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REPUBLICANISM, TACITISM AND STYLE IN ENGLISH DRAMA: 1585–1608

by

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy (English) at the University of Sydney**

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To Jim Bell, Paul Gibbard, David Howie, Simon Morris and Nishi Shah

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CONTENTS

<i>Dedication</i>	i
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ii
Introduction	1
PART A: REPUBLICANISM AND TACITISM	
1. Republican liberty on the early Jacobean stage	16
1.1 Tracing back the English republic	20
1.2 Classical liberty in seventeenth-century England	24
1.3 The classical republican narrative and Essex's circle	32
1.4 Essex's faction, Jonson's <i>Germanicans</i> and the virtue of magnanimity	37
1.5 Magnanimity and the classical republican narrative in Jonson's <i>Sejanus</i>	49
1.6 Peace and liberty in <i>Philotas</i> and the <i>Byron</i> plays	54
1.7 The hazards of 'free natures'	69
2. Tacitean Stoicism in Jonson's <i>Sejanus</i>	79
2.1 The middle way of <i>Annals</i> 1–6	83
2.2 Lipsius's Tacitism and <i>Sejanus</i>	86
2.3 The middle way of Jonson's Lepidus	89
2.4 Lepidus's 'arts' and Arruntius's 'riddles'	95
2.5 The <i>Germanicans</i> ' 'defiant obstinacy'	97
2.6 Tacitean Stoicism in Daniel's <i>Philotas</i>	101
2.7 Lepidus, Chalcidius and the Essex circle	104
2.8 Ducci's Tacitean Stoicism in Jonson's <i>Sejanus</i>	108
2.9 Conclusion	110

PART B: POLITICS AND STYLE

3.	The politics of style: Sententious and Ciceronian rhetoric	115
3.1	The sententious style	120
3.2	‘Moderation and temperance’ in early imperial rhetoric	132
3.3	Figured <i>sententiae</i> in imperial Rome	139
3.4	Tacitean Stoicism and figured <i>sententiae</i> in early modern Europe	151
3.5	Ben Jonson and figured <i>sententiae</i>	158
3.6	The formal character of the Ciceronian style	178
3.7	Cicero’s style and emotive force	184
3.8	The Ciceronian style in sixteenth-century England and <i>Tamburlaine</i>	194
3.9	The Ciceronian style in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama	200
3.10	Conclusion	203
4.	Language and liberty in <i>Richard II</i> and <i>Edward II</i>	205
4.1	The classical republican narrative in <i>Richard II</i>	208
4.2	Shakespeare’s ‘silent king’ and Marlowe’s Mortimer	215
4.3	Bolingbroke’s rhetorical styles in <i>Richard II</i>	222
4.4	The Ciceronian and sententious styles in <i>Edward II</i>	228
4.5	Conclusion	234
5.	‘Ay, Cicero is dead’: Absolutism and lean language in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	236
5.1	Justifying tyrannicide in <i>Julius Caesar</i> : Reasons or rationalizations?	240
5.2	Classical liberty and competitive self-assertiveness	252
5.3	Roman and Elizabethan republicans	254
5.4	Sententious brevity and Ciceronian <i>copia</i> in Caesar’s Rome	258
5.5	Gender and rhetorical style	263
5.6	Conclusion	267

6.	Tacitean Stoicism and the sententious style in Senecan drama	269
6.1	Stoicism in Senecan tragedy	271
6.2	Senecan revengers and Tacitean Stoicism	277
6.3	Tacitean Stoicism and the sententious style in <i>Spanish Tragedy</i>	287
6.4	The sententious speech of Machiavels	296
6.5	Conclusion	303
7.	Breaking up the line: Prosody and rhetorical style	304
7.1	Line integrity in 1580s blank verse	307
7.2	Prosody and the sententious style in <i>Misfortunes of Arthur</i>	316
7.3	Marlowe's 'line for line' translation of <i>Pharsalia</i>	322
7.4	Prosody and the Ciceronian style in <i>Tamburlaine</i>	330
7.5	Conclusion	336
	Conclusion	340
	Appendix Morris Croll and his critics: 'The anti-Ciceronian movement'	345
A.1	Morris Croll and 'le mouvement anticicéronien'	349
A.2	Croll's critics	352
A.3	Salvaging the notion of an anti-Ciceronian style	360
A.4	Classifying the Latin styles	362
A.5	The sententious style and native 'scriptualism'	369
	Bibliography	374

INTRODUCTION

Lancaster All stomach him [Gaveston], but none dare speak a word.

Mortimer Junior Ah, that bewrays their baseness Lancaster.

Were all the earls and barons of my mind,

We'd hale him from the bosom of the king,

And at the court gate hang the peasant up,

Who, swol'n with venom of ambitious pride,

Will be the ruin of the realm and us. (*Edward II*, 1.2.28–32)¹

Sejanus He that, with such a wrong moved, can bear it through

With patience, and an even mind, knows how

To turn it back. Wrath, covered, carries fate:

Revenge is lost, if I profess my hate.

What was my practice late I'll now pursue

As my fell justice. This has stiled it new. (*Sejanus*, 1.576–81)²

In sixteenth-century England, Cicero's rhetoric served as a pre-eminent model for style, influencing not only the development of prose during this period but also the style of

¹Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, ed. Charles Forker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

²Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2. Unless otherwise stated, quotations of Jonson are taken from this edition.

dramatic verse. In the passage above from Marlowe's *Edward II*, Mortimer's five-line sentence can be classified as a Ciceronian period, on account of its suspended syntax and balanced clauses. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, however, reacting against the veneration for Cicero's rhetoric, late Elizabethan authors experimented with an 'anti-Ciceronian' style modelled on the writings of Seneca and Tacitus rather than Cicero. In contrast to the expansive, flowing style of Cicero, the anti-Ciceronian style was brief and epigrammatic, characterized by an abrupt, choppy movement. This anti-Ciceronian style is exemplified by Sejanus's speech, which, it turns out, is a loose translation of a passage from Seneca's *Medea*.³

The late Elizabethan vogue for the imitation of Tacitus and Seneca was part of a broader European movement, and was associated with a surge of interest in Tacitean politics and Senecan Stoicism. Consequently, the anti-Ciceronian style was laden with political connotations, and could be used to express the political attitudes of Tacitean Stoicism. The Ciceronian style also carried significant political connotations, being associated with the republicanism of its namesake. This dissertation examines how early modern authors – and playwrights in particular – exploited the political connotations of the two rhetorical styles, using the Ciceronian style to express republican sentiments and the anti-Ciceronian style to convey Tacitean-Stoic political attitudes.

In order to explore these relationships between style and politics, I examine the attitudes towards speech implied by republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism. Late Elizabethan republicanism emphasized the value of outspokenness, calling for statesmen to speak their minds boldly and passionately. In contrast, advocates of Tacitean Stoicism, such as Justus

³See lines 150–54 of Seneca's *Medea* in *Seneca: Tragedies*, ed. John Fitch, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library 62 and 78 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002–4). Unless otherwise stated, references to Seneca's tragedies are from this edition.

Lipsius, recommended that under oppressive monarchs, statesman should conceal their minds, and adopt a circumspect and restrained mode of speech. These two opposing attitudes towards language are illustrated by the speeches of Mortimer and Sejanus. In the passage from *Edward II*, Lancaster observes that, while the court ‘all stomach’ Gaveston (that is, everyone resents him), his influence on the king is so strong that ‘none dare speak a word’ against him. In reply, Mortimer judges that their restraint of speech and their failure to speak their minds display their ‘baseness’. Whereas Mortimer derides linguistic restraint, Sejanus insists that emotions should be concealed and speech restrained: ‘Wrath, covered, carries fate: / Revenge is lost, if I profess my hate’.

Sejanus is articulating a Tacitean-Stoic attitude towards speech, whereas Mortimer’s call for bold outspokenness articulates a principal tenet of Elizabethan republicanism. I will show that Sejanus and Mortimer communicate these contrasting attitudes not just by the content of their speech but also by exploiting the political connotations of the anti-Ciceronian and Ciceronian styles. Sejanus’s brief, abrupt anti-Ciceronian style, with its broken, halting movement, conveys a Tacitean-Stoic attitude of linguistic restraint. By way of contrast, Mortimer expansive and flowing Ciceronian period expresses his republican outspokenness.

In tracing out connections between politics and style, I am engaging with a body of literary criticism that has been called ‘historical formalism’ and ‘the new formalism’.⁴ In his

⁴See Mark Rasmussen, ‘New Formalisms?’, in *Renaissance Literature and its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 1–14; Richard Strier, ‘How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can’t Do without It’, *Renaissance Literature and its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 207–15; Stephen Cohen, ed., *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Marjorie Levinson, ‘What is New Formalism?’, *PMLA*, 122.4 (March 2007): 558–69; Miranda Hickman, introduction to

introduction to *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism*, Stephen Cohen describes the aim of historical formalism as an attempt to produce ‘a historically and ideologically sensitive formalism’.⁵ Historical formalism endeavours to combine the concerns of earlier, more traditional, varieties of formalism with the historicizing concerns of the ‘political turn’ in criticism, which gathered force in the latter decades of the twentieth century. While historical formalist studies emphasize the importance of close reading and attention to literary form, they acknowledge the intimate interdependency of politics and form. One example of a historical formalist study is Patricia Parker’s article ‘Virile Style’, which analyses the gendered imagery used in the debates about Ciceronian rhetoric, showing that Cicero’s critics presented the anti-Ciceronian style as ‘virile’, in contrast to Cicero’s effeminate style.⁶ I explore a different set of political connotations of the Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian styles, examining how they were used to express republican and Tacitean attitudes.

My arguments about the political connotations of style rely crucially on my account of republican and Tacitean attitudes towards speech. Accordingly, before turning to questions of rhetorical style, the opening two chapters of my dissertation examine in detail what was meant by republicanism and Tacitism in early modern England, and how these political views were represented on the stage. Engaging with Quentin Skinner’s research on liberty, the first chapter examines the dramatization of republicanism in the early years of James’s reign. In a series of studies on early modern liberty, Skinner has shown that Civil War republicans

Rereading the New Criticism, ed. Miranda Hickman and John McIntyre (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), 1–21.

⁵Cohen, introduction to *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism*, 14.

⁶Patricia Parker, ‘Virile Style’, in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York: Routledge, 1996), 201–22. See also her *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), especially 14.

advocated a distinctly classical notion of liberty, which derives from the writings of Roman historians, including Sallust, Livy and Tacitus.⁷ According to this classical conception of liberty, the loss of liberty is equated to slavery or servitude. A defining feature of this notion of liberty is its tie to character traits: Civil War republicans insisted that the suppression of liberty fostered slavish character traits, causing a degeneration of national character. For example, in John Milton's republican text *Eikonoklastes*, which appeared soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, a classical notion of liberty underlies his criticisms of Charles I:

But now, with a besotted and degenerate baseness of spirit, except some few, who yet retain in them the old English fortitude and love of freedom, and have testified it by their matchless deeds, the rest, imbastardized from the ancient nobleness of their ancestors, are ready to fall flat and give adoration to the image and memory of this man, who hath offered at more cunning fetches to undermine our liberties and put tyranny into an art, than any British king before him.⁸

⁷Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); 'A Third Concept of Liberty', *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 117 (2002): 237–68; 'John Milton and the Politics of Slavery' and 'The Idea of Negative Liberty: Machiavellian and Modern Perspectives' in *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2: 186–212, 286–307; *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸John Milton, *Eikonoklastes*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Merrit Hughes, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 344. Skinner discusses this passage in 'John Milton and the Politics of Slavery', *Visions of Politics*, 2: 304.

Milton asserts that Charles's encroachments of liberty had produced a 'besotted and degenerate baseness of spirit' manifested by slavish servility – his supporters 'are ready to fall flat and give adoration to the image and memory of this man'. In contrast, when liberty had previously flourished in England, the people were characterized by 'fortitude', a 'love of freedom' and 'nobleness'. Milton is rehearsing a narrative about the loss of liberty that is prominent in writings of Roman historians, and which I label the 'classical republican narrative'. According to this narrative, the destruction of liberty suppresses those of noble independence, encouraging instead slavish servility.

Chapter One shows that this classical republican narrative not only recurs in the writings of Civil War republicans but is also present in the political discourse of late Elizabethan England, and especially in the writings associated with the Earl of Essex's circle. Furthermore, this narrative is prominent in three early Jacobean plays, Jonson's *Sejanus*, Daniel's *Philotas* and Chapman's *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, which are all regarded as providing commentary on Essex's demise. These three 'Essex plays' use the classical republican narrative to explore contemporary debates about Essex's downfall.

This narrative is present not just in the Essex plays but also in three earlier plays – Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Richard II* and Marlowe's *Edward II*. I discuss the Essex plays in the first chapter, however, delaying my discussion of the other three plays to subsequent chapters, because my account of late Elizabethan republicanism focuses particularly on the Tacitean discourse of Essex's circle. Of the plays considered in the dissertation, *Sejanus*, *Philotas* and *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* engage most directly and self-consciously with the Tacitean republicanism of Essex's faction.

In *Sejanus*, Jonson's characterization of classical liberty derives from his principal source, Tacitus's *Annals 1–6*. In contrast, the most proximate provenance of Shakespeare's treatment of liberty in *Julius Caesar* is Plutarch's *Lives*, which presents the conspirators as

motivated by an ideal of liberty that is both classical and republican. Accordingly, following Plutarch, Shakespeare depicts the conspirators as driven by a commitment to classical liberty. By applying Skinner's insights on liberty to *Julius Caesar*, my reading of Shakespeare's play alters our understanding of the motivations of the conspirators.

Whereas in *Julius Caesar*, *Sejanus*, *Philotas* and *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, the classical republican narrative is indebted to specific classical sources – in particular, to Plutarch and Tacitus – this is not the case in *Richard II*. Nevertheless, I suggest that we can construe a connection between *Richard II* and the Tacitean republicanism of Essex's circle if we consider the performance of the play for Essex's followers on the eve of his uprising.⁹ I approach *Richard II* by asking the question: when the play was performed for Essex's followers on the eve of his uprising, how would they have interpreted the play? In particular, how would *Richard II* have been interpreted in the light of the ideas about classical liberty and republicanism that were circulating in the Essex circle? Drawing on my readings of *Sejanus*, *Philotas* and *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, I propose that *Richard II* can be construed as relating the classical republican narrative about the loss of classical liberty. In his history of Henry IV, John Hayward interpreted the medieval conflict between noble barons and Richard's corrupt favourites as an instance of the classical republican narrative, and Essex's followers would have placed a similar interpretation on the events in Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

⁹Paul Hammer has shown that the play was 'probably' Shakespeare's *Richard II*:

'Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising', *SQ* 59, no. 1 (2008): 1.

My dissertation adds to a recent, growing body of literary criticism that draws attention to the presence of a republican agenda in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.¹⁰ These studies, in part, represent a reaction against New Historicism, but they have also been stimulated by important research into early modern republicanism that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s – especially by the historians Patrick Collinson and Markku Peltonen.¹¹ While literary critics have also drawn on Quentin Skinner’s studies of republican liberty, they have not fully explored the implications of his research for drama. A distinctive contribution of my dissertation arises from its engagement with Skinner’s writings on republican liberty. His research is especially important for our understanding of drama, on account of the link that he identifies between republicanism and character. From Skinner’s studies, we can discern something that might be called a ‘republican character’, consisting of traits such as valour, emotional openness, outspokenness, independence, vigour and an aversion to servility and flattery. Thus he provides us with a sense of what early modern republicans were like – what set of sensibilities they possessed and aspired to. For example, Essex’s outspokenness and ardent emotions, as well as his contempt for politic restraint and flattery, can be seen as of a piece with his republicanism. Modelled partly on Essex, Jonson’s *Germanicans*, Daniel’s

¹⁰See, for example, Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Theatrical Republics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Tom Cain, ‘Jonson’s Humanist Tragedies’, in *Ben Jonson and the Politics of Genre*, ed. A. D. Cousins and Alison Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 162–89.

¹¹Patrick Collinson, ‘The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I’, *BJRLM* 69 (1986–87): 394–424; Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought: 1570–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Philotas and Chapman's Byron all display similar republican character traits. My dissertation not only relies on political treatises to investigate republicanism but it also locates republicanism in the dispositions, sensibilities and behaviour of Elizabethan statesmen.

Whereas Chapter One examines how early modern authors used Tacitus to support a republican agenda, Chapter Two points to very different strain of Tacitism that came to prominence in the late sixteenth century, a version of Tacitism that stresses the value of obedience and moderation. That Tacitus could be used for such diverse purposes reflects a tension in his works – a tension between his republican ideals and his views on political strategy. On the one hand, Tacitus clearly lamented the loss of the republic, mourning the degeneration of national character occasioned by the transition to imperial rule. On the other hand, Tacitus repeatedly emphasizes that, at least in the brutal and capricious regimes of first-century imperial Rome, uncompromising oppositionalism was both dangerous and self-defeating. He recommends, therefore, that under a malign emperor, political life should be approached with moderation and discretion. This moderate and pragmatic mode of Tacitean thought is exemplified by Justus Lipsius's *Six Books of Politics*, which appeared in 1589. Lipsius's *Of Politics* draws on Senecan Stoicism as well as Tacitean politics, advising statesmen to act with Tacitean expediency, fortified by Stoic self-restraint and patience. Whereas Civil War republicans used Tacitus to justify rebellion, Lipsius's Tacitean Stoicism, broadly speaking, encouraged obedience to the monarch, counselling statesmen to behave with cautious prudence and circumspection.

Jonson's *Sejanus* dramatizes these two contending strains of Tacitus's thought, not only portraying the republicanism of the Germanicans but also exploring the Tacitean Stoicism advocated by Lipsius. In *Sejanus*, the chief spokesman for Tacitean Stoicism is Senator Lepidus. While classical scholars have recognized that Lepidus has a central role in Tacitus's *Annals*, literary critics have neglected this significant character. Lepidus's role in

Sejanus is to articulate Jonson's qualms about republicanism, expounding the merits of a prudent 'middle way' in politics. In this play, Jonson stages a debate between the republican Tacitism of the Germanicans and the Tacitean Stoicism of Lepidus. *Sejanus* does not seek to 'decide' between these two approaches to political life, but rather encourages audiences to reflect on their relative merits.

My interpretation of *Sejanus* represents a middle way between the recent readings of the play that emphasize its republicanism and earlier readings that portray Jonson as a royalist.¹² Like the writings of Civil War republicans, *Sejanus* narrates the classical republican tale of the loss of liberty, lamenting the suppression of the Germanicans' 'great souled' independence, and the rise of slavish servility. Through the character of Lepidus, however, the play highlights the imprudence and ineffectiveness of the Germanicans' approach to politics. In staging the opposing attitudes of republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism, *Sejanus* engages with the debates about Tacitism that took place in Essex's circle.

While the opening two chapters establish a contrast between republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism, Chapter Three examines stylistic developments associated with these political views. Lipsius and other sixteenth-century Tacitists not only drew on the political and philosophical ideas of Tacitus and Seneca but also imitated their rhetorical style. The

¹²For more recent readings of *Sejanus* that emphasize its republicanism, see Cain, 'Jonson's humanist tragedies' and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics*. For earlier readings, which highlight the flaws and impotence of the republican Germanicans, see David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, rev. ed. (1984; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1983).

result was a stylistic vogue that Morris Croll labelled ‘the anti-Ciceronian movement’.¹³ Presented in a series of articles in the 1910s and 1920s, Croll’s account of the anti-Ciceronian movement had a considerable influence on English prose studies in the middle decades of the twentieth century, providing a dominant framework for the analysis of style. In the second half of the century, however, a number of commentators presented compelling criticisms of Croll, and, consequently, the current critical consensus is that his account is incoherent and unsupported.¹⁴

While I acknowledge the validity of these criticisms of Croll’s characterization of the anti-Ciceronian movement, I disagree with commentators who suggest we should altogether dispense with the distinction between Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian styles.¹⁵ My dissertation attempts to reconstruct and rehabilitate the notion of anti-Ciceronian rhetoric. Responding to Croll’s critics, I present a novel account of anti-Ciceronian styles. Whereas Croll characterized the anti-Ciceronian style as a reaction against the ornament and symmetry of Cicero’s rhetoric, I suggest that anti-Ciceronian writing was typically highly ornate. The rhetorical figure of *sententia* is a central ornament in anti-Ciceronian, and, indeed, *sententiae* are sufficiently abundant in such writing that it can be classified as a ‘sententious style’.

¹³Croll’s articles are collected in *Style, Rhetoric and Rhythm: Essays by Morris W. Croll*, ed. J. Max Patrick and Robert Evans (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

¹⁴For a summary of the waxing and waning of Croll’s influence, see Neil Rhodes, introduction to *English Renaissance Prose: History, Language and Politics*, ed. Neil Rhodes (Tempe: MRTS, 1997), 1–18.

¹⁵See Roger Pooley, ‘Prospects for Research in Seventeenth Century Prose’, *Prose Studies* 10 (1987): 9–17 and *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century: 1590-1700* (New York: Longman, 1992), 8–10.

My account of the sententious style seeks to expand our conception of the rhetorical figure of *sententia*. In studies of early modern literature, the *sententia* is commonly understood to denote aphorisms, proverbs, maxims and other shapely parcels of wisdom.¹⁶ For Roman authors of the early empire, however, including Seneca, Tacitus, Ovid and Lucan, the *sententia* covered a far broader range of expressions. For example, although the following passage from Ovid's *Heroides* does not include any aphorisms, proverbs or maxims, Ovid would have conceived of every line in the passage as a *sententia*:

Ei mihi! Cur animis iuncti secernimur undis,
 Unaque mens, tellus non habet una duos?
 Vel tua me Sestos, vel te ea sumat Abydos;
 Tam tua terra mihi, quam tibi nostra placet.
 Cur ego confundor, quotiens confunditur aequor?¹⁷

O, me! Our minds joined, why are we separated by waves,

¹⁶See, for example, the characterization of *sententiae* in Jonas Barish, 'Language for the Study; Language for the Stage' in *Elizabethan Theatre XII: Papers Given at the Twelfth International Conference on Elizabethan Theatre..in July 1987*, ed. A. L. Magnusson and C. E. McGee (Ontario: P. D. Meany, 1993), 21.

¹⁷Ovid, *Heroides*, in *Heroides, Amores*, edited and translated by Grant Showerman, revised by G. P. Gould, Loeb Classical Library 41 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 18: 125–29. All quotations of *Heroides* and *Amores* are from this edition. For all the passages in Latin and Greek that appear in this dissertation, the accompanying translations are mine, except for the passage from Plutarch's *Lives* in Chapter Five and the passages from Lucan's *Pharsalia* in Chapter Seven.

And why does one mind hold two of us, but not one land?

Either let your Sestos take me, or this Abydos take you;

Your land is as delightful to me, as my land is to you.

Why am I disturbed, as often as the sea is disturbed?

Chapter Three will provide an account of the conception of the *sententia* in early imperial Rome. Once we recognize the breadth of this concept, it becomes apparent that the *sententia* is the centrepiece of much of the Roman literature in that period.

In his account of the anti-Ciceronian style, Morris Croll observed that this late sixteenth-century stylistic movement was stimulated by, and associated with, a surge of interest in Tacitean political views. While Croll and subsequent commentators point to this link between anti-Ciceronian writing and Tacitean politics, they do not explain of what this link consists. My dissertation provides such an explanation, asking the question: why was the sententious style seen as suitable for expressing the political attitudes of Tacitean Stoicism? In answering this question, Chapter Three points to a close relationship between sententious writing and *figurata oratio* ('figured language'), which is an oblique, allusive mode of speech. Figured language was perceived as suitable for the restrained form of speech advocated by Tacitean Stoicism.

In classical and early modern writings on rhetoric, the sententious style is distinguished from, and contrasted with, the Ciceronian style, which was associated with the republicanism of Cicero. Thus in early modern Europe, the sententious and Ciceronian styles carried distinct political connotations. Playwrights of the period, including Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson and Kyd, exploited the connotations of the sententious and Ciceronian styles, using the two rhetorical modes to convey Tacitean and republican political attitudes. In Chapters Three to Six, I examine the role of the sententious and Ciceronian styles in

Sejanus, *Richard II*, *Edward II*, *Julius Caesar* and *Spanish Tragedy*. The quotation from Sejanus's soliloquy at the start of my Introduction illustrates how the sententious style could be used to express the linguistic restraint of Tacitean Stoicism. The brevity of Sejanus's sententious speech, as well as its abrupt, terse movement, helps to convey his Tacitean efforts at self-control and restraint. By way of contrast, the quotation from *Edward II* exemplifies the use of the Ciceronian style to signal republican outspokenness. The length of Mortimer's Ciceronian period, together with its smooth, flowing movement, serves to convey his lack of restraint.

This dissertation examines not only the relationship between rhetoric and politics but also their connection to the developments in prosody that took place in the latter years of Elizabethan England. In the plays of the 1580s, blank verse was generally characterized by line integrity, with pauses appearing at the end of lines. In the 1590s, however, playwrights were increasingly prone to break up the line, making liberal use of strong *caesurae*. Chapter Seven argues that this disruption of line integrity was, in part, a response to the vogue for sententious writing. In contrast to the smooth, even rhythms of the Ciceronian style, sententious writing is abrupt and choppy. As a consequence, when the sententious style is versified, it tends to break up the line. This dissertation provides historical context for important developments in versification in late Elizabethan England, linking versification to rhetorical practices and, accordingly, to the political attitudes of the period.

PART A:

REPUBLICANISM AND TACITISM

CHAPTER ONE

REPUBLICAN LIBERTY ON THE EARLY JACOBEAN STAGE

The prating tavern haunter speaks of me what he lists; the frantic libeller writes of me what he lists; already they print me and make me speak to the world, and shortly they will play me in what forms they list upon the stage.

Letter of the Earl of Essex to the Queen, 12 May, 1600.¹

After the Earl of Essex's treason trial in 1601, authors were vividly aware of the danger that a work might be interpreted as an 'application' to Essex. The authorities judged John Hayward's history of Henry IV to be an application to Essex, with the consequence that Hayward spent the remainder of Elizabeth's reign in the Tower. In Essex's treason trial, his accusers construed a performance of a play about Richard II – probably Shakespeare's – as applying to Essex.² Elizabeth's death in 1603, however, brought about a notable change in the royal attitude towards Essex's memory and his followers: Essex's son was warmly received by James; and the Earl of Southampton and Sir Henry Neville, two of Essex's followers, were released from the Tower, as was John Hayward.³ Accordingly, the end of

¹Walter Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1853), 2: 99.

²Hammer, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*', 1.

³Maureen King, 'The Essex Myth in Jacobean England', in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer and Jason Lawrence (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 177–78; John Manning, introduction to

Elizabeth's reign encouraged the appearance of a series of plays that explored Essex's fall, fulfilling his prophecy to Elizabeth that 'shortly they will play me in what forms they list upon the stage'. Three early Jacobean plays with an especially direct and detailed 'application' to Essex are Jonson's *Sejanus* (1603–4)⁴, Daniel's *Philotas* (1604–5) and Chapman's two-part play *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* (1607–8).

These Jacobean Essex plays explore the late Elizabethan republicanism – or, at least, quasi-republicanism – of Essex and his followers.⁵ The republicanism of Essex's circle was closely tied to a cluster of cultural, psychological and political attitudes, including attitudes towards peace, chivalric honour and emotional control. Such attitudes are dramatized in the Jacobean Essex plays, and contemporary audiences would have recognized their connection to a republican agenda. This group of plays provides a particularly rich illustration of the variety of ways in which republican ideas might be evoked on the early modern stage.

My particular focus is on the dramatization of the republican conception of liberty. In a sense, this chapter is a detailed elaboration of the following pregnant remark of Tom Cain in his introduction to Jonson's *Sejanus*:

John Hayward's Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII, ed. John Manning, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 42 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1991), 9.

⁴Elizabeth died on 24 March, 1603. *Sejanus* first appeared on stage soon afterwards, between 25 March 1603 and 24 March 1604. See Philip Ayres, introduction to *Sejanus His Fall*, ed. Ayres (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 9.

⁵For recent accounts that emphasize the quasi-republican elements in the views of Essex and his followers, see Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Hammer, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*'.

The usual meaning of ‘freedom’ for Jonson is not individual liberty but frankness of speech, and it is this freedom which he identifies as the most important characteristic of a healthy republic. Such freedom is essential for counsellors, but it is no less necessary for the ‘merciful’ prince’s subjects.⁶

What, in more detail, did Jonson perceive to be the value of liberty? A plausible answer might be that Jonson’s political ideal was a monarchical republic in which the monarch is guided by the advice – including critical advice – of counsellors. Accordingly, if counsellors are to voice such criticisms of the monarch, a measure of freedom is necessary. While I agree that this provides part of the answer to the question, I will argue that Jonson – and early modern republicans more generally – had a far richer conception of the value of liberty. My argument relies heavily on the work of Quentin Skinner, who, like Cain, emphasizes the difference between contemporary notions of ‘individual liberty’ and what early modern republicans meant by liberty.⁷ Drawing especially on the histories of Tacitus, Livy and Sallust, republicans in early modern England made use of a distinctly classical conception of liberty, which subsequently fell out of favour during the Enlightenment. I will rehabilitate this pre-Enlightenment, classical notion of liberty, examining how it was staged in early modern drama.

One of the most distinctive features of this classical conception of liberty is encapsulated by the term ‘free nature’, a term that is used to describe the protagonists in

⁶Tom Cain, introduction to *Sejanus, Works of Jonson*, 2: 208.

⁷Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*; ‘A Third Concept of Liberty’; ‘John Milton and the Politics of Slavery’; ‘The Idea of Negative Liberty: Machiavellian and Modern Perspectives’; and *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*.

Daniel's *Philotas* (1.2.426) and Chapman's *Tragedy of Byron* (3.2.82).⁸ A 'free nature' is a character trait defined by a sense of independence, a refusal to be dependent upon the will of another. Moreover, this character trait is closely associated with a number of other related traits, including magnanimity, courage, outspokenness, emotional openness, as well as, possibly, military prowess. If someone lacks a free nature, they are slavish – that is, they are servile, cowardly and obsequious. According to the classical conception of liberty, to promote liberty is to give scope to those with a 'free nature'; conversely, to restrict liberty is to render the nation slavish. The classical notion of liberty, therefore, has an intimate conceptual tie to questions of character, which distinguishes it from more recent Enlightenment conceptions of 'individual liberty'.

On account of its close connection to character, classical liberty was apt for dramatization. In the Jacobean Essex plays, the merits of republicanism are conveyed by characterization: when characters of a 'free nature' are presented as admirable, they serve to illustrate the value of classical liberty, and, conversely, when obsequious courtiers and slavish flatterers are criticized, audiences are encouraged to reflect on the dangers of restricting liberty. This chapter attempts to explain how characterization in early modern drama is used to invoke a republican agenda.

Before turning to this task, however, I will begin by addressing a methodological question that arises for any attempt to locate republicanism in pre-Civil War literature. Examples of such attempts include David Norbrook's *Writing the English Republic*, which locates antecedents of Civil War republicanism in Stuart literary culture, and Andrew Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, which traces back republicanism further,

⁸Samuel Daniel, *Philotas*, ed. Laurence Michel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949); George Chapman, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, ed. John Margeson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

pointing to its presence in the drama and poetry of late Elizabethan England.⁹ The methodological challenge that confronts such studies relates to the meaning of ‘republicanism’. After all, few Elizabethans and Jacobean would have aligned themselves with a political position that favoured a headless republic. Moreover, it is unlikely that Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson would have advocated such a radical change of government. What might it mean, then, to locate the antecedents of English ‘republicanism’ in Elizabethan and Jacobean culture?

1.1 Tracing back the English republic

The historian J. G. A. Pocock has denied that republicanism had a significant presence in Elizabethan political thought. While he acknowledges that Elizabethan humanists emphasized the contribution of counsellors to government, he insists that this does not amount to an endorsement of an ‘acephalous’ republic:

But the community of counsel does not become a republic in the acephalous sense; ‘common weal’ or *res publica*, it remains a *corpus* of which the king is a

⁹David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*. For other studies which investigate the presence of republicanism in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, see Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Theatrical Republics*; Cain, ‘Jonson’s Humanist Tragedies’; and Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship*.

head, a hierarchy of degree in which counsel is given by every man sitting in his place.¹⁰

Pre-war republicanism, Pocock suggests, was at most a ‘language, and not a program’.¹¹ A trauma of the magnitude of the Civil War was necessary for the ‘hierarchy of degree’ to fracture, allowing oppositional groups to contemplate seriously the possibility of an acephalous state. Pocock is presenting a revisionist account of the Civil War, which can be contrasted to the views of Marxist and liberal (or ‘Whig’) historians. Whereas Marxist and liberal historians present the war as the outcome of a continuous process of economic and social change over the preceding centuries, revisionist historians emphasize discontinuities and accidents immediately prior to the outbreak of war. Pocock, in particular, argues that mid-seventeenth-century republicanism was produced by the Civil War, and thus should not be construed as the culmination of a line of thought developed throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Literary critics acknowledge that the kind of view articulated by Pocock poses a methodological challenge for efforts to locate republicanism in pre-war literature.¹² If it is granted that Elizabethan playwrights did not conceive of an acephalous republic as a serious contender for government in England, then it is unclear how republican readings of their works could be warranted. In order to address this challenge, literary commentators have

¹⁰J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 339.

¹¹Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 15.

¹²Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Theatrical Republics*, 3; Norbrook, *Writing the English Revolution*, 5, 13; Cain, ‘Jonson’s Humanist Tragedies’, 168; Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 13; Cheney, *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship*, 4–6.

relied particularly on Patrick Collinson's and Markku Peltonen's criticisms of revisionism.¹³ Collinson argues that 'Pocock underestimated ...quasi-republican modes of political reflection' of the Elizabethans. While Elizabeth's England was not an acephalous republic, it was nevertheless a 'monarchical republic', a mixed form of government that was a 'judicious blend' of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy.¹⁴ Peltonen further explores Elizabethan republicanism in *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought: 1570–1640*. Ciceronian republicanism, Peltonen argues, lies behind the humanist ideal of the virtuous counsellor, who is portrayed as actively participating in civic life for the common good: 'the hallmark of the English humanists', Peltonen concludes, was 'the essentially Ciceronian doctrine of the great importance of the *vita activa*'.¹⁵ *Contra* Pocock, Peltonen proposes that Civil War republicanism can be seen as continuous with, and emerging from, this Ciceronian strand of English humanist thought.

Drawing on Collinson and Peltonen, Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism* characterizes Elizabethan republicanism as 'the intellectual conviction that it was necessary to control the powers of the crown by establishing a means of ensuring that a coterie of virtuous advisers and servants would always have the constitutional right to counsel the monarch'.¹⁶ In early modern literature, republicanism could manifest itself in a variety of different ways. Tom Cain suggests that Jonson's republicanism is displayed by his preoccupation with virtuous counsel, justifying his republican reading of *Poetaster* with the

¹³Norbrook, *Writing the English Revolution*, 12, 66; Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies', 168, 186; Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 17, 49–51; Cheney, *Marlowe's Republican Authorship*, 3–4, 22, 32.

¹⁴Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I', 401.

¹⁵Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 10.

¹⁶Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 17.

observation that the play ‘shows the evils of conspiracy and calumny being averted in a monarchical republic through the power delegated by a wise prince to honest counsellors’.¹⁷ Annabel Patterson suggests republicanism may be revealed by the use of a certain vocabulary: early modern republicans possessed a ‘vocabulary that signifies a republican subtext’, which includes the terms ‘*liberty*’, ‘*freedom*’, especially when qualified as *ancient*’, ‘*common*’, especially when conjoined with “good”, “wealth”, or “weal”. The use of these terms, she suggests, ‘immediately invoked an entire agenda’.¹⁸ Hadfield shows that a republican agenda may also be invoked by the use of certain of images and tales, particularly those associated with ancient Rome: ‘Republicanism was a fund of stories and potent images’, including ‘the rape of Lucrece, the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, the assassination of Caesar’.¹⁹

This chapter identifies another means by which republicanism was invoked on the early modern stage, arguing that playwrights explored republicanism by exploiting the intimate tie between character and classical liberty. Before turning to the dramatization of classical liberty on the stage, however, I will first rehearse Skinner’s findings on the role of classical liberty in the writings of seventeenth-century republicans. Drawing on Skinner’s research, I identify a republican narrative that recurs not only in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political writings but also in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama.

¹⁷Tom Cain, ‘Jonson’s Humanist Tragedies’, 171.

¹⁸Annabel Patterson, *Reading between the Lines* (London: Routledge, 1993), 211–12.

¹⁹Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 13.

1.2 Classical liberty in seventeenth-century England

In his article ‘A Third Concept of Liberty’, a response to Isaiah Berlin’s ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, Skinner distinguishes the classical conception of liberty from the two other notions – ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ liberty – that are identified by Berlin.²⁰ In the ‘positive’ sense, liberty amounts to self-mastery or self-realization, a notion of freedom that is found, for example, in the writings of Rousseau and Marx. On the other hand, ‘negative’ liberty is equated to freedom from interference, which is generally what the British philosophers Hobbes, Hume, Bentham and Mill mean by liberty. Skinner argues that Berlin’s twofold scheme omits to recognize a ‘third concept of liberty’, a classical conception which was prominent in the political discourse of the seventeenth century but fell out of favour during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The difference between negative and classical liberty can be illustrated by a debate between the royalist Thomas Hobbes and the republican James Harrington.²¹ Hobbes provides one of the earliest articulations of the negative conception of liberty, which he developed to rebut the arguments of republicans.²² Negative liberty is nothing more than non-interference: according to this negative notion of freedom, people are free to the extent that the government does not interfere with lands, limbs and chattels. Therefore, Hobbes maintains, if a monarch is benevolent, so that subjects are allowed to use their lands and goods without restraint or interference, then the subjects in that monarchy may be as free as citizens in a republic. The conclusion of Hobbes’s argument is expressed in his *Leviathan*:

²⁰Isaiah Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166–217.

²¹For an analysis of this debate, see Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 85–86.

²²Skinner, ‘A Third Concept of Liberty’, 246–47.

There is written on the turrets of the city of Lucca in great characters at this day the word LIBERTAS; yet no man can thence infer that a particular man hath more liberty or immunity from the service of the commonwealth there, than in Constantinople. Whether a commonwealth be monarchical or popular, the freedom is still the same'.²³

In his republican tract *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, James Harrington replies to this argument in *Leviathan*, arguing that even 'the meanest' citizen of a republic has more liberty than 'the greatest' subject of a monarch, because the latter is dependent on 'the will of his lord':

it is known that whereas the greatest bashaw [i.e. pasha] is a tenant, as well of his head as of his estate, at the will of his lord, the meanest Lucchese [i.e. citizen of the republic of Lucca] that hath land is a freeholder of both, and not to be controlled but by the law.²⁴

Harrington rejects Hobbes's view that freedom from interference is sufficient for liberty. Even when a monarch does not interfere with his subjects' persons or possessions, nevertheless the subjects lack liberty if the monarch has the power to do so. In such a case, the subject is, as Harrington puts it, dependent on 'the will of his lord', and, accordingly,

²³Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 140. The passage is quoted in James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 20.

²⁴Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, 20.

lacks liberty. The defining feature of Harrington's conception of liberty is independence from the will of the monarch: subjects lose their liberty when they are dependent on the will of another. Civil War republicans objected not merely to interference by the monarch but also to dependency *per se*.

This republican conception of liberty is explicitly defined in *Discourses Concerning Government*, which was written by the late seventeenth-century republican Algernon Sidney:

liberty solely consists in an independency upon the will of another, and by the name of slave we understand a man who can neither dispose of his person nor goods, but enjoys all at the will of his master.²⁵

I will focus on two key elements of republican liberty. The first is illustrated by the passage above: liberty is independence from the will of another, whereas dependency is equated to slavery. Sidney's definition of slavery derives from Roman law as articulated in the Justinian code: a slave is someone who 'is, contrary to nature, dependent on the will of another'.²⁶ More generally, Sidney's writings on liberty draw heavily on Roman historians of the early empire, including Tacitus, Sallust and Livy, who describe the *servitium* – the slavery or servitude – that attended the fall of the republic.

A second, related, element of the republican conception of liberty is the perceived relationship between liberty and national character. To destroy liberty, to place subjects in a

²⁵Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ed. Thomas West (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1990), 17.

²⁶Servitus est constitutio iuris gentium, qua quis dominio alieno contra naturam subicitur: Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty', 248.

position of dependency, is to debilitate and corrupt the character of the nation.²⁷ When liberty is lost, subjects become equivalent to slaves, and, accordingly, they develop ‘slavish’ character traits. This second element is illustrated by the following passages from Sidney’s *Discourses*, which describe the effect on Roman character of the fall of the republic:

The first fruit was such an entire degeneracy from all good, that Rome may be justly said never to have produced a brave man since her first age of slavery....The patrician and plebeian families, and such as excelled in all virtues, being thus extinguished or corrupted, the common fell into the lowest degree of baseness. *Plebs sordida circo & theatris sueta*. [The plebians, having been degraded, became accustomed to the circus and theatres.] That people which in magnanimity surpassed all that have been known in the world; who never found any enterprise above their spirit to undertake, and power to accomplish, with their liberty lost all their vigour and virtue.²⁸

I in the meantime follow the opinion of those who think slavery doth naturally produce meanness of spirit, with its worst effect, flattery, which Tacitus calls *foedum servitutis crimen* [the foul crime of servitude].²⁹

These passages articulate a perceived relationship between liberty and character: liberty fosters ‘magnanimity’, ‘vigour’, ‘virtue’ and ‘brave’ men, whereas imperial rule, which is equated to ‘slavery’, produces ‘baseness’, ‘meanness of spirit’ and ‘flattery’.

²⁷See Skinner, ‘A Third Concept of Liberty’, 257–61.

²⁸Sidney, *Discourses*, 146–7.

²⁹Sidney, *Discourses*, 162.

In emphasizing the relationship between liberty and character, seventeenth-century republicans were guided by the writings of Roman historians. In Sidney's quotations above, for example, the two Latin phrases are both from Tacitus.³⁰ English republicans were indebted to Tacitus's vivid descriptions of the degradation of national character in imperial Rome, such as the following:

Ceterum tempora illa adeo infecta et adulatio sordida fuere ut non modo primores civitas, quibus claritudo sua obsequiis protegenda erat, sed omnes consulares, magna pars eorum qui praetura functi multique etiam pedarii senatores certatim exurgerent foedaque et nimia censerent. (*Annals*, 3.65)³¹

So corrupt was this age, and so base was its flattery, that not only the principal citizens (who had to be obsequious in order to maintain their fame) but also all of the consuls, most of the ex-consuls and many of the minor senators competed with one another to stand up and propose the most foul and dishonourable motions.

³⁰See the editor's footnotes to the passages: Sidney, *Discourses*, 146–7, 162.

³¹All Latin quotations from the *Annals* are from Tacitus, *Histories Books 4–5, Annals Books 1–3*, trans. Clifford Moore and John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library 249 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931); Tacitus, *Annals Books 4–6, 11–12*, trans. John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library 312 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931); Tacitus, *Annals Books 13–16*, trans. John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library 322 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

At Romae ruere in servitium consules, patres, eques. Quanto quis inlustior, tanto magis falsi ac festinantes. (*Annals*, 1.7)

At Rome, however, consuls, senators and knights fell into slavery. The greater their fame, the greater their hypocrisy and haste.

Sidney's *Discourses*, which draw heavily on the texts of Tacitus and other Roman historians, illustrate the distinctly classical character of the notion of liberty defended by seventeenth-century republicans. They followed the Roman historians in two important respects. First, liberty is identified with independence, while dependency is seen as a form of slavery. Second, they emphasize the connection between liberty and character. In describing the debilitating effects on character of the loss of liberty, they recount a tale that I will refer to as the 'classical republican narrative'. According to this narrative, the loss of liberty causes the suppression of magnanimous citizens, who are characterized by independence, courage, nobility, vigour and openness, creating an enervated nation of cowardly, base and slavish flatterers. This narrative is exemplified by the above quotations of Sidney and Tacitus.

The classical republican narrative and the classical conception of liberty are not separate and distinct elements of early modern republican thought. Rather, this narrative is conceptually linked to classical liberty in two respects. First, the narrative can be used to justify Harrington's reply to Hobbes. We can imagine Hobbes pressing Harrington with the following question: if the monarch is benevolent and does not actually interfere with the subjects' possessions or person, why should the subjects be concerned about their dependency on the will of a monarch? Republicans can reply to Hobbes by invoking the

classical republican narrative: such dependency is harmful, because it produces a degeneration of national character.³²

The second conceptual link between this narrative and classical liberty is apparent from Sidney's and Tacitus's descriptions of the degeneration of Roman character. In their tales of the destruction of virtue and the proliferation of vice, Sidney and Tacitus have in mind specific virtues and vices. According to the classical notion of liberty, the loss of liberty creates a form of dependency akin to slavery, and thus the vices emphasized by Sidney and Tacitus are 'slavish' vices – 'obsequiousness', 'flattery', 'meanness of spirit' and 'baseness'. They are the vices that, as Sidney puts it, 'slavery doth naturally produce'. Conversely, the virtues suppressed in imperial Rome, Sidney and Tacitus tell us, are those associated with a robust sense of independence – 'magnanimity', 'vigour' and bravery. Particularly noteworthy is Sidney's reference to 'magnanimity'. In the early modern period, the principal meaning of 'magnanimity' was greatness of soul or strength of mind, a meaning closely related to its etymological root – *magnus animus* ('great soul'). As I will discuss later in the chapter, a key feature of the virtue of magnanimity is a strong sense of independence. The essence of the classical republican narrative can therefore be summarized as follows: the destruction of liberty debilitates national character by suppressing magnanimous independence and, instead, promoting slavish character traits.

While the classical republican narrative is especially prominent in the texts of republicans after the outbreak of the Civil War, it also appeared earlier in the seventeenth century. Skinner shows that a classical conception of liberty is invoked in Thomas Hedley's speech to parliament in 1610.³³ In Hedley's attack on James's efforts to extend his royal

³²In effect, Skinner makes this point in 'A Third Concept of Liberty', 256–60.

³³For analyses of Hedley's speech, see Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 220–28; Skinner, 'John Milton and the Politics of Slavery', 291–92.

prerogatives, he emphasizes the key elements of classical liberty that were later articulated by Sidney. Anticipating the arguments of Civil War republicans, Hedley equates liberty to independence, while the loss of liberty is presented as slavery, or ‘bondage’. Like Harrington, Hedley not only objects to the monarch’s exercise of powers to interfere with the subjects’ chattels and land, but he also objects to the monarch’s mere possession of such power. If the subjects’ ‘lands and goods are only in the power of the lord’, Hedley asserts, the result is ‘bondage, or the condition of a villein’.³⁴ In his speech, Hedley recounts the classical republican narrative of the loss of liberty, emphasizing its debilitating effects on character. If a subject were to lose his liberty, Hedley avers, it would ‘abase his mind’ and produce a ‘drooping dismayedness’.³⁵ In contrast to the servile pusillanimity of ‘a villein’, those who enjoy the ‘ancient liberty’ encoded in the Magna Carta have developed a magnanimous, great-souled character: the English law grants ‘to subjects such ingenuity and freedom as maintains him in spirit and courage’.³⁶ Hedley is at pains to convey to his audience the classical provenance of these arguments; like Sidney’s *Discourses*, Hedley’s speech is liberally sprinkled with references to Tacitus.

The classical notion of liberty and the classical republican narrative appear not only in Jacobean texts but also in the political discourse of late Elizabethan England. My particular focus is on the Earl of Essex and his followers. The next section establishes the presence of the classical republican narrative in the writings of Essex’s circle, and the remainder of the chapter shows that this narrative also appears in the three Jacobean Essex plays – Jonson’s *Sejanus*, Daniel’s *Philotas* and Chapman’s *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*. Responding to

³⁴Robert Hedley’s speech to parliament, June 26, 1610 in *Proceedings in Parliament 1610*, ed. Elizabeth Foster, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 194.

³⁵Hedley’s speech to parliament, 194, 196.

³⁶Hedley’s speech to parliament, 191.

late Elizabethan political controversies, the Jacobean Essex plays helped to transmit ideas about liberty that were vital to Civil War republicanism.

1.3 The classical republican narrative and Essex's circle

From its inception, English Tacitism was closely associated with the Earl of Essex. In 1591, the English Tacitist movement began in earnest with the publication of the first English translation of Tacitus – Sir Henry Savile's rendering of Tacitus's *Agricola* and the first four books of the *Histories*. Ben Jonson reported that the anonymous preface to Savile's translation, entitled 'A. B. To the Reader', was written by Essex.³⁷ Published in 1598, Richard Grenewey's translation of Tacitus's *Annals* and *Germania* was dedicated to Essex. Also dedicated to Essex was John Hayward's controversial Tacitean history *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie III*, which first appeared in 1599.

In early modern Europe, Tacitus was used as authority for a variety of different political views, but Essex was especially interested in the republican strain in Tacitus's writings. I will discuss two texts associated with Essex's circle that invoke the classical republican narrative of the loss of liberty. The first text is *An apologie of the Earl of Essex against those which falsly and maliciously taxe him to be the onely hinderer of the peace, and quiet of his country*. In his *Apologie*, Essex argues that the Dutch should not sign a peace treaty with Spain, maintaining that peace would bring 'slavery upon the Netherlands', because:

³⁷William Drummond, *Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden*, in *Works of Jonson*, 5: 377, lines 285–86.

there shall nothing limit the prince's absoluteness, but his own will. The strength of the contract cannot limit it, for neither will he keep faith with those whom he accounteth heretics, and calleth rebels, neither will they make any longer to betray themselves, for province will strive with province, town with town, and man with man who shall be obsequious, and shew themselves most servile, all care of defence neglected by minds bewitched with the name of peace, all memory of former tyranny blotted out of their hearts, resolved to accept a Sovereign.³⁸

The passage illustrates two key elements of classical liberty to which I have already alluded. Firstly, liberty is conceived of in opposition to slavery, which is dependency on another's will. Thus Essex is concerned about the onset of 'slavery upon the Netherlands' because 'there shall nothing limit the prince's absoluteness, but his own will'. Secondly, such dependency is presented as detrimental to national character. The passage recounts the classical republican narrative, complaining that the loss of liberty would cause the Dutch to become 'obsequious' and 'most servile'. We can imagine any number of objections to Spanish rule, and it is striking that, of these, Essex emphasizes the debilitating effect on national character.

The classical republican narrative also appears in John Hayward's history *Henrie III*, a text that was closely associated with the Earl of Essex. Hayward's history first appeared in January of 1599, and soon after its publication Essex requested that the licensing authorities excise from the book the dedication to him. In the middle of 1599, all copies of the second

³⁸Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, *An apologie of the Earle of Essex* (1600), C2^r. For the political context of Essex's *Apologie*, see Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 97–104.

edition were seized and burnt. According to Francis Bacon, the Queen herself expressed concerns that Hayward's book was treasonous:

For her Majesty being mightily incensed with that book which was dedicated to my Lord of Essex, being a story of the first year of King Henry the fourth thinking it a seditious prelude to put into people's heads boldness and faction, said she had good opinion that there was treason in it... whereto I answered: for treason surely I found none but for felony very many. And when her Majesty hastily asked me wherein, I told her the author had committed very apparent theft, for he had taken most of the sentences of Cornelius Tacitus, and translated them into English.³⁹

Over the next two years, as part of the authorities' investigations into Essex, Hayward was questioned on several occasions about parallels between Bolingbroke and Essex, and soon after Essex's execution, Hayward was incarcerated in the Tower.⁴⁰

Bacon's reply to the Queen highlights the pervasive Tacitean presence in Hayward's history: Hayward had included in his text 'most of the sentences [i.e., *sententiae*] of Cornelius Tacitus'. Drawing on Tacitus, Hayward introduces a classical conception of liberty

³⁹*Sir Francis Bacon His Apologie in Certaine Imputations concerning the Late Earle of Essex*, in *The Literary and Professional Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Ellis and Douglas Heath, 14 vols., New ed. vols. 1–7 (London: Longman, 1861–79), 10: 150.

Unless otherwise stated, quotations of Bacon are from this edition.

⁴⁰For a detailed account of the reaction of Elizabethan authorities to Hayward's book, see Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 162–91.

into *Henrie III*, which is especially evident in the two passages cited below.⁴¹ The first passage is from the speech of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who endeavours to persuade Bolingbroke to rebel:

The remembrance of the honourable reputation that our country hath borne, and the noble acts which it hath achieved, doth nothing else but make the baseness more bitter unto us, whereinto it is new fallen...[A]ncient nobility is accompted a vain jest; wealth and virtue are the ready means to bring to destruction. Our ancestors lived in the highest pitch and perfection of liberty, but we, of servility, being in the nature not of subjects, but of abjects and flat slaves.⁴²

The second is from Bolingbroke's reply to the Archbishop, in which he agrees to lead the rebellion:

If we prevail, we shall recover again our liberty; if we lose, our state shall be no worse than now it is. And since we must need perish, either deservingly or without cause, it is more honourable to put ourselves upon the adventure either to win our lives or die for desert. And although our lives were safe, which indeed are not, yet to abandon the state and sleep still in this slavery were a point of negligence and sloth.⁴³

⁴¹ While authorities chose to interpret Hayward's history as an oppositional text, its politics are somewhat ambiguous: see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572–1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 106–7.

⁴² Hayward, *Henrie III*, 113.

⁴³ Hayward, *Henrie III*, 117.

Echoing Tacitus's classical notion of liberty, the Archbishop and Bolingbroke both equate the loss of liberty to slavery. In Bolingbroke's speech, the phrase 'although our lives were safe' is especially telling. Even if our safety were not threatened, Bolingbroke asserts, we would nonetheless be in a state of slavery, because the king has the power to harm subjects. On the classical conception of liberty, subjects may be enslaved even if, as it turns out, their lives are not harmed, so long as the monarch has the power to do so. The mere presence of such power – independent of the exercise of that power – ensures that subjects are dependent on one man's will, which is slavery. Bolingbroke is, in effect, voicing Harrington's reply to Hobbes that was quoted above.

These passages from *Henrie IIII* draw on the classical republican narrative about the debilitating effects on national character of the loss of liberty. As a consequence of Richard's suppression of liberty, England has lost its 'honourable reputation' and is now characterized by 'baseness'. Under Richard's rule, 'ancient nobility' is derided, and 'virtue' is a 'means to bring destruction'. His reign has encouraged 'servility', creating a nation of 'abjects' and 'slaves'. If the people accede to Richard's encroachments on liberty, they will lose their vigour, and be reduced to an enervated state of 'sloth', 'negligence', 'sleep' and 'slavery'.

Essex's accusers and also modern scholars have pointed to a range of correspondences between Hayward's Bolingbroke and Essex.⁴⁴ In *Henrie IIII*, therefore,

⁴⁴Mervyn James, 'At the Crossroads of the Political Culture: The Essex Revolt, 1601', in *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England*, ed. Mervyn James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 418–23; Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 236–43; Paul Hammer, 'The Smiling Crocodile: The Earl of Essex and late Elizabethan "Popularity"', in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 95–115.

Hayward can be construed as using the classical republican narrative to characterize the suppression of not just Bolingbroke but also Essex's circle. Hayward was provoking his Elizabethan readers to consider whether, like Bolingbroke and his allies, Essex's faction had been marginalized as a consequence of the erosion of liberty.

Hayward's *Henrie VIII* and Essex's *Apologie* illustrate the presence of the classical republican narrative in late Elizabethan political discourse. The next two sections argue that, as in *Henrie VIII*, Jonson's *Sejanus* uses the classical republican narrative to interpret the suppression of Essex's faction. My argument for this reading of *Sejanus* has two parts. First, I show in the next section that Essex and his followers can be identified with Jonson's Germanicans. The subsequent section then demonstrates that, in staging the destruction of the Germanican faction, Jonson is dramatizing the classical republican narrative.

1.4 Essex's faction, Jonson's Germanicans and the virtue of magnanimity

Drawing heavily on its principal source Tacitus's *Annals 1–6*, Jonson's *Sejanus* is a central text in the English Tacitist movement. While *Sejanus* was first performed in 1603–4, there is reason to think that Jonson began work on the play in 1601–2, soon after Essex's treason trial of 1601.⁴⁵ In his article 'Jonson among the Historians', Blair Worden suggests that the play provides commentary on Essex's demise, identifying Essex with Jonson's Germanicans. Replying to those who equate Essex with Sejanus, Worden argues that a correspondence between the Germanicans and Essex is more compelling:

Sejanus thrived by hiding his feelings: Essex, as Camden writes, 'could not cover his affections'. Jonson's *Sejanus* is the arch courtier: Camden's Essex 'seemed

⁴⁵Ayres, introduction to *Sejanus His Fall*, ed. Ayres, 9.

not made for the court'. Camden's account of Essex's fall, which takes on a dark Tacitean colouring, alludes not to Sejanus but to Germanicus, the lost leader to whom the virtuous enemies of Sejanus in Jonson's play lament. The Germanicans, rather than Sejanus, are Jonson's equivalents to Essex. They resemble the earl in their adherence to antique values of martial prowess and of noble hospitality, in their swelling ranks of retainers, in their imprudent bursts of anger at the corruption of public life, in their conviction that the proper role of the nobility has been usurped by the newly risen courtiers.⁴⁶

This section will build upon, and provide further support for, Worden's reading of *Sejanus*. My focus is especially on Worden's observation about the parallel between the passionate outspokenness of Essex and the Germanicans: Essex could not 'cover his affections', and,

⁴⁶Blair Worden, 'Jonson among the Historians', in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 78. He is responding to criticism which argues that Essex should be identified with Sejanus, such as Richard Dutton, 'The Sources, Text, and Readers of "Sejanus": Jonson's "Integrity in the Story"', *SPh*. 75, no.2 (Spring, 1978): 181–98; J. H. M. Salmon 'Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England', *JHI* 50, no. 2 (April – June, 1989): 219. See also Peter Lake, 'From *Leicester his Commonwealth* to *Sejanus his Fall*: Ben Jonson and the Politics of Roman (Catholic) Virtue', in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation'*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Lake also acknowledges, however, that there are respects in which Essex corresponds to the Germanicans. Those who argue for the identification between Essex and Sejanus point to the following correspondences: they were both erstwhile royal favourites who used the army as a power base, but each fell out of favour with the monarch, and ultimately were executed for treason.

similarly, the Germanicans were prone to ‘imprudent bursts of anger’. Such character traits, I will argue, are closely tied to a commitment to classical liberty.

The Germanicans’ ardent emotions and outspokenness are dramatized throughout the play. The characteristic mood of the Germanicans is one of angry outrage, a tone set at the opening of the play by the vituperations of Sabinus and Silius. Arruntius and Agrippina have notably fiery tempers, and they consistently refuse to restrain their speech. That Essex was similarly outspoken is apparent from the reports of his contemporaries. As Worden notes, Camden suggests that Essex was not suited to the court, on the grounds that he ‘could not cover his mind’:

Neither indeed was this noble Earle made for a courtier, who was slow to any wickedness, very wary in taking offence, and very loath to forget it, and one that could not cover his mind.⁴⁷

Sir Henry Wotton also points to Essex’s artlessness and emotional openness, describing him as a ‘weak dissembler’ who was unable to put ‘his passions in his pocket’:

The Earl was the worse philosopher, being a great resenter and a weak dissembler of the least disgrace: and herein likewise as in the rest, no good pupil to the Lord of Leicester, who was wont to put all his passions in his pocket’.⁴⁸

⁴⁷William Camden, *The historie of the life and reigne of that famous princesse Elizabeth* (Oxford, 1634), 327.

⁴⁸Henry Wotton, *A Parallell betweene Robert late Earle of Essex, and George, late Duke of Buckingham* (London, 1641), 9.

On a number of occasions, Francis Bacon warned Essex against using a blunt, direct mode of speech when addressing the Queen, but was rebuffed by Essex:

the only course to be held with the Queen was by obsequiousness and observance...My Lord on the other side had a settled opinion that the Queen could be brought to nothing but by a kind of necessity and authority.⁴⁹

The impressions of Essex's contemporaries are, moreover, consistent with what we know about Essex's pattern of rash and impetuous behaviour towards the Queen.⁵⁰

Paul Hammer has observed that Essex's frank, blunt manner was not an isolated personality trait but rather cohered with his broader set of values, suggesting that his directness was connected to a particular conception of virtue:

For, while courtly accomplishments were recognised as evidence of personal virtue, the indirectness and flattery endemic to the Court were seen by Essex as antithetical to virtue...In order to distinguish himself from such conduct, and believing that the active display of virtue must bring recognition and reward, Essex combined his exhibition of courtly accomplishments with a directness of

⁴⁹Bacon, *Apologie*, in *Works of Bacon*, 10: 144.

⁵⁰On one occasion, having been struck by the Queen for turning his back on her, Essex responded aggressively, placing his hand on the hilt of his sword. A second incident precipitated his permanent exclusion from Court: when he returned from the wars in Ireland, he rushed into her bedchamber before she was ready to be seen. He was never again allowed to appear in her presence at Court.

manner which was quite uncourtierlike and yet which, in his mind, connoted a kind of blunt honesty.⁵¹

Hammer's observation gives rise to the question: what is this conception of 'virtue' associated with Essex's directness, outspokenness and emotional openness? An answer is suggested by Camden's remarks about Henry Cuffe, who served as an advisor to Essex. Like Wotton and Bacon, Cuffe drew attention to Essex's open nature:

But as Cuffe often used to complain to the author of the original of this story, he [Essex] was φιλοφανερὸς and μισοφανερὸς, one that could neither conceal his love, nor his hatred, but always shewed them in his countenance.⁵²

Either Cuffe or Camden has misremembered the two Greek words. Rather than *philophaneros* and *misophaneros*, they should be *phanerophilos* and *phaneromisos*, which mean, respectively, 'openly loving' and 'openly hating'.⁵³ Cuffe has taken his description of Essex from Aristotle's discussion of the virtue of magnanimity in *Nichomachean Ethics*. Aristotle's description of the magnanimous 'great souled' man reveals connections between diverse characteristics of Essex:

⁵¹Paul Hammer, *The Polarization of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 335–6.

⁵²Camden, *The historie of the life and reigne of that famous princesse Elizabeth*, 327.

⁵³The words φιλοφανερὸς and μισοφανερὸς do not appear in the Liddell and Scott Greek-English lexicon.

ἀναγκαῖον δὲ καὶ φανερομισῆ εἶναι καὶ φανερόφιλον (τὸ γὰρ λανθάνειν φοβουμένου), καὶ μέλειν τῆς ἀληθείας μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς δόξης, καὶ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν φανερῶς (παρρησιαστῆς γὰρ διὰ τὸ καταφρονητικὸς εἶναι, καὶ ἀληθευτικός, πλὴν ὅσα μὴ δι' εἰρωνείαν· εἴρων δὲ πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς), καὶ πρὸς ἄλλον μὴ δύνασθαι ζῆν ἄλλ' ἢ φίλον (δουλικὸν γάρ, διὸ καὶ πάντες οἱ κόλακες θητικοὶ καὶ οἱ ταπεινοὶ κόλακες).⁵⁴

He must be openly loving and openly hating, because to conceal is to be afraid. He must care for truth rather than popular opinion, and must speak and act openly. Speaking from a position of superiority, he talks boldly and frankly, except when he is self-deprecating (as he is when conversing with the populace). He is unable to live at the will of another (except for a friend) because to do so would be slavery, as flatterers are all base, and submissive people are flatterers.

Essex's directness, outspokenness and emotional openness were of a piece with his valorization of the virtue of magnanimity.

In several places in his writings, Essex emphasizes the value of magnanimity. When describing his friendships with military men in his *Apologie*, Essex remarks: 'I love them for their virtue's sake, for their greatness of mind'.⁵⁵ 'Greatness of mind' or 'greatness of soul' is a translation of the Latin word *magnanimitas*, and was the primary meaning of magnanimity in Elizabethan England. Essex also stresses the value of magnanimity in a letter of advice to

⁵⁴Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Horace Rackham, Loeb Classical Liberty 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 4.3.28–31.

⁵⁵Essex, *Apologie*, B3^f.

the Earl of Rutland, a letter that is clearly indebted to Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*.⁵⁶ In his history of Elizabeth's reign, Camden alludes to Essex's magnanimity, observing that 'he began to be somewhat self-willed and stubborn towards the Queen, and rather out of his great mind than pride'.⁵⁷ Camden construes Essex's sense of independence as a manifestation of his 'great mind' – that is, his magnanimity.

Essex's valorization of magnanimity is associated with his well-documented preoccupation with honour.⁵⁸ According to Aristotle, the principal concern of the magnanimous man is honour:⁵⁹

μάλιστα μὲν οὖν περὶ τιμᾶς καὶ ἀτιμίας ὁ μεγαλόψυχός ἐστι.

So the magnanimous man is especially concerned with honour and dishonour.

⁵⁶Bacon, *Works*, 9: 9. For the Aristotelian source of the letter to Rutland, see Brian Vickers's notes in Francis Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 541. There is an ongoing debate about whether the letter was written by Essex, or, instead, was written on behalf of Essex by Bacon: see Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. Vickers, 539–41.

⁵⁷Camden, *The historie of the life and reigne of that famous princesse Elizabeth*, 327.

⁵⁸Essex's efforts to identify with, and encourage the revival of, the chivalric honour code are discussed in James, 'At the Crossroads of the Political Culture'; Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 79–102; Hammer, *Polarization of Elizabethan Politics*, esp. 199–212, 297–98; 335–37; Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 176–80.

⁵⁹Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 4.3.17.

As in the case of Essex, Agrippina's outspokenness and emotive openness are not simply idiosyncratic psychological traits, but cohere with, and are justified by, a broader set of values. Her 'conspicuous courses', she says, are 'noblest' and are required by 'Virtue's forces'. The virtue she has in mind is magnanimity – that is, 'greatness of spirit'. Thus Silius commends Agrippina's great-souled magnanimity when he replies that her speech is 'great...like the spirit / Of Agrippina'. Agrippina and Sosia's outspokenness is not psychological incontinence but rather is a sign of their courage. Silius describes Agrippina as having 'bravely spoken' and characterizes Sosia as 'bold, and free of speech'. In attributing Agrippina and Sosia's outspokenness to their courage, Jonson emphasizes their magnanimity. For Aristotle's magnanimous man, outspokenness is demanded by courage, because 'to conceal is to be afraid'.

Agrippina also expresses her magnanimity by distinguishing herself from Juno, refusing 'To be made Juno's rival'. Juno was the archetypal foe of the magnanimous, great-souled classical hero, persecuting Hercules throughout his life and harrying Aeneas during his long quest to reach the site of Rome. Indeed, Agrippina's deprecation of Juno echoes remarks made by Essex. Lamenting the fluctuations in Elizabeth's support for the war against Spain, Essex on a number of occasions identified himself with Aeneas and Queen Elizabeth with Juno.⁶⁰ The effect of Agrippina's reference to Juno, therefore, is to align herself with the masculine heroic magnanimity of both Aeneas and Essex, distancing herself from the feminine opponents of heroic virtue, Juno and Elizabeth. This passage from *Sejanus* illustrates that, as in the case of Essex, the emotive outspokenness of the Germanicans is part of a network of values and character traits associated with magnanimity.

⁶⁰Hammer, *Polarization of Elizabethan Politics*, 242, 245–6, 330, 331. See also Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 221.

In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle emphasizes the magnanimous man's strong sense of independence, and his disdain for slavish servility and flattery: 'He is unable to live at the will of another...because to do so would be slavery, as flatterers are all base, and submissive people are flatterers'. Essex's magnanimous sense of independence is displayed in a letter written in 1598 to Sir Thomas Egerton: 'I have been content to do Her Majesty the service of a clerk, but can never serve her as a villain or slave'.⁶¹ The magnanimous contempt of Essex's faction for slavish flattery is encapsulated in the following passage of Robert Naunton's *Fragmenta regalia, or, Observations on the late Queen Elizabeth, her times and favorites*. In this passage, Naunton is describing Lord Willoughby, who was a prominent supporter of Essex:⁶²

I have heard it spoken that had he [Willoughby] not slighted the court, but applied himself to the Queen, he might have enjoyed a plentiful portion of her grace, and it was his saying (and it did him no good) that he was none of the *reptilia*, intimating that he could not creep on the ground, and that the court was not his element, for indeed as he was a great soldier, so was he of a suitable magnanimity, and could not brook the obsequiousness and assiduity of the court.⁶³

By using the word 'magnanimity', Naunton is ascribing to Willoughby the cluster of properties in the passages from Aristotle above – courage, emotive outspokenness, a sense of

⁶¹*Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex*, 501.

⁶²Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, 376.

