, in his defence, that he has not been sufficiently rewarded for his service and that he is seeking only to preserve his social status which is dependent on wealth:

> I must confess my fortunes are declined,
> But neither my deservings nor my mind.
> I seek but to sustain the right I found
> When I was rich, in keeping what is left
> And making good my honour as at best,

> Though it be hard. Man's right to everything
> Wanes with his wealth, Wealth is his surest king.
> (*Cons*. I. 1. 132-8)

As Bussy D'Ambois had recognized, status is dependent on wealth and the ability to build up a clientage. La Fin is dismissed by the king for failing to come to terms with the new order and for maintaining war time values, 'Thou art at peace with nothing but with war' (*Cons*. I. 1. 151). It is his claims of ingratitude against the king that interest Byron:

> [...] you have stirred for him in deeds of arms
> And make yourself his glory and your country's,
> Till you be sucked as dry and wrought as lean
> As my flayed carcass.
> (*Cons*. II. 1. 65-8)

Byron takes up the theme of ingratitude from La Fin and contrasts his present displacement with an excessive estimation of his past achievements. He continues to exaggerate his own contribution to the king's military campaign until he comes to construct an image of himself as kingmaker:

> What had his arms been without my arm
> That with his motion made the whole field move?
> (*Cons. III. 2. 90-1)*

Savoy's overpraise of Byron's past achievements in the presence of the king recalls and substantiates Byron's claims. As Byron's mind becomes unbalanced with the flattery of Savoy and La Fin and the contemplation of open revolt he becomes unable to distinguish between reality and the self-made myth of his achievements:

> I have Alcides-like gone under th'earth
> And on these shoulders borne the weight of France:
> And for the fortunes of the thankless king,
> My father, all know, set him in his throne,
> And if he urge me, I may pluck him out.
> (*Trag*. III. 1. 151-5.)

Henry frequently has to remind others of his own contribution to the war and to place Byron's achievements alongside those of soldiers such as Sir John Norris and Sir Roger Williams:

> He hath deserved my love with worthy service,
> Yet he cannot deny but I have thrice
> Saved him from death.
> (*Trag.* IV. 2. 9-11.)

Finally, angered by Byron's persistence he urges his own war record:

> ... Thou end the war
> And settle peace in France? What war hath raged
> Into whose fury I have not exposed
> My person, which is as free a spirit as thine?
> Thy worthy father and thyself combined
> And armed in all the merits of your valours,
> Your bodies thrust amidst the thickest fights,
> Never were bristled with so many battles,
> Nor on the foe have broke such woods of lances
> As grew upon my thigh, and I have marshalled.
> (*Trag.* IV. 2. 253-62.)

The king's refusal to recognize his achievements are attributed by Byron to ingratitude:

> What wrongs are these, laid on me by the king,
> To equal others' worths in war with mine!
> (*Cons.* III. 2. 210-11.)

This complaint is developed by Byron into a general complaint about the peace-time administration. It is implied that the king neglects those who were loyal to him and fought for him in difficult times and prefers the company of shallow and compliant men:

> So rare are true deservers loved or known
> That men loved vulgarly are ever none,
> [...]
> men will shortly buy
> Friends from the prison or the pillory
> Rather than honour's markets. I fear none
> But foul ingratitude and detraction
> In all the brood of villany.
> (*Cons.* III. 2. 232-3, 239-43.)

Byron's complaints about the king's ingratitude become more persistent as the play develops and Byron comes to believe in the mythical image of himself as the saviour of France. In *The Tragedy* he reconciles himself to rebellion as the only means of restoring his neglected worth. Since the end of war he is of no use to the king:

> Since Bretagne is reduced, and breathless war
> Hath sheathed his sword and wrapped his ensigns up,
> The king hath now no more use of my valour,
> And therefore I shall now no more enjoy
> The credit that my service held with him.
> (*Trag.* I. 2. 5-9.)

The neglect of valued service is attributed to the corrupted values of peace-time society in which virtue has no place:

> The world is quite inverted, virtue thrown
> At vice's feet, and sensual peace confounds
> Valour and cowardice, fame and infamy.
> (*Trag.* I. 2. 14-16.)

Byron's complaints are endorsed by Queen Elizabeth during his embassy to England. She is critical of Henry's decision to make peace with Spain and in doing so renege on an earlier promise he had given England to continue with the war until a joint peace could be agreed. In this context Elizabeth protests that Henry 'neglects / Old friends for new, and sets his soothèd ease / Above his honour' (*Cons.* IV. 1. 53-5). Elizabeth's protests add authority to Byron's complaints by providing (in the context of the play) an independent perspective on the dispute.

The audience at the Blackfriars Theatre may well have suspected that the truth about Byron's service comes somewhere between his own boastful accounts and the more reductive ones given by the king. The king recognizes Byron's service but places it alongside that of other participants. Whether this is an honest attempt to moderate Byron's boasts or has the more machiavellian aim of denigrating his achievements in order to justify the denial of fitting reward is unclear. The king, as will be seen, does not tolerate rivalry and could well be envious of having to share the honours or take second place in reports of military campaigns. Byron, nevertheless, seems to have been well rewarded for his service (*Trag*. I. 1. 1-19.) despite complaints of the king's ingratitude. Yet, it should be noted that the honours bestowed on him are for the most part military ones which add to his dignity and importance on the battlefield but are of little significance at times of peace. Again, it is difficult to balance the complaints of Byron with the statements of Henry as they offer two opposing perspectives on the quarrel. It could well be that even their definitions of reward differ. For Henry it seems to be about bestowing titles and honours whereas for Byron it is trust and recognition. Byron does not complain about the lack of honours bestowed on him but about his neglect by the king. It his political displacement not his lack of honours that drives him into conspiracy.

Byron's sense of neglect influences his perception of the court. In comparison with war-time the present court is seen as degenerate and as representative of the political and moral decay of the new era. Byron's condemnation of the court can be set alongside the criticism that was levelled against King James's court by Fulke Greville and others in the first decade of the seventeenth century.[52] Like Byron the critics of James's court disapproved of the recent peace with Spain and contrasted the lavishness of his court and his encouragement of unworthy followers with a nostalgic view of the discipline and order of Elizabeth's, during the height of her reign, and of her support for worthy military men, such as Raleigh, Sidney, Leicester and Essex. The latter's disgrace and execution was blamed not on the queen but on the duplicity of Cecil and Bacon.

Byron associates peace with immorality and corruption and points to Henry's court as evidence of his claim. He complains that Henry's untrustworthiness and his political duplicity are the cause of the country's moral decline. In conversation with D'Auvergne he argues that when kings forsake 'simple virtue' for machiavellian expediency they lose their right to the trust and loyalty of their subjects. In Henry's case the political expediency of his religious conversion has cast doubts upon the sincerity of his religious beliefs. When kings play 'both ways with religion' they set a bad moral example which extinguishes 'the lamp of all authority'. Byron implies that religion offers a moral code by which kings rule their subjects and subjects obey their king. When kings are seen to depart from religious teachings or cast doubt on their own beliefs their subjects are likely to follow suit. Effectively, a king who is not guided by religion loses the moral right to rule (*Trag*. III. 1. 1-48). Byron returns to the theme in his praise of Philip II of Spain. He contrasts the 'piety and justice' of Philip's kingdom with the injustice and moral degeneracy of Henry's. His claim is that Philip, unlike Henry, was motivated by strong religious beliefs (*Trag*. IV. 2. 115-55). It is possible that Byron's complaints about the sincerity of the king's religious beliefs could allude to James's tolerance of Roman Catholicism. Under James recusancy statutes, to the great concern of his bishops, were not systematically enforced as they had been under Elizabeth. Furthermore, Queen Anne was openly Roman Catholic, refusing to take part in Anglican ceremonies, and the king made no secret of his desire to find a Catholic bride for Prince Henry.[53]

The moral and physical decay associated with peace is the theme of Byron's speech on 'the most base fruits of a settled peace' (*Trag*. IV. 1. 1-28). He argues that the peace has made men idle and led them to place their pleasures and their wealth before their independence and their legal rights:

> [...] Men themselves, instead of bearing fruits,

Grow rude and foggy, overgrown with weeds,
Their spirits and freedoms smothered in their ease.
(*Trag.* IV. 1. 8-10)

Byron's and Chapman's concern with the effects of a prolonged peace was shared by Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon. Jonson, in his 'Epistle to a Friend, to Persuade Him to the Wars', recognizes the need of war to prevent men from becoming idle and degenerate:

Wake, friend, from forth thy lethargy: the drum
Beats brave, and loud in Europe, and bids come
All that dare rouse: or are not loth to quit
Their vicious ease, and be o'erwhelmed with it.
Its a call to keep the spirits alive
That grasp for action, and would yet revive
Man's buried honour, in his sleepy life.

Bacon also sees 'a foreign war' as a necessary means of providing exercise for men so as 'to keep the body in health; for in a slothful peace, both courages will effeminate and manners corrupt'.[54]

All that Byron has to say about kings and courts, policy and corruption is seen to be true. Savoy is a perfect example of a machiavellian prince and Henry himself practises the duplicity of state when necessary. Savoy uses flattery with the king, La Fin and Byron in order to win their confidence. In the opening scene Savoy praises Henry for his treatment of La Fin, 'Your majesty hath with the greatest life / Described a wicked man' (*Cons.* I. 1. 165-6). However, when we next see him he is taking La Fin into his service:

I told him [the king], having threatened you away,
That I did wonder this small time of peace
Could make him cast his armour so securely
In such as you, and, as 'twere, set the head
Of one so great in counsels on his foot,
And pitch him from him with such guardlike strength.
(*Cons.* II. 1. 6-11)

He proceeds to make use of La Fin in order to win over Byron. This is achieved by encouraging Byron to believe that it is he who is persuading La Fin to rebel. When Byron is tricked into thinking that he is introducing La Fin to Savoy's service, Savoy leads him on:

> *Savoy.* Your name, I pray you sir?
> *La Fin.* La Fin, my lord.
> *Savoy.* La Fin? [*To Roncas*] Is this the man
> That you so recommended to my love?
> (*Cons.* III. 2. 41-3)

Savoy's third deceit aims at creating friction between Henry and Byron. He achieves this by overpraising Byron's contribution during the civil war at the expense of the king's own achievements. The king responds as Savoy expects by denigrating Byron's role and praising the contribution of others (*Cons.* II. 2. 66-240). Savoy then proceeds to tell Byron of the king's reaction to his praise, inciting, as he had hoped, Byron's anger, 'What wrongs are these, laid on me by the king, / To equal others' worths in war with mine!' (*Cons.* III. 2. 45-109, 210-11).

Savoy is not the only prince to employ politic means in order to achieve his ends. Henry's employment of La Fin to provide evidence against Byron must seriously question claims that he is a virtuous king. Having previously denounced La Fin as 'La Fiend' he now sees him as 'good de La Fin' and praises his 'excellent desert / Of loyalty and policy' (*Cons.* III. 2. 226; *Trag.* I. 3. 10, 12-13). His 'desert' has been earned with the betrayal of a friend. Furthermore, the king tricks Byron into returning to court and believing that there is no evidence against him by having La Fin write him a letter of assurance which is to be delivered 'by some choice friend of his, or by his brother' (*Trag.* I. 3. 97). In addition to this, the king surrounds himself with machiavellian councillors, notably Janin and the Chancellor. The latter keeps records of those who are involved in the conspiracy (although they are not to be prosecuted on this occasion), 'sewed' in his doublet 'till need or opportunity requires' (*Trag.* I. 3. 78-

80). Janin advises the king to have Byron assassinated secretly in order to prevent the need for a trial:

> Princes, you know, are masters of their laws,
> And may resolve them to what forms they please,
> So all conclude in justice; in whose stroke
> There is one sort of manage for the great,
> Another for inferior.
> (*Trag.* IV. 2. 31-5)

The trial, when it comes, is corrupt. Byron is denied his right as an aristocrat to be judged by his peers, and instead is tried by 'petty judges' (*Trag.* V. 2. 38). Furthermore, the Chancellor (his enemy) appears to be both prosecutor and chief justice, preventing any possibility of an impartial trial. Finally the main witness against Byron, La Fin is kept hidden by the Chancellor until he is called on to give evidence. Byron is right to challenge the legality of La Fin's evidence:

> [...] Is it justice
> To tempt and witch a man to break the law,
> And by that witch condemn him?
> (*Trag.* V. 2. 156-8)

He claims that the methods used by the king to convict him are morally unacceptable. He accuses the king of framing him by using La Fin to play on his weaknesses: ''Tis tyrannous and impious policy / To put to death by fraud and treachery' (*Trag.* V. 2. 188-9). Byron finally, questions the justice of allowing La Fin to profit at his expense. Can his own services to the king and the country be weighed against the actions of an informer? The trial serves to justify Byron's accusations of corruption and moral decline.

The play contains other examples of the moral decline that Byron protests about. The Masque of Virtues in Act II of *The Tragedy* reminds us of the king's imperfect morals. If the king (who Byron argued is supposed to be the moral exemplar of his kingdom) commits adultery and openly parades his mistress in public, the audience may justifiably doubt his sincerity or even his right in taking a high moral line.

The king twice sets himself up as a moral example to other princes. At the end of *The Conspiracy* he warns Savoy against becoming involved in a war against Spain:

> If any troubles should be stirred betwixt you,
> I would not stir therein but to appease them;
> I have too much care of my royal word
> To break a peace so just and consequent,
> Without force of precedent injury.
> (*Cons*. V. 2. 208-12)

The audience which would have been aware of Henry's lack of faith to Elizabeth in 1598, when he reneged on an agreement between the two countries in order to make his own peace with Spain, may well have doubted the sincerity of this speech. He makes a similar speech to the Spanish Ambassador in Act V of *The Tragedy* when he condemns the political duplicity of kings. Having just contrived Byron's downfall through the use of an informer and set up a corrupt trial it is unlikely that the audience would be taken in by Henry's rhetoric. Byron recognized that there was no substance to the king's words and that he was 'full of state':

> [...] Like th'ancient gods
> Are modern kings, that lived past bounds themselves,
> Yet set a measure down to wretched men.
> (*Trag*. V. 3. 59-61)

Furthermore, one of Byron's complaints against kings is that the values he upholds such as 'love, fame, loyalty' had become part of the king's rhetoric of expediency:

> [...] So all things here
> Have all their price set down from men's concepts,
> Which make all terms and actions good or bad
> And are but pliant and well-coloured threads
> Put into feignèd images of truth.
> (*Cons*. III. 1. 55-9)

Byron's reaction to his political and ideological displacement is to seek a return to a past golden age when his own ideals were supposedly dominant and his talents and accomplishments of value. As Byron's values are predominantly military ones this necessitated a return to a state of war. His conspiracy has the intent of re-opening the war with Spain as a means of restoring the social order, as he perceives it, and setting right the corruption of peace-time government:

> We must reform and have a new creation
> Of state and government, and on our chaos
> Will I sit brooding up another world.
> I, who through all the dangers that can siege
> The life of man have forced my glorious way
> To the repairing of my country's ruins,
> Will ruin it again to readvance it.
> (*Trag*. I. 2. 29-35)

He will drive France back into war in order to reform the country in his own likeness. The martial aristocracy will return to the forefront of politics and the values of the battlefield will replace the political expediency of the present regime.

