Early Modern Literary Studies

Beaumont and Fletcher's Rhodes: Early Modern Geopolitics and Mythological Topography in *The Maid's Tragedy*

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1. Unlike William Shakespeare's near-contemporaneous *Tempest*—wherein the action unfolds on an unspecified island somewhere in the watery "space" lying "'twixt" Tunis and Naples—Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy* (King's Men, c. 1610) is set in a readily identifiable Mediterranean locale.[1] In the play's opening scene, Melantius, a soldier who has recently returned from performing military "deeds abroad" clearly identifies the "here" to which he has been restored as Rhodes.[2] And lest we forget the particularity of the play's setting, the island's overly lustful monarch is referred to throughout the play exclusively by his national appellation. This geographical specificity in *The Maid's Tragedy*, however, is coupled with a marked sense of atemporality; that is, though the *where* of the action is made abundantly clear to the play's audience, the *when* remains elusive. In addressing Beaumont and Fletcher's unusual union of topographical precision with a carefully crafted sense of timelessness, this article considers the diverse imaginative landscapes in which Rhodes existed for early modern audiences. In what follows, I explore the meaning of Rhodes first within the historical, geopolitical context of the early modern Mediterranean (as a place that had played a crucial and well-known role at the epicentre of fifteenth and sixteenth-century conflicts between the Ottomans and the Knights of St John) and then in relation to the literary, intertextual planes peopled by the familiar characters of Greco-Roman mythological tradition. Within the play itself, these geopolitical and mythological readings of the Rhodian setting are not binaries. Rather, what is most evocative about the play's stated location is the diverse range of historical and cultural meanings attached to it. As my concluding reassessment of *The Maid's Tragedy's* bloody dénouement elucidates, the simultaneous determinacy and indeterminacy of Beaumont and Fletcher's chosen setting allows for—and in fact derives its richness from—polysemantic play.

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2. In Andrew C. Hess's essay on *The Tempest*, he wonders "why Shakespeare chose to offer such a resonant set of Mediterranean geographical referents in his play, but then made little reference to the violent rupture of Mediterranean unity that redefined political and cultural borders at the time and location of his play."[3] I here want to ask a very similar set of questions about Beaumont and Fletcher's work: why have the authors set *The Maid's Tragedy* in a recognizable location—an island situated on the shifting borders of the Eurasian world—and how might we reread their play in light of regional geopolitics? Given the abundance of scholarly discourse on

Shakespeare's *Tempest* within the regional context of the early modern Mediterranean, it is, perhaps, surprising that these questions have not been asked about *The Maid's Tragedy* before now. After all, it was more than a decade ago that Barbara Fuchs, citing sixteenth-century conflicts involving Malta, Cyprus, and Rhodes, declared that: "*Any* island imagined in the Mediterranean [in the early seventeenth century] would be understood to exist in a hotly contested space, permanently threatened by the Ottoman Empire if not directly under its control."[4]

3. Before examining the facets of the play's significant, though apparently heretofore unexplored, early modern geopolitical resonances in further detail, it is helpful to briefly review some key details regarding the transfers of political power in early modern Rhodes. Historically speaking, Rhodes was a conspicuously volatile place as well as a noted site of cross-cultural commerce and exchange. Since the first decade of the fourteenth century, the island had been controlled by the militant Christian order of the Knights of St John. Its strategic position, lying less than twenty kilometres off the coast of Asia Minor and in the midst of key Mediterranean trade routes, made Rhodes a target of the rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire, the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Ottoman forces of Mehmed II (best remembered for his 1453 conquest of Constantinople) laid siege to the island unsuccessfully in 1480. Süleyman I renewed this effort, and in 1522 his forces succeeded in taking Rhodes from the Knights of St John following a second siege. The sixteenth-century fall of Rhodes was only one of many similar island conquests and sieges that took place along the fluctuating borders of the Ottoman Empire in subsequent decades: the islands of Naxos and Cyprus fell to Ottoman forces in 1564 and 1571, respectively, and in 1565 the island of Malta—where the Knights of St John had eventually relocated after their loss of Rhodes—suffered a prolonged attack by the Ottomans which they managed to withstand. Rhodes, then, played a central and prominent role in the sequence of sixteenth-century conflicts and conquests in the eastern Mediterranean.

4. Details of recent maritime battles, including the critical 1522 siege and capture of Rhodes, would have been well-known in contemporary England, where they were recounted (and perhaps sometimes embellished) in historical sources. The second volume of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation,* for example, contains a segment entitled "A briefe relation of the siege and taking of the Citie of *Rhodes,* by *Sultan Soliman* the great Turke."[5] Even more detailed accounts of both the 1480 and 1522 sieges appear in Richard Knolles' immensely popular *Generall Historie of the Turkes*. Such English volumes "Faithfullie collected…and digested" (to use the terminology of Knolles' frontispiece) diverse sources and materials that were circulating in Europe during the era in order to illustrate the "strange successe of [the] great and mightie *Othoman* Empire."[6] Works such as Knolles' and Hakluyt's highlighted the "maiestie and power" of the ever-expanding Ottoman regime, and they conveyed attendant anxieties that "how farre [the Ottomans] shall yet farther spread, none knoweth."[7] Such historical sources place the sixteenth-century conquest of Rhodes within the larger narrative of how this awe-inspiring Islamic empire—capitalizing in part on Christian Europe's internal disunity—had efficiently annexed formerly Christian domains:

