Dido, Queen of Carthage and the Contradictions of Sovereignty

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Just what kind of monarch is the protagonist of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*? The question would have occurred to many in the play's original audience. Dido herself presents her tragic arc as that of a "queen."[1] Many spectators would know that Virgil's *Aeneid*, the play's chief source and reference point, takes pains to present her as the just ruler of a well-framed commonwealth. Virgil's Dido is first glimpsed progressing magnificently to the temple of Juno in the centre of Carthage, where she proceeds to dispense "laws and justice to men, and distribute the labour of tasks by merit or by lot."[2] The late classical commentaries of Servius and Donatus, well-known in early modern Europe, thought these lines deliberately framed to compliment Dido's untypical virtue and authority as a female ruler.[3] Meanwhile the Carthaginians, at least in early modern texts of the poem, are described appointing "laws and magistrates and a sacred senate" while building their city.[4] These details, suggesting obvious parallels with the Roman *res publica*, imply a constitutional and consensually governed polity.[5] Thomas Phaer's translation of Virgil from the mid-1550s had used them to portray Carthage as a recognizably *English* "monarchical republic," rendering them as "laws and officers […] in parlament."[6]

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[1] Christopher Marlowe, *Dido Queen of Carthage* (henceforward *DQoC*), 5.1.294, 307. References are to *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 2nd ed., 2 vols (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1: 1–70.

[2] Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.507–8, my trans. (*iura dabat legesque viris, operumque laborem / partibus aequabat iustis aut sorte trahebat*), in *Opera*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Clarendon Press, 1969).

[3] *P. Vergilii Maronis … Bucolica, Georgica, et Aeneis, Doctissimis Servii Honorati, & Aelii Donati, excellentium Grammaticorum commentariis illustrata* (Basle: Hieronymus Curio, 1544), 191–92. Donatus, for example, says Virgil's was "extraordinary praise *[praecipua laus]*" because "men were assenting to the orders of a woman [*acquiescebant viri iussis foeminae*]."

[4] Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.426: *iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum*. The line's provenance was questioned in the eighteenth century by Christian Gottlob Heyne, and by many scholars since.

[5] Other hints also support the comparison. At the building of Carthage, a horse's head is discovered beneath its foundations (*Aeneid* 1.441–15), "like as at the building of Rome the head of a man": marginal note in Thomas Phaer, trans., *The .xiii. Bookes of Aeneidos* (London: William How for Abraham Veal, 1584), sig. B.vi^{v}. The metaphor of industrious bees (*Aeneid* 1.430–40) also suggests Rome, at least indirectly via the well-known description of the bees' commonwealth in *Georgics* IV. For modern discussion of Virgil's deliberate analogies, see Elena Giusti, *Carthage in Virgil's Aeneid: Staging the Enemy Under Augustus* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), esp. 127 ff. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108241960.

[6] Phaer, *The .xiii. Bookes of Aeneidos*, sig. B.vi^{v}. For the Tudor idea of the king-in-parliament, see e.g. Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (?1562), ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge University Press, 1982), Book 2, chapters 1–4. Cf. Patrick Collinson, "The monarchical republic of Queen Elizabeth I," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 69, no. 2 (March 1987), 394–424, https://doi.org/10.7227/BJRL.69.2.5; John F. McDiarmid, ed., *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson* (Ashgate, 2007); Jonathan McGovern, "Was Elizabethan

https://doi.org/10.7190/jms.5.2025.pp1-30

Even without being primed by Virgil, spectators attending the play's first performances, sometime during the mid to late 1580s, would have been unsurprised that Dido's royal status and powers were a major focus.[7] The nature, origins and extent of regal authority were heavily debated in this period—in England as elsewhere—as a consequence of contested or doubtful successions, the precarious position of confessional minorities during the conflicts of religion, and growing awareness, due to trade, colonialism and humanist philological research, of the historical and geographical diversity of forms of human government. If such debate was marked at the extremes by absolutist ideas on the one hand and theories of popular sovereignty and the right of resistance or even tyrannicide on the other, there were any number of in-between positions and a variety of different political idioms—theological, juristic, politic-pragmatic—with which to articulate them.[8] Politically engaged English readers of the 1580s could find it relatively easy to get hold of texts as various as the Huguenot resistance tract *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, Pierre du Belloy's strongly royalist, pro-Bourbon *Apologie Catholique* or—most famously of all—Jean Bodin's encyclopaedic *Six Livres de la République*, often mis-characterized as simply a text of regal absolutism: in fact, despite Bodin's own strong preferences, it allowed for the legitimacy of

England really a Monarchical Republic?" *Historical Research : The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 92 (2019), 515–28, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12275.

[7] Martin Wiggins with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, volume 2: *1567–1589*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), 820, gives 1587–90 as the play's date range and a "best guess" of 1588. Cf. Wiggins, "When did Marlowe write *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?," *Review of English Studies* 59, no. 241 (2008), 521–41, https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgn104. The previous consensus was for earlier in the decade. The exact date is not a key premise for this essay's argument.

[8] The above sentences are necessarily very summary. The most accessible introduction to the (vast) field of political thought in the 1570s and 1580s remains Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2: *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 189–348, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817892; cf. J. W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Methuen, 1928), 302–444, and the chapters by Robert Kingdon (Calvinist resistance theory), J. H. M. Salmon (Catholic resistance theory and its opponents), Julian Franklin (Bodin and his influence), J. P. Sommerville (absolutism), and Peter Burke (Tacitism and reason of state) in J. H. Burns with Mark Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193–218, 219–253, 298–328, 347–73, 479–98. For political thought in the British Isles in this period, see Glenn Burgess, *British Political Thought, 1500–1660* (Red Globe Books, 2009), 92–141; debates within English Catholicism, Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the English Catholics* (Cambridge University, Press, 1982), 129–46; between Elizabethan Protestants, Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (Unwin Hyman, 1988), esp. 129–35, which argues for growing ideological polarization about royal powers towards the end of the 1580s. Throughout this period, English political thought and culture were strongly influenced by debates and publications overseas, especially France: see J. H. M. Salmon, *The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought* (Oxford University Press, 1959), especially chapter 2, "The Elizabethan Reception," 15–38; Lisa Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce: French anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (University of Rochester Press, 1996), esp. 75–118.

many different forms of government and several templates for monarchical rule.[9] The play's subject matter could not be more appropriate to a climate of ideological disputation concerning the powers of princes: it concerns a queen who falls for a "stranger," offers him her crown, and finally immolates herself in infatuated despair leaving her realm without a ruler or obvious successor.[10] Such a story virtually invites an audience to ponder the best form of monarchical succession, the advisability of female rulers, and the right of princes to alienate their authority—to mention only three of the questions that crop up in debates about monarchy in the period—and that is without considering any of the parallels to Elizabeth's failed marriage negotiations or the rival candidacy of Mary Stuart to the English throne, which themselves prompted such questions and which modern scholarship has often detected in the play.[11]

Given this background, the way *Dido of Queene of Carthage* goes about representing monarchy would have come as something of a surprise. Yes, royal authority is a key premise of the play's action. But it makes almost no attempt to deploy standard political languages or idioms to represent it—with one exception, which this essay shall later discuss. It abandons Virgil's model for either the Carthaginian state or its ruler's style of government. In the play, Dido is first encountered on the way to a banquet. If Carthage has laws, magistrates (besides the monarch), let alone a "sacred senate" or parliament, an audience never hears of them.

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[9] Stephanus Junius Brutus, the Celt, *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, trans. George Garnett (Cambridge University Press, 1994), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558689; [Pierre du Belloy], *Apologie Catholique* (n.p.: 1585); cf. Anon, trans., *A Catholicke Apologie* (London: for Edward Aggas, n.p.); Jean Bodin, *Six Livres de la République* (Paris: Jacques Du Puys, 1576). All of these texts have surviving copies in English university, college and cathedral libraries, and are mentioned by English writers and polemicists of the 1580s and beyond. For a discussion of the *Vindiciae* in early modern England (though not trained in detail on the 1580s), see Stefanio Tutino, "Huguenots, Jesuits and Tyrants: Notes on the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* in Early Modern England," *Journal of Early Modern History* 11, no. 3 (2007), 175–96, http://doi.org/10.1163/157006507781147452. Bodin's English impact is discussed in Salmon, *The French Religious Wars*, 22 ff., and J.H.M. Salmon, "The Legacy of Jean Bodin: Absolutism, Populism or Constitutionalism?" *History of Political Thought* 17, no. 4 (1996), 500–22 (esp. 514–22), https://www.jstor.org/stable/26217043. The image of Bodin as predominantly an absolutist has tended to derive from Julian H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1973); see however Daniel Lee, *Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Constitutional Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 187–224, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198745167.001.0001.