Byron, as 'active man' finds it difficult to accommodate himself to peace time society in which there is no outlet for glory and the achievement of personal honour. As he states, when arrested, his sword is his soul and to take away his sword is to take away his life (*Trag*. IV. 2. 280-2). Unable to play the minor role that has been allotted to him in the new regime he seeks an outlet for fame and glory:

> What force hath any cannon, not being charged,
> Or being not discharged? To have stuff and form
> And to lie idle, fearful and unused,
> Nor form nor stuff shows; happy Semele
> That died compressed with glory!
> (*Cons*. I. 2. 34-8)

Rebellion offers the opportunity to 'put off from this dull shore of ease' and to win glory by fighting against the tide (*Cons*. II. 1. 149).

Irrespective of the justification of Byron's complaints about modern society his military values represent a threat to the stability that peace has offered to France. In order to satisfy his own ambition and desire for glory he is prepared to lead France back into war.

Henry, like Byron, was a successful military commander during the Wars of Religion and his strategies and achievements on the battlefield were the subjects of the newsletters that were so popular in England during the 1590s. We are reminded of his military reputation during the play when he counters Byron's self-glorification by relating in more modest terms his own contribution to the war:

> [...] can he not deny but I have thrice
> Saved him from death: I drew him off the foe
> At Fountaine François, where he was engaged,
> So wounded and so much amazed with blows,
> That, as I played the soldier in his rescue,
> I was enforced to play the marshal
> To order the retreat, because he said
> He was not fit to do it, nor to serve me.
> (*Trag*. IV. 2. 10-17)

Following Byron's arrest Henry challenges his interpretation of their respective roles during the war: 'What war hath raged / Into whose fury I have not exposed / My person [...] ?' (*Trag*. IV. 2. 254-6). Henry's military prowess is acknowledged by Queen Elizabeth when she complains to Byron about the king's failure to visit her in person:

> But here is nothing worth his personal sight,
> Here are no wallèd cities; for that crystal
> Sheds with his light his hardness and his height
> About our thankful person and our realm.
> (*Cons*. IV. 1. 39-42)

Despite their war-time similarities, Henry, unlike Byron, has successfully made the transition from war to peace. He puts the past behind him and refers to his military achievements only when frustrated by Byron's misrepresentation of events. Henry recognizes that he owes his kingdom to 'arms' as well as 'birth' but acknowledges, unlike Byron, the difference between destructive war and fruitful peace (*Cons*. I. 1. 118). Like Byron he has spent all of his adult life in a war-torn environment but has suffered more. As a prince of the blood and the leader of the Huguenots he was involved directly in the dynastic disputes of the war and survived numerous attempts on his life. His religious convictions must have been affected by the Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day in which many of his friends and religious cohorts were murdered shortly after his marriage to Marguerite de Valois. He experienced at first hand the political duplicity of the last Valois kings and the queen mother, Catherine de Medici and had quickly to learn the art in order to survive. Raised in such an environment Henry had become a survivor and had learnt to put political and moral principles second to the basic necessity of survival. For Henry political expediency could be justified as a means of safeguarding his crown and dynasty and of ensuring political stability.

Henry recognizes more than Byron the destructiveness of war:

> When guilt made noblesse feed on noblesse,
> All the sweet plenty of the realm exhausted,
> When the nak'd merchant was pursued for spoil,
> When the poor peasants frighted neediest thieves
> With their pale leanness, nothing left on them
> But meagre carcasses sustained with air,
> Wand'ring like ghosts affrighted from their graves,
> When with the often and incessant sounds
> The very beasts knew the alarum bell,
> And, hearing it, ran bellowing to their home.
> (*Trag*. I. 1. 124-33)

His aims are to pacify the kingdom and to enable men to return to normal lives after thirty-eight years of war. He wishes to forget the past and to look ahead to peace and the consolidation of his dynasty. His design is peace but he makes it clear in the prayer for his son that if necessary he will revert to war to protect what he has. When Byron's conspiracy is confirmed Henry complains about the ingratitude of his subjects. He has given them peace and security and 'they now so soon complain of ease' (*Trag.* III. 2. 31-55).

Although Henry and Byron are both, to some extent, motivated by self-interest - Henry with establishing his authority and dynasty, Byron with regaining the esteem and influence he had during the wars - Henry, at least, shows some concern for the needs of the country as a whole. Byron is prepared to push France back into war to fulfil his own ambition and to satisfy his thirst for glory. His criticism of the court, although broadly justified, is very much from the perspective of someone on the margins of political power. His own values and his perception of the relationship between king and subject are largely idealistic and militaristic and do not offer a realistic basis for peace-time government, which on the whole is pragmatic rather than principled. In his glorification of war Byron chooses to forget the destruction and suffering that it causes to the vast majority of the population and considers only his own ambitious designs. Chapman, although recognizing that there is substance to the complaints of the nobility about the decline of the natural social order and the moral degeneracy of modern courts, questions the idealization of war and military values and presents the danger of the over-mighty subject.

4.6.2. 'The Free Born Powers of Royal Man': Absolute Monarchy and Subaltern Majesty

The question of political ideology raised by Chapman's play was a central issue in early Jacobean England. The conflict between the absolutist tendencies of Henry and the subaltern majesty beliefs of Byron were mirrored in the disputes between king and Parliament in England. King James's political writings, notably *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, and his speeches to Parliament, advocated a system of absolute monarchy, creating fears among his subjects that this ideology would be the basis of his government in England. In *The Trew Law*, published in Scotland in 1598 and in England in 1603, James argued that the king was God's lieutenant on earth, answerable only to God for his actions and bound only by God's law.

> [...] their [the people's] obedience, I say, ought to be to him [the king], as to Gods Lieutenant in earth, obeying his commands in all thing, except directly against God, as the commands of God's Minister, acknowledging him a Judge set by GOD over them, having power to judge them, but to be judged onely by GOD, whom to onely hee must give count of his judgement; fearing him as their Judge, loving him as their father; praying for him as their protectour; for his continuance, if he be good; for his amendement, if he be wicked; following and obeying his lawfull commands, eschewing and flying his fury in his unlawfull, without resistance, but by sobbes and teares to God [...].[55].

The significance of this passage is that it directly challenges the view of constitutional and Subaltern Majesty theorists that at times of tyrannical government resistance is justified if led by officers of the kingdom. Of equal concern were James's views on the role of Parliament. Although writing specifically about the Scottish Parliament his English subjects would have seen his comments as an indication of his views on Parliament in general:

> [...] we daily see that in the Parliament (which is nothing else but the head Court of the king and his vassals) the lawes are but craved by his subjects, and onely made by him at their rogation, and with their advice: For albeit the king make daily statutes and ordinances, enjoyning such paines thereto as hee thinkes meet, without any advice of Parliament or estates; yet it lies in the power of no Parliament, to make any kinde of Lawe or Statute, without his Scepter be to it, for giving it the force of a Law.[56]

In effect, the king is suggesting that Parliament - Lords and Commons - has merely an advisory role in government rather than the shared role that was claimed. Although Parliaments could not make laws without the consent of the monarch, it would have been argued by constitutionalists that kings could not impose laws and taxes without the consent of the elected officers of the kingdom. This safeguard prevented tyranny and excessive taxation. A third point of controversy raised by James's treatise was the claim that 'the King is above the law, as both the author and giver of strength therto'.[57] As shown in Chapter Two, constitutionalists argued that the Common Law, which operated in England, was in existence before kings and was established on the principle of equality irrespective of position. If the law was in existence before the establishment of the monarchy it followed that kings as well as subjects were bound by it.

In his speech to Parliament on 31 March 1607 (at approximately the time Chapman was writing the play) James returned to the theme of the relationship between king and law. In the context of his proposals for the political unification of England and Scotland he recommended merging the legal systems of the two countries and took upon himself the right to interpret the spirit of the English Common Law where it was ambiguous or unclear:

> [...] in any case wherein the Law is thought not to be cleare [...] then in such a question wherein no positive Law is resolute, *Rex est Judex*, for he is *Lex loquens*, and is to supply the Law, where the Law wants [...]. [58]

This was a threat to the basic principle of the separation of powers and was challenged by constitutionalists who claimed that the spirit of the law could only be interpreted by trained lawyers who had had years of experience unravelling the complexities of Common Law. Besides it would challenge the principle of justice and the impartiality of the law, and increase the likelihood of tyranny, if the executive was also the interpreter of the law.

The debate over the legal power of the monarch and the natural rights of the subject has a significant role in Chapman's play. Henry sees the nobility as a threat to his aims of ensuring the continuation of peace and establishing his dynasty. The Wars of Religion, like the Wars of the Roses in England, had illustrated the dangers represented by a financially independent landed aristocracy. There was always the threat of a recurrence of the dynastic wars if the nobility retained their political and financial power bases. Henry followed the example of the early Tudors and taking advantage of the divisions and financial difficulties of the nobility, an inevitable result of a long civil war, began a policy of centralization which would undermine the patronage system and make the nobility more financially dependent on the monarch. He also set about re-establishing the authority of the monarch which had been lost during the reigns of the last three Valois kings (Francis II, 1559-60; Charles IX, 1560-74; Henry III, 1574-89).[59]

After the fall of Byron, Henry assumes the role of absolute monarch. Byron's trial and execution will, in his view, serve as an example of his authority to other nobles:

> My subjects and the world shall know my power
> And my authority by law's usual course
> Dares punish, not the devilish heads of treason,
> But their confederates, be they ne'er so dreadful.
> The decent ceremonies of my laws
> And their solemnities shall be observed,
> With their sternness and severity.
> (*Trag.* IV. 2. 41-7)

In his speech to the Spanish ambassador he claims that although kings 'sit above the danger of the laws' they should set a moral example to their subjects (*Trag.* V. 1. 48-68). This speech echoes the sentiments expressed by King James in *The Trew Law*. However, as Byron has previously recognized and as has been seen in the course of the play, the king's rhetoric is more form than substance and his words are not borne out by his actions. Some members of the audience at Blackfriars would have been aware that while the

Henry on stage was setting himself up as a moral example to the Spanish ambassador and criticizing Spain for breaking the terms of their treaty by conspiring with Byron, the real Henry had been secretly breaking the terms of the treaty with Spain by subsidizing the Protestants in the Netherlands.[60] Perhaps, one should not be too surprised at Henry's duplicity. As Chapman and the Taciteans had been trying to show, kings generally do not govern on the basis of morality or religious teachings but are motivated by political expediency. In this Chapman's Henry is no different from any other king.

When news is brought of the refusal of the peers to sit in judgement on Byron Henry asserts his authority:

> The court may yet proceed; and so command it.
> 'Tis not their slackness to appear shall serve
> To let my will t'appear in any fact,
> Wherein the boldest of them tempts my justice.
> I am resolved, and will no more endure
> To have my subjects make what I command
> The subject of their oppositions,
> Who evermore slack their allegiance,
> As kings forbear their penance.
> (*Trag*. V. 1. 92-100)

In his final appearance on stage Henry, having resolved to make an example of Byron and to re-establish the authority of the monarchy, is firmly settled in his 'sun of height' (*Trag*. V. 1. 138).

While Henry's ideology is absolutist his method is pragmatic. He shows that he is prepared to use any available means to achieve his aims. The use of informers, such a La Fin, the devious means by which he persuades Byron to return to court, the employment of machiavellian ministers and the corrupt trial can all be justified by Henry, in terms of politics, if they ensure the continuation of peace and the preservation of his dynasty. Until the moment of his arrest, Henry is prepared to pardon Byron on the condition that he publicly confesses his guilt and presumably names his confederates. Most commentators on the play have taken this willingness to forgive as evidence of Henry's virtue. Even Braunmuller who, on the whole, questions the perception of Henry as an ideal and virtuous king accepts that 'in his reluctance to punish Byron, Henry's attitude is much less equivocal'.[61] In the light of what we have seen of Henry and of the methods he uses to achieve his political ends, this interpretation needs to be reconsidered. If he had evidence of Byron's involvement in conspiracy and wanted to save his subject from execution could he not have confronted him with it, instead of deviously acting as if the accusations were hearsay? The use of La Fin to write and assure Byron that the king was satisfied of his innocence and the secreting of La Fin at the trial do not seem compatible with the desire to save Byron from the block. One suspects that Henry knew how Byron would react to his offer of pardon for a public apology. Byron's pride and vanity would not allow him to humble himself before the king in front of witnesses. Byron suggests as much himself when following his conviction the Chancellor tells him that Henry would have gladly pardoned him had he confessed:

> No, no, his bounty then was misery,
> To offer when he knew 'twould be refused;
> He treads the vulgar path of all advantage
> And loves men for his vices, not for their virtues.
> (*Trag.* V. 3. 151-4)

Henry probably wished to make political gain from Byron's fall by contrasting his own generosity with the ingratitude of his subject (effectively reversing Byron's own complaint). Had Byron accepted the offered pardon it would have been at the price of public humiliation which would have served the king's aim equally as well as execution. Byron would no longer have been able to justify rebellion on the grounds of the king's ingratitude and could have no complaints if he was excluded from the decision-making process.

Henry's actions can all be justified politically if not morally. The punishment of a traitor, the use of politically-expedient methods to effect his arrest and the re-establishment of monarchical power to ensure future peace all seem relatively uncontroversial in the context of the play. However, the boundary between Henry's absolute monarchy and tyrannical government is, as Chapman shows us, a narrow one.

Byron's view of the relationship between king and subject is fundamentally different from Henry's. It has its roots in the feudal vassal-lord relationship which depended on reciprocal honour between king and nobility. Byron is a proponent of the theory of Subaltern Majesty in which the king's powers over his subjects are limited by constitutional law, and the nobility, particularly officers of the kingdom (Byron as a marshal of France is an officer of the kingdom), have personal rights and legal responsibilities including, when necessary, armed resistance against tyrannical monarchs. Byron perceives the king's policy of centralization to be an attempt to curtail the independence of the nobility and in effect an infringement of their constitutional rights. Furthermore by excluding the nobility from his closest councils and by appointing 'low-born' ministers he is depriving the nobility of their right to be the principal advisers of the king. Byron also claims that by leading the country into a state of moral degeneracy the king has shown himself as unfit to rule the kingdom.