> The fame of these Turks togither with their fortune, thus daily encreasing, and the mightie Empire of the Sarasins as fast declining: which vnder their Chaliphes the successors of the false prophet *Mahomet*, hauing in lesse than the space of two hundred yeeres, ouerspread not onely the greatest part of ASIA and AFRIKE, euen vnto GADES and the pillers of *Hercules:* but also passing ouer that strait, had ouerwhelmed almost all SPAINE, and not there staying, but passing the Pyrenei had pearsed euen into the heart of FRANCE, and diuers other parts of Christendom· as namely, ITALY, SICILY, the famous Iland of the RHODES, with many others of the MEDITERRANEAN.[8]

Should, then, Rhodes' role in Mediterranean geopolitics affect how we approach *The Maid's Tragedy*? It seems clear that for Beaumont and Fletcher, as well as for their original audiences, references to the play's Rhodian setting would have been inextricably linked to such grander narratives of Mediterranean warfare and Ottoman expansionism. Indeed, Rhodes held a prominent and memorable position in such narratives, for, as Hakluyt's work suggested, "since the creation of the world…so great quantity [of artillery] was neuer bent and layed before any towne as hath bene against Rhodes at this siege."[9]

5. As a means of thinking about how contemporary geopolitics, particularly the Ottoman Empire's influence in the Mediterranean region, are reflected and represented in Beaumont and Fletcher's dramatic portrait of Rhodes, it is helpful to consider some of the things that are *not* happening in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) and William Shakespeare's *Othello* (c. 1604) serve as apt and familiar literary counterexamples. Each of these plays is also set amidst islands associated with the Ottoman Empire's sphere of control, and, moreover, we find specific references to Rhodes in each of these pieces. What is immediately striking about each of these other early modern plays is the fact that their Rhodian references are explicitly embedded in narratives of Mediterranean conflict.[10]

6. *The Jew of Malta* begins with ominous allusions to the perceived threat of "A fleet of warlike galleys…from Turkey" whose "coming will afflict us all."[11] Marlowe, for his part, reenvisions within the play a version of the 1565 siege of Malta wherein the Christian forces do not persevere.[12] In so doing, he is careful to establish the genealogy of his unfortunate Maltese Christians, creating links both historical and metaphorical between the earlier sixteenth-century siege of Rhodes and the perfidies represented in his own plot:

> remember that, to Europe's shame,
> The Christian isle of Rhodes, from whence [the Maltese Christians] came,
> Was lately lost, and [they] were stated here
> To be at deadly enmity with Turks. (2.2.30-3)[13]

It is thus that the national crisis in Malta is presented against the backdrop of larger Mediterranean conflicts and exiles, specifically the Knights of St John's historical loss of Rhodes to Ottoman invaders.[14] Marlowe's Christian Malta, then, both reflects and continues the crisis of the besieged island of Rhodes, and the sense of ongoing warfare for control of Mediterranean islands does not disappear at the end of the play. Rather, the Ottoman threat with which the play opened still remains in the final scene.

7. Likewise, *Othello*—the only of Shakespeare's plays in which the island of Rhodes is mentioned—is yet another drama that unfolds in a milieu of Mediterranean naval conflict. At the start of the play, Othello is introduced to us as a military man "Horribly stuffed with epithets of War" (1.1.14). We learn that he has previously fought "Against the general enemy Ottoman" (1.3.49) at "Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds" (1.1.29). Now that Othello has been put in charge of a new campaign, scuffles with the Ottomans over control of these same Mediterranean islands continue. In the play's opening act, Shakespeare records their regional movements with a notable geographic precision: in scene 3, we hear contradictory reports of "A Turkish fleet… bearing up to Cyprus" (1.3.8) and of a "Turkish preparation mak[ing] for Rhodes" (1.3.14) before finally learning that "The Ottomites, reverend and gracious, / Steering with due course toward the Isle of Rhodes, / Have there injointed them with an after fleet" (1.3.36). Although the Ottoman fleet is subsequently destroyed in a storm, dispelling the immediate menace that it posed in act 1, this milieu of Mediterranean hostility established at the start of *Othello* is key, nonetheless, to establishing the play's mood, and there remains a ghostly threat of Ottoman conquest and violence that informs the rest of the play.

8. In contrast to these counterexamples, Beaumont and Fletcher's Mediterranean island in *The*

Maid's Tragedy is a place that is neither *explicitly* threatened nor palpably occupied by Ottoman forces. Yet I find it impossible to conceive that the original Jacobean audience would have been able to separate their knowledge of this play's geographically specific setting off the coast of Asia Minor from their knowledge of sixteenth-century Mediterranean history, as represented both in widely-disseminated historical accounts and also as recast in contemporaneous literary and theatrical versions. In light of this, I propose that the geopolitics of early modern Rhodes inflect *The Maid's Tragedy* in three primary ways: the generalised backdrop of warfare against which the action are set; the play's emphasis on fortification and security within the city; and the portraits of internal strife and treachery which we see amongst the wronged and vengeful Rhodians themselves.