[10] The play departs from Virgil in having both Anna and Iarbus (original ruler of Libya before the Carthaginians' arrival) commit suicide also.

[11] For the claimed Anjou allusions, see Stump, Donald. "Marlowe's Travesty of Virgil: *Dido* and Elizabethan Dreams of Empire," *Comparative Drama* 34, no.1 (2000): 79–107, https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2000.0035. Lisa Hopkins, "Christopher Marlowe and the Succession to the English Crown," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 38, no. 1/2 (2008): 183–98 (184), http://www.jstor.org/stable/20479329, suggests that the play's plot alludes to the succession crisis. Deanne Williams, "Dido, Queen of England," *ELH* 73, no. 1 (2006): 31–59, https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2006.0010, points out the numerous resemblances between Dido and England's queen.

Instead, as this article will describe, the play advances a striking and in certain respects *un*-political or even anti-political portrait of princely power and identity. This vision centres on the subjective experience of princes themselves and their desires and pleasures, rather than the abstract or metaphorical corporate entities (state, body politic, kingdom, commonwealth, "republic") whose nature, genesis, purpose, structure and welfare were the chief interest of the period's ideological debates. So distinctive is the play's set of priorities that it calls into question standard strategies for interpreting the politics of early modern drama, and its relationship either to modern or early modern political ideas: for example those which try to read topical ideological or political positions straightforwardly into the play (and therefore plays themselves as types of political thought or "thinking"), or which promote a "subversive" understanding of its approach to political ideology, or finally which read Renaissance representations of monarchy through modern conceptualisations of sovereignty, heavily associated with the ideas of Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben and Ernst Kantorowicz.[12] But as I shall argue in concluding this essay, it is a vision of royal power with striking resemblances to that found in other plays conventionally attributed to Christopher Marlowe. This calls for recognising the specificity of different dramatists' portraits of regal authority, and also, perhaps, of political imagination as an important consideration in debates about early modern dramatic authorship.

Lovely Aeneas

There are two key elements to the portrait of monarchy in *Dido Queene of Carthage*. The first is its persistent conflation of royal status with erotic charisma. Being a monarch, the play suggests, enhances your sex appeal; conversely, having sex appeal makes you quasi-monarchical. The basis for this association is the gaze. The play is fascinated by the political potency of "looks," meaning not only the act of seeing (whose capacity for moral and cognitive error Jonathan Sell has recently explored) but also being looked *at*.[13] Richard

[12] For early modern theatre as "political thinking" as opposed to "political thought" (i.e. grand theory), see Peter Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage: Power and Succession in the History Plays* (Yale University Press: 2016), 2–66 (esp. 44). For a (similar) view that "the public nature of the drama made it a potent vehicle for disseminating political ideas and imaginatively experimenting with novel constitutional solutions," see Paulina Kewes, "History Plays and the Royal Succession," in Kewes, Ian W. Archer and Felicity Heal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles* (Oxford University Press: 2013), 493–509 (494), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199565757.001.0001. I discuss the "subversive" / New Historicist approaches, and those engaging with Schmitt, Agamben and Kantorowicz, somewhat later in this article

[13] Jonathan P.A. Sell, "A Tragedy of Oversight: Visual Praxis in Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*." *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 29 (2016): 130–53, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44505218. Sell is not concerned with the erotic or political aspects of perception. For the double meaning of "looks" in the period, as both appearance and visual act, see especially Richard Snyder,

Snyder has argued that, in both *Tamburlaine* plays, "looks" in this double sense constitute a "visual framework" for princely power.[14] If this is true also for *Dido Queen of Carthage*, as we will see it is, it is because, to an extent that exceeds *Tamburlaine*, the two-way gaze is *also* a vehicle for erotic compulsion. As both monarchs and the sexually attractive are the focus of the same charged exchange of glances, the basis of their power (the play strongly implies) is ultimately the same.This logic is manifest mostly, though not only, in the play's portrait of Aeneas. Aeneas's disruptive potency of gaze is registered by Dido the very first time they appear on stage together, before she even knows who he is: "what stranger art thou that doest eye me thus?" (2.1.74). The question initiates an association of "eye" and "I," the subjective ego and erotic speculation, that runs throughout the play: later Dido will repeat the pun, describing Aeneas as "the man that I do eye where ere I am" (3.4.18). Aeneas's looks are central to the play's action. Cupid specifically sets out to make "the Carthaginian queene / to be inamourd of [his] lookes" (3.1.1–2; his appearance or his gaze or both are meant), and partly as a result when Dido describes Aeneas's appeal she focuses on his visual magnetism. He is "faire and beautifull," she explains to Anna, later claiming that "in his lookes I see eternitie, / And heele make me immortall with a kisse" (3.1.63, 122–23). This heightening of Aeneas's beauty is one of the play's divergences from its classical sources. Virgil's Dido is infatuated by Aeneas's "much manliness [*virtus*] and much honour [*honos*]" as much as his "face and words"—of course she finds the latter appealing, but not to the same exaggerated and singular extent.[15] Ovid's Dido, in the *Heroides*, talks of his domination of her waking gaze, but calls far less attention to his beauty as such.[16]

In the play, moreover, it is not just Dido who notices Aeneas's visual charms. He is called "lovely Aeneas" four times, half the epithet's total number of occurrences in the play, only two of which are by Dido.[17] The term's registers are significant. In contemporary literature and drama, "lovely" nearly always connotes a childlike and/or "feminine" erotic beauty. In Marlowe's *Edward II*, for example, Gaveston conjures the homoerotically androgynous image of "a lovelie boye in *Dian*'s shape, / with haire that gilds the water as it

"Powerful Looks in *Tamburlaine*," *The Journal of Marlowe Studies* 2 (2021): 26–39 (28–29), https://doi.org/10.7190/jms.v2i0.123.

[14] Snyder, "Powerful Looks in *Tamburlaine*," 26, 33.

[15] Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.3–5: *multa viri virtus animo multusque recursat / gentis honos: haerent infixi pectore vultus / verbaque*.

[16] Ovid, *Heroides*, VII.25: *Aeneas oculis semper vigilantis inhaeret* (itself extrapolating from Virgil's line above). References to Ovid, *Heroides and Amores,* trans. Grant Showerman, rev. G. P. Goold (Harvard University Press, 1914).

[17] Specifically, "lovely" is applied to Aeneas by Ilioneus (*DQoC* 2.1.62), Anna (3.1.71), and Dido (4.4.49, 5.1.249 (where she refers to his "lovely face")).

glides," where *it* could mean the sexually objectified boy as well as the hair (1.1.61–62).[18] There is a precedent of sorts for the epithet in the *Aeneid*, where the narrator describes Aeneas about to go a-hunting as *ante alios pulcherrimus omnes*, "most beautiful before all the others" (IV.141). Yet in classical Latin *pulcher* (like the English "lovely") was often applied to children, youths or women rather than adult males, and the ancient commentator Servius believed an explanation was necessary: "[Virgil] gives him beauty [*pulchritudinem*] because he is loved," he remarked, adding significantly that "granted the term better fits Ascanius," Aeneas's son, whom the poem describes as a "boy," *puer,* only a few lines later.[19] As if to confirm Servius's comment, in *Dido Queene of Carthage* "lovely" is indeed used of other characters (it is also applied to some birds) only with reference to Ascanius or his body double Cupid, the love-god, both of whom are required by the action to sit on Dido's lap and are therefore clearly small boys.[20] This matches the way "lovely" is employed in other children's plays of the 1580s. In Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris*, for example, a play written in the same precious idiom as *Dido Queene of Carthage*, it is applied to Venus, the goddess of love, as well as again to Cupid, her "lovely boy"—that is to a child, or a woman of probably childlike beauty.[21]

The point about such childish loveliness is that it compels the visual attention of others in what the play understands as a political, indeed quasi-monarchical way. Early in the play, Anna comments on Aeneas's power to command a multitude's looks: "so lovely is he," she remarks, "that the people swarme to gaze him in the face." "But tell them none shall gaze on him but I," Dido retorts, "Lest their gross eye-beames taint my lovers cheekes" (3.1.71–74). Anna here reframes as sexual-political magnetism what in the equivalent section of the *Aeneid* is simply a geopolitical appraisal—a marriage (*coniugio*) with Aeneas would fortify the infant city against threatening neighbours (IV. 31–53). The latent *royalty* of such power is conveyed during the charged, innuendo-laden dialogue between Dido and Aeneas during the

[18] Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, *The Complete Works*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 2:13–119.
[19] *Quia amatur, ideo dat ei pulchritudine[m]: licet Ascanio magis co[n]gruat* (Servius, note to *Aeneid* IV.141 in *P. Vergilii Maronis … Aeneis* (1544), sig.C2^{v}); Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.156 ("At puer Ascanius …"). *Puer* is also Juno's term for Cupid, in the same book (IV.94); Virgil's Aeneas is by contrast programmatically *vir*, "the M/man," as in *arma virumque cano* (I.1). Servius's interestingly impersonal *amatur*, "[Aeneas] is loved," does raise the question of by whom—Dido, the narrator, or a narrator whose perspective is focalized on Dido?
[20] For "lovely" applied to Ascanius / Cupid, see *DQoC* 2.1.93 (Ascanius), 3.1.29 (Cupid dressed as Ascanius), and 3.2.23 (Ascanius's "lovely life," the epithet transferred from the life's owner). For birds, see 4.4.11 ("White Swannes, and lovely water fowles").
[21] George Peele, *The Araygnement of Paris* (London: Henry Marsh, 1584), sig. Biij^{v} ("*Venus* is the lovely Queene of love"), C^{r} ('her louely boy faire *Cupids* sight").