⁶³Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta regalia, or, Observations on the late Queen Elizabeth, her times and favorites* (London, 1641), 22.

independence and contempt for flattery and servility. In his criticism of ‘the court’, Willoughby is, in effect, criticizing the Cecilian faction – the faction headed by Robert Cecil. Whereas Essex’s faction was, for the most part, identified with the military, their rival faction, the Cecilians, were perceived as courtiers. In contrast to Essex, who, as Camden observes, was not ‘made for a courtier’, Robert Cecil ‘was a courtier from his cradle’.⁶⁴ Naunton’s description of Lord Willoughby reveals how the Essex’s followers perceived the factional rivalry: it was a struggle between those of ‘a suitable magnanimity’ and ‘the obsequiousness and assiduity of the court’.⁶⁵

Willoughby’s criticisms of the Cecilians correspond closely to the invectives of Jonson’s Germanicans that are directed at Sejanus’s faction. Like Essex’s followers, the Germanicans present their opponents as servile courtiers. Indeed, the play opens with a pair of Germanicans, Sabinus and Silius, inveighing against the obsequiousness of the ‘court’:

Sabinus Hail, Caius Silius!

Silius Titius Sabinus, hail!

You’re rarely met in court.

Sabinus Therefore, well met.

Silius ’Tis true; indeed, this place is not our sphere.

Sabinus No Silius, we are no good engineers;

We want the fine arts, and their thriving use

⁶⁴Naunton, *Fragmenta regalia*, 39.

⁶⁵Like Willoughby, Essex deprecated the obsequious of his enemies in ‘the court’, giving the nickname ‘the sycophant’ to one of his chief factional enemies, Lord Cobham. (Wotton, *Parallell*, 9).

Should make us graced or favoured of the times.

We have no shift of faces, no cleft tongues,

...

We have nor place in court, office in state

That we can say we owe unto our crimes. (1.1–7, 13–14)

The ‘court’, Silius says, ‘is not our sphere’. The Germanicans lack the obsequiousness of courtiers: they are not ‘good engineers’ (that is, good schemers) and have ‘no shift of faces, no cleft tongues’. Those who have a ‘place in court’ probably ‘owe’ it to their ‘crimes’. Another Germanican, Arruntius, uses ‘courtly’ as a term of abuse (1.385). Willoughby’s imagery of obsequious prostration – ‘he was none of the *reptilia*, intimating that he could not creep on the ground’ – is prominent in the invective of Jonson’s Germanicans:

Cordus Here comes Sejanus.

Silius Now observe the stoops,
The bendings, and the falls.

Arruntius Most creeping base!

(1.175–6)

My suggestion is that, for Jonson’s early Jacobean audiences, the struggle between the two factions in *Sejanus* would have evoked the factional rivalry of the late 1590s. The Germanicans’ valorization of honour, courage, passionate outspokenness, independence and magnanimity would have reminded audiences of Essex’s faction. In addition, the vituperations of the Germanicans against servile and obsequious courtiers are reminiscent of Essex’s criticisms of Cecil’s faction.

These correspondences between Jonson's *Sejanus* and the various descriptions of Essex and his faction by their contemporaries substantiate Blair Worden's observation that Essex is identified with the Germanicans. I have suggested, in addition, that Essex's and the Germanicans' passionate outspokenness and aversion to sycophancy emerge from, and are incorporated in, a coherent network of related values associated with the virtue of magnanimity. Jonson's portrayal of the magnanimous traits of the Germanicans, I will now argue, is integral to the classical republican narrative in *Sejanus*.

1.5 Magnanimity and the classical republican narrative in Jonson's *Sejanus*

The close connection between magnanimity and classical liberty is apparent from a comparison between Sidney's definition of classical liberty and Aristotle's description of the magnanimous man. Liberty, Sidney proposes, 'consists in an independency upon the will of another, and by the name of slave we understand a man who can neither dispose of his person nor goods, but enjoys all at the will of his master'.⁶⁶ The magnanimous man, Aristotle insists, 'is unable to live at the will of another...because to do so would be slavery'. Aristotle's magnanimous man has a strong sense of independence that is akin to a commitment to classical liberty. Accordingly, in Sidney's articulation of the classical republican narrative, he specifically mentions that the rise of imperial rule caused the destruction of the 'magnanimity' of the Roman republic. My suggestion is that magnanimity was regarded as a principal virtue of early modern republicans. When republicans lament the destruction of virtue caused by the loss of liberty, they are especially concerned about the suppression of the virtue of magnanimity, as well as its associated character traits and values.

⁶⁶Sidney, *Discourses*, 17.

In *Liberty before Liberalism*, Quentin Skinner summarizes the character traits admired by Civil War republicans. Broadly speaking, these traits can be construed as characteristics of Aristotle's magnanimous man:

The figure they [Civil War republicans] wish to hold out for our admiration is described again and again. He is plain and plain hearted; he is upright and full of integrity; above all he is a man of true manliness, of dependable valour and fortitude. His virtues are repeatedly contrasted with the vices characteristic of the obnoxious lackeys and parasites who flourish at court. The courtier, instead of being plain and plain hearted, is lewd, dissolute and debauched; instead of being upright, he is cringing, servile and base; instead of being brave, he is fawning, abject and lacking in manliness.⁶⁷

This passage could equally describe the Germanicans' perception of the contrast between their faction and Sejanus's faction, and it could also characterize Essex's view of the opposition between his faction and the Cecilians. In each case, the principal contrast is between magnanimous independence and slavish servility.

Drawing on Tacitus's chronicle of Tiberius's reign, Jonson's *Sejanus* dramatizes the classical republican narrative. His play portrays how the loss of liberty under Tiberius caused the suppression of the magnanimous Germanicans, fostering instead slavish servility. Jonson's decision to set his play in Tiberius's Rome is significant. While Augustus's life spanned the period of transition from republic to monarchy, Tiberius's accession completed this transition. Tiberius's reign is a focal point, therefore, for Tacitean lamentations about the loss of republican liberty.

⁶⁷Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 195–96.

In the opening act of *Sejanus*, the Germanicans mourn the fall of the republic, bemoaning, in particular, the loss of ‘liberties’ that were enjoyed under the republic:

We that within these fourscore years were born
 Free, equal lords of the triumphed world,
 And knew no masters but affections,
 To which, betraying first our liberties,
 We since became the slaves to one man’s lusts. (1.59–63)

The Germanicans’ notion of liberty is a distinctly classical one. When Silius complains that Romans have become ‘the slaves to one man’s lusts’, he is reiterating the definition of classical liberty: to be bereft of liberty is slavery, which is dependence on one man’s will – or as Silius puts it, ‘one man’s lusts’. Sabinus uses similar language to Silius, describing the fall of the republic as the time ‘when the Romans first did yield themselves / To one man’s power’ (4.167–68). Moreover, throughout the play, the Germanicans equate imperial rule to ‘slavery’ or ‘servitude’.⁶⁸

In the opening act of the play, the Germanicans describe the degeneration of national character occasioned by the ‘slavery’ of imperial rule. Tiberius’s oppressive rule is held responsible for the proliferation of flattery and base character traits. Thus Sabinus complains that ‘Tyrants’ arts / Are to give flatterers grace’ (1.70–71). Arruntius contrasts contemporary Romans with those who lived under the republic: ‘The men are not the same; ’tis we are base, / Poor, and degenerate from th’ exalted strain / Of our great fathers’ (1.87–89). Tiberius’s suppression of liberty has debilitated the character of Rome, rendering his subjects ‘base’, ‘Poor’, and ‘degenerate’. In contrast, he refers to Romans of the republic as ‘exalted’ and

⁶⁸See, for example, 1.11, 1.53, 1.63, 1.92, 3.262, 3.309, 4.151, 4.172, 4.172

‘great’. The terms ‘exalted’ and ‘great’ correspond to the Latin word *magnus*, and thus Arruntius is alluding to the *magnus animus* – that is, the magnanimity – of republican Romans. Later in the same passage, Arruntius laments the departure of the Republicans’ ‘mighty spirits’ (1.97), which translates into Latin as *magni animi*. He continues: ‘There’s nothing Roman in us, nothing good, / Gallant or great’ (1.102–3). In using the terms ‘gallant’ and ‘great’, Arruntius is reiterating his complaint that the magnanimity of the Republic had been destroyed by Tiberius’s suppression of liberty. These mournful laments of the Germanicans in the opening act are, in effect, an expression of the classical republican narrative, describing how the loss of liberty has suppressed magnanimous independence, encouraging instead slavish servility.

The audience of *Sejanus*, having been informed in the opening act that imperial rule has corrupted the Roman national character, then witnesses in the subsequent acts how this corruption takes place. The Germanicans are the representatives of magnanimous virtue, and Jonson dramatizes their destruction under Tiberius’s oppressive regime. The outspokenness and passionate outrage of the Germanicans, which are expressions of their magnanimity, ensure that they are systematically imprisoned, exiled or killed. Jonson is at pains to convey that the outspokenness and emotional openness of the Germanicans are responsible for their downfall. With the Germanicans marginalized, servile and self-interested courtiers dominate the political life of Rome. In staging the destruction of the Germanican faction, Jonson is dramatizing the classical republican narrative.

In respect of their outspokenness, emotional openness and – more generally – their magnanimity, the Germanicans would have reminded early Jacobean audiences of Essex’s faction. Accordingly, Jonson is, in effect, applying the classical republican narrative not just to the Germanicans but also to Essex’s faction. That is, *Sejanus* invites the audience to

construe the downfall of Essex's faction as an example of the debilitating effects on national character of the suppression of liberty.

While the current chapter emphasizes this republican narrative in *Sejanus*, the next chapter will point to an opposing narrative in the play, which articulates criticisms of the Germanicans. Jonson's Lepidus, in particular, provides credible criticisms of the imprudent outspokenness of the Germanicans. As Jonson's portrait of Lepidus draws on an extensive body of classical and early modern political writings, I delay my discussion of his character until the next chapter, which provides an account of the political views that lie behind his criticisms of the Germanicans. Chapter Two shows that, although *Sejanus* uses the classical republican narrative to promote the value of classical liberty, the play is not an unalloyed defence of republican attitudes, but rather encourages the audience to explore debates about republicanism.

By way of summary, I will revisit Tom Cain's observation that was quoted at the opening of this chapter: 'The usual meaning of "freedom" for Jonson is not individual liberty but frankness of speech, and it is this freedom which he identifies as the most important characteristic of a healthy republic'. In *Sejanus*, 'frankness of speech' is part of an integrated network of traits and values that are associated with the virtue of 'magnanimity': magnanimity involves not only 'frankness of speech' but also honour, courage, emotional openness and a sense of independence that is akin to a commitment to classical liberty. Frankness of speech is a manifestation of both the courage and the independence of the magnanimous man. Its opposite, flattery, is a sign of cowardice and also slavish dependency on the will of others – a servile acceptance of the loss of classical liberty. As Cain observes, the notion of freedom in *Sejanus* is presented 'as the most important characteristic of a healthy republic'. Classical liberty vitalizes the republic not only by ensuring that the monarch's decisions are guided by frank advice from virtuous counsellors, but also by

improving the character of the people, producing magnanimous, courageous and vigorous, citizens, rather than base, cowardly and enervated subjects.

I have identified a narrative in *Sejanus* that appears throughout the writings of both Roman historians and Civil War republicans. This republican narrative is also present in the Tacitean writings associated with Essex's circle, including Essex's *Apologie* and Hayward's *Henrie VIII*. In his history, Hayward uses the classical republican narrative to interpret the marginalization of Essex's faction, and, similarly, in *Sejanus*, the audiences are invited to use this narrative to understand the demise of Essex. The next section will show that Daniel and Chapman also explored the classical republican narrative in their drama, using this narrative to engage with contemporary debates concerning the downfall of the Earl of Essex.

1.6 Peace and liberty in *Philotas* and the *Byron* plays

Chapman's *Byron* plays – *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron* and *The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* – were initially performed in 1607 or 1608, not many years after the Duke of Byron's death, which occurred in 1602.⁶⁹ With its plot spanning events that took place between 1598 and 1602, Chapman's two-part play must have had some of the attraction of a modern docudrama when it was first appeared, dramatizing and interrogating recent well-known events in Continental politics. The *Byron* plays are notably untheatrical,⁷⁰ and were performed by the Children of the Queen's Revels for the 'intellectually self-conscious'

⁶⁹Margeson, introduction to *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, 5–6.

⁷⁰John Margeson describes them as 'written throughout like a dramatic poem rather than as a theatrical script': introduction to *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, 1.

audience of Blackfriars, an audience open to experimental and avant-garde drama.⁷¹ Daniel's *Philotas* was also performed at Blackfriars by the Children of the Queen's Revels, and it shows a similar disregard for theatricality. In its use of set speeches and a chorus, *Philotas* is reminiscent of the neo-Senecan closet drama associated with the Countess of Pembroke's circle.

In the *Byron* plays and *Philotas*, the connection to Essex is more explicit and direct than in *Sejanus*. Written several years after *Sejanus*, the *Byron* plays make no effort to mask the correspondence between the careers of Byron and Essex. In *Tragedy of Byron*, Chapman introduces two explicit references to Essex. Having been accused of treason by the king, Byron contemplates whether he will meet a similar fate to Essex:

The matchless Earl of Essex, who some make,
 In their most sure divining of my death,
 A parallel with me in life and fortune. (4.1.133–35)

Subsequently, when he is pleading for mercy after being convicted of treason, Byron again refers to Essex:

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. (5.3.139–42)

⁷¹Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 147.

In describing Essex's 'wilful' character, and his refusal to use 'submission', Chapman is alluding to his magnanimous independence. The *Byron* plays overtly encourage the audience to reflect on the comparison between the downfalls of Essex and Byron.

Like the *Byron* plays, Daniel's *Philotas* includes an explicit reference to Essex, albeit in an Apology that was appended to the play. In 1605, Daniel was summoned by the Privy Council for questioning about the 'application' of *Philotas* to the Essex affair.⁷² He replies to those accusations in the Apology, asserting that the allegations were 'wrong': the play 'may be applied to the late Earl of Essex' only 'through ignorance of the history'.⁷³ Despite Daniel's protestations, numerous critics have concluded that the Privy Council's accusations were well founded.⁷⁴ While Daniel insists that his play is true to its historical sources,

⁷²As noted at the opening of the chapter, the accession of James brought about an alteration in the crown's attitude towards the supporters of Essex. The question then arises: why were authorities suspicious of a play exploring the demise of Essex? Although James had effected a reconciliation with Essex's supporters, the Privy Council would have been concerned about Daniel's depiction of Craterus and Ephestion, who correspond to Essex's opponents – the Cecilian faction. Commentators on *Philotas* have, therefore, suggested that Robert Cecil may have been a force behind the accusations directed at Daniel. See Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 168–71; Janet Clare, 'Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority': *Elizabethan and Dramatic Censorship*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 151.

⁷³Daniel, *Tragedy of Philotas*, Apology, lines 1, 73–74.

⁷⁴Lawrence Michel, introduction to *Philotas*, 36–66; Brents Stirling, 'Daniel's *Philotas* and the Essex Case', *MLQ* 3 (1942): 583–94; Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels*, 167; Hugh Gazzard, "'Those Graue Presentments of Antiquitie": Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* and the Earl of Essex', *RES*, New Series 51, no. 203 (August, 2000): 424–50. While G. A. Wilkes has

Curtius's *History of Alexander* and Plutarch's life of Alexander, Laurence Michel has meticulously mapped out the detailed correspondences between the trajectories of Essex and Daniel's Philotas, which are especially striking at those points where the play departs from its sources. Rather than rehearse such arguments, I will take it as read that *Philotas* served, to at least some extent, as a commentary on Essex's downfall.

In their Jacobean plays, Daniel and Chapman re-evaluate the unqualified admiration for Essex's martial virtue that they had expressed in the 1590s. During that period, Daniel's patron, Lord Mountjoy, was closely allied to Essex, and the first edition of Daniel's *The Civil Wars*, which appeared in 1595, lauds Essex and Mountjoy as martial heroes 'in whose actions yet the image shines / Of ancient honour ne'er worn out of date'.⁷⁵ The verses in *The Civil Wars* that commend Essex were excised from the 1609 edition. Like Daniel, Chapman had also praised Essex's martial exploits prior to his downfall, dedicating his 1598 translation of *The Iliad* to 'To the most honoured now living instance of the Achilleian virtues eternized by the divine Homer, the Earl of Essex, Earl Marshall'.⁷⁶ The principal 'Achilleian' virtue is magnanimity, the defining characteristic of the heroic 'great-souled' man. In *Philotas* and the *Byron* plays, however, the two authors provide a more critical evaluation of Essex's preoccupation with honour and magnanimity, pointing to the potential hazards to the public

defended Daniel's innocence against the Privy Council's accusations, his is a relatively isolated voice, at least since the appearance of Michel's edition of *Philotas*. See G. A.

Wilkes, 'Daniel's *Philotas* and the Essex Case: A Reconsideration', *MLQ* 23 (1962): 233–42.

⁷⁵Samuel Daniel, *The Civil Wars*, ed. Laurence Michel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 312.

⁷⁶*Seven Books of the Iliades, Books 1 and 2*, trans. George Chapman, in *Chapman's Homer: The Iliad*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll and Gary Wills (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 503.

good arising from the magnanimous man's desire for glory. Nevertheless, Daniel and Chapman also draw attention to the benefits of magnanimity, invoking in their plays the classical republican narrative. Like Jonson's *Sejanus*, *Philotas* and the *Byron* plays emphasize the opposition between the passionate outspokenness of magnanimous men and the servile flattery of courtiers, relating a tale of the destruction of magnanimity and classical liberty. Moreover, this opposition, I will argue, is coloured with a distinctly Tacitean tone.

Like the Germanicans in *Sejanus*, Daniel's *Philotas* shares Essex's distaste for 'the court'. In the opening scene of the play, when *Philotas* is advised that to survive 'in courts' requires 'meek and humble' behaviour (1.1.59–61), he refuses to moderate his frank and open manner of speech:

I cannot plaster and disguise m'affairs
 In other colours then my heart doth lay.
 Nor can I patiently endure this fond
 And strange proceeding of authority,
 That have ingrostr up all into their hand
 By idolizing feeble majesty,
 And impiously do labour all they can
 To make the King forget he is a man,
 Whilst they divide the spoils, and pray for power,
 And none at all respect the public good. (1.1.65–74)

Philotas presents courtiers as flatterers 'idolizing feeble majesty', who seek private gain at the expense of 'the public good'. By way of contrast, he emphasizes his own openness: he refuses to 'plaster and disguise' his thoughts. *Philotas*'s defence of openness and his

opposition to courtly flattery are reminiscent of Essex's magnanimous persona.

Subsequently, having recognized that his foes are plotting against him, Philotas again valorizes 'open actions', refusing to 'stoop' to 'baseness and soothing them':

Yet will I never stoop, and seek to win
 My way by them, that came not in by them;
 And scorn to stand on any other feet
 Than these of mine own worth; and what my plain
 And open actions cannot fairly get,
 Baseness and soothing them, shall never gain. (2.2.630–37)

Philotas's openness is associated with a sense of independence: he will not 'stand on any other feet / Than these of mine own worth'. His open manner derives from the kind of aversion to dependency that is associated with a commitment to classical liberty.

Given that Philotas represents Essex, the counterparts of the Cecilian faction are the principal courtiers in Daniel's play, Craterus and Ephestion. After a scene in which the chorus observe Craterus and Ephestion conversing, they judge that these courtiers mendaciously and maliciously are plotting Philotas's demise:

See how these great men clothe their private hate
 In their fair colours of the public good. (4.3.1110–11)

Yea, valour, honour, bounty shall be made
 As accessories unto ends unjust. (4.3.1118–19)

So that base vileness, idle luxury
 Seem safer far, than to do worthily. (4.3.1122–23)

The courtiers, who are pursuing private interests rather than the ‘public good’, are ‘base’, in contrast to the magnanimous ‘valour’ and ‘honour’ of Philotas. In plotting his downfall, they exploit Philotas’s ‘valour’ and ‘honour’, using them ‘unto ends unjust’. In these speeches, the chorus and Philotas set up an opposition between the courtiers’ base, self-serving flattery and Philotas’s magnanimity.

In the *Byron* plays, Chapman develops a similar contrast between Byron’s open nature and the obsequious servility of courtiers. In the following exchange, Byron and one of his companions, D’Auvergne, complain about the venal flattery of the courtiers:

<i>D’Auvergne</i>	But methinks, Being courtiers, they should cast best looks on men When they thought worst of them.
<i>Byron</i>	O no, my lord They ne’er dissemble but for some advantage; They sell their looks and shadows, which they rate After their markets, kept beneath the state. (<i>Tragedy of Byron</i> , 4.1.77–82)

In contrast to the veiled speech and mercenary flattery of the courtiers, Byron displays the particular kind of openness associated with magnanimity. Thus his co-conspirator warns him that he must curb his frankness, which is associated with his ‘great...spirit’:

How great a spirit he breathes! How learn’d, how wise!

But, worthy prince, you must give temperate air
 To your unmatched and more than human wind,
 Else will our plots be frost-bit in the flower. (1.2.43–46)

As in *Sejanus*, the contrast between magnanimous openness and courtly flattery signals the presence of the classical republican narrative in *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* and *Philotas*. In accordance with this narrative, the magnanimous protagonists in Chapman's and Daniel's plays are undone by servile flatterers. In the *Byron* plays and *Philotas*, however, the classical republican narrative includes an element that is not emphasized in Jonson's play: Chapman and Daniel associate the loss of liberty with the onset of 'slavish' peace. In the *Byron* plays, in particular, it is significant that the action begins in 1598 when France and Spain signed the peace treaty of Vervins.

A central theme in Tacitus's works is an association between peace and the loss of liberty. In the *Annals*, this association arises in the first instance because Augustus established imperial rule in Rome by ending the Civil Wars, breaking his opponents' will to resist:

nullo adversante, cum ferocissimi per acies aut proscriptione cecidissent, ceteri
 nobelium, quanto quis servitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur ac
 novis ex rebus aucti, tuta et praesentia quam vetera et periculosa mallent.

(*Annals*, 1.2)

There was no opposition [to imperial rule]: the most headstrong had died on the battlefield or by proscription, while the remainder of the nobility were raised to wealth and honour by an easy acceptance of slavery. And having thrived on rebellion, they now preferred safety to the hazards of old.

Tacitus presents Augustus's peace, the *pax Romana*, as a capitulation by the Roman people to absolutist rule, marking the beginning of their 'slavery'. More generally, when Tacitus is critical of peace, he typically is construing it as a capitulation to absolutism that is attended by a loss of classical liberty. For example in the passage below from *Agricola*, when Tacitus suggests that peace has caused 'indolence' among the Gauls, he is criticizing them for having capitulated to Rome, with the result that 'their virtue and liberty have been lost':

nam Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse accepimus; mox segnitia cum otio intravit,
amissa virtute pariter ac libertate. (*Agricola*, 11.4)⁷⁷

It is thought that in times of war the Gauls also thrived. Now that indolence,
which accompanied peace, has set in, their virtue and liberty have been lost.

In *Agricola*, British chieftain Calgacus inveighs against the 'peace' produced by Roman occupation, and his speech displays Tacitus's sententious style at its most memorable:

ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant. (*Agricola*, 30.5)

They make a wasteland, and call it peace.

⁷⁷Tacitus, *Agricola*, in *Agricola, Germania, Dialogus*, translated by M. Hutton and W. Peterson, revised by R. M. Ogilvie, E. H. Warmington and M. Winterbottom, Loeb Classical Library 35 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970). All quotations from *Agricola, Germania* and the *Dialogue* are from this edition.

Again, the criticism of peace is a call for resistance to tyrannical rule and the restoration of classical liberty.

As an unwavering advocate for war against Spain, Essex made use of this kind of Tacitean criticism of peace. In 1598, when the Treaty of Vervins gave the English and Dutch the opportunity to become parties to the pact between French and Spain, Essex argued strenuously that they should not sign the treaty, writing his *Apologie* in order to bolster the case for war.⁷⁸ The passage quoted above from Essex's *Apologie* uses the classical republican narrative to argue that the Netherlands should not treat for peace with Spain. In this passage, Essex invokes the Tacitean link between peace and the loss of liberty. If the Dutch accept the terms of the peace treaty, Essex asserts, then: 'province will strive with province, town with town, and man with man who shall be obsequious, and shew themselves most servile, all care of defence neglected by minds bewitched with the name of peace, all memory of former tyranny blotted out of their hearts, resolved to accept a Sovereign'.⁷⁹

The use of the word 'neglected' in the passage is significant. Essex is presenting an association between the loss of liberty, peace and neglect: peace represents a form of neglect, which is responsible for the loss of liberty. This same association is also present in the earlier quotation from Hayward's *Henrie IIII*. In deciding to fight for 'liberty', Bolingbroke presents himself as choosing 'adventure' over a 'safe' existence of 'sleep', characterized by 'negligence', 'sloth' and 'slavery'. When Hayward and Essex present peace – and the accompanying loss of liberty – as associated with indolence, safety and neglect, they are both drawing on Tacitus's characterization of peace. In his account above of the *pax Romana*, Tacitus observes that the Roman Civil Wars ended when Romans 'preferred safety to the dangers of old', succumbing to 'slavery'. Moreover, he suggests that the Gallic peace was

⁷⁸For the political context of Essex's *Apologie*, see Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 97–104.

⁷⁹Earl of Essex, *Apologie*, C2^r.

accompanied by *segnitia*, which could be translated as indolence, sloth or sluggishness.

Drawing on Tacitus, Essex's and Hayward's reiterations of the classical republican narrative associate the loss of liberty not only with peace but also with images of safety, indolence, sloth, neglect and sleep.

At the opening of the *Byron* plays, Chapman highlights the peacetime conditions that form the backdrop to the plays. Thus in the second scene of the *Conspiracy*, Byron is present in Brussels for the signing of the Treaty of Vervins. By drawing attention to this Treaty, Chapman encourages his audiences to recall the debates that took place in 1598 about whether England should sign up to the treaty, and, in particular, to reflect on Essex's opposition to peace with Spain. Essex was not only opposed to England signing the treaty; he also expressed disgust at what he perceived to be a capitulation by France to Spanish tyranny.⁸⁰ In this respect, Essex's attitude corresponds to that of Chapman's Byron. In the *Byron* plays, Byron presents the Franco-Spanish peace as a corrupting influence on the nation, as hostile to martial men like himself – men of magnanimous 'virtue, 'valour' and 'fame':

The world is quite inverted, virtue thrown

At vice's feet, and sensual peace confounds

Valour and cowardice, fame and infamy. (*Tragedy of Byron*, 1.2.14–16)

Building on this suggestion that peace produces a degeneration of national character, Byron specifically invokes the classical republican narrative, stating that peace is accompanied by a loss of liberty. In a 'settled peace' (4.1.1), Byron says:

⁸⁰Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 99.

men themselves, instead of bearing fruits,
 Grow rude and foggy, overgrown with weeds,
 Their spirits and freedoms smothered in their ease,
 And as their tyrants and their ministers
 Grow wild in the prosecution of their lusts,
 So they grow prostitute and lie, like whores. (*Tragedy of Byron*, 4.1.8–13)

Byron uses imagery of neglect to deprecate peace: in a ‘settled peace’, men become ‘rude’ and ‘overgrown with ‘weeds’, and rulers ‘Grow wild’. Peace also involves the suppression of liberty and magnanimous great spirits: ‘spirits and freedoms’ are ‘smothered’, and ‘tyrants’ flourish. The association of peace with both neglect and a loss of liberty recalls the passages quoted above of Tacitus, Hayward and Essex. As in these passages, Byron presents peace as a form of neglect, which produces tyranny and a loss of classical liberty.

This speech of Byron appears at the opening of scene 4.1 of the *Tragedy of Byron*, in which Byron and D’Auvergne complain at length about the flattery and obsequiousness of courtiers. The opening speech of the scene, therefore, gives the audience a framework with which to interpret Byron’s and D’Auvergne’s anti-courtier sentiments. The framework is a thoroughly Tacitean one: the courtiers exemplify the loss of classical liberty, and their servile flattery is to be interpreted as slavery, as base dependency on the will of the king.

Like Byron, Daniel’s *Philotas* is a celebrated soldier. Moreover, as in the *Byron* plays, *Philotas* pointedly draws attention to its peacetime setting. The following speech of the chorus suggests that peacetime conditions contributed to *Philotas*’s demise:

Some war hath graced, whom peace doth ill become,
 And lustful ease hath blemisht all their part.

We see Philotas acts his goodness ill,
 And makes his passions to report of him
 Worse than he is: and we do fear he will
 Bring his free nature to b'intrapt by them. (1.2.421–26)

In referring to Philotas's 'free nature', the chorus introduce a concept that is central to the classical notion of liberty. As we have seen, Byron also describes himself as possessing a 'free nature' (*Tragedy of Byron*, 3.2.82). To have a 'free nature' is to have a strong sense of independence akin a commitment to classical liberty – an aversion to dependency on the will of another. Accordingly, the warning of the chorus in *Philotas*, that in peacetime a 'free nature' is imperilled, serves to associate peace with the loss of liberty. The chorus also links peace to negligent indolence, suggesting that it produces a corrosive 'lustful ease'. In this passage, Daniel invokes the Tacitean association between peace, neglect and the loss of liberty.

The chorus suggest that Philotas's 'free nature' is characteristic of those whom 'war has graced', implying that it is a soldierly trait. At his trial, Philotas makes the same suggestion. Replying to accusations about his outspoken criticism of Alexander, Philotas uses his martial character as an excuse. He has an inclination, he says, towards a 'dangerous liberty / Of speaking truth' (4.2.1580–81), which is associated with his soldierly character:

And God forbid, that ever soldiers words
 Should be made liable unto misdeeds,
 ...
 Their deeds deserve, to have them rather thought
 The passion of the season, than their mind:

For soldiers' joy, or wrath, is measureless,
 Rapt with an instant motion; and we blame,
 We hate, we praise, we pity in excess,
 According as our present passions frame. (4.2.1587–88, 1593–98)

Emotive outspokenness, Philotas insists, is a characteristic trait of soldiers, which is responsible for his imprudent speech. The same connection between the military and 'free natures' is articulated in the 'Argument' to the play: Philotas's dispraise of Alexander is described as 'the brave words and boasts of a soldier' (Argument, 12–13).

The 'free nature' of a soldier is one aspect of his magnanimity. In early modern England, magnanimity was regarded as the principal virtue of a soldier.⁸¹ Indeed, as noted above, Essex himself explains that he cultivates the companionship of military men on account of their magnanimity: 'I love them for their virtue's sake, for their greatness of mind'.⁸² Furthermore, Naunton connects Willoughby's 'magnanimity' to his martial character: 'as he was a great soldier, so was he of a suitable magnanimity'. Accordingly, the magnanimous independence of a 'free nature' was seen as part of a soldierly character.⁸³

⁸¹For example, Richard Crompton wrote a treatise on honour and warfare, which was dedicated to the Earl of Essex, with the title *The mansion of magnanimitie Wherein is shewed the most high and honorable acts of sundrie English kings, dukes, earles, lords, knights and gentlemen, from time to time performed in defence of their princes and countrie* (London, 1599).

⁸²Essex, *Apologie*, B3^f.

⁸³Like *Philotas*, Jonson's *Sejanus* develops an association between outspokenness and magnanimous independence, but Jonson, however, does not emphasize the connection to martial virtue. After all, Cordus is a historian and Agrippina and Sosia are women. Whereas

The concept of a ‘free nature’ is helpful in answering the question: why did Elizabethan and Jacobean quasi-republicans value freedom of speech? One answer might be that republicans emphasized the importance of virtuous and critical counsel to the monarch, which is possible only if free speech is permitted. While I do not disagree with this answer, it omits one of the most distinctive features of the republican conception of freedom – namely, its perceived effect on character. The answer must be supplemented in two important respects.

First, a ‘free nature’ was regarded as valuable for its own sake, apart from its influence on the functioning of government. When the chorus in *Philotas* refer to the protagonist’s ‘free nature’, they are referring to his magnanimous independence. For republicans, this kind of character was regarded as admirable in itself, and, conversely, to lack a ‘free nature’ was regarded contemptible. When Jonson’s *Germanicus*, Daniel’s *Philotas* and Chapman’s *Byron* unleash their invective on servile and obsequious courtiers, their criticism is not merely that such slavish characters have a detrimental effect on government, but also that such characters are contemptible *per se*. According to early modern republicans, liberty is valuable both because of its beneficial effect on government but also because it produces ‘free natures’, which are admirable.

Second, a ‘free nature’ was perceived not merely to be an isolated character trait, but rather to be tied to a network of other traits, including magnanimity, courage, openness, honour, as well as – in at least some cases – military prowess. Restrictions on liberty, therefore, discourage not only free natures but also the associated character traits, producing subjects who are cowardly, pusillanimous, dissembling, dishonourable, and poor soldiers.

all three display magnanimous independence, none is a soldier. While magnanimous independence is loosely associated with martial virtue, Jonson’s *Sejanus* illustrates that it is not an exclusive concern of men and soldiers.

This classical republican view lies behind Robert Hedley's criticism of James's efforts to extend his prerogative: Hedley argues that the loss of liberty would cause Englishmen to 'grow both poor and base-minded like to the peasants in other countries, which be no soldiers nor will be ever made any'.⁸⁴ Unless it is interpreted in the light of the classical conception of liberty, Hedley's claim – connecting James's tax grab to the quality of English soldiery – might seem absurd.

In the Jacobean Essex plays, the playwrights use the classical republican narrative to engage with debates about Essex's downfall, emphasizing the value of a 'free nature' and the detriment to the public good of suppressing magnanimous independence. In each of these plays, however, this narrative is only one thread in a more complex view of liberty that is presented to the audience. The plays draw attention not only to the value of free natures but also to their potential harm. Those who possess a free nature may pose a danger both to the public good and also to themselves. All three plays, I will argue, include alternative narratives that are in tension with the classical republican narrative of the loss of liberty.

1.7 The hazards of 'free natures'

In Daniel's play, the classical republican narrative is articulated primarily in the speeches of Philotas and the chorus. As described in the previous section, this narrative would suggest that while Philotas did voice criticisms of Alexander, he was not involved in the conspiracy to overthrow the monarch. He was a magnanimous, outspoken soldier who was attacked by self-serving, obsequious and mendacious courtiers. These courtiers exploited his impolitic outspokenness and his 'free nature' in order to frame him, and his ultimate confession merely testifies to the unreliability of evidence obtained by torture.

⁸⁴Hedley's speech to parliament, 194–95.

Daniel does, however, present a number of alternative perspectives on Philotas's fall. The first such perspective is offered by Philotas's accusers, principally Alexander, Craterus and Ephestion, who present a malign interpretation of Philotas's actions that implicates him in the conspiracy against the monarch. But having heard Craterus and Ephestion plotting, as well as the chorus's negative assessment of their character, the audience has reason to question their motives, and so is not necessarily compelled to take their version of the events seriously. Similarly, Alexander's view of events is suspect: he vacillates in his judgement, swayed first by Philotas and finally by Craterus and Ephestion; and he seems to place excessive weight on the fact that Philotas criticized his claims to divinity, which clearly has stung his vanity.

The Argument that prefaces the play also offers a perspective that is critical of Philotas. It presents a favourable portrait of Craterus and Ephestion, maintaining that the conspiracy against Alexander, 'which being by Ephestion and Craterus, two the most especial counsellors of Alexander, gravely and providently discerned, was prosecuted in that manner as became their nearness and dearness with their Lord and Master' (Argument, 31–34). The Argument casts aspersions on the credibility of the chorus, which is portrayed as 'representing the multitude and body of a people who vulgarly (according to their affections, carried rather with compassion on great-mens' misfortunes, then with the consideration of the cause) frame their imaginations by that square, and censure what is done' (Argument, 41–45). It is unclear, however, how the perspective provided by the Argument should be interpreted. First, Laurence Michel has provided reasons to think that the Argument was completed only after the Apology, in response to accusations by the Privy Council.⁸⁵ Second,

⁸⁵Michel, introduction to *Philotas*, 41.

Richard Dutton observes that in the overblown praise of Craterus and Ephestion, ‘the congratulatory rhetoric borders on irony’.⁸⁶

Of the perspectives that are critical of Philotas, perhaps the most credible is that presented in Chalcisthenes’s speeches. Chalcisthenes, who is an adviser of Philotas, appears to provide honest counsel without a private agenda.⁸⁷ The audience is given no reason to doubt Chalcisthenes’s credibility. Immediately after Philotas presents himself as a straight-talking soldier in the pursuit of the public good, Chalcisthenes offers the audience an alternative perspective on his character. First, he questions whether Philotas is really motivated by the public good: ‘Philotas, all this public care, I fear, / Is but some private touch of your dislike’ (1.1.83–84). He goes on to suggest that Philotas’s oppositional behaviour – his tendency to ‘condemn / The train of state’ – arises not from virtue but from ‘envy’ (1.1.90, 94–95). Not only is he motivated by envy but also by excessive ambition, by a will to dominate: ‘Cannot you great-men suffer others to / Have part in rule, but must have all to do?’ (1.1.152–53). Philotas’s excessive ambition, Chalcisthenes suggests, is a vice characteristic of ‘great-men’ – that is, of magnanimous men. In other words, Chalcisthenes is warning that the virtue of magnanimity is a close neighbour to the vice of self-serving ambition, a vice perilous to the state. He repeats this concern in the following couplet: ‘And who have spirits to do the greatest good, / May do the most hurt, if they remain not good’ (1.1.126–27). When referring to those ‘who have the spirits to do the greatest good’, Chalcisthenes means magnanimous, great-spirited people. Such people ‘May do the most hurt’ to the nation if they fail to strive at the public good.

⁸⁶Dutton, *Mastering the Revels*, 169.

⁸⁷In the next chapter, I suggest that Chalcisthenes’s advice is reminiscent of that provided to Essex by Francis Bacon and Lord Henry Howard.

In expressing this concern about the potential hazards of magnanimity, Chalisthenes is articulating a classical commonplace that can be found, for example, in Cicero's *On Duties*. Cicero wrote *On Duties* in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the republic, and he clearly has Julius Caesar in mind when he describes the dangers of 'greatness of spirit' to the state. The contrast between Aristotle's and Cicero's accounts of magnanimity is striking. Cicero devotes more space to the hazards of magnanimity than to its admirable features:

Sed ea animi elatio, quae cernitur in periculis et laboribus, si iustitia vacat pugnatque non pro salute communi, sed pro suis commodis, in vitio est.

(*On Duties*, 1.19.62)⁸⁸

But this elevation of spirit, which is displayed in danger and toil, if it is unattended by a sense of justice and if it aims at its own ends rather than the common good, it is a vice.

Facile autem ad res iniustas impellitur, ut quisque altissimo animo est, gloriae cupiditate. (*On Duties*, 1.19.65)

The greater is his spirit, the more easily is he driven to unjust actions by the desire for glory.

In his criticisms of Philotas, Chalisthenes is expressing Ciceronian concerns about the potential of the magnanimous man to harm the public good. At the opening of the play, Daniel encourages the audience to resist the easy conclusion that Philotas is a virtuous but

⁸⁸Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library 30 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913).

impolitic victim. In effect, *Philotas* presents the audience with two different attitudes towards classical liberty and soldierly magnanimity. One is the classical republican narrative, which emphasizes the value of magnanimous independence, and which laments its destruction. The opposing attitude is the Ciceronian account of magnanimity. In *Philotas*, Daniel engages with the debate about these two attitudes to magnanimity, so as to explore, but not to answer, the questions surrounding the demise of Essex.

In his *Byron* plays, Chapman places more emphasis than Daniel on the potential hazards of magnanimity. Throughout the plays, Chapman stresses the Ciceronian concern that if the magnanimous man does not pursue the public good, he poses a danger to the state. The prologue to the *Conspiracy* urges the audience to ‘see in his [Byron’s] revolt how honour’s flood / Ebbs into the air when men are great, not good’ (*Conspiracy of Byron*, Prologus, 23–24). Men who ‘are great, not good’ are magnanimous men, whose quest for glory harms rather than abets the public good. Then in scene 1.2, immediately prior to Byron’s first appearance on the stage, a tapestry displaying the ‘history of Catiline’ is spread out, anticipating Byron’s rebellion (*Conspiracy of Byron*, 1.2.15). Early moderns regarded Catiline’s rebellion as emblematic of the dangers to the state of self-serving ambition. Finally, when Byron awaits his execution in the final scene of the *Tragedy*, he appears to have learnt this lesson: ‘He is at no end of his actions blest / Whose ends make him the greatest, and not best’ (*Tragedy of Byron*, 5.4.145–46). Generally speaking, Chapman presents Byron’s rebellion as inspired by magnanimity but inimical to the public good.

Accordingly, a number of critics have concluded that the play is broadly critical of the rebel Byron, who is presented in an unfavourable light compared to the admirable king. Thus Peter Ure concludes that ‘Henry IV is the standard-bearer of moral authority in these plays’, and that Chapman ‘has so firmly grounded his moral scheme and embodied it so successfully in the continued contrast between the righteous Henry and the errant Byron that we are not

likely to misunderstand where the true moral order lies'.⁸⁹ Eugene Waith concurs that Chapman presents the king as 'a model of wisdom and forbearance', while Byron is the archetype of an 'ambitious traitor'.⁹⁰ According to Richard Hillman, in representing 'heroic ambition as self-destructive', Chapman is supporting the interests of King James: the *Byron* plays not only glance backwards at Essex but also criticize the growing independence, ambition and militarism of James's son, Prince Henry.⁹¹

While I acknowledge that Ciceronian concerns about magnanimous independence are central to the *Byron* plays, I argued in the previous section that Chapman also emphasizes the value of such independence. Scene 4.1 of the *Tragedy*, I suggested, is especially preoccupied with the classical republican narrative of the loss of liberty. In this scene, the proliferation of servile and obsequious courtiers illustrates the harm to the public good from the destruction of 'spirits and freedoms'.⁹² In comparison with Henry's courtiers, therefore, Byron has

⁸⁹Peter Ure, 'Chapman's Tragedies', in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama: Critical Essays by Peter Ure*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), 177, 180. For other commentary emphasizing the favourable presentation of the king, see *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Tragedies*, ed. T. M. Parrott (London: Routledge, 1910), 596; A. R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 58.

⁹⁰Eugene Waith, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 133, 136.

⁹¹Richard Hillman, 'The Tragic Channel-Crossings of George Chapman, Part I: *Bussy d'Ambois, The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*', *CahiersE* 65 (Spring 2004): 33.

⁹²Margot Heinemann has also proposed that Chapman's depiction of Henry's counsellors suggests a criticism of monarchical power: 'The Machiavellianism of the King's counsellors, and his inevitable use of informers and *agents provocateurs*, attract a degree of sympathy to

virtues that, at least potentially, can improve the health of the republic. In this scene, Byron stresses the value of frank counsel: if ‘spirits and freedoms’ have been ‘smothered’, if the king’s adviser’s have all become flatterers, ‘who’, Byron asks, ‘will stir / To tell authority that it doth err?’ (4.1.19–20). Chapman is alluding to a similar rhetorical question that Essex had posed in a letter to Sir Thomas Egerton: ‘Cannot princes err?’.⁹³ As princes can ‘err’, a healthy republic requires frank counsellors, who are driven by a sense of magnanimous independence.

The *Byron* plays do, therefore, promote the republican idea that subjects of ‘free nature’ may potentially benefit the common good. Byron himself, however, has an excessive appetite for liberty, which is hazardous to the public good. In the character of Byron, Chapman blends together classical and Marlovian notions of freedom. Invoking Icarus’s aspirations to fly, Byron expresses a Marlovian desire to free himself from fate and the human lot:

O that mine arms were wings, that I might fly
 And pluck out of their hearts my destiny!
 I’ll wear those golden spurs upon my heels

Byron even in his blindness and folly’. (Margot Heinemann, ‘Political Drama’ in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 184). Glen Mynott also discerns criticisms of monarchical power in *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*: “‘We must not be more true to kings / Than Kings are to their subjects’”: France and the Politics of the Ancient Constitution in Chapman’s Byron Plays’, *Ren. Studs.* 9, no. 4 (1995): 477–93.

⁹³*Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex*, 501. Essex’s question to Egerton was cited in his trials. See Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 198–99.

And kick at fate; be free, all worthy spirits,

And stretch yourself for greatness and for height;

Untruss your slaveries.

(*Conspiracy of Byron*, 3.3.127–32)

Byron has the excessive desire for freedom characteristic of a Marlovian overreacher. While his immoderate appetite for liberty is hazardous not only for himself but also the public good, the play nevertheless suggests that classical liberty, appropriately tempered, promotes the health of the nation.

Republican sentiments are conveyed in the characterization not only of Byron but also of Henry IV. While I agree with the critical consensus that the king is, broadly speaking, presented as admirable, this favourable presentation is at times used to support a republican rather than a royalist or absolutist agenda. For example, when reflecting on how to respond to Byron's conspiracy, Henry rejects the advice of his advisor, Janin, who argues that Henry should ignore due process. Janin obsequiously suggests that 'Princes, you know, are masters of their laws / And may resolve them to what forms they please' (*Tragedy of Byron*, 4.2.30–31). Responding to Janin, Henry insists that 'The decent ceremonies of my laws / And their solemnities shall be observed' (*Tragedy of Byron*, 4.2.45–46). Henry is, in effect, endorsing the central precept of the monarchical republicans of Elizabethan and Jacobean England – the precept that law and custom place substantial restrictions on monarchical power. Furthermore Henry's insistence on the process of law is not merely for show. In a subsequent soliloquy, Henry laments:

O how much

Err those kings, then, that play with life and death

And nothing put into their serious states

But humour and their lusts!

(*Tragedy of Byron*, 4.2.79–82)

Henry insists that government must not be driven by the ‘humour’ and ‘lusts’ of the monarch, articulating the same as the criticism of absolutism expressed by Silius in *Sejanus*: ‘We since became the slaves to one man’s lusts’ (1.62–63). In using a favourable depiction of a monarch to advance a republican agenda, Chapman is following the model of Jonson’s *Poetaster*. As discussed earlier, *Poetaster* promotes the ideal of a monarchical republic by portraying a monarch who is willing to be guided by virtuous counsel.

These republican elements in the *Byron* plays are not inconsistent with Chapman’s unfavourable depiction of rebellion. After all, when Cicero expresses his concerns about the dangers of magnanimity, he has Caesar’s rebellion in mind, which, of course, was an assault on the Roman republic. Rebellion potentially poses a danger not only to monarchies but also to republics. When considering the extent to which scope must be given to ‘free natures’, classical and early modern republicans were aware of both their potential benefit to the public good, but also their potential harm.

Whereas in *Philotas* and *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, the Ciceronian concerns about magnanimity are presented alongside the classical republican narrative, such Ciceronian concerns are largely absent from Jonson’s *Sejanus*. Unlike *Philotas* and *Byron*, the Germanicans in *Sejanus* are not presented as motivated by self-serving ambition. There is no suggestion that the Germanicans’ magnanimous character and ‘free nature’ are in the service of anything other than the public good. Jonson’s emphasis on the value of classical liberty encourages a republican reading of the play; *Sejanus* vividly depicts the harm to the public good that results from the suppression of classical liberty.

Nevertheless, like *Philotas* and the *Byron* plays, *Sejanus* does contain a countervailing narrative that criticizes republican ‘free natures’. While it does not present the republican

Germanicans as motivated by self-serving ambition, instead it suggests that they are ineffective, imprudent and susceptible to manipulation. The next chapter examines in detail Jonson's criticisms of the Germanicans. Accordingly, my reading of *Sejanus* builds on elements of both republican and royalist interpretations of Jonson's politics. On the one hand, my emphasis in the current chapter on the role of the republican classical narrative in *Sejanus* is consistent with a recent strand in the critical literature that draws attention to republican elements in the play.⁹⁴ On the other hand, in highlighting Jonson's criticisms of the Germanicans, the next chapter agrees in some respects with readings of *Sejanus* presented in the 1980s by David Norbrook and Jonathan Goldberg, who both present a broadly royalist portrait of Jonson.⁹⁵ In *Sejanus*, Jonson encourages his audience both to sympathize with, and also to criticize, the republicanism of the Germanicans.

⁹⁴See, for example, Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies', 171–79; Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics*, 23–33.

⁹⁵Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, 161–62; Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, 177–83.

CHAPTER TWO

TACITEAN STOICISM AND JONSON'S *SEJANUS*

In *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, David Norbrook proposes that Jonson's *Sejanus* depicts 'a world largely divided into fools and knaves'.¹ While 'fools' is, perhaps, an overly strong term to describe the Germanicans, numerous critics have observed that they are certainly startlingly ineffective, as well as somewhat benighted.² If any of the Germanicans deserves to be called a 'fool', it is Arruntius. Sejanus and Tiberius explicitly decide to exploit Arruntius's outspokenness, using him as an instrument to serve their own ends.³ Moreover, when Tiberius is orchestrating his master plan in the fourth and fifth acts, Arruntius looks on

¹Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, 161.

²Katharine Maus describes the Germanicans as 'politically impotent', Blair Worden as 'victims of power, Philip Ayres as 'socially ineffective. See Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 32; Worden, 'Politics in *Catiline*: Jonson and his Sources', in *Re-Presenting Ben Jonson: Text, History, Performance*, ed. Martin Butler (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1999), 163; Ayres, introduction to *Sejanus*, ed. Ayres, 10. Russ McDonald similarly suggests that the Germanicans' virtue is 'incapable of defending itself against the quick forces of evil': 'Jonsonian Comedy and *Sejanus*', *SEL* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 294.

³See *Sejanus*, 3.498–99. Jonathan Goldberg emphasizes Tiberius's manipulation of Arruntius: 'Even Arruntius is part of the imperial performance, an allowed voice giving Tiberius scope for his acts' (*James I and the Politics of Literature*, 181). While Goldberg's New Historicist interpretation of *Sejanus* differs in important respects from that of Norbrook, both critics stress Tiberius's potency and the ineffectiveness of the Germanican opposition.

in a state of unvarying bewilderment. Norbrook's remark, I suggest, poses an important challenge for any republican reading of *Sejanus*. If the play is freighted with a republican agenda, why is Jonson at pains to expose the flaws in the Germanicans, who are the primary exponents of republicanism in the play? What is the function of Jonson's studious criticism of the Germanicans?

To answer these questions, it is instructive to compare *Sejanus* to its principal source, Tacitus's *Annals*. Like Jonson, Tacitus is both sympathetic to republican values but is also critical of the Germanicans. Rather than lauding Agrippina's republican ideals, Tacitus deprecates her obstinacy (*contumacia*), characterizing her as reckless (*improvidus*) and incapable of discerning dissimulation (*nescia simulationum*).⁴ There is a tension in Tacitus's works between his valorization of republican liberty, which was discussed in the previous chapter, and his criticism of the republicans of Tiberius's Rome. This tension reflects a contrast between Tacitus's political ideals and his views on effective political strategy. On the one hand, Tacitus is drawn to the republican ideal, lamenting the loss of liberty in the early Principate. On the other hand, Tacitus strongly believes that if, in fact, a statesman is serving an oppressive emperor, he should avoid overt and defiant displays of liberty, which Tacitus regards as self-defeating and feckless. For instance, Tacitus praises the Roman general Agricola, who served under the brutal and paranoid emperor Domitian, for eschewing 'empty shows of liberty':

moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia
neque inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat. (*Agricola*, 3)

⁴Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.12, 4.54. See also 4.52–53.

He [Domitian] was, however, appeased by the moderation and prudence of Agricola, who was not given to the kind of defiance and empty shows of liberty that creates notoriety and ruin.

Tacitus's grounds for criticizing defiance are grimly empirical. He himself had served as a senator under Domitian, and his histories chronicle the banishments, poisonings and executions that almost invariably ensue after any overt and defiant displays of opposition. As a result, throughout Tacitus's writings, two contrasting strands of thought can be distinguished: a republican note is struck when Tacitus inveighs against the loss of liberty under imperial rule, but he also regularly presents criticisms of defiance. While these two strands of thought create a tension in Tacitus's writings, they are not, of course, straightforwardly inconsistent. Tacitus's republicanism represents a political ideal, whereas his criticism of defiance reflects his judgement that, at least under the brutal regimes of first-century Rome, statesmen could survive only if they compromised their ideals.

Both strands of Tacitean thought are central to Jonson's *Sejanus*. Whereas the previous chapter drew attention to the republican element in the play, the current chapter will emphasize the presence in *Sejanus* of the second strand of Tacitean thought, which warns statesmen about the hazards of 'defiance and empty shows of liberty'. Jonson conveys this Tacitean lesson not only by emphasizing the flaws in the Germanicans, but also through his characterization of Lepidus. In Tacitus's *Annals*, Lepidus is a similar figure to Agricola, presented as admirable for his moderation, prudence and discretion. Like Agricola, Lepidus avoids 'defiance and empty shows of liberty', but he is not obsequiously servile. Rather, as Tacitus puts it, Lepidus navigates a middle way 'between defiant obstinacy and crooked subservience'.⁵ Classical scholars have long recognized Lepidus's pivotal role in *Annals* 1–

⁵Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.20.

6,⁶ but in the critical literature on *Sejanus*, commentators have paid relatively little attention to Jonson's portrait of Lepidus.

In *Sejanus*, I will argue, Jonson presents a contrast between Lepidus and the Germanicans that encourages audiences to reflect upon the merits of the Tacitean middle way.⁷ Like the *Annals*, *Sejanus* depicts the downfall of the Germanicans as a cautionary tale, prompting audiences to explore the more politic and prudent middle path of Lepidus. For the audiences at the early performances of *Sejanus*, the destruction of the Germanicans would have brought to mind another more recent cautionary tale – the fall of the Earl of Essex. In Jonson's *Sejanus*, the Tacitean middle way is presented as an alternative to an uncompromising and unrestrained mode of political engagement, which was seen as responsible not only for the failure of the Germanicans but also for the downfall of the Earl of Essex.

⁶For classical scholarship that stresses the importance of Lepidus's role in *Annals* 1–6, see Ronald Syme, 'Marcus Lepidus, Capax Imperii', *JRS* 45, parts 1 and 2 (1955): 33; Ronald Martin, *Tacitus* (London: Batsford, 1981), 127, 137; Patrick Sinclair, *Tacitus the Sententious Historian: A Sociology of Rhetoric in Annales 1–6* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 163–91.

⁷This account of the role of Lepidus in Jonson's *Sejanus* is presented in Peter Gibbard, 'Jonson's *Sejanus* and the Middle Way of *Annals* 1–6', *SEL* 56, no. 2 (forthcoming in Spring 2016).

2.1 The middle way of *Annals* 1–6

In the opening lines of *Discoveries*, Jonson asserts that ‘very few men are wise by their own counsel, or learned by their own teaching’.⁸ It may well be that this assertion itself is not the fruit of Jonson’s ‘own counsel’, but rather derives from the final sentence in the following passage from the *Annals*, which spells out Tacitus’s statement of purpose for writing the *Annals*:

Igitur ut olim plebe valida, vel cum patres pollerent, noscenda vulgi natura et quibus modis temperanter haberetur, senatusque et optimatum ingenia qui perdidicerant, callidi temporum et sapientes credebantur, sic converse statu neque alia re Romana, quam si unus imperitet, haec conquiri tradique in rem fuerit, quia pauci prudentia honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt, plures aliorum eventis docentur. (*Annals*, 4.33)

In former times, when the people ruled or the aristocracy prevailed, it was necessary to know the nature of the masses and to have the means of controlling them; and those regarded as shrewd and wise made efforts to learn thoroughly the character of the senate and aristocrats. Thus today, in contrast, when the Roman state hardly differs from a monarchy, it might serve some purpose for the details of political life to be collected and passed on. For few men distinguish right from wrong, the expedient from the disastrous, using their own judgement: most are taught by the experience of others.

⁸*Works of Jonson*, 7: 499, line 15.

Tacitus's *Annals*, written at the beginning of the second century, analyses the political history of first-century Rome. The first century represented a new era of Roman politics, a period of monarchical rule after the fall of the republic. It is an era notorious for brutal emperors, the most infamous of whom are Tiberius, Caligula, Nero and Domitian. As a member of the senatorial class, Tacitus was actively involved in the dangerous political life of early imperial Rome, and he wrote the *Annals* as a guide to post-republican politics 'when the Roman state hardly differs from a monarchy'.

The purpose of the *Annals* is to teach the audience, understood to be the governing class of Rome, by describing 'the experience of others'. But whereas 'most are taught by the experience of others', Tacitus acknowledges the existence of a 'few men' who, 'using their own judgement', navigated successfully through the dangerous political landscape of early imperial Rome. The *Annals* uses these 'few men' as exemplars: the reader is intended to learn about imperial politics by understanding the successful strategies of these 'few men'. Tacitus's exemplars provide lessons not only in political expediency but also in morality: these 'few men' were able to 'distinguish right from wrong, the expedient from the disastrous'.

Of these exemplary figures in the *Annals*, one of the most important is Senator Lepidus.⁹ In the following passage, Tacitus praises Lepidus's successful political career, which he achieved while retaining at least a measure of moral agency:

Hunc ego Lepidum temporibus illis gravem et sapientem virum fuisse comperior:
nam pleraque ab saevis adulationibus aliorum in melius flexit. Neque tamen
temperamenti egebat, cum aequabili auctoritate et gratia apud Tiberium viguerit.

⁹Other exemplary figures in the *Annals* include Regulus and Piso, who, like Lepidus, are praised for their combination of moderation and integrity. See *Annals*, 6.10, 14.47.

Unde dubitare cogor, fato et sorte nascendi, ut cetera, ita principum inclinatio in hos, offensio in illos, an sit aliquid in nostris consiliis liceatque inter abruptam contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis vacuum.

(*Annals*, 4.20)

I gather that Lepidus was, for his time, a grave and wise man, for many actions he bent to the better, in opposition to the savage subservience of others. However, he did not lack discretion: under Tiberius, he thrived, with consistent power and favour. For this reason, I am forced to doubt that the consequences of the likes and dislikes of princes are governed by fate and our star of nativity. Perhaps, instead, we are free to pursue our purposes, to find a way between defiant obstinacy and crooked subservience, a way clear of intrigue and danger.

Lepidus was certainly a master of political expediency, behaving with ‘discretion’ (*temperamentum*), which allowed him to thrive under Tiberius. But he was not guilty of ‘crooked subservience’ (*deforme obsequium*). Despite the brutality of Tiberius’s regime, Lepidus was able to exercise moral agency: ‘many actions he bent to the better, in opposition to the savage subservience of others’. Lepidus’s mode of political engagement is described as a middle way, ‘a way between defiant obstinacy and crooked subservience’. In the *Annals*, Tacitus recommends Lepidus’s middle way, encouraging readers to be guided by considerations of both political expediency and morality.

Tacitus’s description of Lepidus makes explicit the central question driving the narrative in the *Annals* 1–6: are ‘the consequences of the likes and dislikes of princes ... governed by fate and our star of nativity’? In other words, the question is whether any moral agency is possible under monarchical rule. In portraying Sejanus’s faction and the Germanicans, Tacitus points to the difficulty of achieving agency under Tiberius. When the

Germanicans attempt to exercise such agency, they are promptly poisoned or prosecuted. Sejanus and his followers do not even attempt to exercise moral agency, but unswervingly and obsequiously pursue their self-interest. In contrast, Lepidus is one of the ‘few men’ who was able to exercise at least a measure of moral agency under Tiberius. His political strategy, therefore, can be construed as a solution to the problem posed by *Annals* 1–6.

Classical scholars have long accorded Lepidus a central role in the *Annals* 1–6. Ronald Syme describes Lepidus as ‘Tacitus’ hero’, although anti-hero would probably be a more accurate description.¹⁰ Patrick Sinclair suggests that Tacitus uses Lepidus as the ‘standard of prudence’, as the paradigm of an ‘aristocratic survivalist’.¹¹ Commenting on Tacitus’s praise of Lepidus, quoted above, Ronald Martin proposes that the passage is the key to understanding Tacitus’s own political attitude: ‘Only rarely does Tacitus express himself so unequivocally; there can be no doubt that he so greatly admired Lepidus, because he exemplified that ideal of political conduct that he himself upheld’.¹² Similarly, I will argue that in Jonson’s *Sejanus*, audiences are encouraged to explore Lepidus’s path between the extremes of ‘defiant obstinacy and crooked subservience’. In characterizing the contrast between Lepidus and the Germanicans, Jonson portrays the attractions of the Tacitean middle way.

2.2 Lipsius’s Tacitism and *Sejanus*

In early modern Europe, Tacitus was appropriated to authorize a diverse range of political positions, from royalism to Civil War republicanism. Several early modern Tacitists,

¹⁰Syme, ‘Marcus Lepidus, Capax Imperii’, 33.

¹¹Sinclair, *Tacitus the Sententious Historian*, 183.

¹²Martin, *Tacitus*, 137. See also 127.

however, drew on Tacitus to articulate a middle way in politics, akin to that presented in *Annals 1–6*. Thus in his *Six Books of Politics*, Justus Lipsius, who was perhaps the most prominent Tacitist of the late sixteenth century, uses Lepidus to defend political moderation:

This caution of Tiberius is not slightly to be overpassed: who did not affect those that excelled in virtue, and detested them that were vicious. Fearing lest those that did so surpass might be a stumbling block in his own way; and those of the worser sort a shame and dishonour to the commonwealth. Those then of the middle sort are the best, to whose fidelity, both in times past and at this day, Princes may with most safety commit their secret affairs.¹³

The marginal note to this passage cites the *Annals* as its source. When Lipsius talks of Tiberius favouring statesmen ‘of the middle sort’, he has Tacitus’s Lepidus in mind. The path between ‘those that excelled in virtue’ and those ‘that were vicious’ is the middle way of Lepidus. Throughout *Of Politics*, Lipsius directs his readers towards this principle of moderation, which provides the framework for much of the advice in the treatise.¹⁴

¹³Justus Lipsius, *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine*, trans. William Jones (London, 1594), 55.

¹⁴In the following passages, Lipsius articulates his doctrine of the middle way: ‘we desire that the Prince...be able to intermingle that which is profitable with that which is honest’ (*Of Politics*, 113); ‘be instructed to mingle those things that are profitable with matters that are honest’ (*Of Politics*, 201–2). For an example of Lipsius’s application of the doctrine of the middle way, see his discussion of deception (*Of Politics*, 112–23). Lipsius recommends a middle way between unsullied honesty and ‘great deceit’.

Several historians of political thought have emphasized the significance of the middle way in Lipsius's works. Thus in their studies of the early modern Tacitist movement, J. H. M. Salmon and Adriana McCrea both suggest that the following aphorism of Sir Robert Dallington, calling for a 'middle way' between 'Moralists' and 'Politicks', articulates Lipsius's doctrine:¹⁵

All Moralists hold nothing profitable that is not honest: Some Politicks have inverted this order, and perverted the sense, by transposing the terms in the proposition: holding nothing honest that is not profitable. Howsoever those former may seem too straight laced, these surely are too loose. For there is a *middle way* between both, which a right Statesman must take.¹⁶

Nevertheless, among historians, the political significance of Lipsius's writings remains contested, perhaps because his writings combine elements of both republican and royalist political positions.¹⁷ Accordingly, diverse readings of Lipsius can be found in the literary

¹⁵ Adriana McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584–1650* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997), 55; Salmon 'Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England', 216–17.

¹⁶ Robert Dallington, *Aphorismes civill and militarie* (London, 1613), Bk. 5, Aphorisme 19, p. 314. The emphasis is mine.

¹⁷ On the one hand, Quentin Skinner and Richard Tuck discern in Lipsius's works an attitude of resigned submission to authority and a preoccupation with self-preservation: Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 277–81; Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*. On the other hand,

criticism on Jonson's *Sejanus*, with critics tending to offer interpretations of Lipsius that are consistent with their reading of the politics of *Sejanus*. Thus in his republican reading of *Sejanus*, Cain portrays Jonson as extracting quasi-republican values from Lipsius.¹⁸ In contrast, Norbrook, who interprets *Sejanus* as a study in statecraft and *realpolitik* expediency, suggests it may have been influenced by 'Lipsius' "Machiavellian" Tacitism'.¹⁹ My suggestion, which is intermediate between these two views, is that Jonson was interested in Lipsius's defence of the Tacitean middle way. Drawing on both Lipsius and Tacitus, Jonson crafts the character of Lepidus so as to present an alternative to both the uncompromising moralism of the Germanicans and the amoral self-interest of Sejanus's faction.

2.3 The middle way of Jonson's Lepidus

It might appear that Jonson's Lepidus is broadly aligned with the Germanicans. After all, they praise him, they value his advice, and, in the final two acts of *Sejanus*, Lepidus's constant companion is Arruntius, a prominent member of the Germanican faction. Jonson is careful, however, to distance Lepidus's political stance from that of the Germanicans. Thus when Arruntius expresses hope that 'the fates grant' him the opportunity to see Tiberius's death, Lepidus responds by insisting that subjects have a duty of obedience to their 'prince':

Arruntius

but if the fates

Grant it [Tiberius's murder] these eyes, they must not wink.

Markku Peltonen has drawn attention to the presence of quasi-republican values in his writing: Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 135.

¹⁸Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies', 164, 167, 176, 183.

¹⁹Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, 161.

Sabinus And bending to the better –

(3.359–69)

These two passages illustrate that Lepidus's attitude to obedience is somewhat nuanced. On the one hand, guided by considerations of expediency, he has a general policy of obedience to the emperor, even though Tiberius is a vicious tyrant. On the other hand, he is prepared to oppose the emperor to support a moral cause – 'bending to the better' – so long as such opposition is not excessively imprudent. In his characterization of Lepidus, Jonson is portraying the Tacitean middle way in politics, which proposes that conduct should be guided by considerations of both morality and expediency. Indeed, the remarks quoted above of Sabinus and Arruntius echo Tacitus's description of Lepidus's middle way. Sabinus's comment about Lepidus's influence on politics, 'bending to the better', is borrowed from Tacitus's observation that 'Many actions he bent to the better' (*in melius flexit*). Similarly, when Arruntius commends Lepidus as 'grave and honest' and praises his 'moderation', his remarks are also drawn from this passage in the *Annals*: they derive from Tacitus's descriptions of Lepidus as *gravem et sapientem* (grave and wise) and *temperans* (moderate). When writing this scene, Jonson was clearly attending closely to the passage in the *Annals* that outlines Lepidus's character.

As noted in the introduction, it is a commonplace of Jonsonian criticism that the virtuous characters of *Sejanus* are 'politically impotent'. While the term plausibly applies to the Germanicans, it is not so applicable to Lepidus. At the end of the play, unlike most of the Germanicans, Lepidus is neither dead, nor exiled nor imprisoned. Moreover, as is illustrated by his intervention on behalf of Silius's heirs, Lepidus provides at least a measure of effective opposition to the emperor. In his reading of *Sejanus*, Jonathan Goldberg argues that the apparently oppositional, critical voices in the play are, in fact, contained resistance, which

Tiberius allows – and indeed exploits – to increase his hold on power.²⁰ But Lepidus's defence of Silius's family is not merely pseudo-opposition. When Tiberius accepts Lepidus's proposal for the disposal of Silius's estate with the words 'It shall please us', Arruntius chips in with a telling aside: 'Ay, / Out of necessity'. Arruntius is suggesting that Lepidus has somehow forced Tiberius's hand, that Lepidus possesses a degree of power beyond that allowed by Tiberius. In pursuing a Tacitean middle way, Lepidus is able to exercise a genuine – albeit circumscribed – critical voice, which, in contrast to the railing of the Germanicans, is politically potent.

Laco, the commander of the night watch, is another character who, like Lepidus, possesses political power, and does not fit easily into the simple dichotomy between the virtuous Germanicans and the vicious courtiers of Sejanus's faction. The ambiguity of Laco's moral character is revealed by the divergence between Arruntius's and Lepidus's judgements about Laco. When Arruntius abuses Laco and his soldiers as 'horse-leeches' (4.356), Lepidus is provoked to defend Laco as an 'honest Roman' (4.359). Later in the act, Arruntius again inveighs against Laco when he overhears him expressing his frustration at Tiberius's 'forkèd tricks':

Laco These forkèd tricks, I understand 'em not.

Would he would tell us whom he loves or hates,

That we might follow, without fear or doubt.

Arruntius [*Aside.*] Good heliotrope! Is this your honest man?

Let him be yours still. He is my knave. (4.423–27)

²⁰Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, 177–83. As is typical of the New Historicist criticism of the 1980s, Goldberg's text focuses on the forces of containment, construing potential subversion as a means of imposing authoritarian conservatism.

Arruntius abuses Laco as a ‘heliotrope’ – a flower that continuously turns so that it always faces the sun – criticizing his expedient attitude of obedience to the Tiberius. In contrast, Lepidus insists that Laco’s obedience is consistent with being an ‘honest Roman’. Jonson is portraying Laco as a statesman ‘of the middle sort’: on the one hand, given that Lepidus judges him ‘an honest Roman’, there is reason to think that he possesses at least a measure of virtue, but, on the other hand, his expedient attitude of obedience towards a vicious tyrant necessarily compromises his morals. Like Lepidus, Laco is able to exercise virtue – albeit in a compromised form – without thereby being rendered politically impotent. Laco’s power is demonstrated at the close of the play when, as commander of the night watch, he enforces the arrest of Sejanus.