Byron claims that the king has manipulated the values of love, fame and loyalty upon which lay the basis of the feudal relationship between king and nobility, in order to impose 'slaveries' upon his subjects. These values which were once symbolic of the 'free-born powers of royal man' have become 'mere politic terms' by which the king diminishes the native rights of the nobility (*Cons*. III. 1. 25-31). The feudal values have been redefined in terms of loyalty and service to the king rather than as the basis of a reciprocal relationship (*Cons.* III. 1. 47-62). Honour, for example, is interpreted differently by Byron and D'Auvergne on the one hand and the king on the other. For Byron and D'Auvergne honour is understood in its feudal sense, as a code of behaviour which is expected of men of good lineage. This consists of reciprocal loyalty between nobility and monarch, honesty, and bravery in battle. For the king, honour is defined in terms of loyalty to the monarch. Byron begins his speech on the moral decline of the country with the assertion that 'we [the nobility] must not be more true to kings /Than kings are to their subjects' (*Trag.* III. 1. 1-2). This is a significant speech which defines Byron's view of the relationship between king and nobility. If kings do not honour their subjects then they lose the right to expect loyalty from them. The relationship, as Byron sees it, is a form of contract between king and nobility which if broken by one frees the other from its obligations. Byron's claim is that the king by adopting machiavellian practices has lost his honour and freed the nobility from their obligations to him. When the king asks Byron to confess his involvement in the conspiracy Byron responds that a man of 'free nature' and 'honour' must honour himself as much as his king. By humbling himself before the king he would lose his honour and be unworthy of the king's respect:

> Being friend and worthy fautor of myself,
> I am no foe of yours, nor no impairer,
> Since he can no way worthily maintain
> His prince's honour that neglects his own.
> (*Trag.* III. 2. 76-9)

When the king asks him directly whether he has 'maintained' his 'truth of loyalty', Byron can with honesty answer yes because for him loyalty is defined in terms of himself and his code of honour rather than specifically in relation to the king. Henry later reproaches D'Auvergne for his misplaced loyalty to Byron. For the king, loyalty is defined only in terms of the duties of his subjects to himself:

> Think you it not as strong a point of faith
> To rectify your loyalties to me,
> As to be trusty in each other's wrong?
> Trust that deceives ourselves is treachery,
> And truth that truth conceals an open lie.
> (*Trag.* IV. 2. 180-4)

As he awaits death Byron continues in his loyalty to his friends and asks that D'Auvergne may be told that he died with honour, 'Beseeching him to know I have not used / One word in my arraignment that might touch him' (*Trag.* V. 4. 243-4).

Byron believes that reward and honour are due to birth and merit and not dependent on the will of the king. The king is obliged to reward what Essex referred to as the 'active virtues' of the nobility.[62] As he has been instrumental in capturing the city of Bourg for the king Byron believes that it is his right to be allowed to nominate its new governor. When the king denies him the honour Byron considers it an infringement of native rights. He justifies his participation in the conspiracy on the grounds that he is defending his native rights from the absolutist tendencies of the king. When accused by Janin of aiming for the crown Byron denies the charge but claims he is defending the rights that he has won through his service:

> I fly with no such aim, nor am opposed
> Against my sovereign; but the worthy height
> I have wrought by my service I will hold.
> (*Trag.* III. 1. 212-4)

When he and D'Auvergne are ostracized following their return to court Byron considers it evidence of the increasing power of the king. The nobility have lost their independent spirit and live in fear of the king and 'from his face are all their faces moulded' (*Trag.* IV. 1. 70). In his major speech at the beginning of Act IV of *The Tragedy*, Byron outlines the dangers of absolute monarchy and the effects of the nobility's loss of independence. Peace, he suggests, has allowed the king to fetter the independent spirit of the nobility with the result that:

> Their spirits and freedoms smothered in their ease,
> As their tyrants and their ministers
> Grow wild in prosecution of their lusts,
> So they grow prostitute and lie, like whores,
> Down, and take up, to their abhorred dishonours;
> The friendless may be injured and oppressed,
> The guiltless led to slaughter, the deserver
> Given to the beggar, right be wholly wronged
> And wrong be only honoured, till the strings
> Of every man's heart crack; and who will stir
> To tell authority that it doth err?
> All men cling to it, though they see their bloods
> In their most dear associates and allies
> Poured into kennels by it; and who dares
> But look well in the breast, whom that impairs?
> (*Trag.* IV. 1. 10-24)

The inference of Byron's speech is that a strong independent nobility offers the only hope of restraint upon tyranny. Once the nobility have been made subservient to the monarch and dependent on him for honour and position there will no longer be an independent voice to speak out on behalf of the oppressed.

Byron's trial could be seen as an example of the tyrannical workings of state that he condemns. Deprived of the right of trial by his peers, judged by his prosecutor (who serves the interest of the king) and condemned on the evidence of an *agent provocateur*, he is entitled to complain of tyranny:

> 'Tis tyrannous and impious policy
> To put to death by fraud and treachery.
> (*Trag.* V. 2. 188-9)

Although much of what Byron says is true he, just as much as Henry, is motivated by self-interest. His support of native rights and shared government is not determined by a desire for social equality or to protect the interests of the oppressed but to advance the political interests of his own class at the expense of monarchical authority. He is prepared to drive France back into war to satisfy his own ambitions. The destruction and terror of the long civil war was largely the result of the independent power of the nobility that Byron is trying to retain. The king's aim of centralization and the establishment of absolute monarchy is an attempt to prevent the outbreak of further baronial wars. Although largely motivated by his own dynastic concerns the king's policy would bring peace and security to the country as a whole. Nevertheless, Chapman uses Byron to voice concerns about the dangers of absolute monarchy and the threat of its decline into a system of arbitrary, tyrannical government.

4.6.3. 'Only Power to Dare': Byron's Aggressive Militarism

Although Byron's complaints about the moral degeneracy of the court and his fears about the dangers of absolute monarchy are borne out in the play, his militant chivalry is portrayed as a threat to the security and well-being of the country in general. His values, which are primarily chivalric, are idealistic and dependent on a nostalgic view of the past. Like Henry, he is not motivated by virtue or morality but by self-interest. In his case this is the desire for the personal glory and honour, which can be won on the field of battle, and the public esteem and authority which comes with it. In order to re-create a situation in which his talents are valued, he conspires with his country's enemies with the intention of re-opening the war.

During his embassy to Brussels Byron is confronted with the dangers of rebellion by the fate of D'Aumale:

> So, when men fly the natural clime of truth
> And turn themselves loose out of all the bounds
> Of justice and the straight way to their ends,

> Forsaking all the sure force in themselves
> To seek without them that which is not theirs,
> The forms of all their comforts are distracted,
> The riches of their freedoms forfeited,
> Their human noblesse shamed, the mansions
> Of their cold spirits eaten down with cares,
> And all their ornaments of wit and valour,
> Learning and judgement, cut from all their fruits.
> (*Cons*. I. 2. 154-64)

He sees in D'Aumale's disgrace the effects of sacrificing the self-dependency of the honest man in order 'to trust our blood in others' veins' (*Cons*. I. 2. 140). To engage in conspiracy, he implies, requires putting one's honour in the trust of fellow conspirators. He determines to retain control over his own destiny but later admits that he has 'cast' himself 'into the arms of others' (*Cons*. III. 3. 33-4). He ignores the warning represented by D'Aumale and places his honour and his life in the 'arms' of La Fin. His dependency on La Fin becomes irrational as the play develops, and he determines to return to court, despite the reservations of D'Auvergne and La Brunel, when he receives assurances from La Fin.

Despite his criticism of the machiavellians at court he becomes the willing victim of the duplicity of Savoy and La Fin. Both play on his main weaknesses, his pride and his vanity. Byron is won over by their praise of his military accomplishments and their sympathy with his neglect. Flattered by the esteem in which they hold him he is oblivious to their motives and easily manipulated.

Although he surrenders his independent spirit to the devices of Savoy and La Fin he remains firm with the king. Despite the evidence against him and the warnings of his friends, he persistently denies involvement in the conspiracy and rests secure in the belief that his strength and reputation will defend him from arrest and conviction. In the final two acts of the play he seems to lose sense of the reason or 'law rational' on which he prides himself. He adopts bestial qualities and comes to depend entirely on strength and force in his conflict with the king. The Captain of Byron's guard who complains of his failure to recognize the danger confronting him compares him with a horse:

> The devil or your wicked angel blinds you,
> Bereaving all your reason of a man,
> And leaves you but the spirit of a horse
> In your brute nostrils: only power to dare.
> (*Trag.* IV. 1. 107-10)

While all around him realize the weakness of his position Byron remains confident in his own martial strength. Lost in his vanity he fails to pay heed to his own earlier warnings about the machiavellianism and political subtleties that operate at court and perceives his conflict with Henry in terms of armed combat:

> For all my huge engagement, I provide me
> This short sword only, which if I have time
> To show my apprehender, he shall use
> Power of ten lions if I get not loose.
> (*Trag.* IV. 1. 150-3)

Even D'Auvergne complains of Byron's 'bold approach, so full of will' and his confrontational attitude to the king (*Trag.* III. 2. 133). Byron, unlike Bussy D'Ambois, fails to recognize the need to compromise his native rights with the authority of the king and threatens force to defend his person from arrest and to protect his honour. His refusal to acknowledge the authority of the king and to pay 'humble tribute in manner, though not in matter' presents him as a challenge to the king's security and the peace resulting in his fall and execution.[63] The Captain's claim that Byron had 'only power to dare' is proved right when Byron is arrested. Confronted with the inevitable, Byron is forced to resign his sword and left to complain that he should be allowed to defend himself, against his accusers, in armed combat. However, there is no room for chivalric heroics in the peace-time court and Byron is led away protesting his innocence and complaining about the king's ingratitude.

Our sympathy with Byron is gradually withdrawn in the last two acts of the play as, confronted with his guilt, he continues to plead his innocence and to boast of his past service to the country. He refuses to face up to the reality of his plight and, even while awaiting the verdict of the court, maintains an arrogant confidence in his own importance. He mocks the court-room scene, mimicking the accusations of the Chancellor, but his role-play, like his vain self-assurance is fantasy. It takes Epernon to recall him to reality: 'He said not this, my lord, that I have heard' (*Trag.* V. 3. 33). He remains confident of his acquittal and of his importance to France. He is irreplaceable and the king is just trying to weaken his spirit:

> Acquittal? They have reason; were I dead
> I know they cannot all supply my place.
> Is't possible the king should be so vain
> To think he can shake me with fear of death?
> Or make me apprehend that he intends it?
> (*Trag.* V. 3. 36-40)

Byron eventually recognizes his plight when the Chancellor and the judges arrive to read his sentence. He maintains his innocence and accuses the Chancellor and, indirectly, the king of treason against God for condemning D'Auvergne and himself who, he claims, are God's 'truest images' (*Trag.* V. 3. 100). He protests his innocence and denounces the king, who has forgotten his past service, until the moment of death. Not until he is on the block does he realize the gravity of his situation and that the expected pardon is not going to arrive. He makes his peace with his friends and his family and dies warning others not to follow his example but to humble themselves before the king.

Byron's fall and execution is due to the militant confrontational stand he takes against the king. Although his complaints are often justified and he retains our sympathy for much of the play, even though involved in conspiracy, his aggressive challenge to the monarch's authority and rejection of reason for martial strength necessitates his destruction before he returns the country to the chaos of war. In the fall of Byron, Chapman exposes the aggressive militarism of chivalry as a threat to the well-being of the country. While there may be truth in what Byron says about kings and courts the nostalgic glorification of war and militaristic values that are offered by him is not an answer. War, as was borne out by the situation in France, was essentially destructive.

4.7. Conclusion

Chapman's *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* takes as its central character a figure from recent French history who achieved his reputation in war and came to represent the militaristic values of chivalry. Written between 1607 and 1608 the play takes on board contemporary political issues such as concerns about the degeneracy of the court, the workings of the state apparatus, the role of the nobility in peace-time society, absolute monarchy and chivalric militarism. Chapman exposes the machinery of government as pragmatic at its best and duplicitous at its worst, and shows that monarchs and politicians are primarily working for their own interests, although sometimes these correspond with the interests of the country at large. He recognizes the advantages of strong government as represented by absolute monarchy but perceives the danger inherent in a system that places unrestricted power in the hands of one person. He sympathizes with the need for a strong independent nobility to limit the powers of government and to resist tyrannical monarchs but sees in the French situation the dangers of an over-powerful nobility. Chivalry, in the aftermath of Essex's attempted coup is exposed as primarily militaristic and nostalgic and its glorification of war as disturbing, misplaced and motivated by self interest. Although the play comments, often subversively, on sensitive political issues its problems with censorship seem to have been caused not by such general allusions but by the more specific complaints of the French ambassador. Chapman through the play can be seen to comment objectively on contemporary disputes between King James and the nobility over the agreement of peace with Spain and the extent of the limitations (if any) on the prerogative of the king. These are major themes in Chapman's plays and will be considered again in the following chapter in the context of 1610 and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, ed. by John Margeson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). All quotations are from this edition and line references appear in the text.
2. *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Tragedies*, ed. by T. M. Parrott; Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman*; Eugene M. Waith, *Ideas of Greatness*; Leonard Goldstein, *George Chapman: Aspects of Decadence in Early Seventeenth Century Drama*.
3. Peter Ure, 'Chapman's Tragedies' in *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies*, vol 1, *Jacobean Theatre*, ed. by J. R. Brown and B. Harris (London: Arnold, 1960), pp. 227-47; repr. in Peter Ure, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. by J. C. Maxwell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), pp. 166-86.
4.Heinemann, pp. 161-205; Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*.
5. Rees, p. 53; Edward D. Kennedy, 'James I and Chapman's Byron Plays', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 64 (1965), 677-90 (678).
6. I use the spelling 'Biron' for the historical figure and 'Byron' for the central character in the play.
7. Charles de Montigny, *Le Maréchal de Biron* (Paris: Hachette, 1861), p. 9. Translation taken from Hugh M. Richmond, 'Shakespeare's Navarre', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 42 (1979), 193-216 (203).
8. Armand de Gontaut, *Letters and Documents*, ed. by James W. Thompson (1936), vol. i, p. xl. Quotation taken from Hugh Richmond, *Puritans and Libertines: Anglo-French Literary Relations in the Reformation* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 313.
9. Montigny, p. 20; translation quoted from Richmond, p. 205.
10. Grimeston (1607), p. 992.
11. *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, v, pp. 127-8; *A New General Biographical Dictionary*, ed. by Hugh J. Rose (London, 1847), iv, p. 253.
12. Montigny, p. 22.
13. Montigny, p. 55, translation quoted from 'Shakespeare's Navarre', p. 206.
14. Montigny, p. 19.
15. Montigny, pp. 16-17.
16. Winwood, i, pp. 384-5.
17. Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV* (London: Longman, 1984), p. 179.
18. Winwood, i, p. 295.
19. Summary of Montigny, pp. 57-155.
20. *CSP Domestic 1601-3*, p. 244.
21. Chamberlain, i, p. 168.
22. Letter from Robert Cecil to an unknown correspondent, 1 August 1602, *HMC (Salisbury)*, xiv (1923), p. 229.
23. *CSP Venice 1603-7*, p. 205.
24. 'Shakespeare's Navarre'.
25. *Acts of the Privy Council*, ed. by J. R. Dasent (London: HMSO, 1907; repr. 1974), 32, 1601-4, pp. 190, 213.
26. Pierre Matthieu, *Histoire de France durant Sept Annees de Paix de Henri IV*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1605), ii, p. 47b.
27. Camden, *Annals*, p. 562. Camden writes, 'Whereas certaine French writers have delivered, that amongst other things of those which were condemned, she shewed the Earle of Essex his skull in her private Chappell or (as others write) fastened upon a pole to Biron and the Frenchmen, it is a ridiculous vanity, for it was buried together with his body'.
28. Camden, Annals, p. 493.
29. *Annals*, p. 494; Margeson, p. 282.
30. *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 216-7.
31. Harrison, p. 322.