"cave" scene. Dido here explains to her reluctant suitor why she has chosen him above others.

> AENEAS. *Aeneas* thoughts dare not ascend so high
> As *Didos* heart, which Monarkes might not scale.
> DIDO. It was because I sawe no King like thee,
> Whose golden Crowne might ballance my content. (*DQoC,* 3.4.33–6)

Dido here appears to regard Aeneas as a king, a statement which taken literally is false. Aeneas is not a king in the play, a point that is underscored more than once (3.1.149; 3.3.17–18) and which we will shortly return to. The label is partly flattery, to be sure, partly perhaps referring to the status Dido wants for Aeneas and goes on to promise him. But the characteristic emphasis on *looking* ("it was because *I sawe* no King like thee") suggests that kingliness is also a way of describing his visual impact on her, and indeed actually defined less, for Dido, by title than sexual attraction.[22] The phrase "golden Crowne," in this context, may signify an actual crown—worn by Aeneas or offered to him at this point—but it could also mean his golden hair. In a sense, it doesn't matter—the play insinuates a direct equivalence of regal and erotic power, as between Dido's infatuation and the adoration of a crowd of potential royal subjects.

This is a highly distinctive way of thinking about monarchical power. In other texts of the late sixteenth century we can certainly find figurative, allegorical or rhetorical connections between political obedience to princes and amorous devotion. Indeed they are virtually commonplace. But in *Dido Queene of Carthage* that connection is understood *literally*, as if eroticised charisma is all that regal authority really comes down to: as Richard Snyder comments discussing *Tamburlaine*, "looks are not only tied to power, but perhaps even *are* power."[23] While Snyder, however, is concerned with links to contemporary theories of visual perception, both intro-missive and extro-missive, here I would rather emphasise how this model of political power seems ideally suited to—and indeed probably derives from—the theatre. It extrapolates from the charged exchange of looks between a singular, visually compelling performer and a watching audience. In collapsing more abstract conceptions of power into this immediate and theatrical form, the play is undoubtedly making a provocative political argument, with interesting implications for how, in these terms, monarchy might cease to function. But its dramatic nature also enables the audience to

[22] Contrastingly, Dido's attitude to Iarbus (a titular monarch) is defined by visual repulsion: his "lothsome sight offends mine eye" (3.1.57), where again the 'I' and the 'eye' are elided.
[23] Snyder, "Powerful looks in *Tamburlaine*," 28.

recognise and experience such power without needing to imagine or transfer to the stage the hyperbolical conceits of love-poetry or monarchical ideology. This is because they help constitute it. The "crowd" who swarm to "gaze [Aeneas] in the face," are, in part, none other than the play's rapt spectators. The command he exercises over them, as their hungry eyes follow his "lovely" form around the stage, perhaps getting him to "eye"/I them in return, *is* the kingliness the play attributes to him.

Such a directly theatrical strategy depends on the actor playing Aeneas being visually attractive. It is very likely—as Jackson Cope once argued—that the part was written for a boy actor who is younger and less physically mature than the one playing Dido.[24] He must, at any rate, have been very lovely to look at, a quintessential example indeed of the capacity of boy-actors to appeal erotically both to male and female spectators.[25] The fitting of part to player is supported by one of the play's more curious details: Aeneas's "golden hair," mentioned by Dido (3.1.85). In Virgil's *Aeneid* it is famously Dido, not Aeneas, who has yellow or golden hair: the play switches the detail.[26] Actors could wear wigs, but it seems unlikely that the play would designate Aeneas's hair colour at all unless it referred to the actor. Notably, another male character in children's drama of the 1580s has hair colour of the same sort explicitly described in the text. This is the protagonist of Lyly's *Endimion*, who besides "golden lockes" also has a "chin, on which scarcely appeareth soft downe," suggesting someone on the verge of adolescence yet still in appearance a lovely child.[27] It is tempting to suggest the parts were written for the same performer.[28] Like Endimion, Aeneas is boyish, blonde and beautiful, not because of some poetic requirement, but because the actor was, and because it is precisely their physical allure which enables and reinforces the play's literalising equation of erotic and royal power.

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[24] Jackson Cope, "Marlowe's Dido and the Titillating Children," *English Literary Renaissance* 4, no. 3 (1974): 315–25, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43446806.

[25] Much has been written on the sexual allure of the early modern boy-actor. For a representative discussion, emphasizing the variability and cross-gendered nature of the appeal see Phyllis Rackin, "Boys will be Girls," in *Shakespeare and Women* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 75 ff.

[26] Virgil, *Aeneid* IV.590 (*flauentisque comas*), 698 (*flauum crinem*). The detail was thought by Servius to indicate Dido's unchastity, as 'matrons' should have black hair (Servius, note to *Aeneid* IV.698 in *P. Vergilii Maronis … Aeneis* (1544), sig. E2^{v}).

[27] John Lyly, *Endimion, The Man in the Moone* (London: John Charlewood, 1591), sig. D3^{r}; the description is by the witch Dipsas as Endimion lies asleep.

[28] If so, then presumably *Dido* was on stage near to the known date of *Endimion*'s performance, 2nd February 1588.

Sovereign Dido?

Aeneas, then, embodies an idea of royal power as erotic compulsion, directed through the gaze. There is also another conception of monarchy in the play, however, which equates royal status with subjective autonomy and unfettered agency, and with the experience of being singular and superior to others. As with the reconstitution of political power as a purely theatrical or erotic form of compulsion, there is a certain reductiveness at work here. The complex apparatus of ceremonies, metaphysical or legal fictions, and institutional arrangements which supported monarchy politically and ideologically in late sixteenth-century Europe, are set aside, and replaced by or displaced onto subjectivising notions of will and attachment. This conception of monarchy is what drives the distinctive dramatic rhythm of the scenes between Dido and Aeneas. Nearly every one of their interactions involves a continuous struggle for psychological control alongside professions of erotic or political submission. In scene after scene, that is, Aeneas tries to comply with Dido's commands only for this posture to founder on her wish rather to subject herself to him. Conversely, whenever he tries to assert himself, the potential for his erotic or political independence spells danger to the infatuated queen, and she immediately tries to regain control. As the play progresses this complex dance becomes increasingly frantic, if not indeed traumatic, certainly on Dido's part. But it is also somewhat comical, as both characters adopt stances that contradict their explicit promises and concessions.

The pattern for this intricate interplay is established by the court banquet scene at which Dido first encounters Aeneas, before he begins retelling the fall of Troy (2.1.74–120). The two protagonists enter immediately into a complex negotiation over the latter's appropriate *place*, both in literal or theatrical and more extended senses. It starts with Dido beckoning Aeneas to sit in a chair that will allow him to "banquet with a Queene"—one presumably next to hers in a commanding, probably central position on stage. When he refuses, she ups the offer, commanding him to "sit in *Dido*s place" and offering his son Ascanius her own lap (2.1.83, 91– 93). Although Aeneas does appear to sit in Dido's chair at this point, as she requires, he complains at the offence to decorum ("this place beseemes me not, O pardon me," 2.1.94), while his expression of thanks stresses his inferior status by indicating that his now privileged situation is merely bestowed at her gift ("In all humilitie I thanke your grace," 2.1.99). These exchanges indicate that Aeneas, at the outset, favours a relationship where he is the humble stranger begging for succour from an all-powerful monarch, in which any privileges awarded him underline her power as royal donor. He therefore refuses the ambivalent status of "companion to a queene" on the grounds that his

"fortune is too meane" (2.1.88–89); *fortune* here has the dual meaning of "wealth" and personal quality or status. Dido on the other hand invites Aeneas into a shared but exclusive partnership of princes. Besides offering him her chair, she also calls for the robes of "*Sicheus*," her former husband, to replace the "base robes" of a Trojan exile (2.1.79–80).[29] Each of these conceptions is met with protest by the other character. Aeneas expresses discomfort at being awarded a station he feels inappropriate. Dido finds such deference offensive to her hope that they will experience a shared superiority over everyone else, retorting that Aeneas should "remember who thou art, speake like thy selfe, / Humilitie belongs to common groomes" (2.1.100–1). The significance of this language, which includes a characteristically Marlovian sneer of social contempt, will be explored towards the end of this essay.