Throughout the play, these statesmen ‘of the middle sort’, Laco and Lepidus, display Stoic restraint and self-control. Lepidus, in particular, uses distinctively Stoic language to articulate his views. When asked how he has kept his ‘head / safe on his comely shoulders’ (4.292–93), he attributes his survival to Stoic patience – ‘the plain and passive fortitude / To suffer, and be silent’ (4.294–95). Lepidus does not, however, subscribe to the variety of Stoicism that urges retirement from the *vita activa*: his defence of Silius’s estate illustrates his active involvement in public life. Rather, Lepidus is guided by the kind of Stoicism articulated in Lipsius’s *Of Politics*.

In this Tacitean political treatise, Lipsius advises statesmen who are negotiating hazardous political environments to develop Stoic virtues in order to survive.²¹ One of the most distinctive features of Lipsius’s writing is his blend of Senecan Stoicism and Tacitean politics. Salmon observes that: ‘Before Lipsius, European interest in Seneca and Tacitus had

²¹For Lipsius’s Stoic advice on survival in courts, see his *Of Politics*, 57. This section of *Of Politics* is discussed in more detail below.

seldom linked the two ideologically'.²² Given the central role of both Tacitus's politics and Seneca's Stoicism in Lipsius's political thought, I will refer to Lipsius's variety of Tacitism as 'Tacitean Stoicism'. Lipsius urges statesmen to temper their moral impulses with Tacitean expediency, encouraging them to develop Stoic self-control to restrain their moral outrage. In *Sejanus*, Lepidus conveys not only Lipsius's Tacitean 'middle way' but also his Senecan Stoicism.

Lepidus's Tacitean Stoicism is also expressed in the closing scenes of the play, when Arruntius, Terrentius and Lepidus are voicing the *de casibus* lessons to be learnt from the fall of Sejanus. Lepidus's passages, in particular, have a notably Stoic ring. Fortune only has power, Lepidus insists, when men lack Stoic wisdom: 'Fortune, thou hadst no deity if men / had wisdom' (5.715–16). When Lepidus laments that Fortune 'Confounds, with varying her impassioned moods' (5.872), his remark invokes Stoic sentiments about the dangers of passion and inconstancy. Lepidus's speeches in the final scene lend to the play's conclusion an inflection of Lipsius's Tacitean Stoicism.

Jonson faced a considerable challenge, however, in his efforts to stage Lepidus's Stoicism. A number of commentators have pointed to the problems with dramatizing Stoicism: a Stoic lacks the flaws, the passions, the vengefulness and the impulse to theatricality that make for a dramatically effective character.²³ In the final two acts of *Sejanus*, Jonson addresses this challenge by pairing Lepidus with Arruntius, who, with his invective and passionate impulsiveness, is a more dramatically engaging character. By

²²Salmon, 'Stoicism and Roman Example', 201.

²³See Katherine Maus's introduction to *Four Revenge Tragedies*, ed. Maus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), xxv–xxvii; and also Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind*, 31–34.

staging exchanges between Arruntius and Lepidus, Jonson provokes audiences to reflect upon the Tacitean middle way.

2.4 Lepidus's 'arts' and Arruntius's 'riddles'

In the fourth act, after several Germanicans have lost their lives, Arruntius asks Lepidus his secret to survival: 'What are thy arts – good patriot, teach them me'? (4.290). Lepidus is portrayed as Arruntius's tutor in imperial politics. The fourth and fifth acts offer not only Arruntius but also the audience an opportunity to learn Lepidus's 'arts'. Like the *Annals*, Jonson's *Sejanus* is a guide to political life, helping the audience to 'distinguish...right from wrong, the expedient from the disastrous'. But the audience is taught primarily by what is shown rather than what is said: instead of giving Lepidus lengthy, didactic speeches on prudent political strategy, Jonson conveys the merits of Lepidus's middle way by dramatizing a contrast between Arruntius's blunders and Lepidus's relative success.

Lepidus is invariably correct in his predictions about the political machinations of Tiberius and Sejanus. Having overheard a description of Tiberius's mixed messages, Lepidus is the first to forecast that he is about to turn on Sejanus:

I'll ne'er believe but Caesar hath some scent
 Of bold Sejanus' footing. These cross-points
 Of varying letters and opposing consuls,
 Mingling his honours and his punishments,
 Feigning now ill, now well, raising Sejanus
 And then depressing him, as now of late
 All the reports we have it, cannot be

Empty of practice.

(4.446–53)

At the opening of the final act, Arruntius casts aspersions on Lepidus's prediction of Sejanus's downfall. Lepidus does not, however, alter his view, and is proven to be right (5.431–40). When Arruntius refers to Lepidus as 'Lynceus' (4.473), who was an Argonaut celebrated for exceptionally good vision, he is praising Lepidus for his unusual insight into the political intrigues of Tiberius's Rome.

In the fourth act, the audience learns why Lepidus's judgement is superior to that of Arruntius. Central to Lepidus's skill is his Stoic self-control, which is contrasted with Arruntius's characteristic emotional lability. Whereas Lepidus dispassionately and carefully observes the machinations of Roman politics, Arruntius's habitual state of moral outrage impairs his judgment. Thus, when eavesdropping on Laco and his interlocutors, instead of attending carefully to their words, Arruntius vents his anger in a series of asides: 'Good heliotrope! Is this [Laco] your honest man?' (4.426); 'That the dear smoke would choke him [Sejanus], / That would I more' (4.434–35); and 'The fiends they [the Gods] are, / To suffer thee [Pomponius] belie 'em' (4.481–82). In contrast, Lepidus is silently observing, and his comments are infrequent and brief. In two of his asides, he urges Arruntius to control his emotions: 'Peace, good Arruntius' (4.435); and 'Noble Arruntius, stay' (4.493). His other two asides draw attention to crucial information revealed by the overheard conversations: 'Note' (4.494); and 'Observe you?' (4.504).

Lepidus's powers of observation are central to his 'arts' of survival. In observing, he is dispassionate, careful, analytical, and, as a consequence, correct. In contrast, seething with rage, Arruntius simply fails to pay attention. He is continuously distracted from listening. The result is that at the end of their eavesdropping, while Lepidus has discovered Tiberius's strategy, Arruntius confesses that he has learnt 'Nothing. Riddles' (4.504). While Lepidus's

skill at political observation is grounded in his emotional self-control, Arruntius's lack of judgement is a consequence of his incontinent moral indignation.

In summarizing the 'Characters' in *Every Man Out of his Humour*, Jonson describes the humour that grips the malcontent Malicente: he is possessed by 'an envious apoplexy, with which his judgement is...dazzled and distasted'.²⁴ We might similarly diagnose Arruntius as in the grip of a humour which has 'dazzled and distasted' his judgement. Overwhelmed by moral outrage, Arruntius's judgement is deficient, and at times his behaviour borders on foolishness, a defect that is especially hazardous in Tiberius's Rome.

2.5 The Germanicans' 'defiant obstinacy'

Jonson presents the attractions of the Tacitean middle way, I have suggested, not only by pointing to Lepidus's success but also by anatomizing the flaws of Arruntius, who departs from this path 'between defiant obstinacy and crooked subservience'. The other Germanicans in *Sejanus* also deviate conspicuously from Lepidus's prudent approach to politics. In depicting the disastrous consequences of the Germanicans' impulsive outspokenness, Jonson is conveying the appeal of Tacitus's middle way. Admittedly, Jonson's characterization of the Germanicans not only draws upon, but also departs from, Tacitus's *Annals 1–6*. For example, Jonson is more sympathetic towards the Germanicans than Tacitus. Whereas the audiences of *Sejanus* are encouraged to empathize – at least to some degree – with the moral indignation of the Germanicans, Tacitus often appears to be impatient with their imprudence. Nevertheless, Jonson is determined to replicate one central feature of Tacitus's characterization of the Germanicans – the destructive consequences of their defiant outspokenness.

²⁴Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, in *Works of Jonson: Characters* 8.

In *Sejanus*, the leader of the Germanicans, Agrippina, explicitly defends her frank and blunt mode of speech. When advised to restrain her criticism of Tiberius and Sejanus, she replies that virtue demands that she speak her mind: she refuses ‘to whisper any thought’ because ‘Virtue’s forces / Show ever noblest in conspicuous courses’ (2.455–57). Nothing could be further from Lepidus’s advice ‘To suffer, and be silent’. It is virtually an iron law in Jonson’s play that any conspicuous outspokenness or defiance is soon followed by imprisonment, exile or death. Thus Agrippina is soon banished for her railings against the regime. The audience is not surprised by her exile, however, having already seen Cordus arraigned for his defence of republicanism, Sabinus prosecuted for subversive remarks about Tiberius, and Drusus poisoned for his open defiance of Sejanus.

It might be thought that one exception to this rule is Arruntius, who remains alive at the end of the play despite his propensity to moral outrage. On the contrary, I will argue, Jonson’s treatment of Arruntius further illustrates his efforts to convey the hazards of outspoken opposition. Although Arruntius survives in *Sejanus*, Tacitus’s *Annals* record that he ultimately dies as a consequence of his outspokenness. The *Annals* portray Arruntius as virtuous but impolitic; he had a ‘most upright character’ (*Annals*, 6.7) and was ‘impatient of vices’ (*Annals*, 6.47). As invariably happens to such individuals in *Annals* 1–6, he is prosecuted on trumped-up charges, which causes him to take his own life. Arruntius’s suicide occurs after Sejanus’s downfall, however, and thus takes place outside the time period spanned by Jonson’s play. Jonson adheres to the timeline in Tacitus’s *Annals*, allowing Arruntius to survive until the end of *Sejanus*. But this creates a problem for Jonson, who wishes to avoid the impression that there is any scope for outspoken opposition in Tiberius’s Rome. Thus he invents an explanation for why Sejanus and Tiberius permit Arruntius to survive:

Sejanus Sabinus shall be next [to die].

Tiberius Rather Arruntius.

Sejanus By any means, preserve him. His frank tongue

Being lent the reins, will take away all thought

Of malice in your course against the rest.

We must keep him to stalk with. (3.497–501)

Jonson provides this explanation of Arruntius's survival, which has no counterpart in the *Annals*, so as to ensure that his survival cannot be construed as evidence that Tiberius's attack on the Germanicans' 'obstinate defiance' has any limits. On the contrary, Arruntius's survival is merely a means to the emperor's end of destroying the oppositional faction. Moreover, this passage contributes to the impression that Arruntius's poor judgement verges on foolishness. He believes he is opposing Sejanus and Tiberius, when, in fact, he is aiding them, serving as a guileless pawn in their plots.

The danger of outspokenness is an important theme not only in *Sejanus* but also in *Poetaster*, which appeared not long before Jonson began work on *Sejanus*.²⁵ In *Poetaster*, the Ovidians are undone by their outspokenness and imprudence, suffering a similar fate to the Germanicans in *Sejanus*. After Ovid immoderately praises Julia, Tibilius admonishes him for

²⁵*Poetaster* was written in the spring or summer of 1601: Tom Cain, introduction to *Poetaster*, ed. Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 28. Although *Sejanus* first appeared on stage between 25 March 1603 and 24 March 1604, Philip Ayres suggests that 'Jonson may have been working on *Sejanus* for something like two years before its appearance on stage, having declared in the "apologeticall Dialogue" at the end of *Poetaster* (printed 1602) his intention to "trie / If *Tragoedie* have a more kind aspect": Ayres, introduction to *Sejanus*, ed. Ayres, 9.

his lack of self-control: ‘thou’lt lose thyself’ (1.3.44). This warning foreshadows Ovid’s imprudent outspokenness at the banquet, which ultimately leads to his exile. More generally, there are several significant correspondences between the structures of *Sejanus* and *Poetaster*.²⁶ In each play, when the emperor acts to repress subversive outspokenness, he is assisted and abetted by the principal villain in the play. The suggestion is that corrupt counsellors are at least partly responsible for the suppression of critical voices. But both plays also point to limits on the power of such malign influences. Encouraged by their initial successes, the two principal villains overreach: Sejanus goes too far in prosecuting Tiberius’s relatives, Agrippina and his nephews (5.571–77), and Lupus fails when he attempts to extend the scope of his attack from Ovid to Horace. Whereas the incontinent Germanicans and Ovidians are undone by the principal villains, these villains, in turn, are subsequently dealt with by the emperor in the final act.

Lepidus and Horace remain unharmed at the end of the two plays, having survived threats from the villains. There are, of course, major differences between these two characters – for one thing, the character of Horace is more dramatically effective. But given the structures of the plays, there is an important correspondence between Lepidus and Horace: they both possess a moral compass that distinguishes them from the principal villains, but they also display circumspection and prudence which is lacking in the Germanicans and Ovidians, and which ensures their survival at the end of the plays. Despite being a central character, Horace only arrives onstage in the third act of *Poetaster*, and, significantly, Lepidus’s entrance in *Sejanus* is also delayed until the third act. This allows the first two acts of *Poetaster* and *Sejanus* to focus on the Ovidians and the Germanicans, portraying their vulnerability to

²⁶Parallels between *Poetaster* and *Sejanus* are also examined in Cynthia Bowers, “‘I will write satires still in spite of fear’”: History, Satire and Free Speech in *Poetaster* and *Sejanus*’, *BJJ* 14, no. 2 (2007): 153–72.

attack by the principal villains. When Horace and Lepidus appear onstage in the final three acts, the audience is presented with an alternative to not just the outspoken political attitudes of the Ovidians and Germanicans but also the amoral servility of the villains. The structure of *Poetaster* suggests that, prior to writing *Sejanus*, Jonson was already exploring the Lipsian middle way in politics – a path of political engagement that navigates between hazardous outspokenness and amoral flattery.

2.6 Tacitean Stoicism in Daniel's *Philotas*

While there is a loose correspondence between Jonson's Lepidus and Horace, there are stronger similarities between Lepidus and the character of Chalcidius in Daniel's *Philotas*. In the introduction to his edition of *Philotas*, Laurence Michel observes that 'there are situations, passages, characters, even words in *Sejanus*, which are startlingly like *Philotas*: for one who has read merely the two plays the conclusion would be inevitable that one influenced the other'.²⁷ Michel does not, however, provide any examples. While in Chapter One I pointed to a broad resemblance between the characterization of the Germanicans and *Philotas*, I will now draw attention to similarities between specific passages involving Jonson's Lepidus and Daniel's Chalcidius.

In the opening scene of *Philotas*, the exchange between Chalcidius and *Philotas* resembles the dialogue between Lepidus and Arruntius in the fourth act of *Sejanus*. In response to *Philotas*'s oppositional expressions of outrage, Chalcidius urges him to control his emotions and mask his discontent:

Chalcidius In courts men longest live, and keep their ranks,

²⁷Michel, introduction to *Philotas*, 27.

By taking injuries, and giving thanks.

Philotas And is it so? Then never are these hairs

Like to attain that sober hue of gray,

I cannot plaster and disguise m'affairs

In other colour than my heart doth lay. (1.1.59–66)

This exchange in *Philotas* is reminiscent of the following passages in Jonson's *Sejanus*, Lipsius's *Of Politics* and Seneca's essay *On Anger*:

Arruntius What are thy arts – good patriot, teach me them –

That have preserved thy hairs to this white dye,

And kept so reverend and so dear a head

Safe on his comely shoulders?

Lepidus Arts, Arruntius?

None but the plain and passive fortitude

To suffer and be silent. (Sejanus, 4.290–95)

In general, dost thou determine to live ever in court? Then acquaint thyself with these two. 1. Patience, (by the ancient example of him, who, being demanded, how he had attained to that great age in court? (a thing which chaunceth very seldom) answered, By suffering wrong and giving thanks) 2. And wary circumspection. (*Of Politics*, 57)

Notissima voc est eius qui in cultu regum consenuerat. Cum illum quidam interrogaret, quomodo rarissimam rem in aula consecutus esset, senectutum: ‘Iniurias’, inquit, ‘accipiendo et gratias agendo’. (*On Anger*, 2.33.2)²⁸

Particularly notable is the remark of the man who had grown old in the service of kings. When someone asked him how he had, most unusually, survived for so long in court, he said, ‘by accepting injuries and giving thanks for them’.

A marginal note to *Of Politics* reveals that Seneca’s *On Anger* is the source of Lipsius’s ‘ancient example’. In these two passages, moreover, the words used by the aging courtier are strikingly similar to Chalcidius’s line ‘By taking injuries and giving thanks’. Daniel’s line is indebted either to Seneca’s essay or Lipsius’s treatise. The passage from *Sejanus* also resembles those in *On Anger* and *Of Politics*, although perhaps the linguistic correspondences are not so striking.

Both Jonson and Daniel, however, introduce an image that is absent from the passages in *On Anger* and *Of Politics*. Seneca and Lipsius merely describe the courtier as having ‘grown old’, as having lived to a ‘great age’ in court, whereas Jonson and Daniel in addition use the imagery of hair colour to allude to old age. Arruntius asks Lepidus how he has preserved his ‘hairs to this white dye’, and similarly Philotas informs Chalcidius that ‘never are these hairs / Like to attain that sober hue of gray’. Of course, this may simply be a coincidence; after all, grey or white hair is a stock image for old age. Nevertheless, it seems to me likely that in these passages either Daniel is borrowing from Jonson, or *vice versa*. As

²⁸Seneca, *On Anger*, in *Moral Essays*, trans. John Basore, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 214 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928).

Sejanus was first acted in 1603 or early 1604, prior to the publication or opening performance of *Philotas*, the most obvious inference is that Daniel's passage is indebted to *Sejanus*.²⁹

In any event, Chalcidius performs a role in *Philotas* akin to that of Jonson's Lepidus. Both urge Stoic patience and circumspection, attempting to curb the excesses of the open, passionate, magnanimous Essex-like characters of Philotas and Arruntius. They represent a particular political attitude in classical and early modern thought – the Tacitean Stoicism that is articulated in the passages from Lipsius's *Of Politics* and Seneca's *On Anger*.

2.7 Lepidus, Chalcidius and the Essex circle

In late Elizabethan England, the kind of Tacitean-Stoic advice offered by Lepidus and Chalcidius can be located in the discourse of the Essex circle. I am not proposing that either *Sejanus* or *Philotas* is a strict *pièce-à-clef* in which the various characters correspond to particular personages in late Elizabethan politics. While no single figure in 1590s politics can straightforwardly be equated to Lepidus and Chalcidius, nevertheless several of Essex's supporters – especially Lord Henry Howard and Francis Bacon – performed advisory roles similar those of Lepidus and Chalcidius. In their advice to Essex, Howard and Bacon urged

²⁹ Laurence Michel questions whether *Philotas* was influenced by *Sejanus*, partly on the grounds that 'Daniel says he had written three acts of *Philotas* in 1600, so *Sejanus* could not have affected them' (Michel, introduction to *Philotas*, 27). Michel's argument is not compelling, however. We need not accept Daniel's claim to have written the three acts in 1600, as this claim formed part of his defence against accusations by the Privy Council. Moreover, even if we do accept his claim, the remaining two acts of the play – as well as any revisions to the other three acts – were written subsequently.

him to control his emotions, to develop patience, to qualify his frankness and to moderate his oppositional tone.

Our richest source of information about Howard's advice to Essex is a set of rough notes written in Howard's hand. Either Howard sent fair copies of these notes to Essex, or the notes were the basis for advice that Howard presented verbally.³⁰ Paul Hammer observes that a key theme in Howard's advice is patience: there is a section in the notes headed 'Answers to the difficulties. Patience worketh miracles'.³¹ Essex is urged to curb his oppositional directness when speaking to the Queen: 'Her thoughts are not contented without sympathy with those in whom she takes delight. This sympathy requires accord not discrepancy, affection not opposition, hunger not satiety'.³² In her observations on these notes, Alexandra Gajda observes that Howard, in effect, advises Essex to follow a Lipsian middle way between frankness and extreme deception: 'Howard's counsels to Essex, lengthier than they are original, contain a vaguely Lipsian endorsement of the use of moderate deception, while emphasizing the utility of patience and constancy to rank with Essex's more actively brilliant virtues'.³³

Gajda and Hammer both observe the similarity between Howard's advice to Essex and that provided by Francis Bacon.³⁴ In his 'Apology Concerning the Earl of Essex', Bacon reports that he unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Essex that 'the only course to be held

³⁰For a detailed account of this manuscript, see Paul Hammer, 'How to Become an Elizabethan Statesman: Lord Henry Howard, the Earl of Essex and the Politics of Friendship', *EMS* 13 (2007): 1–34.

³¹Hammer, 'How to Become an Elizabethan Statesman', 10, 17.

³²Hammer, 'How to Become an Elizabethan Statesman', 19.

³³Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 190.

³⁴Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 190–1; Hammer, 'How to Become an Elizabethan Statesman', 20–23.

with the Queen was by obsequiousness and observance'.³⁵ Furthermore, in a letter to Essex dated 1596, Bacon expresses concern that Essex presents himself as 'A man of a nature not to be ruled', advising 'For the removing the impression of your nature to be *opiniastre* and not rutable'.³⁶ The similarity between the advice of Bacon and Chalcidius is especially striking: Bacon warns Essex of the dangers of 'a popular reputation', encouraging him 'to take all occasions, to the Queen, to speak against popularity and popular causes vehemently; and to tax it in all others'³⁷ and, correspondingly, Chalcidius urges Philotas to diminish 'your popular dependences: / Your entertainments, gifts, and public grace / That doth in-jealous Kings, distaste the Peers' (1.1.21–23).

In advising Essex to temper his excesses, Howard and Bacon play a role reminiscent of that of Lepidus and Chalcidius. The middle way of Howard and Bacon, moreover, is apparent from their uncertain location in the factional divide. Even after Essex had fallen out of favour in 1599 and 1600, Howard continued to serve as an adviser to him. At the same time, however, Howard made efforts to cultivate relations with Cecil. Thus, according to one Elizabethan courtier, Howard was 'held a newt' in the rivalry between the factions of Essex and Cecil.³⁸ As Linda Levy Peck observes, Howard illustrates that 'It was not impossible to be on good terms with both Essex and Cecil'.³⁹ Like Howard, Bacon straddled the factional

³⁵Bacon, *Apologie*, in *Works*, 10: 144.

³⁶Bacon, Letter to the Earl of Essex, 4 October, 1596 in *Works*, 9: 41–42.

³⁷Bacon, Letter to Essex, in *Works*, 9: 41, 44.

³⁸Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Lord De L'Isle and Dudley Preserved at Penhurst Place*, vol. 2 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), 397.

³⁹Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), 18.

divide, although Bacon was, perhaps, more opportunistic. He was firmly of Essex's faction in the mid-1590s, but by 1600 he had decisively abandoned Essex, joining forces with his accusers. Through the character of Lepidus, Jonson encourages audiences to reflect on the attractions of the political strategies of pragmatic, moderate survivalists such as Howard and Bacon. While *Sejanus* sympathizes with Essex's republicanism, Jonson also invites the audience to consider whether Essex should have tempered his excesses in accordance with the suggestions of moderate statesmen such as Howard and Bacon.

It might be argued, however, that such a parallel between Howard and Lepidus is improbable. After all, Jonson presents Lepidus as a sympathetic character whereas, according to William Drummond, Jonson described Howard as 'his mortal enemy', at least after he had become the Earl of Northampton:

Northampton was his mortal enemy for brawling, on a St George's Day, one of his attenders. He was called before the Council for his *Sejanus*, and accused of popery and treason by him.⁴⁰

Two points can be made in reply. First, I am not insisting that Jonson's Lepidus is to be strictly identified with Howard, but, instead, I am simply suggesting that Howard's and Bacon's political strategies were representative of the kind of pragmatic strategy pursued by Lepidus. Second, as Tom Cain observes, while Jonson subsequently viewed Howard as his enemy, he did not harbour this hostility when writing *Sejanus*: 'By 1605 Jonson was to see Howard as his enemy...but that this was not the case early in 1603 is suggested not just by Jonson's friendship with Cotton, but by the patronage at this time of another client of the

⁴⁰Drummond, *Informations in Works of Jonson*, 5: 375, lines 250–52.

Howard family, Robert Townshend'.⁴¹ Cain suggests that Jonson's appearance 'before the Council for his *Sejanus*' was instigated by Howard as part of his investigation into the gunpowder plot.⁴²

2.8 Ducci's Tacitean Stoicism in Jonson's *Sejanus*

Whereas the previous chapter examined the republican strain in *Sejanus*, the current chapter has been primarily concerned with the kind of Tacitean Stoicism that is articulated in Lipsius's *Of Politics*, and is exemplified in the character of Lepidus. Tacitean Stoicism could, however, take on a somewhat darker complexion, as is illustrated by Sejanus's soliloquy at the end of the first act. Counselling himself to delay his vengeance against Drusus, Sejanus valorizes Stoic patience: 'He that, with such a wrong moved, can bear it through / With patience, and an even mind, knows how / To turn it back' (1.576–78). As Jonathan Dollimore observes, in Sejanus's soliloquy, 'stoic "patience" is being appropriated for *realpolitik*'.⁴³ In contrast to Lepidus's 'middle way', Jonson's villains in *Sejanus* – principally Tiberius, Macro and Sejanus – use Stoic restraint and Tacitean expediency in the untrammelled pursuit of amoral self-interest.

In his depiction of these villains, Jonson draws on an amoral strand of early modern Tacitism, which construed Tacitus's works as a cynical *realpolitik* guide for princes or courtiers who wished to pursue their self-interest in a corrupt state. This amoral interpretation of Tacitus is illustrated by a remark of Guicciardini, who suggests that Tacitus 'teaches

⁴¹Cain, introduction to *Sejanus*, in *Works of Jonson*, 2: 198.

⁴²Cain, introduction to *Sejanus*, in *Works of Jonson*, 2: 201–2.

⁴³Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 136.

tyrants ways to secure their tyranny'.⁴⁴ In the early modern period, an influential work of amoral Tacitism was Lorenzo Ducci's *Ars aulica or The courtiers arte*, which provides a cynical guide to success in court.⁴⁵ While Ducci encourages the courtier to display obedience to his lord, the reason to do so, he insists, is 'for his own benefit'.⁴⁶ Ducci praises Tacitus as 'an excellent master of courtiers', expressing admiration for Tacitus's analysis of strategies for success in the corrupt political world of early imperial Rome.⁴⁷

In Jonson's *Sejanus*, Macro serves as a spokesman for Ducci's Tacitism. He articulates the central tenet of Ducci, observing that 'The way to rise is to obey and please':

Macro I will not ask why Caesar bids do this,
 But joy that he bids me. It is the bliss
 Of courts to be employed, no matter how:
 A prince's power makes all his actions virtue.
 We, whom he works by, are dumb instruments
 To do, but not enquire: his great intents
 Are to be served, not searched...
 The way to rise is to obey and please.
 He that will rise in state, he must neglect

⁴⁴Francesco Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper, 1965), 45.

⁴⁵Lorenzo Ducci, *Ars aulica or The courtiers arte*, trans. Edward Blount (London, 1607). For discussions of Ducci's use of Tacitus, see Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, 161–62; Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 129.

⁴⁶Ducci, *Courtiers arte*, 1.

⁴⁷Ducci, *Courtiers arte*, 33.

The trodden paths that truth and right respect. (3.714–20, 735–37)

David Norbrook observes that Jonson takes a certain ‘sardonic relish’ in the amoral machinations of Tiberius,⁴⁸ and the same could be said of his portrayal of Sejanus and Macro. Nevertheless, his attitude towards this amoral variety of Tacitean Stoicism is broadly negative. In the Germanicans’ vituperations against such characters, we hear Jonson’s contempt for flattery, venality and vice. Jonson’s familiar satirical voice is displayed, for example, in Sabinus’s rant against those servile courtiers who ‘Laugh when their patron laughs; sweat when he sweats / ... ready to praise / His lordship if he spit, or but piss fair’ (1.33, 38–9). Jonson’s play is critical of such cynical, self-serving political strategies, and his sympathies lie with the republican Tacitism of the Germanicans and the moderate Tacitean Stoicism of Lepidus.

2.9 Conclusion

The ambiguity in Jonson’s *Sejanus* arises from its sympathy with two conflicting views of politics – the Germanicans’ republicanism and Lepidus’s Tacitean Stoicism. In this respect, *Sejanus* resembles its principal source, Tacitus’s *Annals*. Tacitus also sympathizes with republicanism as a political ideal, but warns of the danger of excessive displays of liberty in oppressive monarchies. Like Tacitus, Jonson presents the downfall of the Germanicans as a cautionary tale, as a warning against ‘obstinate defiance’ in a perilous political environment. Through the character of Lepidus, Jonson invites his audience to reflect on the merits of a moderate course in politics, and to ask, in particular, whether the Earl of Essex would have

⁴⁸Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, 161.

been better served to follow the middle way advocated by more pragmatic statesmen such as Francis Bacon and Lord Henry Howard.

The Tacitean ‘middle way’ of Lipsius is not only explored in *Sejanus* but is also a more general feature of Jonson’s politics, as is apparent from parallels between *Poetaster* and *Sejanus*. Moreover, Jonson also expresses this intermediate political attitude in his dedication to *Cynthia’s Revels* to James’s court, which he signs as ‘Thy servant, but not slave, Ben Jonson’.⁴⁹ This phrase, Martin Butler has suggested, summarizes the political attitudes expressed in Jonson’s Jacobean poetry.⁵⁰ Jonson’s avowal that he is James’s ‘servant’ expresses an attitude of obedience, but the qualification ‘but not slave’ asserts a measure of independence.

The antithesis between ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ in the dedication to *Cynthia’s Revels* is reminiscent of a remark made by Sabinus in the opening scene of *Sejanus*: Sabinus criticizes courtiers who ‘by slavery, not by service, climb’ (1.11). This phrase of Sabinus can, in turn, be traced back to Tacitus’s *Annals*. The source of Sabinus’s comment, which is revealed in Jonson’s notes to the 1605 edition of *Sejanus*, is Tacitus’s description of the consolidation of imperial power under Augustus: ‘There was no opposition [to imperial rule]: the most headstrong had died on the battlefield or by proscription, while the remainder of the nobility were raised to wealth and honour by an easy acceptance of slavery’ (*Annals* 1.2).⁵¹ In this passage, Tacitus sets out the dilemma at the heart of the *Annals* 1–6: ‘headstrong’ criticism leads to ‘proscription’, followed inevitably by prison, exile or execution, while wealth and honour, for the most part, are gained only by ‘slavery’ (*servitium*). This dilemma provides the

⁴⁹This dedication appears in the 1616 Folio: see *Works of Jonson*, 5: 11.

⁵⁰Martin Butler, “‘Servant, but not Slave’: Ben Jonson at the Jacobean Court”, *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 90 (1995): 65–93.

⁵¹This sentence appears in a passage that is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

frame for Tacitus's analysis of politics throughout the *Annals 1–6*. The art of politics, as presented by Tacitus, is the ability to navigate between the two horns of this dilemma.

Lepidus was especially skilful at managing this dilemma, which is why Tacitus, Lipsius and Jonson present him as an exemplary statesman. When Sabinus criticizes courtiers who 'by slavery, not by service, climb', he is referring to the Tacitean dilemma; similarly, Jonson's assertion that he is James's 'servant, but not slave' again alludes to the Tacitean dilemma. Jonson is locating his own political attitude as intermediate between 'the most headstrong' and those 'raised to wealth and honour by an easy acceptance of slavery'. In other words, he is aligning himself with the middle way in politics.

Jonson, like his Lepidus, appears to be located between two worlds. As Tom Cain emphasizes, Jonson had close ties to oppositional members of the Inns of Court coterie, and he regularly clashed with authorities.⁵² But he also energetically carried royal favour, which he consistently achieved, at least during the reign of James. Similarly in *Sejanus*, Lepidus's intimates are, in the main, republican Germanicans, whom he supports in opposition to Tiberius. Nevertheless, he is able to retain the favour of Tiberius, through a combination of political skill, self-restraint and an attitude of obedience. This location between two worlds is the outcome of a political strategy, the strategy of the middle way. The classical defence of this strategy is provided in Tacitus's *Annals 1–6*, and Jonson's *Sejanus* also encouraged early modern audiences to investigate a path between amoral servility and dangerous defiance.

In Chapter One and in the current chapter, I characterize two opposing political attitudes, republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism, locating them in late Elizabethan political discourse, and explaining how they were represented on the stage. In doing so, I particularly focus on Jonson's *Sejanus* because it provides a detailed exploration of both republican and Stoic varieties of Tacitism. The next chapter explores early modern stylistic developments

⁵²Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies', 166.

that were associated with republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism. These developments altered not just the prose style of political treatises and histories but also the style of dramatic verse.

PART B:

POLITICS AND STYLE

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICS OF STYLE: SENTENTIOUS AND CICERONIAN RHETORIC

Written in the 1590s, Fulke Greville's plays *Alaham* and *Mustapha* are examples of the neoclassical closet drama that emerged from the Countess of Pembroke's circle. This circle of playwrights, which included the Countess, Daniel, Kyd, Cary and Alexander, took as their principal models the tragedies of Seneca, as well as the neoclassical Senecan drama of Robert Garnier. Greville was an especially observant student of both the structure and the style of Seneca's tragedies, and his plays abound in brief, pointed *sententiae*, imitating the distinctive epigrammatic character of Seneca's style. In his study of Greville's dramatic verse, Jonas Barish remarks on 'the presence, in the language, of a massive, indeed a stupefying scale, of *sententiae*'.¹

Despite Barish's stress on the abundance of *sententiae* in Greville's plays, I would suggest that he nevertheless underestimates their importance in Greville's Senecan style. As is common among commentators on early modern style, Barish conceives of *sententiae* as 'nuggets of wisdom', equating the *sententia* to the 'aphorism'. Thus his examples of *sententiae* are all universal generalizations, such as the maxim 'The wicked wrestle both with might and slight'.² While such aphorisms and maxims do appear in Greville's plays on a 'massive...scale', they represent only one variety of Greville's Senecan *sententiae*.

Seneca's conception of the *sententia* was that of his age, derived from the rhetorical practices of early imperial Rome. In his *Orator's Education*, Quintilian, a contemporary of

¹Barish, 'Language for the Study; Language for the Stage', 21.

²Barish, 'Language for the Study; Language for the Stage', 22–23.

Seneca, provides an account of this broad notion of a *sententia*, distinguishing between ‘old’ and ‘modern’ *sententiae*. Whereas ‘old’ *sententiae* are the ‘nuggets of wisdom’ referred to by Barish, ‘modern’ *sententiae* are compact displays of wit and ingenuity. In the writings of Seneca and his contemporaries, such modern *sententiae* appear in abundance. Imitating the style of Seneca, the following passage from Greville’s *Alaham* contains, and indeed consists of, four *sententiae*, which I have enumerated. Only the second is a *sententia* of the ‘old’ variety:

[1] That which I most did hate, and least did fear,

Is fall’n: [2] nature cares not for native blood.

[3] I wickedly must do, or mischief bear:

[4] I must no more be, or no more be good. (1.1.20–23)³

The other three are identifiable as ‘modern’ *sententiae* not only by their brevity but also by their Senecan efforts at wit and ingenuity. In *sententiae* (1) and (3), the wit arises from Greville’s use of antitheses between ‘most’ and ‘least’, and between doing evil and suffering evil. Antitheses are a characteristic form of wit in Seneca’s sententious style.

The *sententia* has a central role in the taxonomy of both classical and early modern styles. Seneca, Tacitus and Ovid, for example, use *sententiae* to such an extent that it was seen to define their style, which can be described as a sententious mode of writing. Accordingly, the style of their early modern imitators can also be characterized as sententious. In using the figure of *sententia* to define the style of Seneca, Tacitus and their imitators, I present a very different account of the Senecan and Tacitean styles to that of

³Fulke Greville, *Alaham* in *The Complete Poems and Plays of Fulke Greville, Lord Brook (1584–1628)*, in *Two Volumes*, ed. G. A. Wilkes, vol. 1 (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2008).

Morris Croll. In his influential studies on ‘the anti-Ciceronian movement’, Croll presents the late sixteenth-century vogue for imitating Seneca and Tacitus as a reaction against Ciceronian artifice and symmetry. While Croll’s account served as a dominant framework for English prose studies in the middle decades of the twentieth century, more recent critics have come to regard his analysis as deeply flawed. In response to these compelling criticisms of Croll, I offer an alternative account of the influence of Seneca and Tacitus on early modern style. In this chapter, I present the positive case for my position, while the appendix to the dissertation locates my account in the debate between Croll and his critics.

Both historians and literary critics have observed that, in the late sixteenth century, the vogue for the Tacitean and Senecan style was associated with a surge of interest in Tacitus’s politics and Seneca’s Stoicism.⁴ For example, Lipsius not only drew on the political and philosophical views of Tacitus and Seneca, but he also offered praise for, and experimented with, their rhetorical style. In the latter years of Elizabeth’s reign, there arose a new genre of history, ‘politic history’, which combined Tacitean analyses of politics with a notably Tacitean sententious style.⁵ Richard Tuck has traced the shift of interest in the

⁴McCrea, *Constant Minds*, esp. 11, Alexandra Gajda, ‘Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c. 1530 – c. 1640’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* ed.

A.J.Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 253–68; Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 124–125; Peter Burke, ‘Tacitism’ in *Tacitus*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London: Routledge, 1969), 150–53; Morris Croll, ‘Juste Lipse et le Mouvement Anticicéronien à la Fin du XVIe et au Début du XVIIe Siècle’, ‘Muret and the History of “Attic Prose”’ and ‘Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne and Bacon’, in *Essays by Croll*, ed. Patrick and Evans, 7–44, 107–162, 167–202.

⁵F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 237–285.

sixteenth century from Cicero's to Tacitus's political writings, observing that this change in political attitudes was accompanied by an alteration of rhetorical style.⁶ This broad critical consensus has not gone unchallenged, however. In *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, Brian Vickers questions the assumption 'that a writer will reproduce the style of the philosophers or historians he admires', offering examples of authors with interests in Tacitean and Machiavellian politics who write with a Ciceronian style.⁷ To establish a relationship between the Tacitean style and politics, Vickers suggests, more must be done than merely point to a handful of sixteenth-century writers, such as Lipsius, and observe their joint interest in Tacitus's politics and style.

This chapter addresses Vickers's challenge by examining the perceived linkages between Tacitean politics and the formal features of the sententious style. The following exchange in Shakespeare's *Richard III* illustrates the connection between sententious speech and Tacitean Stoicism. In this passage, Gloucester makes several brief, veiled remarks that foreshadow the murder of the princes:

York I pray you, uncle, render me this dagger.

Richard Gloucester My dagger, little cousin? With all my heart.

Prince Edward A beggar, brother?

York Of my kind uncle that I know will give,

It being but a toy which is no grief to give.

⁶Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 5, 41.

⁷Brian Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 107.

Richard Gloucester A greater gift than that I'll give my cousin. (3.1.110–15)⁸

Gloucester's two covert threats to the princes, 'With all my heart' and 'A greater gift than that I'll give my cousin', are examples of what Quintilian calls 'modern' *sententiae*. Whereas in Greville's passage, antitheses are used to supply the wit for his *sententiae*, the wit in Shakespeare's two *sententiae* arises from the veiled language. For practitioners of the sententious style, including Seneca, Tacitus and Ovid, such allusive language was a characteristic device for introducing wit into their *sententiae*. This passage from *Richard III* is especially reminiscent of the brief, veiled stichomythic exchanges in Seneca's tragedies.⁹ Justus Lipsius and other advocates of Tacitean Stoicism were attracted to the sententious style on account of its allusive, indirect quality, which was seen as suitable for the kind of restrained and discrete mode of communication recommended by Tacitus.

In classical and early modern commentary on rhetoric, the sententious style of the early empire was presented in contrast to, and, indeed, as a reaction against, the earlier rhetorical style of Cicero. In Cicero's prose, the centrepiece was the expansive period, whereas early imperial writing was centred on the brief *sententia*. Like the sententious style, Cicero's mode of rhetoric was laden with political connotations. In this chapter, I explore the perceived connection between the Ciceronian style and the republican politics of its namesake. Ciceronian rhetoric was seen as expressive of republican attitudes to speech, invoking the republican character traits of outspokenness and magnanimous independence that were discussed in Chapter One.

⁸William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd ed.

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). All quotations of Shakespeare are from this edition.

⁹Chapter Six discusses several examples of such stichomythic passages in Seneca's tragedies.

There are, in fact, diverse points of contrast between Ciceronian rhetoric and the early imperial style of Tacitus and Seneca. In the following passage, William Dominik summarizes various differences between the two rhetorical styles:

In the place of Ciceronian correctness, harmony, propriety, fullness, and rhythm, contemporary audiences [in the early empire] developed a predilection for incongruity, discordance, disproportion, and point. The postclassical style of expression was an index of the new attitudes produced by the altered social and political circumstances of the empire.¹⁰

I am not attempting to provide an exhaustive account of these two rhetorical styles and their cultural contexts. Rather, my focus is specifically on political attitudes towards freedom of speech. In political environments in which free speech was suppressed, Ciceronian rhetoric, with its expansive, flowing, rhythmical and emotive style, was seen as potentially defiant and oppositional. By way of contrast, in such hazardous political environments, the sententious style was perceived as apt for a prudent and restrained mode of speech.

3.1 The sententious style

In his *Directions for Speech and Style* (ca. 1599), John Hoskyns claimed to have ‘used and outworn six several styles since I was first Fellow of New College [in 1586]’.¹¹ His comment

¹⁰William Dominik, ‘Tacitus and Pliny on Oratory’ in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. William Dominik and Jon Hall (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 333–34.

¹¹John Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, in *The Life, Letters and Writings of John Hoskyns*, ed. Louise Osborn (Hamden: Archon Books, 1973), 152.

epitomizes the mood of experimentalism in 1590s literature: literary fashions came and went rapidly, and there was a rich variety of styles on offer. Hoskyns makes his comment when discussing, in particular, the vogue of the sententious style in late Elizabethan England:

Sententia, if it be well used, is a figure, if ill and too much, it is a style, whereof none that writes humorously or factiously nowadays can be clear...[W]hilst moral philosophy is now a while spoken of, it is rudeness not to be sententious.¹²

When ‘too much’ used, Hoskyns observes, the *sententia* ‘is a style’. In other words, the liberal use of *sententiae* was seen as defining a style. At the time Hoskyns was writing, the sententious style was in fashion, so that it was ‘rudeness not to be sententious’. Similarly, in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, the 1623 Latin edition of *Advancement of Learning* (1605), Francis Bacon records that ‘of late’ the sententious style ‘hath been very pleasing unto the ears of our time’:

The labour here is altogether, that words may be aculeate, sentences concise [*sententiae concisae*]... Such a style as this we find more excessively in Seneca; more moderately in Tacitus and Plinius Secundus; and of late it hath been very pleasing unto the ears of our time.¹³

¹²Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 152.

¹³From the 1623 Latin edition of *Advancement: De Augmentis Scientiarum* in *Works of Bacon*, 1: 452, as translated by Gilbert Wats in *Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning* (Oxford, 1640), 29.

Bacon identifies three classical models for the sententious style, Seneca, Tacitus and the younger Pliny, who are all Roman authors of the early imperial period. Their sententious writings were part of a broader stylistic movement that spanned oratory and literature – verse as well as prose – in early imperial Rome.

This movement emerged from, and was sustained by, the declamation practices of the early empire. A declamation (*controversia*) is a rhetorical performance in which the participants, having been provided with a fictional situation, deliver an oration in defence of one of the parties to the situation. Originally limited to the rhetorical schools, declamations became a social activity during the reign of Augustus, performed in public by eminent orators and personages. In early imperial Rome, the orations of the declaimers had a distinctive style, characterized by highly ornate, pointed language that bristled with *sententiae*.¹⁴ The preoccupation of declaimers with *sententiae* is evident from the rhetorical text *Declamations*, written by Seneca's father. In his preface to *Declamations*, the elder Seneca addresses his sons: the central 'purpose and the aim' of the book is to record for them the *sententiae* from the declamations:

Interponam itaque quibusdam locis quaestiones controversiarum, sicut ab illo
propositae sunt, nec his argumenta subtexam, ne et modum excedam et
propositum, cum vos sententias audire velitis et quidquid *ab* illis abduxero
molestum futurum sit. (*Declamations* 1, Preface, 22)¹⁵

¹⁴Stanley Bonner, *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1949), 51–70. See also Janet Fairweather, *Seneca the Elder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 190–227.

¹⁵Seneca the Elder, *Declamations*, trans. Michael Winterbottom, vol.1, Loeb Classical Library 463 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

So at certain points, I shall place the central questions of the declamations just as they were laid out by the declaimer, but I shall not weave in the accompanying arguments, so that I do not depart from the purpose and aim of this book; for you want to hear the *sententiae*, and any subject-matter which leads me away from the *sententiae* may annoy you.

In this text, the elder Seneca provides a detailed analysis of a number of declamations, beginning his treatment of each declamation with a lengthy catalogue of declaimers' *sententiae*. The prominence accorded to *sententiae* in *Declamations* is indicative of their central role in declamatory rhetoric.

The term *sententia* is frequently used to refer to proverbs, maxims and other compact parcels of wisdom. In *Declamations*, however, the elder Seneca uses the term to denote a far broader range of expressions. This is illustrated by the *sententiae* below, which are taken from the elder Seneca's record of the declamation 'Three Times a Hero'. This declamation was based on a fictional scenario in which a father disinherits his son who, despite his exemption from military service, nonetheless rejoins the army in defiance of his father's wishes. The declaimers were evenly divided between those who defended the father, speaking in the father's voice, and those who argued for the opposing position. The following are a sample of the *sententiae* used in defence of the father:

(1) Fugit me filius, et quidem ad hostem.

My son flees me – towards the enemy.

(2) Abico filium ut habeam.

I disinherit my son to keep him.

(3) Non ante te retinere coepi quam dimisit res publica.

I did not begin to keep you back until the state released you.

(4) Quid fatigante felicitatem molestius est?

What is more tiresome than someone weary of happiness? (1.8.1–3)

Of these four *sententiae*, only the last might be described as a proverb or maxim. On what basis does the elder Seneca classify the first three expressions as *sententiae*? The most detailed account of the use of *sententiae* in imperial rhetoric is provided by Quintilian in his *Orator's Education*.¹⁶ Quintilian distinguishes between two varieties of *sententia*: the traditional 'old' (*antiqua*) *sententia* and the more 'modern' (*nova*) variety that was especially popular in early imperial Rome.¹⁷ Traditionally conceived, *sententiae* are brief universal pronouncements (*vox universalis*), which include proverbs, aphorisms and maxims. Quintilian uses the Greek term *gnomai*, 'gnomic *sententiae*', as a label for this traditional variety. In the list above, the fourth *sententia* is gnomic. Quintilian contrasts gnomic *sententiae* with 'more modern kinds of *sententiae*'.¹⁸ While 'modern' *sententiae* encompass a range of utterances, their characteristic property is that they are brief, compressed expressions of wit, aiming to display ingenious conceits. For instance, *sententiae* based on surprise (*inopinatus*) represent one of the 'more modern kinds of *sententiae*'. Quintilian gives the example of the Gallic orator who, having heard that Nero had had his mother killed, quipped

¹⁶Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. Donald Russell, 5 vols., Loeb Classical Library 124, 125, 126, 127, 494 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8.5.1–34.

¹⁷Quintilian, *Orator's Education*, 8.5.3–34.

¹⁸Quintilian, *Orator's Education*, 8.5.15.

‘Your Gallic provinces ask, Caesar, that you bear your happiness like a man’.¹⁹ Quintilian catalogues a number of other conceits characteristic of ‘modern’ *sententiae*, the most important of which, perhaps, is antithesis. Quintilian offers the following example of an antithetical *sententia*: ‘I know whom to flee; whom to follow I do not know’.²⁰ In Tacitus and Seneca’s writings, such antithetical *sententiae* abound. In his comprehensive study of the style of the declaimers, Stanley Bonner outlines some of the most common conceits in ‘modern’ *sententiae*: such expressions are frequently ‘sharpened by antithesis or subtle allusion’ and are characterized by ‘the cultivation of paradox’.²¹ The conceits identified by Bonner are present in the *sententiae* listed above. *Sententiae* (1) and (2) express paradoxes, and (2), in addition, turns on an antithesis between disinheriting and keeping. *Sententia* (3) is constructed around a similar antithesis – the opposition between keeping and releasing. In the declamatory aesthetic, wit was highly valued, and declaimers attempted to exhibit their wit by devising ingenious ‘modern’ *sententiae*.

The declamatory mode of rhetoric influenced not only oratory but also the literature of the period, and especially the writings of the younger Seneca, Ovid, Lucan, Tacitus and Juvenal.²² The close relationship between declamation and imperial literature – as well as the

¹⁹rogant te, Caesar, Galliae tuae ut felicitatem tuam fortiter feras: Quintilian, *Orator’s Education*, 8.5.15.

²⁰habeo quem fugiam, quem sequar non habeo: Quintilian, *Orator’s Education*, 8.5.19.

²¹Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 55.

²²Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 149–67; Ulrike Auhagen, ‘Rhetoric and Ovid’, in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. William Dominik and Jon Hall (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 413–24; Marcus Wilson, ‘Rhetoric and the Younger Seneca’, in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. Dominik and Hall, 425–38; Walter Summers, introduction to *Select Letters of Seneca* (London: Macmillan, 1910, reprinted 1952), xxxi–xli;

preoccupation of both with *sententiae* – is especially apparent in Ovid’s verse. A contemporary of the elder Seneca, Ovid was both a poet and an accomplished declaimer: the elder Seneca describes his ‘talent’ (*ingenium*) at declamation as ‘smooth, fitting and pleasing’.²³ *Declamations* reports that Ovid was heavily influenced by Latro, a declaimer renowned for his *sententiae*: Ovid ‘listened so devotedly to Latro that he transferred many of his *sententiae* into his own verses’.²⁴ Indeed, a number of *sententiae* in Ovid’s poetry have counterparts in the elder Seneca’s *Declamations*.²⁵

When the figure of *sententia* is used with sufficient frequency, Hoskyns observes, it is no longer merely a figure but becomes ‘a style’. According to this criterion, Ovid’s *Heroides* and *Amores*, as well as at least some passages in *Metamorphoses*, can be classified as exemplars of the sententious style.²⁶ For example, in the lines below, taken from Narcissus’s lamentation in the *Metamorphoses*, the density of *sententiae* is striking. I have underlined the *sententiae* in the passage:

uror amor mei, flammis moveoque feroque.

quid faciam? roger anne rogem? quid deinde rogabo?

Sinclair, *Tacitus the Sententious Historian*; S. P. Oakley, ‘Style and Language’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, ed. A. J. Woodman (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 195–211; Stanley Bonner, ‘Lucan and the Declamation Schools’, *AJP* 87, no.3 (1966): 257–89; Susanna Braund, ‘Declamation and Contestation in Satire’, in *Roman Eloquence*, ed. William Dominik (London: Routledge, 1997), 147–65.

²³Seneca the Elder, *Declamations*, 2.2.8.

²⁴Seneca the Elder, *Declamations*, 1, preface, 22; 2.2.8.

²⁵Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 151–53.

²⁶*Ibid.*

quod cupio mecum est; inopem me copia fecit.

o utinam a nostro secedere corpore possem.

votum in amante novum, vellem quod amamus abesset.²⁷

I burn with love for me; I excite the flames and suffer them.

What shall I do? Shall I woo or be wooed? How then shall I woo?

What I desire is with me; plenty has made me poor.

Oh, if only I could depart from my body!

A novel wish for a lover, I should like what I love to be distant.

Absent from this passage are traditional, gnomic *sententiae*. Rather, the lines are studded with what Quintilian calls ‘modern’ *sententiae* – concise expressions of ingenuity and wit. Ovid’s *sententiae* would have appealed to the declaimers’ taste for antithesis and paradox: all six *sententiae* convey paradoxical conceits; and the second, third and fourth *sententiae* also embody antitheses. In his criticism of Narcissus’s speech, Dryden claims that Ovid is admired by those ‘who call conceits and jingles wit’.²⁸ Stripped of the abuse, Dryden’s observation is instructive. Both in imperial Rome and early modern England, Ovid was valued especially for the wit and ingenious conceits of his *sententiae*.

²⁷Ovid, *Metamorphoses I–IV*, ed. and trans. D. E. Hill (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1985), 3.464–68.

²⁸John Dryden, *Fables ancient and modern translated into verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, & Chaucer, with original poems by Mr Dryden* (London: 1700), preface, sig. B^v.

The sententious style is present not only in Ovid's verse but also in the writings of Seneca, Tacitus, Lucan and a number of other early imperial authors.²⁹ Written at the end of the first century, Quintilian's *Orator's Education* provides the most detailed contemporary commentary on this stylistic movement. He observes that *sententiae* were not so popular in traditional rhetoric but 'in our time there are no bounds to their use'.³⁰ Quintilian is critical of this stylistic fashion. While acknowledging that the *sententia* is an effective rhetorical figure if used in moderation, he disparages the 'modern licence' (*novam licentiam*) for *sententiae*.³¹ According to Quintilian, the younger Seneca was particularly culpable of this stylistic vice:

si prava non concupisset, si non omnia sua amasset, si rerum pondera
minutissimis sententiis non fregisset, consensu potius eruditorum quam puerorum
amore comprobaretur. (*Orator's Education*, 10.1.130–131)

If he [Seneca] did not desire perversity, if he was not fixed on his own point of view, if he did not break up weighty matters into minute *sententiae*, he would

²⁹For accounts of *sententiae* in Seneca's works, see Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 165–66; Walter Summers, introduction to *Select Letters of Seneca*, lxxiv–lxxvii; Anna Motto and John Clark, 'Ingenium Facile et Copiosum', *Classical Bulletin* 52 (Nov., 1975 – Apr., 1976): 1–4. In 'Lucan and the Declamation Schools', 257–89, Bonner shows that *sententiae* abound in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. The central role of *sententiae* in Tacitus' style is examined in Sinclair, *Tacitus the Sententious Historian*; Paul Plass, *Wit and the Writing of History: The Rhetoric of Historiography in Imperial Rome* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 26–55; Oakley, 'Style and Language', 199–203.

³⁰Quintilian, *Orator's Education*, 8.5.2.

³¹Quintilian, *Orator's Education*, 8.5.34.

have been approved by the majority of educated men, rather than merely by the admiration of boys.

A similar account of the early imperial style is presented in Tacitus's *Dialogue on Oratory*, which was written towards the end of the first century or at the beginning of the second. Like Quintilian's text, Tacitus's *Dialogue* records the popularity of the sententious style in early imperial Rome, describing what the 'young men' found attractive about the new rhetorical style:

Iam vero iuvenes et in ipsa studiorum incude positi, qui profectus sui causa oratores sectantur, non solum audire, sed etiam referre domum aliquid inlustre et dignum memoria volunt; traduntque in vicem ac saepe in colonias ac provincias suas scribunt, sive sensus aliquis arguta et brevi sententia effulsit, sive locus exquisite et poetico cultu enituit. (*Dialogue on Oratory*, 20)

Indeed, the young men, forging an education, who pursue public speakers for the purpose of improving themselves, desire not only to hear but also to carry back home some utterance worth remembering. They recount it to one another, often when they write home to their colonies and provinces, whether it is some pointed and brief *sententia* flashing out an insight, or a passage that gleams with exquisite and poetical refinement.

The two key attributes of the 'modern' *sententia* are summarized in the phrase 'pointed and brief'; the *sententia* is a brief expression pointed with wit. In Tacitus's own historical writings, 'pointed and brief' *sententiae* are abundant. The appendix to this dissertation

provides several examples of passages from Tacitus's and Seneca's works that illustrate their preoccupation with *sententiae*.

In late Elizabethan England, the fashion for the sententious style was perceived as re-enactment of the corresponding stylistic movement in early imperial Rome. Hoskyns's account of the sententious style was derived from, and contains echoes of, Quintilian's *Orator's Education*.³² The influence of the sententious style on late Elizabethan prose is illustrated by the opening lines of Bacon's *Essays* (1597), Sir William Cornwallis's *Essays* (1600), and John Donne's *Paradoxes*, written in the early 1590s:

Studies serve for pastimes, for ornaments, and for abilities. Their chief use for pastime is in privateness and retiring; for ornament is in discourse, and for ability is in judgement. For expert men can execute, but learned men are fittest to judge or censure. To spend too much time in them is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affection; to make judgement wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience. (Bacon, *Essays*)³³

The world is a book: the words and actions of men commentaries upon that volume: The former like manuscripts private: the latter common, like things printed. None rightly understand this author, most go contrary.

(Cornwallis, *Essays*)³⁴

³²For parallels between Hoskyns and Quintilian's accounts of the sententious style, see Osborn's commentary to *Directions for Speech and Style*, 269.

³³*Works of Bacon*, 6:525.

³⁴William Cornwallis, *Essayes*, ed. Don Cameron Allen (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 1.

To affect yea to affect their own deaths, all living things are importuned. Not by Nature only which perfects them, but by art and education which perfects her.

(Donne, *Paradoxes*)³⁵

The style is also present in a number of passages of Hayward's *Henrie III*, the first part of which was published in 1599.

So much are men more inclinable to revenge displeasure than reward desert; for it is troublesome to be grateful, and many times chargeable, but revenge is pleasant, and preferred before gain.³⁶

All four texts are strikingly aphoristic, studded throughout with the 'pointed and brief' *sententiae* that characterize the sententious style.

Bacon's *Essays* represent a notably self-conscious and explicit experiment in sententious writing. Brian Vickers has analysed the stylistic variety within Bacon's *Essays*, observing that the curt abruptness his 1597 essays grades into a more discursive style in the 1612 and 1625 essays.³⁷ But despite the variety of his *Essays*, the stylistic mode of all three editions can broadly be classified as sententious. To appreciate the role of *sententiae* in the *Essays*, it is instructive to examine Bacon's account of rhetoric in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. In this Latin edition of *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon expands considerably the treatment of rhetoric in the earlier English edition, providing a detailed explanation of how to create a

³⁵John Donne, *Paradoxes*, in *Paradoxes and Problems*, ed. Helen Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1.

³⁶Hayward, *Henrie III*, 75.

³⁷Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*.

storehouse of prepared *sententiae* that can be drawn upon in rhetorical writing and speeches. Bacon includes in *De Augmentis* an example of a large collection of *sententiae*, which are organized under forty-seven topic headings.³⁸ Of the forty-seven topics in the collection, twenty-six correspond to titles of the essays.³⁹ More generally, many of Bacon's essays abound in, and are structured around, the *sententiae* from the collection in *De Augmentis*, providing a paradigmatic example of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean vogue for sententious writing.⁴⁰

3.2 'Moderation and temperance' in early imperial rhetoric

In *De Augmentis*, Bacon presents the fashion for the sententious style as succeeding an earlier phase of rhetoric that was dominated by the imitation of Cicero.⁴¹ In presenting an opposition between the sententious and Ciceronian styles, Bacon is echoing early imperial texts on rhetoric. A central theme of Quintilian's *Orator's Education* and Tacitus's *Dialogue on Oratory* is the contrast between the older Ciceronian style, associated with the Roman republic, and the new sententious mode of rhetoric that emerged from the early empire.

A distinctive feature of Cicero's oratory is his conception of the role of emotions in rhetoric. According to Cicero, the orator should not only induce strong emotions in his audience but he should experience them himself. Thus in *On the Orator*, Cicero endorses

³⁸*Works of Bacon*, 1: 689–706.

³⁹Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. Vickers, 716.

⁴⁰For example, all seven *sententiae* from the topic 'Silence in Secrecy' can be found in Bacon's essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation', which also draws on three *sententiae* from the topic 'Dissimulation' (*Works of Bacon*, 1: 699–701).

⁴¹*Works of Bacon* 1: 451–452.

Marcus Antonius's observation that the most effective way of producing anger, hatred or pity in the audience is for the orator to feel and display those same emotions while speaking:

non mehercule unquam iudices, aut dolorem, aut misericordiam aut invidiam aut odium dicendo excitare volui, quin ipse in commovendis iudicibus eis ipsis sensibus, ad quos illos adducere vellem, permoverer. Neque est enim facile perficere, ut irascatur cui tu velis, iudex, si tu ipse id lente ferre videare.

(*On the Orator*, 2.45.190)⁴²

By Hercules, I have never endeavoured, by means of speech, to arouse judges and jurors to sorrow or pity, to envy or hatred, unless I myself, while seeking to influence them, were moved by those very feelings which I sought to induce in them. For it is not easy to ensure that a judge is made angry with the person you are attacking, if you yourself appear to treat the matter dispassionately.

Similarly, in *Brutus*, Cicero explains that the force of Galba's eloquence derived from his 'innate passion':

Quem fortasse vis non ingeni solum sed etiam animi et naturalis quidam dolor dicentem incendebat efficiebatque ut et incitata et gravis et vehemens esset oratio.

(*Brutus*, 24.93)⁴³

⁴²Cicero, *On the Orator*, Books 1–2, trans. E. W. Sutton and Horace Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 348 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948).

Not intellectual power alone but also a kind of innate passion fired him [Galba] when he spoke, and produced speech that was ardent and formidable and vehement.

Again, in his *Orator*, Cicero insists that he is able to inflame his audience only if his own state of mind is inflamed:

nulla me ingeni sed magna vis animi inflammat, ut me ipse non teneam; nec unquam is qui audiret incenderetur nisi ardens et eum perveniret oratio.

(*Orator*, 132)

No great force of talent but a force of mind inflames me, so that I lose hold of myself, and my audience would never be set on fire except by fiery speech.

Cicero's own passions are inflamed to such an extent that he 'lose[s] hold' of himself. This self-portrait emphasizes the intemperate lack of restraint of Cicero's favoured style of rhetoric. Cicero encourages the orator to experience strong emotions and, by conveying his fiery state of mind to the audience, to induce similar ardent emotions in the audience. The Ciceronian style of oratory is, therefore, characterized by a kind of openness; the orator succeeds only by opening his passionate state of mind to the audience.

Cicero's oratory was developed in, and was adapted to, the political conditions of the Roman republic. How might this open, emotive style fare in the early empire, during, say, the

⁴³Cicero, *Brutus* in *Brutus, Orator*, trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library 342 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962). All quotations from *Brutus* and *Orator* are from this edition.

reign of Tiberius? What happens in Tiberius's Rome when a speaker, fired with passion, 'lose[s] hold' of himself? In Tacitus's *Annals*, it is almost an exceptionless law that anyone who speaks openly and passionately is executed or exiled. As Chapter Two showed, Jonson's *Sejanus* dramatizes the dangers of open speech in Tiberius's Rome; the Germanicans in the play – especially Agrippina and Arruntius – consistently adopt an open, emotive mode of speech that contributes to, and, indeed, is largely responsible for, the downfall of the faction. In the *Annals*, Tacitus vividly depicts the hazards of open speech in the early empire, as well as the resulting paranoia:

Non alias magis anxia et pavens civitas, *sui* tegens adversum proximos;
congressus, conloquia, notae ignotaeque aures vitari; etiam muta atque inanima,
tectum et parietes circumspectabantur. (*Annals*, 4.69)

Never before had there been such great anxiety and terror among the citizens, who became reticent even towards their intimates; gatherings and conversations, the ears of friends and strangers, were avoided; even things mute and inanimate, walls and roofs, were treated with circumspection.

Tacitus portrays a world in which reticence and circumspection are essential for survival. The central lesson to be learnt from Tiberius's reign, according to Tacitus, is the danger of speaking openly. Tacitus's advice is almost the inverse of that of Cicero. Cicero encourages speakers to experience strong passions and display them to the audience, whereas Tacitus urges statesmen to develop Stoic emotional control and circumspection.

The contrast between the intemperance of Cicero's style and the restraint of early imperial rhetoric is emphasized in Tacitus's *Dialogue*. In the following passage, one of the

interlocutors in the *Dialogue*, Messalla, suggests that Cicero's rhetorical style was especially adapted to political conditions in the Roman republic, and the demise of his style was a response to the transition to imperial rule. The 'great and celebrated eloquence' that Messalla refers to is the older rhetorical style of Cicero:

sed est magna illa et notabilis eloquentia alumna licentiae, quam stulti libertatem vocabant, comes seditionum, effrenati populi incitamentum...Rhodii quidam, plurimi Athienses oratores exstiterunt, apud quos omnia populus, omnia imperiti, omnia, ut sic dixerim, omnes poterant. Nostra quoque civitas, donec erravit, donec se partibus et dissensionibus et discordiis confecit, donec nulla fuit in foro pax, nulla in senatu concordia, nulla in iudiciis moderatio, nulla superiorum reverentia, nullus magistratum modus, tulit sine dubio valentior eloquentiam... sed nec tanti rei publicae Gracchorum eloquentia fuit ut pateretur et leges, nec bene famam eloquentiae Cicero tali exitu pensavit. (*Dialogue*, 40.2–4)

But this great and celebrated eloquence is the adopted child of *licentia*, which the foolish call liberty, a friend of rebels, a goad for an unbridled populace... There were some orators in Rhodes and many in Athens, two cities in which everything was controlled by the populace, everything by the ignorant masses, everything, as it were, by everyone. Similarly in our state, so long as it went astray, so long as it wore itself out with division, dissent and discord, so long as there was no peace in the forum, no harmony in the senate, no restraint in the courts, no respect for authority, no restrictions on public officials, then, without doubt, eloquence grew mightier... But the benefit to Rome from the eloquence of the Gracchi did not

compensate for the suffering under their laws, and Cicero's famous death was too high a price to pay for the glory of his eloquence.

While Messalla regards the earlier style of rhetoric as 'mightier' than the newer sententious style, it is not, he judges, a style suited to the political conditions of the early empire. He sees the Ciceronian style as born of *licentia*, a term that has the general meaning of freedom and unrestraint, but also has a technical meaning in rhetorical theory referring to open and critical speech. The idea that Ciceronian eloquence was somehow suited to republican political conditions came to enjoy currency in the early modern discourses on rhetoric.⁴⁴ For instance, in his essay 'On the Vanity of Words', Montaigne's discussion of the politics of eloquence is a loose translation of Messalla's speech in Tacitus's *Dialogue*.⁴⁵

While acknowledging that early imperial rhetoric had not attained the 'renown and glory' of Cicero's eloquence, Messalla consoles his interlocutors that the 'moderation and temperance' of the early imperial style was suited to the times:

Credite, optimi et in quantum opus est disertissimi viri, si aut vos prioribus saeculis aut illi quos miramur his nati essent, ac deus aliquis vitas vestras ac tempora repente mutasset, nec vobis summa illa laus et gloria in eloquentia neque illis modus et temperamentum defuisset. (*Dialogue*, 41.5)

⁴⁴Marc Fumaroli, 'Rhetoric, Politics, and Society: From Italian Ciceronianism to French Classicism' in *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. James Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 253–73.

⁴⁵Fumaroli, 'Rhetoric, Politics, and Society', 257.

Believe me, my dear, accomplished friends, you have all the eloquence necessary. If you had been born in previous centuries, or those whom we admire had been born in these times, if some god had switched your lives and eras, you would not lack their renown and glory in eloquence, and they would not lack your moderation and temperance.

While the ‘moderation and temperance’ of imperial rhetoric was suited to the times, the open, emotive style of Cicero emerged from, and was adapted to, republican Rome.

Using language reminiscent of Tacitus’s Messalla, Seneca regularly presents himself as favouring a temperate, restrained mode of speech.⁴⁶ For instance, in *Epistle 59*, Seneca praises Lucilius for having his ‘words under control’:

habes verba in potestate. Non effert te oratio nec longius quam destinasti trahit. Multi sunt, qui ad id, quod non proposuerant scribere, alicuius verbi placentis decore vocentur, quod tibi non evenit; pressa sunt omnia et rei aptata. Loqueris quantum vis et plus significas quam loquieris. (*Epistles*, 59.4–5)⁴⁷

You have your words under control. Your speech does not carry you away, nor does it drag you further than you had planned. There are many who are enticed on by the allure of some other pleasing word to write something which they had not intended to write, but this does not happen to you. Your words are all concise and

⁴⁶See especially Seneca’s *Epistle 114*.

⁴⁷Seneca, *Epistles 1–65*, trans. Richard Gummere, Loeb Classical Library 75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917).

appropriate to the subject. You say as much as you want, and you mean more than you say.

Seneca praises Lucilius not only for his linguistic restraint but also for a second, related feature of his style: ‘you mean more than you say’. In Seneca’s description of Lucilius’s style, restraint of language grades into a kind of concealment. Lucilius’s style is to be admired, Seneca tells him, because he tacitly communicates something over and above what he explicitly says. In the terminology of rhetorical theory, Lucilius is using ‘figured language’, an oblique, indirect mode of communication. In contrast to the open, emotive rhetoric of Cicero, which emerged from republican Rome, the dangers of free speech in the early empire encouraged the development of a restrained and allusive ‘figured’ style.