32. Entered in the Stationers Register on 5 August 1602.
33. Letter from the Bishop of London to Robert Cecil, 23 August 1602, *HMC (Salisbury)*, xii (1910), p. 318.
34. Allardyce Nicoll, 'The Dramatic Portrait of George Chapman', *Philological Quarterly*, 41 (1962), 215-28; Elias Schwartz, 'The Date of Chapman's Byron Plays', *Modern Philology*, 58 (1961), 201-2.
35. Robert Ornstein, 'The Date of Chapman's Tragedies, Once More', 61-4.
36. Margeson, pp. 5-6.
37. F. S. Boas, 'The Source of Chapman's *The Conspiracie and Tragedie of Charles Duke of Byron* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *Athenaeum* (10 Jan 1903), 51-2.
38. Dutton, *Mastering the Revels*, pp. 191-2.
39. Tricomi, p. 42.
40. Quotation from Anthony Nixon, *The Blacke Yeare* (London, 1606), p. 2br.
41. Letter to Sir Thomas Edmondes, 7 March 1606; see Dutton, p. 179.
42. Dutton, p. 181.
43. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, ii, 51-2; Tricomi, pp. 45-6.
44. Tricomi, p. 46; Dutton, pp. 181-2.
45. Quoted from Margeson, p. 276.
46. Chambers, ii, 53-4.
47. Tricomi, p. 47.
48. Tricomi, p. 49.
49. *A Seventeenth Century Letter-Book*, p. 392.
50. *A Seventeenth Century Letter-Book*, p. 246.
51. Dutton offers an alternative account of these events, pp. 184-6.
52. See Greville, *Life of Sidney*, 162-215.
53. Maurice Lee, *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI in his Three Kingdoms* (Urbano and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1990), pp. 176-7.
54. *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, ed. by George Parfitt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975; repr. 1984), pp. 150-5; Bacon, 'Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates', *The Essays*, p. 153.
55. *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. by Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Harvard University Press, 1918; repr. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), pp. 53-70 (p. 61).
56. *Political Works*, p. 62.
57. *Political Works*, p. 63.
58. *Political Works*, p. 299.
59. J. H. M. Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Ernest Benn, 1975), p. 321.
60. David Buisseret, *Henry IV* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 110.
61. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, pp. 92-3.
62. *HMC (Salisbury), vii* (1899), p. 520.
63. *Life of Sidney*, p. 69.

Chapter 5

Clermont D'Ambois: 'Most Worthy of the Race of Men'? The Deconstruction of the Chivalric Myth in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*

> [...] This same D'Ambois
> Hath gotten such opinion of his virtues,
> Holding all learning but an art to live well,
> And showing he hath learn'd it in his life,
> Being thereby strong in his persuading others,
> That this ambitious Guise, embracing him,
> Is thought t'embrace his virtues.
> (I. 1. 168-74)[1]

5.1. Introduction

The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, like most of Chapman's plays, has been considered in rigidly dichotomized terms. Most commentators have considered the play in terms of a conflict between the virtuous, stoical Clermont and the corrupt, active court.[2] When the play does not seem to fit the mould that has been created for it, mainly due to doubts about the consistency between Clermont's stoic philosophy and his active role in the play, it is written off as a failure.[3] The preoccupation with discussing Chapman's Tragedies in terms of simple binary oppositions, such as virtue against evil, and Stoic man against active man, has been a major handicap to the understanding of his dramatic output. Chapman, as has been suggested in the course of this thesis, is primarily concerned with contemporary political issues. As the political world is ambiguous and its participants motivated to a large extent by ambition and self-interest it cannot be considered in terms of good and bad. In this world no motive is virtuous or wicked but is determined in accordance with the needs of the individual or factional group at a particular time in a particular situation. Chapman is interested in man's reaction to the political environment, conflicts of ideology, concepts of social order and the mythologization of the past. All of these are related to the struggle for power and the desire to strengthen or replace existing hierarchies.

The Elizabethan and Jacobean chivalric revivals are a part of this process, with a largely mythological concept of chivalry being established to counter present social and political trends by emphasizing contrasts between a past golden age of heroic achievement and virtue, and a present of peace, corruption, and moral decline. In the context of 1610-1611 (the date of *The Revenge*) the chivalric golden age is taken to be the 1580s and 1590s which was portrayed as a period of military achievement in which the nobility sought personal glory and fame in the campaigns against Spain. This golden age was contrasted favourably with the present peace and King James's apparent willingness to tolerate aggressive Habsburg involvement in the Protestant states of the German union.

This chapter will consider *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* in the context of the political situation of 1610-1611 and the brief revival of the chivalric movement among the nobility that was occasioned by the Cleves-Julich affair and the festivities arranged for the inauguration of Prince Henry as Prince of Wales. The Cleves-Julich affair highlighted the political divisions between the dominant Salisbury-Howard circle, which was associated with peace and preferred a negotiated solution to the crisis, and the circle surrounding Prince Henry, which advocated a more aggressive response. It would be wrong, however, to see the division as caused entirely by principled differences over foreign policy: opportunism played a part in the stance taken by the nobility at the court of Prince Henry. The war party was made up primarily of politically-marginalized figures, such as the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Southampton, the Earl of Essex, Viscount Lisle and Fulke Greville, who saw war (in which they would be the natural military leaders) as an opportunity to regain influence and public esteem.

The world of *The Revenge* is one in which we see divisions between the court party of the king, associated with peace and monarchical authority, and the pro-war party of Guise, which seeks to limit the king's authority. Guise associates himself with chivalry and a mythology of war in order to contrast the political corruption of the present with past military glory and nobility. Clermont represents the virtue and heroism with which Guise wishes to be associated and his image is manipulated by the latter for political advantage. Clermont is fashioned into the embodiment of chivalric virtue, by Guise and others, in order to promote an ideal vision of true nobility. He finds it impossible to live up to the expectations of his fashioned image and throughout the play we see in him a conflict between the image of what he should be and the real man. Chapman uses the play to explode the myth of chivalry by portraying it as an idealized set of values which are manipulated for political advantage.

The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I consider how Chapman creates a mythical hero for his play through an amalgamation of historical characters. In the Second, I claim that the play can best be read in the context of the renewed interest in chivalry that occurred in 1610, and consider the relevance of the Cleves-Julich affair and the inauguration of Prince Henry. In the third, I consider the play's portrayal of the absolute state. In the final section I discuss chivalry and nobility in the context of the play. This final section is divided into three sub-sections considering the fashioning of Clermont into the embodiment of the chivalric myth, Chapman's explosion of the myth, and finally the anti-chivalric combat and Clermont's suicide.

5.2. Clermont D'Ambois and the Revenge of Bussy's Death: The Creation of a Myth

The renewed interest in chivalry in 1610 led to a revival of *Bussy D'Ambois* by the Children of Whitefriars (formerly Children of the Revels).[4] In order to capitalize on the revival of the earlier play and the popularity of chivalry, Chapman, it seems, hurriedly wrote a sequel. The central plot is loosely based on reports of a ten-year feud between the D'Ambois and Montsoreau families after the murder of Bussy in 1579. In order to provide the play with a central character and to reconsider the issue of chivalric heroism raised by the earlier play, Chapman created a largely fictional brother for Bussy. This brother, Clermont, while sharing Bussy's heroic qualities, moderates them with personal restraint and virtue. Whereas Bussy's military values conflicted with those of the court society which he aspired to enter, Clermont's refined chivalry has been incorporated into the established hierarchy. He denounces the corruption of the court but offers little threat to the maintenance of the existing social order. Whereas Chapman had created Bussy in the context of the Essex rebellion, and the challenge of the chivalric nobility to the authority of the monarch, Clermont is a product of the more accommodating chivalry of 1610. Essex used his chivalric associations to advocate political rights and to challenge monarchical power. In 1610 under the protection of Prince Henry chivalry no longer represented the same challenge to authority but offered opposition within the existing power structure. It is worth noting that while Clermont is himself without political ambition, his image is manipulated for oppositional purposes by Guise, a prince of the blood.

In order to adapt history to the political situation of 1610, Chapman had to make significant alterations to his source material and create a central character that was appropriate to the times. His source for the main plot is unknown, but considering his loose dependency on factual information in the play it is probable that he worked primarily from hearsay.

Much has been made of Chapman's fictionalization of history in *The Revenge*. This has undoubtedly been influenced by the dramatist's own response to criticism in his dedicatory epistle to the printed edition of the play:

> and for the autentical truth of either person or action, who (worth the respecting) will expect it in a poem, whose subject is not truth, but things like truth?[5]

However, Parrott's claim, subsequently followed by other commentators, that the main plot is entirely fictional is incorrect:

> How little connexion the main plot of this play has with the truth of history is shown by the fact that in reality there was neither revenger nor revenge for the murder of Bussy. Chapman's figure of Clermont D'Ambois cannot be identified with any historical character; his very name, indeed, is composed of names and titles belonging to Bussy himself: Louis de Clermont, sieur de Bussy D'Amboise. And the revenge taken by this imaginary hero upon his brother's murderer is as imaginary as the hero himself, for the feud was composed by order of Henry III shortly before his death, and the historical Montsurry, whom Chapman represents as dying under Clermont's sword, was actually alive at the time his death was being represented on the stage of Whitefriars, and survived to receive Marie de Medici at Angers as late as 1616.[6]

Chapman makes much greater use of history than Parrott and others allow. Not only was there an historical Clermont D'Ambois (although he seems to have little in common with Chapman's Clermont) but there is also some evidence that Chapman may have believed that revenge was actually carried out against Montsoreau.

Chapman's Clermont seems to have been a mythologization of his historical namesake. Little is known about Georges de Clermont D'Amboise (the younger brother of Bussy) who is referred to in state papers as Clermont D'Amboise. Unlike his brother he converted to Calvinism and served as a captain in the Huguenot army under the King of Navarre and the Prince of Conde. Like Chapman's Clermont he had, according to Henry Cobham (English Ambassador in France), 'been like to have been clapped up in the "Bastyllyon"' in 1580, but escaped.[7] He was held responsible for at least two military disasters, at La Rochelle in 1577 (where he was accused of being either incompetent or a traitor) and at Angers in 1585.[8] In 1582 he was out of favour with the King of Navarre for having behaved discourteously towards Mme de Duras 'a lady highly in favour with the Queen of Navarre'. It was reported that he 'broke a glass of ink on her face'.[9] Clermont came to England on behalf of the King of Navarre, at least once but possibly three times. In March 1584 Sir Edward Stafford (English Ambassador in France) informed Walsingham that Clermont was on his way to England to visit the Queen.[10] Clermont next turns up in Guernsey in November 1585 'bringing advertisements that these Islands will soon be assailed'.[11] The following month the governor of Guernsey wrote to Sir Amias Paulet (governor of Jersey) to confirm that he had sent Clermont and the Prince of Condé to England.[12] The Clermont D'Amboise (he had many namesakes) who was entrusted by the King of Navarre in June and July 1588 with secret embassies to Queen Elizabeth and Duke John Casimir of the Palatinate could well be the same man.[13]

Chapman's romanticization of a brutal figure from recent French history, who was involved in intrigue, suspected of treason, and incompetent as a military leader, may have been a deliberate attempt to emphasise the role of literature and language in mythologising the past. If Chapman's audience was able to recognise the disparity between the historical Clermont and Chapman's character, they may to some extent have been awakened to the literary process of re-creating the past. However, it seems unlikely that the audience would have known of Clermont, as he was only a minor figure in the French religious wars whose life, unlike his brother's, offered little of interest.

Chapman makes use of information about other historical characters in the creation of his Clermont. Clermont's suicide is probably based on that of his historical sister, Renée (Chapman's Charlotte). She was married to Jean de Montluc, Seigneur de Balagny (Chapman's Baligny). She was renowned for her aggressiveness and resolution. Derblay describes how she rallied her followers at the siege of Nevers in Cambrai in 1595:

> Can you let yourselves be so overcome by foolish fears as to trust your hopes to a cruel enemy steeped in the blood of pillage, instead of in your courage and in these arms which we took up for the common good? Have you now anything more to fear from the enemy but the sound of his cannons? The breach is so steep, so narrow, and so rough that their soldiers can never scale it [...] Take heart then and have courage from the example of these brave French whom you see with arms in hand. You are safe among friends [...] Follow me! Come fight with me on the breach. Come! We go on to victory.[14]

As Hugh Richmond suggests, this speech was probably the inspiration for Henry V's famous speech in Shakespeare's play. Renée was well known in her day for the 'Roman resolution' of her death. Following the fall of Nevers in September 1595 she took her own life, reproaching her husband 'for his base mind' and telling him 'that to do worthily he ought also to die with her'.[15]

As F.S. Boas pointed out, Clermont's arrest at Cambrai is based entirely on Grimeston's account of the arrest of Charles de Valois, Comte D'Auvergne for his part in the d'Entragues conspiracy of 1604.[16] Although we know that the historical Clermont was to have been imprisoned in the Bastille under suspicion of treason there are no details of the arrest (if, indeed, he was arrested). Chapman, presumably, having recently read Grimeston while writing his play on Byron had remembered the description of d'Auvergne's arrest and considered it appropriate for the central character of his play.

Chapman may have based the duel between Clermont and Montsurry upon some other source. Charles de Chambes, Comte de Montsoreau (on whom Chapman based his Montsurry) was, as Parrott pointed out, still alive when his death was portrayed on stage. He died peacefully at the age of seventy-three in 1621. However, there is evidence to suggest that there were rumours of his death in 1582. On 7 December of that year Henry Cobham (the English Ambassador in France) informed Sir Francis Walsingham that Montsoreau had been killed by Balagny: 'I hear that Balagny has caused M. de Montsoreau to be murdered, revenging thereby the death of M. de Bussy'.[17] For a senior government official such as Cobham to send this information to Walsingham there must have been good grounds for believing that it was genuine. Possibly some incident had taken place between Balagny and Montsoreau in which it was believed that the latter had been killed. It is possible that reports of Montsoreau's death became known in England and formed a sequel to stories of Bussy's murder. Chapman, working without a written source may have heard the story, assumed it to be reliable and changing Balagny to Clermont used it as a fitting finale to the revenge plot of the play.

The main plot of Chapman's play, as I have indicated, is based on fragments of historical material (although some of this is little more than gossip), thus showing the assumptions of Parrott and others, that there was no historical foundation for the central plot of the play, to be inaccurate. Chapman's Clermont is undoubtedly a romanticized portrayal of the historical character but then so was Bussy. It is possible that Chapman deliberately romanticized these characters in order to emphasize the way in which chivalry and the deeds of chivalric figures from the past were mythologized. By showing on stage how the actions and motivations of bloodthirsty, self-interested individuals of the recent past were romanticized to correspond with the chivalric myth, Chapman could be seen to be deconstructing the myth and undermining the motives of the political figures who subscribed to it.

5.3. The Political Context of *The Revenge*

As with most of Chapman's plays it is difficult to establish a precise date of composition or first performance for *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. However, Parrott's suggested date of 1610 or 1611 is supported by most commentators. The play was entered in the Stationers Register on 17 April 1612 and published the following year with a title page notifying the readers that 'it hath beene often presented at the private Play-house in the White-Fryers'. As the Children of the Revels began playing at the private theatre in Whitefriars in 1609 and since we are told the play was 'often presented' there is a strong case for Parrott's date.[18]

A composition date of 1610 or early 1611 sets the play firmly in the political context of the Cleves-Julich dispute and the inauguration of Prince Henry as Prince of Wales. These events created a renewed interest in chivalry which is reflected in the content of Chapman's play. I will now discuss, briefly, these two events before considering their significance to the play.