9. The dialogue surrounding Melantius' homecoming in the scene 1 in *The Maid's Tragedy* clearly establishes a backdrop of armed conflict in the Mediterranean. Lysippus greets the military hero: “Noble Melantius! / The land by me welcomes thy virtues home to Rhodes; / Thou that with blood abroad buyest us our peace!” (1.1.13-15). Melantius, who has lost a “sea of blood” (1.2.85) and gained “honored scars” (4.1.29) over the course of his valiant career, clarifies that Rhodian martial exploits abroad are ongoing. The constancy of this external conflict is highlighted through Melantius' assertion that he has been “oft” fighting in such wars, dating back at least to the time of the boyhood of Amintor, who is now a grown man:

> When [Amintor] was a boy,
> As oft as I returned (as, without boast,
> I brought home conquest) he would gaze upon me,
> And view me round, to find in what one limb
> The virtue lay to do those things he heard. (1.1.51-5)

The Rhodes of *The Maid's Tragedy* is a paranoid place, and justifiably so, for the “soft and silken wars” (1.1.42) at home prove just as lethal as the unnamed enemies that Melantius has been combating abroad. This sense of paranoia within Rhodes emerges clearly in the play's second scene, which begins with Calianax's aggravated exclamation: “Diagoras, look to the doors better, for shame! You let in all the world, and anon the King will rail at me!” (1.2.1-2). The gravity of the ensuing discussion between Calianax and his servant is striking, considering that the men are essentially working as ushers for a court masque. “I shall never keep them out” (1.2.11) Diagoras worries, presumably with reference to the Rhodian riff-raff who might want to crash Evadne and Amintor's wedding festivities. When Melantius requests that the men “Open the door” (1.2.25) so that the military hero (and an innocuous lady friend) might attend the nuptial celebrations, he is first interrogated by Diagoras—who issues the stern warning “I hope your lordship brings no troop with you; for, if you do, I must return them” (1.2.28-9)—and then is very nearly denied entry altogether by his long-time antagonist Calianax.

10. Like Marlowe's Malta, Beaumont and Fletcher's Rhodes is a fortified site, and, given the play's preoccupation with security, it is hardly surprising that, as in *The Jew of Malta*, these fortifications have been violated by the play's final act.[15] Again, as in Marlowe's earlier work, the crucial breach of security in *The Maid's Tragedy* comes from within. In act 3, Melantius, bent on righting the wrongs done to his sister Evadne and friend Amintor, hatches a plan to exact revenge upon the King of Rhodes, a plan that requires the cooperation of “the keep[er] of the fort” (3.2.305). Although he is not immediately successful in his attempt to persuade Calianax to “deliver it / Into [his] hands” (3.2.307-8), by the beginning of act 5, we hear a report that Melantius' revenge scheme has come to fruition:

> Melantius
> Has got the fort and stands upon the wall
> And with a loud voice calls those few that pass
> At this dead time of night, delivering

> The innocence of this act. (5.1.141-5)

The play makes it abundantly clear that whoever controls Rhodes' fortifications controls its political destiny. Moreover, as Melantius clarifies, for a murderer to "scape" Rhodes would be impossible "without hav[ing] this fort" (3.2.312-3); this point is specifically reiterated in the King of Rhodes' own assertion that "no man / Could kill me and scape clear, but that old man [Calianax]" (4.2.79-80) since he alone has "the means" (4.2.83). That the vengeful rebels gain control of the city's fortifications, then, is a crucial precondition for the transfer of power that we see at the end of the play. By scene 2 of act 5, the self-righteous conspirators are perched safely atop the city walls. Amiably negotiating with passers-by, Melantius and his "boldly confident" (5.2.12) comrades translate their control of the fortifications into political authority as they offer the now-vacant position of Rhodian monarch to Lysippus: "Come to the back gate, and we'll call you king, / And give you up the fort" (5.2.72-3).

11. Yet another way in which *The Maid's Tragedy* is coloured by accounts of recent Rhodian history involves the play's portraits of internal treachery and strife. We cannot fail to observe that the play's representations of civil disobedience and dissent from within are broadly reminiscent of narratives and anecdotes found in historical sources about Rhodian treachery and political insecurity. The historical accounts paint a portrait of Christian Rhodes as an island that is continually being threatened and compromised not only by the external Ottoman threat but also by the indiscretions, personal ambitions, and questionable allegiances of its own inhabitants. As *Generall Historie of the Turkes* so aptly puts it, "The enemie was not busier without the citie...but traiterous minds were as busie within to haue betrayed the same."[16]