From the start, Dido's behaviour is contradictory. The extravagance of her offers, which raise a political outsider to the rank of personal confidant or even substitute consort, is proof and display of her royal authority. Aeneas can object to, but not, seemingly, reject her invitations, which have an imperative edge. At the same time, the *content* of Dido's gestures imply a surrender of exactly that authority which guarantees her ability to make them. This is perhaps only implicit in the wish to dress Aeneas in her husband's robes. It is unclear how much a pseudo-husband might interfere with or qualify her own royal status. The symbolic implications of planting him in the royal chair are more troubling. Is this merely a gesture of hospitality or a transfer of authority? Where then does Dido sit? The gestures initiate an air of uncertainty concerning the actual distribution of agency and power—political and psychological—which runs throughout the drama.

The stakes in this early game of places are partly crystallised by the subtle and complex term "companion." To be "companion to a queene," the possibility that troubles Aeneas's sense of propriety, is evidently to enjoy an intimacy with them that excludes everyone else and is indeed defined against them. They are simply "common groomes." At the same time, although it promises a shared superiority over others, it is clearly *not* to be an equal. Rather it is a privilege bestowed by the more powerful party. An instructive exchange in Marlowe's *Edward II* illuminates the term's elision of political and affective registers. Baldock, a would-be courtier, asks Spencer, another, if he hopes to be the "follower" of Gaveston, a recent beneficiary of royal favour. "No, companion," Spencer replies, "for he

[29] Dido orders her attendant to "Goe fetch the garment which *Sicheus* ware" (2.1.80). It is unclear when or whether this 'garment', clearly more magnificent than Aeneas's existing attire, is produced. Readers of Virgil would know about Sicheus, although the play at this point has yet to mention him, or Dido's widowed status.

loves me well, / And would have once preferr'd me to the king" (2.1.12–14). For the ambitious Spencer, "companion" suggests both bonds of affection ("love") and a transactional patronage politics ("preferr'd"); it is a better term than "follower" precisely because it permits an emotional intimacy, and its genuine or imagined obligations, to overlay (yet not eliminate) the realities of social hierarchy and subordination.

Companionship, therefore, is precisely *not* friendship (at least not in these plays), which as Laurie Shannon argues is typically presented in early modern culture as involving equality of agency and thus potentially contradicts sovereign authority.[30] It is, rather, a form of intimacy that permits inequality and may even rely on it. At the same time its precise ratio of obligations and dependences is not always easy to decipher, creating scope for confusion, misunderstanding, and outrage. This is precisely what happens a little later in *Dido Queen of Carthage*, when Iarbus, Dido's former suitor, expresses resentment at her generosity towards Aeneas. Here erotic rivalry mingles with a sense of offended status. Iarbus's status is itself somewhat unclear in the play. In title he is clearly a king ("of rich *Getulia*," as he himself states), as in the Virgilian back-story (3.1.45). Indeed, Carthage has been carved out of land he awarded Dido upon her arrival in Libya. Nonetheless his language and behaviour often suggests he is only a privileged member of Dido's own court—"our Court," as he introduces it to the visiting Trojans (1.2.39).[31] It is his identity as dependent courtier that permits Dido, about to go a-hunting with Aeneas, to dismiss Iarbus contemptuously from her "companie": "Pesant, goe seeke companions like thy selfe, / and meddle not with any that I love" (3.3.21–22). This is the language a social superior adopts to subordinates, not brother kings. "Love" here has an obviously amorous register but the term "companions" also mobilizes ideas of royal preferment and social exclusivity (again, the accompanying sneer of "pesant" is worth noting).

Dido may be making an erotic choice here, one forced on her unwittingly by the gods. But the power to make it rests on a sense of her royal authority, her ability to determine which of her suitors merits the access and intimacy of preferment. Crucially, the term "companion" does not forfeit this sense of her own superior authority and agency even as it holds out the promise of some sort of exclusive, affective relationship. Indeed Dido always resists the very idea of handing over her power to act and command, even when her increasingly desperate situation compels her formally to do so. This contradiction is

[30] Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), *passim*.
[31] He also calls Dido "my Queene" (1.2.42) where "my" sounds more, in context, like the statement of a subject than an amorous or political claim to possession.

encapsulated by her climactic, desperate decision to make Aeneas explicitly "soveraigne Lord" of Carthage (4.4.68). The offer is dramatized in an emotionally fraught scene that begins with her equipping him with the "emperiall Crowne of *Libia*" and "Punike Scepter" (4.4.34, 35), and climaxes in a declaration of political submission that finally elicits from the reluctant Trojan a promise to switch his dynastic ambitions to Carthage ("Then here in me shall flourish Priams race," 4.4.87–88). Along the way Dido promises Aeneas a regal procession through the city's streets, ratifying his new status, and makes a strident declaration of her regal authority (4.4.64–69, 71–78). These offers elaborate significantly on their classical sources. Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides* treat a power-share or transfer as something which has already happened, mystifying or occluding the exact moment. Ovid's Dido says she already has made Aeneas king, as well as inviting him to wield the sceptre again.[32] Virgil's queen says she "in my madness gave [him] a place within the kingdom," and later reproaches herself for "handing [him] the sceptre."[33] Iarbas, meanwhile, claims in a prayer to Jupiter that she has accepted him as her "master" (which also implies political subordination), but he is a prejudiced witness and responding to ambiguous rumour.[34] The play goes further, dramatizing the ideologically freighted moment of royal investiture.

And yet, far from clarifying what Dido is giving and Aeneas receiving, this scene only creates further uncertainty. Ostensibly Dido could not be clearer that she is surrendering her

[32] Ovid, *Heroides* VII.12 (*sceptro tradita summa tuo*, "ultimate [authority] handed over to your sceptre"), VII.90 (*vixque bene audito nomine regna dedi*, "I gave you the monarchy, your name having been scarcely properly heard [before]"), VII.192 (*inque loco regis sceptraque sacrata tene*, "and in the place of a king do you manage the consecrated sceptre"). Note that *inque loco regis*, perhaps implying Aeneas is not *actually* king but simply exercising regal office, is the early modern reading—see e.g. *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistolae* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1583), sig. Ciiij^{v}. Modern texts since the nineteenth century, contrastingly, tend to print *resque loco regis sceptraque sacra tene*, "do you manage the state and the sacred sceptre in the station of king," which lessens this implication.

[33] Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.373 (*regni demens in parte locavi*), 596–7 (*cum sceptra dabas*).

[34] Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.214 (*dominum Aenean in regna recepit*, "accepted Aeneas into the kingdom as her master." This complaint depends, however, on *Fama*'s rumour, possibly inaccurate, that Dido and Aeneas are conducting a reckless and adulterous love affair (IV.194) and that she has "deigned to join herself [*se iungere*] to him as a husband/man [*viro*]" (IV.192), where *iungere* and *viro* are ambiguous. According to patriarchal norms, were Dido to marry Aeneas he might automatically acquire political supremacy. Virgil's narrator unambiguously states that they aren't married, though she uses the term (*Aeneid* IV.172), and Aeneas also denies it (IV.338–39). Dido, contrastingly, uses the terms *connubia nostra* and *inceptos hymenaeos* (IV.316) and in a line that Virgil apparently recited to Augustus with "huge emotion," terms Aeneas a "guest—since that name is all that remains from that of a husband [*hospes* / *hoc solum nomen quoniam de coniuge restat*]" (IV.323–24; cf. Servius in *P. Virgilii Maronis* (1544), sig. C6^{r}). Ovid's Dido calls herself a "deceived spouse [*coniugis deceptae*, *Heroides* VII.69), but later admits she abandoned shame (97) and calls herself the "pledged wife [*debita coniunx*]" of her first husband Sychaeus, as well as offering to describe herself simply as his "hostess, not wife" (*non nupta, sed hospita*, VII.167; again, imitating Virgil). It is therefore unclear in what capacity either Virgil's or Ovid's Aeneas wields the royal power Dido claims she has given him. The play likewise stops short of clarifying their relationship. Dido has in fact promised Aeneas the kingship before they have sex (*DQoC*, 3.4.64), there describing herself as his "Lover" (3.4.61); she promises that in the regal procession she offers him, he will ride through the streets "As *Didos* husbande" (4.4.67), where the *as* is problematic (current? future? actual or merely a role?); she terms him "my lover" only a few lines earlier.

authority to Aeneas. "Sway thou the Punike Scepter in my steede," she enjoins, and seems equally unambiguous somewhat later: "this land is thine, / Dido is thine, henceforth Ile call thee Lord" (4.4.35, 84). But—as in earlier parts of the play—her language and behaviour in the scene flatly contradict such a wholesale surrender of authority. In theatrical terms, everything seems designed to maximize her own power of action and decision while minimizing that of Aeneas. It is she who equips him with sceptre and crown, in terms of commanding instruction ("Weare" the crown, she tells him, "Sway thou" the sceptre, 4.4.34, 35), an incongruity maximised if Dido is indeed played by a more mature actor. Likewise it is rather her sister Anna whom Dido instructs to "leade my lover forth […] let him ride […] through the Punicke streetes / And will my guard […] To waite upon him" (4.4.64, 65, 67–68). Aeneas won't even be giving orders to his new soldiers. When Aeneas replies to her rhapsodies at his royal costume, it is not in the tones of her new lord and master, but with submissive gratitude, terming her "patronesse of all our lives" (4.4.55). Finally she dominates their dialogue, not only by virtue of how many lines she speaks but the vehemence of her language.