5.3.1. The Cleves-Julich Succession Crisis

The death of Duke William of Cleves-Julich in March 1609 initiated a major crisis in Europe. As Duke William had no male heirs and the laws of succession in his territories were ambiguous, his death resulted in a dispute between rival claimants. The two major claimants were the Elector of Brandenburg and the Duke of Neuberg, but the Elector of Saxony also had a claim. The crisis was intensified by religious issues. The late duke had been a Catholic whereas the two major claimants were Protestants. If a Protestant claim were made good the religious balance inside the Holy Roman Empire would be altered with the subjects of the dukedom compelled to follow the religious denomination of its new duke.[19]

Under imperial law the territories should have passed into the control of the Emperor until the conflicting claims could be resolved. However, this may have taken many years and the close proximity of the territories to the Netherlands made it undesirable to the Dutch for them to be occupied by Habsburg armies. Henry IV was determined to prevent the Habsburgs from gaining control of the Dukedom and encouraged the authorities in the late duke's territories to ask France officially for protection. This resulted in the Treaty of Dortmund of May 1609, in which the two major claimants agreed that they would jointly administer the territories until their respective claims could be adjudicated by an unnamed group of friendly princes. They also agreed to resist the claims of any third party to a share in the territories.[20]

The treaty was unsatisfactory to the Habsburgs and in July 1609 Archduke Leopold acting, he claimed, on behalf of his imperial brother, the Emperor Rudolf II, occupied the city of Juliers with eighteen hundred men.[21] Henry IV's response was to encourage Brandenburg and Neuberg to raise an army, with the support of other members of the Protestant Union, by offering to match their military commitment with a French army. Maurice Lee claims that Henry was planning a large-scale anti-Habsburg war with Spain as its main target, the so-called 'Grand Design'. Henry wished to be seen taking only a supportive role in the Juliers conflict in order to ensure English and Dutch support for the campaign.[22] By December 1609 the German Protestant Union and France were committed to liberating Juliers from Imperial forces.

In January 1610 King James had reluctantly promised to supply 4000 troops for the campaign. He was unwilling to be drawn into the war because he was suspicious of Henry's general intentions and because of his desire to be regarded as the European mediator. However, he was even more reluctant to allow the French to act alone and for Henry to become the sole leader of anti-Habsburg Europe.[23] There was also talk, at the time, of England joining the Protestant Union and of James becoming its head. In April 1610 the Prince of Wurttemberg came to London in an attempt to persuade the King to join the Union and to commit more troops to the campaign against Archduke Leopold. James refused, primarily because he was suspicious of Henry's intentions and unwilling to become entangled in a major war.[24] It was for the same reason that James drew back from Henry's proposal of an aggressive Anglo-French alliance. Nevertheless, James's commitment to the Juliers campaign ran the risk of involving England in a major European war which was, perhaps, only avoided by the assassination of Henry IV in May 1610.

5.3.2 The Festivities for the inauguration of Prince Henry as Prince of Wales

The prospect of European War influenced the theme of the festivities arranged to celebrate Prince Henry's inauguration as Prince of Wales and brought about a short-lived chivalric revival in 1610. James's vacillation over committing himself to war against the Habsburgs provided the occasion for the revival of a chivalric movement in England. Those members of the nobility who were centred at the court of Prince Henry and advocated a strong commitment to the war, employed chivalric iconography and language to promote their cause.

Roy Strong has shown how the entertainments commissioned by and for Prince Henry in 1610 combined a mythology of the previous reign with an aggressive militaristic message.[25] The most significant of these entertainments was *Prince Henry's Barriers* which took place at court on 6 January 1610. In *The Barriers* Prince Henry was celebrated as the heir to an heroic tradition of militaristic monarchs. The prince appeared under the pseudonym of Meliadus, Lord of the Isles (an anagram of *Miles a deo*) thus establishing himself in the role of Protestant Christian knight. As Roy Strong has suggested, the Prince, through this spectacle, presents 'the new court of St James's as the thinly veiled focus for the revival of the Elizabethan war party, fiercely Protestant and anti-Habsburg'.[26]

In the context of the European situation the chivalric theme of Prince Henry's entertainments could be seen as advocating alliances with France and the Protestant Union and supporting Henry IV's 'Grand Design'. In this the Prince was establishing his court as the focus of opposition to the more cautious foreign policy of the King, Salisbury, the Earl of Northampton and the Earl of Suffolk. The *Barriers* was performed at a time when Henry IV had just committed himself to an alliance with the Protestant Union and pressure was being brought on James to supply troops and join the alliance.

The Accession Day tilts had continued under King James but, as the King was a poor substitute for Gloriana, they soon began to fall into decline.[27] However, in 1610 Prince Henry attempted to revive their significance in order to impress the visiting Duke of Wurttemberg and his cousin the Prince of Brunswick. On King's Day, 24 March, a huge spectacle was staged evoking memories of the glories of the chivalric past. As Wurttemberg was in England to persuade the King to join the Protestant Union the Prince's activities can again be seen as an attempt to influence foreign policy.[28]

Roy Strong suggests that the Prince's investiture ceremony in June 1610 was toned down, by order of the King, so as to reduce any possibility of the occasion being used to emphasize the political tensions between the

Prince and himself.[29] However, the festivities, lasting from 31 May until 5 June, retained a chivalric theme. This was despite the major setback suffered by the pro-war cause due to the assassination of Henry IV the previous month.

The Queen's Masque (*Tethys' Festival*) was staged on the evening of 4 June. Written by Samuel Daniel and designed by Inigo Jones it recast the Prince in the role of Meliadus. In the masque Tethys gives Meliadus the sword of Astraea, thereby suggesting that Prince Henry is the heir of Queen Elizabeth as the symbol for English chivalry.[30]

This theme was repeated in the Creation Tilt of 5 June. Lord Compton's portrayal of the shepherd knight, Philisides, implicitly encouraged the idea of the Prince as the true heir of Sir Philip Sidney and Elizabethan chivalry.[31]

The Prince's court increasingly became the focus for the pro-war party which included survivors of the old Essex faction, such as the Earl of Southampton, Viscount Lisle and Sir Fulke Greville, as well as the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Arundel.[32] By 1610 chivalry had become iconographically associated with Prince Henry and the Southampton-Pembroke factions, which advocated an aggressive militaristic foreign policy, and was directed against the peace policy of the King and the dominant Salisbury-Howard faction.

5.3.3. Chivalry and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*

Faced with the threat of English involvement in a major European war, and witnessing renewed attempts to manipulate chivalry to glorify war for political purposes, Chapman returned to the theme of his earlier tragedies.

As with *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, Chapman, it could be argued, recognizes in *The Revenge* the concerns of the martial nobility and their displacement in peace-time society. He seems to show an awareness of the dangers brought about by the nobility's political decline, notably the increasing lack of constraint upon monarchical power. Furthermore, Chapman seems to recognize the need for an effective opposition to the dominant Salisbury-Howard group so as to redress the political imbalance which leads to widespread corruption. Nevertheless, once again he can be seen to portray the promotion of war as a negative reaction to the problems of the day. Attempts to glorify war and to drag England into a possibly long and expensive military campaign are seemingly motivated by private interests. Generally, the play seems to expose the self-interest that motivates the mythologization of war.

By illustrating how chivalry is mythologized by factional leaders to promote their own aims, *The Revenge* can be seen to be countering the message put across by Prince Henry's festivities. It dissociates the iconographical *ideal* of an apolitical nobility (based on a fraternity of honour, which is dedicated to virtue and the defence of the kingdom) from the political *reality* of a minority faction, reconstructing history in order to promote an aggressive anti-Habsburg foreign policy and their own claims to political leadership. Connected with the court of Prince Henry, to whom he had already dedicated his *Twelve Bookes of the Iliads* and his poem *The Teares of Peace* (both 1609), Chapman shared his patron's interest in chivalry but may have felt duty bound to warn him of the realities of war and the manipulation of his image for political ends by the martial nobility. In the dedicatory epistle to *The Teares of Peace* Chapman celebrates peace and condemns the misery of war as the result of man's 'selfe-love':

> Now that our Soveraign, the great King of Peace,
> Hath (in her grace) outlabour'd *Hercules*;
> And, past his Pillars, stretcht her victories;
> Since (as he were sole Soule, t'all Royalties)
> He moves all Kings, in this vast universe,

To cast chaste Nettes, on th'impious lust of *Mars*;
See, All; and imitate his goodnesse still;
That (having cleard so well, warres outward ill)
Hee, God-like, still employes his firme desires,
To cast learn'd inke upon those inwarde fires,
That kindle worse Warre, in the mindes of men,
Like to incense the outward Warre againe:
Selfe-love, inflaming so, men's sensuall bloud,
That all good, publique, drownes in private good.[33]

The 1613 edition of *The Revenge* is dedicated to Sir Thomas Howard, the second son of the Earl of Suffolk and a prominent member of the anti-war faction. By describing Howard as the 'Right virtuous and Truly Noble Knight', Chapman challenges the notion that 'virtue' and 'true noblesse' are the preserve of the pro-war faction.[34] Although by 1613 the Cleves-Julich crisis was history, Prince Henry was dead and Chapman was searching for a new patron, his choice of Howard as the dedicatee of his play would suggest that Chapman felt the political stance taken by the play was suitably in agreement with Howard's own. Furthermore, Chapman may have been acquainted with Howard at the time he was writing the play as the dedicatory sonnet he addressed to him in the 1611 edition of his *Iliads* is more personal in tone than the others in the volume. The dedication of the play to Howard could perhaps be interpreted as evidence of Chapman's opposition to war in 1610.

5.4. Absolute Monarchy and the Political State in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*

The Revenge raises the issue of monarchical authority and specifically the dangers of power without restraint. The claims of Clermont, Guise and Renel that peace has led to a decline in the political influence of the nobility, with the result that the king's power has increased due to the lack of external controls, is a common theme in Chapman's tragedies. In

1610 the issue of the king's prerogatives and his political ideology was again of major concern in England.

1610 was the year of 'The Great Contract' debates in Parliament, in which it was proposed, by Salisbury, that the king should abolish wardships and impositions in return for an annual supply from his subjects.[35] The debate developed into an argument over the King's prerogatives and whether Parliament had the legal right to discuss them. The King claimed that the prerogatives were his by divine right and couldn't be bargained away, but indicated that he might be inclined to relinquish some of them voluntarily if Parliament showed their obedience and love by voting him an annual income. Parliament argued that the King could not introduce new impositions without their consent, as law could only be made by King in Parliament. The majority of M.P's in the Commons were reluctant to vote for supply unless they were guaranteed concessions in return. The King's reluctance to allow Parliament to discuss his prerogative and his two speeches to Parliament in March and May 1610, in which he claimed that it was seditious for his subjects to dispute what a king might do, enhanced fears of absolute government. James's speech to Parliament, of 21 March 1610, re-introduced the idea that kings should be regarded as God's lieutenants on earth. He asserts that:

> Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of Divine power upon earth: For if you wil consider the Attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a King. God hath power to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accomptable to none: To raise low things, and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soule and body due. And the like power have Kings: they make and unmake their subjects: they have power of raising, and casting downe: of life, and of death: Judges over all their subjects, and in all causes, and yet accomptable to none but God onely.[36]

He continues with the suggestion that kings have the right to dispose of the property of their subjects as they see fit. He argues that the relationship between kings and their subjects originated from that between a father and his family:

> Now a Father may dispose of his Inheritance to his children, at his pleasure: yea, even disinherite the eldest upon just occasions, and preferre the youngest, according to his liking; make them beggers, or rich at his pleasure; restraine, or banish out of his presence, as hee findes them give cause of offence, or restore them in favour againe with the penitent sinner: So may the King deale with his subjects.[37]

However, despite his power, a good king chooses to be restrained by his own laws. James as a good king will rule according to the law but will not tolerate his subjects disputing his authority:

> So is it sedition in Subjects, to dispute what a King may do in the height of his power: But just Kings wil ever be willing to declare what they wil do, if they wil not incurre the curse of God. I wil not be content that my power be disputed upon: but I shall ever be willing to make the reason appeare of all my doings, and rule my actions according to my Lawes.[38]

The message of James's speech is that kings can do as they please but it makes political sense for them to listen to their subjects.

James's speech raised the controversial issues of the political and property rights of the people. Irrespective of whether James ruled according to the law, if it was accepted that kings had the right to tax at will and to govern without the consent of their subjects, a dangerous precedent would be established. As Sir Thomas Wentworth protested, 'If we shall once say that we may not dispute the prerogative let us be sold for slaves'.[39] The extent of concern over increasing monarchical power can be seen from the King's determination to assure his subjects that although he had the authority to do so, he did not intend to rule as an absolute king or to replace the Common Law with the Civil Law.[40]

Henry III in *The Revenge* is not a tyrannical king but basically a good king whose excesses are made possible by the lack of political control over his authority. His government is portrayed as an example of the inherent dangers of absolute monarchy. Clermont's and Renel's complaints about state corruption and the machiavellianism of the king's closest advisors are borne out by the play. However, Clermont's association with Guise, who aspires to the crown, deprives him of the objectivity he claims. His opposition is manipulated to serve the political ambition of Guise who seeks not to reform the system but to replace the king with himself. The effect of this is that while we sympathise with Clermont's criticism of the corrupt political world we recognize that through his friendship with Guise he plays a significant role in that world and is guilty of partizanship in his criticism of the dominant group. He sees political duplicity all around him but fails to associate it with Guise. The result is that his opposition is worthless because it fails to provide an objective solution for the problem.

In the first scene of the play we are told that political corruption is due to the king's decision to 'rule by power', which is the result of the decline of the financial and political independence of the nobility caused by peace. Renel contrasts the present state of affairs with that of a past golden age of war:

> [...] But we have observ'd
> Rule in more regular motion: things most lawful
> Were once most royal; kings sought common good,
> Men's manly liberties, though ne'er so mean,
> And had their own swinge so more free, and more.
> But when pride enter'd them, and rule by power,
> All brows that smil'd beneath them, frown'd; hearts griev'd
> By imitation; virtue quite was vanish'd,
> And all men studied self-love, fraud, and vice;
> Then no man could be good but he was punish'd:
> Tyrants being still more fearful of the good
> Than of the bad.
> (I. 1. 18-29)

Baligny responds by contrasting the present nobility with 'the matchless race of soldiers' of the war years:

> Ambition then, was only scaling walls,
> And over-topping turrets; fame was wealth;
> Best parts, best deeds, were best nobility;
> Honour with worth, and wealth well got or none:
> Countries we won with as few men as countries;
> Virtue subdu'd all.
> (I. 1. 48-53)

Baligny suggests that Guise represents the virtuous nobility and aims to recreate the golden age of chivalry, implying that his 'strange aims' are fed by the mythology of war (I. 1. 71-2).

The myth of the past that is established in the opening scene is to some extent deconstructed by the two characters who set it up. Renel is a 'decay'd lord' who is excluded from the king's party and has fallen on hard times (I. 2. 126). He is a follower of Guise who hopes to regain influence and wealth through the rise of his patron. The genuineness of his concern over the decline of honour is exposed by his part in the deception of Montsurry. Having used his friendship with Montsurry as a means of enabling Baligny to deliver Clermont's challenge he exclaims with delight, 'This was a sleight well mask'd. O, what is man, / Unless he be a politician' (I. 2. 140-1). Baligny, on the other hand, is an *agent provocateur* employed by the king to incite and report rebellious talk from supporters of Guise. His comments are an attempt to encourage Renel into treasonable discourse.