12. Contemporary anecdotes about such "traiterous minds" abound. Knolles, for instance, relates the story of one "*Anthonius Meligalus*, fugitiue knight" who provided Mehmed II with "a perfect plot of the citie…and the isle wherein it stood," and Hakluyt tells a similar tale (which perhaps played some role in inspiring Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*) featuring a double-crossing Jewish physician who, after gaining the trust of the Rhodian locals, provides Süleyman with tactical information so "hee might easilie and at vnawares surprise the towne."[17] In this vein, another fifteenth-century story found in *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* shares some patent similarities with the plot of political intrigue that unfolds in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Knolles' work describes how "one Ianus a Dalmatian" was recruited by the Ottomans in a thwarted attempt to poison Peter Damboyse, then serving as Rhodes' Great Master:

> This *Ianus*…acquainted himselfe with one *Pythius* an Epiro, of great familiaritie with *Marius Philelphus* (of late secretarie vnto *Damboyse*...) *Ianus* by the meanes of *Pythius*, whom he had now throughly corrupted, sought after *Philelphus*, who then as hee right well knew, liued discontented, as a fit instrument whereby to worke this treason; for that he was a man well acquainted with the cookes and butlers, and other seruitours in the Great Masters house, and himselfe (yet) there verie conuersant also. *Pythius* presuming of his old acquaintance and familiaritie with *Philelphus*, and waiting vpon his melancholie humour, began to persuade him to reuenge the disgrace he liued in, and withall to shew him the meanes how to doe it, by poysoning of the Great Master: which might (as he said) fall out to his greater good than he was yet aware of. *Philelphus* making semblant as if he had not disliked of the motion, was desirous to know of him what farther benefit might thereby arise vnto him, more than reuenge….*Philelphus* hauing got full vnderstanding of the treason, presently discouered the same to *Damboyse*.[18]

13. The story of Philelphus in Knolles' account bears a marked resemblance to the story of Calianax narrated in Beaumont and Fletcher's play. Like Philelphus, Calianax is identified as a "fit instrument whereby to worke…treason" against his ruler due to his trusted position within the city. And, also like Philelphus, Calianax finds himself being recruited into a conspiracy against

Rhodes' sovereign, allegedly for the "greater good" of Rhodian society. Although Calianax's attempts to warn the King of Rhodes about Melantius' pending treachery are ultimately stymied by Melantius' own persuasive denials, he also follows the model of Philelphus in "discouer[ing] the same to" his monarch once he has "got full vnderstanding of the treason."[19]

14. These congruences that I have just outlined between historical accounts of Rhodes as it existed in the Ottoman-dominated sphere of the eastern Mediterranean and the fictive Rhodes of *The Maid's Tragedy* serve to direct our interpretation of the play. All of these elements—the backdrop of continual warfare, the paranoid emphasis on security within the city, the ever-present threat of treachery—combine to darken the mood of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragedy and to inflect its events with an aura of uncertainty. Put another way, the authors' gestures towards Rhodes' turbulent geopolitical realities help to more fully characterise the vulnerabilities of the voluble island outpost that serves as the setting for their own play. Subject to corruption, conspiracy, gross abuses of power, and conditional civil obedience, Beaumont and Fletcher's Rhodes is plagued by ongoing social dissatisfaction and disruption. And no wonder the Rhodians are discontent, for in *The Maid's Tragedy* constancy and loyalty prove no less destructive than infidelity and treachery, and authority seems to be as disturbingly arbitrary as it is fleeting.

15. The careful distinction that Melantius draws in the play's first scene between Rhodes' inner stability and its external conflicts—"But this is peace, / And that [abroad] was war" (1.1.130-131)—rapidly erodes as the play's action unfolds. As Melantius himself bitterly notes in the play's second scene, "This Rhodes…is nought / But a place privileged to do men wrong" (1.2.88-9). Over the course of the play, the Rhodians are subjected first to the unchecked and callous whims of a monarch who is more interested in securing his own private sexual satisfaction than maintaining positive relationships with his courtiers, and then they are delivered rather haphazardly into the hands of his younger brother. The gratuitously violent and decidedly unorthodox manner in which royal authority is transferred from one king to the next at the play's end leaves the audience wary: despite the lip service that Lysippus may pay to good governance, we are left with grave doubts about the future efficacy of the play's second monarch. Lysippus, after all, is a man who ascended the throne only through the intervention of self-righteous dissidents, and the manner in which he has been installed as king suggests that he may be nothing more than a temporarily convenient political puppet. We might say, then, that Beaumont and Fletcher's chosen setting serves as a sort of shorthand, highlighting the play's civil uncertainty through Rhodes' prominent associations with well-known, real-life military and political upheaval.