3.3 Figured *sententiae* in imperial Rome

Of the rhetorical texts of classical Rome, Quintilian’s *Orator’s Education* provides the most extensive account of figured language. Prior to his detailed treatment of figured speech, Quintilian points to an ambiguity in the terms *figura* and *figuratus*, alerting the reader to a distinction between two senses of ‘figured language’:

Sed si habitus quidam et quasi gestus sic appellandi sunt, id demum hoc loco accipi schema oportebit quod sit a simplici atque in promptu posito dicendi modo poetice vel oratorie mutatum. Sic enim verum erit aliam esse orationem ἀσχημάτιστον, id est carentem figuris, quod vitium non inter minima est, aliam ἐσχηματισμένην, id est figuratam. Verum id ipsum anguste Zoilus terminavit, qui id solum putaverit schema quo aliud simulatur dici quam dicitur, quod sane vulgo

quoque sic accipi scio: unde et figuratae controversiae quaedam, de quibus post paulo dicam, vocantur. (*Orator's Education*, 9.1.13–14)

But if the term ‘figure’ is to be given to certain qualities and modes, as it were, then it will be necessary that ‘figure’ is understood as what is poetically or rhetorically varied from a simple and explicit style of speaking. For thus it will be true that there will be, on the one hand, ἀσχημάτιστον language, characterized by a lack of figures, which is a significant fault, and on the other hand ἐσχηματισμένην language, which is figured. In fact, this term was defined more narrowly by Zoilus, who thought that a figure was used only if something was pretended to be said other than that which, in fact, was said. This is widely understood, I know. On this basis, the figured declamations get their name, regarding which I will speak a little later.

The second Greek word, ἐσχηματισμένην translates as ‘figured’ while other Greek word, ἀσχημάτιστον, means ‘figureless’. In this passage, Quintilian distinguishes Zoilus’s narrower sense of ‘figured’ language from another, wider, sense. Figured language, construed widely, is that which ‘is poetically or rhetorically varied from a simple and explicit style of speaking’. The wide sense of the term can be understood simply to refer to language that abounds in figures of thought, figures of speech and figures of sound. Examples of figures of thought are apostrophe, irony and rhetorical questions; figures of speech include repetition and climax; while figures of sound are exemplified by isocolon and paromoion.⁴⁸ In its wide

⁴⁸The various rhetorical treatises offer different taxonomies of figures. The classification of figures that I use is based on Quintilian’s taxonomy.

sense, ‘figured language’ is, roughly speaking, language which is rhetorical or poetical, rather than plain and unadorned.

According to Quintilian, the Greek rhetorician Zoilus (fourth century BCE) introduced the narrow sense of ‘figured language’: ‘this term was defined more narrowly by Zoilus, who thought that a figure is used only if something was pretended to be said other than that which was said’. The narrow sense of ‘figured language’ has been a popular topic in recent scholarship, partly because of its implications for the politics of language.⁴⁹ Henceforth, I will use the term in this narrow sense. From figured language, Quintilian tells us, ‘the figured declamations get their name, regarding which I will speak a little later’. Quintilian’s promise to ‘speak a little later’ about figured declamations is discharged in the following passage. The passage is located immediately after a discussion of the rhetorical concept of *emphasis*, and it opens by commenting on the close relation between *emphasis* and figured language:

Huic vel confinis vel eadem est qua nunc utimur plurimum. Iam enim ad id genus quod et frequentissimum est et expectari maxime credo veniendum est, in quo per quamdam suspicionem quod non dicimus accipi volumus, non utique contarium,

⁴⁹For recent commentary on figured language, see Malcolm Heath, ‘Pseudo-Dionysus *Art of Rhetoric* 8–11: Figured Speech, Declamation, and Criticism’, *AJP* 124, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 81–105; Lucio Montefusco, ‘*Ductus* and *Color*: The Right Way to Compose a Suitable Speech’, *Rhetorica* 21, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 113–131; Bé Breij, ‘Pseudo-Quintilian’s *Major Declamations* 18 and 19: Two *controversiae figuratae*’, *Rhetorica* 24, no. 1 (Winter, 2006): 79–104. The political significance of ‘figured language’ is explored in detail in Frederick Ahl, ‘The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome’, *AJP* 105, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 174–208.

ut in εἰρωνείᾳ, sed aliud latens et auditori quasi inveniendum. Quod, ut supra ostendi, iam fere solum schema a nostris vocatur, et unde controversiae figuratae dicuntur. Eius triplex unus est: unus, si dicere palam parum tutum est, alter si non decet, tertius quo venustatis modo gratia adhibetur et ipsa novitate ac varietate magis quam si relatio sit recta delectat. (*Orator's Education*, 9.2.65–66)

Either similar to *emphasis*, or perhaps the same, is something which we currently use a great deal. For now we should turn to a kind of speech which is very common, which I know you are waiting for, in which, through a certain hint, we want something to be understood which we do not say, not by any means its opposite, as in irony, but something hidden and to be discovered by listening. This device, as I indicated above, almost alone is called a figure by us, and from it the figured declamations derive their name. There are three uses of this device: first, if it is insufficiently safe to speak openly; another, if it is unseemly to do so; third, when it is used only for the purpose of pleasure, and by its novelty and variety, it provides more delight than if the statement were straightforward.

Figured language is an oblique mode of expression, communicating by allusion, by insinuation, by implication: we use figured language, Quintilian says, when ‘through a certain hint, we want something to be understood which we do not say...something hidden and to be discovered by listening’. Quintilian observes that figured language’ is ‘similar to *emphasis*, or perhaps the same’. Several definitions of *emphasis* appear in *The Orator's Education*: *emphasis* is used to supply ‘a deeper meaning than that which the words state in

themselves’;⁵⁰ and if *emphasis* is used, then ‘from a phrase, something hidden may be extracted’.⁵¹ At least in Quintilian’s treatise, it is difficult to distinguish between the definitions of *emphasis* and figured language.

Quintilian identifies three justifications for using figured language. My focus will be on the first justification: figured speech is useful ‘if it is insufficiently safe to speak openly’. Like *Orator’s Education*, the Greek rhetorical texts that provide analyses of figured language also draw attention to this first justification.⁵² Quintilian provides a detailed elaboration on how figured language might be useful when ‘it is insufficiently safe to speak openly’, discussing its use in declamation competitions. Quintilian describes a particular kind of declamation whose rules prohibited competitors from speaking openly. For example, the rules may specify that a fictional decree makes it a capital offence to criticize a tyrant’s past.⁵³ In these declamations, Quintilian reports, competitors would use figured language to get around the prohibition. Instead of directly attacking the tyrant, they would criticize indirectly, by insinuation and allusion.

⁵⁰Vicina praedicatae, sed amplior virtus est emphasis, altiore praebens intellectum quam quem verba per se ipsa declarant: *Orator’s Education*, 8.3.83.

⁵¹Est emphasis etiam inter figures, cum ex aliquo dicto latens aliquid eruitur: *Orator’s Education*, 9.2.64.

⁵²See Dirk Schenkeveld, *Studies in Demetrius On Style* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1964), 118–9; Frederick Ahl, ‘The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome’, 185–92; Bé Breij, ‘Pseudo-Quintilian’s *Major Declamations* 18 and 19: Two *controversiae figuratae*’, 83–84. The Greek rhetorical texts that offer accounts of figured language include the Pseudo-Dionysius *Art of Rhetoric* and Demetrius’s *On Style*.

⁵³*Orator’s Education*, 9.2.67.

Quintilian creates an impression that there was a vogue for figured language among his contemporaries in the early empire. It is a mode of speech, he informs his readers, ‘which we currently use a great deal...which is very common, which I know you are waiting for’. Indeed, he tells us, a certain type of declamation, ‘figured declamations’, get their name from figured language. Given the suppression of open speech in the early empire, it is unsurprising that oratory in imperial Rome was preoccupied with figured language.

In the rhetorical treatises of the early empire, figured language was perceived as associated with a brief, concise mode of speech. The relationship between brevity and figured language is summarized in the passage from Seneca’s Epistle 59 quoted earlier. Having commended Lucilius’s restraint and brevity (‘You have your words under control...Your words are all concise’), Seneca suggests that his restrained brevity imparts a figured quality to his writing: ‘You say as much as you want, and you mean more than you say’. The brevity of figured language is, in fact, suggested by its definition. Quintilian defines language to be figured when ‘we want something to be understood which we do not say’. It follows, then, that in figured speech there is something ‘which we do not say’. The implication is that when language is figured, speech is cut-off, abbreviated, truncated.

The brevity of the *sententia* ensures that it is an especially suitable vehicle for figured speech. In the section of *Orator’s Education* concerned with *sententiae*, Quintilian provides an example of a *sententia* whose brevity renders it figured:

Est et quod appellatur a novis noema, qua voce omnis intellectus accipi potest, sed hoc nomine donarunt ea quae non dicunt verum intelligi volunt, ut in eum quem saepius a ludo redemerat soror, agentem cum ea talionis quod ei pollicem dormienti recidisset: ‘eras dignus ut haberes integram manum’: sic enim auditur ‘ut depugnares’. (*Orator’s Education*, 8.5.12)

There is also something which is called by the moderns a *noema*. This may mean any idea, but they give this name particularly to things which they do not say yet they want to be understood. For example, a sister had often bought out her brother from his gladiatorial contract, and she cut off his thumb when he was asleep. Upon being sued by him, she said: ‘you deserved to keep your hand intact’, by which it was understood ‘so that you might have fought to the death’.

The sister’s *sententia* is figured: orators use such *sententiae*, Quintilian notes, when there are ‘things which they do not say yet they want to be understood’. In this case, the sister implied, without explicitly stating, that she wished her brother had been killed. The figured quality of the *sententia* is achieved by its brevity; the sister omits to expand the remark with ‘so that you might have fought to the death’, and thereby ensures that there is more to be understood than she explicitly says.

In Quintilian’s account of the distinction between ‘old’ and ‘modern’ *sententiae*, the ‘modern’ *sententia* is characterized by its brevity together with its ingenuity or point: to borrow Tacitus’s phrase, it is a ‘pointed and brief’ *sententia*. The ingenuity of the sister’s *sententia* – its ‘pointed’ quality – derives from her use of figured language. By meaning more than she says, she displays her ingenuity, her wit. We can identify two reasons, then, why the ‘pointed and brief’ *sententia* is a particularly apt vehicle for figured speech: first, figured language supplies the *sententia* with its conceit, its ‘pointed’ character; and second, the brevity of a *sententia* facilitates figured language, which is achieved by truncating speech.

I observed earlier that *sententiae* are a particular focus of the elder Seneca’s *Declamations*. Indeed, in Tacitus’s *Dialogue*, Messalla suggests that the schools of

declamation were responsible for the emergence of the new style in the early empire.⁵⁴ In the sententious style of the declaimers, figured language was a prominent rhetorical device. In his *Declamations*, the elder Seneca praises the declaimer Otho for his skill at figured language:

Otho Iunius pater solebat difficiles controversias belle dicere, eas in quibus inter silentium et detectionem medio temperamento opus erat. (*Declamations*, 2.1.33)

Otho Junius Senior was generally skilful at performing difficult declamations, which needed a restrained middle way between silence and bold assertion.

Figured language – language ‘between silence and bold assertion’ – was particularly valuable in ‘difficult declamations’. Otho was ‘generally skilful’ in his use of figured language, and the elder Seneca describes in detail a particular declamation contest in which Otho displayed this skill. In this declamation, the fictional character whom Otho defended was an impoverished man who had disinherited his son. Seneca discusses Otho’s *color* – the way in which he had ‘spun’ the facts in order to defend the impoverished father. Seneca observes that Otho never explicitly states his *color*, but, instead, he conveys it implicitly, by a series of figured *sententiae*:

Solebat hos colores qui silentium et significationem desiderant bene <dicere> itaque et hanc controversiam hoc colore dixit, tamquam in emendationem abdicatorum et reconciliationis causa facerat. Hoc non detegebat, sed omnibus sententiis utebatur ad hoc tendentibus. (*Declamations*, 2.1.37)

⁵⁴Tacitus, *Dialogue*, 35.

He generally performed well those *colores* that required silence and hints, and thus he spoke this declamation with the *color* that the poor father was attempting to reform the disinherited sons and to bring about a reconciliation with their father. He did not reveal this, but it was the inclination of all the *sententiae* that he used.

This declamation, the elder Seneca suggests, was one of the ‘difficult declamations’ which ‘required silence and hints’. Therefore, rather than explicitly stating his *color*, Otho conveys it implicitly, using figured language: the *color* ‘was the inclination of all the *sententiae*’. Seneca then provides a long list of figured *sententiae* in which Otho implies, without explicitly stating, the *color* of his declamation. In his account of figured language, which was quoted above, Quintilian refers to ‘figured declamations’; from figured language, Quintilian says, ‘the figured declamations derive their name’. Otho’s speech is an example of a figured declamation, illustrating the central role of *sententiae* in expressing figured language.

Another example of a figured declamation is the Pseudo-Quintilian’s *Major Declamation 19*, in which the opposing parties are a husband and wife. The husband suspects that his wife committed incest with their son. In order to confirm his suspicions, he tortures his son, and, as a consequence, the son dies. The father refuses to state explicitly what he learnt in the torture, in order to protect the reputation of his family. Thus in his defence the father must convey, without explicitly stating, that his suspicions of incest were confirmed by the interrogation of his son. This declamation contest was evidently designed to allow declaimers to display their skill at figured speech. The figured language in the declamation has been examined by Bé Breij, who compiles a lengthy catalogue of the figured *sententiae*

used the speech.⁵⁵ For instance, in the following *sententiae*, the father implies, without explicitly saying, that he had obtained evidence of his son's guilt:

Ita tibi non videtur omnia respondere pro filio, qui dicit 'occidi'?⁵⁶

Does it not seem to you that the man who says 'I killed him' has replied to all questions about his son?

As is illustrated by the declamations of Pseudo-Quintilian and Otho, the declaimers of the early empire saw *sententiae* as a particularly suitable vehicle for conveying figured speech. The brevity of *sententiae* occludes their meaning, which is conveyed by insinuation and implication rather than explicit statement. The figured language, in turn, supplies the *sententia* with its pointed character.

In early imperial Rome, the style of the declaimers had a considerable influence on the literature of the period. Figured *sententiae* were prominent not only in the declamations of the early empire but also in the verse of the period. As noted earlier, Ovid's contemporaries regarded him as not just an accomplished poet but also a skilful declaimer, and his verse abounds in *sententiae*. In *Roman Declamation*, Stanley Bonner distinguishes between two varieties of Ovid's *sententiae*: those that were not especially influenced by the declamation schools, and those that display the 'declamatory touch'.⁵⁷ The 'declamatory touch', Bonner suggests, is apparent in following misogynistic *sententia* from *Amores*:

⁵⁵Bé Breij, 'Pseudo-Quintilian's *Major Declamations* 18 and 19: two *controversiae figuratae*', 83–84.

⁵⁶*Declamationes XIX Maiores Quintiliano Falso Ascriptae*, ed. Lennaert Håkanson (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1982), 19.5.

⁵⁷Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 151–53.

Casta est quam nemo rogavit. (*Amores*, 1.8.43)

A woman is chaste whom no one has propositioned.

The ‘declamatory touch’ can also be detected in two *sententiae* from *Heroides*. In the first, Oenone rails at Paris, deprecating Helen’s love for him:

Ardet amore tui? Sic et Menelaon amavit. (*Heroides*, 5.105)

She burns with love for you? Thus also she loved *Menelaus*.

The second *sententia* is a snide remark made by Hypsipyle to Jason, telling him about their children:

si quaeris, cui sint similes, cognosceris illis:

fallere non norunt: cetera patris habent. (*Heroides*, 6.123–4)

If you ask, there are similarities to you that you will recognize in them:

they do not know deceit; but in other respects they are like their father.

Bonner shows that two of these three *sententiae* can be found in the elder Seneca’s *Declamations*. But he observes that the influence of the declamations on the *sententiae* can also be inferred from their tone: ‘It is mainly by the innuendo or the sting that we recognize the declamatory touch’.⁵⁸ All three *sententiae* are charged with innuendo, which is, of course, a form of figured language; when using innuendo, the speaker means more than is said. Thus

⁵⁸Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 153.

Bonner is effectively saying that figured language is a primary indicator of ‘the declamatory touch’.

The presence of figured language in Ovid’s *sententiae* is noted not only by Bonner but also by Quintilian. In *Orator’s Education*, Quintilian opens his treatment of figured language with an example of a *sententia* from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The *sententia* is uttered by Zmyrna, who is struggling to manage an erotic desire for her father. Having failed to summon the strength to confess her ‘crime’ directly to her nurse, she alludes to it using figured language:

O, dixit, felicem coniuge matrem! (*Orator’s Education*, 9.2.64)

She said ‘Oh, mother, fortunate in your husband!’

Although Zmyrna does not directly refer to her transgressive desire, the nurse catches her meaning. Again, Ovid uses brevity to impart to the *sententia* a figured quality.

In this section, I have illustrated three observations about the use of figured language in early imperial Rome. Firstly, figured language was a characteristic feature of the early imperial sententious style. In effect, Bonner makes this observation when he notes that the *sententiae* of the first-century declamatory style were frequently ‘sharpened by antithesis or subtle allusion’.⁵⁹ Bonner’s phrase ‘subtle allusion’ is a reference to figured language. Secondly, the ‘modern’ *sententia* was seen as an especially suitable vehicle for figured language: the brevity of the *sententia* was apt for the curt, truncated character of figured speech; and the figured language, in turn, provided the *sententia* with its pointed character. Thirdly, during the early empire, the heightened interest in figured speech was a conscious response to restrictions on open speech. As Quintilian puts it, figured language is warranted

⁵⁹Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 55.

‘if it is insufficiently safe to speak openly’. On account of its brevity and its association with figured language, the sententious style was perceived as suitable for a restrained, veiled mode of speech, which was prudent in the hazardous political world of early imperial Rome.

3.4 Tacitean Stoicism and figured *sententiae* in early modern Europe

In late sixteenth-century Europe, the surge of interest in Tacitus’s works stimulated experimentation with the sententious style of early imperial Rome. Justus Lipsius and other early modern Tacitists not only drew on the political views of Tacitus and Seneca, but also imitated their sententious style. Lipsius’s writings on politics and rhetoric, I will argue, cast light on the connection between the sententious style and Tacitean Stoicism. As discussed in Chapter Two, Lipsius developed his Tacitean Stoicism in response to his perception of the hazards of political life, arguing that, in order to survive, statesmen should compromise their morals and adopt a restrained, covert mode of speech. For example, in his neo-Stoic treatise *Of Constancy* (1584), Lipsius urges those courtiers who serve under a tyrant to restrain their speech: ‘How many could I recount unto thee, who for their unadvised tongues have suffered punishment of all their senses under tyrants?’⁶⁰

Lipsius’s valorization of Tacitean-Stoic restraint is conveyed not just in his political works but also in his writing on rhetoric. In *Principles of Letter-Writing* (1591), he suggests that, in contrast to Cicero, Seneca and Tacitus use a ‘restrained’ (*strictus*) style of speech. While boys may benefit from imitating the copious ‘luxuriance’ of Cicero, adults should imitate the ‘restrained’ style of Seneca, Tacitus and Sallust:

⁶⁰Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, trans. John Stradling (Holborn, 1594), 196.

Sed imprimis suadeam Sallustium, Senecam, Tactium, et id genus brevium, subtiliumque scriptorium iam legi, quorum acuta quasi falce luxuries illa paulisper recidatur fiatque oratio stricta, fortis, et vere virilis.

(*Principles of Letter-Writing*, 38–40)⁶¹

But primarily I would encourage the reading of Sallust, Seneca and Tacitus, and that brief and subtle style of writing, which uses a sharp pruning hook to cut back luxuriance for a while, and the speech becomes restrained, strong and truly masculine.

I will discuss the gendered imagery of such criticisms of Cicero in the context of *Julius Caesar*, examining how Shakespeare uses the sententious and Ciceronian styles to convey masculine and feminine character traits. My current focus, however, is on the connection between Seneca and Tacitus's 'restrained' style and the restrictions on speech in early imperial Rome. Lipsius's passage recalls the contrast in Tacitus's *Dialogue on Rhetoric* between the uncontrolled 'licentia' of Cicero's republican rhetorical style and the 'moderation and temperance' of early imperial eloquence.

Lipsius characterizes Seneca and Tacitus's sententious style as 'brief and subtle', suggesting that their restraint is associated with their brevity. Moreover, in his *Guide to Stoic Philosophy*, Lipsius observes that the restrained brevity of Seneca's style can take the form of figured language. The following passage from the *Guide*, which commends Seneca's style, echoes Seneca's praise of Lucilius's figured writing:

⁶¹Justus Lipsius, *Principles of Letter-Writing: A Bilingual Text of Justi Lipsi Epistolica Institutio*, ed. and trans. by R. V. Young and M. Thomas Hester (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996).

Verba, selecta, propria, significantia: immo quae plus aliquid semper dicunt, quam dicunt.⁶²

Well-chosen, proper and significant words: which always say something more than they say.

In expressing admiration for words which ‘say something more than they say’, Lipsius is praising Seneca’s use of figured language.

In a letter, Lipsius reveals that he himself is attempting to develop a figured style. He tells his correspondent that his recent work *Questiones Epistolicae* attempts to move away from ‘Ciceronian balance’ towards a brief, figured style:

De quibus quid iudicaturi sitis, timeo. Alia enim quaedam a prioribus meis haec scriptio, cui nitor ille abest, et luxuria, et Tulliani concinni: pressa ubique, nec scio an quaesita nimis brevitatis. Quae me tamen nunc capit. Timanthen pictorem celebrant, quod in eius operibus plus semper aliquid intellegeretur, quam pingeretur: velim in mea scriptione.

I am concerned about what you will make of this work [*Questiones Epistolicae*]. For this is a different style from my earlier writings, in which the elegance is absent, as is luxury, and Ciceronian balance: concise everywhere, and too much, perhaps, deliberate brevity. However this now captivates me. They celebrate

⁶²Justus Lipsius, *Manuductionis ad Stoicam Philosophiam Libri Tres* (Antwerp, 1604), 57.

The title can be translated as *A Guide to Stoic Philosophy in Three Books*.

Timanthes the painter, because in his works there was always more to be understood than was actually painted. I would like this in my writing.⁶³

Lipsius aspires to a style of writing in which ‘there was always more to be understood than was actually’ said. In other words, he is developing a figured style.

The main conclusions in this chapter about the politics of style are exemplified by Lipsius’s attitudes towards rhetorical style and politics. Lipsius adopted, and also commended, a brief, restrained, figured and sententious style, a style modelled on the writings of Seneca and Tacitus. He conceived of this style as consistent with his Tacitean-Stoic political writings, which called on statesmen to restrain their speech and conceal their minds. In contrast, he saw the expansive, flowing Ciceronian style as unsuitable for the restrained and covert form of communication that he advocates.

Lipsius’s writings were an important impetus to the English Tacitist movement, which gathered force in the 1590s.⁶⁴ In the first English translations of Tacitus, which mark the beginning of the English Tacitism, the prefaces emphasize the figured quality of Tacitus’s writing. Henry Savile’s translation, which appeared in 1591, includes an anonymous preface that draws attention to the obscurity of Tacitus’s style:

⁶³In Morris Croll, ‘Juste Lipse et le Mouvement Anticicéronien à la Fin du XVIIe et au Début du XVIIIe Siècle’, *Essays by Croll*, 17.

⁶⁴The influence of Lipsius on early modern England is described in McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England*, 55; J. H. M. Salmon, ‘Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England’, 216–17. For the influence of Lipsius on Hoskyns’s and Bacon’s writings on rhetoric, see Osborne, introduction to Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 104.

For Tacitus I may say without partiality, that he has written the most matter with best conceit in fewest words of any historiographer ancient or modern. But he is hard. *Difficilia quae pulchra* [Difficult things which are beautiful]: the second reading over will please thee more than the first, and the third than the second.⁶⁵

Similarly in his 1597 translation of *The Germania* and *The Annals*, Richard Greenwey also stresses the ‘difficulty’ of Tacitus’ style:

No word not loaden with matter, and as himself speaketh of Galba, he useth *Imperatoria breuitate* [Imperial brevity]: which although it breed difficulty, yet carrieth great gravity.⁶⁶

When Greenwey refers to the ‘imperial brevity’ of the text, he is alluding to the sententious brevity that was favoured by authors of early imperial Rome – not only Tacitus but also Seneca, Ovid, Lucan and Martial. In qualifying ‘brevity’ with ‘imperial’, Greenwey is alluding to the political environment from which this brief style emerged. This ‘imperial brevity’, he observes, may ‘breed difficulty’ – that is, it may occlude meaning, giving rise to figured language.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Tacitus, *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba. Fower Bookes of the Histories of Cornelius Tacitus. The Life of Agricola*, trans. Henry Savile (Oxford, 1591).

⁶⁶Tacitus, *The annales of Cornelius Tacitus. The description of Germanie*, trans. Richard Greenwey, 2nd ed. (London, 1598).

⁶⁷For an example of the ambiguity and difficulty of Tacitus’s writing, see the discussion of a passage in *Annals*, 2.51 by Plass, *Wit and the Writing of History*, 3–4.

Late Elizabethan Tacitism helped to encourage the fashion for sententious writing. In his *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon displays a sophisticated understanding of suitability of *sententiae* for figured speech. Discussing Caesar's oratory, he praises one of Caesar's figured *sententiae*, unpacking it to reveal its figured quality:

Caesar did extremely affect the name of king; and some were set on, as he passed by, in popular acclamation to salute him king, whereupon, finding the cry weak and poor, he put it off in a kind of jest, as if they had mistaken his surname; *Non Rex sum, sed Caesar* [I am not King, but Caesar]: a speech, that if it be searched, the life of fullness of it can scarce be expressed: for first it was a refusal of a name, but yet not serious: again it did signify an infinite confidence and magnanimity, as if he presumed Caesar was the greater title; as if by his worthiness it is come to pass till this day: but chiefly it was a speech of great allurements towards his own purpose; as if the state did strive with him but for a name, whereof mean families were vested; for Rex was a surname with the Romans, as well as King is with us.⁶⁸

The brief *sententia* 'I am not King, but Caesar' conveys more than is explicitly stated: 'if it be searched, the life and fullness of it can scarce be expressed'. In other words, the *sententia* is figured. In the first instance, the *sententia* can be interpreted as a weak pun, as saying 'My surname is not King, but Caesar!'. But the *sententia* also carries the implication that he is not a mere King, but greater than a King. This additional implication plays on the fact that in Rome *Rex* was a surname 'whereof mean families were vested', which supports the suggestion that the title of Caesar is greater than that of *Rex*. Caesar exploits sententious

⁶⁸*Works of Bacon*, 3: 312.

brevity, Bacon suggests, in order to convey a range of meanings. Bacon's remarks on Caesar's *sententia* reveal his awareness of the suitability of brief *sententiae* for figured language, recognizing that the brevity of a *sententia* allows it to imply a range of different meanings. Indeed, in his writings, and especially in his essays, Bacon exploits the potential ambiguity of brief *sententiae*.⁶⁹ F. J. Levy has suggested that there is a connection between Bacon's style and his political views, arguing that Bacon's studied equivocation reflects his engagement with Tacitism and Machiavellianism.⁷⁰

Discussions of figured *sententiae* also appear in the rhetorical treatises of early modern England, drawing particularly on Quintilian's *Orator's Education*. As noted above, Quintilian uses the term *noema* to refer to the figured *sententia*: 'There is also something which is called by the moderns a *noema*. This may mean any idea, but they give this name particularly to things which they do not say yet they want to be understood'. Henry Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence* and George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* present

⁶⁹F. J. Levy, 'Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics', *ELR* 16, no. 1 (1986): 101–22; Stanley Fish, 'Georgics of the Mind: The Experience of Bacon's Essays', in *Seventeenth Century Prose*, ed. Fish (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 251–80.

⁷⁰Levy, 'Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics'. For an account of the influence of Tacitus and Lipsius on Bacon, see Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, especially 108–15. For further commentary on the influence of Tacitean obscurity on early modern style, see George Williamson, *Seventeenth Century Contexts* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 121–22; James Biester, *Lyric Wonder: Rhetoric and Wit in Renaissance English Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), esp. 94–109.

accounts of the *noema*, which appear to be indebted to Quintilian.⁷¹ In his *Discoveries*, Jonson also provides a discussion of figured language, borrowing from Quintilian's account of the subject. Jonson not only explores figured language in his criticism, but he also consciously employed it in his literary works. Figured *sententiae* feature prominently in Jonson's Martialian epigrams, as well as in his play *Sejanus*.

3.5 Ben Jonson and figured *sententiae*

In *Discoveries*, Ben Jonson claims to favour a 'plain' style of writing, declaring that 'Pure and neat language I love, yet *plain* and customary'. He would prefer, he says, 'a *plain* downright wisdom, than a foolish and affected eloquence', and he commends a style that is neither high nor meagre because 'There the language is *plain* and pleasing'.⁷² Prior to the 1980s, Jonsonian criticism regularly took at face value his claims to write with a plain style.⁷³ Thus Wesley Trimpi's influential *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style*, published in 1962, provides a detailed analysis of the varieties of Jonson's plain style. Over the past

⁷¹Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London, 1593), 180–81; George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 316.

⁷²*Works of Jonson* 7: p. 561, line 1325; p. 511, lines 244–45; and p. 568, lines 1448–49 (my emphasis).

⁷³See, for example, Wesley Trimpi, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Arthur Marotti, 'All About Jonson's Poetry', *ELH* 39, no. 2 (1972): 208–37. The perception that Jonson writes with a plain style did not entirely disappear after the 1970s, as is exemplified by W. David Kay's discussion of Jonson's 'honest' style in *Ben Jonson: A Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 8.

three decades, however, critics have stressed not the straightforwardness, or ‘plainness’, of Jonson’s poetry, but, instead, its indirection – its use of equivocation, insinuation and allusion.⁷⁴ For instance, in his book *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage*, Robert C. Evans locates Jonson’s poems in the competitive struggle for patronage in the Stuart court, and he suggests that Jonson developed a style adapted to this environment, a style that is characterized by equivocation and insinuation rather than ‘plainness’.⁷⁵

The poem [‘To Thomas, Earl of Suffolk’] illustrates how he could manipulate the reading experience, how this poet of the ‘plain style’ could use equivocation to display his skill [and] insinuate meaning.

Evans’s observation draws attention to a tension between Jonson’s theory and practice. On the one hand, in his observations on writing, Jonson identifies with the ‘plain’ style of writing but on the other hand his poetry abounds in indirection and insinuation.

⁷⁴Jennifer Brady, “‘Beware the Poet’”: Authority and Judgment in Jonson’s Epigrammes’, *SEL* 23, no. 1 (1983): 95–112; Don Wayne, *Penhurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 33; Fish, ‘Authors-Readers: Jonson’s Community of the Same’, *Representations* 7 (Summer 1984), 33; Robert C. Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1989); Victoria Silver, ‘Totem and Taboo in the Tribe of Ben: The Duplicity of Gender and Jonson’s Satires’, *ELH* 62, no. 4 (1995): 729–57; Ian Donaldson, ‘Jonson’s Poetry’, *Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 119–39; Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 147–49.

⁷⁵Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage*, 63.

If Jonson's protestations that he uses a plain style are disingenuous, the question arises of how he conceived of the style in his verses. It might appear that Jonson's own literary criticism is unhelpful in answering this question, given his misleading tendency to identify with the plain style. Jonson's criticism, however, is not univocal: a series of remarks in *Discoveries* and *Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden* suggest that Jonson perceived himself as deploying figured language, consciously modelling his writing on the restrained, figured style of the early empire.

In his *Discoveries*, Jonson, like Seneca and Lipsius, calls for a restrained mode of language, regularly inveighing against unrestrained speech: 'Ready writing makes not good writing... Yet when wee thinke wee have got the faculty, it is even then good to resist it: as to give a Horse a check sometimes with a bit'.⁷⁶ Moreover, he suggests that in some circumstances, this linguistic restraint should take the form of figured language. There may be justification for avoiding 'words...uttered plainly' and, instead, obscuring their meaning:

But why do men depart at all from the right and natural ways of speaking?
 Sometimes for necessity, when we are driven, or think it fitter, to speak that in
 obscure words or by circumstance, which uttered plainly would offend hearers.
 Or to avoid obsceneness, or sometimes for pleasure and variety; as travellers turn
 out of the highway, drawn either by the commodity of a footpath or the delicacy
 or freshness of the fields. And all this is called ἐσχηματισμένη, or figured
 language.⁷⁷

⁷⁶*Works of Jonson* 7: 557, lines 1228–30. See also lines 248, 264–65, 685–87.

⁷⁷*Works of Jonson* 7: 567, lines 1432–38.

The Greek word *eschematismene* is the same as that which appeared in Quintilian's discussion of figured language that was quoted earlier. As Jonson observes, it translates into English as 'figured'. Editors of *Discoveries* have noted that Jonson's discussion of figured language draws heavily on the following passage from Juan Luis Vives's *Art of Speaking*:

Discessum est in his a recto et naturali loquendi more; primum necessitatis causa, quando obscuris verbis institerunt dicere, quod apertis offendisset audientes, vel turpitudine aliqua, vel re minus grata: ex necessitate ad utilitatem, et commoditatem est uentum, inde ad jucunditatem et delicias, sicut de regia via per semitas deflectimus commoditate illarum, vel amoenitate allecti. Haec sunt quae orationem figuratam reddunt, quae oratio ἐσχηματισμένη Graecis dicitur.⁷⁸

In these ways, men depart from the right and natural way of speaking; firstly, for the sake of necessity, when they might decide to speak in obscure words, because hearers would be offended by open words, either because of obscenity, or because of diminished pleasantness: from necessity one comes to utility and to agreeableness, from there, to enjoyment and charm, as if, from the highway, one is deflected to the footpaths by the agreeableness of them, or by the delightfulness of the fields. This is referred to as figured speech, which is called ἐσχηματισμένη speech by the Greeks.

Vives's treatment of figured language is based primarily on that of Quintilian. The correspondence between *Orator's Education*, *Art of Speaking* and *Discoveries* is especially

⁷⁸Juan Luis Vives, *De Ratione Dicendi: Latieinisch/Deutsch*, ed. Angelika Ott (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1993), 126. I have corrected a misspelling of the Greek word in this passage.

apparent in the discussions of the warrant for using figured language. Quintilian lists three justifications for its use: ‘first, if it is insufficiently safe to speak openly; another, if it is unseemly to do so; third, when it is used only for the purpose of pleasure, and by its novelty and variety, it provides more delight than if the statement were straightforward’. In citing three justifications, Quintilian’s treatment of figured speech is distinct from that offered by the Greeks. The Greek rhetorical texts that provide analyses of figured language cite Quintilian’s first two justifications for the use of figured speech, but not the third – they omit to note that such language may be justified as providing pleasure.⁷⁹ In contrast to the Greek rhetoricians, Vives and Jonson follow Quintilian and include this third justification.

In his treatment of figured language, Jonson borrows not only from Vives’s *Art of Speaking*, but also directly from Quintilian’s text. Traces of *Orator’s Education* are especially apparent in Jonson’s specification of Quintilian’s third justification for figured speech. Jonson points to the ‘pleasure, and variety’ afforded by figured language. In explicitly stressing the ‘variety’ provided by figured speech, Jonson’s passage is similar to Quintilian’s text and departs from *The Art of Speaking*. Quintilian says that figured language can be used to provide pleasure (*gratia*), because it introduces ‘novelty and variety’ (*novitas* and *varietas*) into speech. In contrast, Vives does not explicitly mention the ‘variety’ introduced by the use of figured speech but instead focuses on the pleasure it produces: ‘from necessity, one comes to utility (*utilitas*) and agreeableness (*commoditas*), from there to enjoyment (*jucunditas*) and charm (*deliciae*)’. Given Jonson’s intimate knowledge of *The Orator’s Education*, we should not be surprised to learn that he drew upon Quintilian’s text.

⁷⁹See Schenkeveld, *Studies in Demetrius On Style*, 118–19; Ahl, ‘The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome’, 185–92; Bé Breij, ‘Pseudo-Quintilian’s *Major Declamations* 18 and 19: two *controversiae figuratae*’, 83–84. The Greek rhetorical texts that offer accounts of figured language include the Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Art of Rhetoric* and Demetrius’s *On Style*.

Jonson's advice to Drummond, as recorded in *Informations*, attests to his familiarity with *The Orator's Education*:

He recommended to my reading Quintilian (who, he said, would tell me the faults of my verses as if he had lived with me).⁸⁰

Quintilian's sixth, seventh, eighth books were not only to be read, but altogether digested.⁸¹

While *Orator's Education* is the ultimate classical source for the treatment of figured language in *Discoveries* and *The Art of Speaking*, Jonson and Vives display a political cautiousness that causes them to depart from their source. The most obvious alteration is that they obfuscate Quintilian's first justification for using figured language. In a studiously vague sentence, Jonson says that figured language is useful when 'it is fitter to speak in obscure words' and when 'words...uttered plainly would offend hearers'. In contrast, Quintilian provides a clear and concise statement of the first justification of figured language: it is useful 'if it is insufficiently safe to speak openly' (*si dicere palam parum tutum est*). He then goes on to explain how figured language can be used to attack tyrants indirectly, by insinuation and allusion, and thus avoiding prohibitions on open speech.

The reason why Jonson did not translate directly Quintilian's frank treatment of the political utility of figured language is, presumably, that he judged that it would be hazardous to do so. Jonson regularly came into conflict with authorities over his plays and, as a consequence, he took any opportunity to deny that his writing contains hidden – and

⁸⁰*Works of Jonson* 5: 360, lines 8–9.

⁸¹*Works of Jonson* 5: 366, lines 97–98.

potentially subversive – meanings. For example, in the dedication of the *Epigrams*, Jonson acknowledges the danger that he will be accused of criticising by means of ‘cipher’. Anticipating this accusation, he says of his poems that ‘when I made them I had nothing in my conscience to expressing of which I did need a cipher’.⁸² In general, Jonson’s policy is to deny strenuously that he uses ‘cipher’ for political criticism, which encourages him to obscure Quintilian’s first justification for figured speech. Indeed, Jonson’s studied vagueness about the political utility of figured language can itself be construed as an exercise in figured language. Borrowing a phrase from Quintilian’s passage above, it might be said that the account of figured language in *Discoveries* contains ‘something hidden and to be discovered’. Jonson wants ‘something to be understood’ that he does not say.

Whereas *Discoveries* expresses a general recognition of the value of figured language, Jonson’s remarks in *Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden* make claims for the importance of figured language that are both more specific and more insistent. In the composition of epigrams, Jonson suggests, figured language is essential and the plain style inadequate. This suggestion emerges from a series of criticisms that Jonson directs at his rival epigrammists, including the following observation about the epigrams of Sir John Davies:

A great many epigrams were ill because they expressed in the end what should have been understood by what was said: that of Sir John Davies.⁸³

Commentary on the *Informations* has tended to interpret Jonson as making a vague, general criticism of Davies’s epigrams. Wesley Trimpi glosses Jonson as criticizing the ‘flat’ verse of Davies, while C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson propose that Jonson is asserting that a good

⁸²*Works of Jonson* 5: 111, lines 5–6.

⁸³*Works of Jonson* 5: 378, lines 296–97.

epigram, in contrast to those of Davies, should be capped with a reflection not ‘quite obvious or otiose’.⁸⁴ My suggestion is that Jonson should be read as making a very specific criticism of Davies’s rhetorical style; he is criticising Davies for failing to use figured language. We employ figured language, Quintilian observes, when ‘we want something to be understood which we do not say’: *quod non dicimus accipi volumus*.⁸⁵ Quintilian’s contrast between ‘what is understood’ and ‘what is said’ is used by Jonson to frame his criticism of Davies. Jonson asserts that an epigram should leave more to be understood than what is said; in other words, an epigram should use figured language. And, according to Jonson, Davies’s epigrams fail to do so: his epigrams ‘expressed in the end what should have been understood by what was said’.

But why does Jonson upbraid Davies for failing to use figured language in his epigrams? Why does Jonson regard epigrams as flawed if they lack figured language? To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine Jonson’s broader views on epigrams. In his poem ‘To My Mere English Censurer’, Jonson criticizes not only the epigrams of Davies but also those of John Weever:

To thee my way in epigrams seems new,
 When both it is the old way and the true.
 Thou say’st that cannot be, for thou hast seen
 Davies and Weever, and the best have been,
 And mine come nothing like. I hope so.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Trimpi, *Ben Jonson’s Poems*, 170; *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925–52), 2:351.

⁸⁵Quintilian, *Orator’s Education*, 9.2.65.

⁸⁶*Works of Jonson* 5: 121, lines 1–5.

As a number of commentators have observed, when Jonson insists that his ‘way in epigrams’ is ‘the old way and the true’, he is referring to the epigrams of Martial.⁸⁷ Poets should model their epigrams on Martial, the poem asserts, and while Jonson is successful in composing Martialian epigrams, Davies is not.

In *Martial and the English Epigram*, T. K. Whipple provides a summary of the characteristic features of Martial’s epigrams. He stresses, in particular, Martial’s use of ‘indirection’, ‘implication’ and ‘innuendo’:

Irony, in fact, is one of Martial’s most frequent satirical weapons. It rarely takes the form of downright sarcasm; he does not say the opposite of what he means. Rather, he deals in innuendo, he damns by implication. Straightforward, bludgeoning abuse is not his line; even if his satire sounds far from over-delicate or subtle to modern ears, it yet involves a certain indirection.⁸⁸

Whipple is, in effect, pointing to Martial’s frequent use of figured language. To write with ‘innuendo’, ‘implication’ and ‘indirection’ is, as Quintilian would have put it, to leave more to be understood than what is said. Martial wrote in the second half of the first century, and his proclivity for figured language is representative of the literary tastes of the early empire. Like Ovid’s poetry and Seneca’s tragedies, Martial’s epigrams display the fondness for figured *sententiae* that is characteristic of early imperial declamatory practices.

⁸⁷*Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford, Simpson and Simpson 2: 348; R. V. Young, ‘Ben Jonson and Learning’, in *Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* ed. Harp and Stewart, 51.

⁸⁸T. K. Whipple, *Martial and the English Epigram from Sir Thomas Wyatt to Ben Jonson* (1925; repr. New York: Phaeton Press 1970), 293.

The following epigram provides an illustration of Martial's use of figured *sententiae*:

Petit Gemellus nuptias Maronillae
 et cupit et instat et precatur et donat.
 adeone pulchra est? immo foedius nil est.
 quid ergo in illa petitur et placet? tussit.⁸⁹

Gemellus is wooing the hand of Maronilla,
 And he is ardent and obstinate and he pleads and brings presents.
 Is she such a beauty? Actually, no one is uglier.
 So what is sought-after and desirable in her? She coughs.

The final sentence in the passage, a sentence comprising a single word *tussit* ('she coughs'), is a figured *sententia*. From this sentence, the reader is required to understand more than is said. In particular, the reader must infer that Maronilla is seriously ill, and that Gemellus is pursuing matrimony with an eye on her inheritance. The wit of the epigram largely derives from its use of figured language. If instead of 'she coughs', Martial had concluded the epigram with 'she is dying, and Gemellus is attempting to secure her inheritance', the comic effect would have been undermined. In this epigram, Martial uses brevity to render the language figured, condensing the clinching *sententia* into one word – *tussit*. The wit of the *sententia* relies on its figured brevity, from the deliberate omission to unpack its full meaning.

⁸⁹Martial, *Epigrams*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, vol.1, Loeb Classical Library 94 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1.10.

The following epigram provides another example of Martial's use of figured *sententiae*:

Plena laboratis habeas cum scrinia libris,
 Emittis quare, Sosibiane, nihil?
 'edent heredes' inquis 'mea carmina'. Quando?
 Tempus erat iam te, Sosibiane, legi.⁹⁰

You have bookcases full of final drafts you've laboured over,
 Why, Sosibianus, do you publish none?
 'My heirs will publish my poems' you say. When?
 It is now time, Sosibianus, you are read.

The line 'It is now time, Sosibianus, you are read' has a surface meaning suggesting that Martial wishes the author well. In combination with the penultimate line, however, the final line carries an implication that Martial would like the author to die – there is more to be understood from the line than what is said. As in the previous epigram, the poem is structured around a point of wit that is delivered using a figured *sententia* in the final line.

Jonson's epigrams are closely modelled on those of Martial.⁹¹ One especially Martialian epigram is his poem 'To Sir Annual Tilter':

Tilter, the most may'dmire thee, though not I;
 And thou, right guiltless, mayst plead to it 'Why'?

⁹⁰Martial, *Epigrams* vol.1, 4.33.

⁹¹See Whipple, *Martial and the English Epigram*.

For thy late sharp device. I say 'tis fit
 All brains at times of triumph should run wit.
 For then our water conduits do run wine;
 'But that's put in', thou'lt say. Why, so is thine.⁹²

The 'wit' in the knight's device, Jonson says, is 'put in'. Perhaps the knight paid someone to write his 'device' rather than doing it himself. Perhaps, instead, Jonson is insinuating that Sir Annual Tilter plagiarized it, and possibly even plagiarized it from Jonson. The brevity of the clinching expression 'so is thine' leaves it up to the reader to interpret what Jonson is saying. As in Martial's epigrams above, the final expression in the poem is a brief, figured *sententia*: Jonson wants something to be understood that is not said. Similarly, Jonson's epigram 'On Old Colt' concludes with a figured *sententia*:

For all night sins with others' wives, unknown,
 Colt now doth daily penance in his own.⁹³

The brevity of the expression 'daily penance in his own' again asks the reader to understand more than what is said. Perhaps the Old Colt's promiscuous sexual history has rendered him impotent in a monogamous relationship; perhaps, alternatively, it left him with a debilitating sexual disease; or it may be that he is unable to avoid fantasising about other women.⁹⁴

⁹²*Works of Jonson* 5: 126–27.

⁹³*Works of Jonson* 5: 130.

⁹⁴Jonson's poems 'On Sir Voluptuous Beast' and 'On the Same Beast' provide a more explicit exploration of the impact of a promiscuous past on marital sex.

As contemporary critics have shown, such examples of Jonson's indirection and insinuation are numerous, providing copious demonstration of the gap between his poetic practice and his claims to use a plain style. My suggestion is that, while Jonson's standard policy was to present himself as a poet of the plain style, he would have classified the primary model for his epigrams, Martial, as a practitioner of the figured style. Moreover, he would have classified his own epigrammatic style as figured language, a style that deliberately eschewed the clarity of the plain style and aimed, instead, at the kind of indirection and innuendo that is exemplified by Martial and early imperial declamations. In his desire to pinpoint what he perceived to be the central defect in Davies's epigrams, Jonson departs from his general policy of presenting himself as a defender of plain writing, and reveals an alignment with the figured style.

Drummond reports that, as well as attacking Davies and Weever, Jonson also made the following criticisms of the epigrams of John Owen and John Harrington:

Owen is a poor pedantic schoolmaster, sweeping his living from the posteriors of little children, and hath nothing good in him, his epigrams being bare narrations.⁹⁵

When Sir John Harrington desired him to tell the truth of his epigrams, he answered him that he loved not the truth, for they were narrations and not epigrams.⁹⁶

In his book on Jonson's plain style, Wesley Trimpi interprets these remarks as criticizing Harrington's epigrams as 'casual anecdotes', as an 'anecdotal narration of circumstances'.⁹⁷

⁹⁵*Works of Jonson* 5: 371, lines 166–68.

⁹⁶*Works of Jonson* 5: 361, lines 26–28.

Trimpi is construing the word ‘narration’ in its primary modern sense (which was also current in early modern England), according to which a narration is ‘A thing narrated or recounted; a story, an account’.⁹⁸ I will argue, instead, that in these remarks to Drummond, Jonson uses the word ‘narration’ in a sense related to its technical meaning in classical rhetorical theory. This technical sense of ‘narration’, which is now obsolete, was current in Jonson’s England and is defined in the *OED* as ‘The part of an oration in which the facts of the matter were stated’.⁹⁹ In the *OED*, this definition is accompanied by a quotation from Thomas Wilson’s *The Art of Rhetoric*: ‘The narration is a *plain* and manifest pointing of the matter, and an evident setting forth of all things, that belong unto the same’ (my italics). As is exemplified by Wilson’s text, rhetorical manuals generally recommend that in the narration, an orator should use a plain style, or at least a relatively plain style, because the narration is the part of the speech in which clarity is most important.¹⁰⁰ In his criticism of Owen and Harrington, Jonson complains that their epigrams use the style characteristic of a narration in oratory – that is, a style that is excessively plain.

There are illuminating parallels between Jonson’s use of the term ‘narration’ and that of Demetrius in *On Style*. Like Jonson, Demetrius uses ‘narration’ (*diegema*) in a pejorative sense; for both Jonson and Demetrius, ‘narration’ is a term of abuse. *On Style* includes three passages in which ‘narration’ is used in this pejorative sense, and in the first of these

⁹⁷ Trimpi, *Ben Jonson’s Poems*, 170–71.

⁹⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. ‘narration’, accessed March 24, 2012, <http://www.oed.com>.

⁹⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. ‘narration’, accessed March 24, 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Cicero proposes that narrations should be ‘expressed clearly, almost with the tone of everyday conversation’: *Orator*, 124.

passages, the phrase ‘bare narration’ (*diegema psilon*) is strikingly reminiscent of Jonson’s complaint about Owen’s ‘bare narrations’:

Εὐθύς οὖν πρώτη ἐστὶ χάρις ἢ ἐκ συντομίας, ὅταν τὸ αὐτὸ μηκυνόμενον ἄχαρι γένηται, ὑπὸ δὲ τάχους χάριεν, ὥσπερ παρὰ Ξενοφῶντι, «τῷ ὄντι τούτῳ οὐδὲν μέτεστι τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἐπεὶ ἐγὼ αὐτὸν εἶδον ὡσπερὶ Λυδὸν ἀμφοτέρα τὰ ὦτα τετυρημένον· καὶ εἶχεν οὕτως.» τὸ γὰρ ἐπιλεγόμενον τὸ «εἶχεν οὕτως» ὑπὸ τῆς συντομίας τὴν χάριν ποιεῖ, εἰ δὲ ἐμηκύνθη διὰ πλειόνων, ὅτι «ἔλεγεν ταῦτα ἀληθῆ, σαφῶς γὰρ ἐτετύρητο,» διήγημα ἂν ψιλὸν ἐγένετο ἀντὶ χάριτος.

(*On Style*, 137)¹⁰¹

The very first source of charm [*charis*] is that from brevity, when an utterance which would lose its charm if lengthened gains charm by its quick expression, as in Xenophon: “‘This man has nothing Greek about him, since, as I saw, both his ears were pierced like a Lydian’”. And so he had’. The ending ‘so he had’ is made charming by its brevity, but if it were expanded more, as ‘he spoke truthfully, for clearly he had had them pierced’, then it would have become a bare narration and not charming.

τὸ γὰρ μῆκος ἐκλύει τὴν σφοδρότητα, τὸ δὲ ἐν ὀλίγῳ πολὺ ἐμφαινόμενον δεινότερον· παράδειγμα τὸ Λακεδαιμονίων πρὸς Φίλιππον, «Διονύσιος ἐν

¹⁰¹All quotations of *On Style* are from *Aristotle Poetics, Longinus On The Sublime, Demetrius On Style*, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell and Doreen Innes, trans. W. H. Fyfe, revised by Donald Russell, Loeb Classical Library 199 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Κορίνθω·» εἰ δὲ ἐξέτειναν αὐτό, «Διονύσιος ἐκπεσὼν τῆς ἀρχῆς πτωχεύει ἐν Κορίνθῳ διδάσκων γράμματα,» διήγημα σχεδὸν ἂν ἦν μᾶλλον ἀντὶ λοιδορίας.

(*On Style*, 241)

For length weakens intensity, and it is more forceful [*deinoteros*] to express a great deal of meaning in a few words. An example is the statement of the Spartans to Phillip, ‘Dionysios in Corinth’. If they had lengthened it, ‘Having been deposed from rule, Dionysios is living in poverty, running a school in Corinth’, it would almost be a narration instead of an insult.

λαμβάνοιτ’ ἂν καὶ ἡ κλιμαξ καλουμένη, ὥσπερ Δημοσθένης τὸ «οὐκ εἶπον μὲν ταῦτα, οὐκ ἔγραψα δέ· οὐδ’ ἔγραψα μὲν, οὐκ ἐπρέσβευσα δέ· οὐδ’ ἐπρέσβευσα μὲν, οὐκ ἔπεισα δὲ Θηβαίους»· σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐπαναβαίοντι ὁ λόγος ἔοικεν ἐπὶ μειζόνων μειζόνα· εἰ δὲ οὕτως εἶποι τις ταῦτα, «εἰπὼν ἐγὼ καὶ γράψας ἐπρέσβυσά τε καὶ ἔπεισα Θηβαίους,» διήγημα ἐρεῖ μόνον, δεινὸν δὲ οὐδέν.

(*On Style*, 270)

What is called ‘climax’ should also be used, as in this expression of Demosthenes: ‘I did not say those things, and then fail to move the resolution. I did not move the resolution, and then fail to serve as envoy. I did not serve as envoy, and then fail to persuade the Thebans’. For the expression almost seems to mount higher and higher, and if, instead, he had said ‘Having spoken and moved the resolution, I served as envoy and persuaded the Thebans’ it would have been a mere narration and not forceful [*deinos*].

In *On Style*, Demetrius divides style into four broad classes: the plain (*ischnos*), the grand (*megaloprepes*), the elegant (*glaphyros*) and the forceful (*deinos*). The second and third

quotations above appear in Demetrius's account of the forceful style. In both quotations, Demetrius explains why a statement is forceful by comparing it to a rewritten, less forceful, version of the statement. When Demetrius says that the rewritten versions, which he refers to slightly as 'narrations', lack force, he is saying that they represent a move away from the forceful style towards the plain style. In these two quotations, therefore, 'narration' connotes plainness. A similar connotation attaches to the meaning of 'narration' in the first of the three quotations, which appears in Demetrius' discussion of the elegant style. A principal ingredient of the elegant style is 'charm' (*charis*),¹⁰² so when Demetrius asserts that the rewritten statement – the 'narration' – lacks charm, he is suggesting that it represents a move away from the elegant style towards a plainer style. As Demetrius uses the term, therefore, a 'narration' is a statement displaying a relatively plain style, which lacks the charm and force of the elegant and forceful styles.

The first two of the three quotations, moreover, suggest that Demetrius uses 'narration' with an additional, more specific connotation. In these two passages, the 'narration' is what results from unpacking a brief, condensed statement into a lengthy exposition. The expansion of the statement ensures that it loses its charm or force, and thus the 'narration' is compared unfavourably to the pregnant brevity of the original. The term 'narration' as it is used by Demetrius, therefore, not only carries a sense of plainness, but also connotes a lengthy, expository style, lacking the elegance or force of a brief style.

My suggestion is that in his criticisms of Owen and Harrington, Jonson uses the term 'narration' in the same way as Demetrius. That is, he is criticising Owen and Harrington for using an inappropriately plain style, with a more specific suggestion that their poems lack the pregnant brevity that is appropriate to the genre of epigrams. In the epigrams of Martial and Jonson that were quoted above, figured language is created by brevity. The wit in their

¹⁰²Demetrius, *On Style*, 36, 128.

epigrams succeeds precisely because the compressed final lines are not unpacked into lengthy, expository ‘narrations’. On this reading, Jonson’s attacks on Owen and Harrington are similar to his criticism of Davies. Their common fault – as Jonson presents it – is that they use a plain, expository style in their epigrams, rather than the compressed, pregnant style that is apposite to the genre.

By the end of the sixteenth century, a number of texts of Demetrius’s *On Style* were circulating in Europe, including various translations into Latin and Italian.¹⁰³ Jonson’s discussion of letter-writing in his *Discoveries* ultimately derives from *On Style*, although perhaps via the translations of Justus Lipsius and John Hoskyns.¹⁰⁴ Jonson may well have read *On Style*, but I am not claiming that he did. Rather, my suggestion is that Jonson uses the word ‘narration’ in a sense derived from classical rhetorical theory, and that this sense is exemplified by Demetrius’s use of the term in *On Style*.¹⁰⁵

Figured language has a central role not only in Jonson’s epigrams but also in his *Sejanus*. Throughout the play, characters use figured language to negotiate the hazardous political landscape of early imperial Rome. The following exchange between Tiberius and Sejanus illustrates how sententious brevity could be used to impart a figured quality to speech:

Tiberius Sit down, my comfort. When the master prince

Of all the world, Sejanus, saith he fears,

¹⁰³Bernard Weinberg, ‘Translations and Commentaries of Demetrius, *On Style* to 1600: A Bibliography’, *PQ* 30, no. 4 (1951): 353–80.

¹⁰⁴Young, ‘Ben Jonson and Learning’, 45.

¹⁰⁵For more detail on references to figured language in Jonson’s criticism, see Peter Gibbard, ‘Jonson’s Criticism and Figured Language’, *BJJ* 19, no. 2 (2012): 261–280.

Is it not fatal?

Sejanus Yes, to those are feared.

Tiberius And not to him?

Sejanus Not if he wisely turn
That part of fate he holdeth first on them.

Tiberius That nature, blood, and laws of kind forbid.

Sejanus Do policy and state forbid it?

Tiberius No.

Sejanus The rest of poor respects, then, let go by;
State is enough to make th'act just, them guilty.

Tiberius Long hate pursues such acts.

Sejanus Whom hatred frights,
Let him not dream on sov'reignty.

Tiberius Are rites
Of faith, love, piety, to be trod down?
Forgotten? And made vain?

Sejanus All, for a crown.
The prince who shames the tyrant's name to bear
Shall never dare to anything but fear. (2.165–79)

In this passage, Sejanus and Tiberius use a brief, restrained and figured sententious style. Tiberius's opening question creates an allusive tone that characterizes the entire exchange: 'When the master prince/ Of all the world, Sejanus, saith he fears,/Is it not fatal?' First, rather than saying 'I', Tiberius refers to himself indirectly as 'the master prince of the world'. Second, instead of asserting absolutely that he fears, Tiberius presents the point as a

hypothetical: ‘when...he fears’. Third, Tiberius omits to say whom he fears. The brevity of the phrase ‘he fears’ leaves it to the hearer, Sejanus, to infer who is feared. By phrasing his point in an elliptical way, Tiberius is using brevity to create figured language; his words mean more than they say.

Sejanus responds by implying that Tiberius should kill this unnamed group whom he fears. Again, this is not directly stated, but rather it is implied by Sejanus’s comment that when a prince fears, it is fatal ‘to those are feared’. At this point, Tiberius offers Sejanus a hint to help him identify the group he is talking about. He says that ‘nature, blood, and laws of kind forbid’ him from killing them, implying that Tiberius is referring to Agrippina and her family. A few lines after the exchange quoted above, Tiberius is concerned that Sejanus may not yet have caught his meaning: ‘Knows yet Sejanus whom we point at?’ (2.188). Unsurprisingly, we learn that Sejanus was following Tiberius’s meaning all along.

In the passage above, each of the figured expressions is a *sententia*. They represent what Quintilian calls ‘modern’ *sententiae* – brief utterances that display ingenuity or wit. In Sejanus’s and Tiberius’s ‘modern’ *sententiae*, the ingenuity is displayed in the use of figured language. The passage also includes a number of the more traditional ‘old’ *sententiae*, maxims of Tacitean and Machiavellian statecraft, several of which are of Senecan provenance.¹⁰⁶ In this exchange, Tiberius and Sejanus communicate using the figured, sententious style of early imperial Rome. The appearance of figured, sententious speech in *Sejanus* is especially noteworthy, because Jonson dramatizes the use of this style in the environment that gave birth to it – the hazardous political world of the early empire. Sejanus’s and Tiberius’s sententious style conveys their Tacitean restraint and circumspection, contributing to the play’s dark Tacitean atmosphere.

¹⁰⁶See the footnotes to the passage in *Works of Jonson 2*: 274.

Chapters Four, Five and Six explore the use of sententious speech in a range of other plays, including Marlowe's *Edward II*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. Like Jonson, these playwrights exploit the political connotations of the sententious style to express the political attitudes of Tacitean Stoicism. In these plays, the sententious style – and especially the figured *sententia* – are used to convey the attitudes of prudent restraint and moderation advocated by Tacitus. As in *Sejanus*, the style is used to create a mood of Tacitean corruption and conspiracy.

In my analysis of the sententious style, I have attempted to show how two formal features of the style – its brevity and its 'pointed' wit – contribute to its political expressiveness. Turning now to the Ciceronian style, I will again begin with a detailed examination of the formal features of the style, before investigating how these formal features of Ciceronian rhetoric are used to express political attitudes.

3.6 The formal character of the Ciceronian style

For an author such as Cicero, who wrote such a quantity and diversity of works over many decades, as well as writing a variety of texts about style, a methodological challenge arises for any attempt to characterize *the* style of his writing. Roger Pooley expresses scepticism about such an attempt, observing that while Cicero at times uses highly elaborate and ornamental rhetoric, 'he does not stay at this level for long, and indeed recommends that the orator should master the plain 'Attic' style as well... So one can find Cicero himself writing (as well as commending) "Attic" prose'.¹⁰⁷ To address this challenge, I will focus on Cicero's *Orator*, which was a highly influential work written late in his career. In the *Orator*, he recognizes that the style of an oration should depend on, and vary according to, its subject

¹⁰⁷Pooley, *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century*, 9.

matter. Responding to criticisms from Attic orators who favour a plain style of rhetoric, Cicero acknowledges a role in oratory for the three styles of rhetoric – the plain (*tenuis*), middle (*medius*) and grand (*grandiloquus*) styles. But while the *Orator* does not defend a single, univocal rhetorical style, nevertheless the central thrust of Cicero’s argument is to urge the merits of the grand style, and to attack his critics for their failure to exploit its considerable resources. Any accomplished speaker should use all three styles, but the kind of orator whom Cicero most admires – whom he aspires to become – is the master of the grand style.¹⁰⁸ It is possible, therefore, to talk coherently about *the* Ciceronian style, so long as this phrase is understood to mean the style that Cicero most admires, rather than the style that he invariably uses.

The centrepiece of the Ciceronian style is the period. While the *Orator* warns that a speaker should not overuse periods, they nevertheless have a central role in creating the distinctive rhythm of Cicero’s prose.¹⁰⁹ An especially expansive and elaborate period appears at the opening of one of Cicero’s early orations, *On Behalf of Archias*:

si quid est in me ingeni iudices quod sentio quam sit exiguum aut si qua
 exercitatio dicendi in qua me non infitior mediocriter esse versatum aut si huiusce
 rei ratio aliqua ab optimarum artium studiis ac disciplina profecta a qua ego
 nullum confiteor aetatis meae tempus abhorruisse, earum rerum omnium vel in
 primis hic A. Licinius fructum a me repetere prope suo iure debet.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Cicero, *Orator*, 99.

¹⁰⁹ Cicero, *Orator*, 221.

¹¹⁰ Cicero, *On Behalf of Archias*, 1, in *Orations: Pro Archia, Post Reditum in Senatu, Post Reditum ad Quirites, De Domo Sua, De Haruspicum Responsis, Pro Plancio*, trans. N. H. Watts, Loeb Classical Library 158 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923).

- (1) Whatever ability I possess, jurors,
- (2) which I recognize is limited,
- (3) or whatever experience of oratory,
- (4) in which I do not deny I am tolerably practiced,
- (5) or whatever knowledge of this,
- (6) derived from studies and practice of these excellent arts,
- (7) which studies, I confess that I have not at any time hated
- (8) surely the fruit of all these things, this A. Licinius, first and foremost,
- (9) has a claim to demand back from me, almost by right.

A period is comprised of a number of *membra*, which correspond to clauses or phrases. The *Orator* proposes that a typical period is about four *membra* in length, suggesting that the above period, which I construe as divided into nine *membra*, is long even by Cicero's standards:¹¹¹

Constat enim ille ambitus et plena comprehensio e quattuor fere partibus, quae membra discumus, ut et auris impleat et neque brevior sit quam satis sit neque longior... E quattuor igitur quasi hexametrorum instar versuum quod sit constat fere plena comprehensio. His igitur singulis versibus quasi nodi apparent continuationis, quos in ambitu coniungimus. (*Orator*, 221–222)

¹¹¹*Pro Archias* is a relatively early oration of Cicero. Some of his later orations were characterized by shorter periods. See L. P. Wilkinson, *Golden Latin Artistry* (1963; repr. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1985), 179–83.

The full and comprehensive period is composed of about four parts, which we call *membra*, so as to fill the ears and be neither briefer than the proper length, nor longer... Each of the four parts that compose the full period, then, is about equal to a line of hexameter verse. In each of these lines of verse, binding knots appear, which we unite in a period.

Cicero emphasizes that in a period the *membra* are united together by ‘binding knots’. To understand what Cicero means by this, it is helpful to turn to Demetrius’s treatment of periods in his *On Style*. Demetrius distinguishes two techniques that bind a period together. The *membra* are bound together, first, by the suspension of meaning, and second, by balance between the *membra*.¹¹² In the example above, Cicero suspends the resolution of meaning by opening the sentence with a series of subordinate clauses – primarily relative clauses. The suspension of meaning is only resolved in the final *membra*, when the main verb arrives. Suspension of meaning binds together the *membra* because the sense of the initial *membra* is only completed when the main verb arrives near the end of the period. The *membra* in the above period are also bound together by balance: in particular, there is balance between *membra* (1), (3) and (5) and also between *membra* (2), (4) and (7).

I will use an English example to illustrate the role of balance in Cicero’s style. Edward Hall’s history *The troubleous season of Kyng Henry the sixt* (1548) opens with the following elaborate Ciceronian period:

- (1) Death the determinate end of man’s life
- (2) and of all earthly things the final point and prick,
- (3) which favoureth neither Emperor nor spareth king,

¹¹²Demetrius *On Style*, 11, 22–26.

- (4) but at his pleasure confoundeth rich and slaieth poor,
 (5) unbodying the soul of this goodly prince
 (6) this martial captain and renowned flower,
 (7) not only dismayed and appalled the hearts and courages of the English
 nation,
 (8) but also puffed up and encouraged the minds and stomaches of the Dolphyn
 and his proud people.¹¹³

Like the opening sentence of Cicero's *On Behalf of Archias*, Hall's sentence displays the characteristic features of a period. In Hall's period, there are eight component *membra* which are all relatively long. Despite the length of Hall's sentence, it is not a disjointed construction. Hall binds the *membra* together by suspending the resolution of meaning, opening the sentence with a series of subordinate clauses – relative clauses and participles. The suspension of meaning is only resolved in the seventh *membrum*, when the main verb 'dismayed' finally arrives.

In Hall's sentence, balance also serves to bind together the *membra* of the period. In his *Orator*, Cicero describes how balance (*concinnatas*) may be used to create a rhythm in speech:

formae vero quaedam sunt orationis, in quibus ea concinnitas est ut sequatur numerus necessario. Nam cum aut par pari refertur aut contrarium contrario opponitur aut quae similiter cadunt verba verbis comparantur, quidquid ita concluditur, plerumque fit ut numerose cadat. (*Orator*, 220)

¹¹³Edward Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke*, 2nd ed. (1548), fol. 83^r.

There are, in fact, certain figures of speech which produce such balance that rhythm necessarily results. For when equal is placed by equal, or opposite is set against opposite, or words correspond to words with similar endings, whatever is decorated in this way will have a rhythmical cadence.

Three figures of speech that produce balance are *parison* (like-structure), *paromoion* (like-sound) and *isocolon* (like-length). These three figures are all present in Hall's period above. *Parison* balances *membra* (7) and (8), as is apparent from structural correspondence between the following segments of the *membra*:

dismayed and appalled the hearts and courages of the
 puffed up and encouraged the minds and stomachs of the

Membra (3) and (4) are balanced by *paromoion*, in particular by correspondences between the verb endings '-eth', as well as the alliteration between 'spareth' and 'slaieth'. *Isocolon* also balances *membra* (3) and (4), which are both thirteen syllables in length. Moreover, *membra* (1) to (6) are loosely balanced by *isocolon* – they are all between ten and thirteen syllables long.

In the *Orator*, Cicero argues that these formal features of his style are responsible for the emotive force of his grand style. I noted in the first section of this chapter that in the *Orator*, as well as in *On the Orator* and *Brutus*, Cicero stresses the emotive force of his preferred style of oratory. In the following section, drawing particularly on the *Orator*, I will identify the links between the emotional force of Cicero's oratory and the formal characteristics of his style.