Baligny is the embodiment of the dangers resulting from absolute monarchy. He is dependent entirely on the king and sees honour solely in terms of service to his monarch. All deeds done in the service of the king can be justified in terms of loyalty. When he is praised for his honesty by the king for having devised 'some close stratagem' for apprehending Clermont, he responds:

> I will be honest, and betray for you
> Brother and father: for I know, my lord,
> Treachery for kings is truest loyalty;

> Nor is to bear the name of treachery,
> But grave, deep policy.
> (II. 1. 30-4)

He defends his deceit and betrayal of friends by his endorsement of the absolute right of kings:

> Kings may do what they list, and for kings, subjects,
> Either exempt from censure or exception;
> For, as no man's worth can be justly judg'd
> But when he shines in some authority,
> So no authority should suffer censure
> But by a man of more authority.
> (II. 1. 133-8)

Baligny's captain, Maillard, like his master, believes that all honour stems from service to the king. For him the king's commands should be obeyed without question:

> [...] The King's command
> Is need and right enough: and that he serves
> (As all true subjects should) without disputing.
> (III. 1. 14-16)

Having given his word to Clermont that there are no orders for his arrest, he later arranges his apprehension. When confronted by Clermont for his lack of faith he defends himself by claiming that one cannot be dishonoured when acting on the king's behalf:

> [...] not a fault,
> How foul soever, done for private ends,
> Is fault in us sworn to the public good:
> We never can be of the damned crew,
> We may impolitic ourselves (as 'twere)
> Into the kingdom's body politic,
> Wherof indeed we're members.
> (IV. 1. 48-54)

The philosophy of political time-servers such as Baligny and Maillard leads to tyranny: false accusations, false arrests and political assassinations are all carried out in the name of the general good.

Clermont recognizes this dependency on the monarch and the confusion between the good of the king and the good of the country as a threat to the liberty of the nobility. He realizes the threat that is posed by absolute government and denounces those among the nobility who relinquish their rights for the easy life offered at court:

> ... so our soft French nobles,
> Chain'd up in ease and numb'd security
> ... Besotted with their peasants' love of gain,
> Rusting at home, and on each other preying,
> Are for their greatness but the greater slaves,
> And none is noble but who scrapes and saves.
> (II. 1. 162-3, 168-71)

He argues that the nobility can only remain strong and retain their honour by being independent of the state and true to themselves. Like his brother he is a proponent of the native rights of the nobility, but suggests that only by remaining free from factional politics and ambition can one reserve the right to be 'subject to no king':

> Not to have want, what riches doth exceed?
> Not to be subject, what superior thing?
> He that to nought aspires, doth nothing need;
> Who breaks no law is subject to no king.
> (IV. 5. 22-5)

Assured of his innocence and his freedom from any factional involvement, he denounces his arrest as the result of 'false policy' and the work of 'some informer' (IV. 1. 90, 94). However, despite his claims to be free from dependency, Clermont's relationship with Guise embroils him, unwittingly, in the world of factional politics. His association with Guise renders him suspicious to the followers of the king, for in this divisive world to be the follower of Guise makes one the enemy of the king. The weakness of Clermont's philosophy, as he later comes to realize, is the impossibility of neutrality or objectivity in this highly political world.

Chapman, in *The Revenge*, raises the dangers of absolute monarchy by portraying the excesses of unrestricted power. However, Clermont's philosophy of the noble, stoical life, free from political involvement, is exposed as idealism, manipulated for political advantage by Guise.

5.5. Chivalry and the Deconstruction of a Myth in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*

Clermont is shown, in *The Revenge*, to have been fashioned into the role of chivalric hero by social and political forces to the extent that his own self-identity is engulfed by his constructed image and he comes to believe in his own moral superiority. His tragedy is his inability to equate his fashioned self of independent and virtuous hero with the reality of human fallibility and socio-political dependency. Only when he receives news of Guise's assassination does Clermont finally recognize his own limitations and the role he has played in a politically-active world. The conclusion is pessimistic, with Clermont considering that life is not worth living without his ideals and taking his own life in order to escape further exploitation.

Clermont's fashioned philosophical idealism has no place in the political world in which 'virtue lives so undistinguished / From vice in any ill'(IV. 1. 86-7). It is a world containing what Dollimore calls 'decentred' men, in which concepts such as virtue, honour and honesty are seen in terms of private advantage and personal service rather than as part of a general moral and social code.[41] Honour is defined within the context of small social factions, service to which has become confused with service to the state. For Baligny and Maillard virtue and honour demand blind loyalty to the monarch.

The society depicted by Chapman, like that of Jacobean England, is hierarchical, and members of the lesser nobility, such as Baligny, Maillard, Clermont and Renel can only receive power and status through the patronage of powerful factional leaders. In Chapman's play it is the King and Guise who control patronage and all who would rise are dependent on their continuing good-will. Baligny and Maillard are both dependants of the King and come to believe that the public good is embodied in the king's will. Yet service to the King is confused with their private desire for personal advancement. The dilemma of the decentred state is that there is no simple division between private ends and public good, in which case there can be no objective good or virtue. The King defines honesty in terms of personal loyalty to himself and refers to Baligny as 'honest Baligny' and 'virtuous Baligny' in response to the latter's deception of Guise and Clermont. Guise and Clermont are seen, by the King and his dependants, as factional and traitorous because they are not directly dependent on the crown. The King justifies the assassination of Guise by claiming that he was 'forc'd to it by an insolence of force' and that '... this blood I shed is to save the blood / Of many thousands' (V. 4. 45, 50-1). Clermont fails to understand that he cannot be active at court and at the same time independent of the political world.

5.5.1. The Construction of a Myth

It is Guise (traditionally associated with chivalric iconography) who masters the art of using rhetoric to associate private / factional interest with the greater public good.[42] He constructs an ideal chivalric image for Clermont associating him with the virtue, independence and political neutrality of the knight errant of chivalric literature. Clermont becomes his constructed self (Guise's 'creature') at the expense of his own identity (II. 1. 79). As we shall see, his instincts are repressed by the need to act out his role and to satisfy the expectations that society has of him.

It is significant that it is his friend and patron, Guise, who establishes the image of Clermont as a combination of chivalric virtues and humanistic stoical rationality. This is the combination of qualities that Sir Philip Sidney had advocated. According to Guise:

> [...] besides his valour,
> He hath the crown of man, and all his parts,
> Which learning is; and that so true and virtuous
> That it gives power to do as well as say
> Whatever fits a most accomplish'd man.
> (II. 1. 83-7)

Clermont's independent spirit and rational mind are eulogised by Guise in the presence of the king, following Clermont's release from captivity. According to Guise he has the firmness of mind and spirit:

> To be remov'd from anything he chooseth
> For worthiness, or bear the least persuasion
> To what is base, or fitteth not his object,
> In his contempt of riches and of greatness,
> In estimation of th'idolatrous vulgar,
> His scorn of all things servile and ignoble,
> Though they could gain him never such advancement,
> His liberal kind of speaking what is truth
> In spite of temporizing, the great rising
> And learning of his soul, so much the more
> Against ill Fortune, as she set herself
> Sharp against him, or would present most hard
> To shun the malice of her deadliest charge;
> His detestation of his special friends,
> When he perceiv'd their tyrannous will to do,
> Or their abjection basely to sustain
> Any injustice that they could revenge;
> The flexibility of his most anger,
> Even in the main career and fury of it,
> When any object of desertful pity
> Offers itself to him; his sweet disposure,
> As much abhorring to behold as do
> Any unnatural and bloody action;
> His just contempt of jesters, parasites,
> Servile observers, and polluted tongues:
> In short this Senecal man is found in him,
> He may with heaven's immortal powers compare,
> To whom the day and fortune equal are;
> Come fair or foul, whatever chance can fall,
> Fix'd in himself, he still is one to all.
> (IV. 4. 17-46)

In the context of Guise's political ambition and his perceived historical reputation, this eulogy of Clermont takes on greater political significance. Guise has a specific personal interest in creating an heroic and independent image for Clermont, for through his relationship with him, as patron and friend, he will be associated with his estimable qualities. By fashioning a mythical image for Clermont, Guise hopes to gain political advantage for himself by disguising his own ambitions behind the chivalric code of honour that he has associated with Clermont. Guise's manipulation of Clermont's image is recognized by Monsieur:

> [...] This same D'Ambois
> Hath gotten such opinion of his virtues,
> Holding all learning but an art to live well,
> And showing he hath learn'd it in his life,
> Being thereby strong in his persuading others,
> That this ambitious Guise, embracing him,
> Is thought t'embrace his virtues.
> (I. 1. 168-74)

The sincerity of Guise's praise of Clermont's virtue is undermined by Monsieur's insight into the workings of the political mind. He recognizes the importance of appearance and of display. Whether Clermont is virtuous or not is unimportant, what matters is that he presents a virtuous image (I. 1. 171). As a devious political figure himself, Monsieur is well aware of the way in which images and myths are constructed in order to deceive the populace. He notices that while Guise 'makes show t'affect' Clermont's disdain of ambition, he privately pursues another course:

> 'Tis fine hypocrisy, and cheap, and vulgar,
> Known for a covert practice, yet believ'd,
> By those abus'd souls that they teach and govern
> No more than wives' adulteries by their husbands.
> (I. 1. 162-5)

The emphasis upon the distinction between show and reality recurs in the king's response to Guise's long eulogy, 'Shows he to others thus?' and 'apprehend I this man for a traitor?' (IV. 4. 47-8). The use of 'show', here suggests an act or display and the King's second question implies that the man he has had arrested is not compatible with the man whom Guise has just described. The King sees things from an opposing political perspective to Guise and is not ready, at this stage, to subscribe to the chivalric myth.

5.5.2. The Conflict Between Fashioned Self and Active Man

Having illustrated the process of fashioning Clermont as chivalric hero, the play proceeds to unfashion his mythical image by emphasising the inconsistency between the ideal he upholds and the realities of his interaction with the political establishment. Those critics who have seen the play as a dramatic failure have emphasized the inconsistency between Clermont's philosophy and his involvement in the active world.[43] Yet, this inconsistency is essential as a means towards making the audience aware of the disparity between mythical hero and real man.

Clermont conditions himself to the image that has been constructed for him and loses his own self in the process. He is blind to the realities of his relationship with Guise and sees in his friend the reflection of his own fashioned self. All that he does is given political significance through association with Guise. His comparison between an inactive, modern nobility, concerned only with self-advancement, and a virtuous and honourable nobility of some glorious 'Golden Age', is an attack aimed specifically at the dominant court faction, Guise's rivals:

> All take their births and birth-rights left to them
> (Acquir'd by others) for their own worth's purchase,
> When many a fool in both is great as they:
> And who would think they could win with their worths
> Wealthy possessions, when, won to their hands,

> They neither can judge justly of their value,
> Nor know their use? And therefore they are puff'd
> With such proud tumours as this Monsieur is,
> Enabled only by the goods they have
> To scorn all goodness: none great fill their fortunes;
> But as those men that make their houses greater,
> Their households being less, so Fortune raises
> Huge heaps of outside in these mighty men,
> And gives them nothing in them.
> (I. 1. 299-312)

Guise's agreement with Clermont's comments ('True as truth') essentially undermines them by putting them into a political perspective. The partial nature of the comments is emphasised by the exclusion of Guise from the criticism. The majority of the audience at the Whitefriars Theatre would have considered Guise an example of what was being condemned.

Clermont's belief in an independent nobility whose honour is inherent and not dependent on service to the state, is clearly inconsistent with the reality of a hierarchical and factional political structure which is upheld through the clientage system. When Renel praises Baligny's fortune in having been made 'great' by the King in return for his services, Clermont responds:

> Honour never
> Should be esteem'd with wise men, as the price
> And value of their virtuous services,
> But as their sign or badge; for that bewrays
> More glory in the outward grace of goodness,
> Than in the good itself; and then 'tis said,
> Who more joy takes that men his good advance
> Than in the good itself, does it by chance.
> (III. 2. 29-36)

The idealism of Clermont's views is emphasised by Charlotte's immediate response, 'My brother speaks all principle'. The independence that he esteems is, however, compromised by his own dependency on Guise. The reality that Clermont fails to acknowledge is that his is a hierarchical world in which real power and independence is the preserve of princes.

Clermont's own position at court is subject to the patronage of Monsieur and Guise. As Monsieur implies in his 'flyting' scene with Clermont, Clermont owes his position at court to the usefulness of his service to his master, and only retains his position for as long as he is useful:

> Why do I love thee, then? Why have I rak'd thee
> Out of the dung-hill, cast my cast wardrobe on thee?
> Brought thee to court too, as I did thy brother?
> Made ye my saucy boon companions?
> Taught ye to call our greatest noblemen
> By the corruption of their names, Jack, Tom?
> Have I blown both for nothing to this bubble?
> Though thou art learn'd, th'ast no enchanting wit;
> Or were thy wit good, am I therefore bound
> To keep thee for my table?
> (I. 1. 256-64)

Although Monsieur's speech is prompted by bitterness at Clermont's desertion of his faction for that of Guise, it serves to put the patron-client relationship into perspective. Clermont does not owe his position to virtue or to birth but to his importance to Guise. His independence is as much a construct of Guise's as his other virtues. Clermont's dependency on Guise becomes more apparent when he is arrested on the King's instruction and taken to the Bastille. It is only through the intervention of Guise that his release is secured. It is also quite evident that it is his relationship with Guise that leads to his arrest in the first place. Guise's political opponents do not consider Clermont to be independent but see him as tainted, through association, with his patron's own ambitions. To Maillard he is a traitor to the king and to Baligny he is Guise's 'creature'. His relationship with Guise makes him an inevitable target for the king and the dominant faction.

Clermont's partizanship makes him blind to Guise's ambition and his notorious involvement in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. He believes that Guise's 'strange aims' are no more than the reform of the nobility:

> His strange aims are to cross the common custom

> Of servile nobles, in which he's so ravish'd
> (II. 1. 264-5)

He attempts to justify the Massacre to Baligny, claiming that, 'Had faith and true religion been preferr'd, / Religious Guise had never massacred' (II. 1. 233-4). Even Baligny, political chameleon that he is, draws the line at agreeing with this. Clermont's refusal to perceive Guise's aims for what they really are - and particularly his defence of the Massacre - must have had the effect of diminishing his status and, most certainly, his claim to objectivity in the eyes of the audience.

The disparity between Clermont's image of Guise and the reality become apparent in the final act. Guise sounds out the extent of Clermont's loyalty by referring to the 'admired voice / That at the barricadoes spake to me / (No person seen), "Let's lead my lord to Rheims"'(V. 1. 37-9). Clermont attempts to dissuade Guise by suggesting that it was his 'fancy' that spoke to him and advises him not to be tempted to 'rise unlawfully'. Is it coincidence that Clermont is immediately visited by Bussy's ghost (unseen and unheard by Guise)? Clermont is to follow the ghost's wishes and to revenge Bussy's murder on Montsurry. Having dismissed Guise's 'admired voice' as 'fancy' Clermont is now prepared to act contrary to reason and fulfil the wishes of an unseen spirit of his own. By giving legitimacy to Bussy's ghost he indirectly legitimizes Guise's 'voice'. Guise is impatient for Clermont to 'perform thy brother's thus importun'd wreak', for by carrying out his revenge Clermont is giving assent to Guise's own 'strange aims'.