All this suggests Dido has not in fact surrendered power at all. This is also apparent in the way she envisages Aeneas's new royal role. Rather than concentrate on his political authority, she emphasizes the sensory and material pleasures of his new status. The "emperiall Crowne of *Libia*" and "Punike Scepter," for example, are in theory ceremonial signifiers if not embodiments of monarchical authority. But the way Dido describes them suggests rather that they are items of expensive costume that in her view enhance his—already considerable—sexual charisma: "O how a Crowne becomes *Aeneas* head […] O keepe them still, and let me gaze my fill: now lookes *Aeneas* like immortall *Jove* […]" (4.4.38, 44–45; note the characteristic emphasis on looking). Likewise, she promises a regal procession because she presumes that Aeneas will enjoy the attention of adoring crowds, extrapolating from Anna's earlier description of "the people" goggling at his loveliness. Her specific claim that the procession will "make experience of my love" (4.4.64), means by "experience" the sensory pleasure of being acclaimed by an adoring populace, as well as proof of her passion. Now it is true, as we have seen, that the play views being the object of erotic attention not only as pleasurable to the recipient but a form of power. Dido's imagining of Aeneas as king, however, hopes that he will remain *passively* beautiful and accepting of her demands—a form of spectacular pleasure that erotically captivates without becoming independent agency. The reason for this is not simply to bind him to her forever, forestalling the threat of future departure. Dido is unwilling to grant Aeneas genuine autonomy because it

would compromise her own. Indeed, she never comes to terms with what her voluntary self-subordination really means, representing it as an act that confirms her queenly agency. We therefore enter a paradoxical situation, again with slightly comic aspects. Aeneas is offered power but only so that he does not exercise it. Dido surrenders her titular sovereignty, so that in practical and psychological terms, she retains control.

The Absolute Self

It is at this point, and this point only, that an explicitly ideological note is struck. Contemplating the possibility of kingship, Aeneas asks "what if the Citizens should repine thereat?" (4.4.70). The meaning of "citizens" hovers ambiguously between "denizens of a city" and more politically participatory senses: is Aeneas saying that good rulers respect their subjects' wishes or that major political decisions require popular consent? Dido seemingly infers the latter. She bursts out in anger:

> Those that dislike what *Dido* gives in charge,
> Commaund my guard to slay for their offence:
> Shall vulgar pesants storme at what I doe?
> The ground is mine that gives them sustenance,
> The ayre wherein they breathe, the water, fire,
> All that they have, their lands, their goods, their lives,
> And I the Goddesse of all these, commaund
> *Aeneas* ride as Carthaginian King. (4.4.71–78)

These claims and their occasion reflect contemporary debates about the powers of princes, particularly those between defenders of the Tudor and Valois dynasties and their ideological opponents, Calvinist and Catholic, during the 1570s and 1580s. Too general to point to a specific source, they nonetheless clearly belong on the extreme side of contemporary royalist thought, most closely resembling (as Paul Kocher first noted) the negative characterisations of monarchical ideology by Huguenot polemicists, for whom claims to own one's subjects' lives and goods (let alone belief one could kill them outright) was a mark of tyranny, and any comparison of princes to gods sacrilegious.[35] As Jean Bodin acknowledged, most contemporary European princes eschewed Dido's style of assertion, for pragmatic as well as constitutional reasons.[36] Bodin himself did not include such claims among his "marks" of

[35] Paul Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning and Character* (Russell and Russell, 1946), 175–80. Kocher cites the condemnation of such views in *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, using the 1646 English translation (177–78): for the original passages, see *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* ed. and trans. Garnett, 104, 109.

[36] Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 232–45. Bodin distinguishes between a "seigneurial" monarchy, where rulers claim ownership of their subjects' lives and goods, and a "royal" one which leaves them in their

absolute sovereignty.[37] Charles Merbury, who adapted a number of Bodin's doctrines in his *Brief Discourse of Royall Monarchy* (1581), observed that to use "the bodyes, and liues of their subiectes at their luste and pleasure, taking from them their landes, goodes and liberties" was not only ungodly but a "doctrine most pernicious unto Princes."[38]

Why is this speech in the play? A clear ideological or topical purpose is not easy to discern. It is difficult to imagine an audience of London "citizens" warming to Dido's views, but equally difficult to know whether they would take them seriously or why at this point (and this point only) they might be invited to lose sympathy with her. Nothing else in the play corroborates her arguments, chiefly because this is the only passage in the play even to broach the question of her relation to her subjects. Indeed, despite their ideological cast, these arguments make most sense when seen as a response to, and extension of, Dido's psychological predicament. Confronting her own powerlessness, the fact of her *erotic* subjection to Aeneas, Dido reaches for an extreme type of political authority as a means to protect her own agency. Absolute *potestas* is claimed to preserve absolute *potentia*, but—perversely and paradoxically—via its total abdication. The essential contradiction is highlighted in Dido's language. How serious can her promised submission to Aeneas be when she "commaund[s]" him to ride as a king? Is a self-described "Goddesse" really about to subordinate herself to another?

This passage, then, uses contemporary political ideology in an arguably non-ideological way. In *Dido Queene of Carthage*, political sovereignty is on the one hand sign and figure of a psychological ideal, that amalgamates subjective autonomy with control of one's environment and the realisation of one's desires. On the other, it is the means to realise that self-sovereignty, as no other condition can guarantee it except a form of absolutism so extreme it verges on tyranny. Introducing the terminology of sovereignty into my argument has certain implications.[39] In a late sixteenth-century context, sovereignty in the political

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possession. Most European monarchies were originally seigneurial but had, he argues, adopted the appearance and often the substance of royal ones. He also says that subjects of royal monarchies are likely to resist having such rights infringed, and it is therefore dangerous for princes to try (238).

[37] For these "marks," see Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 190–228.

[38] Charles Merbury, *A Discourse of Royall Monarchie* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1581), 45. For Merbury's use of Bodin, see Allen, *A History of Political Thought*, 250–51.

[39] For discussions of sovereignty in Renaissance literature and drama, see esp. Huw Griffiths, *Shakespeare's Body Parts: Figuring Sovereignty in the History Plays* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474448727; Joseph Campana, ed., "After Sovereignty," special issue, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 58, no.1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.2018.0000; Christopher Pye, *The Storm at Sea: Political Aesthetics in the Time of Shakespeare* (Fordham University Press. 2015), esp. 125–41, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt130h9h7; Graham Hammill and Julia Lupton, eds, "Sovereigns, Citizens, and Saints: Political Theology and Renaissance Literature," special issue, *Religion & Literature* 38, no. 3 (2006), https://www.jstor.org/stable/40060023; Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*.

sense was an emergent concept, one among many being forged during the arguments between royalists and anti-royalists about the nature, origins and structure of political communities. The term "sovereign," when used at all, was capable of many different articulations and applications—it could simply be a royal honorific, for example. At the time of *Dido Queene of Carthage* the concept had only been fully theorized once, by Jean Bodin, in his influential *Six Livres de La République*. Bodin made "souuerainеté"—defined as the absolute and perpetual authority within a commonwealth—the keystone of his ideal of a well-ordered political community.[40] Exactly how Bodin defined sovereignty needs of course careful analysis. It did not, in fact, automatically mean princely power: in fact, it is precisely because he did *not* simply equate the two that the term was necessary. It is true that Bodin strongly preferred monarchical sovereignty, exercised in a "royal" not tyrannical or "seigneurial" way and inherited via male primo-genitural succession.[41] He also denied the right of citizens or subjects to oppose sovereign commands (at least in most situations). But he acknowledged that sovereignty could be legitimately wielded by aristocracies and popular assemblies as well as princes. In fact, as Daniel Lee has recently highlighted, he devoted a portion of his text to an innovative theory of popular sovereignty.[42] Moreover, in a conscious and carefully underlined innovation, he distinguished between the formal sovereign and the style of government: kings could therefore govern through democratic institutions, or vice versa.[43] Indeed, the rationalist and pragmatic Bodin (well aware of the human deficiencies of individual rulers) always understood and preferred the sovereign to act with and through a lattice of other institutions and magistracies, rather than in isolation, even if he allowed for such a style if the sovereign wished. This is apparent from the title and organization of his treatise, which seeks to establish the best way of organizing a commonwealth rather than glorify princely authority in the manner of many royalist contemporaries. The sovereign was therefore, in Quentin Skinner's well-known formulation, the "analytical implication of [Bodin's] concept of the state," rather than being the chief aim or subject of his work as such.[44]