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16. While, as I have been arguing, aspects of *The Maid's Tragedy* certainly resonate with accounts of the real-life history of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Rhodes, reading Beaumont and Fletcher's geographically specific setting *only* in terms of Rhodes' geopolitical context limits our understanding of how the play's setting simultaneously functions within the imaginative spaces of prior literature. Here I want to again return to the issue of what the play is *not* doing as a segue into my discussion of the second semantic register of Beaumont and Fletcher's Rhodian setting (the mythological). Whereas in *Othello* or *The Jew of Malta*, issues of religious and national identity are never far from the surface—and also despite the fact that early modern historical accounts locate Rhodes squarely in the middle of a religious tug-of-war—the question of the various Rhodian characters' religious and national identities is neatly omitted from *The Maid's Tragedy*. This dramatic lacuna is paired with a general sense of atemporality within the play, for we are given few clues to help us identify the *when* of the dramatic setting.[20] Melantius, for instance, twice refers in the opening scene to the fact that he has been recently off fighting "at Patria," a reference that is overwhelmingly nonspecific in its connotations.[21]

Similarly, when the king jokes on Amintor's wedding night that he hopes the cuckold will father "a boy, / That may defend [the Rhodian] kingdoms from [their] foes" (1.2.287-8), the identities of these "foes" are left unspecified. Also frustrating for its implications of temporal vagueness is a conversation that transpires between the King, Melantius, and Calianax in act 4, during which the monarch praises Calianax's "keeping of the fort," declaring "he has kept it well" (4.2.84-5). Melantius ill-humouredly and rather wittily replies:

> From cobwebs, sir,
> 'Tis clean swept. I can find no other art
> In keeping of it now: 'Twas ne'er besieged
> Since he commanded. (4.2.86-9).

Though we learn that the fort has allegedly not seen action during Calianax's tenure as guardian, we have no way of knowing just how long it has been "Since he commanded." Furthermore, the King's subsequent reaction—"You are not merry" (4.2.94)—marks Melantius' comment about the fort's alleged "cobwebs" as nothing more than a snide, ill-humoured dig at an old adversary. Faced with such temporal ambiguity within the play, we are left to wonder: Is this the Rhodes that we remember as a fortified bastion of medieval Christianity? Could it, perhaps, be simultaneously meant as a fictive reflection of the Ottoman-occupied Rhodes as it existed in Beaumont and Fletcher's own era? Or—to introduce a new interpretative dimension to the mix—is this also meant to be understood as a literary locale, positioned within the versatile imaginative topography of the mythological Mediterranean?

17. The deliberate atemporality of *The Maid's Tragedy* allows the play's authors to draw upon the plural resonances of the play's setting, and, accordingly, they locate the Rhodian "dissension amongst lovers" (3.1.223) within the imaginative, deeply intertextual space of Greco-Roman mythology.[22] Rhodes is, after all, physically located within a terrain also traversed by the likes of Aeneas and Theseus, and it is hard not to hear echoes of the Trojan archetype in Beaumont and Fletcher's representation of their own walled city. As in the Trojan saga, which begins with the discord between Menelaus, Paris, and Helen, the strife in this fictive Rhodes is similarly put in motion with a disagreement between two men (Amintor and the King) who have competing claims on the same woman (Evadne). And, just as in classical Latin poetry, where Eurasian Troy, brought down by treachery from literally within its own walls, "is persistently depicted as a place of reverberating sorrow," to borrow Michael C. J. Putnam's phrasing, the Rhodes of *The Maid's Tragedy* is also a borderland space infiltrated by treason and marked by its tragic atmosphere.[23]

18. *The Maid's Tragedy* is a play with numerous amatory victims. Foremost among them is the vindictive Aspatia, apparently the play's titular tragic maid, who is vulnerable, publicly dishonoured, and suicidal before the play has even begun. A casualty of the lecherous and tyrannical King's schemes, she has been renounced by her less-than-faithful former fiancé Amintor. In act 1, she is forced to witness her erstwhile lover wed the King's clandestine mistress, and, as we observe her subsequent displays of grief, we are kept acutely aware of the ways in which intertextual literary space overlays historical place. Cliché is heaped upon cliché as Aspatia's identity as a literarily resonant abandoned woman is developed over the course of the play, and the tale that Beaumont and Fletcher tell of Aspatia and her "hard fortunes" (1.1.72) is also, as Raphael Lyne has recently noted, conspicuously indebted to Ovid's ancient Latin *Heroides*.[24] In the literary imagination of early modern England, the betrayed woman—neglected, deserted, or deceived by her lover—was routinely associated with the stories recounted in the *Heroides* (as well as later vernacular adaptations of these stories by Chaucer, Gower, and their early modern successors). Indeed, Ovidian characters so frequently provided the patterns for female-voiced lament that these heroines' very names became bywords for unhappy lovers. In *The Maid's Tragedy*, such mythological stories of abandoned women offer not only generic literary models for Aspatia's complaints but also serve, broadly speaking, as

geographically resonant sources for her own story. In mapping her own position in relation to the intertextual landscapes of classical mythology, Aspatia calls particular attention to the stories of three prior heroines, each of whom appears in the context of Ovid's *Heroides* and each of whom has relevant connections to the mythological topography of the eastern Mediterranean: the Phoenician refugee Dido, founder of Carthage and sometime paramour of Aeneas; the nymph Oenone, first wife of the Trojan prince Paris whom he later abandoned in favour of Helen; and, perhaps most importantly, the Cretan princess Ariadne, deserted by Theseus on the island of Naxos after having helped him to vanquish the Minotaur.[25]