Earlier, Clermont had claimed that reason is an important attribute of nobility:

> When Homer made Achilles passionate,
> Wrathful, revengeful, and insatiate
> In his affections, what man will deny

He did compose it all of industry,
To let men see that men of most renown,
Strong'st, noblest, fairest, if they set not down
Decrees within them, for disposing these,
Of judgment, resolution, uprightness,
And certain knowledge of their use and ends,
Mishap and misery no less extends
To their destruction, with all that they priz'd,
Than to the poorest, and the most despis'd.
(III. 4. 14-25)

Nevertheless, he proceeds to display a remarkable lack of judgement. Apart from failing to recognise Guise's ambitious intents he betrays his initial instinct to suspect Maillard's 'stratagems' and accepts the latter's word of honour that there are no plans for his arrest. Like Byron he appears to adhere to an idealistic belief in a fraternity of honour among the nobility. This proves to be naive when Clermont is subsequently arrested by Maillard. Maillard defends himself from the accusation of perjury by claiming that he 'swore for the King'. Unlike Clermont, Maillard recognises the realities of the patronage system and sees honour only in terms of loyalty to the patron, in his case the king.

Clermont's belief in a fraternity of honour is closely connected to his providentialism. He purports to perceive society as divinely ordered and, as will be seen, refuses to consider the idea of revenging Guise's assassination on the king. He claims to have no outward ambition and encourages others to be satisfied with the position given them by birth:

... I note how dangerous it is
For any man to press beyond the place
To which his birth, or means, or knowledge ties him;
For my part, though of noble birth, my birthright
Had little left it, and I know 'tis better
To live with little, and to keep within
A man's own strength still, and in man's true end,
Than run a mix'd course.
(III. 4. 48-55)

He draws the line at directly encouraging Guise's political aspirations and claims to be indifferent to personal suffering. However, his providentialism, like his neutrality, is compromised by his attacks upon the moral degeneracy of the court and his allegiance to Guise. When against his own better judgement he goes to view Maillard's troops he claims that he is indifferent to his fate:

> Chance what can chance me, well or ill is equal
> In my acceptance, since I joy in neither,
> But go with sway of all the world together.
> (III. 4. 159-61)

His response is the same following his arrest:

> Good sir, believe that no particular torture
> Can force me from my glad obedience
> To anything the high and general Cause
> To match with his whole fabric hath ordain'd.
> (IV. 1. 131-4)
>
> To love nothing outward,
> Or not within our own powers to command;
> And so being sure of everything we love,
> Who cares to lose the rest?
> (IV. 5. 4-7)

However, once again Clermont's idealism conflicts with his immediate response to hardship. Again the constructed image of the stoical man serves as a constraint upon the emotive self. Despite his rhetoric, Clermont is inwardly a man of action who wishes to influence change and is motivated by the desire for honour and military glory. His immediate reaction, when arrested, is to resist, and he defends himself heroically against numerically superior forces. Only when he is eventually subdued does he return to his stoical acceptance of fate. His deliberation over whether or not to view Maillard's troops also conflicts with his philosophy. His prime concern here is not the threat of danger but the need to impress others. Having given his word to view the troops he feels obliged to do so, although he claims that the outward show of honour this action would bestow on him is undesired. He evokes memories of the Earl of

Oxford who had turned down a similar honour. That he needs to deliberate over the issue suggests a conflict between the self and the image. He recognizes the disparity between his philosophy and the desire for active engagement with danger that drives him on:

> I had an aversation to this voyage,
> When first my brother mov'd it; and have found
> That native power in me was never vain;
> Yet now neglected it. I wonder much
> At my inconstancy in these decrees,
> I every hour set down to guide my life.
> (III. 4. 8-13)

Alexander Leggatt correctly recognizes that Clermont has the same need to impress as the other courtiers, but that his prestige 'comes not from wealth, position or fine clothes, but from the distinction of his character and life'.[44] His suicide represents his eventual rejection of providentialism along with the rest of his image.

5.5.3. Chivalric Combat and Death

Clermont's image as virtuous and rational man is further threatened by the social expectation that he will revenge the murder of his brother, Bussy, by killing Montsurry. Encouraged to perform his fraternal duty by Charlotte, Baligny, Renel, Guise and Bussy's ghost, he has determined to carry it out only by honourable means, by challenging Montsurry to a duel. When Montsurry is uncompliant Clermont is rebuked by Charlotte and Bussy's ghost for his slowness in effecting the revenge. Charlotte considers Clermont's lack of enthusiasm for the task to be a sign of weakness that is exploited by his enemies:

> Some fool hath put this trick on you, yet more
> T'uncover your defect of spirit and valour,
> First shown in ling'ring my dear brother's wreak.
> See what it is to give the envious world
> Advantage to diminish eminent virtue.

> Send him a challenge? Take a noble course
> To wreak a murder done so like a villain?
> (III. 2. 89-95)

For Bussy's ghost Clermont's inaction is a sign of cowardice:

> Danger (the spur of all great minds) is ever
> The curb to your tame spirits; you respect not
> (With all your holiness of life and learning)
> More than the present, like illiterate vulgars;
> Your mind (you say) kept in your flesh's bounds,
> Shows that man's will must rul'd be by his power:
> When (by true doctrine) you are taught to live
> Rather without the body than within,
> And rather to your God still than yourself.
> (V. 1. 78-86)

However, a coward he certainly is not as he showed when defending himself from arrest. Bussy's ghost, in these lines, outlines the conflict within Clermont between the real and the fashioned man. Clermont cannot reconcile revenge with his image unless it is carried out with honour. He responds to criticism by stating, 'Shall we revenge a villany with villany' and regrets that 'ever / (By any instigation in th'appearance / My brother's spirit made, as I imagin'd) / That e'er I yielded to revenge his murther' (III.2. 96, 109-12). Renel defends him by claiming that the 'course' taken by Clermont 'is allow'd by all' and is an honourable one (III. 2. 120). It seems that once again Clermont's public image motivates his action: revenge will be pursued with honour.

The honourable course by which Clermont wishes to revenge his brother's murder is undermined by the dubious methods used by Baligny and Renel to force Montsurry to accept the challenge, and by Montsurry's own refusal to satisfy Clermont's honour. When Montsurry is confronted by Clermont in the final scene he throws himself on the ground rather than fight. Clermont's honour is worthless in this situation and he is almost forced to compromise his ideals and murder Montsurry in cold blood in order to satisfy the demands of his sister and the expectations of the world. Only when

Clermont offers to hold down Montsurry for Tamyra to revenge the injuries he had inflicted on her in *Bussy D'Ambois* does he finally agree to fight a duel with Clermont. The dishonour of having wounds inflicted on him by a woman is too much even for the anti-hero Montsurry to bear. The duel is fought and Clermont's honour and his duty are satisfied with Montsurry's death. Nevertheless, the farcical nature of the scene, in which Montsurry at first refuses to give Clermont the opportunity of revenging his brother's death in the honourable fashion he desires, undercuts the chivalric code to which Clermont adheres, suggesting that it is artificial and out of place in a society in which survival and political advancement is more important than personal honour.

Clermont's suicide follows the re-discovery of himself in the final scene. The euphoria of his success over Montsurry is dampened by news of Guise's death. The King's assassination of Guise brings home to Clermont the recognition that his chivalric ideals are an unrealistic dream. Honour would require him to revenge the murder of Guise on the King, but killing the King would conflict with his philosophy and involve him directly in factional politics. Although, in Clermont's eyes, the king has acted tyrannically by having Guise assassinated, he accepts that the king is the absolute head of the political state and is answerable only to God:

> There's no disputing with the acts of kings,
> Revenge is impious on their sacred persons.
> (V. 5. 151-2)

As Guise was, for Clermont, the focus for virtuous action and the hope for reform, his death represents the end of all Clermont's ideals:

> [...] Shall I live, and he
> Dead, that alone gave means of life to me?
> There's no disputing with the acts of kings,
> Revenge is impious on their sacred persons:
> And could I play the worldling (no man loving
> Longer than gain is reap'd, or grace from him)
> I should survive and be wonder'd at

> Though (in my own hands being) I end with him.
> (V. 5. 149-56)

According to Richard Ide, 'When Clermont states that the Guise has taken "piety" and "manhood" with him (i.e. "pietas" and "prudentia"), he means that there remains no possibility for effective, virtuous action in this world. Rather than accept slavery and life the stoic freely exercises his option of pledging himself to the "universal all" through death'.[45] Following the death of Guise, Clermont rediscovers his own identity and frees himself from the constraints of the image of chivalric virtue which he had tried unsuccessfully to live up to. He can now act impulsively and escape, through death, from the harshness of reality. It has been noted by J.W. Lever, that not until the final scene does Clermont come alive 'as a complete and suffering human being'.[46] This is because it is only after Guise's death that he is able to free himself from his imposed limitations and from the fashioned image of greatness that he has struggled to maintain.

Clermont also comes to recognize the political exploitation of chivalric ideals and fears justifiably that the King will try to make political capital out of him by enticing him into a relationship similar to the one he had with Guise. That this was the king's aim is confirmed by the final speech of the play when he insists that he 'would have kept this Clermont as my crown'. Having employed Bussy as his 'eagle', the king is not unaware of the value of Clermont's image to his own cause (V. 5. 217). Unwilling to kill a king or to have his image used to enhance a tyrannous regime, Clermont follows the earlier advice of Baligny and takes his own life:

> Better a man were buried quick, than live
> A property for state, and spoil to thrive.
> (IV. 4. 57-8)

5.6. Conclusion

The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois shows how a mythological concept of chivalric ideals is manipulated for political gain. The chivalric figure of Clermont is fashioned into a superhuman embodiment of the heroic and the virtuous by Guise and others for their own ends. Through association with Clermont, Guise is seen to be endorsing the chivalric values of his friend and client. The play deconstructs Clermont's fashioned image by emphasizing the disparities between his ideals and the active man within, and by showing his failure to dissociate himself from the political world.

In the context of the chivalric revival of 1610 and political divisions over the response to the Cleves-Julich succession crisis, Chapman's play can be seen to be decoding the discourse of chivalry by portraying its motivation as political and factional rather than dutiful. The glorification of war, by confusing reality with romantic perceptions, is part of a process of idealizing the past in order to criticize the present. As is implied by the play the mythology of the golden age is usually constructed and endorsed by the politically displaced, with the aim of rekindling their political fortunes. As in the earlier tragedies, Chapman can be seen to recognize the problems of modern society and the dangers represented by absolute monarchy, but to reject idealism and martial values as a solution. War in 1610 would create misery and financial hardship for many and political gain for a few. The replacement of one dominant group by another would do little to reconstruct the political imbalance or to remedy social ills. As the king claimed in justification for his assassination of Guise, 'this blood I shed is to save the blood / Of many thousands' (V. 4. 50-1).

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Parrott. All quotations are from this edition and line references appear in the text.
2. *Bussy D'Ambois and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, ed. by F. S. Boas (1905), pp. xxxvi-ix; Parrott, pp. 575-6; F. T. Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1640* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 145; J. W. Wieler, *George Chapman - The Effect of Stoicism upon his Tragedies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 81; Rees, pp. 93-125; Lever, *The Tragedy of State*, pp. 47-55.
3. Critics who have reached this conclusion include Jean Jacquot, *George Chapman 1559-1634*, pp. 180-1; Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy*, p.22; Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*, pp. 74-5; Millar Maclure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (Toronto, 1966), pp. 127-30; Alexander Leggatt, 'The Tragedy of Clermont D'Ambois', *MLR*, 77 (1982), 524-36; Richard S. Ide, 'Exploiting the Tradition: The Elizabethan Revenger as Chapman's "Complete Man"', *MRDE*, 1 (1984), 159-79.
4. Brooke, p. liv.
5. Parrott, p. 77.
6. Parrott, pp. 571-2.
7. Henry Cobham to Sir Francis Walsingham, Feb 21 1580, *CSP Foreign: Elizabeth 1579-80*, p.161.
8. *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, vol I (Paris, 1956) pp.506-7.
9. Cobham to Walsingham, April 9 1582, *CSP Foreign: Elizabeth 1581-2* p.621 & Cobham to Queen Elizabeth, May 3 1582, *CSP Foreign : Elizabeth 1582* p.4.
10. Stafford to Walsingham, March 25 1584, *CSP Foreign: Elizabeth 1584*, p.427.
11. Sir Thomas Leighton (Governor of Guernsey) to Anthony Paulet (Governor of Jersey) 29 Nov 1585, *CSP Domestic: Addenda 1580-1625* p.161.
12. Leighton to Sir Amias Paulet, 23 Dec 1585, *CSP Domestic: Addenda 1580-1625* p.161.
13. *DBF*, p.507.
14. Claude Derblay, *Une Héroine de Brantôme: Renée de Bussy d'Amboise* (Paris: Plon, 1935), pp.218-9. Quotation taken from Hugh M. Richmond, *Puritans and Libertines: Anglo-French Literary Relations in the Reformation* (London: University of California Press, 1981) p. 374.
15. 'Advertisements of the rendering of Cambrai', Sept 1595, *List and Analysis of State Papers Foreign Jan-Dec 1595*, p.131.
16. Boas, *Bussy*, xxxii
17. Henry Cobham to Sir Francis Walsingham, 7 December 1582, *CSP Foreign: Elizabeth 1582*, p.490.
18. Tricomi, p. 261; Chambers, iii, 258-9; Parrott, p. 571
19. This section is largely a summary of pages 142-167 in Maurice Lee Jr, *James I and Henri IV: An Essay in English Foreign Policy 1603-1610* (Urbano and London: University of Illinois Press,1970). Lee, p. 146.
20. Lee, pp.147-148.
21. Lee, p. 149.
22. Lee, pp. 153-8.
23. Lee, p.158.
24. Lee, pp.160-1.
25. This section is largely dependent on Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, pp. 138-83; Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd*, pp. 71-8.
26. Strong, p. 141.
27. Strong, p. 139.
28. Nichols, *Progresses*, ii, p. 287.
29. Strong, pp. 153-4.
30. Strong, pp. 155-8; Parry, pp. 73-4.
31. Strong, pp. 158-9.

32. The Earl of Arundel although a member of the Howard family had received little political advantage from the influence of his close relatives, the Earls of Northampton and Suffolk. He had reason to be aggrieved with Northampton and Suffolk who had been given, by the king, many of the lands that belonged to the attainted Dukedom of Norfolk to which Arundel was heir.
33. *Poems*, p. 173.
34. Parrott, p. 77.
35. See Wallace Notestein, *The House of Commons 1604-10*,(London: Yale University Press, 1971) pp.255-423; *Parliamentary Debates in 1610*, ed. by Samuel Rawson Gardiner (London: Camden Society, 1861))
36. McIlwain, pp. 307-8.
37. McIlwain, p. 308.
38. McIlwain, p. 310.
39. Notestein, p. 311.
40. Notestein, p. 278.
41. Dollimore, pp. 153-6.
42. See Kristen B. Neuschel, *Word of Honor: Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989); Bacon's reference at the trial of the Earl of Essex to Essex imitating Guise, in using a martial image to court popularity. James, p. 449.
43. Wieler, p. 111; Ribner, p. 22; Ornstein, pp. 74-5; Maclure, pp. 127-30; Ide, p. 170; Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions*, pp.31-2.
44. Leggatt, p. 529.
45. Ide, p. 168.
46. Lever, p. 54.