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[40] Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 152 ("la puissance absolüe & perpetuelle d'une Republique")
[41] See Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 699–717.
[42] On this point see Lee, *Popular Sovereignty*, 187–224. Lee rightly criticises the tendency of much discussion of Bodin to confuse the normative and analytical elements of his thought, i.e. what he thought legitimate from what he thought preferable.
[43] Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 233; cf. Lee, *Popular Sovereignty*, 219; Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1–62, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316417782.
[44] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge University Press, 1978), vol. 2, 284–301 (287).

Could the obsession with sovereign agency in *Dido Queene of Carthage* nonetheless be traceable to Bodin? One attraction of such a claim is that *Six Livres de la République* was published in French in 1576, before any conceivable date for the play's composition and performance.[45] It was widely read in England. Gabriel Harvey claimed it was one of the most popular texts among Cambridge students, which is where Christopher Marlowe probably encountered it.[46] One notable feature of Bodin's text was his hostility to female rule, which he claimed was against the laws of nature. Women's subordination to men in marriage contradicted the principle of sovereignty. Indeed their intrinsic susceptibility to sexual desire might lead them to marry social subordinates, or worse, "strangers" who would introduce foreign laws, religion, customs and manners.[47] This anti-gynocratic critique derived force from being compounded with Bodin's otherwise firm defence of hereditary succession. It dovetails neatly with the central plot-line of Dido's story, as well as some of the particular dramatic choices of *Dido Queene of Carthage*—for example, Aeneas's post-investiture plans for "Trojanizing" Carthage, and Dido's own losing struggle to retain autonomy and control once in the grip of erotic infatuation.[48] It was moreover an aspect of Bodin's text notorious in England. Defenders of the Elizabethan settlement such as John Bridges issued refutations.[49] As late as 1606, Bodin's English translator Robert Knolles criticized his "poor French shifts for the avouching and proofe of the Salique law" governing male hereditary succession in France.[50] (Bodin may well have intended the Anglophobic provocation, for example in his jibing comment that only "un peuple si lasche" would ever accept a female sovereign).[51]

And yet trying to pin *Dido Queene of Carthage* in precise ways to Bodin's conception of sovereignty is ultimately rather challenging. It is one thing to argue that the preoccupations of a particular play emerged from a general climate where ideas of sovereign authority were being formulated with increasing rigour and an anti-gynocratic twist, thanks in part to Bodin.

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[45] Bodin's revised Latin translation of 1586 would also have been available, depending on the play's precise date of composition or performance.

[46] "You cannot step into a scholar's study but ten to one you shall [likely] find open either Bodin de Republica or Le Roy's exposition upon Aristotle's Politics or some other like French or Italian politique discourses": undated letter, E. J. L. Scott, ed., *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey, A.D. 1573–1580*, Camden Society Series no.33, (London: 1884), 79, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435025515982. Spelling modernized.

[47] Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 718–27. Bodin expanded his critique in his 1586 Latin version. Cf. Drew Daniel, "Striking the French Match: Jean Bodin, Queen Elizabeth, and the Occultation of Sovereign Marriage," in Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton, eds, *Political Theology and Early Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), 246–7.

[48] For Aeneas and his companions' decision to rename Carthage "Anchisaeon," underlining the shift to dynastic patriarchy, see *DQoC* 5.1.18–23.

[49] John Bridges, *A Defence of the Government Established in the Church of England for Ecclesiastical Matters* (London: John Windet, 1587), 787–88.

[50] Richard Knolles, *The six bookes of a common-weale* (London: Adam Islip for George Bishop, 1606), 753.

[51] Bodin, *Six Livres de la République*, 727.

It is another to point to specific dependences or determinate associations. The most important point to make is that the play is not interested in, and hardly ever chooses to speak, the languages of political ideology in the way Bodin and his contemporaries employ them. Its idiom is neither theological, juristic, nor pragmatic-political. Moreover, it expresses almost no interest at all, as Bodin does, in the structure and functioning of the wider political community. If there is a debt, then, there is also a significant translation in linguistic and imaginative focus, *from* the political *towards* the psychological, aesthetic and erotic. Only part of this translation can be accounted for by drama's preference for embodied subjectivities rather than abstract concepts. The point is that that play tends to suspend a political frame of reference altogether.[52] Indeed, its representation can even be said to have an *anti*-political aspect. Dido becomes as much a victim of the royal status she cannot ever truly abandon as a beneficiary of its promised pleasures and entitlements; "politics" in the play is an arena in which sovereign subjectivity is not affirmed, so much as exposed to contradiction and finally annihilated. The paradoxes of the investiture/divestiture scene lead ineluctably towards suicide.

In Virgil's *Aeneid* as in countless other tellings, Dido's self-slaughter is chiefly the result of madness and despair after Aeneas abandons her. Although *Dido Queene of Carthage* retains a sense of her grief and frenzy, its preoccupation with the problems of sovereign agency gives her death an additional psychological rationale and dramatic intensity. This is visible first of all when, echoing her contradictory offer of kingship to Aeneas, she directs a similar invitation to her sister Anna: "now bring him backe, and thou shalt be a Queene, / and I will live a private life with him" (5.1.97–98). The promise requires, once again, the paradoxical authority to alienate itself. It hands over ultimate control to another in order to realise a desire that only such control guarantees. Like the last gesture of Faustus, "I'le burne my bookes," it can be contemplated only when all other possibilities have been eliminated, as it strikes at the very heart of the speaker's identity.[53] Like Faustus's gesture, too, it is a cry of despair, never realised and perhaps never realisable. Not to be a queen is not to be Dido. Her final suicide is therefore fittingly and necessarily an act of sovereign self-cancellation. It annihilates the regal identity that is also, at the same time, affirmed, portraying Aeneas as one who will be "famous throughout the world / for perjurie and slaughter of a Queene"—as a

[52] Contrast here Griffiths, *Shakespeare's Body Parts*, 27-28, which cogently argues that some plays translate the paradigm of sovereignty into monarchical solitude, a representation that can still be seen as political.
[53] *Doctor Faustus*, 5.2.[1982] in *The Complete Works*, ed. Bowers, 2, 227.

regicide—and validating the title of the play, the tragedy of Dido *as* queen of Carthage (5.1.294).

In making Dido's a tragedy about the failure to sustain personal autonomy, the play makes her fate especially cruel. In *Dido Queene of Carthage,* a sovereign self is made to experience their own self-eclipsing subjection to another—in fact, for much of the play go about *using* their own sovereign will to realise that subjection. While there is humour in the contortions this produces, especially when performed by children, by the end the overall effect is traumatic. The collapse into contradiction and eventual self-annihilation of the play's model of monarchy seems less a satirical or self-aware critique of its impossibility (a strategy, that is, of *subversion*) than something more existentially devastating, a recognition of human limitation and dependency. What is more, the instrument through which the gods destroy the play's protagonist is erotic desire, which the play also conceives as the main pleasure and source of royal power through the operation of speculative attraction. In her fine study *Sovereign Amity*, Laurie Shannon identifies a contradiction intrinsic to royal friendships in Renaissance literature: princes must be sovereign, but friendship presupposes equality, hence princes who enter into friendships experience a collapse of political identity. "Affectively speaking," Shannon concludes, the "proper sovereign" has therefore to be solitary.[54] This is not quite the situation in *Dido Queene of Carthage*, where even the most intimate of relationships seem predicated on a dialectic of power and submission, not equality. Rather the play finds the tragic dissolution of sovereign identity in the very experience of desiring another, not only because of libidinous bondage but because it compels a sovereign agent to admit the necessary independence (that, is uncontrollability) of another subjectivity, fracturing the illusion of absolute control on which the self-conception depends. So, yes, true sovereignty seems only possible in solitude: but at the same time without others to eye or be eyed by, the "I" as constituted in this play has no being at all. The contradiction is essential, rather than contingent on specific choices.