3.7 Cicero's style and emotive force

In a Ciceronian period, suspension of meaning and balance provide the 'binding knots', as Cicero puts it, that unite the *membra* into a period. To describe speech that is bound together in this fashion, Cicero uses the term *aptus*, which can be translated as 'well-knit' or 'connected'.¹¹⁴ In contrast, he describes the plain Attic style of his critics as *solutus* ('loose') or *amputatus* ('disjointed'). For example, addressing Brutus in *Orator*, Cicero complains that Brutus's friends, who use an Attic style of oratory, attack his 'well-knit' style:

Hoc freti isti et ipsi infracta et amputata locuntur et eos vituperant qui apta et finita pronuntiant. (*Orator*, 170)

On this basis, these friends of yours deliver broken and disjointed speeches, but they disparage those who give well-knit (*aptus*) and rounded orations.

Within a Ciceronian period, suspension of meaning and balance knit together the constituent *membra*.

Cicero's criticism of the plain style is similar to Quintilian's attack on the sententious style a century later. In his *Orator's Education*, Quintilian suggests that an excessive density of *sententiae* 'produces fragmented speech', which 'lacks structure':

Facit res eadem concisam quoque orationem: subsistit enim omnis sententia, ideoque post eam utique aliud est initium. Unde soluta fere oratio et e singulis

¹¹⁴I am borrowing the phrase 'well-knit' from the translation in the Loeb edition.

non membris sed frustis conlata structura caret, cum illa rotunda et undique circumcisa insistere invicem nequeant. (*Orator's Education*, 8.5.26–7)

Also, this [excessive density of *sententia*] produces a fragmented speech: for each *sententia* stands alone, and therefore after it there is another beginning. From this it follows that that the speech is very disorderly, and being built not from *membra* but separate pieces, it lacks structure, because these polished and whittled-down phrases cannot prop up each other.

Implicit in Quintilian's observation is a comparison between the sententious and Ciceronian styles. When he suggests that the sententious style 'is very disorderly, and being built not from *membra* but from separate pieces, it lacks structure', the implied contrast is to the well-knit Ciceronian style, which is 'built...from *membra*' and therefore has 'structure'.

In the *Orator*, Cicero regularly suggests that a well-knit style imparts to speech a distinctive rhythm, whereas a disjointed style lacks these rhythmical qualities.¹¹⁵ He uses a variety of devices to create rhythm,¹¹⁶ and one such device is balance. As noted above, Cicero observes that 'certain figures of speech produce such balance that rhythm necessarily results', alluding to the figures of *isocolon*, *paromoion* and *parison*. Balance not only binds *membra* together, creating a well-knit style, but it also helps to create a regular rhythm to the speech. *Isocolon* has a particularly important role in creating the rhythm of periodic speech; by ensuring that each *membra* should be 'about equal to a line of hexameter verse', Cicero imparts to his periods a regular rhythmical movement. In Hall's period above, for example,

¹¹⁵See especially *Orator*, 168–70; 232–36

¹¹⁶For example, the appropriate selection of metrical feet at the end of a period, which helps to create a well-knit style, contributes to the rhythm of speech.

the similarity in the length of the *membra* ensures that the passage has a strong, even rhythm.¹¹⁷

The well-knit character of Cicero's style, as well as its associated rhythmical movement, contributes to the emotive force of his oratory. He observes that 'a well-knit style has far more force than the loose style' (*multo maiorem habent apta vim quam soluta: Orator*, 228). The rhythms of Demosthenes's well-knit style, Cicero says, were responsible for its lightening-like force:

Cuius non tam vibrarent fulmina illa, nisi numeris contorta ferrentur.

(*Orator*, 234)

Those thunderbolts of his [Demosthenes's] would have lacked their vibrant force, had they not been hurled forth by rhythm.

The ultimate conclusion of the *Orator*, expressed in the closing passages of the text, is that only well-knit oratory – the oratory of Cicero rather than Attic rhetoricians – has the emotive force to which an orator should aspire. In the concluding passages of his *Orator*, Cicero rejects as a false dichotomy the opposition between well-knit speech and speech grounded in ideas. An orator should be capable of both forms of speech, and if he cannot construct well-knit orations, his oratory will always lack emotive force:

composite et apte sine sentiis dicere insania est, sententiose autem sine verborum et ordine et modo infantia, sed eius modi tamen infantia, ut ea qui

¹¹⁷Chapter Seven discusses in more detail the rhythm that arises from *isocolon* in the periodic style.

utantur non stulti homines haberi possint, etiam plerumque prudentes; quo qui est contentus utatur. Eloquens vero, qui non approbationes solum sed admirationes, clamores, plausus, si liceat, movere debet, omnibus oportet ita rebus excellat, ut ei turpe sit quicquam aut spectari aut audiri libentius. (*Orator*, 236)

It is, in fact, senseless to speak with an artfully constructed and well-knit style if one lacks ideas; however to state ideas without any form or structure in the language is to be inarticulate. Men who are inarticulate in this way will be judged, for the most part, as wise rather than foolish; and if that is enough for someone, let him speak in this fashion. In truth, however, the eloquent orator, who ought to move his audience not merely to approval but also to wonder, to shouts and to applause, should so excel in all things that he would be ashamed if any other performance were seen or heard with greater pleasure.

When Cicero distinguishes between the ability merely to gain ‘approval’ and the capacity to produce ‘wonder’, ‘shouts’ and ‘applause’, he is, in effect, contrasting oratory that merely instructs to oratory that moves the emotions. Only well-knit speech, with its rhythmical qualities, has emotive force.

In *Orator’s Education*, Quintilian’s discussion of ‘composition’ recapitulates Cicero’s conclusion in the *Orator*.¹¹⁸ For Quintilian, composition is the art of producing a rhythmical well-knit style. He insists that composition is essential for creating emotive force:

¹¹⁸Quintilian’s indebtedness to Cicero is acknowledged at the opening of his discussion of composition (*Orator’s Education* 9.4.1–2).

Ideoque eruditissimo cuique persuasum est valere eam plurimum, non ad delectationem modo sed ad motum quoque animorum: primum quia nihil intrare potest in adfectus quod in aure velut quodam vestibule statim offendit, deinde quod natura dicimur ad modos. Neque enim aliter eveniret ut illi quoque organorum soni, quamquam verba non exprimunt, in alios tamen atque alios motus ducerent auditorem. (*Orator's Education*, 9.4.9–11)

Thus the most erudite are convinced that it [composition] is of great value, not only for the sake of pleasure but also for moving the emotions. This is the case firstly because nothing can reach the emotions if it gives offence to the ear – at the entrance, as it were – and secondly because we are naturally swayed by rhythm. For otherwise, the sounds of musical instruments, which do not articulate words, would be unable to provoke diverse emotions in listeners.

The rhythms of well-knit speech, Quintilian asserts, move the emotions of audiences in a manner akin to musical rhythms.

The highly emotive quality of Cicero's rhetoric is associated with, and emerges from, the nature of its composition – in particular, its well-knit and rhythmical style. In *Principles of Letter Writing*, when Lipsius disparages the Ciceronian style in favour of the 'restraint' of Tacitus and Seneca, he rejects not only an emotive mode of rhetoric but also the associated Ciceronian well-knit composition. Thus he favours using a disjointed mode of composition:

Compositionis; ut structuram et periodum longiorem omnem fugias: membris utare, et asyndetis saepe. (*Principles of Letter-Writing*, 26)

Of composition; avoid all long periodic structures: use *membra*, and often with *asyndeton*.

Lipsius is, in effect, recommending a ‘loose’ or ‘disjointed’ style rather than a well-knit style. His disjointed style is achieved not only by avoiding periods but also by *asyndeton*. When he recommends that readers ‘use *membra*, and often with *asyndeton*’, he is suggesting that they use single-clause sentences without connectives (such as ‘and’ and ‘or’) between the clauses. Lacking the well-knit character and rhythm of Cicero’s style, Lipsius’s recommended style would thereby also lack its emotive force.

In characterizing the contrast between the formal features of the Ciceronian and sententious rhetoric, I will emphasize not only the well-knit character of the Ciceronian style but also its relative lengthiness. Whereas the sententious style abounds in brief *sententiae*, the centrepiece of Cicero’s style is the lengthy period, which, according to the *Orator*, is generally equal to about four hexameter lines. The expansiveness of the Ciceronian style allows for a fluid and flowing movement, which can be used to convey an unrestrained, emotive tone.

In the *Orator*, Cicero presents the lengthiness of his style as contributing to its emotive force. The following passage illustrates how the ‘full, *copiosus*’ character of Cicero’s style is associated with its emotive force:

Tertius est ille amplus, copiosus, gravis, ornatus, in quo profecto vis maxima est. Hic est enim cuius ornatum dicendi et copiam admiratae gentes eloquentiam in civitatibus plurimum valere passae sunt, sed hanc eloquentiam quae cursu magno sonituque ferretur, quam suspicerent omnes, quam admirarentur, quam se assequi

posse diffident. Huius eloquentiae est tractare animos, huius omni modo permovere. Haec modo perfringit, modo irrepit in sensus. (*Orator*, 97)

The third kind of orator [a practitioner of the grand style] is full, *copiosus*, grave, and ornate, and he has the greatest force. For he is the orator whose ornament and *copia* of speech have encouraged admiring nations to allow eloquence to attain the highest power in the state. I mean the kind of eloquence which rushes along with the roar of a great torrent, which all look up to, which all admire, which all despair in being able to imitate themselves. This eloquence is capable of swaying minds, of moving them in every way. Sometimes it violently invades the emotions, sometimes it steals in.

The image of a roaring river is used to convey the emotive force of the grand style: such eloquence, Cicero says, ‘rushes along with the roar of a great torrent’. The audience’s minds and emotions are carried away by this torrent of eloquence, which ‘is capable of swaying minds, of moving them in every way’. The imagery suggests that Cicero’s emotive force arises from the copious, flowing character of the grand style. It is a style that gushes, that roars, producing an outpouring of words. Cicero presents the *copia* of his style as responsible for its power over the emotions.

The following sentence from Thomas Wilson’s *Art of Rhetoric* illustrates this connection between emotive force and the length of a Ciceronian period. The period is relatively long – composed of at least eight *membra* – and expresses the speaker’s moral outrage at the wickedness of ‘man’:

Seeing God hath made man a creature unto his own likeness, seeing he hath given him life, and the spirit of understanding, endowing him with his manifold graces, and redeeming him not with vile money, but with his own precious body, suffering death, and bloodshedding upon the cross, the rather that man might live forever: what an unthankful part is it, yea what an heinous thing is it for man so oft to offend, so oft to wallow in such his wickedness, and evermore for God's loving kindness, to show him self of all other creatures most unkind? ¹¹⁹

The lengthiness of the period helps to convey the magnitude of the speaker's moral outrage. Reason after reason pour out, creating the impression that the speaker is overflowing with righteous anger.

Wilson offers this Ciceronian period as an example of the figure of amplification, which he defines as the 'augmenting or diminishing of any matter'.¹²⁰ In the *Orator*, Cicero himself stresses the importance of amplification in his style, judging amplification to be one of the principal ornaments of oratory.¹²¹ Early modern commentators on rhetoric recognized the central role of amplification in Cicero's rhetorical style. John Hoskyns observes that Cicero is particularly fond of two forms of amplification – 'division' and 'accumulation'.¹²²

¹¹⁹Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Medine (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 158–59.

¹²⁰Wilson, *Art of Rhetoric*, 152.

¹²¹Cicero, *Orator*, 125–26

¹²²Hoskyns says of accumulation that 'Cicero (in his orations) useth it oft' and that division 'is more taken up by Cicero than Demosthenes': *Directions for Speech and Style*, 138–39.

William Cornwallis criticizes Cicero for his excessive use of 'divisions': Cornwallis,

To amplify a subject by division, Hoskyns says, ‘is to break it and make an anatomy of it into several parts’.¹²³ In contrast, accumulation is the ‘heaping up of many terms of praise or accusing, importing but the same matter’.¹²⁴ Both forms of amplification are exemplified in the following Ciceronian period, taken from the histories of Edward Hall. The figure of accumulation is displayed by the first four *membra* of the period, which are roughly synonymous, ‘importing but the same matter’. The figure of division is exemplified by the remaining *membra*. Taken together, the final seven *membra* express the proposition ‘most of Europe has witnessed this destruction’, but Hall divides this proposition into a series of separate assertions about each component country:

What mischief hath insurged in realms by intestine violence,
 what depopulation hath ensured in countries by civil dissention,
 what detestable murder hath been committed in cities by separate factions, and
 what calamity hath ensued in famous regions by domestical discord and unnatural
 controversy:

Rome hath felt,
 Italy can testify,
 France can bear witness,
 Beame can tell,
 Scotland may write,
 Denmark can show, and

Essayes, ed. Allen, 175. Henry Peacham says that examples of amplification are ‘everywhere to be found in the orations of Tully’: *Garden of Eloquence*, 122.

¹²³Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 136.

¹²⁴Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 138.

especially this noble realm of England can apparently declare and make demonstration.¹²⁵

The function of amplification is to heighten the emotional tone of the speech and to intensify the effect on the affections of the audience. Cicero proposes that amplification is most valuable ‘when rousing the emotions’.¹²⁶ Thomas Wilson similarly suggests that amplification is done with ‘the intent that our talk might appear more vehement’, that the value of amplification ‘standeth most in apt moving of affections’.¹²⁷ Henry Peacham also uses the term ‘vehemence’ in connection to amplification, observing that Cicero uses amplification ‘when he doth vehemently inveigh against Piso, vehemently against Clodius, but most vehemently of all against Catiline’.¹²⁸ In the Ciceronian style, amplification helps to give rise to the emotive force of his rhetoric.

In tracing out the relationship between the formal features of Cicero’s style and the emotive force of his rhetoric, I have focused on three related features: the well-knit character of his style, the lengthiness of his periods and his proclivity for amplification. Cicero’s well-knit style imparts to his orations a regular rhythm, which, according to Cicero and Quintilian, is primarily responsible for the emotive force of periodic speech. But the distinctive movement of his oratory is also shaped by the lengthiness of his periods, which creates an

¹²⁵Edward Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke*, 2nd ed. (1548), fol. 1^r.

¹²⁶Cicero, *On the Orator*, in *On the Orator, Book III, On Fate, Stoic Paradoxes, The Divisions of Oratory*, trans. Horace Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 349 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 3: 104–5.

¹²⁷Wilson, *Art of Rhetoric*, 159, 160.

¹²⁸Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, 122.

impression of overflowing, uncontrolled passion. Finally, Cicero's use of amplification also contributes to the vehemence of his favoured grand style of oratory.

3.8 The Ciceronian style in sixteenth-century England and *Tamburlaine*

Written in the mid-sixteenth century, Edward Hall's periods illustrate Cicero's influence on English writing during that period. Commentators have documented the prominence of the Ciceronian style in sixteenth-century English prose, examining its presence, for example, in Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus*, Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor* and Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.¹²⁹ The following well-known passage from Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* provides a sense of the dominance of Cicero's rhetorical style in sixteenth-century England and Europe:

Then did Sturmius spend such infinite and curious pains upon Cicero the orator and Hermogenes the rhetorician, beside his own books of periods and imitation and the like. Then did Carr of Cambridge and Ascham, with their lectures and

¹²⁹For accounts of the use of the periodic style in sixteenth century England, see Silvia Adamson, 'Literary Language', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language, 1476–1776*, ed. Roger Lass, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 583–95; Gert Ronberg, *A Way with Words* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 99–116; Janel Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), esp. 322–44; Alvin Voss, 'The Formation of Roger Ascham's Prose Style', *SPh.* 71, no. 3 (July 1974): 344–70, and "'Good Matter and Good Utterance": The Character of English Ciceronianism', *SEL* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 3–18; Debora Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

writings, almost deify Cicero and Demosthenes, and allure all young men that were studious unto that delicate and polished style of learning.¹³⁰

The Ciceronian style can be found throughout the political treatises, histories, letters, religious writings, speeches and poetry of the sixteenth century, and also – I would add – in Elizabethan verse drama.

In literary criticism on sixteenth-century stylistics, the relationship between the terms ‘Cicero’s style’, ‘the grand style’ and ‘the periodic style’ is not always clear. Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably, but sometimes they refer to different styles. In her book *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance*, Deborah Shuger examines the ambiguity in the notion of the ‘grand style’, distinguishing two different meanings of the term. The first conception she attributes to Morris Croll: ‘Croll tends to view oratory in terms of copia, periodicity and schematic ornament’.¹³¹ By ‘schematic ornament’, Shuger is referring to the figures of balance (primarily *parison*, *paromoion* and *isocolon*), which, as I have shown, are central to the periodic style. According to this first conception, the defining property of the grand style is that it copious and periodic. She contrasts this with a second conception, which proposes that the defining property of the grand style is ‘passion’, together with ‘force’, ‘sublimity’ and ‘dignity’.¹³²

The notion of a ‘periodic style’, which is used to characterize Shuger’s first conception of the grand style, admits of degree. We can imagine a relatively pure form of the

¹³⁰*Works of Bacon*, 3: 283–84. Johann Sturm (1507–89), Nicholas Carr (1524–68) and Roger Ascham (1515–68) were prominent mid-sixteenth century scholars of rhetoric. This passage is discussed in more detail in the appendix.

¹³¹Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 4.

¹³²Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 5, 7.

periodic style in which periods are used unremittingly, with elaborate balance throughout.¹³³

While Cicero stresses the value and utility of periods, he disparages pure forms of the periodic style, insisting that an overuse of periods will undermine the emotional force of the speech:

Genus autem hoc orationis neque totum assumendum et ad causas forensis neque omnino repudiandum; si enim semper utare, cum satietatem affert tum quale sit etiam ab imperitis agnoscitur; detrahit praeterea actionis dolorem. (*Orator*, 209)

In forensic oratory, this kind of speech [periodic speech] neither should be adopted nor entirely rejected. If continuously used, not only will it fatigue the listeners but, in addition, the contrivance will be obvious even to the unlearned. Moreover, it strips the performance of emotion.

On the one hand, Cicero criticizes a pure periodic style as inimical to emotional force. On the other hand, however, as discussed above, the conclusion of the *Orator* is that a moderate use of periods is part of a well-knit style, and, accordingly, is necessary for creating emotional force. Cicero's style, therefore, combines Shuger's two conceptions of the grand style: he calls for a style that is both periodic (albeit to a moderate extent) but also possesses emotional force. Indeed, according to Cicero, emotional force is a consequence of a style that is moderately periodic. My characterization of Cicero's style is broadly consistent with that of

¹³³In the *Orator*, Cicero presents the rhetoric of Isocrates as a relatively pure form of the periodic style. See for example, *Orator*, 37–38.

Shuger, who suggests that Cicero allows ‘some periodicity’ in his oratory, producing a mode of speech that is a ‘conjunction of artistry and emotional force’.¹³⁴

This form of oratory, which is characterized by ‘emotional force’, is given the label ‘armamental’ rhetoric by Sylvia Adamson. In an article on literary style in early modern England, she distinguishes ‘the armamental ideal of rhetoric’ from ‘an ornamental ideal, descending more directly from the “aureate” styles of Lydgate and the post-Chaucerians’.¹³⁵ While ornamental rhetoric was a courtly style designed to charm and please, armamental oratory aims to persuade by emotional force – by moving the emotions. Adamson uses the term ‘armamental’ on account of the martial imagery used in early modern rhetorical treatises to describe the emotive force of oratory. For example, in his *Garden of Eloquence*, Henry Peacham compares figures of rhetoric to ‘martial instruments both of defence and invasion’.¹³⁶

Cicero undoubtedly had an important influence on the development of ornamental rhetoric in early modern England, and, indeed, at least some of his oratory could be described as ornamental rather than armamental. While I acknowledge the variety of Cicero’s writings, I am taking ‘the Ciceronian style’ to refer the Cicero’s favoured style in his *Orator*. In his descriptions of this grand style of oratory, Cicero emphasizes its emotive force, rather than its capacity to charm or please. The *Orator* portrays the grand style as distinctly armamental, using the imagery of war to convey its emotive force. In a quotation above, Cicero describes how the grand style ‘violently invades (*perfringit*) the emotions’ (*Orator*, 97). He compares

¹³⁴Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 26.

¹³⁵Adamson, ‘Literary Language’, 546.

¹³⁶Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, ABiv^r.

orators to boxers and gladiators: like fighters, orators can strike a ‘heavy blow’ (*plagam gravem*) only if they have a graceful style (*Orator*, 228).¹³⁷

Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* represents, perhaps, the most elaborate attempt to stage Cicero’s armament style. When Adamson introduces the notion of ‘the armament ideal of rhetoric’, her prime example is *Tamburlaine*. Like Cicero’s *Orator*, *Tamburlaine* presents war and oratory as parallel and complementary spheres of activity. Thus when Theridamas avers that he will either defeat Tamburlaine in battle or persuade him to plead for mercy, Mycetes’s reply makes explicit Theridamas’s implied alignment between combat and rhetoric: ‘Go, stout Theridamas, thy words are swords’ (*Part I*, 1.1.74).¹³⁸ It turns out, however, that it is Tamburlaine who displays the greatest skill at combining oratory and martial force. He overcomes the Persians not only by his feats of arms but also through his oratory, persuading Theridamas to join Tamburlaine’s forces. In pledging allegiance to Tamburlaine, Theridamas suggests that Tamburlaine’s oratorical success was akin to a military victory: he was ‘Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks’ (*Part I*, 1.2.227). The influence of Cicero on *Tamburlaine* is evident not only in the emphasis on the emotive force of rhetoric, but also in Marlowe’s use of the periodic style. As Adamson observes, ‘the effects of Marlowe’s “mighty line” may owe as much to his mastery of the principle of periodicity as to his mastery of the iambic pentameter’.¹³⁹ Chapter Seven shows that the dramatic verse of *Tamburlaine* incorporates the key formal features of Cicero’s style: sentences are lengthy and copious; and long periods are common but not unremitting.

¹³⁷Following Cicero, Quintilian uses similar martial analogies when arguing that a well-knit style is necessary for emotional force: *Orator’s Education* 9.4.8–9.

¹³⁸Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, ed. J. S. Cunningham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981).

¹³⁹Adamson, ‘Literary Language’, 591.

In *Tamburlaine*, the emotive force of Cicero's armamentary rhetoric is used for a variety of affective purposes. The protagonist exploits oratory to gain new recruits, to woo his lover Zenocrate and to rouse and exhort his followers. But the affective purpose that I particularly want to emphasize is the expression of outspoken defiance. Marlovian defiance, which is directed at figures of authority, is central theme of the *Tamburlaine* plays. In the first part of *Tamburlaine*, which dramatizes the protagonist's rise from base beginnings, the objects of his defiance are his political superiors – kings and emperors. In the second part, having achieved his astonishing secular victories, Tamburlaine then directs his defiance at the heavens. Throughout the play, Tamburlaine uses copious Ciceronian periods to express this defiance. For instance, judging that the Egyptian lords 'scorn' his base origins, Tamburlaine responds defiantly with a lengthy Ciceronian period:

But since they measure our deserts so mean
 That in conceit bear empires on our spears,
 Affecting thoughts coequal with the clouds,
 They shall be kept our forcèd followers
 Till with their eyes they view us emperors. (*Part I: 1.2.63–67*)

In the second part of *Tamburlaine*, the death of Zenocrate provokes Tamburlaine to defy the gods. Inveighing against the gods for taking away Zenocrate, he threatens to attack heaven itself:

Raise cavaleros higher than the clouds,
 And with the cannon break the frame of heaven,
 Batter the shining palace of the sun

And shiver all the starry firmament. (*Part II*: 2.4.103–6)

Tamburlaine's aggressive defiance is again expressed by a lengthy Ciceronian period.¹⁴⁰ The emotive force of Tamburlaine's armament Ciceronian rhetoric ensures that it is a suitable mode of speech for conveying his heated defiance.

3.9 The Ciceronian style in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama

In his article '*Tamburlaine's* Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation before 1593', Peter Berek examines the influence of Marlowe's play on the dramatic writing of his contemporaries, including Thomas Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War*, George Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* and Robert Greene's *Alphonsus King of Aragon*.¹⁴¹ These three plays, all written in the 1580s, imitated not only the style but also the subject matter of *Tamburlaine*.¹⁴² Set amid battles, each play features protagonists with overreaching ambition and martial prowess reminiscent of Tamburlaine, exemplifying a genre of drama that has been termed 'heroical history'.¹⁴³ Like *Tamburlaine*, these 1580s heroical histories were written in the emotive,

¹⁴⁰In this period, the clauses are bound together by balance rather than suspended meaning – in particular, the first four clauses are closely balanced by *parison* and *isocolon*.

¹⁴¹Peter Berek, '*Tamburlaine's* Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation before 1593', *RenD*, new series, 13 (1982): 55–82.

¹⁴²In the case of *Wounds of Civil War*, the direction of influence is contested. See Joseph Houppert, introduction to *Wounds of Civil War* ed. Joseph Houppert (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), xii–xiv.

¹⁴³David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). See also James Shapiro, *Rival*

armamental style of Cicero, abounding in copious, lengthy periods.¹⁴⁴ Cicero's rhetoric is suited to the genre of heroic history; the emotional force of Ciceronian periods could be used to express martial rage, aspiring ambition, proud defiance and bold, magnanimous independence.

In subsequent Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, therefore, playwrights were able to exploit two mutually reinforcing connotations of the Ciceronian periodic style. In the first instance, the periodic style expressed the armamental, emotive force of Cicero's rhetoric. But, in addition, as the copious periodic style had become associated with the 1580s heroic histories, and with *Tamburlaine* in particular, it could be used to evoke the heroic, martial attitudes of that genre.

The emotive force and heroic connotations of Ciceronian periods could take on a defiant, oppositional note in an oppressive political environment. This expressive function of the Ciceronian style can be illustrated by the following passage from Jonson's *Sejanus*:

Agrippina Hear me, Silius:
 Were all Tiberius' body stuck with eyes,
 And every wall and hanging in my house
 Transparent, as this lawn I wear, or air;
 Yea, had Sejanus both his ears as long
 As to my inmost closet, I would hate
 To whisper any thought, or change an act,
 To be made Juno's rival. Virtue's forces

Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 86–89.

¹⁴⁴See Chapter Seven for a more detailed discussion of the style of 1580s drama.

Show ever noblest in conspicuous courses.

Silius 'Tis great, and bravely spoken, like the spirit

Of Agrippina.

(2.449–59)

Agrippina's sentence is a Ciceronian period, and it has the characteristic emotive force of Ciceronian rhetoric. The lengthiness of the period and its flowing rhythm contribute to the unrestrained, emotive character of her speech. But in Tiberius's Rome, emotion is dangerous, either when expressed in impulsive action or in passionate speech. Given the oppressive political environment, her unrestrained expression of emotion has a distinctly oppositional tone. Agrippina's oppositional outspokenness is signalled, therefore, by both the content and the form of her speech. The oppositional note struck by Agrippina's period is further reinforced by its association with *Tamburlaine*. For Jacobean audiences, Agrippina's Ciceronian period would have sounded somewhat old fashioned, evoking the 1580s heroic histories and especially *Tamburlaine*. Accordingly, her Ciceronian period is expressive of attitudes of martial rage, magnanimous independence and Marlovian defiance.

Cicero's emotive rhetoric emerged from, and was adapted to, the political world of the republic. In an oppressive monarchy, such rhetoric is potentially hazardous to the speaker, and it signals an oppositional and republican outspokenness. In the next two chapters, I examine the political connotations of the Ciceronian style in three plays, *Richard II*, *Edward II* and *Julius Caesar*. In these plays, oppositional characters, such as Bolingbroke and John of Gaunt, use Ciceronian periods to express attitudes of defiant republican outspokenness.

3.10 Conclusion

In *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, Vickers criticizes those who associate the early imperial style with Tacitean politics, arguing that ‘there is no such one-to-one correlation’ between stylistic preferences and philosophical and political views.¹⁴⁵ For instance, Gabriel Harvey showed a strong interest in Machiavellian and Tacitean politics, yet his characteristic style was distinctly Ciceronian. I suggest that, in demanding that historical formalist studies establish a ‘one-to-one correlation’ between style and politics, Vickers sets the bar too high. Conventions of language are far too complex and fluid for such an exceptionless correlation to hold. Language users may violate linguistic conventions, perhaps for the purposes of irony or deceit, or perhaps for an aesthetic effect. Moreover, there may be a diversity of conflicting conventions, which are continuously developing, interacting and evolving. It would be unrealistic to expect that historical formalism might establish universal one-to-one correlations between style and political attitudes.

Accordingly, I am offering highly qualified conclusions about the associations between politics and style. One important function of the sententious style, I have suggested, is its use in restrained, veiled communication. Thus sententious speech was seen as apt for the kind of linguistic restraint and circumspection advocated by Tacitean Stoicism. On the other hand, in oppressive political environments, Cicero’s favoured rhetorical style could be used to express outspoken, oppositional attitudes, on account of its emotive force.

Having reached these conclusions, I do not, of course, deny that the sententious and periodic styles have other important functions. In the tragedies of Seneca and his imitators, for example, the sententious style is used to express extreme rage as well as restraint.¹⁴⁶ Thus

¹⁴⁵Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, 107.

¹⁴⁶Chapter Six discusses in detail attitudes towards the emotions in Senecan tragedy.

In Fulke Greville's *Alaham*, Hala expresses her towering wrath in highly sententious language:

Hala A work that no age dares
 Allow, yet none conceal, I must attempt.
 Fury! Then spur thyself, embedlam wit;¹⁴⁷
 Poison my thoughts, to make my reason see
 Pleasure in cruelty, glory in spite:
 Rage, to exceed examples, doth delight. (2.2.140–45)

Conversely, in early modern England, the periodic style was used for ornamental as well as armamental purposes. In such cases, the periodic style served to create an impression of gravity, erudition or courtly grace rather than emotive force.

Nevertheless, the functions of Ciceronian and sententious rhetoric that I have identified in this chapter are central functions of the styles. Furthermore, there is a sense in which these functions are conceptually tied to the styles. The emotive force of the Ciceronian style is at the core of Cicero's characterization of his style in the *Orator*; a principal aim of Cicero's *Orator* is to show that his well-knit periodic style is responsible for the emotive force of his rhetoric. Similarly, the veiled, restrained character of the sententious style is alluded to in Quintilian's account of the *sententia*: the 'modern' *sententia* is characterized by brevity and a display of ingenuity, and, Quintilian observes, figured language represents one means of displaying such ingenuity.

¹⁴⁷According to the *OED*, 'embedlam' means 'To put into Bedlam; hence to drive mad' (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. 'embedlam', accessed December 7, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE AND LIBERTY IN *RICHARD II* AND *EDWARD II*

I thought their ambition had been limited in monopolizing the prince, governing the court, enriching themselves, and supplanting me, whose opposition they had sometimes found and would ever fear, for still me thought it was madness, if not impossibility, for men so base, so cowardly, and that knew themselves to be so odious, to aspire higher...For now hath this reigning faction left no degree, county, nor no man almost of living, courage, or understanding without some complaint against them...Now doth not only their corrupting of my servants, stealing of my papers, suborning of false witnesses, procuring of many forged letters in my name, and other such like practices against me appear; but their seeking to suppress all noble, virtuous, and heroical spirits.

Letter from Essex to James VI, 25 December, 1600¹

Written on Christmas Day, Essex's letter to James provides insight into his state of mind in the months immediately prior to his rising on 8 February, 1601. In this letter, Essex complains that the Cecilian faction is suppressing 'all noble, virtuous, and heroical spirits'. In early modern England, 'virtuous' could refer to a diverse range of character traits, but the term 'heroical spirits' makes it clear what virtue Essex has in mind. He does not mean the passive virtues of patience, obedience, piety, decency and temperance, but rather he is referring to the active virtue of magnanimity – the 'heroical' virtue of greatness of spirit.

¹Essex's letter is reprinted in Helen Stafford, *James VI of Scotland and the Throne of England* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1940), 221–24.

Magnanimity involves a cluster of character traits, including valour, frankness, honour, emotional openness and independence. Accordingly, Essex also describes these ‘heroical spirits’ as men of ‘courage’, contrasting his magnanimous followers to the ‘base’ and ‘cowardly’ members of the Cecilian faction. In his complaints to James, Essex is, in effect, recounting a narrative that I labelled in Chapter One ‘the classical republican narrative’. According to this narrative, the loss of classical liberty produces a degeneration of national character, suppressing magnanimous independence, and fostering slavish servility. Essex’s letter describes such a degeneration of character in Elizabeth’s court: those who are ‘base’ and ‘cowardly’ prosper, while magnanimous ‘heroical spirits’ and men of ‘courage’ are suppressed.

On 7 February, 1601, shortly after this letter was written and the day before Essex’s rising, several of his followers paid the Lord Chamberlain’s men to perform a ‘play of deposing king Richard the second’.² As Paul Hammer has shown, the play was ‘probably’ Shakespeare’s *Richard II*.³ The question I will ask is: how would Essex’s followers have interpreted *Richard II*? In my earlier analysis of Hayward’s history of Henry IV, I suggested that, drawing on Tacitus, Hayward introduces the classical republican narrative into the account of Bolingbroke’s rebellion. While Shakespeare’s play is not as intellectually self-conscious as Hayward’s history, Shakespeare’s depiction of Bolingbroke and his followers would nevertheless have encouraged late Elizabethan audiences – and Essex’s followers in particular – to read into the play the classical republican narrative.

I am not claiming that Shakespeare necessarily read all or any of Tacitus’s works before turning his hand to *Richard II*. Rather, I am simply drawing attention to the close

²The Trial of Sir Christopher Blunt in *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. T. B. Howell, vol. 1 (London, 1816), 1412.

³Hammer, ‘Shakespeare’s *Richard II*’, 1.

correspondence between Shakespeare's depiction of the feudal, oppositional values of the barons and classical republicanism. Numerous commentators have pointed to a relationship between classical and baronial oppositionalism. As David Norbrook puts it in his article on *Richard II*, 'aristocratic constitutionalism could blend with classical republicanism'.⁴ I will explore this correspondence between classical and baronial oppositionalism not only in *Richard II* but also in Marlowe's *Edward II*. In the first half of Marlowe's play, the barons – and especially Mortimer Junior – express values that correspond closely to classical republican values.

Common to both classical republicanism and baronial oppositionalism is the valorization of magnanimous independence, an independence that is displayed by emotional openness and outspokenness. In *Richard II* and *Edward II*, Shakespeare and Marlowe convey the barons' strong sense of independence by their mode of speech. Bolingbroke, John of Gaunt and Mortimer Junior use passionate, expansive Ciceronian periods – some of which are reminiscent of the style of *Tamburlaine* – in order to express their magnanimous outspokenness. In contrast, the sententious style is used to convey attitudes of patience and restraint. Before turning to consider these questions about rhetorical style, however, the first two sections of the chapter examine the role of the classical republican narrative in *Richard II* and *Edward II*. The final two sections then illustrate how Shakespeare and Marlowe exploit the political connotations of the Ciceronian and sententious styles so as to express republican and Tacitean-Stoic attitudes.

⁴David Norbrook, "A Liberal Tongue": Language and Rebellion in *Richard II*, in *Shakespeare's Universe: Renaissance Ideas and Conventions, Essays in Honour of W. R. Elton*, ed. John Mucciolo (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 39.

4.1 The classical republican narrative in *Richard II*

Commentary on the politics of *Richard II* has paid close attention to the feudal, medieval setting of the play. The opening act particularly emphasizes the chivalric trappings of medieval England, dramatizing the genesis of Bolingbroke and Mowbray's aborted trial by combat, a distinctly feudal institution. According to E. M. W. Tillyard, the medieval world of *Richard II* is governed a harmonious order of degree, with the king at the apex ruling by divine right. On this reading, Richard's negligent and malign rule precipitates the end of the medieval era, destroying its unity and harmony. Challenging Tillyard's interpretation of *Richard II*, Graham Holderness shows that, far from emphasizing feudal harmony, Shakespeare depicts a conflict that resides at the centre of feudal power relations: the 'conflict between the King's sovereignty and the ancient code of chivalry'.⁵ In the opening scene, when Bolingbroke insists on his right to trial by combat, he is driven by the demands of the chivalric honour code, which requires him to revenge the murder of kin. The conflict between the monarch and the honour code is not visible in this scene; Richard appears to allow Bolingbroke his right to trial, assuming an appropriately neutral role in the dispute between Bolingbroke and Mowbray. As Holderness puts it, Richard's role in the opening scene is that of 'chairman'.⁶ In 1.3, however, when Richard halts the combat and exiles the combatants, the conflict between the crown and the honour code is revealed. In failing to accord Bolingbroke his feudal rights, Richard displays his absolutist tendencies. Whereas, for Tillyard, Bolingbroke's rebellion is a disruption to the harmonious medieval order, Holderness shows that it exemplifies a conflict at the core of medieval politics – the conflict between monarchical power and the feudal rights of barons.

⁵Graham Holderness, 'Shakespeare's History: *Richard II*', *L&H* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1981), 6.

⁶Holderness, 'Shakespeare's History: *Richard II*', 6.

While my reading is broadly complementary to that of Holderness, I present another way of describing the conflict between the crown and baronial honour. Central to the honour code is the virtue of magnanimity. The conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke is driven by the magnanimous independence of Bolingbroke, whom Shakespeare pointedly portrays as the archetypal magnanimous, ‘great-souled’ man. In the discussion of magnanimity in Chapter One, I showed that there is a close tie between honour and magnanimity: as Aristotle puts it, ‘the magnanimous man is especially concerned with honour and dishonour’. In their efforts to reinvigorate the honour code, Essex and his followers presented magnanimity as a preeminent virtue. Moreover, incorporated in the character trait of magnanimity is a strong sense of independence: Aristotle says that the magnanimous man ‘is unable to live at the will of another...because to do so would be slavery’. On account of his magnanimous independence and valour, he is open in speech and emotions: according to Aristotle, ‘to conceal is to be afraid’.⁷ Chapter One suggested that Essex’s outspokenness, emotional openness, strong sense of independence and preoccupation with honour were part of an integrated network of values and traits associated with his valorization of magnanimity.

In *Richard II*, Bolingbrook and Mowbray’s emotional openness is emphasized in the opening scene of the play: Richard describes them as ‘Wrath-kindled gentlemen’ (1.1.152), ‘High stomached’ and full of ire’ (1.1.18). Their speech is not, of course, entirely frank: conspicuously absent is any mention of Richard’s complicity in the murder of Gloucester. Nevertheless, if their speech is compared, say, to the circumspect restraint with which Jonson’s Sejanus addresses his sovereign, it is strikingly open. Their speech gushes forth, and is replete with angry, emotive invective. Given Bolingbroke’s kinship to Richard, Mowbray explicitly requests to speak freely, but Bolingbroke asks no such permission. Their freedom

⁷See Chapter 1.3 for an account of the virtue of magnanimity.

of speech is most evident from their refusal – despite Richard’s command – to withdraw their challenges. Bolingbroke defiantly insists:

Ere my tongue
 Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong,
 Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear
 The slavish motive of recanting fear
 And spit it bleeding in his high disgrace (1.1.190–94)

For classical republicans, ‘slavish’ is a key word indicating a degenerate character trait – a contemptible acceptance of dependency. Bolingbroke’s speech is not guided by ‘The slavish motive of recanting fear’ but rather the bold independence of the magnanimous man. In the first scene, Shakespeare emphasizes Bolingbroke’s emotional openness and free speech so as to portray his magnanimous independence. The honour code demands the display of magnanimous independence, which is perpetually at risk of conflicting with the power of the crown.

In his neutral role of ‘chairman’ in the opening scene, Richard appears to accommodate Bolingbroke’s magnanimous independence. He insists that Bolingbroke and Mowbray are permitted to speak openly: ‘ourselves will hear / The accuser and accused freely speak’ (1.1.16–17); ‘Free speech and fearless I to thee allow’ (1.1.123). Shakespeare is at pains to suggest that Richard at least appears to give latitude to baronial independence. At the end of the first scene, therefore, the conflict between the crown and baronial independence seems to be contained, to be manageable.

In 1.3, however, Richard’s accommodating stance in the opening scene is shown to be a mere pretence. Such openness and independence are not permitted in Richard’s absolutist

reign, and Bolingbroke is promptly banished. When the king subsequently shortens the term of banishment by four years, Bolingbroke's aversion to dependency is vividly conveyed:

How long a time lies in one little word!

Four lagging winters and four wanton springs

End in a word: such is the breath of kings. (1.3.206–8)

In lamenting his dependency on the will of one man, Bolingbroke conveys the magnanimous independence that is common both to the feudal honour code and also to classical republicanism.

At the performance of *Richard II* on the eve of Essex's rising, how would his followers have construed the opening act? They would have noted the parallels between Essex and Bolingbroke in the first scene: both are characterized by emotional openness, frank speech, a preoccupation with honour, a sense of independence and, more generally, magnanimity. Over the past several years, they had viewed the decline in Essex's fortune: 'he was reduced from being Earl Marshal, Master of the Ordinance, Master of the Queen's Horse, and the fourth-ranking Privy Councillor to being a mere private individual'.⁸ When Essex complains to James that Elizabeth's favourites were 'seeking to suppress all noble, virtuous, and heroic spirits', he is referring not only to his followers but also to himself. Upon viewing Bolingbroke's exile in the third scene, therefore, Essex's supporters would have perceived a re-enactment of the recent suppression of magnanimous 'heroic spirits' in England. This impression would have been reinforced by the fourth scene, which portrays Richard's flatterers in the ascendancy. Like Essex's letter to James, therefore, the first act of *Richard II* can be construed as relating the classical republican narrative of the loss of

⁸Hammer, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*', 6.

classical liberty: Richard's absolutist rule is suppressing magnanimous, 'free natures', fostering instead the rise of servile flatterers.

While the opening two acts are broadly sympathetic towards Bolingbroke's magnanimous independence, at the same time they interrogate the value of such independence. Richard reminds the audience that baronial independence may potentially harm the public good: 'our eyes do hate the dire aspect / Of civil wounds ploughed up with neighbour's swords' (1.3.126–27). Moreover, in the second scene, Gaunt criticizes Bolingbroke's defiance, insisting that Richard's divine right to kingship calls for patient obedience rather than independence. As Richard is 'God's substitute', a subject 'may never lift / An angry arm against his minister', but rather should 'Let heaven revenge' (1.2.37, 40–41). In reply, Gloucester's widow criticizes Gaunt's patience as base and cowardly: 'That which in mean men we entitle patience / Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts' (1.2.33–34). Gaunt and the Duchess are, in effect, debating the relative merits of active and passive virtues: the passive virtues include piety, obedience and patience, in contrast to the active virtues of courage, independence, steadfastness, openness and magnanimity. In criticizing 'patience' as 'mean', 'cold' and 'cowardice', the Duchess is defending Bolingbroke's magnanimous independence.

While the debated between Gaunt and the Duchess provokes the audience to reflect on the relative merits of patience and magnanimous independence, in 2.1 Shakespeare encourages the audience to accept that, at least under Richard's absolutism, patience has become untenable, and thus defiant independence is warranted. By 2.1, despite his inclination towards obedience, even Gaunt can no longer maintain an attitude of patience in the face of Richard's neglect of the common good. Like Bolingbroke, Gaunt becomes passionately outspoken and defiant.

In his article “‘A Liberal Tongue’: Language and Rebellion in *Richard II*”, David Norbrook draws attention to the motif of the ‘liberal tongue’ in the play. Especially in the first two acts, a series of references to tongues traces the spread of outspokenness among Bolingbroke and his followers. In the passage quoted earlier, when Bolingbroke refuses to withdraw his challenge to Mowbray, he insists that he will not allow that ‘my tongue / Shall wound my honour’. Subsequently, Gaunt tells Richard that he had to struggle with his ‘unwilling tongue’ when Richard called for Bolingbroke’s exile: ‘you gave leave to my unwilling tongue / Against my will to do myself this wrong’ (1.3.234–35). By the second act, however, Gaunt’s ‘tongue’ is no longer struggling to remain patient, but rather has become defiantly independent. Richard threatens to execute Gaunt for his outspoken ‘tongue’:

Wert thou not brother to great Edward’s son,
 This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
 Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders. (2.1.122–24)

Gaunt is not alone in dispensing with patience. The tongues of other nobles are also speaking out:

Ross My heart is great, but it must break with silence
 Ere’t be disburdened with a liberal tongue.
Northumberland Nay, speak thy mind, and let him ne’er speak more
 That speaks thy words again to do thee harm.
Willoughby Tends that that thou wouldst speak to the Duke of Hereford?
 If it be so, out with it boldly, man. (2.2.229–34)

Significantly, Willoughby equates a ‘liberal tongue’ with speaking ‘boldly’. In Aristotle’s description of the magnanimous man, open speech is perceived as a sign of courage. This connection between free speech and ‘bold’ speech is again apparent in a subsequent remark by Ross:

Be confident to speak, Northumberland.
 We three are but thyself, and, speaking so,
 Thy words are but as thoughts. Therefore be bold. (2.2.275–77)

Bolingbroke’s outspokenness in the first scene is contagious, steadily spreading in the opening two acts. By the second act, even York is struggling to retain an attitude of patience, complaining to Richard that ‘You...prick my tender patience to those thoughts/ Which honour and allegiance cannot think’ (2.1.206–9). In the first two acts, the accumulation of ‘liberal’ tongues encourage the audience to sympathize with Bolingbroke’s magnanimous independence. Gaunt’s and York’s struggles with patience are perhaps the most telling: they suggest that Bolingbroke’s magnanimous independence is not merely an excess that might be expected in a hot-blooded youth, but rather is an appropriate response to Richard’s growing absolutism. By the end of the second act, therefore, the classical republican narrative is in place: the second act directs the audience towards the view that Bolingbroke’s banishment represents the suppression of virtuous independence, leaving England in the hands of a negligent monarch guided by self-serving flatterers.

In 1.2, when Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloucester debate the merits of active and passive virtues, this debate has echoes of an ongoing controversy in the Essex Circle. As discussed in Chapter Two, Francis Bacon and Lord Henry Howard advised Essex to display

more patience in his dealings with the court and Elizabeth. By the time Essex wrote his letter to James on Christmas Day of 1600, however, he had run out of patience:

I saw plainly the more patience I shewed and silence I used the more would mine enemies increase their insolency and multiply their errors ... Now doth reason, honor, and conscience command me to be active.⁹

By the end of 1600, Essex had concluded that the passive virtues of ‘patience’ and ‘silence’ were no longer tenable, and that the active virtues were called for – valour, honour, openness and magnanimous independence. For those followers of Essex who witnessed the performance of *Richard II* on 7 February 1600, they would have construed a parallel between their own plight and the erosion of patience among Bolingbroke and his supporters, who similarly were necessitated by honour ‘to be active’.

4.2 Shakespeare’s ‘silent king’ and Marlowe’s Mortimer

Whereas the opening acts of *Richard II* present Bolingbroke as outspoken and passionate, in the deposition scene, he takes on the role of the ‘silent king’. In contrast to his lengthy speeches in the opening scene of the play, none of Bolingbroke’s contributions to the deposition scene exceed five lines. He becomes especially taciturn and laconic when Richard enters the stage, after which his interventions are only one or two lines in length.

Bolingbroke’s restrained brevity is contrasted to Richard’s emotive copiousness, leading Richard to label him the ‘silent king’ (4.1.280).

⁹Essex, Letter to James VI, 25 December, 1600, in Stafford, *James VI of Scotland*, 221–24. I have silently changed ‘cloth’ to ‘doth’.

In fact, earlier in the play, in 3.3, Shakespeare already begins to signal Bolingbroke's new restraint. Bolingbroke tells his followers that when he approaches Richard, he will be 'yielding', in contrast to Richard's 'fire' and 'rage':

Be he the fire, I'll be the yielding water.
 The rage be his, whilst on the earth I rain
 My waters. (3.3.57–59)

This speech marks a reversal in Bolingbroke's and Richard's roles: in the opening scene, Bolingbroke was 'wrath-kindled' and Richard was (or at least appeared to be) accommodating. Andrew Gurr has observed that 3.3 is something of a crossroads in the play; it is the point at which Bolingbroke's path of ascent crosses Richard's path of descent.¹⁰ Once Bolingbroke gains the ascendancy, his 'free nature' becomes notably more restrained.

This discontinuity in Bolingbroke's character is comparable to that of Marlowe's Mortimer, in whom such discontinuities are even more pronounced. Written in 1591 or 1592, *Edward II* provided a model for the structure of *Richard II*, which appeared several years later, in 1595. As Irving Ribner puts it: 'In *Edward II* Shakespeare found the dramatic pattern he was to develop in *Richard II*, with two parallel movements, a weak king falling because of his inability to wield power, while a powerful adversary declines in human quality even as, because of his superior abilities, he rises in the fallen king's place'.¹¹ In *Edward II*, when

¹⁰Andrew Gurr, introduction to William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. Andrew Gurr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17.

¹¹Irving Ribner, 'Marlowe and Shakespeare', *SQ* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1964), 53.

Mortimer ‘declines in human quality’, he is transformed from an angry baron to a scheming Machiavellian villain.¹²

As in the case of Bolingbroke, the transformation in Mortimer’s character involves a change from magnanimous independence to a more restrained mode of behaviour. The following passage in the fourth act provides the first indication of Mortimer’s new restraint:

Isabella And Edward, thou art one among them all,
 Whose looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoil
 And made the channels overflow with blood.
 Of thine own people patron shouldst thou be,
 But thou –
Mortimer Junior Nay madam, if you be a warrior,
 Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches. (4.4.9–15)

Prior to this passage, Mortimer is presented as consistently passionate and outraged, so that Isabella’s term for him, ‘furious Mortimer’ (2.2.85), serves as a summary of his character in the opening acts. But, as Thomas Cartelli observes, after Mortimer’s advice to Isabella, Marlowe portrays him as cold and restrained, as a ‘master’ of his passions:

¹²For accounts of the change in Mortimer’s character, see Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 121–22; David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 241–44; J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 215–17; James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights*, 92–93; Charles Forker, introduction to *Edward the Second*, ed. Forker, 73–74; Robert Logan, *Shakespeare’s Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare’s Artistry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 83–116.

This moment [when Mortimer urges Isabella not to ‘grow so passionate’] marks both a break and a divergence in the way in which passions are expressed and represented in the play. Whereas the ‘furious’ Mortimer has heretofore been as much the embodiment as well as the anatomizer of the compulsive hold that passions can have on character, at this point he attempts to represent himself as both their master and mediator.¹³

In portraying Mortimer’s newfound restraint in the final two acts of *Edward II*, Marlowe emphasizes not only his emotional control but also his restraint of speech. When Mortimer advises Isabella not to ‘grow so passionate’, he specifically urges her not to be ‘passionate in speeches’. In the fourth act, Mortimer again advises Isabella to restrain her speech: ‘Madam, have done with care and sad complaint’ (4.6.66). His restrained language in the final two acts is, however, in sharp contrast to the open and emotive mode of language at the opening of the play. Earlier in the play, rather than encouraging Isabella to hide her thoughts, he requests her to ‘speak her mind’ (1.4.228). Throughout the first two acts, Mortimer refuses to curb his hot, angry speech, as is exemplified by his defiant reply to Warwick:

Warwick Bridle thy anger, gentle Mortimer

Mortimer Junior I cannot nor I will not; I must speak. (1.1.120–21)

¹³Thomas Cartelli, ‘*Edward II*’, *Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 168.

In the second half of the play, Mortimer's transformation into a villain is accompanied by changes in his attitude both to emotion and to speech: the outspoken, passionate baron becomes a cold, conniving Machiavel, characterized by emotional and linguistic restraint.

In drawing attention to Mortimer's angry outspokenness, the opening acts of *Edward II* are portraying the magnanimous independence associated the baronial honour code. As in *Richard II*, Marlowe is dramatizing a conflict at the core of medieval politics: the conflict between the monarch and the sense of independence of the 'great souled' baron. In the opening acts of *Edward II*, magnanimous independence is not presented as destructive self-assertiveness, but rather as serving the public good. This is especially apparent in 2.2, when Mortimer demands of Edward an opportunity to speak frankly: 'Nay, now you are here alone, I'll speak my mind' (2.2.154). This expression of outspoken independence is the prelude to a set of speeches by Mortimer and the barons that catalogue their grievances. In describing the consequences of the king's neglect, the barons describe in concrete detail the harm done to the people: those English soldiers who were forced to abandon France 'lame and poor, lie groaning at the gates' (2.2.162); the Scots have plundered northern England and 'unresisted drave away rich spoils' (2.2.166); and those on the northern border have had 'their houses burnt, / Their wives and children slain' (2.2.178–79). These complaints are a particularly forceful articulation of the consequences of Edward's neglect, and they serve to elicit sympathy for the deposition.¹⁴ The barons are never presented as men of unalloyed virtue, but their catalogue of grievances nevertheless reveals a serious concern with the common good.

¹⁴David Bevington shows that while the barons are at times petty and are motivated by self-interest, they nevertheless are presented by Marlowe as having a genuine concern for the common good: Bevington, 'Christopher Marlowe: The Late Years', in *Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe: Fresh Cultural Contexts*, ed. Sara Munson Deats and Robert Logan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 209–22.

In the opening acts of the play, Mortimer's magnanimous independence, signalled by his insistence 'I'll speak my mind', is in the service of the common good.

Mortimer's outspokenness distinguishes him from Edward's flatterers. He deprecates the 'baseness' of the flatterers who do not 'dare speak a word' against Gaveston:

Lancaster And all the court begins to flatter him [Gaveston].

Warwick Thus leaning on the shoulder of the king

He nods, and scorns, and smiles at those who pass.

Mortimer Senior Doth no man take exception at the slave?

Lancaster All stomach him, but none dare speak a word.

Mortimer Junior Ah, that bewrays their baseness, Lancaster. (1.2.22–27)

This passage is reminiscent of the discontented exchanges between the Germanicans in Jonson's *Sejanus*. On account of their magnanimous independence, men of honour have been marginalized in the court, and flatterers are in the ascendancy. This exchange between the barons, in effect, expresses the classical republican narrative, a narrative that is present throughout the first three acts. This same narrative is alluded to at the beginning of the third act, for example, when the barons urge Edward to 'have old servitors in his esteem, / And shake off smooth dissembling flatterers' (3.1.168–69).

In pointing to the presence of this classical narrative in *Edward II* and *Richard II*, I am not implying that Marlowe and Shakespeare are deliberately invoking Tacitus. Rather, the two plays criticize absolutism from the perspective of the baronial honour code.

Nevertheless, this aristocratic criticism of absolutism has a similar form to, and merges with, the classical republican narrative. Both barons and classical republicans inveighed against monarchs who promoted flatterers and marginalized those of magnanimous independence.

What is common to the value systems of the barons and classical republicans is the valorization of magnanimous independence: while the barons regarded dependency as dishonourable and base, the classical republicans construed it as servitude, akin to slavery. In his history of Henry IV, Hayward exploited this correspondence between classical values and the honour code, fusing together a baronial and Tacitean criticism of absolutism. While *Richard II* lacks the self-conscious Tacitism of Hayward's history, nevertheless Essex's supporters, watching the play on the eve of his rising, would have construed in its opening acts the classical republican narrative.

Although this classical narrative has an important presence in both *Richard II* and *Edward II*, it is primarily located in the opening acts, ending with the transformation of the characters of Bolingbroke and Mortimer. This discontinuity in characterization contributes to the political ambiguity of the plays.¹⁵ In the fourth act of *Edward II*, Mortimer's transformation from a passionate, magnanimous baron to a restrained villain contributes to a shift in sympathy away from the barons and towards the king. At the same time, the king becomes more sympathetic, displaying fortitude in battle and dignity in suffering. In the final act, Marlowe uses the pathos of the king's suffering not only to produce tragic closure but also to elicit sympathy for Edward. The closure of the play is, broadly speaking, conservative: the death of the king is lamented; the villainous rebel is punished; the realm is in the hands of a virtuous monarch; and thus the play closes with a sense of order restored – with a 'major chord resolution'.¹⁶ The political ambiguity of *Edward II* arises from the

¹⁵For accounts of the political ambiguity of the two plays, see Bevington, 'Christopher Marlowe: The Late Years'; and Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin, introduction to William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 16–29.

¹⁶Bevington, 'Christopher Marlowe: The Late Years', 221.

contrast between the conservative ending and the oppositional sympathies of the opening acts, in which the classical republican narrative is an important element of the criticism of absolutist monarchical power.

Like Marlowe, Shakespeare directs the audience's sympathies towards the deposed monarch in the second half of the play. The portrayal of Richard's suffering introduces a note of pathos, while the courage he displays in his final fight imparts to his death a heroic character. Although Bolingbroke's Machiavellian plot to kill Richard reinforces the audience's sympathy for the deposed monarch, Shakespeare does not transform Bolingbroke into an unambiguous villain akin to Mortimer. The relatively benign characterization of Bolingbroke, at least in comparison to Mortimer, reflects Shakespeare's sensitivity to the need to de-emphasize the illegitimacy of the Lancaster line. Nevertheless, there is broad similarity in the structures of the two plays: the opening acts of the plays present the classical republican narrative, whereas in the second half, the emotive magnanimous independence of Bolingbroke and Mortimer gives way to more restrained and prudent character traits.

4.3 Bolingbroke's rhetorical styles in *Richard II*

In the deposition scene, Richard's description of Bolingbroke as the 'silent king', I have suggested, draws attention to the contrast between Bolingbroke's relatively brief, laconic mode of speech in that scene and the ornate loquacity of Richard. In the first half of the twentieth century, critics tended to present this contrast between Bolingbroke's and Richard's styles as a general feature of the play: Hardin Craig opposes Bolingbroke's 'plain style' to Richard's 'rhetorical style'; Mark van Doren describes Bolingbroke as 'for the most part, a man of few words', contrasting his terseness to the 'rhetoric' of Richard; and Tillyard presents an opposition between Bolingbroke's style, 'which has the full accent of the world

of action', and 'the ceremonial style used to represent Richard and his court'.¹⁷ Subsequent commentators, however, rather than attempting to characterize *the* style of Bolingbroke, have generally emphasized the variety of his styles.¹⁸ Although in 4.1 and, to a lesser extent, in 3.3, Bolingbroke's style is relatively brief, elsewhere in the play – and especially in the opening two acts – his speech is notably copious and ornate.

In the first scene of the play, Bolingbroke's challenge to Mowbray is some distance from a 'plain style' of speech:

Besides I say, and will in battle prove,
 Or here or elsewhere, to the furthest verge
 That ever was surveyed by English eye,
 That all the treasons for these eighteen years

¹⁷Hardin Craig, introduction to William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard the Second*, ed. Hardin Craig (New York: Macmillan, 1912), xiv; Mark van Doren, *Shakespeare* (1939; repr. New York: New York Review Books, 2005), 71–73; E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944), 257, 259. According to Tillyard, Richard's 'ceremonial style' represented the harmonious medieval world, while Bolingbroke's style is the voice of the new pragmatism. Van Doren describes Richard as 'a poet, not a King', drawing on a critical tradition that includes W. B. Yeats and Walter Pater. See Yeats, 'At Stratford-on-Avon' (1901), in *Richard II: Critical Essays*, ed. Jeanne Newlin (New York: Garland, 1984), 121–22; Pater, 'Shakespeare's English Kings' (1889), in *Richard II: Critical Essays*, ed. Newlin, 198–202.

¹⁸Dorothy Hockey, 'A World of Rhetoric in *Richard II*', *SQ* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1964): 179–91; T. P. McAlindon, *Shakespeare and Decorum* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 41–42; Gurr, introduction to *King Richard II*, 34; Dawson and Yachnin, introduction to *Richard II*, 63–64.

Complotted and contrived in this land
 Fetch from false Mowbray their first head and spring.
 Further I say, and further will maintain
 Upon his bad life, to make all this good,
 That he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death,
 Suggest his soon-believing adversaries,
 And consequently, like a traitor-coward,
 Sluiced out his innocent soul through streams of blood;
 Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries
 Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth
 To me for justice and rough chastisement. (1.1.92–106)

In this passage, Bolingbroke uses the Ciceronian rhetorical style. Each of the two lengthy sentences is a Ciceronian period, which is constructed from *membra* bound together by both grammatical suspension and balance.¹⁹ Chapter Three showed that Cicero uses amplification to create the emotive force of his rhetoric, and, similarly, in Bolingbroke's periods, the emotional heat is intensified by amplification. Bolingbroke particularly uses hyperbole to achieve amplification:²⁰ he is prepared to prove his case 'to the furthest verge / That ever was surveyed by English eye'; Gloucester's blood 'cries / Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth'.

Bolingbroke's Ciceronian periods in the opening scene contribute to his characterization as outspoken and passionate in the first half of the play. The emotive quality

¹⁹The principal source of balance is *isocolon*: the *membra* tend to coincide with lines.

²⁰For a discussion of the use of hyperbole to achieve amplification, see Quintilian, *Orator's Education*, 8.6.67–68.

of the style and its copious length convey his passionate outspokenness, manifesting his magnanimous independence. Accordingly, these Ciceronian periods form part of the classical republican narrative in the first half of the play: this narrative laments the loss of magnanimous independence under tyranny, and Bolingbroke's independence is indicated by his use of the Ciceronian style. Bolingbroke's periods illustrate how Ciceronian rhetoric could be used to convey republican attitudes.

While I have emphasized the Ciceronian quality of Bolingbroke's challenge to Mowbray, Nicholas Brooke discerns in Bolingbroke's speech a 'Marlovian tone' – the tone of *Tamburlaine*.²¹ These two claims are consistent; as discussed in Chapter Three, *Tamburlaine* is a sustained experiment in Ciceronian rhetoric. Tamburlaine's Ciceronian style serves to express his 'great-souled' magnanimous independence, conveying his defiance of the kings he conquers, and then subsequently his defiance of the heavens. Bolingbroke's speech illustrates that the defiant 'Marlovian tone', when used by a subject addressing his king, can take on an oppositional ring.

While Bolingbroke's Ciceronian style is perhaps most pronounced in the opening scene, he uses emotive Ciceronian periods throughout the first half of the play. Kneeling before Gaunt prior to his trial by combat, Bolingbroke declaims a lengthy, vaunting Ciceronian period:

O thou, the earthly author of my blood,
 Whose youthful spirit in me regenerate
 Doth with a two-fold vigour lift me up
 To reach at victory above my head,

²¹Nicholas Brooke, 'Marlowe as Provocative Agent in Shakespeare's Early Plays', *Sh. Sur.*, 14 (1961), 39.

Add proof unto mine armour with thy prayers,
 And with thy blessings steel my lance's point
 That it may enter Mowbray's waxen coat
 And furbish new the name of John a Gaunt
 Even in the lusty haviour of his son. (1.3.69–77)

Bolingbroke directs another long, emotive period at Bushy and Green when sentencing them to death:

Myself – a prince by fortune of my birth,
 Near to the King in blood, and near in love
 Till you did make him misinterpret me –
 Have stooped my neck under your injuries,
 And sighed my English breath in foreign clouds,
 Eating the bitter bread of banishment,
 Whilst you have fed upon my signatories,
 Disparked my parks and felled my forest woods,
 From my own windows torn my household coat,
 Razed out my imprese, leaving me no sign,
 Save men's opinions and my living blood,
 To show the world I am a gentleman. (3.1.16–27)

Like Cicero, Bolingbroke injects emotive force into his speech by using amplification. In this case, amplification is primarily achieved by the figure of ‘heaping up’ (*synathroismos*)²²:

Bolingbroke ‘heaps up’ the wrongs to which he has been subjected, amplifying the sense of outrage that his speech is intended to convey.

The contrast between these passionate, lengthy periods and Bolingbroke’s more restrained and economical speech in 3.3 and 4.1 conveys the alteration in Bolingbroke’s character in the second half of the play. Like his son, Gaunt also undergoes a transformation of character, but his transformation is in the opposite direction. Gaunt’s patience in the opening act gives way to outspoken independence in 2.1. As in the case of Bolingbroke, Shakespeare uses a shift in style to signal Gaunt’s change of character. In 2.1, Gaunt declaims several heated Ciceronian periods, the most striking of which is his ‘sceptred isle’ speech. This stunning Ciceronian period is twenty-one lines long. The first nineteen lines are a series of noun phrases, delaying the main verb until the penultimate line. The suspended syntax is resolved when Gaunt angrily concludes that England ‘Is now leased out – I die pronouncing it – / Like to a tenement or pelting farm’ (2.1.59–60). Like Bolingbroke’s periods, Gaunt’s passionate Ciceronian speech conveys his defiant independence. This copious Ciceronian mode of speech is expressive of Gaunt’s ‘liberal tongue’, provoking Richard to threaten to cut his head off, on account of ‘This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head’ (2.1.123). The ‘sceptred isle’ speech does not convey a nostalgic yearning for the loss of medieval harmony, but, rather, is an angry, quasi-republican invective, expressing Gaunt’s magnanimous independence and castigating Richard for his neglect of the common good.

²²The figure of ‘heaping up’ is closely related to the figure of accumulation. As discussed in Chapter Three, accumulation is one of Cicero’s principal means of achieving amplification. For the relationship between the figures of ‘heaping up’ and accumulation, and for the use of these two figures to achieve amplification, see Quintilian, *Orator’s Education*, 8.4.26–27.

4.4 The Ciceronian and sententious styles in *Edward II*

Bolingbroke's transformation into a 'silent king' in the middle of *Richard II* corresponds to a discontinuity in Mortimer's character. While the characterization of Bolingbroke is somewhat different to that of Mortimer, nevertheless they share the trait of being relatively restrained and circumspect in the second half of the plays, losing their passionate outspokenness of the opening acts. In the final two acts of *Edward II*, Mortimer's new mood of restraint spreads to other characters. Mortimer's advice to Isabella – that she should not 'grow so passionate in speeches' – is echoed in Leicester's advice to himself: 'Leicester, leave to grow so passionate' (4.7.55). When Mortimer again counsels Isabella to control her emotions – to 'have done with care and sad complaint' (4.6.66) – she passes this advice on to her son: 'Weep not, sweet son' (5.6.32). The following soliloquy by Kent also evinces the new mood of restraint and self-control:

But Edmund, calm this rage;
Dissemble or thou diest, for Mortimer
And Isabel do kiss while they conspire. (4.6.11-13)

In the fourth and fifth acts, the protagonists' preoccupation with restraint marks a change in the political environment. It is a world in which emotive outspokenness is hazardous, a world summed up by Kent's imperative: 'Dissemble or thou diest'. The danger of uncontrolled emotions and speech, which is a central theme throughout Jonson's *Sejanus*, becomes a dominant motif in the final acts of *Edward II*. The ascendancy of the villainous Mortimer introduces into the play a dark atmosphere of Tacitean Stoicism.

Given the dangers of open speech, Marlowe's characters resort to figured language in order to conceal their meanings. In the following passage, the dark Tacitean mood is conveyed not only by the circumspect brevity and whispered asides but also by the use of figured language. In this passage, the characters mean more than they say:

Kent Madam, without offence, if I may ask,

How will you deal with Edward in his fall?

Prince Edward Tell me, good uncle, what Edward do you mean?

Kent Nephew, your father – I dare not call him king.

Mortimer Junior My lord of Kent, what needs these questions?

'Tis not in her controlment, nor in ours;

But as the realm and parliament shall please,

So shall your brother be disposèd of.

[*Aside to Isabella*] I like not this relenting mood in Edmund;

Madam, 'tis good to look to him betimes.

Isabella [*Aside to Mortimer Junior*] My lord, the Mayor of Bristol knows our mind?

Mortimer Junior [*Aside*] Yea, madam, and they scape not easily

That fled the field. (4.6.30-43)

When Prince Edward asks Kent the rhetorical question 'what Edward do you mean?', a number of different tacit meanings may be attributed to him. He may be implying that he too has fallen because he is empathetically participating in his father's downfall. On this interpretation, Prince Edward is simply expressing sorrow for the king's demise. But he may also be insinuating something more sinister: now that his father has been dealt with,

Mortimer will initiate a plot against him. Replying to Prince Edward, Kent similarly uses figured language: the most direct implication of his remark is that King Edward's deposition is imminent, but he also hints at the dangers faced by those who 'dare' to oppose Mortimer.

Prince Edward's and Kent's figured language imparts to the dialogue a laconic wit that is distinctly sententious. In this passage, Marlowe uses a sententious style, which is evident both from the sustained brevity of the language and also its sententious wit. The passage illustrates the conclusion of Chapter Three, which showed that a figured, sententious style was seen as suitable for a political environment in which open speech is hazardous. The figured brevity of the language renders it apt for the restrained, veiled mode of communication that is prudent in such dangerous political environments. In *Edward II*, the sententious style contributes to the dark Tacitean atmosphere that pervades the final two acts of the play.