Conclusion

> [...] There is no truth of any good
> To be discerned on earth, and by conversion
> Nought therefore simply bad [...]
> [...] so all things here
> Have all their price set down from men's concepts,
> Which make all terms and actions good or bad
> And are but pliant and well-coloured threads
> Put into feignèd images of truth.
> (*The Conspiracy of Byron*, III. 1. 47-9, 55-9)

1. Chivalry on the Stage 1602-1613

Chapman was not the only dramatist to write plays on chivalry in the decade following the death of Essex. In this section I would like to consider very briefly the portrayal of chivalry in some of these plays. I have chosen for discussion plays that could be seen to question the romanticism of chivalry and to deconstruct the chivalric myth. The plays that will be considered are Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and *All's Well that Ends Well*; Shakespeare's and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; and Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. It is difficult to do justice to these plays in the brief space I have available, but my intent is to establish a common interest in chivalry among dramatists in early seventeenth century England.

Troilus and Cressida

Troilus and Cressida is generally believed to have been written in 1602, a year after the execution of the Earl of Essex. The play although set during the Trojan War and based on Chaucer's poem is very much involved with the factional conflicts of late Elizabethan politics. Chapman's chivalric Trojans could be seen as an allusion to the Essex Circle, and their association with martial values and the cult of honour. This reading would see the more pragmatic Greeks as the political ancestors of Robert Cecil and his following. Alternatively or simultaneously the conflict in the Greek camp between Agamemnon and Achilles could be seen to have similarities with the well-documented quarrels between the queen and Essex.

The Trojans and in particular Hector identify themselves in the play with the forms and conventions of chivalry by seeking out opportunities for single combat. Hector's sporting challenge to the Greeks during the truce is reminiscent of those made in chivalric romance and by Essex at Lisbon and Rouen:

> If there be one among the fair'st of Greece
> That holds his honor higher than his ease,
> And [seeks] his praise more than he fears his peril,
> That knows his valor, and knows not his fear,
> That loves his mistress more than in confession
> With truant vows to her own lips he loves,
> And dare avow her beauty and her worth
> In other arms than hers - to him this challenge!
> (I. 3. 265-72)[1]

However, Hector's chivalry has no answer to the revengeful, non-chivalric Achilles who has him murdered in cold blood. Confronted by Achilles after he has disarmed himself, Hector appeals to the Greek's chivalric honour to forego his advantage and to seek him out on another occasion. Achilles, however, will not be denied his revenge: 'Strike, fellows, strike, this is the man I seek' (V. 8. 10). Following the dishonourable murder of Hector, Achilles claims for himself the honour of his death. Eric Mallin, in a recent article, claims this incident as an example of the means by which the play serves to emphasize 'the unreliability of mythification'.[2] Achilles is seen to be instrumental in creating his own myth by having the Myrmidons proclaim his victory:

> On, Myrmidons, and cry you all amain,
> 'Achilles hath the mighty Hector Slain!'
> (V. 8. 13-14)

The death of Hector and the impending fall of Troy could be read as an allusion to the death of Essex and symbolically the death of chivalry:

> So, Ilion, fall thou next! Come, Troy, sink down!
> Here lies thy heart, thy sinews and thy bone.
> (V. 8. 11-12)

Troilus and Cressida could be interpreted as a testament to the chivalric idealism that had been exposed as empty and artificial by the fall of Essex. The individualism of the chivalric tradition is shown in the play to prevail over the demands of public responsibility, as statesmanship dissolves into the egoism of private quarrel, vengeance, and the satisfaction of personal honour. The war itself is being fought to satisfy a trivial point of honour which is incompatible with the destruction and the loss of lives that have resulted from it:

> The ravish'd Helen, Menelaus' queen,
> With wanton Paris sleeps - and that's the quarrel.
> (Prologue, 9-10)

All's Well that Ends Well

All's Well that Ends Well, written shortly after *Troilus and Cressida* (1602-3) likewise exposes to criticism chivalry's concern with personal honour. War and chivalry have been replaced by peace and statesmanship at the French court of the play, and honour is won through service to the state rather than in military combat. Seeking personal glory rather than public honour, Bertram and the other young French nobles go to Italy to fight on either side in the war between the Florentines and the Sienese. They are shown to be prepared to kill and die solely for honour without understanding the cause of the dispute. The aims of the war are never clear and, having won military glory and received some scars, they return to France. The outward disfigurement of the wound gained in battle is perceived as the mark of nobility:

> A scar nobly got, or a noble scar, is a good
> Liv'ry of honour.
> (IV. 5. 99-100)

The outward sign of honour that Bertram has won in a meaningless conflict is contrasted with the honour he has lost through the abandonment of his wife and his disloyalty to the king. One reading of the play is to consider it as exposing the futility and egoism of the concern for chivalric honour and as emphasizing the distinction between the military honour, that is based on reported valour and visible wounds gained in a foreign war, and the greater honour that is won by loyalty and service. Alternatively the play could be seen as exposing the inertia, moral and political of a society where the accepted ideals of chivalry have been set aside without there being anything more trustworthy to replace them.

The Two Noble Kinsmen

The Two Noble Kinsmen was probably first performed as part of the wedding festivities for Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine in 1613. The play is based on Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* but exposes the contradictions and limitations of chivalry in the seventeenth century.

At the beginning of the play the two kinsmen Arcite and Palamon mourn the passing of the Golden Age and condemn the vice and corruption of Thebes. The chivalric values that they esteem go unrewarded and the king, Creon they regard as 'a most unbounded tyrant'. Having decided to leave the city in search of a new Golden Age, elsewhere, they are recalled to service to defend the city against Theseus. Honour and the desire for glory compels them to stay and fight for their country despite their contempt for Creon.

> Our services stand now for Thebes, not Creon.
> Yet to be neutral to him were dishonour,
> Rebellious to oppose; therefore we must
> With him stand to the mercy of our fate,
> Who hath bounded our last minute.
> (I. 2.99-103)[3]

Athens under Theseus could be seen to represent a new Golden Age. Ruled by a king who postpones his wedding ceremony so as to go to war against Thebes, at the request of the three queens whose husbands' bodies have been dishonoured by Creon, Athens appears to be the centre of chivalry. Theseus is capable of recognizing bravery and honour among his enemies and commends the wounded Arcite and Palamon for their deeds.

Athens, however, is not the centre of chivalry that it initially appeared, but the place in which its futility and fragility are exposed. Imprisoned, the friendship between Arcite and Palamon is threatened by their rivalry for the love of Emilia whom they have seen from a distance. The weakness of their chivalric bond is exposed by their willingness to kill each other over the love of a woman they have never met. Following Arcite's return to Athens after banishment and Palamon's escape from prison, the two kinsmen agree to fight a chivalric combat to settle their differences. Palamon's anger at what he considers to be the betrayal of his friend is countered by Arcite's conciliatory language and his willingness to nurse his friend back to health and to provide him with armour and weapons for the combat. Palamon complains that Arcite's language of honour and friendship is just form and does not correspond with his betrayal. This could be seen as a general criticism of chivalric discourse:

> Cozener Arcite, give me language such
> As thou hast showed me feat.
> (III. 1. 44-5)

The combat, shortly after it has commenced, is interrupted by the arrival of Theseus. Self-interest predominates and Palamon, afraid that his own arrest will leave the disguised Arcite free to marry Emilia, reveals his kinsman to Theseus:

> ...this is Arcite:
> A bolder traitor never trod thy ground,
> A falser nev'r seemed friend.
> (III. 6. 140-2)

Emilia asked to choose between them in order to save their lives is unable to do so. That they are prepared to kill each other for the love of a woman who cannot decide between them to some extent exposes the fragility of the kinsmen's chivalric bond. Theseus proposes that they are to return 'within this month' to participate in a four-a-side combat for her love. As Emilia recognizes this is a combat in which there will be no victors:

> ... is this winning?
> O all you heavenly powers, where is your mercy?
> But that your wills have said it must be so,
> And charge me live to comfort this unfriended,
> This miserable prince, that cuts away
> A life more worthy from him than all women,
> I should and would die too.
> (V. 3. 138-44)

Arcite wins the contest and Emilia, but is killed when he is thrown from his horse. Palamon is saved from execution and betrothed to Emilia only through the loss of his friend.

The play while recognizing the romantic appeal of chivalry does expose its weaknesses. The friendship between the kinsmen is fragile and their sense of honour seems to stretch no further than ensuring equality in combat. The combat itself is indicative of the duel fought over personal honour, and can be perceived as a wasteful misuse of energy. Finally, the combat is exposed as futile, with the victor being crushed to death by his horse and the loser gaining the prize of life and Emilia. However, as has been noted, for Palamon, life and Emilia come at the expense of his friend.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle

The Knight of the Burning Pestle offers a very different perspective on chivalry from the previous plays that I have discussed. Generally believed to have been first performed in 1607 by Chapman's company at the Blackfriars theatre it mocks citizen aspirations of nobility and chivalry. Furthermore, it parodies the bourgeois hero tales of the 1590s and early 1600s, such as Deloney's *Jack of Newbury* and Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*, which show middle-class figures fighting and feasting like knights. In *The Knight* a grocer disrupts the intended performance of the company and demands that they put on a play in which a grocer performs heroic deeds. The ludicrousness of the subsequent plot in which the grocer's apprentice, Rafe plays the knight of the Burning Pestle emphasizes the distance between romance and reality and mocks the inability of the citizens to distinguish fact from fiction.

Rafe confuses the chivalric deeds he reads about in romances with historical accounts, and contrasts the behaviour of these fictional knights with the contemporary reality:

> There are no such courteous and fair well-spoken
> knights in this age. They will call one 'the son of a whore'
> that Palmerin of England would have called 'fair sir'; and
> one that Rosicleer would have called 'right beauteous
> damsel', they will call 'damned bitch'.
> (I. 244-8)[4]

Rafe's knight errantry fails to follow the pattern of the romances. He unwittingly causes Mrs Merrythought to lose her fortune and proves incapable of helping her to rediscover it. Furthermore, he is unable to regain Luce for Humphrey and earns himself a beating for his troubles. His only success comes when he manages to defeat the Barber-Surgeon and release his diseased customers. In the world of the play innkeepers, unlike their counterparts in the romances, expect to be paid and Rafe is saved from another possible beating only by the intervention of the Citizen. Rafe's military drill in Act Five exposes the reality of the modern militia: unwilling soldiers who are poorly armed and trained.

This short discussion of four plays, which admittedly fails to do justice to any of them, should at least go some way towards showing that Chapman's interest in deconstructing the chivalric myth was shared by some of his contemporaries.

2. Chapman and the Chivalric Myth

Chapman's exposure of the politicization of chivalry was much deeper than that of other contemporary dramatists and his understanding of the complexities of the political world and its discourses was, at the very least, as acute as that of Jonson, Shakespeare and Daniel. In this thesis I have shown how Chapman not only deconstructs the myth of chivalry but portrays the way in which it is established as a means of political discourse with the aim of associating the social elite with virtue and military prowess. The plays emphasize the hierarchical nature of chivalry and illustrate how its exclusiveness is used as a means of social control. Chapman attempts to dissociate chivalry from its fictional attributes and to portray it as essentially egoistic and militaristic. In the decentred political world of his plays the nobility, despite their protests and their chivalric trappings, are as motivated by ambition, power, fame and wealth as the time serving ministers they despise. Chivalry and its association with the golden age is primarily a tool in the battle for power.

As a Tacitean, Chapman portrays openly on stage the pragmatic and decentred political world and explodes myths suggesting that actions are determined by morality. All policies and practices at Chapman's courts are motivated by ambition, the desire for public recognition and the need to protect private and factional interests. Furthermore, Chapman shows us how a mythical view of the past is used as a weapon of opposition against the dominant political group, which is held responsible for social and moral decline.

During the reign of King James, the Golden Age was considered, by many of the politically marginalized figures, to have been the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Unhappy with James's decision to make peace with Spain, the perceived decadence of his court, his absolutist political views, his toleration of Roman Catholics, and frustrated by their own isolation from the political centre, figures such as Fulke Greville encouraged belief in a mythical perception of Elizabeth's reign. Critics of James, contrasted his pacifism with the military leadership of Elizabeth (an example is the speech supposedly given by Elizabeth at Tilbury Docks in 1588), and his extravagant and degenerate court with the frugal, well-disciplined one of the queen. In *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron* the French king subscribes to the Golden Age view of Elizabeth

> ... there's a queen
> Where nature keeps her state, and state her court,
> Wisdom her study, continence her fort;
> Where magnanimity, humanity,
> Firmness in counsel and integrity,
> Grace to her poorest subjects, majesty
> To awe the greatest, have respects divine,
> And in her each part all the virtues shine.
> *(III. 2. 277-84)*

Similar praise of Elizabeth occurs in *Bussy D'Ambois* (I. 2. 16-38).

Chapman's plays consider the major political issues of the day. Apart from chivalry, he is primarily concerned with related issues, such as the extent of monarchical authority and the role of the nobility in peace-time society. He considers these issues from a dual perspective. He recognizes the need for strong government and the dangers of an over-powerful militaristic nobility but he is also concerned about the effects of unrestrained monarchy and the centralized control of political patronage. Furthermore, he sympathises with the nobility's sense of displacement in peace-time society, but remains sceptical of their motives for glorifying war and mythologizing the past.

Chapman's attitude to chivalry seems to have been influenced considerably by the fall of Essex. As I have shown, the celebration of chivalry that is central to his early Homeric translations and the Dedicatory Epistles to Essex, is transformed into a more sceptical view in the plays, which were written after Essex's execution. Possibly, this is because Essex's attempted rebellion had highlighted the fragility of chivalry and the difficulty of separating the martial image from political ambition. In the early years of the seventeenth century, Chapman was associated, in some capacity, with the court of Prince Henry, to whom he dedicated *The Teares of Peace* (1609), the *Twelve Books of the Iliads* (1609), and *The Iliads of Homer* (1611). His dedications to Henry take a very different form from those to Essex and, instead of advocating the search for military glory, he promotes the advantages of peace and praises the prince for his inner virtues.

I have attempted in this thesis to move away from traditional readings of Chapman's tragedies, which have considered the plays to be primarily concerned with stoicism and morality. My intention has been to show that Chapman is a major political dramatist who comments in a sophisticated manner on the main issues of the day. I would like to think that my work on Chapman's portrayal of chivalry might encourage others to reconsider his plays from new angles and to discard the notion that they can be seen in terms of simple binary conflicts, such as virtue against evil and morality against corruption.

Notes to the Conclusion

1. All quotations from *Troilus and Cressida* and *All's Well That End's Well* are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans, and others (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Line numbers are given in the text.
2. Eric S. Mallin, 'Emulous Factions and the Collapse of Chivalry: *Troilus and Cressida*', *Representations*, 29 (1990), 145-179, (p. 153).
3. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. by Eugene M. Waith (Oxford: Clarendon Press (The Oxford Shakespeare), 1989). All quotations are taken from this edition and line numbers are given in the text.
4. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ed. by Sheldon P. Zitner (Manchester: Manchester University Press (The Revels Plays), 1984). All quotations are taken from this edition and line numbers are given in the text.

Bibliography

I have divided the bibliography into two sections: primary sources and secondary sources. Standard reference works (for example, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of National Biography*) are not entered here. Publishers and printers are not listed for works printed before 1700. I have throughout followed the guidelines for thesis presentation as set out in the *MHRA Style Book*, 4th edn (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1991).

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