Conclusion: Sovereign selves in Marlovian drama

This essay has sought to show that the chief ingredients of monarchy in *Dido Queene of Carthage* are the erotics of the gaze and a fantasy of subjective autonomy and control. The former, it argues, is developed from the interaction between charismatic performer and attentive audience in a crowded playhouse. The latter possibly reflects changes in European

[54] Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 154 (see also 11); cf. Griffiths, *Shakespeare's Body Parts*, 27–28.

political language and thought in the 1570s and 1580s, particularly emergent theories of (regal) sovereignty. Given its topical choice of theme, let alone probable engagement with contemporary political ideas, it can hardly be said to be an unpolitical play. Yet its ultimate focus is less on politics than human subjectivity, its desires, illusions, and limitations. Certainly, it is questionable that it intends an *ideological* argument at all.

To offer such a reading might seem a challenging gambit, against the tenor of much recent discussion of sovereign authority in Renaissance drama. It calls for placing plays in close dialogue with contemporary ideological debates while also appreciating their intellectual and imaginative individuality—the fact that they may process this material in entirely distinctive ways. It also challenges the conclusions of critics who read sovereignty in early modern drama through the work of twentieth-century thinkers like Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, or Ernst Kantorowicz. This tradition typically focuses on the plays of Shakespeare.[55] In one of the most penetrating critiques of such dependencies—and re-readings of Kantorowicz—Lorna Hutson argues that the techniques of early modern forensic argument enabled early modern drama to render monarchs as mere embodied agents, unwinding the fictions of absolutism and omnipresence characteristic of royalist ideology by exposing them, precisely, as rhetorical inventions. Audiences, for their part, were invited to consider themselves adjudicatory citizens.[56] Up to a point, *Dido Queene of Carthage* aligns with this argument. The play, too, shows the limits to and contradictions within its conception of sovereignty. On the other hand, it does not award audiences the autonomy of judgment Hutson argues for. We cannot know what the play's original spectators thought or how they reacted to it. But spectatorship as configured *within* the play has a decidedly voyeuristic character: it participates in the dynamics of power not through consensual judgment but longing and attraction. Moreover, sovereign agency as a psychological fantasy eclipses any

[55] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, introd. Conrad Leyser (Princeton University Press, 2016); Carl Schmitt¸ *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (University of Chicago Press, 2005); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford University Press, 1998); Agamben, *State of Exception* (Stanford University Press, 2005). Agamben's theorization of sovereignty leans heavily on Schmitt's emphasis on the exception (*Political Theology*, 5–15); both make pointed (but highly selective and arguably somewhat distorting) reference to Bodin. For Schmitt in relation to "sovereignty" in Shakespeare, see e.g. Pye, *The Storm at Sea*, 125–141 (126–7); for Agamben *and* Schmitt, see e.g. Griffiths, 18–19. Kantorowicz in Shakespearean criticism is a vast field: for critical overviews, see David Norbrook, "The Emperor's New Body? *Richard II*, Ernst Kantorowicz, and the politics of Shakespeare Criticism," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 2 (1996): 129–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369608582250; Victoria Kahn, "Political Theology and Fiction in *The King's Two Bodies*," *Representations* 106, no.1 (2009): 77–101, https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2009.106.1.77 (which deals with the links between Kantorowicz and Schmitt); Lorna Hutson, "Imagining Justice: Kantorowicz and Shakespeare," *Representations* 106, no.1 (2009): 118–42, https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2009.106.1.77. Hutson also considers Schmitt.

[56] Hutson, "Imagining Justice," esp. 138–39.

meaningful representation of the wider body politic—one of the big developments of sixteenth-century drama that, Hutson argues, qualified idealisations of royal authority.[57] The voices of citizens may be there in the play's background, but are almost deliberately sidelined, receiving mention only as accessories or obstacles to the protagonists' subjective pleasures or desires. In this respect the model is neither Hutson's *nor* the absolutist readings via Kantorowicz or Schmitt which she questions.

One of the obvious reasons for this difference is that ultimately the portrait is not a Shakespearean one. It is a distinctive portrait, shared by few other English Renaissance plays. Those which have a similar conception are strongly associated with Christopher Marlowe, and are in principle one reason for attributing them to his hand or mind. Here, for example, are Tamburlaine and his henchmen considering the merits of kingship:

> TAMBURLAINE. Is it not brave to be a King, *Techelles*?
> *Usumcusane and Theridamas*,
> Is it not passing brave to be a King
> And ride in triumph through *Persepolis*?
> *Techelles*. O my Lord, tis sweet and full of pompe.
> *Usumcuasane.* To be a King is halfe to be a God.
> *Theridamas.* A God is not so glorious as a King:
> I thinke the pleasure they enjoy in heaven
> Can not compare with kingly joyes in earth.
> To weare a Crowne enchac'd with pearle and golde,
> Whose vertues carie with it life and death,
> To aske, and have: commaund, and be obeied.
> When looks breed love, with lookes to gaine the prize.
> Such power attractive shines in princes eies.
> (*1 Tamburlaine*, 2.5.51–64)[58]

The comparison to a god, the fantasy of immediate wish fulfilment, the fetishisation of regal costume, the belief in illimitable "commaund" including over the lives of subjects, the longing for processional spectacle: this understanding of monarchy, centred on subjective experience, has exactly the same ingredients as in *Dido Queene of Carthage*. Perhaps the most salient parallel is the idea that royal power consists of an exchange of "lookes," between prince and onlookers, that generates "love." This is a "power attractive" because though wielded *over* others, it depends on the monarch being the sexualised focus of their gaze.

In *Dido Queene of Carthage* this fantasy collapses into contradiction, epitomized by the fraught scene in which Dido tries to alienate her regal title while asserting her sovereign

[57] Hutson, "Imagining Justice," 125–35.
[58] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine, Part 1*, *The Complete Works*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 1.77–148; cf. Snyder, "Powerful looks," 31–32.

will. This episode and its psychological dynamics recur twice in other "Marlowe" plays. Firstly, at the end of *Tamburlaine Part Two*, a dying Tamburlaine tries to transmit not only his titles but his charismatic authority and agency, his Tamburlaine-ness so to speak, to Amyras his son. It is arguably a failure: even after he has handed over his symbolic regalia, Tamburlaine is still issuing commands, while Amyras finds it difficult to free himself from his own identity as follower-subject.[59] In *Edward II* the king is forced to abdicate, and the play gives him a scene where (arguably for the first time in the play) he acquires subjective authority and rhetorical dominance, completely overpowering his interlocutors.[60] Even though Edward is losing power in the fictional world of the play, in the world of the theatre as playhouse he is gaining it. This contradiction is chiefly enabled by the play's conflation of monarchical power with theatrical charisma, a conflation also visible in *Tamburlaine* and *Dido Queene of Carthage*.

For Tamburlaine, Edward and Dido, the agony of abdication is mainly that it requires surrender of personal autonomy and agency—or at least the illusion that they possess it. In most other contemporary drama (especially Shakespeare's) abdications are given a much clearer political emphasis, involving questions of legitimacy and the wider political order. To be sure, this presentation does not preclude dramatic subversion, cynicism, or critique, nor does it ignore the psychological suffering of individual monarchs, but such perspectives are always in negotiation with the wider, political dimensions of ruling. Marlowe's rulers, however, are almost pathologically uninterested in such frameworks. Everything is reduced to the self. When Edward in his abdication scene says, "what are kings when regiment is gone, / but perfect shadows in a sunshine day?" (5.1.26–27) he does not mean the complex apparatus of legitimating ceremony, which for example Henry V interrogates (but also endorses) in Shakespeare's play, and which brings into focus the participation of others, and a shared sense of the past, in the constitution of power.[61] "Regiment," for Edward, means simply ruling—the ability to command others and therefore remain free in oneself. As long as he can tell others what to do, he is a king. Once he is accepting their orders, he is a mere shadow. Despite the lines' poetic beauty, the underlying thought is so simple as to be a truism. It is

[59] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine, Part 2*, *The Complete Works*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 1.149–252, 5.3.182–83, 202–5 (where Theridamas even instructs Amyras, after he has taken the accoutrements of state to "obey his [Tamburlaine's] majesty," 205), 206–9.
[60] Marlowe, *Edward II*, 5.1. Edward's "maruelous agonie" in this scene is anticipated in the chronicles: see Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles* (London: John Harrison et al., 1587), 340.
[61] William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. T.W. Craik, Arden Shakespeare 3rd series (Bloomsbury, 1995), 4.1.227–81. Cf. David Bevington and James Shapiro, "'What are Kings when Regiment is Gone?' The Decay of Ceremony in *Edward II*," in Kenneth Friedenreich, ed., *"A Poet and a Filthy Playmaker": New Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (AMS Press, 1988), 263–78.

true that Edward is a "light-brained" king, not given to complex ratiocination (5.2.2). But when his antagonist, Mortimer, takes his place, he elaborates the same theme: "the prince I rule, the queene I do commaund … and what I list commaund, who dare controwle?" (5.4.49–50, 68). Mortimer's fantasy, too, is of complete autonomy and agency, though significantly he believes he can exercise it without regal title. In this respect he strongly resembles Dido, as well as Edward and Tamburlaine.