The following passage has a similar tone of restraint and deception. In veiled asides, the interlocutors talk of 'plots', 'stratagems' and 'whispers'. Throughout the passage, as Kent observes, Isabella and Mortimer 'do dissemble':

Mortimer Junior [*Aside to Isabella*] Finely dissembled; do so still,
sweet queen.

Here comes the young prince with the Earl of Kent.

Isabella [*Aside to Mortimer Junior*] Something he whispers in his
childish ears.

Mortimer Junior [*Aside*] If he have such access unto the prince,
Our plots and stratagems will soon be dashed.

Isabella [*Aside*] Use Edmund friendly, as if all were well.

Mortimer Junior [*To Kent*] How fares my honourable lord of Kent?

Kent In health, sweet Mortimer [*To Isabella*] How fares your grace?

Isabella Well – if my lord your brother were enlarged.

Kent I hear of late he hath deposed himself.

Isabella. The more my grief.

Mortimer Junior And mine.

Kent [*Aside*] Ah, they do dissemble. (5.2.73-85)

The conspiratorial mood of the dialogue is also conveyed by its sententious style. Isabella introduces sententious wit into the exchange by her use of figured language. In particular, her remark that she is ‘Well – if your lord my brother were enlarged’ embodies multiple meanings: ‘enlarged’ may mean either released from prison or released from life.²³ The sententious style of the passage, which arises from its restrained brevity and sententious wit, reinforces the Tacitean mood of the final act.

The polysemic language of the final two acts is especially evident in Mortimer’s soliloquy below. In this speech, Mortimer explains to the audience the ambiguity that he has introduced into the command for the King’s execution:

This letter, written by a friend of ours,

Contains his death, yet bids them save his life.

[*He reads*] ‘*Edwardum occidere nolite timere, bonum est;*

Fear not to kill the king, ’tis good he die’.

But read it thus, and that’s another sense:

‘*Edwardum occidere nolite, timere bonum est;*

Kill not the king, ’tis good to fear the worst’. (5.4.6–12)

²³See the notes to this passage in Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. Forker.

The ingenuity in the Latin *sententia* derives not only from its carefully crafted equivocation, but also from its use of *homoiooteleuton* – the repetition of word endings. The endings *–um* and *–ere* are repeated to create internal rhymes, and the repetition has a chiasmic structure, creating balance between the first half of the sentence and the second: *Edwardum occidere nolite timere bonum est*. More generally, the passage exemplifies the sententious style. The opening two lines of the passage also constitute a *sententia*: its sententious wit turns on the antithesis between ‘death’ and ‘life’. In contrast to the flow of Ciceronian rhetoric, this passage has the restrained, halting movement of the sententious style. The sententious style serves to convey Mortimer’s Tacitean restraint and politic expediency.

The restrained Tacitism of the final two acts of *Edward II* is markedly different from the political world in the first half of the play. As noted above, in the opening acts Mortimer is an outspoken, magnanimous baron, who regularly insists on speaking openly: ‘I must speak’ (1.1.120-121); ‘I’ll speak my mind’ (2.2.154). Corresponding to the change in Mortimer’s character is a change in his rhetorical style. Whereas in the final two acts his restraint is evinced by brief and restrained sententious speech, at the opening of the play, Mortimer, like Bolingbroke, expresses his magnanimous independence by declaiming emotive Ciceronian periods:

And know, my lord, ere I will break my oath,
 This sword of mine that should offend your foes
 Shall sleep within the scabbard at thy need,
 And underneath thy banners march who will,
 For Mortimer will hang his armour up. (1.1.84–88)

Were all the earls and barons of my mind,
 We'd hale him from the bosom of the king,
 And at the court gate hang the peasant up,
 Who, swol'n with venom of ambitious pride,
 Will be the ruin of the realm and us. (1.2.28–32)

Cousin, an if he will not ransom him,
 I'll thunder such a peal into his ears
 As never subject did unto his king. (2.2.126–128)

This tattered ensign of my ancestors,
 Which swept the desert show of that dead sea
 whereof we got the name of Mortimer,
 Will I advance upon these castle walls. (2.3.21–24)

Critics frequently draw attention to the contrast between the styles of *Edward II* and *Tamburlaine*.²⁴ There is certainly a striking difference between the economical and restrained sententious style of the second half of *Edward II* and the passionate Ciceronian style of *Tamburlaine*. But in the first two acts of *Edward II*, there are at least traces of *Tamburlaine*'s Ciceronian rhetoric. In Mortimer's periods, the vaunting tone, the hyperbole, the grammatical suspension, the balanced clauses and the end-stopping all recall the *Tamburlaine*'s Ciceronian style. Whereas *Tamburlaine*'s periods express the magnanimous independence of a

²⁴See, for instance, Harry Morris, 'Marlowe's Poetry', *Tulane Drama Review* 8 (1964): 134–54; Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study*, 212–13; Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights*, 92.

warrior-king, Mortimer's periods illustrate that the magnanimous independence conveyed by Ciceronian periods can take on an oppositional note when asserted by a marginalized subject.

Conclusion

In *Richard II* and *Edward II*, the playwrights selectively use Ciceronian and sententious rhetoric to convey attitudes of magnanimous independence and Tacitean-Stoic restraint. Bolingbroke's restraint and circumspection in the second half of *Richard II* can be contrasted with his earlier magnanimous independence, which is signalled by his use of passionate Ciceronian periods in the opening acts. In contrast, Gaunt initially is guided by Stoic patience, before taking on a republican attitude of magnanimous independence in scene 2.1. In this scene, Shakespeare uses Ciceronian rhetoric to convey Gaunt's republican independence.

In *Edward II*, Marlowe uses not just the Ciceronian style but also the sententious style to express the political attitudes of the characters. In the closing acts, the language becomes restrained and sententious, which contributes to the dark Tacitean mood at the end of the play. By way of contrast, in the initial acts, there are occasional Ciceronian periods reminiscent of *Tamburlaine*, which express Mortimer's magnanimous independence. In general, the style of *Edward II* is very different from that of *Tamburlaine*. James Shapiro has suggested that in *Edward II*, Marlowe adopts Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays as his stylistic model rather than *Tamburlaine*: 'Marlowe is writing a lot like Shakespeare, not only in the historical and political point of view, but also in the verse style (there is a notable shift away from high astounding terms, set speeches, and even a greater percentage of run-on lines that break down the Marlovian verse paragraphs)'.²⁵ Whereas in *Tamburlaine*, the Ciceronian

²⁵Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights*, 92.

style is used uniformly throughout the play, in *Edward II* this style is used selectively, expressing the republican political attitudes of Mortimer in the opening acts.

The republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism in *Richard II* and *Edward II* are not directly indebted to specific classical antecedents. In this respect, the two plays are different from most of the plays that are given detailed attention in the dissertation. As I have shown, in *Sejanus*, *Philotas* and *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron*, there are direct correspondences to Tacitus's works. Chapter Five will show that the classical republicanism of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* can be located in its principal source, Plutarch's *Lives*. In Chapter Six, I suggest that the Tacitean Stoicism of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* draws on Seneca's tragedies. Nevertheless, we can construe a connection between the Tacitism of Essex's circle and *Richard II*. Hayward's *Henrie IIII* provided a Tacitean interpretation of the deposition of Richard, using the classical republican narrative to construe Bolingbroke's grievances against the crown. Similarly, on the eve of Essex's uprising, his followers would have interpreted Shakespeare's play as dramatizing this classical narrative. Both *Richard II* and *Edward II* illustrate the correspondence between the concerns of classical republicans and those of oppositional barons.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘AYE, CICERO IS DEAD’:

ABSOLUTISM AND LEAN LANGUAGE IN *JULIUS CAESAR*

After he [Caesar] had ended his civil wars, he did so honourably behave himself that there was no fault to be found in him... For he pardoned many of them that had borne arms against him and, furthermore, did prefer some of them to honour and office in the commonwealth, as, amongst others, Cassius and Brutus, both the which were made Praetors. (Plutarch, *Lives*, 790)¹

In *Richard II* and *Edward II*, the barons justify the deposition of the monarch by cataloguing the harms occasioned by his reign. Bolingbroke complains that Richard and his favourites have plundered his estate – ‘Disparked my parks and felled my forest woods’ (3.1.23). John of Gaunt laments that Richard has ‘leased out’ England ‘Like to a tenement or pelting farm’ in order to fill his coffers (3.1.31–68). Similarly, in *Edward II*, the barons deliver to the king a detailed and concrete litany of complaints: Edward has burdened the ‘murmuring commons’ with higher taxation (2.2.156–59); his military failures have rendered his subjects ‘lame and poor’; they ‘lie groaning’ and have had ‘their houses burnt / Their wives and children slain’ (2.2.160–94). These kinds of complaints are notably absent from the speeches of the conspirators in *Julius Caesar*. While in *Richard II* and *Edward II*, the barons instance specific harms to the subjects of the realm, the conspirators in *Julius Caesar* make more general, abstract complaints about their loss of liberty. Indeed, the opening scene

¹Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Thomas North (London, 1579). Subsequent quotations in English from Plutarch’s *Lives* are from this edition.

demonstrates that Caesar is a popular ruler, suggesting that he is neither cruel nor negligent. In this respect, Shakespeare's portrait of Caesar follows his principal source, Plutarch's *Lives*. As is illustrated by the quotation above, Plutarch repeatedly emphasizes that, after his victory over Pompey, Caesar acted with clemency, avoiding 'any tyrannical or cruel act'.²

Having defeated Pompey, although Caesar is not a king, he is nonetheless a monarch. The Romans, according to Plutarch, submitted 'to be ruled by one man alone', and 'they chose him perpetual dictator'.³ But at least in comparison with Marlowe's Edward II and Shakespeare's Richard II, there is a sense in which the Caesar of Plutarch and Shakespeare is a benevolent monarch. The question then arises: in the political culture of the late sixteenth century, would Elizabethans have found such a monarchy objectionable? While Roman republicans may have been opposed to monarchical rule, Elizabethans, broadly speaking, did not object to monarchy *per se*, but only to tyrannical forms of monarchy. Such considerations have encouraged some critics to read Shakespeare's play as a criticism of Caesar's assassination. According to this reading, Cassius and Brutus provide flimsy, ungrounded justifications for the assassination, offering rationalizations rather than reasons. Cassius is motivated solely by envy and emulousness, and Brutus is imprudent and imperceptive – a self-deluded would-be idealist.⁴ Even among those critics who do not insist on a royalist

²Plutarch, *Lives*, 1081. For Caesar's clemency, see also *Lives*, 785–86.

³Plutarch, *Lives*, 789. Plutarch uses the Greek words *monarchia* and *diktator* to describe Caesar's rule: see *Life of Caesar* in *Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 99 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 57.1.

⁴Versions of this royalist reading of *Julius Caesar* can be found in Mark Hunter, 'Politics and Characters in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', *Essays by Divers Hands* 10 (1931): 109–40;

interpretation of *Julius Caesar*, many nevertheless present Brutus and Cassius as rationalizing the assassination rather than offering a reasoned defence of their actions.⁵

Although I will criticize such readings of *Julius Caesar*, I nevertheless acknowledge the importance of the observation that – at least in one sense – Shakespeare’s Caesar is a benevolent monarch, a monarch who is crucially different to Richard II and Edward II. Shakespeare’s play poses the question of how the deposition of a benevolent monarch might be justified. According to the political norms of Elizabethan England, there are at least two conceivable kinds of warrant for such a deposition. First, even though Caesar was, in a sense, benevolent, he was a usurper who attained his position through military force. As other commentators have explored this warrant for tyrannicide,⁶ I will focus on a second justification for the assassination, which is central to Shakespeare’s play. Although Plutarch and Shakespeare do not portray Caesar as responsible for cruelty or harm suffered by the

Hardin Craig, *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* (Columbia: Lucas Brothers, 1948), 168–77;

Ernest Schanzer, ‘The Problem of *Julius Caesar*’, *SQ* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1955): 297–308.

⁵See, for example, Gordon Smith, ‘Brutus, Virtue and Will’, *SQ* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1959):

367–79; Gayle Greene, “‘The Power of Speech / To Stir Men’s Blood’: The Language of

Tragedy in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*’, *RenD* 11 (1980): 67–93; Carol Rutter, ‘Facing

History, Facing Now: Deborah Warner’s *Julius Caesar* at the Barbican Theatre’, *SQ* 57 no. 1

(Spring 2006): 71–85; Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his*

Contemporaries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 98–101.

⁶In early modern political culture, there was a distinction between tyranny *ex defectu tituli*

(‘by defect of title’), which is the case of a usurper, and tyranny *de parte exercitii* (‘in

practice’). Tyranny *ex defectu tituli* in *Julius Caesar* is discussed by Robert Miola, ‘*Julius*

Caesar and the Tyrannicide Debate’, *RQ* 38, no.2 (Summer 1985): 271–89. See also Irving

Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1960), 55–56.

populace, nevertheless they both emphasize his suppression of classical liberty. Their Caesar is an absolutist: in the language of classical republicanism, he sought to render Rome dependent upon his will, even though, as it turned out, he generally exercised his will benevolently. Caesar's absolutism would have been an anathema not only to Roman republicans but also to Elizabethan advocates of a 'monarchical republic'. Plutarch's and Shakespeare's criticisms of Caesar as a benevolent absolutist rely crucially on a classical notion of liberty: it is a distinctive implication of the classical concept of liberty that absolute power is to be criticized, even if it is exercised benevolently.⁷

In the final two sections of this chapter, I examine Shakespeare's use of rhetorical style to express political attitudes in *Julius Caesar*. Numerous commentators have remarked on the brevity and restraint of language in the play.⁸ Especially in the speeches of the conspirators, linguistic restraint and brevity serve to occlude and veil meaning. By using this stylistic register, Shakespeare conveys that in Caesar's Rome, liberty is under threat; the suppression of open speech requires that communication is brief, covert and restrained. The style of the conspirators in *Julius Caesar* can be compared to that in the final two acts of *Edward II*. Like Marlowe, Shakespeare uses sententious brevity to dramatize the suppression of liberty. Moreover, in *Julius Caesar*, the prudence of the restrained sententious style is contrasted to the danger of outspoken Ciceronian periods. Shakespeare uses the contrast between sententious and Ciceronian styles to depict the absolutism of Caesar's rule.

⁷This feature of classical liberty is discussed in the second section of Chapter One.

⁸John Brown, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Style* (London: Heinemann, 1970), 104; Charles and Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1990), 154; Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (London: Penguin, 2000), 85, 87.

5.1 Justifying tyrannicide in *Julius Caesar*: Reasons or rationalizations?

Commenting on scene 1.2, in which Cassius seduces Brutus to enlist in the conspiracy, Paul Schanzer proposes that Cassius's arguments are unpersuasive and unsupported by evidence: 'where Cassius can be relied upon to make the most of the opposition's case against Caesar, he does not mention any specific acts of tyrannical behaviour. There is only the general assertion that Rome is "groaning underneath this age's yoke"'.⁹ Thus Schanzer concludes: 'Most of his arguments seem misdirected, while he leaves unsaid all the things that could have moved Brutus. No reference is made to the welfare of the people'.¹⁰ Building on Schanzer's observations, Gayle Greene also concludes that in the seduction scene, Cassius's reasoning is wayward: as he fails to mention any 'specific grievance', the result is that 'we find no reasons, only a rhetoric that obscures questions of Caesar's ambition and the justice of his death'.¹¹

Schanzer and Greene identify an important feature of the justification of tyrannicide in *Julius Caesar*. In constructing Cassius's arguments in 1.2, Shakespeare is guided by Plutarch, who repeatedly emphasizes that, at least after Caesar was established as 'perpetual dictator', 'there never followed any tyrannical nor cruel act, but contrarily, it seemed that he was a merciful physician'.¹² Following Plutarch, therefore, Shakespeare does not have

⁹Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare: A Study of Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 26.

¹⁰Schanzer, *Problem Plays of Shakespeare*, 39.

¹¹Gayle Greene, 'Language of Tragedy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', 67.

¹²Plutarch, *Lives*, 1081. The following two quotations from Plutarch's *Lives* also illustrate his depiction of Caesar's clemency. 'Furthermore, he [Caesar] courteously used all Pompey's friends and familiars, who wandering up and down the country, were taken of the king of

Cassius complain about harm to ‘the welfare of the people’ or about any ‘specific acts of tyrannical behaviour’.

Nevertheless, I will question Schanzer and Greene’s conclusion that ‘we find no reasons’ for the assassination in Cassius’s arguments. The following passage from the *Lives*, which is followed by North’s translation, illuminates both Plutarch’s and Shakespeare’s characterizations of conspirators’ justification for the assassination. While the passage relates specifically to Brutus’s justification for opposing Octavius Caesar, it indicates why, more generally, the conspirators objected to benevolent monarchy, including the benevolent monarchy of Julius Caesar:

And Cicero himself, for the great malice he bare Antonius, did favour his [Octavius’s] proceedings. But Brutus marvellously reprov'd him for it, and wrote unto him that he seem'd by his doings not to be sorry to have a maister, but only afraid to have one that should hate him: and that all of his doings in the commonwealth did witness that he chose to be subject to a mild and courteous bondage, sith by his words and writings he did commend this young man Octavius Caesar to be a good and gentle Lord. For our predecessors, said he, would never abide to be subject to any maisters, how gentle or mild soever they were: and for his own part that he had never resolutely determin'd with himself to make war or peace, but otherwise that he was certainly minded never to be slave or subject. And therefore he wonder'd much at him, how Cicero could be

Egypt, and won them all to be at his commandment’ (*Lives*, 786). ‘As for them that were taken prisoners, Caesar did put many of them amongst his legions, and did pardon also many men of estimation, among whom Brutus was one, that afterwards slew Caesar himself’ (*Lives*, 785).

afraid of the danger of civil wars, and would not be afraid of a shameful peace: and that to thrust Antonius out of the usurped tyranny, in recompense he went about to stablish young Octavius Caesar tyranny.¹³

In this passage, Brutus uses a specifically classical conception to liberty to attack the prospect of Octavius's benevolent rule. According to this notion of liberty, a loss of liberty amounts to slavery. Thus Brutus rejects Octavius's leadership as 'bondage' (*douleia*), which would render him a 'slave' (*to douleuein*).¹⁴ Such slavery is unacceptable even if it is the 'mild and courteous bondage' (*philanthropa douleia*) that Octavius's reign promised to be. For defenders of classical liberty, the suppression of liberty is objectionable even under benevolent rule. Quentin Skinner puts the point as follows:

The distinctive claim they [advocates of classical liberty] defend is that a mere awareness of living in dependence on the goodwill of an arbitrary ruler does serve in itself to restrict our options and thereby to limit our liberty. The effect is to dispose us to make and avoid certain choices, and is thus to place clear constraints on our freedom of action, *even though our ruler may never interfere with our activities or even show the least sign of threatening to interfere with them.*¹⁵ (My italics)

¹³Plutarch, *Lives*, 1065.

¹⁴Moreover, Brutus's criticisms of Cicero's proposed 'shameful peace' are reminiscent of Tacitus's contempt for peaceful capitulation that was discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁵Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty', 257. See the second section in Chapter One for further discussion of this characteristic of classical liberty.

According to advocates of classical liberty, dependency on one man's will is servitude, even if, as it turns out, that man exercises his will benevolently. Although Octavius's rule would be 'gentle or mild' (*praos*), it was 'tyranny' (*tyrannos*) nonetheless. Similarly, Plutarch presents Julius Caesar's position of 'perpetual dictator' as tyranny: 'This was a plain tyranny: for to this absolute power of dictator, they added this, never to be afraid to be deposed'.¹⁶ In Plutarch's *Lives*, the conspirators' objected to the rule of both Octavius and Julius Caesar on the grounds that these rulers sought to establish benevolent absolutism or, in other words, benevolent slavery, which would amount to a suppression of classical liberty.

Brutus's commitment to classical liberty is also apparent from his reaction to Cicero's death. Those who had stayed in Rome, Brutus says, had given up their liberty and thus become 'slaves':

But then Brutus said that he was more ashamed of the cause for the which Cicero was slain than he was otherwise sorry for his death; and that he could not but greatly reprove his friends he had at Rome, who were slaves more through their own fault than through their valiantness or manhood which usurped the tyranny, considering that they were so cowardly and faint-hearted as to suffer the sight of those things before their eyes, the report whereof should only have grieved them to the heart.¹⁷

This passage illustrates the connection, which was explored in Chapter One, between classical liberty and character. A commitment to classical liberty is associated with a network of character traits, including magnanimity, independence, openness, courage and a strong

¹⁶Plutarch, *Lives*, 789.

¹⁷Plutarch, *Lives*, 1067–68.

sense of honour. Thus Brutus maintains that those ‘slaves’ who had accepted their loss of liberty are ‘cowardly and faint-hearted’. In saying that he is ‘ashamed’ of them, Brutus is maintaining that their slavish behaviour is dishonourable. Brutus subsequently reiterates that the ‘bondage’ of Octavius’s rule was dishonourable: ‘either I will set my country at liberty by battle, or by honourable death rid me of this bondage’.¹⁸

In characterizing the justification of the conspirators in *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare follows Plutarch closely. Accordingly, when defending tyrannicide, Shakespeare’s Cassius and Brutus articulate a commitment to classical liberty. Rather than citing specific acts of cruelty or harm against the people, they instead inveigh against the slavish condition to which they have been reduced, as well as the degradation of character brought about by such servitude. In the seduction scene, when Cassius laments that he has become ‘A wretched creature, and must bend his body / If Caesar carelessly but nod on him’ (1.2.117–20), he is complaining that he has become dependent on the will of Caesar, on Caesar’s ‘nod’. According to the classical conception of liberty, to be dependent upon the will of one man is slavery. The resulting state of servitude is degrading; it has rendered him a ‘wretched creature’. Cassius complains that not only he but also Rome has been reduced to servitude: in judging that Rome is ‘groaning underneath this age’s yoke’ (1.2.63), Cassius again expresses his commitment to classical liberty. Throughout the seduction scene, Cassius emphasizes the degradation of national character brought about by this servitude:

Age, thou art shamed.

Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods. (1.2.151–52)

we petty men

¹⁸Plutarch, *Lives*, 1068.

Walk around under his huge legs, and peep about
 To find ourselves dishonourable graves.
 The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
 But in ourselves, that we are underlings. (1.2.137–41)

In the state of servitude enforced by Caesar, Rome has lost its ‘noble bloods’; instead, in this ‘shamed’ age, men are ‘petty’, ‘dishonourable’ and ‘underlings’.

Cassius also invokes the notion of classical liberty in his exchange with Casca in 1.3. The following passages illustrate the distinctive features of the classical conception of liberty: the loss of liberty is construed as slavery, which, in turn, is perceived to produce degradation of character:

Our fathers’ minds are dead,
 And we are governed with our mothers’ spirits.
 Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish. (1.3.81–83)

Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius. (1.3.89)

Poor man, I know he would not be a wolf
 But that he sees the Romans are but sheep.
 He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.
 Those that will with haste make a mighty fire
 Begin it with weak straws. What trash is Rome,
 What rubbish, and what offal, when it serves
 For the base matter to illuminate

So vile a thing as Caesar! But, O grief,
 Where hast thou led me? I perhaps speak this
 Before a willing bondman; (1.3.103–12)

Cassius presents the loss of liberty under Caesar as servitude: Rome is under a ‘yoke’; Cassius is in ‘bondage’; and Casca is a ‘bondman’. This servitude has degraded national character: it has rendered Romans ‘base’, ‘weak’ and ‘womanish’, turning them into ‘sheep’, ‘hinds’, ‘trash’, ‘rubbish’ and ‘offal’.

Cassius is relating the classical republican narrative of the loss of liberty, which was characterized in Chapter One. According to this narrative, a loss of liberty is equated to ‘slavery’, which produces degeneration of national character, fostering vice and suppressing virtue. This narrative particularly focuses on specific vices and virtue: the vices are those associated with ‘slavery’ or dependency, such as obsequiousness, flattery, servility, baseness; and the virtues are those antithetical to ‘slavery’ – the collection of character traits that are associated with magnanimous independence. Cassius, of course, is not a perfectly virtuous character. In the seduction scene, the audience witnesses Cassius consciously manipulating Brutus. Moreover, the fourth act reveals that Cassius is corrupt and venal. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, he possesses the magnanimous ‘strong minded’ independence that is central to the classical republican narrative – he is courageous, self-assertive, passionate, vigorous and contemptuous of servility. When Cassius rails against the base servility of Caesar’s Rome, he is expressing his republican aversion to slavish character traits. In this respect, Shakespeare follows Plutarch, who also presents Cassius as possessing – and as partly motivated by – a genuine commitment to republican liberty. Rejecting the view that Cassius was motivated solely by a private dispute between himself and Caesar, Plutarch

judges that Cassius acted partly on the basis of republican beliefs: ‘For Cassius, even from his cradle, could not abide any manner of tyrans’ (*Lives*, 1058).

In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius is an especially ardent defender of classical liberty, but similar claims are made by the other oppositional characters in the play, including Casca, Flavius and Brutus. Following Cassius, Casca refers to himself as a ‘bondman’, describing life under Caesar as ‘captivity’: ‘So every bondman in his own hand bears / The power to cancel his captivity’ (1.3.100–1). At the end of the opening scene, the tribune Flavius forecasts that unless the growth of Caesar’s power is checked, Rome will be reduced to a state of ‘servile fearfulness’ (1.1.75). This term is a concise expression of the distinctive concern of advocates of classical liberty. Subjects may live in a state of ‘servile fearfulness’ even if, in fact, the ruler does not inflict significant harm or cruelty on the people, so long as the ruler has the power to do so – so long as subjects are dependent on the will of one man.

Commentary on *Julius Caesar* has been particularly critical of Brutus’s touted reasons for the assassination. For example, Brutus’s funeral oration, it has been suggested, provides only rationalizations rather than reasons for the assassination. Paul Schanzer suggests that it offers ‘only the vaguest charge against Caesar’; Brian Vickers deprecates the ‘logical flimsiness’ of the oration; Mark Hunter insists that Brutus fails to supply ‘proof’; and Gayle Greene discerns in the oration ‘no argument that could appeal to logic’.¹⁹ While it is true that Brutus does not cite specific instances of cruelty or harm, the observations of these commentators lose their force once it is recognized that the conspirators’ principal concern is Caesar’s suppression of classical liberty. In his funeral oration, Brutus justifies the

¹⁹Schanzer, *Problem Plays of Shakespeare*, 48; Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare’s Prose* (London: Routledge, 1968), 243; Hunter, ‘Politics and Characters in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*’, 123; Greene, ‘Language of Tragedy in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*’, 82.

assassination as a defence of classical liberty, insisting that it was required to prevent the Roman people from descending into a state of servitude and degradation:

Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, that that Caesar were dead,
to live all free men? (3.2.22–24)

Who is here so base that would be a bondman? (3.2.29–30)

Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? (3.2.30–31)

Who is here so vile that will not love their country? (3.2.32–33)

Brutus's justification of the assassination is the same as that of Cassius, Casca and Flavius: Caesar's suppression of classical liberty would reduce citizens to 'slaves', degrading a Roman citizen to the 'base', 'rude' and 'vile' status of a 'bondman'.

In questioning Brutus's defence of Caesar's assassination, critics have focused especially on his soliloquy in the orchard, construing it as a rationalization rather than an articulation of his reasons:

It must be by his death. And for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crowned.
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
And that craves wary walking. Crown him: that!

And then, I grant, we put a sting in him
 That at his will he may do danger with.
 Th'abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
 Remorse from power. And to speak truth of Caesar,
 I have not known when his affections swayed
 More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
 That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
 Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
 But when he once attains the upmost round,
 He then unto the ladder turns his back,
 Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
 By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.
 Then lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel
 Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
 Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
 Would run to these and these extremities;
 And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
 Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,
 And kill him in his shell. (2.1.10–34)

The reasoning in the soliloquy has been described as loose, obscure or fallacious, as a self-deluded rationalization for Brutus's decision. The critical literature on this speech is extensive, and I will only focus on one central argument for this sceptical reading of the

soliloquy.²⁰ The argument begins with the observation that Brutus acknowledges that he does not currently have grounds for concern that Caesar will behave tyrannically, because Brutus has never observed Caesar's 'affections swayed / More than his reason'. So Brutus's reasoning rests on a hypothetical future possibility: the crown 'might change his nature'. Critics have suggested that this reasoning of Brutus is flimsy on the grounds that it rests on a judgement about a mere theoretical possibility. Thus Warren Chernaik maintains that Brutus's argument is 'extremely shaky' because, in effect, it 'proposes a pre-emptive strike against Caesar, killing him before he has a chance to display any tyrannous tendency'.²¹ Carol Rutter similarly discerns in Brutus's speech the questionable logic of pre-emptive attacks: Brutus's speech, she says, serves to legitimize a 'preemptive assassination'.²² Rather than waiting to see if Caesar becomes an 'adder', Brutus pre-emptively decides to 'kill him in his shell'.

But did classical republicans regard the logic of 'pre-emptive assassination' as 'shaky'? Advocates of classical liberty would defend such pre-emptive action: they opposed not only actual displays of tyranny but also the mere possession of absolute power, which

²⁰Versions of this argument can be found in Hunter, 'Politics and Characters in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', 120–22; Craig, *Interpretation of Shakespeare*, 168–77; Schanzer, 'The Problem of *Julius Caesar*'; Smith, 'Brutus, Virtue and Will'; Greene, 'Language of Tragedy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', 78–82; Rutter, 'Facing History, Facing Now', 74; Chernaik, *Myth of Rome*, 98–101. While Coleridge's remarks on the obscurity of Brutus's soliloquy are often cited by commentators, his grounds for thinking the speech to be obscure are different from those of most commentators: see *Coleridge's Criticism of Shakespeare: A Selection*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 177–78.

²¹Chernaik, *Myth of Rome*, 99.

²²Rutter, 'Facing History, Facing Now', 74.

creates the potential for tyrannical acts. As discussed above, in Plutarch's *Lives*, Brutus objects to Octavius Caesar even though he acknowledges that Octavius would be a benevolent monarch. According to classical republicans, the possession of absolute power by a monarch is sufficient to create what Flavius describes as a state of 'servile fearfulness'. Brutus's principal reason for the assassination is his concern that if Rome crowns Caesar, 'we put a sting in him / That at his will he may do danger with'. The key phrase here is 'at his will'. In the eyes of a defender of classical liberty, Rome is making itself dependent on one man's 'will', which amounts to servitude or slavery. While the danger of Caesar is hypothetical – 'he may do danger' – this does not undermine the classical republicans' concern with Caesar's absolute power. Such republicans were concerned simply about the potential for rulers to behave tyrannically, regardless whether that potential was acted upon.²³

Plutarch explicitly states that Brutus made two mistakes: first, permitting Mark Antony to live, and then allowing his funeral oration.²⁴ In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare emphasizes the disastrous consequences of these judgements, both for Brutus and also for the republican cause. While acknowledging that on these two occasions Brutus's judgements were costly, I have nevertheless argued that we should resist the conclusion that Brutus's judgement is uniformly and unvaryingly poor, and that his defence of the assassination is a self-deluded rationalization.

²³Plutarch's *Lives* provides an additional reason for construing as well-grounded Brutus's concerns about hypothetical future acts of tyranny by Caesar. Plutarch reports that Caesar was especially adept at hiding malign intentions: 'Cicero like a wise shipmaster that feareth the calmness of the sea was the first man that mistrusting his [Caesar's] manner of dealing with the commonwealth, found out his craft and malice, which he cunningly cloaked under the habit of outward courtesy and familiarity' (Plutarch, *Lives*, 765).

²⁴Plutarch, *Lives*, 1064.

Critics have judged Brutus's reasoning to be questionable not only on the grounds of his justification of pre-emptive action but also on account other characteristics of the speech that render it murky and obscure. For example, the soliloquy is largely couched in terms of generalizations and metaphors, only occasionally referring specifically to Caesar. As Simon Palfrey puts it, by the end of the speech, Caesar 'has all but disappeared'.²⁵ We need not conclude, however, that the veiled character of the soliloquy implies that the reasoning is 'shaky'. Rather, the obscurity of the soliloquy may reflect its dangerously subversive content – after all, Brutus is justifying the killing of a monarch. As discussed in the fourth section of this chapter, throughout the first two acts the conspirators use allusive language, which serves to convey the danger of their conspiracy. Shakespeare occluded the meaning of the conspirators' speech not just because their ideas were hazardous under Caesar's absolutism but also because they were dangerous in late Elizabethan England.

5.2 Classical liberty and competitive self-assertiveness

Whereas I have drawn attention to the commitment to classical liberty of the oppositional characters in the play, a number of commentators have emphasized instead their emulous rivalry and competitiveness. Coppélia Kahn, for example, observes that Shakespeare's characterization of the conspirators captures the 'agonistic, highly competitive nature of the Roman ruling elite'.²⁶ Wayne Rebhorn discerns in the characters of Cassius, Brutus, Flavius

²⁵Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 2011), 277.

²⁶Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women* (London: Routledge, 1997), 88. See also Kahn, "'Passion of Some Difference": Friendship and Emulation in *Julius Caesar*', in *Julius Caesar: New Critical Essays*, ed. Horst Zander (New York: Routledge, 2005), 271–83.

and Caesar the aggressive competitiveness of early modern aristocrats. Such aristocratic emulousness, Reborn suggests, lies behind Cassius's complaints in the seduction scene:

Honor for Cassius is a matter of total equality with Caesar: 'I had as lief not be as live to be / In awe of such a thing as I myself' (1.2.204–5). The fear of degradation is even more clearly seen in the consistent hostility of Shakespeare's Roman senators to Caesar because of his successful manipulation of the populace. In Cassius's mind, if Caesar becomes a 'Colossus', then the rest of them necessarily are – or feel they are – as good as dead, 'petty men'.²⁷

While I am not suggesting that envy plays no part in Cassius's motivation, I have offered a somewhat different interpretation of his complaints. His commitment to classical liberty, I suggest, lies behind his judgement that, under Caesar's rule, Romans have become 'petty'. His remarks illustrate the republican belief that a loss of classical liberty degrades character.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which my reading is complementary to that of Reborn. In characterizing the conspirators' competitiveness, Reborn emphasizes their preoccupation with honour. Similarly in Chapter One I argued in early modern England, a commitment to liberty was associated with the honour code: the virtue of magnanimity incorporated both a commitment to liberty and a strong sense of honour. Accordingly, the conspirators' defence of liberty is accompanied by the touchiness, competitiveness, self-assertiveness and emulousness that are also associated with the honour code. There is, however, an important difference between my interpretation and that of Reborn. While I am suggesting that the self-assertiveness of the conspirators is principally an aversion to being

²⁷Wayne Reborn, 'The Crisis of the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*', *RQ* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1990), 87.

subject to the will of Caesar, Rebhorn proposes that each conspirator, in fact, desires to have everyone subject to his will: ‘They possess an urge to personal aggrandizement, a will to extend the terrain of the self until it entirely dominates the human landscape’.²⁸ In other words, the conspirators are all just like Caesar; they are all driven by an unqualified will to power. Deborah Warner’s 2005 production of *Julius Caesar* illustrates how Rebhorn’s interpretation might be staged. As Carol Rutter reports: ‘The intellectual core of Warner’s production was the contest between three now men, not just contemporaries but sibling rivals’.²⁹ In Warner’s production, Brutus is anything but an admirable character: emulous and competitive, he ‘behaved like a jilted teacher’s pet peevisly kicking cans in the playground’.³⁰ My interpretation allows for the possibility of a more positive characterization of the conspirators. While the conspirators are motivated by a sense of honour, which is manifested in self-assertiveness and touchiness, nevertheless their concerns are grounded in a commitment to classical liberty rather than ‘a will to extend the terrain of the self until it entirely dominates the human landscape’.

5.3 Roman and Elizabethan republicans

In *Julius Caesar*, I have suggested, Shakespeare is particularly attentive to Plutarch’s characterization of the motives of the conspirators. In particular, he follows Plutarch in attributing to the conspirators classical attitudes towards liberty. But the question then arises: would Elizabethan audiences have sympathized with such attitudes of Roman republicans? After all, even those Elizabethans who might be described as republicans only favoured a

²⁸Rebhorn, ‘The Crisis in the Aristocracy in *Julius Caesar*’, 84.

²⁹Rutter, ‘Facing History, Facing Now’, 73.

³⁰Rutter, ‘Facing History, Facing Now’, 74.

monarchical republic, not a headless Roman republic. Although both Elizabethan and Roman republicans valorized classical liberty, nevertheless Elizabethans and Romans meant something different by liberty. Rebecca Bushnell puts this point as follows:

In borrowing the word ‘liberty’ from its context in North’s translation of Plutarch, Shakespeare reproduces for his audience a ‘foreign’ definition of the word: a ‘liberty’ that was precluded by monarchy, and only possible within the positive laws of republican Rome.³¹

In contrast to the Roman republican notion of liberty, the notion of liberty used in Elizabethan political discourse was consistent with monarchical rule.

If Shakespeare had presented the impending monarchy of Caesar as a monarchical republic, Elizabethan republicans might have found the conspirators unsympathetic. Shakespeare is at pains to convey, however, that Caesar’s rule is characterized by absolutism, ensuring that Elizabethan republicans, who are more moderate than Roman republicans, would nevertheless have shared the conspirators’ concerns with Caesar’s regal ambitions. As discussed above, the play does not criticize Caesar by drawing attention to specific instances of harm or cruelty inflicted on the populace. Instead, Caesar’s absolutist inclinations are conveyed by his insistence on the absoluteness of his will, by his refusal to be influenced by others. Both ancient and Elizabethan republicans would have construed Caesar’s absolutism as reducing the nation to servitude.

The most notable single expression of Caesar’s absolutism is his ‘Northern Star’ speech, which is delivered immediately prior to his assassination:

³¹Rebecca Bushnell, ‘*Julius Caesar*’ in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume 1: The Tragedies*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 348.

I could be well moved if I were as you.
 If I could pray to move, prayers would move me.
 But I am as constant as the Northern Star,
 Of whose true fixed and resting quality
 There is no fellow in the firmament.
 The skies are painted with unnumbered sparks;
 They are all fire, and every one doth shine;
 But there's but one in all doth hold his place.
 So in the world: 'tis furnished well with men,
 And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
 Yet in that number I do know but one
 That unassailable holds on his rank,
 Unshaked of motion; and that I am he
 Let me a little show it even in this –
 That I was constant Cimber should be banished,
 And constant do I remain to keep him so. (3.1.58–73)

Commentary on this speech often focuses on its hubristic, over-reaching aspirations, which are especially evident in Caesar's claims to divine status, a status distinct from those who are 'flesh and blood'.³² My interest, however, is in the political absolutism that is implied by the speech. Such absolutism was objectionable to both Roman and Elizabethan defenders of

³²See, for example, Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy*, 58–59; Horst Zander, 'Julius Caesar and the Critical Legacy', in *Julius Caesar: New Critical Essays*, ed. Horst Zander (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7–8.

classical liberty. While Elizabethan republicans accepted the institution of monarchy, they insisted on the importance of the role of virtuous counsellors in government, arguing that a monarch must be responsive to advice from such counsellors. Otherwise, the nation is subject to one man's will, which amounts to servitude. In the 'Northern Star' speech, when Caesar avows that he is 'unshaked', 'unassailable' and will not be 'moved' by senior statesmen, Elizabethans would have perceived Caesar as an absolutist ruler who excludes counsellors from the process of decision making. While Caesar's speech is larded with the language of 'constancy', he is, in effect, retailing absolutism as constancy.

In the first half of the play, Shakespeare repeatedly emphasizes the priority of Caesar's will over the will of others, presenting Romans as dependent on their ruler's will. Thus, having been questioned by Decius on the 'cause' of his decision not to attend the Senate, Caesar replies: 'The cause is in my will; I will not come. / That is enough to satisfy the Senate' (2.2.71–72). Antony, at least, accepts the absolute priority of Caesar's will: 'When Caesar says "Do this", it is performed' (1.2.12). Caesar's drive to dominate the will of others is also conveyed by prominence of the imperatival mood in his speech.³³ When he first appears on the stage, his contributions to the exchanges with Calpurnia, Antony and the soothsayer are, in effect, a series of commands: 'Stand you directly in Antonio's way' (1.2.5); 'Forget not in your speed, Antonio, / To touch Calpurnia' (1.2.8–9); 'Set on, and leave no ceremony out' (1.2.13); 'Speak' (1.2.19); 'Set him before me' (1.2.22); 'Speak once again' (1.2.24); 'Pass!' (1.2.26). These imperatives convey Caesar's absolutist inclinations.

His fondness for imperatives is one illustration of the way in which Shakespeare uses language in *Julius Caesar* to express political attitudes. More generally, throughout the play, Shakespeare's stylistic choices are sensitive to the politics of scene and character.

³³John Velz, 'Orator and Imperator in *Julius Caesar*: Style and the Process of Roman History', *Sh. St.* 15 (1982), esp. 65.

Shakespeare's choice of rhetorical style, I will argue, is especially significant: as in *Richard II* and *Edward II*, the Ciceronian and sententious styles are used to express political attitudes in *Julius Caesar*, filling out Shakespeare's depiction of the absolutism of Caesar's Rome.

5.4 Sententious brevity and Ciceronian *copia* in Caesar's Rome

Frank Kermode observes that the 'dialect' of *Julius Caesar* is characterized by 'terseness', and has a 'constrained' quality.³⁴ Other commentators similarly have described the style as 'bare', 'severe' and 'plain'.³⁵ But Kermode observes that the style in the first scene of the play is notably different from 'the register of the remainder of the play': 'The play begins with the good-humoured prose of the populace, which gives way at once to the florid scolding of the tribunes'.³⁶ The contrast between the 'florid' passages in the opening scene and the terse 'dialect' in the rest of the play, I will suggest, is associated with a difference in rhetorical styles: the expansive Ciceronian periods in the opening scene give way to sententious brevity in the remainder of the play.

The 'florid scolding of the tribunes' can be illustrated by the following speech of Murellus, who berates the populace for their fickleness towards Pompey:

Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea to chimney-tops,

³⁴Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, 85, 87.

³⁵Brown, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Style*, 104; Martindale and Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity*, 154.

³⁶Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, 87–88.

Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
 The livelong day with patient expectation
 To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.
 And when you saw his chariot but appear,
 Have you not made an universal shout,
 That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
 To hear the replication of your sounds
 Made in her concave shores? (1.1.37-47)

Murellus's long sentences and lengthy, balanced clauses are characteristic of Cicero's periodic style. In the remainder of *Julius Caesar*, however, while Ciceronian periods are used occasionally, the stylistic register is, for the most part, terse and economical. For instance, the style in Brutus's orchard soliloquy is notably different from that of Murellus's speech. Throughout Brutus's speech, the clauses are comparatively brief, frequently shorter than a line in length: 'It must be by his death'; 'He would be crowned'; 'there's the question'; 'that craves wary walking'; 'crown him'; 'that!'; 'So Caesar may'; 'Then lest he may'; 'prevent'; 'Fashion it thus'; and 'kill him in his shell'. Moreover, asyndeton is prominent in the speech, with several clauses lacking ligatures to other clauses. The asyndeton and the brevity create the choppy, halting rhythms – or, as Gayle Green puts it, the 'broken rhythms'³⁷ – that characterize the soliloquy.

Despite the relative brevity of Brutus's style, at least when contrasted with Murellus's expansiveness, it cannot straightforwardly be classified as a 'plain style'. His orchard soliloquy is adorned with gnomic *sententiae*: 'It is the bright day that brings forth the adder'; 'Th'abuse of greatness is when it disjoins / Remorse from power'; and 'lowliness is young

³⁷Greene, 'Language of Tragedy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', 78.

ambition's ladder'. In his soliloquy, Brutus uses a sententious style of rhetoric. The sententious style is also present in his funeral oration,³⁸ which is laden with what Quintilian calls 'modern' *sententiae* – compact expressions of wit and ingenuity. For example, the following *sententia* from the funeral oration is decorated with repetition and chiasmic balance: 'Believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe' (3.2.14–16). Similarly, Shakespeare uses antithetical and chiasmic balance to adorn the following two *sententiae*: 'not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more' (3.2.21–22); and 'Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men?' (3.2.22–24).³⁹ Brutus's funeral oration is, in effect, a concatenation of *sententiae*.

The sententious brevity of such passages contributes to the terse, economical register of the play, which can be contrasted with Murellus's florid, expansive Ciceronian periods in the opening scene. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare exploits the connotations of Ciceronian and sententious styles to express the characters' political attitudes. The expansive Ciceronian periods of Murellus are of a piece with his open, passionate mode of speech, a mode that conveys the tribunes' commitment to classical liberty. In the opening scene, both the content and the style of Murellus's language create the impression that free speech is permitted in Caesar's Rome. This false appearance, however, is soon corrected in the second scene. In one short sentence, we learn that the efforts of the Tribunes were thwarted: 'Murellus and Flavius, for pulling scarves off Caesar's images, are put to silence' (1.2.285–86). Does 'put to silence' mean censored, or deprived of office or killed? The very brevity of the description

³⁸Garry Wills also notes Brutus's use of *sententiae* in his funeral oration: *Rome and Rhetoric: Shakespeare's Julius Caesar* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 64–65.

³⁹Vickers describes the intricate network of 'vertical and horizontal symmetries' in the funeral oration: *Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose*, 244.

suggests how ineffective – what a small thing – their opposition was. Under Caesar’s absolutist rule, open speech is hazardous, and overt opposition will be silenced.

In the remainder of the first act, the asides, the covert meetings and the whispered exchanges of the conspirators help to create an impression that open speech has been suppressed in Caesar’s Rome.⁴⁰ Shakespeare also conveys this impression through his characterization of the conspirators’ style of speech. The terse brevity of Cassius’s and Brutus’s opening exchange, for example, signals that a circumspect and restrained mode of communication is necessary under Caesar’s rule:

Cassius Will you go see the order of the course?

Brutus Not I.

Cassius I pray you, do.

Brutus I am not gamesome. I do lack some part

Of that quick spirit that is in Antony.

Let me not hinder, Cassius, your desires.

I’ll leave you. (1.2.27–33)

Shakespeare reinforces the restrained, abrupt rhythm of the dialogue by ending Brutus’s speech with a shortened line, a line that is not subsequently completed by Cassius’s reply. Such shortened lines are abundant in *Julius Caesar*, contributing to its distinctly terse style.⁴¹

⁴⁰Andrew Hadfield observes that ‘the stage arrangements...carefully divide up the characters into small groups whispering secrets to each other (few plays make such extensive use of the aside and clandestine meeting)’: Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 171.

⁴¹See George Wright, *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art* (Berkeley: University of Californian Press, 1988), 122–25.

The hazards of open speech are conveyed not only by the restrained brevity of conspirators' language but also by their indirect mode of communication. Thus Gayle Greene suggests that Cassius's effort to persuade Brutus 'is made in veiled, allusive terms which communicate, not through what they state but through what they suggest'.⁴² In other words, Cassius is using figured language: his words mean more than they say. In the second scene, Cassius does not directly ask Brutus to join the assassination plot, but he does so allusively, referring to his alleged ancestor, Junius Brutus, the celebrated tyrant-killer:

O, you and I have heard our fathers say
 There was a Brutus once that would have brooked
 Th'eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
 As easily as a king. (1.2.158-61)

Brutus catches Cassius's meaning. In his response, Brutus similarly uses 'veiled, allusive terms', replying that: 'What you would work me to, I have some aim' (1.2.163). Like Cassius, Brutus only makes indirect reference to Caesar's assassination, alluding to it using the vague noun phrase 'What you would work me to'. Similarly, when Brutus enlists Ligarius in the conspiracy, they also communicate using figured language:

Ligarius What's to do?
Brutus A piece of work that will make sick men whole.
Ligarius But are not some whole that we must make sick? (2.1.325-27)

⁴² Greene, 'Language of Tragedy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*', 75.

As in the exchange between Cassius and Brutus, the aim of the interlocutors is to allude to Caesar's assassination without explicitly referring to it.

While these figured exchanges are brief and terse, especially in contrast to the 'florid' speech of the tribunes, they cannot be classified as a plain style, because the figured quality of the language serves as rhetorical 'ornament' (*ornatus*). As shown in Chapter Three, such compact, figured expressions are *sententiae*: the use of figured language supplies the wit and ingenuity that renders them *sententiae*. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare uses sententious rhetoric to establish the political atmosphere of the play. The sententious style, with its restrained brevity and allusive figured character, evinces the need for circumspection and covert communication in Caesar's absolutism. As in the closing acts of *Edward II*, the brief and figured sententious speech in the first two acts of *Julius Caesar* serves to evoke the dark atmosphere of Tacitean Stoicism.

5.5 Gender and rhetorical style

While this chapter focuses on the use of rhetorical style to express republican and Tacitean political attitudes, I will close the chapter by discussing the gendered character of Ciceronian and sententious rhetoric. In a several studies, Patricia Parker has shown that Ciceronian rhetoric was seen as effeminate, whereas the anti-Ciceronian styles of Seneca and Tacitus were presented as masculine.⁴³ These gendered connotations of rhetorical style can be discerned in *Julius Caesar*, and especially in the contrast between the perceived masculinity of Brutus's rhetorical style and Antony's effeminate style.

In his *Lives*, Plutarch describes the difference between the rhetorical styles of Brutus and Antony. Whereas Brutus 'counterfeited that brief compendious manner of speech of the

⁴³Parker, 'Virile Style'; *Literary Fat Ladies*, 14.

Lacedaemonians’,⁴⁴ Antony’s ‘manner of phrase’ was ‘Asiatic’.⁴⁵ The following passage from *Orator’s Education*, which describes the criticisms of Cicero’s style, casts light on the significance of Plutarch’s classification of Antony’s style as ‘Asiatic’:

Quem tamen et suorum homines temporum incessere audebant ut tumidiorem et Asianum et redundantem et in repetitionibus nimium et in salibus aliquando frigidum et in compositione fractum, exultantem ac paene, quod procul absit, viro molliorem....Praecipue vero presserunt eum qui videri Atticorum imitators concupierant. (*Orator’s Education*, 12.12–14)

However, the men of his time dared to attack him [*sc.* Cicero] as tumid, Asiatic, redundant, both excessively repetitive and feeble in his wit, and in his composition, disorganized, extravagant and almost (which is far from the truth) more feminine than masculine....Those who desired to be seen as imitators of Attic writers were especially critical.

According to Cicero’s critics, his style was ‘tumid’, ‘Asiatic’ and ‘feminine’. In contrast, these anti-Ciceronian rhetoricians would characterized have their own style as brief, ‘Attic’ and ‘masculine’. Thus when Plutarch distinguishes Brutus’s ‘brief’ style from Antony’s ‘Asiatic’ style, he is aligning Brutus with a masculine, Attic, anti-Ciceronian style, in contrast with Antony’s effeminate, Asiatic, Ciceronian style. Shakespeare may well have been guided by Plutarch’s remark in his characterization of Brutus’s and Antony’s speech. As observed above, Brutus’s style is uniformly terse and economical, while, at least at times, Antony

⁴⁴Plutarch, *Lives*, 1056.

⁴⁵Plutarch, *Lives*, 971.

delivers copious Ciceronian periods. His Ciceronian style is especially evident in his soliloquy which forecasts that ‘Caesar’s spirit’ will come ‘ranging for revenge’ (3.1.268-278).

The masculinity of Brutus’s anti-Ciceronian style is best illustrated by a speech made not by Brutus but rather by his wife Portia. In this speech, Portia’s style is strikingly similar to her husband’s anti-Ciceronian style in the funeral oration, especially in respect of its clean logical organization and its terse brevity:

I grant I am a woman, but withal
 A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.
 I grant I am a woman, but withal
 A woman well reputed, Cato’s daughter.
 Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
 Being so fathered and so husbanded?
 Tell me your counsels; I will not disclose ’em. (2.1.291–97)

Portia is attempting to persuade Brutus that, although she is a woman, she possesses masculine strength and self-control.⁴⁶ She achieves this not only by the content of what she says but also her style. Avoiding unrestrained, copious Ciceronian rhetoric, Portia exploits the gendered connotations of the brief, terse anti-Ciceronian style to present herself as possessing masculine restraint and fortitude.

⁴⁶In her discussion of Portia’s speech, Coppélia Kahn observes that Roman constancy was perceived to be a masculine trait. See Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women*, 96–101.

In contrast, Antony's more expansive style of language is effeminate. Significantly, when Cassius says that Antony's words 'rob the Hybla bees, / And leave them honeyless' (5.1.34–35), he is criticizing rather than complimenting Antony's rhetoric, deprecating his sweet, honeyed style as effeminate. Antony's stylistic mode contributes to his characterization. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare places particular emphasis on Antony's effeminacy; his increasingly effeminate behaviour manifests the dissolution of his warrior-like character. His femininity is most obvious, perhaps, in Cleopatra's descriptions of Antony's experiments with cross-dressing: 'next morn / Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him whilst / I wore his sword Philippan' (2.5.21–23). Octavius presents Brutus's wanton dissoluteness as effeminate: 'he fishes, drinks, and wastes / The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra' (1.4.4–6). In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare also emphasizes Antony's wanton 'revels' (2.2.116, 5.1.61–62), which, as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, connote an effeminate element in his character.⁴⁷ In order to convey Antony's dissoluteness, revelry and effeminacy, Shakespeare gives to Antony a style that is more expansive than Brutus's terse, brief anti-Ciceronian rhetoric.

In *Literary Fat Ladies*, Patricia Parker explores the association between Ciceronian rhetoric and images of fleshy, swelling bodies, particularly female bodies.⁴⁸ As Parker puts it, the Ciceronian style was associated with 'fat ladies'. This association is evident in Quintilian's passage above, which records that Cicero's style was criticized not only as effeminate but also as swollen or tumid (*tumidus*), in contrast to the lean, masculine Attic style. It is notable that, when comparing Cassius with the effeminate Antony, Caesar says that

⁴⁷For a discussion of Antony's effeminacy, see Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴⁸ See Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*, 14.

he fears Cassius on account of his ‘lean and hungry look’ and his ‘spare’ physique (1.2.193–202). The ‘lean’ and ‘spare’ physique of Cassius corresponds to the rhetorical style of the conspirators. More generally, in this male-dominated play, the stylist register reflects, for the most part, the taut, economical language of lean men, rather than the tumid, Ciceronian style of ‘fat ladies’.

5.6 Conclusion

While the final section of this chapter illustrates that the Ciceronian and sententious styles had a variety of expressive functions, and that, in particular, they were heavily laden with gendered connotations, the focus of the chapter is on the use of rhetorical style to convey republican and Tacitean-Stoic attitudes. The hazards of Ciceronian expansiveness are revealed early in the play, when the audience learns that the oppositional tribunes have been ‘put to silence’. Accordingly, the conspirators communicate in terse, restrained speech, using figured language and sententious brevity.

An account of the Ciceronian style in *Julius Caesar* would be remiss if it failed to mention that Cicero himself makes an appearance onstage. Although he is a minor character, he lurks in the margins throughout the play. Rarely speaking, he is nonetheless regularly spoken of. In his book *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, Andrew Hadfield describes Cicero as a ‘shadowy figure’,⁴⁹ suggesting that his marginal role in the play signifies the failure of his ‘republican ideals’:

Julius Caesar portrays a state that bears only a passing resemblance to the republican ideals established by Cicero...The absence of Cicero’s voice within

⁴⁹Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 168.

the play serves only to draw attention to his writings, and the lack of importance they have at this crucial historical juncture. Cicero's thought has no role in the militarized society that was developing under Caesar.⁵⁰

By locating Cicero on the sidelines, Shakespeare is conveying that from the outset of the play, the republicans' efforts were 'doomed to fail'.⁵¹

For Elizabethan audiences, no figure was more representative of republican ideals than Cicero. In *Julius Caesar*, therefore, the news of Cicero's execution heralds the death of the republic:

Brutus Mine speak of seventy senators that died

By their proscriptions, Cicero being one.

Cassius Cicero one?

Messala Ay, Cicero is dead,

And by that order of proscription. (4.2.229–32)

The constrained brevity of the exchange is appropriate. The passing of Cicero not only represents the death of the republic, but also the death of the Ciceronian style. In the new dispensation, the passionate expansiveness of the Ciceronian style is hazardous. A terse, guarded and indirect style is more suited to the absolutism of the empire, a style characterized by sententious brevity and figured language.

⁵⁰Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 170–71.

⁵¹Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 170–71.

CHAPTER SIX

TACITEAN STOICISM AND THE SENTENTIOUS STYLE IN SENEKAN DRAMA

Hoc interim colligo, posse etiam ex ingentibus malis nascentem iram abscondi et ad verba contraria sibi cogi. Necessaria ista est doloris refrenatio, utique hoc sortitis vitae genus et ad regiam adhibitis mensam. (Seneca, *On Anger*, 3.15.2–3)

For the moment, I am offering this conclusion, that it is possible to hide anger – even if it arises from extreme outrages – and to force oneself to words that hide it. This restraint of distress is necessary, especially for those allotted this kind of life and who are entertained at the table of kings.

Born in the early years of the Roman Empire, Seneca served as a prominent statesman under Tiberius and Caligula, before being banished to Corsica during the reign of Claudius. Upon being recalled to Rome, he was appointed to the position of Nero's tutor, and became one of his principal political advisors. Towards the end of his life, when Nero's capricious paranoia became more manifest, Seneca attempted to withdraw from public life. In 65 CE, following the failure of a conspiracy against Nero's life, he was accused of participating in the conspiracy and forced to commit suicide. The quotation above, taken from Seneca's Stoic essay *On Anger*, expresses the anxieties and preoccupations of statesmen during this notoriously brutal period of imperial rule. Seneca's Stoicism can be seen as a response to hazards of political life in the early empire. In *On Anger*, Seneca argues that Stoic self-control is necessary for those 'who are entertained at the table of kings' – that is, it is necessary for prominent statesmen such as Seneca and his peers. This strand of Stoic thought,

which emphasizes the value of Stoic self-control for statesmen in dangerous political environments, was labelled ‘Tacitean Stoicism’ in Chapter Two. The current chapter will investigate the role of Tacitean Stoicism in Seneca’s drama and in early modern Senecan tragedy, examining, in particular, how dramatists used the sententious style to express Tacitean-Stoic political attitudes.

It might seem that such a venture is doomed from the outset. After all, the most distinctively Senecan protagonists, such as Medea, Atreus and Hercules, are driven by feverish passions, which lead them to murder their kin amid scenes of destruction and disorder. Remarking on the difficulty of locating Stoic ideals in Seneca’s drama, Dennis Henry and B. Walker suggest that ‘the Seneca of the tragedies is, so to say, disloyal to Stoicism’.¹ The same might be said about the traces of Senecan tragedy in early modern drama. The most distinctly Senecan moments in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama are often characterized by hyperbolic language, which expresses the mounting passions and rage of the speaker. The exhortations of Seneca’s protagonists lurk behind Tamburlaine’s command to assault the Gods: ‘Come let us march against the powers of heaven’ (*Tamburlaine, Part II*: 5.3.48).² The hyperbole of Hamlet and Laertes at Ophelia’s funeral also has antecedents in the vaunting self-exhortations of Seneca’s heroes.³ The suggestion that such hyperbolic, emotionally charged rhetoric has any connection to the self-restraint of Stoic philosophy might, on its face, appear puzzling. In order to locate Stoicism in Senecan drama, I draw on Gordon Braden’s study of Senecan drama in *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, which was further developed in Robert Miola’s *Shakespeare and Classical*

¹Dennis Henry and B. Walker, ‘Tacitus and Seneca’, *G&R* 10 (1963), 109.

²Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 190.

³Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca*, 43.

Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca. While the first section of this chapter outlines Braden and Miola's influential account of the role of Stoicism in Senecan drama, the second section focuses particularly on Tacitean Stoicism, examining how Senecan characters rely on Tacitean-Stoic strategies in order to survive in dangerous political environments.

In his advice to those 'who are entertained at the tables of kings', Seneca observes that it is necessary 'to force oneself to words that hide' anger. Stoic self-control, Seneca is suggesting, includes linguistic restraint – restraint in the use of 'words'. As was shown in Chapter Three, the sententious style was perceived to be a particularly suitable vehicle for this restrained Tacitean-Stoic mode of communication. The third section of this chapter explores the association between Tacitean Stoicism and the sententious style in Senecan drama, focusing particularly on Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*.

Literary criticism on the Senecan and Tacitean anti-Ciceronian style has generally concentrated on the prose works of Seneca and Tacitus. I show, however, that the anti-Ciceronian sententious style is prominent in both the prose and verse of early imperial Rome, including Seneca's dramatic verse. This chapter, as well as Chapter Seven, will show that the imitation of Seneca's dramatic verse was an important impetus for early modern experimentation with sententious writing.

6.1 Stoicism in Senecan tragedy

In his study of Seneca's influence on Renaissance drama, Gordon Braden addresses those literary critics who, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, had expressed scepticism about the extent of Seneca's influence. G. K. Hunter and David Bevington, for example, argued that medieval drama had made a far more significant contribution to popular English plays than Seneca's tragedies, with Hunter concluding that Seneca's influence reduces to 'a few well-

worn anthology passages and a few isolated tricks like stichomythia'.⁴ In response, Braden traces out a trajectory of Seneca's influence that aims to identify not merely specific verbal correspondences between Renaissance and classical texts but also 'a similar style of selfhood' in Seneca's tragedies and early modern drama.⁵

Braden's characterization of the Senecan self is perhaps most apparent in the self-exhortations of Seneca's protagonists. Throughout Seneca's tragedies, the various revengers and villains struggle to maintain the will to commit their planned crime, and thus they regularly exhort themselves to overcome their qualms. For instance, in the following soliloquy, Medea is summoning up the passion and the willpower necessary to take revenge on Jason and murder their children:

incumbe in iras teque languentem excita,
penitusque veteres pectore ex imo impetus

⁴G. K. Hunter, 'Seneca and the Elizabethans: A Case-study in "Influence"' *Sh. Sur.* 20 (1967), 21; G. K. Hunter, 'Seneca and English Tragedy', in *Seneca* ed. C.D.N. Costa (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*. Hunter's arguments were a reaction against a series of studies in the late-nineteen and early-twentieth centuries, which proposed that Seneca had an extensive influence on Elizabethan drama. See Cunliffe, *Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*; H. B. Charlton *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy* (1921; repr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1946), F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (1922; repr. Folcroft: Folcroft Press, 1969); T. S. Eliot, 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translation' and 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', in *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed. (1927; repr. London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 65–105, 126–140.

⁵Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, 3.

violentus hauri. quidquid admissum est adhuc,
 pietas vocetur. hoc agam ex faxo sciant
 quam levia fuerint quamque vulgaris notae
 quae commodavi scelera. prolusit dolor
 per ista noster; quid manus poterant rudes
 audere magnum, quid puellaris furor?
 Medea nunc sum: crevit ingenium malis. (*Medea* 902–910)

Urge on your anger, and, sluggish woman, rouse yourself,
 and from deep down in the depths of your heart
 fiercely draw up your old force. What has been perpetrated hitherto,
 let it be called piety. I shall set about this and make them understand
 just how trivial, and of what common stamp,
 were the crimes I committed in the service of others. In these
 my wrath was practicing. Untrained hands,
 the fury of a girl: what great deed might they dare?
 Now I am Medea. My genius has grown through my evils.

Such self-exhortations are particularly prominent in *Medea* and *Thyestes*, but can also be found in *Agamemnon*, *Phaedra*, *Hercules Furens*, *Phoenician Women* and *Oedipus*.⁶

Christopher Star has traced the close correspondence between these self-exhortations and

⁶*Medea*, lines 1–55, 893–977; *Thyestes*, lines 176–204, 267–286, 885–901; *Agamemnon*, lines 108–124, 192–202; *Phaedra*, lines 592–9; *Hercules Furens*, lines 1–124; *Phoenician Women*, lines 155–81; *Oedipus*, lines 1024–32.

Seneca's descriptions of Stoic practices of self-transformation in his essays and letters.⁷ In these prose works, Seneca encourages readers to engage in a daily practice of self-examination with the aim of transforming themselves to attain Stoic constancy.⁸ Although Medea's self-exhortation is used to amplify her rage, which is a goal antithetical to Stoic constancy, Seneca's interest in such self-exhortations derives from the Stoic preoccupation with self-transformation.

The Senecan self, characterized by its concerns with self-examination and self-transformation, reappears in early modern revenge tragedy. Like Seneca's Medea and Atreus, Hieronimo and Hamlet vacillate and delay, before finally taking their revenge at the close of the play. In order to spur themselves onwards, the revengers exhort themselves in lengthy soliloquies, employing rhetorical tropes reminiscent of Seneca's self-exhortations.⁹ For example, in the following speech of Hieronimo, which is prompted by his encounter with another grieving father, he exhorts himself to hasten the revenge of his son's murder:

Then sham'st thou not, Hieronimo, to neglect
The sweet revenge of thy Horatio?
Though on this earth justice will not be found,

⁷Christopher Star, 'Commanding *Constantia* in Senecan Tragedy', *TAPA* 136 (2006): 207–244.

⁸See Catharine Edwards, 'Self-Scrutiny and Self-Transformation in Seneca's Letters', *G&R* 44, no. 1 (April 1997): 23–38; Brad Inwood, 'The Will in Seneca the Younger', *CPhil.* 95 (2000): 44–60.

⁹Peter Gibbard, 'To Spur a Dull Revenge: The Rhetoric of Self-exhortation in Revenge Tragedy', *AUMLA, Refereed Proceedings: 2009 AULLA Conference* (December 2009), 79–90.

I'll down to hell, and in this passion
 Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto's court,
 Getting by force, as once Alcides did,
 A troop of furies and tormenting hags
 To torture Don Lorenzo and the rest. (3.13.106–113)¹⁰

In early modern tragedy, villains and revengers regularly utter such Senecan self-exhortations, for the purpose of steeling themselves for crime.¹¹

The aim of Senecan self-transformation is to increase the willpower, to create a more powerful self. Early in Seneca's *Medea*, the protagonist indicates that she is in the process of transforming herself, telling her nurse that 'I will become' Medea (171). At the end of the self-exhortation above, she signals that the self-transformation is complete: *Medea nunc sum* 'Now I am Medea'. As Miola puts it: 'She achieves her final "nunc sum" by a huge act of impiety that galvanizes all her magic powers and transforms her into an awful supernatural creation'.¹² She has created a self that is capable of the culminating act of revenge – the murder of her children. Similar assertions of identity, which Braden calls the 'climactic Senecan flourish', reappear in early modern drama.¹³ Thus Hieronimo, having wreaked his revenge on the murderers of his son, announces to the Kings of Spain and Portugal: 'know I am Hieronimo' (4.4.83). Hamlet, Mark Antony and the Duchess of Malfi also express the

¹⁰Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. Philip Edwards (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959).

¹¹Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, 175–6; Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy*, 103–4.

¹²Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy*, 90.

¹³Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, 67.

‘climactic Senecan flourish’: ‘This is I, / Hamlet the Dane’ (*Hamlet*, 5.1.253–4); ‘I am Antony yet’ (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.13.92–93); ‘I am the Duchess of Malfi still’ (*Duchess of Malfi*, 4.2.141).¹⁴

Taken together, the contributions of Gordon Braden, Robert Miola and Christopher Star provide a compelling account of the relationship of Stoicism to Seneca’s tragedies and early modern Senecan drama. A Stoic conception of the self, they show, lies behind the feverish hyperbolic rants and outsized emotion of the revengers and criminals in Senecan tragedy. Lurking behind the traces of Seneca in early modern tragedy – the Senecan hyperbole, the vaunting self-exhortations, the Medea-like assertion of identity – is a Senecan conception of the self, a conception ultimately derived from Stoicism, which is preoccupied with self-transformation and self-creation. As Miola puts it, the Senecan self aims at ‘transcendent self-creation through terrible action’ which ‘will ratify and expand the doer’s identity’.¹⁵ The more horrendous the crime, the greater is the character’s capacity for self-overcoming and self-creation.

Seneca’s protagonists use Stoic self-transformation to achieve ends that are antithetical to Stoic virtue and restraint. Christopher Star observes that they use ‘Stoicism to achieve unstoic goals’.¹⁶ While I broadly agree with Braden, Star and Miola’s characterization of Seneca’s protagonists, I will draw attention to a tension within their characters. Seneca’s protagonists, in fact, alternate between the pursuit of the ‘unstoic’ goal of amplifying emotion and the standard Stoic goal of self-restraint. The next section shows that in dangerous

¹⁴John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Brown, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

¹⁵Miola, *Seneca and Classical Tragedy*, 101.

¹⁶Star, ‘Commanding *Constantia*’, 210.

political environments, Senecan revengers strive for self-control, guided by the precepts of Tacitean Stoicism.

6.2 Senecan revengers and Tacitean Stoicism

The co-presence of these competing tendencies in Seneca's characters – tendencies towards both amplifying and also restraining emotion – is exemplified by Atreus's soliloquies in *Thyestes*. Initially, in the second and third acts, Atreus spurs on his rage with a characteristic Senecan self-exhortation:

dira Furiarum cohors
discorsque Erinys veniat et geminas faces
Megaera quatiens: non satis magno meum
ardet furore pectus, impleri iuvat
maiore monstro.