19. Beaumont and Fletcher's Rhodian maiden self-consciously styles her own abandonment narrative vis-à-vis these mythological figures of ancient tradition; as Alexander Leggatt once put it, Aspatia "is an artist in grief, and knows it."[26] From the play's opening scene, we sense that she has already autobiographically fashioned herself into something of a literary character. To this effect, we are told that accounts of Aspatia's "infectious grief" (1.1.97) are quickly spreading through Rhodes. Melantius informs Amintor: "I *hear* / A lady mourns for thee, *men say*, to death" (1.1.135-6).[27] Given this introduction to her situation, it comes as no surprise in act 2 when we learn that Aspatia imagines her life as a tragic story destined to be told and retold to successive audiences:

> As soon as I am dead,
> Come all, and watch one night about my hearse;
> Bring each a mournful story and a tear
> To offer at it when I go to earth;
> With flattering ivy clasp my coffin round;
> Write on my brow my fortune; let my bier
> Be borne by virgins that shall sing by course,
> The truth of maids and perjuries of men. (2.1.100-7)

Envisioning her own body in explicitly textual terms, she suggests that the spectacle of her misfortune will be "Writ[ten] on [her] brow"; her corpse, as she pictures it, will serve as yet another link in a long textual tradition of narratives attesting "The truth of maids, and perjuries of men." It is precisely this self-identification as a literary character located within an extant textual tradition of deceit and desertion that allows Aspatia to present herself as a potential paradigm of grief when she later tells Evadne:

> May no discontent
> Grow 'twixt your love and you! But, if there do
> Inquire of me, and I will guide your moan,
> And teach you an artificial way to grieve,
> To keep your sorrow waking. (2.1.92-6)

As her pointed intertextual references indicate, Aspatia is portrayed as—and understands herself to be—part of an ongoing and *regional* literary tradition of rejection, and it is significant that the three specific narratives with which she aligns her own feature heroines associated with Asia Minor and/or the nearby islands of the eastern Mediterranean. The first two of these three local heroines are invoked by Aspatia in a conversation that the disconsolate maid has with her women Antiphila and Olympias in act 2, scene 2:

> Come, let's be sad, my girls!
> That downcast of thine eye, Olympias,
> Shows a fine sorrow. –Mark, Antiphila,
> Just such another was the nymph Oenone's,
> When Paris brought home Helen. [*To Olympias*] Now, a tear,
> And then thou art a piece expressing fully
> The Carthage queen [Dido], when from a cold sea rock,

> Full with her sorrow, she tied fast her eyes
> To the fair Trojan ships, and, having lost them,
> Just as thine does, down stole a tear. (2.2.27-36)

Later in this same scene, in what is perhaps the play's most memorable and frequently cited passage (and a passage that I will later return to later in this article), Aspatia draws attention to the even more evocative parallels between her plight and that of a third mythological precedent. Having asked to view a "piece of needlework" (2.2.40) depicting the story of Theseus and Ariadne, Aspatia proceeds to critique Antiphilia's artistry:

> These colors are not dull and pale enough
> To show a soul so full of misery
> As this sad lady's was. Do it by me;
> Do it again by me, the lost Aspatia,
> And you shall find all true but the wild island.
> And think I stand upon the sea breach now,
> Mine arms thus, and mine hair blown with the wind,
> Wild as that desert, and let all about me
> Tell that I am forsaken. Do my face
> (If thou hadst ever feeling of a sorrow)
> Thus, thus, Antiphila. Strive to make me look
> Like Sorrow's monument; and the trees about me,
> Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks
> Groan with continual surges, and behind me
> Make all a desolation. Look, look, wenches,
> A miserable life of this poor picture! (2.2.63-78)

By prompting her women to assimilate extant narratives with the circumstances of their own lives, Aspatia encourages them to reembody and reanimate the literary characters of a prior, regional tradition: assume a "downcast" countenance, and a Rhodian maiden can easily become "Just such another" as Oenone; it only takes "a tear" to transform oneself into "a piece expressing fully" the plight of Dido. Aspatia goes so far to suggest that, with her own "soul so full of misery," she can, in essence, out-Ariadne the mythological Ariadne.[28] What is particularly notable about Aspatia's impassioned literary citations of her Ovidian precursors is the way in which she envisions the overlay of mythological space onto her own world. This point is underscored by her remark that "you shall find all true but the wild island."[29] As she reminds us, one "wild island" is not so different from the other; both physically and symbolically speaking, Ariadne's Naxos is not far from Aspatia's own Rhodes.

20. Thus, just as the island's geographic specificity links it to narratives of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Ottoman conflicts, this superimposition of a well-known literary milieu over Beaumont and Fletcher's setting simultaneously connects *The Maid's Tragedy* to an inherited, fictive version of the eastern Mediterranean. Aspatia is acutely sensitive to—and labours to direct attention towards—the fact that, whatever else it may represent, Rhodes also belongs to an intertextual dimension populated by the familiar heroines of classical tradition. To momentarily return to the Shakespearean reference with which I opened this article, the resultant geographical complexity in *The Maid's Tragedy* is not unlike the evocative Mediterranean landscape of *The Tempest*, wherein, to borrow Jerry Brotton's phrasing, "allusion to a classical topography confers a sense of the play as shuttling between the weft of the present and the warp of the past."[30]