Confronted with speeches like Mortimer's, or fates like Edward's or Dido's, it is easy to wonder whether the purpose is to explode fantasies of self-sovereignty and the languages of monarchical absolutism or royal pretension to which they are indebted. Such a reading is reinforced by Marlowe's repeated use of the arcs and motifs of *De Casibus* tragedy, which humiliate the proud and topple the powerful. And of course the temptation remains mighty yet to view such moments through the New Historicist prism of containment and subversion.[62] However, there is a strong sense in all Marlovian drama that the loss of this imagined self-hood is overwhelmingly traumatic, while the very possibility of such a singular, superior existence is deeply appealing. Subversion, that is, comes a long way behind assertion and fantasy, and the turning of fortune's wheel typically propels a deep bitterness or baffled frustration rather than impart didactically a lesson in human humility. One might in fact conclude that Marlowe's work is *imaginatively*, though not ideologically, royalist, in that it explores the fantastical possibilities and traumatic contradictions of a self modelled on the sovereign prince of contemporary political thought.

To reinforce this point it is worth returning here to the language of social contempt, expressions of which are common in works attributed to Marlowe and which appears at freighted moments of *Dido Queene of Carthage*. The sneer is invariably downward, at "vulgar pesants" and "common groomes." Are such passages written to expose the snobbery of the rich and powerful—the dramatist as social critic? Sometimes, perhaps. But on most occasions such language has a different function. It typically expresses the difference between the singular self and everyone else, and crucially by articulating a hierarchical relationship: the one *above* the many. As with the use of ideological language, there is a sense that social distinctions are being used to articulate a psychological or indeed erotic ideal. For one thing, such sneers are rarely applied to *actual* peasants but, (as in *Dido*) to courtiers at a

[62] For a characteristic "subversive" assessment of Marlowe's view of monarchy, trained on the ideology it contests more than its own ingredients, see Chloe Preedy, "(De)Valuing the Crown in *Tamburlaine, Dido Queen of Carthage*, and *Edward II*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 54 (2014): 259–77, https://doi.org/10.1353/SEL.2014.0020 (esp. the phrase "subversive attitudes to monarchy," applied to Marlowe's works, 260).

banquet or a rival monarch—those who need to be psychologically demoted from the status they might otherwise claim. In *Hero and Leander* such slurs are directed at grasping, doltish aristocratic patrons and their hangers-on, mere "boore[s]" and "clowne[s]," when contrasted with the "*Muses* sonnes" (1.472, 481).[63] When Dido tells Aeneas that "humilitie belongs to common groomes," the register of social distance and hierarchy largely articulates her wish to separate herself and the newly eyed object of her subjective desire from everyone else, rendering such exclusivity superior and therefore secure from interference. Companionship extends the sphere of subjective autonomy from the self to one or more chosen others.

But not on equal terms: *within* Marlovian companionate relationships, agency and power are unequally distributed. The surrender of self to another is never completely reciprocal. Initiating such a relationship always has a transactional element. Works attributed to Marlowe are disproportionately studded with proposed erotic bargains, in which addressees are invited into intimate relationships of various kinds through the offer of gifts, typically material objects, sensory pleasures, or both.[64] Dido's advances to Aeneas take exactly this form: they culminate (we have seen) in the offer of kingship as a form of pleasure and gorgeous costume. These barters involve the exchange of incommensurable goods. In the well-known lyric often called "the Passionate Shepherd," for example, the addressee is offered "all the pleasures" in order to "live with me and be my love."[65] The underlying idea is that both parties receive, because they are presumed to want, something different. The terms of such bargains are dictated by the speaker, who never gives up their ultimate leverage. We have already noted how Dido's surrender of sovereignty to Aeneas is anything but. She wishes to bind him to her. Her offer of monarchy to Anna so that she can "live a private life with [Aeneas]" implies something more affectively equal. And yet the wish is ultimately like Edward's, for "some nooke or corner left, / To frolike with my deerest Gaveston," a place, that is, where the "I" enjoys a "with" but without losing sovereignty of their contracted sphere of selfhood (1.4.72–73). Whether the mooted companion is up for the idea hardly matters. The idea that love involves a mutual surrender or amalgamation of agency, as in Renaissance idealisations of friendship, does not exist in "Marlowe" texts. Every relationship

[63] Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Bowers, 2, 423–526.
[64] To give only four examples, of varying style and context, but all offering fabulous and luxurious pleasures: *DQoC* 3.1.116–127 (Dido to Aeneas and Achates, whom she encourages to sail to Italy without his boss); *Edward II*, 1.1.50–70 (Gaveston imagining the pleasures he will offer the king); *1 Tamburlaine* 1.2.93–105 (Tamburlaine to Zenocrate); *The Jew of Malta*, 4.2.88–98, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Bowers, 1, 253-352 (Ithimore to a courtesan).
[65] See Marlowe, *The Complete Works*, ed. Bowers, 2.536, 537.

presumes a subjective ego struggling for dominance, hoping through lavish exhibitions of generosity to buy acceptance of it from another.

An array of similar strategies and ideas surround monarchy in "Marlowe" texts, then, whether we are talking about companions, the power of the gaze or the dilemmas and contradictions within an absolutist idea of the self. The combined portrait that results is so different from that of other dramatists of the period as to suggest, as it were, a "Marlowe signature" regarding princely authority. Granted, it was open to imitation and indeed was imitated—there isn't a theatrical king or queen twenty years after 1593 that doesn't have *something* of the same sovereign psychology and erotic performativity. But the fundamental coordinates of the portrait were not that easy to replicate. Move the dial one millimetre and the portrait becomes the familiar one of a libidinous tyrant, which protagonists like Dido or Tamburlaine resemble but never actually are. Move it another way, and the psychodrama of monarchy becomes also or instead the struggle for or around corporate political identity, whether of nation, kingdom or commonwealth, and again this is something simply struck out of the vision of monarchy embraced by Tamburlaine, Dido or Edward, but which other plays of the period not only talk about but quite understandably make central. Perhaps too, it was difficult for other dramatists to capture the vision's striking indifference to gender or sexual orientation. As objects and subjects of the desiring gaze, monarchs in "Marlowe" can be struttingly masculine (as in *Tamburlaine*) or lovely boys (as in *Dido*), male or female. They can long for men or women, adults or children. If desire undoes them, it is not *what* or *whom* they desire, but the vulnerability and contradiction that desire entails.

The resemblances between these texts' portraits of monarchy does not of course mean Christopher Marlowe *wrote* them all, certainly by himself. As Lukas Erne has recently pointed out, Marlowe's association with many works conventionally attributed to him, the majority published posthumously, is surprisingly tenuous, even if symmetry and justice argue for extending the same scepticism to attempts to dislodge authors as formerly to assign them.[66] Play-writing was often collaborative in Marlowe's time—indeed, the title-page of *Dido Queene of Carthage* attributes it also to Thomas Nashe, although there remains no consensus about what he contributed—and the route from stage to published page permitted many hands to leave a mark.[67] Hence the precise combination of words used to convey some

[66] Lukas Erne, "Disintegrating Marlowe," *Studies in Philology* 119, no. 2 (2022): 272–97, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/851159.

[67] For a recent contribution to the discussion of the respective roles of Marlowe and Nashe in the play's authorship, see Ruth Lunney and Hugh Craig, "Who Wrote *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?" *The Journal of Marlowe Studies* 1 (2020): 1–31, https://doi.org/10.7190/jms.v1i0.92.

of these ideas may not be his, or may have been heavily revised by another: one suspects, indeed, that recent developments in attribution methodologies which have worked in Marlowe's favour by finding his presence in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* render his own work open to similar revisionary claims.[68] Modern attribution scholarship is trained overwhelmingly on habits of language, not of thought, implicitly finding evidence of individuality, as Ed Pechter has noted, chiefly in the poetically and philosophically insignificant.[69] But insofar as continuities of imaginative force and conviction across texts *could* argue for a single artist's singular vision, then monarchy, in Marlowe, might be a place to start.

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[68] Rory Loughnane and Gary Taylor, "The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works," in Gabriel Egan and Taylor, eds, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 496–503, 493–96, 513–17.

[69] Ed Pechter, 'Against Attribution," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 69, no.4 (Winter 2018): 228–255.

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