May the dire crew
of Furies and tumultuous Erinys come, as well as Megaera,
shaking her twin torches. The fury burning within me
is not enough; my breast demands to be filled
with greater monstrosity. (*Thyestes*, 249–54)

Traces of Atreus's speech are present in Hieronimo's self-exhortation quoted above, especially in Hieronimo's invocation of 'the troop of furies and tormenting hags'. Having

roused his wrath, Atreus then encounters the intended victim of his planned revenge, his brother Thyestes. He immediately begins to rein in his anger:

vix tempero animo, vix dolor frenos capit.

sic, cum feras vestigat et longo sagax

loro tenetur Umber ac presso vias

scrutator ore...

praeda cum propior fuit,

cervice tota pugnat et gemitu vocat

dominum morantem seque retinenti eripit.

cum sperat ira sanguinem, nescit tegi –

tamen tegatur.

(*Thyestes*, 495–506)

With difficulty, wrath is reined in; with difficulty, my spirit tempered.

Thus it is when, held by a long leash, a keen-nosed

Umbrian hound is tracking wild beasts and, head down,

Is searching for the trails...

but when the prey is nearer,

he struggles with all the strength of his neck, barking to urge on

his sluggish master, and shakes off restraint.

When anger apprehends blood, it knows no concealment –

Yet it must be concealed.

In this soliloquy, Atreus is transforming himself, but it is a very different kind of self-transformation to the self-exhortations serving to amplify rage, which were quoted

earlier. Indeed, Atreus is now using Stoic self-transformation to serve the function that it was meant to serve – namely, to restrain and conceal the emotions. Immediately following this soliloquy, Atreus has an exchange with Thyestes in which he successfully conceals his anger, speaking in a politic, restrained and circumspect manner.

Seneca's preoccupation with the hazards of open speech is also apparent in Atreus's explanation of why he has not told his sons of his plot. He will not inform them – or at least he will not fully inform them – because:

Tacita tam rudibus fides

Non est in annis; detegent forsán dolos.

Tacere multis discitur vitae malis...

multa sed trepidus solet

detegere vultus, magna nolentem quoque

consilia produunt:

(*Thyestes*, 317–19, 330–32)

Such silent discretion is not found
in youthful years; perhaps they will reveal the plot.
Silence is learnt through the many sufferings of life...

A nervous countenance
reveals much, great schemes may betray a person
against his will.

Seneca's revengers and criminals, in order to conceal their 'great schemes', must use Stoic self-control to avoid a 'nervous countenance' and to maintain a 'silent discretion'.

Whereas in *Thyestes*, Atreus advises himself about the prudence of linguistic restraint, in *Medea*, such advice is provided to Medea by the Nurse and Jason:

Nurse Sile, obsecro, questusque secreto abditos
 manda dolori. (Medea, 150–151)

Be silent, I beg, and hide your complaints
 in secret suffering.

Nurse Compesce verba, parce iam, demens, minis (Medea, 174)

Restrain your words, give up your threats, mad woman.

Jason Suspecta ne sint, longa colloquia amputa. (Medea, 530)

Cut short this long exchange, lest it appear suspicious.

Jason Sana meditari incipe
 et placida fara. (Medea, 537–538)

Start to think sanely

And speak calmly.

Medea realizes that it was a mistake to display her anger to Jason, and adopts a more politic manner in an attempt to manipulate him. So she then apologizes for her uncontrolled language: ‘any words poured out by my uncontrolled suffering, let them not remain in your mind’; ‘let these words that yielded to anger be erased’.¹⁷ While Seneca’s preoccupation

¹⁷Ne, si qua noster dubius effudit dolor,/ maneant in animo verba (Medea, 554–55); Haec irae data oblitterentur (Medea 556–57).

with the hazards of open speech is especially pronounced in *Thyestes* and *Medea*, it is also present in other his other plays, including *Trojan Women* and *Hercules Furens*.¹⁸

This theme of linguistic restraint is explored not only in Seneca's tragedies but also in the Senecan drama of Elizabethan England. Following Seneca, his Elizabethan imitators explored Tacitean-Stoic concerns about the dangers of open speech in early modern courts. In his Senecan revenge tragedy *Alaham*, Fulke Greville studiously replicates the alternation between rage and restraint of Seneca's revengers. Greville's revenger, Hala, is married to the king's second son, Alaham, who maltreats his wife and has her lover put to death. Like Seneca's *Medea*, Hala seeks to revenge herself on her husband by murdering their child. In a Senecan self-exhortation, she urges her rage to 'Work' a deed 'Monstrous, incredible, too great for words'. At the same time, however, she advises herself to restrain her fury – that is, to 'add to fury with constraint':

Work that which Alaham may envy at,
 And men wish theirs; that ill itself may tremble.
 Monstrous, incredible, too great for words.
 Keep close, and add to fury with restraint;
 Do not break forth until thou breakest all. (2.2.110–114)

The imperative 'Do not break forth until thou breakest all' neatly summarizes the psychological tension in the character of the Senecan revenger – the tension in *Medea* and

¹⁸In *Hercules*, the tyrant Lycus says to Megara: 'Come, mad woman, drop this wild speech' (*Agedum efferatas rabida voces amove*: 397). In *Trojan Women*, Andromache is advised by her servant to use restrained language when talking to Ulysses: 'Restrain your mouth for a while, and suppress your protests' (*Cohibe parumper ora questusque opprime*: 517).

Atreus, as well as in Hala and Hieronimo. On the one hand, these revengers must amplify their rage, so that they are able to ‘breakest all’ at the end of the play. On the other hand, they must control and conceal their rage, so that it does ‘not break forth’ until the preparations are in place.

Rather than merely dramatizing Hala’s alternate moods of rage and restraint, Fulke Greville also explicitly describes them. For instance, the play opens with a soliloquy from a Senecan ghost, who observes that Hala’s ‘shameless craft and rage have served her turn’ (*Alaham*, Prologue 97). The ghost is pointing to the admixture in her character of two conflicting tendencies, contrasting her politic ‘craft’ with her passionate ‘rage’. Hala’s husband, Alaham, also draws attention to what is, in effect, the same contrast: ‘my wife hath art and rage’ (*Alaham*, 3.1.39). When Hala shifts between restraint and rage and back again, not only does Greville dramatize the shift, but Hala explicitly states that the shift has taken place. In the following passage, Hala switches from ‘rage’ to ‘craft’ as her husband approaches:

Loe where my husband comes! Now reason must
 Disguise my passions, lest I lose my end;
 Who hides his mind is to himself a friend. (2.1.56–8)

Conversely, upon the exit of her husband, Hala informs the audience that she can dispense with her politic ‘craft’ and once again sets about rousing her rage:

Hala And is he gone? Rage then unprisoned be!
 I like thee well! While Alaham was there,
 Thou then didst use thy violence on me.

Now prey abroad; swell above all respect. (3.4.1–4)

Hala's dialogue with her husband, at least prior to enacting her revenge, is reminiscent of the dialogue between Atreus and his brother: despite Hala's and Atreus's mounting rage, both revengers successfully succeed in concealing their passions. At times, Hala's self-control borders on the inhuman: even when Alaham reveals that he ordered the death of her lover, she retains control over her emotions: 'even now my heart resolves / Revenge; and silence is the way to it' (*Alaham*, 3.3.35–6).

Greville's *Alaham* was a closet drama, written primarily to be read rather than performed, which may explain Greville's tendency to describe explicitly Hala's alternative attitudes to the passions. Given that there was no actor to perform the changes in Hala's emotions, Greville allows her to narrate the trajectory of her emotional states. In contrast to Greville's closet drama, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* was a popular play that enjoyed considerable success on the late Elizabethan stage. Nevertheless, as in *Alaham*, *Spanish Tragedy* draws heavily on Seneca's tragedies for its characterization of the revenger. Like Atreus, Medea and Hala, Kyd's revenger, Hieronimo, alternates between amplifying and suppressing his rage. From time to time, he is consumed by rage, as is illustrated by his self-exhortation that was quoted earlier. But he recognizes that until the opportunity for revenge arises, he must try to restrain his rage. He explains this need for restraint to his wife:

Meanwhile, good Isabella, cease thy complaints,

Or at the least dissemble them awhile:

So shall we sooner find the practice out. (2.5.60–62)

He does not demand that she conceal her emotions indefinitely but rather that she ‘dissemble them awhile’, until the murderers are identified and the plan for vengeance hatched. When advising his wife, Hieronimo is, in effect, rehearsing the imperative of the Senecan revenger that was summarized by Hala: ‘Do not break forth until thou breakest all’.

Control over speech preoccupies Hieronimo as he prepares for revenge. His soliloquies, in particular, include several references to the concealment of his thoughts:

I therefore will by circumstances try
 What I can gather to confirm this writ,
 And, heark’ning near the Duke of Castile’s house,
 Close if I can with Bel-imperia,
 To listen more, but nothing to bewray. (3.2.48–52)

My grief no heart, my thoughts no tongue can tell. (3.3.67)

Hieronimo’s most extensive deliberation about linguistic restraint is expressed in his pivotal soliloquy at the end of the third act. In this speech, he decides to pursue his revenge ‘by a secret, yet a certain mean’, commanding his tongue ‘to milder speeches’ than his ‘spirit affords’ (3.13.1–44).

Considerations of political prudence, I have suggested, encourage Senecan revengers to restrain their speech. But at times such prudent silence shades into defiance. At the close of *Spanish Tragedy*, after Hieronimo’s revenge is complete, his silence takes on a defiant note. When he refuses to answer the King’s questions about the deaths of Lorenzo and Bathazar, he is asserting the limits of the King’s power:

What lesser liberty can kings afford

Than harmless silence? then afford it me. (4.4.180–81)

Hieronimo's defiant silence is expressive of a Stoic conception of autonomy. For subjects of an oppressive regime, Stoicism provides a form of consolation. The Stoic maintains that while monarchs may gain power over the external circumstances of their subjects, the subjects still retain power within an inner sphere – they retain power over the self. The power to remain silent represents a form of inner autonomy. Whereas a malign regime may be able to stop people from speaking – by killing them, for example – nevertheless, if subjects have sufficient self-control, the regime cannot take away their power to be silent. Several of Seneca's characters use silence to assert their autonomy.¹⁹ For instance in *Oedipus*, when Creon refuses to answer Oedipus, he presents his silence as a form of liberty:

Tacere liceat. ulla libertas minor

a rege petitur?

(*Oedipus*, 523–24)

Allow me silence. Can any smaller freedom

be sought from a king?

This passage from *Oedipus* is Kyd's source for the above quotation in which Hieronimo refuses to answer the King of Spain. Both Creon and Hieronimo are asserting their power in

¹⁹At the end of *Agamemnon*, when Clytemnestra commands Electra to reveal his whereabouts, she refuses, saying 'I have said enough to a parent' (*dixi parenti satis*: 970). In *Trojan Women*, when Ulysses demands that Andromache reveal the hiding place of her son, she defiantly refuses to speak, insisting that she would prefer to die (573–5).

the limited sphere in which they retain power – the inner region of power over the self. With Hieronimo's revenge achieved, the prudence that governed his earlier linguistic restraint has transmuted into defiance. Indeed, Hieronimo's assertion of autonomy exceeds that of Creon: he bites off his tongue to assert his residual power. This action represents a violent culmination of a motif that has been building throughout the play – the motif of restraint in the use of language.

Hieronimo's defiance complicates the dichotomy that has been explored in this dissertation between the prudent restraint of Tacitean Stoicism and the magnanimous independence of republicanism. As is illustrated by Creon's defiance, Stoicism, like republicanism, also valorizes independence. On the other hand, republicans and Stoics had very different conceptions of independence, with Stoics striving for a far more modest form of independence than that to which republicans aspired. Stoics attempt to achieve inner autonomy, which provides a consolation for lacking the full-bodied independence demanded by republicans. For example, in his Tacitean-Stoic treatise *Of Constancy*, Lipsius consoles his readers by observing that even in an oppressive regime 'thy tongue alone is bridled, not thy mind'.²⁰ Lipsius offers his readers the inner freedom of the 'mind' as consolation for the fact that their speech is 'bridled'.

While at the close of the play, Hieronimo's linguistic restraint takes the form of defiance, more generally his efforts at self-control are governed by considerations of political prudence. In Chapter Three, I showed that such Tacitean-Stoic attitudes of prudential restraint were associated with, and could be expressed by, the sententious rhetorical style. The next section will illustrate how Kyd and other Elizabethan playwrights used the sententious style to convey Tacitean-Stoic attitudes.

²⁰Lipsius, *Of Constancy*, 196.

6.3 Tacitean Stoicism and the sententious style in *Spanish Tragedy*

Hieronimo's pivotal soliloquy, which appears towards the end of the third act, can be divided into two halves. In the first half, Hieronimo finally resolves to bypass the laws – both divine and secular – and to seek revenge himself. The second half, as noted earlier, provides an extended discussion of the need for restraint and circumspection. This call for self-restraint is conveyed not only by what Hieronimo says but also by how he says it. The halting, stop-and-start movement of the verse serves to express Hieronimo's new commitment to linguistic restraint:

*Vindicta mihi!*²¹

Ay, heaven will be reveng'd of every ill,

Nor will they suffer murder unrepaid:

Then stay, Hieronimo, attend their will,

For mortal men may not appoint their time. 5

*Per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter.*²²

Strike, and strike home, where wrong is offer'd thee,

For evils unto ills conductors be,

And death's the worst of resolution:

For he that thinks with patience to contend 10

To quiet life, his life shall easily end.

Fata si miseros juvant, habes salutem;

²¹ 'Revenge is mine'.

²² 'The safest path to crimes is through crimes'. From Seneca, *Agamemnon* 115: *per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter*.

*Remedium malorum iners est.*²⁴ 35

Nor aught avails me to menace them,

Who as a wintry storm upon a plain,

Will bear me down with their nobility.

No, no, Hieronimo, thou must enjoin

Thine eyes to observation, and thy tongue 40

To milder speeches than thy spirit affords,

Thy heart to patience, and thy hands to rest,

Thy cap to courtesy, and thy knee to bow,

Till to revenge thou know, when, where, and how. (3.13.1–44)

The content of lines 21–44 can be summarized by Hala’s advice: ‘Do not break forth until thou breakest all’. Hieronimo should not be ‘open’, he tells himself, but must rather be ‘secret’ and wait upon ‘opportunity’; he must dissemble ‘quiet in unquietness’, command his ‘heart to patience’. In short, Hieronimo counsels himself using the precepts of Tacitean Stoicism. Such restraint, however, is required only until he knows ‘when, where and how’ to perform his revenge. Then his mounting rage will ‘breakest all’.

The first thirty-five lines of the soliloquy are a series of *sententiae*. Apart from the opening quotation, which is from the Vulgate Bible, the Latin *sententiae* in the speech are from Seneca’s tragedies. Moreover, lines 7–8 and 14–17 translate these *sententiae* of Seneca, and line nineteen is a translation of a *sententia* from Lucan’s *Pharsalia*.²⁵ The stage direction

²⁴The translation of line 35 is: ‘is an ineffective remedy for troubles’. The line is from Seneca, *Oedipus* 515: ‘ignorance is an ineffective remedy for troubles’ (*Iners malorum remedium ignorantia est*).

²⁵*Caelo tegitur qui non habet urnam* (*Pharsalia*, 7.818)

at the opening of the soliloquy records: ‘Enter Hieronimo with a book in his hand’, which might either be a copy of Seneca’s tragedies or a commonplace book replete with gnomic *sententiae*. While some of the *sententiae* in the soliloquy appear to have been coined by Kyd, they display the paradoxes and antitheses favoured by Seneca and other imperial practitioners of the sententious style. For example, the *sententia* ‘will I rest me in unrest’ expresses an antithesis between ‘rest’ and ‘unrest’, which, in turn, gives rise to a paradox. A similar device is used in the *sententia* ‘dissembling quiet in unquietness’. Kyd was sufficiently pleased with these two paradoxes that he recycles them elsewhere in the play.²⁶

Hieronimo’s sententious speech has a halting, restrained movement, which can be contrasted, for example, to the flowing Ciceronian style of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*. By studding the speech with *sententiae*, Kyd breaks it up into smaller units, creating an abrupt, choppy movement, which can be contrasted to the smooth, rapid flow of *Tamburlaine*’s lengthy periods. Thus Hieronimo’s precepts of Tacitean Stoicism, urging self-control, circumspection and concealment, are reinforced by the restrained mode of speech with which they are expressed.

In this soliloquy, Hieronimo’s concern with concealment is also conveyed by its figured quality. The opening *sententia*, *Vindicta mihi*, can be translated as ‘vengeance is mine’. As commentators have observed, this *sententia* has a biblical reference: ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord’.²⁷ By evoking this passage in the Bible, Hieronimo seems to say that he will leave vengeance to God, and thus will not take revenge himself. Indeed, such an interpretation is supported by Hieronimo’s subsequent gloss on the *sententia*: ‘heaven will be reveng’d of every ill’. But this interpretation is contradicted by the literal

²⁶*Spanish Tragedy* 1.3.5 and 3.15.24

²⁷*The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Romans 12: 19.

meaning of the assertion, which is that he will seek revenge himself. In fact, Hieronimo is equivocating, and the audience is meant to be aware of both meanings. In the soliloquy, Hieronimo is deciding between the proposition that vengeance should be left to God and the proposition that he should pursue revenge himself. Kyd ingeniously begins the soliloquy with a Latin *sententia* that is ambiguous between these two propositions.

Among Elizabethan playwrights, Kyd was not alone in using brief Latin *sententiae* to convey a sense of concealment and equivocation. In *Titus Andronicus*, for example, Titus's Latin tags are heavily freighted with hidden meanings.²⁸ Similarly, as discussed in Chapter Four, the equivocal and figured Latin *sententia* of Mortimer in *Edward II* serves to invoke an atmosphere of intrigue and deception. For the early moderns, these Latin expressions were reminiscent of the figured language of the early imperial sententious style – and especially the figured *sententiae* of Ovid and Seneca.

Figured *sententiae* abound in Seneca's tragedies, and are especially common in stichomythic dialogue. Medea's reply to her nurse below, which appears in the midst of a lengthy stichomythic exchange, is a characteristic Senecan figured *sententia*:

²⁸In *Titus Andronicus*, Titus delivers his concealed threat to Chiron and Demetrius by means of a quotation from Horace: '*Integer vitae, scelerisque purus, / Non eget Mauri iaculis, nec arcu*' (4.2.20–21), which can be translated as: 'He who lives wholesomely, and is pure of crime does not need the javelins nor the bow of the Moor'. Aaron catches Titus's meaning, recognizing that Titus is indirectly communicating that he has discovered the 'guilt' of Chiron and Demetrius: 'The old man hath found their guilt / And sends them weapons wrapped about with lines / That wound beyond their feeling to the quick' (4.2.26–28). The message is a hidden threat – it is 'weapons wrapped about with lines'. Titus means more than he says; he is using figured language.

Nutrix Vindex sequetur.

Medea Forsan inveniam moras. (*Medea* 173)

Nurse Retaliation will follow you.

Medea Perhaps I shall find delays.

Medea means more than she says. The reference to ‘delays’ alludes to her escape from Colchis with Jason; she delayed her father’s pursuit by dismembering her brother. Her reply, therefore, is a latent threat of violence to kin, which gestures forward towards her act of infanticide at the close of the play. Another example of a figured *sententia* appears in the following stichomythic exchange between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus in *Trojan Women*. When Agamemnon denies Pyrrhus’s request that the young princess Polyxena be sacrificed, Pyrrhus’s reply is laden with figured language:

Agamemnon Et nunc misericors virginem busto petis?

Pyrrhus Iamne immolari virgines credis nefas? (*Trojan Women*, 330–1)

Agamemnon And, compassionate man, you now seek a virgin for a tomb?

Pyrrhus Do you now believe that the sacrifice of virgins is a crime?

Pyrrhus’s reply is a figured *sententia*: he is alluding to, without explicitly mentioning, Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia. The figured quality of Pyrrhus’s and Medea’s replies is what renders them *sententiae*. According to Quintilian’s account of the ‘modern’ *sententia* in *Orator’s Education*, a *sententia* is a brief expression that conveys wit or a conceit. In Pyrrhus’s and Medea’s *sententiae*, figured language is the source of the wit.

Bel-imperia Ay, brother.

Lorenzo How?

Bel-imperia As those
That what they love are loath and fear to lose.

Lorenzo Then, fair, let Balthazar your keeper be.

Bel-imperia No, Balthazar doth fear as well as we:
Et tremulo metui pavidum junxere timorem,
*Et vanum stolidae proditiōnis opus.*³⁰

Lorenzo Nay, and you argue things so cunningly,
We'll go continue this discourse at court. (3.10.93–105)

This obscure exchange is filled with allusion, insinuation and equivocation. The passage begins with *Bel-imperia* puncturing Balthazar's idealistic pronouncements on love. Among the dangers and corruption of the Spanish court, she is suggesting, love is accompanied by fear. After all, her two previous lovers have been killed, and, moreover, she is planning to kill Balthazar, who loves her. Thus *Bel-imperia* advises Balthazar 'To love, and fear, and both at once...are things of more import'. This line also serves to evoke a dark Machiavellian atmosphere: *Bel-imperia* alludes to a well-known passage in Machiavelli's *The Prince*:

Is it better to be loved than feared, or the reverse? The answer is that it is desirable to be both, but because it is difficult to join them together, it is much safer for a prince to be feared than loved, if he is to fail in one of the two.³¹

³⁰They have joined quaking fear with trembling dread, an empty deed of stupid betrayal'.

³¹Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 62.

By insisting that fear accompanies love, Bel-imperia helps to set a Machiavellian tone to the exchange.

When Bel-imperia subsequently says that she fears herself, Lorenzo does not, at least initially, catch her meaning. She is making use of a sense of the verb ‘to fear’ which is now obsolete but was current in the late-sixteenth century – the sense of being afraid *for* a person.³² For example, in *Richard III*, when Hastings says of King Edward that ‘his physicians fear him mightily’, he means that Edward’s physicians are afraid *for* him.³³ Bel-imperia explains why she fears for herself: she fears ‘as those / That what they love are loath and fear to lose’. In other words, she fears for herself because she fears losing what she loves. She is, perhaps, alluding to the deaths of her previous two lovers.

But the modern sense of the verb ‘to fear’ – which was current in the late sixteenth century – is also in play.³⁴ Bel-imperia is equivocating; the audience is uncertain about the intended meaning, as is indicated by Lorenzo’s request for explication: ‘How?’. She is not only suggesting she is afraid *for* herself; she also suggests she is afraid *of* herself. There is, therefore, at least a hint of a reference to the upcoming bloodbath in the play-within-a-play, when she commits suicide.

When Bel-imperia says that Balthazar ‘doth fear as well as we’, the compactness of the expression renders the sense ambiguous. She might mean any of three things: she might be using the verb in its obsolete sense to mean ‘Balthazar is afraid for Bel-imperia’ or ‘Balthazar is afraid for Balthazar’, or she might be using the verb in its modern sense to mean

³²See OED, sense 8. It is arguable that she is using OED sense 3, which is a reflexive sense of the verb. But when the subject and object are identical, sense 8 is equivalent to sense 3.

³³ 1.1.138.

³⁴ See OED, sense 5.

‘Balthazar is afraid of Bel-imperia’. The second and third meanings amount to threats; they suggest that he should fear for his safety. Again, Bel-imperia is referring forward to the bloodbath in the final act, when she kills Balthazar.

Bel-imperia’s Latin *sententia* also contributes to the sinister mood of concealment and Machiavellian intrigue. The striking feature of the *sententia* is that it includes two nouns that translate as ‘fear’, ‘*metuus*’ and ‘*timor*’, and it also contains two adjectives that translate as ‘trembling’ or ‘fearful’, ‘*tremulus*’ and ‘*pavidus*’. Thus the *sententia* might be translated as: ‘They joined quaking fear with trembling dread, an empty deed of stupid betrayal’. F. S. Boas describes the *sententia* as ‘Another piece of classical patchwork, of which the meaning is obscure’.³⁵ While its exact meaning is obscure, the function of the *sententia*, containing four words meaning ‘fear’ or ‘fearful’, is to reinforce the sense of the density of meanings surrounding the verb ‘to fear’. The *sententia* is another example of the dramatic convention, which was noted earlier, of using brief Latin *sententiae* to convey a sense of obscurity and equivocation.

At the end of the exchange, when Lorenzo praises Bel-imperia for arguing ‘so cunningly’, he is complimenting his sister for her ambiguity and obscurity. The passage illustrates how Elizabethan dramatists used brief, figured *sententiae* to convey guarded attitudes of restraint and concealment. The restrained, veiled sententious speech contributes to the dark Tacitean atmosphere in the play.

6.4 The sententious speech of Machiavels

Immediately prior to the stichomythic dialogue with Bel-imperia, Lorenzo advises Balthazar to ‘deal cunningly’ with his sister (3.10.18): ‘Jest with her gently: under feigned jest / Are

³⁵F. S. Boas, *Thomas Kyd: Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 405.

things conceal'd that else would breed unrest' (3.10.22–3). Like Hieronimo, Lorenzo is preoccupied with the need to occlude meaning and restrain speech. The following passages from Lorenzo's soliloquies also display his concern with linguistic restraint:

'Tis hard to trust unto a multitude,
 Or anyone, in mine opinion,
 When men themselves their secrets will reveal. (3.4.46–8)

I list not trust the air
 With utterance of our pretence therein,
 For fear the privy whisp'ring of the wind
 Convey our words amongst unfriendly ears. (3.4.82–4)

Whereas the revengers, Hieronimo and Bel-imperia, struggle to retain their emotions, alternating between amplifying and restraining their anger, Lorenzo, the principal Machiavel in the play, faces no such struggle. Unlike the Senecan revenger, he is not disturbed by qualms of conscience, and does not need to exhort his passions and his spirit in order to commit his crimes. His unvarying mood is one of restraint and prudence.

In at least some of Lorenzo's speech, Kyd conveys his politic restraint and duplicity by using the sententious style. He adopts the sententious style not only in stichomythic dialogue but also in his soliloquies, as is illustrated by the following passage:

Thus must we work that will avoid distrust,
 Thus must we practice to prevent mishap,
 And thus one ill another must expulse.

...

They that for coin their souls endangered,
 To save my life, for coin shall venture theirs:
 And better it's that base companions die,
 Than by their life to hazard our good haps. (3.2.105–7, 13–16)

Lorenzo explains to the audience why he is plotting against Serberine, a hired hand who is complicit in the murder of Horatio. He is concerned that Serberine might reveal Lorenzo's role in Horatio's death, and, therefore, in order to silence him, he plans to have him killed. The passage contains several *sententiae*, including the Senecan maxim 'one ill another must expulse', which derives from *Agamemnon*.³⁶ Lorenzo closes his speech with another gnomic *sententia*: 'better it's that base companions die, / Than by their life to hazard our good haps'. More generally, the speech has the fragmented style characteristic of sententious writing. In contrast to the lengthy, periodic sentences of Cicero's style, Lorenzo's speech is broken up into a series of brief units, imparting to the verse a halting, restrained movement that is appropriate to the content of the speech. Lorenzo's sententious style conveys his Tacitean-Stoic attitudes of prudence and restraint. Lorenzo's Tacitean Stoicism is not the moderate 'middle way' of Lipsius, however, but is rather the dark, amoral Tacitism of Ducci, which was discussed in Chapter Two.

³⁶Seneca, *Agamemnon* 115: *per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter* ('the safest path to crimes is through crimes'). The *sententia* reappears in Hieronimo's pivotal soliloquy as 'evils unto ill conductors be' (3.13.8). Early modern dramatists make liberal use of this *sententia*: it appears in Shakespeare's *Richard III* ('I am in / So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin' 4.2.65–6) and *Macbeth* ('Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill' 3.2.56).

Lorenzo has been described as the first English ‘Machiavellian villain’.³⁷ In Elizabethan drama, *sententiae* are used to mark a character as a Machiavel, and, more generally, to create a Machiavellian tone. Thus in Marston’s *Antonio’s Revenge*, the Machiavel Piero Sforza has frequent recourse to *sententiae*. In some passages, indeed, he utters nothing but *sententiae*, as is exemplified by his following exchange with Pandulpho:

Piero ’Tis just that subjects act commands of kings.

Pandulpho Command then just and honourable things.

Piero Even so; myself then will traduce his guilt.

Pandulpho Beware, take heed, lest guiltless blood be spilt.

Piero Where only honest deeds to kings are free
It is no empire, but a beggary.

Pandulpho Where more than noble deeds to kings are free
It is no empire, but a tyranny. (2.2.52–59)³⁸

When the Machiavels Piero and Lorenzo use the sententious style, the effect is to invoke the political attitudes of Tacitean Stoicism.

It might be argued, however, that there is a more direct and straightforward explanation of the fondness of Elizabethan Machiavels for *sententiae*. After all, Machiavelli’s own writing is liberally studded with maxims and aphorisms. For example, the following is a characteristically aphoristic passage from Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy*. This passage is

³⁷Lukas Erne, *Beyond The Spanish Tragedy: A Study in the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 96.

³⁸John Marston, *Antonio’s Revenge*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).

the source of one of Tiberius's speeches in Jonson's *Sejanus*, which is quoted immediately beneath the text from the *Discourses*:

A prince, then, who wishes to guard against conspiracies should fear those on whom he has heaped benefits quite as much, and even more, than those whom he has wronged; for the latter lack the convenient opportunities which the former have in abundance. The intention of both is the same, for the thirst of dominion is as great as that of revenge, and even greater. A prince, therefore, should never bestow so much authority upon his friends but that there should always be a certain distance between them and himself, and that there should always be something left for them to desire. (*Discourses*)³⁹

Those are the dreadful enemies we raise
 With favours, and make dangerous with praise.
 The injured by us may have will alike,
 But 'tis the favourite hath the power to strike;
 And fury ever boils more high and strong,
 Heat' with ambition, than revenge of wrong.
 'Tis then a part of supreme skill to grace
 No man too much, but hold a certain space
 Between th'ascender's rise and thine own flat,
 Lest, when all rounds be reached, his aim be that. (*Sejanus*, 3.637–46)

³⁹Machiavelli, *Discourses in The Prince and the Discourses*, ed. Max Lerner (New York: Random House, 1950), 415.

The sententious style in Tiberius's speech, it might be argued, is simply a result of mimicking the sententiousness of Machiavelli's own writing. Similarly, it might be argued, the sententiousness of Lorenzo and Piero does not harken back to Tacitean Stoicism but has a more direct antecedent in Machiavelli.

This argument rests upon an overly simplistic concept of a 'source', which assumes that Tacitism and Machiavellianism represent two identifiably separate movements. In fact, Tacitism and Machiavellianism are closely aligned, both in respect of their politics and their rhetorical style. This is apparent from a comparison between Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Lipsius's Tacitean-Stoic treatise *Of Politics*. Both works provide a criticism of Ciceronian humanism, expressing pessimism about the possibility for the exercise of virtue in political life.⁴⁰ Indeed, Lipsius defends Machiavelli, urging his readers that they should not 'so strictly condemn the Italian fault-writer'.⁴¹ Moreover, both Machiavelli and Lipsius consciously avoid Cicero's periodic style. In the dedicatory letter that accompanied *The Prince*, Machiavelli asserts that: 'I have not embellished this work by filling it with rounded periods'.⁴² Like *Of Politics*, *The Prince* is anti-Ciceronian both in its politics and style.

The Machiavels of Elizabethan tragedy, therefore, are shaped by the joint influence of Machiavelli and Tacitean Stoicism. This fusion of sources is exemplified by the character of Piero Sforza in *Antonio's Revenge*. On the one hand, as a result of Machiavelli's writings on the Sforza family, the surname 'Sforza' was a byword for Machiavellianism: as W. Reavley Gair puts it, 'In late sixteenth-century England, the name "Sforza" was to become

⁴⁰For a discussion of Machiavelli's attack on Cicero, see Quentin Skinner's introduction to Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xv–xxiv.

⁴¹Lipsius, *Of Politics*, 114.

⁴²Machiavelli, *Prince*, 3.

synonymous with tyrannical, Machiavellian opportunism'.⁴³ On the other hand, in Piero's exchange with Pandulpho quoted above, his realpolitik *sententiae* are from Seneca's tragedies.⁴⁴ In the character of Piero Sforza, Machiavellian precepts are expressed using the sententious style of imperial Rome.

Indeed, it is often unclear whether the *sententiae* of Elizabethan Machiavels derive from Machiavelli or an author of early imperial Rome. Thus in the sententious exchange below between Sejanus and Tiberius, in which they contemplate the murder of the Germanicans, editors of *Sejanus* have found it difficult to decide whether the source is Seneca or Machiavelli.⁴⁵

Tiberius That nature, blood, and the laws of kind forbid.

Sejanus Do policy and state forbid it? (*Sejanus*, 2.170–1)

The dialogue may draw upon the *sententia* of Atreus in *Thyestes*: 'sanctity, piety and trust are private virtues: kings may go where they please'.⁴⁶ But the antecedents of this dialogue may equally lie in maxims such as the following in *The Prince*: 'a ruler who wishes to maintain his power must be prepared to act immorally when this becomes necessary'.⁴⁷ In Elizabethan tragedy, the speech of Machiavels drew freely on a pool of *sententiae* that were critical of Ciceronian political attitudes: some of these *sententiae* had ancient origins – principally in

⁴³W. Reavley Gair, introduction to John Marston, *Antonio and Melida*, ed. Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 16.

⁴⁴See the footnotes to the passage in Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, ed. Gair.

⁴⁵See the footnote to the passage in Jonson, *Sejanus*, ed. Ayres.

⁴⁶Sanctitas pietas fides / privata bona sunt: qua iuvat reges eant (*Thyestes* 217–18).

⁴⁷Machiavelli, *Prince*, 55.

Seneca, Tacitus and Lucan – while others were more recently coined by Machiavelli. The function of such *sententiae*, whether ancient or early modern, was to mark the character as Machiavellian, and to create a Tacitean-Machiavellian atmosphere of corruption and conspiracy.

6.5 Conclusion

Tacitean Stoicism was introduced into early modern English culture not only through Tacitean-Stoic political treatises, such as those of Justus Lipsius, but also through the influence of Seneca's tragedies on early modern drama, such as *Alaham* and *Spanish Tragedy*. Throughout Kyd's play, Hieronimo and Lorenzo articulate Tacitean-Stoic views about concealment and restraint. Kyd exploits the association between the sententious style and Tacitean Stoicism, using the sententious style to convey the prudent restraint of Hieronimo, Lorenzo and Bel-Imperia.

In examining the stylistic influence of Seneca's tragedies, I have taken a novel approach to analysing anti-Ciceronian rhetoric. Following Morris Croll's seminal studies, literary criticism on 'the anti-Ciceronian movement' has tended to focus on the influence of the prose works of Seneca and Tacitus. But given the similarity between Seneca's prose and his dramatic verse, it can be argued that the imitation of Seneca's tragedies was at least partly responsible for experimentation with anti-Ciceronian sententious writing in late Elizabethan England. In this chapter, I have shown that Seneca's tragedies jointly influenced the style and political attitudes in Elizabethan drama, reinforcing the association between sententious writing and Tacitean Stoicism. The next chapter will demonstrate that the imitation of Seneca's sententious dramatic verse contributed to the development of prosody in late Elizabethan England, provoking authors to break up the blank verse line.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BREAKING UP THE LINE: PROSODY AND RHETORICAL STYLE

Zenocrate, that gave him light and life,
 Whose eyes shot fire from their ivory bowers
 And tempered every soul with lively heat,
 Now by the malice of the angry skies,
 Whose jealousy admits no second mate,
 Draws in the comfort of her latest breath
 All dazzled with the hellish mists of death. (*Tamburlaine: Part II*, 2.4.8–14)

In his well-known remark about Marlowe, Jonson refers neither to Marlowe's 'mighty verse' nor to his 'mighty poetry' but, rather, to his 'mighty line'. Jonson's choice of words is significant, pointing to the prominence of the line in Marlowe's poetic rhythm. Whereas Jonson uses frequent and varied pauses to break up the line, Marlowe's verse, especially in his *Tamburlaine* plays, is characterized by integrity of the line. The passage above provides a vivid example. Lines are end-stopped and, for the most part, unbroken by strong pauses. Rather than running on, clausal units in the passage tend to coincide with line units. Throughout the two parts of *Tamburlaine*, line integrity is the rhythmical norm, and strong *caesurae* and enjambment are rare.

Commentators on Marlowe's prosody typically trace a path of development from the versification of *Tamburlaine*, taken as representative of his early prosody, to the more

‘advanced’ versification of his later works.¹ While the various studies of Marlowe’s prosody emphasize different aspects of his development, they generally draw attention to one central tendency in Marlowe’s career – a movement away from the line integrity of *Tamburlaine* towards the greater variety and flexibility of his later works, especially in the use of strong caesurae or enjambment. In this respect, the studies of Marlowe’s development are similar to accounts of the development of Shakespeare’s versification. For instance, Russ McDonald observes that between Shakespeare’s early and middle plays, the line is steadily ‘dismantled’:

Fewer lines are endstopped than in the early plays, but what is especially telling is that the basic ten-syllable unit has been dismantled. Midline breaks occur frequently, sometimes more than once in a line. At the same time, many phrases run longer than a single line.²

These developments in Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s versification took place in the context of a broader movement in Elizabethan dramatic blank verse. In the course of the 1590s, authors became increasingly prone to break up the line, moving away from the line integrity of earlier blank verse.

¹Tucker Brooke, ‘Marlowe’s Versification and Style’, *SPh.* 19 (1922): 204; John Bakeless, *The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 181; Morris, ‘Marlowe’s Poetry’; Russ McDonald, ‘Marlowe and Style’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 66.

²Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96. See also Wright, *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art*, 213–19.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between Elizabethan prosody and classical rhetorical styles, explaining how experimentation with the sententious rhetorical style contributed to breaking up the line.³ In late Elizabethan England, the sententious style was imitated by writers of both prose and verse, and it provided the stylistic model for Marlowe's translation of Lucan as well as Thomas Hughes's play *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. The sententious style tends to have a choppy, abrupt rhythm, which can be contrasted with the smooth, even movement of Cicero's rhetoric. Whereas *Tamburlaine* exhibits the regular rhythm of the Ciceronian style, the sententious style of *Misfortunes of Arthur* and *Lucan's First Book* breaks up the integrity of the line.

Although *Misfortunes of Arthur* was written no later than 1588, its versification represents a departure from the line integrity of 1580s blank verse.⁴ The anachronistic prosody of the play arises from Hughes's experimentation with the sententious style. *Misfortunes of Arthur* illustrates that whereas, in general, deviations from line integrity provide evidence of a later, more 'advanced' prosody, we should be cautious about relying on such evidence when the text is written in the sententious style. Such caution is particularly relevant to the dating of *Lucan's First Book*. James Shapiro and David Riggs have proposed a late date for the poem, between 1592 and 1593, primarily on the basis of the advanced

³See Peter Gibbard, 'Breaking Up the Line: The Sententious Style in Elizabethan Blank Verse', *MP* (forthcoming).

⁴The title page of *Misfortunes of Arthur* states that the play was performed by 'the Gentlemen of Grays Inn' at Greenwich Palace in February 1588. See Brian Corrigan, introduction to *The Misfortunes of Arthur: A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition*, ed. Brian Corrigan (New York: Garland, 1992), 53. Quotations of *Misfortunes of Arthur* are from this edition.

craftsmanship of the verse.⁵ I will argue, however, that as in *Misfortunes of Arthur*, the apparently ‘advanced’ prosody of *Lucan’s First Book* may be attributable not to a late date, but rather to Marlowe’s imitation of Lucan’s sententious style.

This chapter not only calls for caution in using prosodic evidence to date blank verse, but it also complicates a standard characterization of the contrast between the prosody of 1580s and 1590s blank verse. While I do not deny that, during this period, authors developed greater prosodic virtuosity, this chapter questions whether the principal distinctive feature of the prosody of 1580s blank verse is that it is ‘underdeveloped’. The blank verse of the 1580s can, instead, be characterized by its Ciceronian style, which gives rise to the prosodic properties of this verse. In the late sixteenth century, changes in the prosody of blank verse resulted both from developments in metrical craftsmanship and also from shifts in rhetorical style.

7.1 Line integrity in 1580s blank verse

At least in respect of its line integrity, *Tamburlaine* is reminiscent of the first tragedy to be written in blank verse, *Gorboduc*, which was initially performed in 1562. In his discussion of

⁵James Shapiro, “‘Metre meete to furnish Lucans style’”: Reconsidering Marlowe’s *Lucan*, in *‘A Poet & a filthy Play-maker’: New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 323; David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), 187 and 305. Shapiro and Riggs challenge the standard dating, according to which Marlowe translated Lucan while at university, no later than 1587. For this standard dating, see Roma Gill, introduction to *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Gill, vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 88; Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 14–15.

the prosody in *Gorboduc*, O. B. Orbison observes that: ‘Enjambment is used – often to good effect – but it is used sparingly. Line integrity is the norm’.⁶ As the following passage from *Gorboduc* illustrates, pauses tend to be placed at the end rather than the middle of the line, producing the play’s characteristically uniform rhythm:

If slain amid the plain this body lie,
 Mine enemies yet shall not deny me this,
 But that I died giving the noble charge
 To hazard life for conquest of a crown. (5.1.158–65)

In his *History of English Prosody*, George Saintsbury inveighs against the regular versification in *Gorboduc*, judging it to be ‘stiff, monotonous, dreary’.⁷ While contemporary critics might abstain from Saintsbury’s vehement value judgements, his account of the movement of the verse is nonetheless instructive:

So wooden is the motion of the verse that even where (as sometimes, though comparatively seldom, happens) there is no actual stop at the end of the line, the voice and even the eye are not raised to ‘carry over’, but sink to make a fresh start at the beginning of the next.⁸

⁶O. B. Harbison, *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 174.

⁷George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody From the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1906), 345.

⁸Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. 1, 344.

The result, according to Saintsbury, is that the ‘stump of the verse’ is uniform to the point of monotony.⁹

The regular versification of *Gorboduc*, Saintsbury suggests, is also characteristic of the blank verse of ‘the Marlowe group’, which includes George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge and Thomas Kyd.¹⁰ Line integrity is the norm, for example, in Peele’s *Battle of Alcazar*, Lodge’s *Wounds of Civil War*, Greene’s *Alphonsus: King of Aragon* and – although to a lesser extent – in Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*, all of which were written in the 1580s. The uniform ‘stump of the verse’, which Saintsbury discerns in *Gorboduc*, is clearly audible, for example, in the opening lines of *The Spanish Tragedy*:

When this eternal substance of my soul
 Did live imprison’d in my wanton flesh,
 Each in their function serving other’s need,
 I was a courtier in the Spanish court. (1.1.1–4)

At the end of each line, the voice tends, as Saintsbury puts it, to ‘sink to make a fresh start at the beginning of the next’.

Whereas *Tamburlaine* also displays the line integrity characteristic of early blank verse drama, several commentators have pointed to innovations in its versification. George Wright observes that, by deviating from the rigid mould of five iambic feet, Marlowe

⁹Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. 1, 345.

¹⁰Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. 1, 346–7.

introduces greater flexibility into his versification.¹¹ Thus in Tamburlaine's speech below, several lines open with a trochee rather than an iambic foot, and, at the end of lines, polysyllabic words create pyrrhic feet.¹² Nevertheless, despite these prosodic variations, the line integrity of the speech – the tendency for pauses to appear at the end rather than the middle of lines – ensures that its versification is relatively regular, at least when compared to 1590s blank verse.

Nature, that framed us of four elements
 Warring within our breasts for regiment,
 Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
 Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
 The wondrous architecture of the world
 And measure every wand'ring planet's course,
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite
 And always moving as the restless spheres,
 Will us to wear ourselves and never rest
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown. (*Tamburlaine, Part 1: 2.7.12–29*)

¹¹Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, 98–9. See also Wolfgang Clemens, *English Tragedy before Shakespeare: The Development of Dramatic Speech*, trans. T. S. Dorsch (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), 117.

¹²Marina Tarlinskaja comments on Marlowe's use of polysyllabic words to create rhythmical irregularity at the end of lines: *Shakespeare's Verse: Iambic Pentameter and the Poet's Idiosyncrasies* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 80.

Russ McDonald contrasts ‘the rolling succession of equivalent lines heard in *Tamburlaine* with the versification of Marlowe’s later play *Edward II* (ca. 1591–3). The versification of the later play is more irregular, he suggests, primarily because of its liberal use of caesurae:

Here [in *Edward II*] the use of caesura is uncommonly abundant. Even if we distrust the punctuation supplied by the editors (of whatever century, the sixteenth or the twenty-first), still it is clear that an actor must stop and start, and stop and start again, disrupting the rhythmic regularity and defeating the familiar Marlovian swagger.¹³

When McDonald talks of caesurae ‘disrupting the rhythmic regularity’, he is referring to strong rather than weak caesurae. Strong caesurae are the kind of mid-line pauses that are typically indicated by punctuation.¹⁴ Thus in the speech above from *Tamburlaine: Part I*, Marlowe only includes two strong caesurae, which correspond to the two mid-line punctuation marks in the passage, thereby ensuring line integrity and thus ‘rhythmic regularity’.

McDonald’s observation about the contrast between Marlowe’s use of caesurae in *Tamburlaine* and *Edward II* is borne out by Ants Oras’s statistics on punctuation.¹⁵ In his comprehensive study of pause patterns in early modern drama, Oras tabulates the frequency

¹³McDonald, ‘Marlowe and Style’, 66.

¹⁴I use the term ‘strong caesurae’ in the same sense as Wright, *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art*, 44–5.

¹⁵Ants Oras, *Pause Patterns in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, University of Florida Monographs, no. 3 (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960).

of ‘internal punctuation marks’ – that is, punctuation that is not located at the end of the line – in a large variety of plays and poems of the period. As Table 1 shows, internal punctuation is far more frequent in Marlowe’s later play *Edward II* than in his *Tamburlaine* plays. Table 1 also shows that such punctuation is also more common in *Edward II* than in two other 1580s plays of comparable length, Lodge’s *Wounds of Civil War* and Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*. In general, internal punctuation is relatively infrequent in 1580s blank verse drama, at least in comparison to subsequent dramatic verse.

Table 1: Internal Punctuation Marks¹⁶

Author and Play	Internal Punctuation
Marlowe, <i>Edward II</i>	1369
Marlowe, <i>Tamburlaine Part I</i>	567
Marlowe, <i>Tamburlaine Part II</i>	742
Kyd, <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i>	848
Lodge, <i>The Wounds of Civil War</i>	593

¹⁶In this table, ‘internal punctuation’ comprises all mid-line punctuation, including commas. A more revealing comparison of punctuation would present the number of internal punctuation marks relative to the length of each play, but unfortunately Oras does not provide such statistics. Thus in Table 1, I have only included plays that are of broadly similar length. They are all about 2,500 lines long, give or take ten per cent, and are predominantly in verse rather than prose. For these five plays, Oras uses as texts ‘*Tudor Facsimile Text* editions’ and ‘Photostats or microfilms of the earliest editions’: see Oras, *Pause Patterns*, 89–90.

As McDonald's remark suggests, punctuation marks are by no means a perfect indicator of strong caesurae. In his study of pause patterns, Oras acknowledges that punctuation 'is not unaffected by the intervention of scribes and printers'.¹⁷ Given the idiosyncrasies of punctuation practices, several scholars have preferred to use grammatical or syntactic criteria rather than punctuation as the basis for compiling statistics on strong caesurae.¹⁸ In general, when a grammatical clause begins or ends in the middle of a line, the result is a strong caesura. Thus in the passages quoted above from *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe maintains the integrity of the line by locating most of the clausal junctures at the end of lines, thereby ensuring that strong caesurae are rare. This broad alignment between clause and line in *Tamburlaine*, Russ McDonald observes, creates an 'impression of regularity':

In most of Marlowe's dramatic verse the impression of regularity is enhanced by a correspondence between the semantic or syntactic unit and the rhythmic segment: in other words, the sentence usually conforms to the demands of the pentameter, ending as the poetic line ends or at least distributing its clauses and phrases so that they lie comfortably within the decasyllabic frame. Thus we find little evidence of enjambment and, as a concomitant, few instances of caesurae.¹⁹

¹⁷Oras, *Pause Patterns*, 3. For similar reservations about the use of punctuation to analyse prosody, see E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 408; Jackson P. MacDonald, *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as a Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61.

¹⁸See, for example, Marina Tarlinskaja, 'The Verse of *A Lover's Complaint*' in *Words that Count: Early Modern Authorship, Essays in Honor of McDonald P. Jackson*, ed. Brian Boyd (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 150.

¹⁹McDonald, 'Marlowe and Style', 63.

The line integrity of 1580s tragedies, therefore, is apparent both from the scarcity of mid-line punctuation and also from the tendency to align the ‘syntactic unit’ and the blank verse line.

Thus far I have simply articulated a commonplace of prosodic studies: the view that the line integrity of 1580s blank verse is one of its most distinctive features. Now I will turn to consider the explanations of this feature of early blank verse. Why was the blank verse of the 1580s highly regular and governed by line integrity? In general, critics assume that in the 1580s, the metrical skills of playwrights were, as yet, underdeveloped, so that they were incapable of producing the irregular versification of the 1590s. Marlovian criticism tends to present the more various versification of Marlowe’s later plays, which make liberal use of strong caesurae, as a result of ‘progress’ in Marlowe’s metrical virtuosity. Tucker Brook refers to the ‘great progress in style and versification which the seven years of Marlowe’s active life brought about’, suggesting that the ‘progress’ in his versification was due to the ‘increased use of metrical devices which lead to variety and freedom’.²⁰ John Bakeless offers a similar account of the ‘progress’ in Marlowe’s style:²¹

The monotony of *Tamburlaine* has already become in *Doctor Faustus* a skilful adaption of sound to sense, and this progress goes further in the second half of *The Jew of Malta*, reaching its climax in *Edward the Second* and *Hero and Leander*.

Russ McDonald’s account of the developments in Marlowe’s style is more nuanced and cautious than the earlier studies, acknowledging that ‘The lack of certain chronology makes it

²⁰ Brooke, ‘Marlowe’s Versification and Style’, 202, 204.

²¹ Bakeless, *Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe*, vol. 2, 181.

difficult to construct a developmental argument'. Nonetheless, he still proposes that in the trajectory of Marlowe's poetic career we can discern an 'advance' in his metrical virtuosity: 'much of the verse of *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II* sounds more diverse, more "advanced", more various than that of other plays'.²²

Literary criticism on late Elizabethan prosody has discerned 'progress' not only in Marlowe's versification but also more generally in the prosody of blank verse. Saintsbury, who is an enthusiastic hagiographer of Shakespeare, explains the changes in versification in the 1590s by pointing to the superiority of Shakespeare's artistry over that of the earlier 'Marlowe group' of playwrights.²³ In *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, Wright suggests that the developments in blank verse reflect an improvement in the abilities not only of playwrights but also audiences. In the first few decades of blank verse drama, Wright speculates, regular prosody was required so that audiences could follow the rhythm of 'this new form'.²⁴ In explaining the relative irregularity of 1590s versification, Wright also emphasizes the movement away from rhetorical speech to a more conversational style: 'the main movement of Elizabethan dramatic dialogue was towards natural speech-tones'.²⁵ The presence of 'natural speech-tones' produced greater irregularity, breaking up the line integrity of Elizabethan blank verse.

This section has summarized a widely held view about the development of Elizabethan verse. According to this view, the blank verse of the 1580s is characterized by integrity of the line, which reflects an early, underdeveloped phase of versification. In

²²McDonald, 'Marlowe and Style', 66.

²³Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. 1, 348–9.

²⁴Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, 97.

²⁵Wright *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, 93; see also McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, 96.

contrast, the blank verse of the 1590s is increasingly prone to break up the line, on account of both ‘advances’ in prosody and also a move away from rhetoric towards more conversational rhythms. In the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to complicate this view of the development of Elizabethan verse. There is an important class of exceptions to this standard characterization of the development of blank verse, and a failure to recognize these exceptions may encourage ungrounded inferences about the dating of blank verse. One such exception is *Misfortunes of Arthur*, by Thomas Hughes. Written within a few years of *Tamburlaine*, *Misfortunes of Arthur* has very different rhythmical qualities to *Tamburlaine*. Hughes deviates from the metrical norm of 1580s blank verse, frequently breaking up the line. The explanation for Hughes’s departure from line integrity, I will suggest, is neither that his verse is more ‘advanced’ nor that his verse represents a move towards a conversational style. Instead, Hughes’s anachronistic versification was a result of his experiments with a particular rhetorical style – the sententious style of first century Rome, the style of Seneca, Tacitus and Lucan.

7.2 Prosody and the sententious style in *Misfortunes of Arthur*

Of the various Elizabethan plays influenced by Seneca, Thomas Hughes’s *Misfortunes of Arthur* is perhaps the most Senecan, drawing on a range of Seneca’s tragedies.²⁶ Senecan *sententiae* are prevalent throughout the play, as is illustrated by Guinevere’s soliloquy below. In this speech, Guinevere deliberates about whether she should commit suicide as a punishment for her ‘wrong’. The *sententiae* are underlined:

[1] Is’t meet a plague, for such excessive wrong,

²⁶Cunliffe, *Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, 52–54, 130–155.

Should be so short? [2] Should one stroke answer all?

And wouldst thou die? Well: [3] that contents the laws,

What then for Arthur's ire? What then for fame,

Which thou hast stained? what for thy stock thou shamst?

[4] Not death, nor life alone can give a full

Revenge: [5] join both in one. [6] Die: and yet live.

[7] Where pain may not be oft, let it be long.

[8] Seek out some lingering death, whereby, thy corse

May neither touch the dead, nor joy the quick. (1.3.44–53)

In the space of ten lines, eight *sententiae* appear, displaying the antithetical and paradoxical conceits characteristic of the early imperial sententious style. The first two *sententiae* both convey the antithesis between, on the one hand, the magnitude of Guinevere's offense – her 'wrong' to Arthur, her 'fame' and her 'stock' – and, on the other hand, the slightness of her proposed punishment, suicide. Guinevere's dilemma is that her 'wrong' must be requited by a punishment greater than death. She solves this dilemma by deciding to pursue a 'living death', which, she later reveals, is to be achieved by withdrawing to a convent. Hughes uses the paradox of a 'living death' to provide the conceit for three *sententiae*, (5), (6) and (8). *Sententiae* (2), (5) and (6) exemplify the extreme brevity that was so valued by practitioners of the sententious style – each *sententia* is about the length of half a line.

Guinevere's soliloquy is, in fact, closely modelled on the passage below from Seneca's *Oedipus*. Having learnt of his 'great crimes', Oedipus asks himself whether death is an adequate punishment for his actions. Like Guinevere's speech, Oedipus's lament is densely populated with *sententiae*. The *sententiae* are underlined, and in the accompanying translations I have attempted to replicate the locations of strong pauses in Seneca's Latin.

Tam magnis brevespoenas sceleribus solvis uno omniapensabis ictu? moreris: hoc patri sat est;quid deinde matri...iterum vivere atque iterum moriliceat, renasci semper ut totiens novasupplicia pendas.–utere ingenio miser!quod saepe fieri non potest fiat diu;mors eligatur longa. quaeratur viaqua nec sepultis mixtus et vivis tamenexemptus erres: morere, sed citra patrem. (936–39, 945–51)You repay such greatcrimes with a small penalty, compensatingfor all with one blow? You die: that suffices for your father;What then for your mother...You must be permitted to live againand to die again, always reborn so that each timeyou pay the penalty anew. Use your brain, wretch!What cannot happen often can happen over a long time;Choose a lingering death. Seek a pathapart from the dead but wander removedfrom the living. Die, but less than your father.

The antithetical and paradoxical conceits in Hughes's *sententiae* are, for the most part, borrowed from Seneca.

Seneca's sententious style imparts to his dramatic verse a distinctive rhythm. The prevalence of brief *sententiae* tends to 'chop up' the language into small segments, producing an abrupt, broken movement in the verse. As noted in Chapter Three, Quintilian's *Orator's Education* remarks on the characteristic rhythm of the sententious style. An excessive density of *sententiae*, he says, 'produces a fragmented speech: for each *sententia* stands alone, and therefore after it there is another beginning. From this it follows that that the speech is very disorderly, and being built not from *membra* but separate pieces, it lacks structure, because these polished and whittled-down phrases cannot prop up each other' (8.5.26–27). Stripped of its value judgements, Quintilian's observation is an insightful characterization of the choppy, broken movement of sententious writing. Quintilian remarks that Seneca's sententious style, in particular, has this fractured quality: 'If he [Seneca] did not desire perversity, if he was not fixed on his own point of view, if he did not break up weighty matters into minute *sententiae*, he would have been approved by the majority of educated men, rather than merely by the admiration of boys' (10.1.130–131).

The fragmented character of Seneca's sententious writing affects the rhythm not just of his prose but also his dramatic verse. In passages dense with 'minute *sententiae*', the brevity of the clauses ensures that mid-line breaks proliferate. For example, the majority of the lines in Oedipus's soliloquy contain at least one strong *caesurae*. The brevity of Seneca's *sententiae* is mimicked by Hughes in Guinevere's soliloquy. Accordingly, Hughes's blank verse takes on the choppy movement of Seneca's sententious style. In general, the clauses in Guinevere's speech are shorter than the ten syllables of the blank verse line, ensuring that most of the lines are broken up by strong *caesurae*.

Seneca disrupts line integrity not only with strong *caesurae* but also with frequent enjambments. In the passage from Oedipus's speech, more lines are enjambed than are endstopped. Following Seneca, Hughes enjambes several lines in Guinevere's speech (49, 52), deviating from the metrical norms of 1580s blank verse. The enjambment that separates the adjective 'full' from the noun 'Revenge' is especially unusual in early blank verse, as it breaks up a basic phrase unit. Such enjambments are encouraged by Hughes's sententious brevity. The pair of compact *sententiae*, 'join both in one' and 'Die: and yet live', together occupy only eight syllables of the decasyllabic line, necessitating that the clause from the previous line runs over to supply the two remaining syllables. In general, where clauses begin near the opening or the end of a line, enjambment may be required.²⁷

In his effort to imitate Seneca's brief *sententiae*, Hughes disrupts the line integrity characteristic of 1580s blank verse. Whereas in *Tamburlaine*, the line units tend to coincide with clausal units, many clauses in Guinevere's soliloquy begin mid-line and at least some clauses spill over into the next line. This passage, moreover, is not an isolated example. In *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, John Cunliffe fills a twenty-five page appendix with passages from *Misfortunes of Arthur* that are indebted to Seneca. In these Senecan passages, Hughes is especially prone to disrupt the line. Hughes's fondness for *caesurae* is also attested to by Oras's statistics on internal punctuation. Even though *Misfortunes of Arthur* is the shorter than all the plays in Table 1, it has close to twice the

²⁷Ants Oras draws attention to the relationship between late pauses and enjambment: 'But when a pause comes after the seventh, or even the eighth, syllable, the remaining space usually suffices for a fragmentary statement which needs to be completed in the following line. In other words, very late pauses make for a run-on technique' (Oras, *Pause Patterns*, 16). See also Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, 213–14.

amount of internal punctuation than the 1580s plays in the table, and, indeed, it has more internal punctuation than Marlowe's later play written in the early 1590s, *Edward II*.²⁸

As noted in Chapter Three, Seneca's fondness for *sententiae* is evinced by his father's preface to *Declamations*, which is addressed to Seneca and his brothers, Novatus and Mela. The elder Seneca recognizes that 'any subject-matter which leads me away from the *sententiae* may annoy you' (*Declamations* 1, Preface, 22). Seneca's brother Mela was the father of Lucan, who is portrayed by Quintilian as a practitioner of the sententious style:

Lucanus ardens et concitatus et sentiis clarissimus et, ut dicam quod sentio, magis oratoribus quam poetis imitandus. (*Orator's Education* 10.1.90)

Lucan is fiery and passionate, and celebrated for his *sententiae*, and – if I might say what I think – more to be imitated as an orator than a poet.

When Quintilian judges that Lucan was 'more to be imitated as an orator', the reference is to his skill at declamation.²⁹ Roman declamation shaped the sententious style of Lucan as well as Seneca.

In *Lucan's First Book*, I will now argue, the task undertaken by Marlowe was similar to that attempted by Hughes. The resemblance is not merely that the two authors were endeavouring to translate Latin poetry into blank verse. In this respect they were preceded by Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, by about half a century. The resemblance, rather, is that Hughes and Marlowe both sought to capture in their translations the sententious style of early

²⁸*Misfortunes of Arthur* has 1413 instances of internal punctuation.

²⁹*Orator's Education*, 10.1.90. For a discussion of Lucan's probable involvement in declamation, see Bonner, 'Lucan and the Declamation Schools', 257–58.

imperial Rome. Like Seneca's tragedies, Lucan's *Pharsalia* displays the sententious style of the first century. In attempting to translate and imitate Lucan's *sententiae*, Marlowe produces blank verse that radically breaks up the integrity of the line.

7.3 Marlowe's 'line for line' translation of *Pharsalia*

In "Metre meete to furnish Lucans style": Reconsidering Marlowe's *Lucan*, James Shapiro draws attention to the different varieties of versification in Marlowe's *Pharsalia*. The opening of Marlowe's translation, he notes, exemplifies the 'familiar paradigm of Marlovian blank verse', which 'consists of decasyllabic end-stopped lines, built up into grammatically and syntactically suspended verse paragraphs'.³⁰ Shapiro is saying, in effect, that the poem opens in the vein of *Tamburlaine*. Indeed, the first sentence of the poem displays the lengthiness, the grammatical suspension and the end-stopped lines that are characteristic of *Tamburlaine*:

Wars worse than civil on Thessalian plains,
 And outrage strangling law, and people strong
 We sing, whose conquering swords their own breasts launched,
 Arms allied, kingdom's league uprooted,
 Th'affrighted world's force bent on public spoil,
 Trumpets and drums like deadly threat'ning other,
 Eagles alike displayed, darts answering darts. (*Lucan's First Book*, 1–7)³¹

³⁰Shapiro, "Metre meete to furnish Lucans style", 319.

³¹Christopher Marlowe, *Lucan's First Book*, in *Collected Poems of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney and Brian Striar (Oxford University Press, 2006), 169–92.

As the poem continues, Shapiro observes, Marlowe deviates from ‘this metrical expectation’, introducing extrametrical syllables and enjambment to vary the ‘familiar paradigm of Marlovian blank verse’.³² In addition, at least in comparison with *Tamburlaine*, *Lucan’s First Book* contains an abundance of strong *caesurae*. On average, internal punctuation appears in about two out of every three lines of Marlowe’s *Pharsalia*, far more frequently than in the 1580s blank verse plays, with the exception of *Misfortunes of Arthur*. Moreover, the poem has a relatively high amount of punctuation in ‘unusual positions’ near the end of the line – after syllables seven, eight or nine. Fourteen per cent of the internal punctuation of *Lucan’s First Book* appears in these unusual positions, considerably more than in other 1580s blank verse.³³ As noted by Oras, the presence of such late breaks fosters enjambment.³⁴

On the basis of its deviations from ‘metrical expectation’, Shapiro judges that prosody in *Lucan’s First Book* is relatively advanced, and thus suggests a late date for the poem.³⁵ I will argue, instead, that the distinctive prosody of Marlowe’s *Pharsalia* can be construed as the outcome of an attempt to imitate Lucan’s sententious style. In Lucan’s poem, the final lines of Figulus’s speech provide a typical example of his use of the sententious style:

Cum domino pax ista venit. Duc, Roma, malorum

³²Shapiro, “‘Metre meete to furnish Lucans style’”, 319.

³³The corresponding figure for the *Battle of Alcazar* is four per cent, for *Tamburlaine: Part I*, nine per cent, for *Tamburlaine: Part II*, nine per cent, for *Wounds of Civil War*, seven per cent, for *Spanish Tragedy*, seven per cent; for *Misfortunes of Arthur* ten per cent. These statistics are calculated from the tables in Oras, *Pause Patterns*, 61–70.

³⁴Oras, *Pause Patterns*, 16.

³⁵Shapiro, “‘Metre meete to furnish Lucans style’”, 320.

Continuam seriem claemque in tempora multa

Extrahe, civili tantum iam libera bello. (Pharsalia, 1.670–72)³⁶

when peace comes, a tyrant will come with it. Let Rome prolong
the unbroken series of suffering and draw out her agony
for ages: only while civil war lasts, shall she henceforth be free.

(Loeb translation)

The first and third lines of the passage include two brief *sententiae*, which – as is characteristic of the sententious style – turn on a paradox and an antithesis. The true horror facing Rome, Figulus foretells, is not war but the coming peace. Peace will be accompanied by tyranny, that of the impending imperial rule. The *sententiae* are subversive: they allude not only to the notorious reigns of Tiberius and Caligula, but also to Nero, Lucan’s emperor.

Before turning to Marlowe’s rendering of the two *sententiae*, it will be useful to consider a general principle governing his translation. In the earliest edition of the translation, published in 1600, the poem was entitled ‘LVCANS FIRST BOOKE TRANSLATED LINE FOR LINE, BY CHR. MARLOVV’.³⁷ In this title, the phrase ‘line for line’ is notable, advertising to his readers a particular relationship between Marlowe’s prosody and that of the original poem. Generally speaking, for any passage in Lucan’s poem, Marlowe’s translation takes the form of a passage of blank verse that contains the same number of lines. Such an endeavour to translate Lucan ‘line for line’ faces the substantial technical challenge of replicating Lucan’s sententious brevity. The Loeb translation of Lucan’s lines 670–72, which

³⁶Lucan, *The Civil War*, trans. J. D. Duff, Loeb Classical Library 220 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928). While the Loeb translation is prose, I partition it into lines in a way designed to mirror the structure of Lucan’s verse.

³⁷*Complete Works of Marlowe*, vol. 1, 90.

is quoted above, is 47 syllables long. In contrast, Marlowe undertook to condense the passage into about 30 syllables – three lines of iambic pentameter:

War only gives us peace. O Rome, continue
 The course of mischief, and stretch out the date
 Of slaughter; only civil broils make peace. (*Lucan's First Book*, 669–71)

In Lucan's three lines, each of the two *sententiae* occupies only part of a hexameter line. Accordingly, in his 'line for line' translation, Marlowe incorporates two corresponding part-line *sententiae* into his blank verse: 'War only gives us peace' and 'only civil broils make peace'. He thereby not only meets the demands of 'line for line' translation, but also replicates the brevity of Lucan's sententious style. As a result, Marlowe's blank verse takes on the choppy, irregular rhythm of sententious writing. Each part-line *sententia* must be accompanied by a strong *caesura*, and these mid-line breaks may encourage enjambment. For example, Marlowe's seven-syllable *sententia* 'only civil broils make peace' is three syllables short of a full pentameter line, requiring that the penultimate line is carried over into the final line to complete the metrical shortfall. The correspondence between the structure of Lucan and Marlowe's lines – in particular, between their use of *caesurae* and enjambment – is striking.

Lucan's sententious style is also displayed in the following passage from Curio's speech to Caesar. The Latin passage is followed by the Loeb translation as well as Marlowe's rendering:

Pellimur e patriis laribus patimurque volentes
 Exilium; tua nos faciet victoria cives.

Dum trepidant nullo firmatae robore partes,
Tolle moras; semper nocuit differre paratis. (*Pharsalia*, 1.278–81)

we have been driven from our country. We suffer exile
willingly, because your victory will make us citizens again.
While your foes are in confusion and before they have gathered strength,
make haste; delay is ever fatal to those who are prepared. (Loeb translation)

We, from our houses driven, most willingly
Suffered exile: let thy sword bring us home.
Now, while their part is weak and fears, march hence:
Where men are ready, lingering ever hurts. (*Lucan's First Book*, 279–82)

The first *sententia* in Marlowe's translation, 'let thy sword bring us home', completes an antithetical conceit: the previous line describes how the speaker was driven from home, which is antithetical to being brought home. The *sententia*, and its counterpart in Lucan's Latin, spans only part of a line, introducing a strong *caesura* into the second line and requiring the first line to run over into the second. Marlowe does not, however, invariably mimic the brevity of Lucan's *sententiae*. Thus Marlowe's gnomic *sententia* at the end of the passage, 'Where men are ready, lingering ever hurts', expands Lucan's part-line *sententia* into a full line. Although Marlowe sometimes deviates from the structure of Lucan's versification, he follows Lucan's structure with sufficient frequency that his translation captures the broken movement of Lucan's sententious style.