* * *

21. If it appears that I have been discussing two entirely different plays—with almost completely

separate casts of characters—in my respective discussions of Rhodes' geopolitical and mythological resonances thus far, this division can be attributed to the bipartite structure of *The Maid's Tragedy*. Scholars have frequently noted the lack of intersection between the two major strands of Beaumont and Fletcher's plot, particularly in the central acts of the play. William Shullenberger, for example, writes that "Aspatia's pathetic story…runs alongside the play, irrelevant to the rest of the story"; Stephen Guy-Bray suggests that the authors "keep Aspatia separate from the main narrative movement"; Christian M. Billing claims that Aspatia "is left almost entirely out of the dramatic picture, moping around the play's fringes in a state of self-indulgent, self-pitying melancholia"; and, although he offers a less trivializing précis of the forsaken heroine's storyline, Mark E. Bingham also notes this structural fissure:

> [Aspatia's] story…involves little more than an initial explanation that she has been cast off, a few scenes in which she and her father Calianax brood over her mistreatment, and finally her suicide, which she accomplishes by putting on pants and challenging Amintor. This action also gives the impression not of a separate or separable subplot, but of a component (imperfectly integrated) of the main plot—another dimension of Amintor's dilemma.[31]

We might say that there are two distinct narrative strands running through most of the play, the Melantius-dominated strand and the Aspatia-dominated strand, with the characters of Amintor and Evadne participating as supporting characters in both plotlines. Although each of these narrative strands has the same point of origin (that is, each stems from the unreasonable behaviour of an absolute monarch), nonetheless, each strand develops somewhat independently throughout the play's first four acts. As my earlier analyses suggest, for much of *The Maid's Tragedy* these two strands correspond neatly with different semantic registers of the Rhodian setting. It hardly comes as a surprise to observe that the Melantius-dominated plot, a plot strand that ultimately leads toward political usurpation, plays heavily upon Rhodes' geopolitical associations by inviting us to consider the ways in which the dynastic conflict at the heart of *The Maid's Tragedy* resonates with historical events unfolding in the early modern Mediterranean. Similarly, that the self-consciously literary Aspatia-dominated plot, a plot strand detailing the consequences of an abandoned woman's grief, relies heavily upon the mythological resonances of Rhodes' Mediterranean setting is only to be expected. What I am also interested in exploring, however, is the intersection of the setting's various registers; that is, how Rhodes' associations with distinct geopolitical places and imaginative spaces can *concurrently* influence our perception of action within the play.

22. By way of concluding my analysis, I will here attempt a succinct reading of the play's dénouement that accounts for the polysemous nature of *The Maid's Tragedy's* geographically specific setting. More particularly, since it consolidates the plural resonances of the play's setting in a particularly condensed form, I want to reconsider the dynamics of Aspatia's "fatal hour" (5.3.1). When she dons male attire and challenges Amintor to a deadly duel in the final act of the play, Aspatia hits upon a "yet unpractised way to grieve and die" (2.1.124) that is purposely designed to punish her romantic betrayer. When Aspatia coerces Amintor, who "must be urged" (5.3.83), to take up arms against her, she exacts retribution by turning the unwitting man into her own suicide weapon. As Amintor has, up to this point, played a role in both of the play's major plot strands, it is apt that the dynamics of this unfortunate Rhodian duel in which he finds himself embroiled seem to draw inspiration simultaneously from the setting's geopolitical and mythological registers.

23. Before turning to the ways in which Aspatia's carefully plotted murder/suicide mission resonates with Greco-Roman tradition, I want to examine how prior representations of the island's geopolitics inform the scene by drawing attention to the play's remarkable (though previously neglected) intertextual relationship with Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (c. 1590). Significantly, this is the only other play from the period preceding *The Maid's Tragedy*

to also be set specifically in Rhodes. Moreover, the perceptible influence of *Soliman and Perseda* upon the final act of Beaumont and Fletcher's work is of particular relevance to a geopolitically attuned reading of *The Maid's Tragedy* since Kyd's play dramatises events surrounding the 1522 Ottoman siege and conquest—that moment in recent history for which Rhodes must have been best remembered in the minds of Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences. At this point it is necessary to say a few words about this little known text. Seemingly based upon the short, embedded drama found within Kyd's own *Spanish Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda* opens with an Ottoman spy having been sent to Rhodes to assess its military fortifications and learn "How *Rhodes* is fenc'd, and how [the Ottomans] best may lay / [Their] never failing siege to win that plot." [32] Subsequently, the play goes on to relate the shifts of power in Rhodes as it is taken from the Christian Knights by the invading forces. Like the Rhodes of *The Maid's Tragedy,* the Rhodes of *Soliman and Perseda* is a predictably volatile place that is governed for the majority of the play by an insatiably lustful tyrant: in this instance, Soliman, a fictive representation of the island's real-life Ottoman conqueror Süleyman.