Like Figulus's prophetic oration, Curio's speech closes with a *sententia*:

Livor edax tibi cuncta negat, gentesque subactas
 Vix impune feres. Socerum depellere regno
 Decretum genero est; partiri non potes orbem,
 Solus habere potes. (*Pharsalia*, 1.288–91)

gnawing envy denies you all things, and you will scarce go unpunished
 for your conquest of foreign nations. Your daughter's husband has resolved
 to thrust you down from sovereignty. Half the world you may not have,
 but you can have the whole world for yourself. (Loeb translation)

Envy denies all, with thy blood must thou
 Aby thy conquest past: the son decrees
 To expel the father; share the world thou canst not;
 Enjoy it all thou mayest. (*Lucan's First Book*, 289–92)

As Quintilian observes, in first-century oratory, *sententiae* were often used to provide closure at the end of a passage (*Orator's Education*, 8.5.13). In Figulus's speech, the closing *sententia* is preceded by another, which Marlowe structures around an antithesis between 'son' and 'father'. In pursuit of compression, Marlowe avoids a literal translation of Lucan's antithesis, which is, in fact, a contrast between a son-in-law (*gener*) and a father-in-law (*socer*). Marlowe's *sententia* captures the point of Lucan's text better than the Loeb translation, which fails to give sharp verbal expression to this antithesis. In general, Marlowe displays sensitivity to the aesthetic of the sententious style, conveying its compact antithetical and paradoxical conceits.

It is significant that Marlowe's sententious passages quoted above are from the speeches in *Lucan's First Book*. In the speeches, which constitute about a tenth of the poem, deviations from 'metrical expectation' are especially pronounced.³⁸ My account suggests an explanation of why the prosody of the speeches is particularly irregular. In the early empire, the sententious style emerged from the oratory of declaimers. Unsurprisingly, then, declamatory rhetoric is especially prominent in the speeches of Lucan's poem, ensuring that sententious brevity is also more marked in these passages. But sententious brevity, I have argued, tends to disrupt line integrity. In an attempt to imitate the sententious brevity of Lucan's speeches, Marlowe disrupts the blank verse line, introducing greater rhythmic complexity into the speeches of *Lucan's First Book*.

While variations from 'metrical expectation' are more common in the speeches, there are other passages in *Lucan's First Book* that also depart from the paradigm of *Tamburlaine*. In the course of arguing that Marlowe's translation is atypical of his versification, L. C. Martin asserts that the following lines are 'the sort of blank verse which we expect rather from dramatists of the seventeenth century rather than him':³⁹

Pompey could bide no equal,
 Nor Caesar no superior, which of both
 Had justest cause unlawful 'tis to judge:
 Each side had great partakers; Caesar's cause,
 The gods abetted, Cato liked the other.
 Both differed much: (*Lucan's First Book*, 125–30)

³⁸Shapiro, "Metre meete to furnish Lucans style", 320.

³⁹L. C. Martin, 'Lucan – Marlowe –? Chapman', *RES* 24, no. 96 (October, 1948), 320.

Again, these lines of Marlowe, with their apparently ‘advanced’ versification, translate a passage in which Lucan’s sententious style is especially pronounced:

Nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarve priorem
 Pompeiusve parem. Quis iustius induit arma,
 Scire nefas; magno se iudice quisque tuetur:
 Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.
 Nec coiere pares. (*Pharsalia*, 1.125–29)

Caesar could no longer endure a superior,
 Nor Pompey an equal. Which had the fairer pretext for warfare,
 we may not know: each has high authority to support him:
 for, if the victor had the gods on his side, the vanquished had Cato.
 The two rivals were ill-matched. (Loeb translation)

Lucan’s passage turns on two brief, antithetical *sententiae*, which Marlowe translates as: ‘Pompey could bide no equal, / Nor Caesar no superior’, and ‘Caesar’s cause, / The gods abetted, Cato liked the other’. As in the speeches, Marlowe’s sententious brevity disrupts the integrity of the line, creating the appearance of ‘advanced’ prosody with a relatively late date.

In some respects, Marlowe’s experiment with the sententious style is comparable to Hughes’s *Misfortunes of Arthur*. But we know that, at least in Hughes’s blank verse, the disruptions to line integrity are accounted for not by a late date but rather by its sententious style. Similarly, the irregular prosody of Marlowe’s poem, especially in the speeches, needs not be construed as a later, more ‘advanced’ style, but can be interpreted instead as the outcome of his experimentation with Lucan’s sententious style. In his ‘line for line’

translation, Marlowe's strenuous efforts to replicate Lucan's versification and rhetorical style imparted to his poem an irregular movement, which is notably different from the uniform flow of *Tamburlaine*.

7.4 Prosody and the Ciceronian style in *Tamburlaine*

Whereas in *Lucan's First Book*, Marlowe versified Lucan's sententious style, *Tamburlaine* represents a sustained experiment in the Ciceronian style. I will argue that the contrast between the rhetorical styles of the two works underlies their different prosodic properties. The Ciceronian style of the *Tamburlaine* plays is exemplified by following sentence from *Part I*:

If all the pens that ever poets held
 Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts
 And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
 Their minds and muses on admirèd themes;
 If all the heavenly quintessence they still
 From their immortal flowers of poesy,
 Wherein as in a mirror we perceive
 The highest reaches of a human wit –
 If these had made one poem's period
 And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
 Yet should there hover in their restless heads
 One thought, one grace, one wonder at the least,
 Which into words no virtue can digest. (5.1.161–73)

Marlowe was a scholar as well as a poet, and his use of the word ‘period’ in this sentence is a scholarly pun. ‘Period’ means a goal, but Marlowe is also referring to the rhetorical structure of the sentence. The sentence is an archetypal Ciceronian period, exemplifying the formal characteristics of a period that were described earlier. As noted in Chapter Three, Demetrius identifies two features of the period that ensure that the periodic style is ‘closely knit’. In a period, *membra* are bound together first, by suspension of meaning, and second, by balance between *membra*.⁴⁰ Marlowe’s period opens with a series of subordinate clauses – in particular, three conditional ‘if’-constructions – and the suspension of meaning is resolved with the arrival of the main clause towards the end of the period. The second formal feature that binds together the *membra* of a period is balance, especially balance that is created by *parison* (like-structure), *paromoion* (like-sound) and *isocolon* (like-length). These three figures are all present in Marlowe’s period. The opening subordinate clauses are balanced by *parison* due to the shared grammatical structure of the ‘if’-clauses. The repetition of ‘if’ at the beginning of lines also creates *paromoion*. Moreover, as is discussed below, the *membra* of Marlowe’s period are closely balanced by *isocolon*.

The language in *Tamburlaine* can be classified as a relatively pure example of the Ciceronian periodic style. As Cicero acknowledged, periodic language should not consist entirely of periods, but a style is periodic so long as periods are relatively common.⁴¹ In both parts of *Tamburlaine*, there is an abundance of periods. Of Marlowe’s periods, the quotation beginning ‘If all the pens...’ is a comparatively lengthy and elaborate example, whereas the period quoted at the opening of the chapter is a more typical example – an example of the

⁴⁰Demetrius, *On Style*, 11, 22–26.

⁴¹Cicero, *Orator*, 208–11.

sort that appears throughout the *Tamburlaine* plays. By the end of the second act of *Part I*, there have been at least fifteen occurrences of periods.⁴²

Other commentators have made brief remarks about the presence of the Ciceronian periodic style in *Tamburlaine*. As noted in Chapter Three, Sylvia Adamson observes that ‘Marlowe’s ‘mighty line’ may owe as much to his mastery of the principle of periodicity as to his mastery of the iambic pentameter’, and she cites an example from *Tamburlaine*.⁴³

Harry Levin also makes a tantalizingly brief reference to the Ciceronian style of *Tamburlaine*:

Possibly the most striking advance beyond *Tamburlaine* [in *The Jew of Malta*] is the transition from a voluble to a laconic style, from Ciceronian periods to Senecan aphorisms.⁴⁴

Levin goes on to suggest – again very briefly – a connection between the periodic style of *Tamburlaine* and its prosody:

All this [the ‘speed’ *Tamburlaine*’s verse] is kept under firm control by the line itself, which – largely through Marlowe’s avoidance of run-overs – becomes a

⁴²Prologue 1–8, 1.1.6–14, 1.1.28–33, 1.1.140–149, 1.2.87–92, 1.2.93–105, 1.2.187–195, 2.2.58–64, 2.2.59–67, 2.3.18–24, 2.6.5–8, 2.6.15–23, 2.7.3–6, 2.7.12–16, 2.7.18–29. Not all periods are bound by both suspended meaning and balance. Some are bound only by balance.

⁴³Adamson, ‘Literary Language’, 591.

⁴⁴Levin, *Overreacher*, 94.

syntactic as well as a metrical unit, coinciding with a single clause from a periodic sentence.⁴⁵

Levin observes that line integrity is especially characteristic of the ‘periodic sentence’ in *Tamburlaine*. This gives rise to the question: does Marlowe’s Ciceronian style promote the integrity of the line?

I will address this question by examining the following period from *Tamburlaine: Part II*. It illustrates Levin’s observation that in *Tamburlaine* the line not only is a metrical unit but is also a syntactic unit ‘coinciding with a single clause from a periodic sentence’:

The general welcomes Tamburlaine received
 When he arrivèd last upon our stage
 Hath made our poet pen his second part,
 Where death cuts off the progress of his pomp
 And murd’rous Fates throws all his triumphs down. (Prologue, 1–5)

In this period, each line coincides with a single clause, a *membrum*. As a result, all *membra* are closely balanced by *isocolon*: they are all about ten syllables long. By incorporating line integrity in his periods, Marlowe ensures that his sentences have the balance characteristic of the Ciceronian style.

In discussing the construction of periods, Cicero places particular emphasis on the importance of *isocolon*:

⁴⁵Levin, *Overreacher*, 30.

Constat enim ille ambitus et plena comprehensio e quattor fere partibus, quae membra discumus, ut et auris impleat et neque brevior sit quam satis sit neque longior. Quanquam utrumque nonnumquam vel potius potius saepe accidit, ut aut citius insistendum sit aut longius procedendum, ne brevitatis defraudasse auris videatur neve longitudo obtudisse. Sed habeo mediocritatis rationem; nec enim loquor de versu et est liberior aliquanto oratio. E quattuor igitur quasi hexametrorum instar versuum quod sit constat fere plena comprehensio.

(*Orator*, 221–22)⁴⁶

The full and comprehensive period is composed of about four parts, which we call *membra*, so as to fill the ears and be neither briefer than the proper length, nor longer. Although sometimes – or, rather, often – it happens that one must halt sooner, or one must advance longer, so that the ears are not cheated by brevity nor wearied by length. But I am speaking of the average; for I am not talking about verse, and prose is considerably freer. Each of the four parts which compose the full period, then, is about equal to a line of hexameter verse.

Although Cicero recommends that orators should vary the length of their *membra*, such variations are to be understood as deviations from the norm. And the appropriate norm of periodic prose, Cicero suggests, is *isocolon*: each *membrum* should be about the length of a line of hexameter verse. Similarly, in *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe's *membra* frequently have the length of a blank verse line, because they tend to coincide with lines. The line integrity in *Tamburlaine* ensures that *membra* are balanced by *isocolon*, creating the balance constitutive of Cicero's periodic style.

⁴⁶Part of this passage is discussed in Chapter Three.

The Ciceronian style is characteristic not only of *Tamburlaine* but also of 1580s tragedy more generally. The following periods from *The Wounds of Civil War* and *The Battle of Alcazar* illustrate Lodge's and Peele's experimentation with the Ciceronian style:

Then we that through the Caspian shorts have run,
 And spread with ships the Oriental Sea,
 At home shall make a murder of our friends,
 And massacre our dearest countrymen. (*Wounds of Civil War*, 1.1.91–95)

But if he level at Alcazar walls,
 Then beat him back with bullets as thick as hail,
 And make him know and rue his oversight,
 That rashly seeks the ruin of this land. (*Battle of Alcazar*, 4.1.1060–64)⁴⁷

The line integrity in these passages ensures that each line coincides with a *membrum*. Thus the *membra* are closely balanced by *isocolon*, imparting to the verse the regular, uniform rhythm characteristic of 1580s blank verse. As in *Tamburlaine*, the regularity of the prosody in the two plays is intimately connected their balanced Ciceronian style.

⁴⁷Thomas Lodge, *The Wounds of Civil War*, ed. Joseph Houppert (London: Edward Arnold, 1970); George Peele, *The Life and Works of George Peele*, vol. 2, ed. Frank Hook and John Yoklavich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

7.5 Conclusion

The contrast between the prosody of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Lucan's First Book* is closely associated with their underlying difference in rhetorical style. In the Ciceronian style, long periods are built up out of relatively lengthy, balanced *membra*. When Marlowe versifies the Ciceronian style in *Tamburlaine*, line integrity produces balance between the *membra* of his periods. The sententious style, in contrast, is characterized by short sentences and even shorter clauses. In his 'line for line' translation of *Pharsalia*, Marlowe replicates the brevity of Lucan's sententious style, and thereby introduces an abundance of strong *caesurae*, as well as the occasional enjambed line. The prosody of Marlowe's *Pharsalia*, which Shapiro describes as 'rhythmically erratic', reflects the choppy, lurching movement of the sententious style. In contrast, *Tamburlaine* exhibits the even rhythms of Cicero's rhetorical style.

This relationship between prosody and rhetoric complicates the standard account of the development of Elizabethan blank verse. On the one hand, during the course of the 1590s, authors tended to break up the line, moving away from the line integrity characteristic of 1580s blank verse. On the other hand, there are exceptions to this general tendency, as is exemplified by Thomas Hughes's *Misfortunes of Arthur*. I have argued that whereas disruptions to line integrity are, in general, evidence of a later, more 'advanced' prosody, we should be wary about drawing such an inference if the verse displays the sententious style. In Marlowe's 'line for line' translation of *Pharsalia*, for example, the disruptions of line integrity may reflect his efforts to capture Lucan's sententious style, rather than a late date of the poem.

The thrust of my argument can be recapitulated by an examination of Harry Morris's argument for the 'advanced' prosody of Marlowe's *Edward II*. Morris offers the following

passage from Mortimer's soliloquy in support of his claim that *Edward II* represents 'the culmination of Marlowe's poetic development':⁴⁸

The prince I rule, the queen do I command,
 And with a lowly congé to the ground
 The proudest lords salute me as I pass;
 I seal, I cancel, I do what I will.
 Feared am I more than loved; let me be feared,
 And when I frown, make all the court look pale.
 ...
 While at the council table, grave enough,
 And not unlike a bashful Puritan,
 First I complain of imbecility,
 Saying it is *onus quam gravissimum*,⁴⁹
 Till being interrupted by my friends,
Suscepi that *provinciam*,⁵⁰ as they term it,
 And to conclude, I am Protector now.
 Now all is all sure; the queen and Mortimer
 Shall rule the realm, the king, and none rule us.
 Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance,
 And what I list command who dare control?
*Maior sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere.*⁵¹ (5.4.46–51, 56–67)

⁴⁸Morris, 'Marlowe's Poetry', 146–48.

⁴⁹'The heaviest burden'.

⁵⁰'I accept that office'.

Morris puts forward the following explanation of why Mortimer's soliloquy represents an advance over the 'rants of Tamburlaine':

The verse is simplicity itself. In addition to conversational vocabulary, straightforward syntax, and homely imagery, grammatical units are more abbreviated than we find them commonly in Marlowe. Mortimer's supreme control is announced with the supreme confidence of 'I came, I saw, I conquered'. The caesural pause multiplies and flies around the line.⁵²

I have proposed an alternative interpretation of the contrast between Mortimer's soliloquy and the 'rants of *Tamburlaine*'. The quoted passage includes five *sententiae* – a Latin *sententia* from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the following four *sententiae*. Each of the four is structured around an antithesis: antitheses between fear and love, ruling and being ruled, enemies and friends, and commanding and being controlled:

Feared am I more than loved; let me be feared.

The queen and Mortimer/ Shall rule the realm, the king, and none rule us.

Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance.

And what I list command who dare control?

In Mortimer's soliloquy, Marlowe is writing in the sententious style. While Morris correctly observes that the 'grammatical units' are 'abbreviated', the 'caesural pause multiplies' and

⁵¹'I am greater than him whom fortune is able to harm'.

⁵²Morris, 'Marlowe's Poetry', 147.

the syntax is ‘straightforward’, these observations can be construed as evidence of the sententious style rather than some notion of ‘advanced’ prosody. As in Hughes’s *Misfortunes of Arthur* and Marlowe’s *Pharsalia*, the sententious style of Mortimer’s soliloquy ensures that ‘grammatical units’ are brief and that strong *caesurae* are abundant. The ‘straightforward syntax’ in the speech is the coordinate syntax of the sententious style, which can be contrasted with the elaborate subordinate syntax that serves to suspend meaning in the Ciceronian periods of *Tamburlaine*. Mortimer’s soliloquy does not have a ‘conversational’ character but is rather a highly rhetorical style – the sententious style of early imperial oratory.

Mortimer’s soliloquy illustrates the interpretive challenge of distinguishing between developments and experiments in style. It may be difficult to judge whether a change in style represents a development in metrical skill, or whether, instead, the author is simply experimenting with a different aesthetic. In Elizabethan blank verse, a tendency to disrupt the line often indicates a later, more developed style. But in the case of Mortimer’s soliloquy, the speeches in *Lucan’s First Book*, and the studiously Senecan passages in *Misfortunes of Arthur*, the most distinctive features of the prosody emerge not so much from developments in metrical craftsmanship, but rather from deliberate experimentation with the sententious style.

More generally, the traditional account of the contrast between the prosody of 1580s and 1590s blank verse, which emphasizes the ‘progress’ in versification during this period, should be somewhat nuanced. Not only should we show caution in attributing the features of 1590s prosody to ‘advances’ in versification, but we should also complicate the view that the distinctive character of 1580s versification is its ‘underdeveloped quality. The prosodic properties of 1580s blank verse can also be construed as a consequence of its characteristic Ciceronian rhetorical style.

CONCLUSION

Macro Macro, thou art engaged; and what before
 Was public, now must be thy private, more.
 The weal of Caesar fitness did imply,
 But thine own fate confers necessity
 On thy employment: and the thoughts borne nearest
 Unto ourselves move swiftest still, and dearest.
 If he recover, thou art lost. (*Sejanus*, 4.81–87)

This passage from Macro's soliloquy in *Sejanus* illustrates a number of issues about relationships between style and politics that have been explored in this dissertation. Other than the opening clause, 'Macro, thou art engaged', the remainder of the passage consists of four 'pointed and brief' *sententiae*. They are not gnomic *sententiae* but rather what Quintilian's *Orator's Education* refers to as *sententiae* of the 'more modern' sort. For three of the *sententiae*, the 'point' – the display of ingenuity – is an antithesis: the passage expresses antitheses between 'public' and 'private', between recovering and losing, and between the reasons for action arising from the 'weal of Caesar' and those arising from 'thine own fate'. In the other *sententia*, the 'point' derives from the parallelism between 'nearest', 'swiftest' and 'dearest'. Bristling with *sententiae*, Macro's soliloquies exemplify the early imperial sententious style. In *Sejanus*, the sententious style is used to establish Macro's character, expressing his Tacitean-Stoic restraint and political expediency.

Adopting a historical formalist approach, this dissertation has examined links between rhetorical style, Tacitean Stoicism and republicanism. Drawing on Quentin Skinner's account of republican liberty, I have particularly focused on republican views about character,

exploring the republicanism of Essex's circle. Guided by republican values, Essex expressed contempt for the slavish character traits of his political opponents, aspiring instead to an ideal of magnanimous independence, which was manifested by bold outspokenness and emotional openness. In contrast, several of those associated with Essex's circle, including Francis Bacon and Lord Henry Howard, advocated Tacitean-Stoic views akin to those of Lipsius, advising Essex that political survival necessitates a measure of restraint, concealment and moral compromise. This late Elizabethan debate about republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism is dramatized in Jonson's *Sejanus*, which explores both republican and Tacitean-Stoic interpretations for the reasons for Essex's decline. According to the classical republican narrative, Essex's fall illustrates the harm to the public good caused by the loss of liberty: when liberty is lost, men of magnanimous independence, courage and vigour are suppressed, whereas slavish sycophants proliferate. On the other hand, a Tacitean-Stoic diagnosis of Essex's demise would point to the imprudence of his passionate outspokenness and uncompromising behaviour.

While there are a variety of ways of characterizing the presence of republican thought in late Elizabethan England, I focus on the classical republican narrative, on account of its importance in the republican discourse of Essex's circle. The narrative is present in Essex's *Apologie* and also in Hayward's *Henrie IIII*. Moreover, in his letter to James VI, written on Christmas Day, 1600, Essex appears to apply this narrative to interpret the marginalization of his faction. Accordingly, playwrights also allude to this classical republican narrative in dramatizations of Essex's political career. This narrative is used to explore the demise of Essex not only in Jonson's *Sejanus* but also in Chapman's *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* and Daniel's *Philotas*. Furthermore, at the performance of *Richard II* on the eve of Essex's uprising, Essex's supporters would have perceived the suppression of Bolingbroke and his allies as an instance of the classical republican narrative, observing the parallels to Essex's

plight. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's treatment of republican liberty may also have been influenced by the republican ideas circulating in Essex's circle, although a more immediate origin is Plutarch's characterization of classical liberty in his *Lives*.

In late Elizabethan England, the republicanism and Tacitean Stoicism of Essex's circle represented two strands of the English Tacitist movement, which began in the 1590s. The renewed interest in the political and philosophical views of Tacitus and Seneca was accompanied by experimentation with their writing style. Morris Croll presented this stylistic movement as a watershed in modernity, as a fundamental shift in both style and thought, depicting 'the anti-Ciceronian style' as a reaction against the rhetorical artifice and symmetry of Cicero. While Croll's analysis provided a dominant framework for prose studies for much of the twentieth century, more recent critics have rejected it as unsupported and incoherent.

Responding to the valid criticisms of Croll, my dissertation has recharacterized the anti-Ciceronian stylistic movement, focusing particularly on Seneca's and Tacitus's use of the *sententia*. Commentators on early modern style often fail to recognize the breadth of the figure of *sententia* in early modern rhetoric. As is illustrated by the quotation of Macro above, the *sententia* encompasses not only 'nuggets of wisdom', such as maxims and proverbs, but also what Quintilian calls 'modern' *sententiae* – compact displays of wit and ingenuity. Once we recognize the breadth of the *sententia*, then the style of Seneca and Tacitus, as well that of their early modern imitators, can be characterized as a sententious style. As emphasized in the Appendix, my characterization of this anti-Ciceronian style is more modest than that of Croll: I do not claim that the sententious style represents the sole reaction against Ciceronian rhetoric; rather, my claim is merely that it constitutes one important anti-Ciceronian reaction.

In contrast to the studies of Croll and his followers, I examine the presence of anti-Ciceronian rhetoric not just in early imperial prose but also in the verse of the period –

especially in Ovid's poetry, Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Seneca's tragedies. A great deal has been written about the influence on early modern prose of Seneca's prose and there is also a large body of criticism concerning the influence on early modern tragedy of Seneca's tragedies, but commentators rarely recognize the connection between these two topics. I have shown that Seneca's prose and dramatic verse are both highly sententious, and, accordingly, these two strands of the critical literature can be brought together. In early modern England, the sententious stylistic movement encompassed the imitation not only of Seneca's prose but also his tragedies. Modelled at least partly on Seneca's dramatic verse, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, Hughes's *Misfortunes of Arthur* and Greville's *Alaham* all experiment with the anti-Ciceronian sententious style. The sententious verse of Seneca and Lucan has distinctive prosodic features – most notably, it abounds in strong caesurae. Thus in late Elizabethan England, the imitation of sententious verse provoked developments in prosody, encouraging authors to break up the blank verse line.

Relying on Quintilian's account of the 'modern' *sententia*, I elucidate the relationship between the sententious style and Tacitean Stoicism. A defining property of the 'modern' *sententia* is its ingenuity and wit, which is given compact expression in a *sententia*. While practitioners of the sententious style used a range of devices to display such wit, including paradoxes and antitheses, one particularly common device was figured language. Thus the *sententia* was perceived as an especially appropriate vehicle for figured language: the figured speech supplied the *sententia* with its characteristic wit; and the brevity of the *sententia* was suited to the truncated, restrained character of figured language. Accordingly, the sententious style was seen as a prudent mode of communication in the kind of dangerous political environment described in Tacitus's histories. The brief, figured *sententia* was apt for the restrained and circumspect style of speech advocated by Tacitus and Seneca.

In contrast to sententious rhetoric, the Ciceronian style was an open, emotive and flowing mode of speech. According to the *Orator*, the periodic style imparts to the speech a regular rhythm, which, in turn, charges Ciceronian oratory with its powerful emotive force. As a result of its emotive character and its openness, the Ciceronian style could take on a distinctly oppositional note when used in political environments in which open speech is suppressed.

A number of early modern playwrights, including Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe and Kyd, exploit the political connotations of the Ciceronian and sententious styles. In *Sejanus*, *Edward II*, *Julius Caesar* and *Spanish Tragedy*, the playwrights use the sententious style to create a dark Tacitean atmosphere, evoking the dangers of political life in Tiberius's Rome, Mortimer's protectorate, Caesar's dictatorship and the Spanish court. The sententious style serves to convey the speaker's efforts at politic Tacitean restraint. The Ciceronian style, in contrast, could be used to create a tone of defiance, especially in hazardous political environments. For instance, oppositional attitudes are expressed by the emotive Ciceronian periods of Jonson's *Agrippina*, Marlowe's *Mortimer*, and Shakespeare's *Bolingbroke*, *John of Gaunt* and *Murellus*. In these examples, the Ciceronian style is used to depict the character of the speaker. Thus, having heard *Agrippina's* period, *Silius* remarks on her magnanimous 'great spirited' character: ' 'Tis great, and bravely spoken, like the spirit / Of *Agrippina*' (2.458–59). As is illustrated by *Agrippina's* speech, Ciceronian periods could be used to convey magnanimous independence – the principal character trait admired by republican advocates of classical liberty.

APPENDIX

MORRIS CROLL AND HIS CRITICS: 'THE ANTI-CICERONIAN MOVEMENT'

Then did Carr of Cambridge and Ascham, with their lectures and writings, almost deify Cicero and Demosthenes, and allure all young men that were studious unto that delicate and polished style of learning...In sum, the whole inclination and bent of those times was rather towards copie than weight. Here therefore is the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter.

Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (1605)¹

Little better [than the Ciceronian style] is that kind of style (yet neither is that altogether exempt from vanity) which neer about the same time succeeded this copy and superfluity of speech [of the Ciceronian style]. The labour here is altogether, that words may be aculeate, sentences concise [*sententiae concisae*]... Such a style as this we find more excessively in Seneca; more moderately in Tacitus and Plinius Secundus; and of late it hath been very pleasing unto the ears of our time. And this kind of expression hath found such acceptance with meaner capacities, as to be a dignity and ornament to Learning; nevertheless, by the more exact judgements, it hath been deservedly despised, and may be set down as a distemper of Learning, seeing it is nothing else but a hunting after words, and fine placing of them.

Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (1623)²

¹*Works of Bacon*, 3: 139. Part of this quotation is discussed in Chapter Three.

²From the 1623 Latin edition of *Advancement: De Augmentis Scientiarum* in *Works of Bacon*, 1: 452, as translated by Gilbert Wats in *Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning* (Oxford, 1640), 29. Chapter Three discusses part of this quotation.

In his account of the anti-Ciceronian movement, Morris Croll argues that towards the end of the sixteenth century, both in England and on the Continent, authors moved away from using Cicero as a stylistic model, turning instead to the imitation of Tacitus and Seneca. Croll's account of early modern prose stylistics proved to be enormously influential. As Neil Rhodes observes, Croll's essays 'represent the beginning of modern academic study of the subject [of English prose], and they effectively set the critical agenda for Renaissance prose studies for the next fifty years'.³

Almost since its genesis, however, a series of compelling criticisms have been directed at Croll's account, most notably by R. F. Jones, Robert Adolph, Brian Vickers and Janel Mueller.⁴ The principal problem with his position can be illustrated using the two quotations at the opening of this chapter. The first quotation is from Bacon's original 1605 edition of *Advancement of Learning*, and the second is a translation of a passage in his 1623 Latin edition of *Advancement*, a passage that has no counterpart in the original edition. In these passages, we can discern not one but two distinct reactions against the Ciceronian style. The first quotation expresses a reaction against the Ciceronian preference for 'copie' over 'weight', for 'words' over 'matter'. This reaction is not merely a criticism of the Ciceronian style but it aimed more generally at rhetorical excess. It is an anti-rhetorical reaction, expressing a preference for a plain – or at least a plainer – style.

³Rhodes, introduction to *English Renaissance Prose*, 8.

⁴R. F. Jones et al., *The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951); Robert Adolph, *The Rise of Modern Prose Style* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968); Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, 96–140; see also his introduction to *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, ed. Vickers, xxxii–xxxiv; Janel Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word*.

In the second quotation, however, Bacon describes a very different reaction against the Ciceronian style. The Ciceronian style, with its ‘copy and superfluity of speech’ was ‘succeeded’ by a style characterized by ‘*sententiae concisae*’ and ‘aculeate’ – that is pointed – language. Far from being a reaction against rhetoric, this second anti-Ciceronian style was highly rhetorical: by means of ‘artifice...every passage seems more witty and weighty than indeed it is’; and the style ‘is nothing else but a hunting after words, and fine placing of them’. Bacon here is alluding to the vogue for the sententious style, which was discussed in some detail in Chapter Three. Bacon’s *Advancement*, therefore, records the existence of two distinct anti-Ciceronian reactions that are opposed to one another. One is an anti-rhetorical reaction, the other is the fashion for highly rhetorical sententious style. A central problem with Croll’s account is that he attempted to yoke together, and to provide a unifying explanation for, these two fundamentally incompatible anti-Ciceronian reactions.

Reviewing the various criticisms of Croll’s account, Roger Pooley concludes that ‘it is difficult to sustain’.⁵ As a consequence, he suggests, the field of prose studies should abandon Croll’s ‘taxonomy linked to Latin styles’ – the taxonomy based upon the labels ‘Ciceronian’, ‘anti-Ciceronian’, ‘Tacitean’ and ‘Senecan’ – and then ‘start again’.⁶ Pooley offered this advice in the early 1990s. Despite his suggestion, subsequent scholarship has retained the ‘taxonomy based on Latin styles’ that he deprecates. Not only literary scholars but also historians of political thought have continued to use the Latin labels.⁷ In studies

⁵Pooley, ‘Prospects for Research in Seventeenth Century Prose’; Pooley, *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century*, 8–10.

⁶Pooley, *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century*, 9.

⁷See, for example, Parker, ‘Virile Style’, 201–22; Jennifer Waldron, ‘Beyond Words and Deeds: Montaigne’s Soldierly Style’ *PQ* 82, no. 1 (2003): 38–58; McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, especially 108–36 and *Shakespeare’s Late Style* (Cambridge:

concerned with the historical and political context of style, the ‘taxonomy of Latin styles’ is particularly important. Chapter Three argues that the Ciceronian style was associated with the republican politics of its namesake, whereas the sententious style linked to the political attitudes of Tacitus, one of its most prominent practitioners. Thus I will argue that the concept of an anti-Ciceronian style should not be abandoned, as Pooley suggests, but, instead should be reconstructed and rehabilitated. The first step in salvaging this concept is to distinguish between the two distinct anti-Ciceronian reactions that are recorded in the 1605 and 1623 editions of Bacon’s *Advancement*.

The result is a less ambitious account of an anti-Ciceronianism than that of Croll. His account purported to encompass a diverse range of styles, from the pithy, neat aphorisms of Bacon to the gargantuan, sprawling sentences of Robert Burton. In contrast, I offer an account not of ‘*the* anti-Ciceronian movement’ but of *an* anti-Ciceronian style – namely the sententious style. It is one style that vied alongside others for prominence in the experimental literary landscape of late Elizabethan England. Such downsizing of scope is necessary if an account of anti-Ciceronianism is to be both coherent and consistent with the richly diverse rhetorical and political cultures of early modern Europe. My focus is on the ornamental sententious reaction against Cicero’s style rather than the anti-rhetorical reaction, as my dissertation traces out the relationship between the sententious style and Tacitean politics.

Cambridge University Press, 2006), 62–66; Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 60–63; Ronberg, *A Way with Words*, especially 109–13; Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 5–6, 41–42; McCrea, *Constant Minds*, *passim*; Alexandra Gajda, ‘Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c. 1530 – c. 1640’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* ed. A.J. Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 253–68; Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 124–25.

A.1 Morris Croll and ‘le mouvement anticicéronien’

Croll first presented an account of the anti-Ciceronian style in his 1914 article ‘Juste Lipse et le mouvement anticicéronien à la fin du XVIe et au début du XVIIe siècle’.⁸ Over the next fifteen years, his account underwent a number of revisions, culminating in an article published in 1929, ‘The Baroque Style in Prose’. This latter article provides a series of examples of the anti-Ciceronian style, the first of which is the following sentence of Henry Wotton:

Men must beware of running down steep hills with weighty bodies; they once in motion, *suo feruntur pondere* [they are carried by their own weight]; steps are not then voluntary.⁹

Croll draws attention to Wotton’s use of *asyndeton*, observing that ‘there are no syntactic connections’ between the clauses of the sentence. The use of *asyndeton*, he suggests, contributes an impression of spontaneity, of a mind in motion:

Wotton gave this passage its form...by omitting several of the steps by which roundness and smoothness of composition might have been obtained. He had deliberately avoided the process of mental revision in order to express his idea when it is nearer the point of its origin in his mind.¹⁰

⁸*Essays by Croll*, 7–44. All quotations of Croll are from this edition.

⁹Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 209.

¹⁰Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 209.

The anti-Ciceronian stylist deliberately avoids ‘roundness and smoothness of composition’. A principal means of achieving this, Croll suggests, is the ‘deliberate asymmetry’ of the anti-Ciceronian style.¹¹ He is contrasting the asymmetry of Wotton’s sentence to the symmetries of Ciceronian periods. Chapter Three described the symmetry between the *membra* of Ciceronian periods, which is primarily achieved by *isocolon*, *paromoion* and *parison*. In contrast to his Ciceronian predecessors, Wotton omitted ‘several of the steps by which roundness and smoothness of composition might have been attained’. The shift from Ciceronian periods to Wotton’s sentence, Croll suggests, represents a move away from artifice and towards realism:

The successive processes of revision to which these [Ciceronian] periods had been submitted had removed them from reality by just so many steps. For themselves, they [the anti-Ciceronians] preferred to present the truth of experience in a less concocted form.¹²

The anti-Ciceronian shift away from symmetry and artifice, Croll continues, is a transition towards a kind of ‘modernism’.¹³ This modern aesthetic aimed to depict ‘a mind thinking, or, in Pascal’s words, *la peinture de la pensée*’,¹⁴ and thus ‘It preferred the forms that express the energy and labor of minds seeking the truth, not without dust and heat’.¹⁵ The anti-

¹¹Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 213.

¹²Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 210.

¹³Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 207.

¹⁴Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 210.

¹⁵Croll, ‘Baroque Style in Prose’, 208.

Ciceronians, therefore, deliberately avoided the symmetry and artifice of the Ciceronian style, so as to convey a realistic impression of the mind in motion. Throughout the various iterations of Croll's account of the anti-Ciceronian movement, he emphasized the movement's rejection of Ciceronian symmetry and artifice.

Several early modern texts provide evidence for Croll's claim that departures from the Ciceronian style represented a reaction against rhetoric. This claim is supported, for example, by the quotation above from Bacon's 1605 English edition of *Advancement*. Moreover, in an early essay 'A Reflection upon Cicero', Montaigne suggests that a characteristic feature of Cicero's style is the overt, exact arrangement of words, and he praises the letters of Epicurus and Seneca because they do not display this feature of the Ciceronian style:

Et, outre cette difference, encore ne sont ce pas letters vuides et descharnées, qui ne se soutiennent que par un delicat chois de mots, entassez et rangez à un juste cadence.¹⁶

And, besides this difference, still these [the letters of Epicurus and Seneca] are not empty and fleshless letters, which hold themselves together only by a delicate choice of words, heaped up and arranged in an exact cadence.

In his *Essays*, William Cornwallis similarly expresses a preference for Seneca and Tacitus, criticizing Cicero on the grounds that his writing is rhetorical, abounding in 'superfluous words'.¹⁷ While these passages provide some evidence for Croll's characterization of the

¹⁶ Montaigne, *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*, ed. Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 252.

¹⁷ Cornwallis, 'On Vanity', in *Essays*, ed. Allen, 175.

anti-Ciceronian movement, his critics have shown that anti-Ciceronianism was far more variegated and disparate than Croll allows.

A.2 Croll's critics

Despite the considerable influence of Croll's account on twentieth-century prose studies, his characterization of the anti-Ciceronian style – in particular, his emphasis on its asymmetry and lack of artifice – does not square with the writings of many of the authors deemed anti-Ciceronian. The main representative of anti-Ciceronianism in early modern England, according to Croll, is Francis Bacon, and the two most prominent anti-Ciceronians of first-century Rome are Seneca and Tacitus. In his book, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, Brian Vickers criticizes Croll's account, arguing that both Bacon's and Seneca's prose styles, far from being asymmetrical, are rather characterized by an abundance of symmetry. In the following passage, Vickers draws attention to Seneca's fondness for symmetrical constructions:

although it [the 'new style' of Seneca] has abandoned the length, copiousness and expansive movement of a Ciceronian period it still depends for its effects on repetition and parallelism: it is symmetrical, but on a smaller scale – and, indeed, the smallness of the gap between the various syntactical parts only draws more attention to the symmetry. Again, the most contentious leader of the new style, Seneca the Younger...is certainly characterised by small, highly pointed clauses and periods (*minutissimae sententiae*, as Quintilian called them).¹⁸

¹⁸Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, 100.

The passage below, taken from Seneca's *Epistles*, illustrates the 'smaller scale' symmetry and the ornamental artifice that, as Vickers observes, is characteristic of Seneca's style:

- (1) Hunc vidimus in bello fortem, in foro timidum
- (2) animose paupertatem ferentem, humiliter infamiam;
- (3) factum laudivimus, contempsimus virum;
- (4) Alium vidimus adversus amicos benignum, adversus inimicos temperatum,
- (5) et publica et privata sancte ac religiose administrantem,
- (6) non desse ei in iis quae toleranda erant, patientiam, in iis quae agenda, prudentiam.
- (7) Vidimus, ubi tribuendum esset, plena manu dantem, ubi laborandum, pertinacem et obnixum et lassitudinem corporis animo sublevantem.
- (8) Praeterea idem erat semper et in omni actu par sibi, iam non consilio bonus, sed more eo perductus,
- (9) ut non tantum recte facere posset, sed nisi recte facere non posset.

(*Epistles*, 120.9–10)¹⁹

- (1) We see him strong in war, but timid in peace
- (2) bearing poverty with courage, but dishonour basely;
- (3) we praise the deed, we disdain the man.
- (4) Another man we see benign to friends, temperate to enemies
- (5) controlling himself piously and conscientiously in both public and private

¹⁹Seneca, *Epistles 93–124*, trans. Richard Gummere, Loeb Classical Library 77 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

(6) and he does not lack patience in actions which must be tolerated, and prudence in actions which must be done.

(7) We see that, where payments should be made, he gives with a generous hand, and where work should be done, he is resolute and firm, overcoming the fatigue of his body with his spirit.

(8) Moreover, he is always the same, and in every act, consistent with himself, not only good by intention but also guided by habit

(9) so that not only is he able to act virtuously, but also he is unable to act other than virtuously.

In this passage, rhetorical ornamentation abounds, and the dominant ornament is the antithetical *sententia*. I have divided the passage into nine sections, each of which is a *sententia* and each of which, except for (2), contains a pair of symmetrical phrases. In general, the source of symmetry between the pairs of clauses is *parison* (like-structure) and *paromoion* (like-sound). The symmetrical phrases are underlined, and bold font is used to indicate the syllables that create *paromoion*. In this passage, *paromoion* primarily takes the form of *homoioteleuton* (like-endings) and repeated words. The abundance of rhetorical figures in this passage – in particular, the use of antitheses, *sententiae*, *parison* and *paromoion* – illustrates the ornamental quality of Seneca’s style. Among classical scholars, it is a commonplace that Seneca’s style is highly ornamental.²⁰

²⁰See, for example, Walter Summers’s introduction to the *Select Letters of Seneca*; William Dominik, ‘The Style is the Man: Seneca, Tacitus and Quintilian’s canon’, in *Roman Eloquence: Rhetoric in Society and Literature*, ed. William Dominik (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Michael von Albrecht, *Masters of Roman Prose*, trans. Neil Adkin (Leeds: Francis Cairns Ltd, 1989).

Guided by the stylistic model of Seneca, Bacon's *Essays* are, as was shown in Chapter Three, a highly conscious experiment in the sententious style. Moreover, like Seneca's passage above, his essays are characterised by 'smaller scale' symmetries, as is exemplified by the following passage from Bacon's early essay 'On Studies':²¹

Reading maketh	a full man,
conference	a ready man, and
writing	an exact man.
And therefore	
if a man write little,	he had need have a great memory,
if he confer little,	he had need have a present wit, and
if he write little,	he had need have much cunning,
to seem to know that he doth not.	

Bacon uses repetition and *parison* liberally, so as to create symmetries between the phrases in the passage.²²

An examination the prose styles of Seneca and Bacon, therefore, very quickly undermines Croll's assertion that their anti-Ciceronian styles are characterized by asymmetry and a lack of artifice. Moreover, this assertion is also undermined by some of the early modern commentary on Seneca's style. Thus, in the passage from the 1623 edition of *Advancement* that was quoted at the opening of the chapter, Bacon explicitly deprecates Seneca's and Tacitus's styles as characterized by 'artifice' and 'ornament'. This style is,

²¹Bacon, 'Of Studies', in *Works of Bacon*, 6: 525.

²²Vickers provides an extensive demonstration of Bacon's use of symmetry in *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, 116–40.

Bacon says, ‘nothing else but a hunting after words, and fine placing of them’. Tacitus and Seneca’s styles, Bacon says, like that of Cicero, are defective in focusing on ‘words’ over matter.

In the annotations appended to his translation of Tacitus’s *Agricola*, Sir Henry Savile expresses a similar perception of Tacitus and Seneca’s style:

How that age [the age of Tacitus and Seneca] was eared, long or round, I cannot define: but sure I am it yielded a kind of sophisticate eloquence, and rhyming harmony of words, whereunder was a small matter in sense, when there seemed to be the most in appearance.²³

This style, Savile maintains, was used in Greece by ‘teachers of oratory in school’ but not by practitioners of rhetoric. In Rome, however, this ‘heresy of style’ was ‘begun by Seneca, Quintilian, the Plinies, and Tacitus’. When Savile refers to the ‘rhyming harmony of words’ in imperial rhetoric, he has in mind the kind of symmetries in the above quotation of Seneca. Seneca’s use of *paromoion*, and especially *homoiooteleuton*, gave rise to ‘rhyming harmony’ in his *sententiae*.

In *Art of Rhetoric*, Thomas Wilson also criticizes the use of ‘rimed sentences’. He observes that such devices were especially popular in Augustine’s age and also in Tacitus’s Rome:

Notwithstanding, the people were such where he [Saint Augustine] lived, that they took much delight in rimed sentences, and in orations made ballad wise.

²³Henry Savile, *The End of Nero and Beginning of Galba...The Life of Agricola* (1591), annotations, 48.

Yea, they were so nice and so wayward to please that except the preacher from time to time could rime out his sermon, they could not long abide the hearing. Tacitus also sheweth that in his time, the judges and servants at the law were driven to use this kind of phrase...So that for the flowing style and full sentence, crept in minstrel's elocution, talking matters together all in rime; and for weightiness and gravity of words, succeeded nothing else but wantonness of invention. Tully was forsaken, with Livy, Caesar and others.²⁴

Wilson distinguishes between an early phrase of Roman rhetoric – the rhetoric of Cicero, Livy and Caesar – and the imperial rhetorical style of Tacitus's time. Moreover, like Savile, Wilson emphasizes the 'riming' that characterized imperial rhetoric, which is created by *paromoion*. Wilson suggests that this kind of rhetorical ornamentation is characteristic of the writings of the authors of early imperial Rome, such as Seneca and Tacitus, rather than Ciceronian rhetoric.

In his account of the late Elizabethan vogue for *sententiae*, Hoskyns also stresses the artifice of the imperial sententious style, suggesting that the overuse of *sententiae* renders a style excessively ornamental:

It is very true that a sentence [that is, a *sententia*] is a pearl in a discourse, but is it a good discourse that is all pearl?²⁵

Hoskyns's remark is a variation on the following remark of Quintilian, who similarly judges that *sententiae*, when used in excess, may lead to overly ornamental style.²⁶

²⁴Wilson, *Art of Rhetoric*, 227.

²⁵Hoskyns, *Directions for Speech and Style*, 153.

Ego vero haec lumina orationis velut oculos quosdam esse eloquentiae credo. Sed neque oculos esse toto corpore velim. (*Orator's Education* 8.5.34)

In truth, I think that these ornaments [that is, *sententiae*] are like the eyes of eloquence. But I do not want eyes all over the body.

Like *Orator's Education*, Tacitus's *Dialogue on Oratory* explores the contrast between the 'modern' style of rhetoric – the style that dominated of first-century Rome – and the earlier Ciceronian style. This text further undermines Croll's characterization of the anti-Ciceronian movement as a reaction against artifice. The first-century anti-Ciceronian in the *Dialogue*, Marcus Aper, does not attack Cicero's style as artificial, but, on the contrary, as insufficiently ornamental:

velut in rudi aedificio, firmus sane paries et duraturus, sed non satis expolitus et splendens. (*Dialogue on Oratory*, 22)

It [Cicero's style] is like crude and unrefined architecture, the wall firm and lasting, to be sure, but without enough polish and splendour.

In contrast, Aper suggests that modern anti-Ciceronian style is attractive to 'the young men' precisely on account of its 'ornament'. Thus he observes that what the 'young men' are seeking in speech is 'some pointed and brief *sententia* flashing out an insight, or a passage which gleams with exquisite and poetical refinement. For poetical ornament is now

²⁶The editor of Hoskyns's text, Louise Osborn, cites Quintilian as a source for this comment.

demanded of the orator'.²⁷ In summary: Croll's account of the anti-Ciceronian style, which emphasizes its asymmetry and lack of artifice, is undermined both by close readings of anti-Ciceronian texts, such as those of Seneca and Bacon, and also by several of the classical and early modern commentators on the style of Seneca, Tacitus and Cicero.

Closely related to this criticism of Croll's account are the concerns articulated by Robert Adolph in his book *The Rise of Modern Prose Style*, which builds upon R. F. Jones's earlier attacks on Croll. Combatting Croll's claim that the plain style of the Restoration was a development of the late sixteenth-century Senecan style, Adolph, like Vickers, draws attention to the rhetorical ornamentation of Seneca's style, contrasting the 'smart antitheses' and 'rhetorical wordplay' of Seneca's prose with the Restoration plain style.²⁸

In his book *The Senecan Amble*, George Williamson, a defender of Croll, acknowledges these challenges to Croll's account. But while Williamson recognizes that Seneca's style 'binds itself together by parallelism', he nevertheless proposes that Croll's account can be finessed in such a way as to allow for a diversity of anti-Ciceronian styles.²⁹ Williamson's defence of Croll, however, is not compelling. If the anti-Ciceronian movement is redefined as encompassing this diversity of styles, the result is not a revision to, but a major departure from, Croll's original account. The impetus behind the anti-Ciceronian movement, according to Croll, was a reaction against artifice towards realism, an impulse to express the mind in motion. But once the patent artifice and the carefully contrived balance

²⁷traduntque in vicem ac saepe in colonias ac provincias suas scribunt, sive sensus

aliquis arguta et brevi sententia effulsit, sive locus exquisito et poetico cultu enituit.

Exigitur enim iam ab oratore etiam poeticus decor (*Dialogue on Oratory*, 20). Part of this passage was discussed in Chapter Three.

²⁸Adolph, *Rise of Modern Prose Style*, 83–96.

²⁹George Williamson, *The Senecan Amble* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 51.

of Senecan prose are recognized, we are a considerable distance from Croll's account. The lesson from the criticisms of Vickers, Jones and Adolph is, at the very least, that Croll's account of the anti-Ciceronian movement was overly ambitious. He sought to impose a unity on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prose that is not present in the texts.

A.3 Salvaging the notion of an anti-Ciceronian style

Reflecting upon the criticisms of Croll's account, Roger Pooley has questioned whether the Latin labels of 'Ciceronian', 'anti-Ciceronian', 'Senecan' and 'Tacitean' can be coherently applied. Writing two decades ago, his recommendation to future researchers was to abandon the 'taxonomy linked to Latin styles' and 'start again':

Rather than following a taxonomy linked to Latin styles, it might be more helpful to extract some of the terms of the debate – parallelism, the links between syntax and logic, particularly in the loosely paratactic sentence, even the length of phrases and sentences, and start again.³⁰

Despite Pooley's advice, however, the Latin labels have retained considerable currency. Patricia Parker has examined the gendered language used in classical and early modern debates about Cicero's style.³¹ Parker's exploration of the anti-Ciceronian movement has proved to be influential, and was built upon, for example, in Jennifer Waldron's analysis of Montaigne's style.³² In his studies on Shakespeare's style, Russ McDonald continues to make

³⁰Pooley, *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century*, 9.

³¹Parker, 'Virile Style'.

³²Waldron, 'Beyond Words and Deeds: Montaigne's Soldierly Style'.

use of the distinction between the Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian style, as do Neil Rhodes and Gert Ronberg in their accounts of early modern style.³³

Not just literary scholars but also historians of political thought have felt the need to retain the ‘taxonomy linked to Latin styles’. When examining the influence of Tacitus’s and Seneca’s works on early modern political and philosophical thought, Adriana McCrea, Richard Tuck, Alexandra Gajda and Markku Peltonen also remark on their influence on early modern style.³⁴ In both the classical and early modern periods, the Latin styles were fraught with political connotations, and thus labels such as ‘the Ciceronian style’ cannot simply be reduced to an ahistorical formal characterization – a characterization that only refers, say, to its use of symmetry, hypotaxis, suspended meaning, and lengthy clauses and sentences. Crucially, the Ciceronian style is, in addition, a style that emerged in the late Republic, a style used by a celebrated advocate of republicanism. As a consequence, the ‘taxonomy linked to Latin styles’ is of particular interest to historical formalist studies.

Research into early modern stylistics, therefore, faces a dilemma. On the one hand, Croll’s account of the anti-Ciceronian movement is implausible. On the other hand, however, to abandon altogether ‘the taxonomy linked to Latin styles’ would obscure the historical context of these styles. In response to this dilemma, I suggest, we should retain the Latin labels, but depart from Croll’s characterization of reactions against Cicero’s style.

Croll attempts to give a unified account of ‘the anti-Ciceronian movement’, when, in fact, there were a number of different – and, indeed, incompatible – reactions against

³³McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, especially 108–136; *Shakespeare’s Late Style*, 62–66; Rhodes, *Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature*, 60–63; Ronberg, *A Way with Words*, especially 109–13.

³⁴Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 5–6, 41–2; McCrea, *Constant Minds*, *passim*; Gajda, ‘Tacitus and Political Thought’; Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 124–25.

Cicero's style. Bacon's quotations at the opening of the chapter record two distinct anti-Ciceronian reactions. The first passage inveighs against the Ciceronians' preference 'towards copie than weight', towards 'words and not matter'. Similar anti-rhetorical criticisms of Cicero were advanced by Montaigne and Cornwallis, who proposed that Seneca and Tacitus were superior stylistic models. But the second quotation of Bacon describes a very different anti-Ciceronian reaction: the imitation of Seneca and Tacitus, Bacon observes, resulted in a style characterized by '*sententiae concisae*' and 'artifice', so 'that every passage seems more witty and weighty than indeed it is' and learning became 'a hunting after words'. Other early modern commentators, including Savile, Wilson and Hoskyns, also characterize the sententious style of Seneca and Tacitus as highly ornamental. Croll, in effect, lumped together these two opposing reactions against Ciceronian speech, and the result was an incoherent notion of 'the anti-Ciceronian movement'. My suggestion is that we should talk in the plural of 'anti-Ciceronian reactions' rather than of '*the* anti-Ciceronian movement'.

In Chapter Three, I examine one kind of reaction against Cicero's style, tracing out the connection between the ornate sententious style and Tacitean Stoicism. I make no attempt to explain the anti-rhetorical reaction against Cicero, which called for a plainer style of speech. Furthermore, I would suggest that there is no unified explanation for the various reactions against Cicero's style. Rather, they represented responses to diverse impulses in early modern culture and politics.

A.4 Classifying the Latin styles

While Croll provided numerous examples of early modern anti-Ciceronian prose, noticeably absent from his work are samples of text from Seneca and Tacitus. David Burchell has suggested that a crucial error in Croll's analysis is his assumption that Seneca and Tacitus

share a common style.³⁵ While I acknowledge that there are important differences between the styles of the two authors, I suggest that both Seneca and Tacitus, as well as a range of other authors of the early empire, can be construed as using a sententious mode of writing – a style characterized by an abundance of *sententiae*.

The quotation above from Seneca’s *Letters* illustrates his frequent recourse to *sententiae*, and his *Essays* are similarly sententious.³⁶ The following passage from his essay *On Anger* illustrates the abundance of *sententiae* – and especially antithetical *sententiae* – in the *Essays*:

Inter istos quos togatos vides nulla pax est; alter in alterius exitium levi compendio ducitur; nulli nisi ex alterius iniuria quaestus est; felicem oderunt, infelicem contemnunt; maiorem gravantur, minori graves sunt; diversis stimulantur cupiditatibus; omnia perdita ob levem voluptatem praedamque cupiunt. (*On Anger*, 2.8.2)

(1) For those you see in civilian dress there is no peace;

(2) any may be led to destroy another for a trivial reward;

³⁵Burchell questions whether there is ‘a connection between the Tacitean and Senecan modes’: “‘A Plain Blunt Man’’: Hobbes, Science, and Rhetoric Revisited’ in *Science, Literature and Rhetoric in Early Modern England*, ed. Juliet Cummins and David Burchell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 59–60.

³⁶For commentators who draw attention to the abundance of *sententiae* in Seneca’s works, see Summers’s introduction to the *Select Letters of Seneca*, ed. Summers, especially lxxiv–lxxvii; Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 160–67; Motto and Clark, ‘*Ingenium Facile et Copiosum*: Point and Counterpoint in Senecan Style’.

- (3) no one profits unless through harm to another;
- (4) they hate the successful, they condemn the unsuccessful;
- (5) they are vexed by their superiors, they vex their inferiors;
- (6) they are driven by conflicting desires;
- (7) for trivial pleasure and plunder, they are willing to destroy everything.

Seneca's passage consists of a sequence of 'pointed and brief' *sententiae*. Of the seven statements that constitute the passage, all but the sixth are *sententiae*. Each *sententia* is pointed with rhetorical ornamentation, especially with Seneca's characteristic ornaments of antithesis, paradox and parallelism. *Sententia* (1) expresses the paradoxical conceit that those in civilian dress enjoy no peace. *Sententiae* (2), (3) and (7) are structured around an antithesis between 'reward', 'profits', and 'pleasure' on the one hand, and the harms they cause, on the other. *Sententiae* (4) and (5) also are built around antitheses, between 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' and between 'superiors' and 'inferiors'. In addition, (4) and (5) are closely balanced. In (5), for instance, the brief clause 'they are vexed by their superiors' (*maiolem gravantur*) is parallel to 'they vex their inferiors' (*minori graves sunt*): the two clauses are balanced by *parison*, *paromoion* and *isocolon*.

As has been observed by a number of commentators, *sententiae* also abound in Tacitus's writing, although they are not evenly distributed throughout his works.³⁷ They are

³⁷F. R. D. Goodyear, 'Development of Language and Style in the Annals of Tacitus', *JRS* 58 (1968), 26–7 and *Tacitus*, *Greek and Rome New Surveys in the Classics*, 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 38; Martin, *Tacitus*, 219–20; Plass, *Wit and the Writing of History*, 26–55; Sinclair, *Tacitus the Sententious Historian*; Tacitus, *Histories Book I*, ed. Cynthia Damon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15–16 and 302–4; Tacitus,

most common in his early *Histories*, and somewhat less frequent in the *Annals*.³⁸ Moreover, in the early *Histories*, Tacitus's use of the *sententia* is more obvious, and it 'stands out' from the context, while in the *Annals*, it tends to be subtly integrated into the text.³⁹ In her edition of *Histories Book I*, Cynthia Damon lists the *sententiae* that she found in the text; she records 54 *sententiae* scattered among the 90 paragraphs of the book.⁴⁰ In fact, Damon understates the density of *sententiae*. For example, in Tacitus's description of Mucianus's character, quoted below, Damon only identifies one *sententia*, which appears in the final sentence of the passage. But if we have reference to Quintilian's account of the 'modern' varieties of *sententiae*, which was summarized in Chapter Three, we can identify numerous *sententiae* in the passage:

Syriam et quattuor legiones obtinebat Licinius Mucianus, vir secundis adversisque juxta famosus. Insignis amicitias iuvenis ambitiose coluerat; mox attritis opibus, lubrico statu, suspecta etiam Claudii iracundia, in secretum Asiae sepositus tam prope ab exule fuit quam postea a principe. Luxuria industria, comitate adrogantia, malis bonisque artibus mixtus: nimiae voluptates, cum vacaret; quotiens expedierat, magnae virtutes: palam laudares, secreta male

Histories Book II, ed. Rhiannon Ash (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21–24; Oakley, 'Style and Language', 199–203.

³⁸Goodyear, 'Development of Language and Style in the Annals of Tacitus', 27. See also Martin, *Tacitus*, 220.

³⁹Goodyear, 'Development of Language and Style in the Annals of Tacitus', 27. See also Martin, *Tacitus*, 220.

⁴⁰Tacitus, *Histories Book I* ed. Damon, 302–4.

audiebant: sed apud subjectos apud proximos, apud collegas, variis inlecebris potens, et cui expeditus fuerit tradere imperium quam obtinere.

Syria and four legions were held by Licinius Mucianus, a man famous for both his good fortune and misfortune. As a young man, he cultivated eminent friendships for the sake of his ambitions; later, with his wealth dissipated and his position shaky, he suspected Claudius was angry with him, and departed for a secluded life in Asia, as near to exile as he was subsequently to the throne. He was a mixture of luxury and industry, affability and arrogance, vices and virtues: his pleasures were immoderate when he was at leisure, but whenever he was put to work, his virtues were impressive. You would applaud his public persona, but his private life was disreputable. Nevertheless, on account of his diverse appealing qualities, he gained influence among his subordinates, among his intimates, among his colleagues, and was more capable of bestowing imperial power than obtaining it.

The *sententia* identified by Damon, at the close of the passage, is built around an antithesis between a capacity to bestow (*tradere*) and to obtain (*obtinere*). Tacitus highlights this antithesis by using *homoioleuton* (like-endings), ensuring that the two antithetical verbs both end in *-ere*. When Savile criticizes Tacitus's 'rhyming harmony of words', he has in mind especially this kind of *homoioleuton*. But in addition to the *sententia* cited by Damon, the passage contains a series of other *sententiae* pointed with antithesis, *homoioleuton* and paradox. The following are the most obvious:

vir secundis adversisque juxta famosus

a man famous for both his good fortune and misfortune

Luxuria industria, comitate adrogantia, malis bonisque artibus mixtus

He was a mixture of luxury and industry, affability and arrogance, vices and virtues

nimiae voluptates, cum vacaret; quotiens expedierat, magnae virtutes

His pleasures were immoderate when he was at leisure, but whenever he was put to work, his virtues were impressive.

palam laudares, secreta male audiebant:

You would applaud his public persona, but his private life was disreputable.

The first three *sententiae* each contain one or more pairs of rhyming endings, which have been underlined. The function of the rhyming is to highlight the antitheses in the passage. The rhymed pair *secundis* and *adversis* contrasts good fortune and misfortune, the pair *luxuria* and *industria* expresses an antithesis between luxury and industry, and *malis* and *bonis* presents an opposition between vices and virtues. Moreover, Tacitus constructs these antitheses to create a sense of paradox. It is paradoxical that Mucianus was famous not only for his successes but also his misfortunes, that he mingled luxury with industry, affability with arrogance, virtue with vice, and that his public and private personae were so different.

Tacitus's description of Mucianus is a paradigmatic example of the imperial sententious style. It also exemplifies the breadth of the 'modern' concept of the *sententia* in first-century Rome. In the passage, there are no *gnomai* – that is, there are no proverbs or maxims, no universal pronouncements (*vox universalis*). Rather, the passage displays what

Quintilian calls the ‘modern’ kind of *sententia* – the brief, compressed expression of ingenuity.

As Burchell observes, there are important differences between the styles of Tacitus and Seneca. For example, commentators have drawn attention to examples of Tacitus’s tendency towards asymmetry and variation of style, which, it might be thought, is in sharp contrast to Seneca’s highly symmetrical style.⁴¹ But this underestimates the complexity of Tacitus’s style. Tacitus makes use, at the same time, of both symmetry and departures from symmetry. As S. P. Oakley puts it, in Tacitus’s ‘extraordinary style, variation and inconcinnity are often placed in the context of otherwise balanced phrasing’.⁴² For example, while I drew attention to the balanced endings in the following *sententia*, it is also characterized by a departure from symmetry: Tacitus deliberately avoids introducing a ‘rhyming harmony’ between the antithetical terms *comitate* (‘affability’) and *adrogantia* (‘arrogance’):

Luxuria industria, comitate adrogantia, malis bonisque artibus mixtus

He was a mixture of luxury and industry, affability and arrogance, vices and virtues.

Despite the differences between the writings of Tacitus and Seneca, both authors can be classified as practitioners of the distinctive style of the early empire – the brief, pointed and sententious style. When early modern commentators such as Bacon and Savile align the styles of Seneca and Tacitus, they particularly have in mind their taste for ‘pointed and brief’ *sententiae*.

⁴¹Martin, *Tacitus*, 220–21.

⁴²Oakley, ‘Style and Language’, 199.

Emerging from the debate about Croll's account are, in effect, two distinct early modern characterizations of the Senecan-Tacitean style: Montaigne and Cornwallis present it as relatively plain, contrasting it to the artifice and rhetoric of Cicero's style, while Bacon, Savile, Hoskyns and Wilson characterize it as a highly ornamental and rhetorical style. In fact, both characterizations are intelligible. In some respects the sententious style is ornamental, but in other respects it resembles the plain style rather than the grand style of Cicero. In its use of antithesis, paradox, figures of balance, and other rhetorical decoration, the sententious style is highly ornamental. On the other hand, in respect of its brevity and its choppy movement, the sententious style is similar to the plain style, at least when contrasted to the grand style of Cicero.

A.5 The sententious style and native 'scriptualism'

Whereas Croll's essays emphasize the influence of classical texts on the development of early modern prose, Janel Mueller's *The Native Tongue and the Word: 1380 to 1580* stresses, instead, native developments. Mueller provides a compelling criticism of Croll's account of the anti-Ciceronian style, drawing attention to the problems arising from the ambitious claims he made for the importance of the anti-Ciceronian movement. Mueller's findings are consistent with my account, which calls for greater nuance and modesty in characterizing early modern stylistic developments.

Mueller's book traces the evolution of 'scriptualism', a style modelled on Biblical language. In her discussion of sixteenth-century prose, she contrasts scriptualist writing, such as Tyndale's biblical translations, with prose that displays the Latinizing influence of Cicero, such as Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor*. She argues that Ciceronian prose, with its elaborate subordinating syntactical structures, is considerably more distant from the

English vernacular than scriptualist prose. At least in respect of its syntax, the scriptualist style is ‘anti-Ciceronian’.

Moreover, in certain moods, the scriptualist style is highly sententious. The following two passages illustrate the sententious mode of scriptualist writing. The first is from Psalm 18 and the latter passage is from Paul’s Epistles to the Corinthians:

26. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

27. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

28. For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

29. For by thee I have run through a hoop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.⁴³

It [the resurrection] is sown a natural body, and riseth a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body: as it is written: the first man Adam was made a living soul: and the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual: but that which is natural, and then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of the Lord from heaven...And as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly.⁴⁴

⁴³*Bible*, ed. Carroll and Prickett, 641.

⁴⁴*Tyndale’s New Testament* ed. David Daniell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 258–59.

Each passage is, in effect, a series of *sententiae* decorated with antitheses and figures of balance.⁴⁵

Mueller's study of the scripturalism focuses on the period between 1380 and 1580. While Croll's concern is primarily with a later period, nevertheless her study poses an important challenge for Croll's account. This challenge can be framed by asking the following question: how should we classify the prose style in the following passage from John Donne's *Devotions*?

Earth is the centre of my body, Heaven is the centre of my soul; these two are the natural places of those two; but those two go not to these two, in an equal pace: my body falls down without pushing, my soul does not go up without pulling: ascension is my soul's pace and measure, but precipitation is my body's.⁴⁶

In Croll's essays, Donne was classified as an anti-Ciceronian.⁴⁷ Drawing on Croll's taxonomy of style, Joan Webber's study of Donne's prose suggests that the *Devotions*

⁴⁵For an account of balance in the Old Testament style, see George Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915); Gerald Hammond, *The Making of the English Bible* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1982), 68–88; Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word*, esp. 34–35; James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). For commentary on Paul's sententious style, see Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word*, 192–198; Paul Holloway, 'Paul's Pointed Prose: the "Sententia" in Roman Rhetoric and Paul', *Novum Testamentum* 40, no. 1 (1998): 32–53.

⁴⁶*John Donne: Selected Prose*, ed. Neil Rhodes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 102–3.

⁴⁷Croll, 'Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne and Bacon', 195, 201.

exemplify the Senecan anti-Ciceronian style: ‘The sentence structure of the meditations is often the more striking form of Senecanism – the *stile coupé*’.⁴⁸ While the prose of the *Devotions* is, at least in places, highly sententious, the question nevertheless arises of whether the style should be classified as Senecan. Should it instead be construed as displaying the scripturalist sententious style? In a number of respects, Donne’s style is similar to the sententious style in the quotation from Paul’s Epistles to the Corinthians. Both passages are studded with brief, antithetical *sententiae*, and, indeed, the two passages are structured around the same antithesis – between earth and body, on the one hand, and spirit and heaven on the other.

A similar question arises in relation to other late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century religious texts. For example, the ‘metaphysical preaching’ of this period is frequently labelled as anti-Ciceronian.⁴⁹ Bishop Joseph Hall’s style, in particular, has been classified as Senecan by Croll, Williamson and others.⁵⁰ However, as F. L. Huntley suggests, Hall’s style could equally be described as scripturalist: ‘Hall got his style partly from Seneca but mostly from the poetry of David, the pithy sentences ascribed to Solomon, and the persuasive prose of St. Paul’.⁵¹

⁴⁸Joan Webber, *Contrary Music* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 189.

⁴⁹Horton Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1986), 68; Williamson, *Senecan Amble*, 237–41; Ian Gordon, *The Movement of English Prose* (London: Longmans, 1966), 111.

⁵⁰Croll, “‘Attic Prose’ in the Seventeenth Century”, 87; Croll, ‘The Baroque Style in Prose’, 213; Williamson, *Senecan Amble*, 246–8; McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 187.

⁵¹F. L. Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall and Protestant Meditation in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study with the Texts of *The Art of Divine Meditation* (1606) and *Occasional Meditations* (1633)* (Binghamton: Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1981),

An understanding of the sententious style requires a more flexible concept of intertextuality than that used in some of the treatments of the anti-Ciceronian movement. Keir Elam has described the shift since the 1980s towards a more general concept of intertextuality, away from one that focuses on ‘one to one relationships with privileged sources’.⁵² In a number of important religious texts, literary style does not bear a one-to-one relationship either with classical anti-Ciceronianism or with scripturalism, but is the outcome of the confluence of these two discourses.

The principal lesson to be derived from the criticisms of Croll’s account is that, in attempting to provide a unifying explanation of ‘*the anti-Ciceronian movement*’, Croll was overly ambitious. My own proposal is more modest, focusing on one specific kind of reaction against the Ciceronian style – the fashion for the ornate, sententious style. Moreover, the complex intertextuality of sententious discourse demands that a critic be wary when evaluating the antecedents of sententious writings. Thus, if the question arises of whether a particular aphoristic style should be classified as Senecan, the answer should be provided with more caution and nuance than that displayed by several of the earlier commentators on ‘*the anti-Ciceronian movement*’.

47-9. See also Richard McCabe, *Joseph Hall: A Study in Satire and Meditation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 189–202.

⁵²Keir Elam, ‘Afterword: Italy as Intertext’, in *Shakespeare, Italy and Intertextuality*, ed. Michele Marrapodi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 254.

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