24. More to the point, in the vein of *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Soliman and Perseda* also features in its final act a cross-dressed Rhodian woman who ends her life through a deceptive murder/suicide scheme. It seems clear, given the striking parallels between the final acts of these two tragedies, that Beaumont and Fletcher had Kyd's prior death scene in mind when they envisioned the dynamics of their own Rhodian maiden's vengeful demise.[33] At the close of Kyd's play, having strategically disposed of Perseda's husband, Soliman audaciously approaches Rhodes with the intention of taking the now-widowed woman for himself. As he approaches, Perseda is seen standing defiantly atop the city walls disguised in masculine attire. Intrepidly calling down to her late husband's killer, she declares herself to be both "A Gentleman, and [Soliman's] mortall enemie" (5.4.24), and the cross-dressed heroine begins her suicidal mission in earnest when she challenges Soliman "to the single combate" (5.4.25). Like Beaumont and Fletcher's Aspatia, who finds it necessary to verbally goad Amintor before he will physically engage her, Kyd's Perseda must also belligerently taunt her opponent—calling him "wicked tirant" (5.4.36), "inhumaine" (5.4.40), and "murtherer" (5.4.37)—as a means of ensuring that he fight with her. In what it perhaps an even more telling parallel, just as in Aspatia's case, Perseda's true identity is revealed, much to the sorrow and humiliation of a male killer who also professes to be her lover, in the moments before she finally expires onstage.[34] All of this speaks decisively for reading Aspatia's suicidal end as a deliberate and deliberately conspicuous quotation of Perseda's. What is more, the obvious correspondences in the action of these plays' final acts encourage us to align Beaumont and Fletcher's tragic Rhodes with Kyd's—and, in turn, with the broader geopolitical context of the early modern Mediterranean.[35]

25. As much as Aspatia's death scene is explicitly derivative of Perseda's, it is also simultaneously coloured by its intertextual links to the abandonment narratives so common in classical literary tradition. And acknowledging the depth and nature of Aspatia's identification with the forsaken heroines of the mythological Mediterranean enriches our understanding of both her desire for reprisal and the manner in which she goes about exacting retribution in act 5. Before she concocts her lethal retaliation plan, Aspatia is shown to be perturbed by "the silent death[s] / Of…forsaken virgin[s]" (1.1.104-5), and she dwells at length upon the inability of her literary colleagues to exact retributive justice in the face of their amatory rejection. Speaking of Dido, for instance, in act 2 she muses: "What would this wench do, if she were Aspatia?" (2.2.37). Answering her own question in the next line, the Rhodian maiden ruefully notes that Dido would probably do nothing at all: "Here she would stand till some more pitying god / Turned her to marble" (2.2.38-9).

26. As is also true of the women whose narratives are retold in Ovid's *Heroides*, *The Maid's Tragedy* is a play in which, as Naomi Liebler has observed, "women are left to fend for themselves."[36] Unlike the vast majority of her literary antecedents, however, Aspatia interprets fending for herself as taking decisive, physical action against the man who wronged

her in love. Her revisionist desire to violently correct the ending of the archetypal Mediterranean-heroine-deserted-by-callous-Mediterranean-hero story is evident as early as act 2 where, in a scene that I earlier discussed, Aspatia critiques Antiphilia's needlework. Forcefully dictating unconventional modifications that she thinks ought to be made to the narrative, Aspatia is insistent that Theseus be punished harshly for his amatory transgressions. Accordingly, she orders her maid:

> in this place work a quicksand,
> And over it a shallow smiling water,
> And [Theseus'] ship ploughing it, and then a Fear.
> Do that Fear to the life, wench. (2.2.54-7)

When Antiphilia protests that such an artistic modification would surely "wrong the story" (2.2.58), Aspatia's reassurance that "'Twill make the story, wronged by wanton poets, / Live long, and be believed" (2.2.59-60) foreshadows the way in which she will attempt to re-'right' what she sees as a flawed literary paradigm. Indeed, her desire to see Theseus caught in "quicksand" and plagued by a "Fear" ominously presages the type of vengeance she will enact upon Amintor at the play's end.

27. In contrast with her literary sisters-in-sorrow, Aspatia resolves to mobilise and take action against her "too fickle" (1.1.135) lover, and I want to suggest that her bitter finale noticeably enacts a reversal of the terms of her earlier question "What would this wench [Dido] do, if she were Aspatia"? Instead, Aspatia looks to her forsaken precursor, and she seems to ask herself: What would *I* do if I were Dido? The play's final act serves as an answer to this inverted question. Whereas the Dido of Latin poetic tradition famously commits suicide by perching atop a funeral pyre and stabbing herself with her departed lover's weapon, Aspatia modifies this well-known suicide scenario with an eye for further vengeance. Taking as her premise the assumption that Amintor must be punished for "the baseness of the injury [he] did to her" (5.3.56), Aspatia follows Dido's lead in resolving to kill herself with her erstwhile lover's sword; unlike Dido, however, Aspatia ensures that he, not she, will be the one to wield it. Always self-consciously literary in her inclinations, Aspatia thus purposely restages Dido's earlier death scene to new ends by forcing the man who abandoned her to also unwittingly deliver the fatal wounds that will end her life.

28. In the readings of Aspatia's death that I have just offered, it is plain to see that multiple discursive contexts and semiotic registers simultaneously inform this single scene. Aspatia is, at once, reenacting the demise of her fellow Rhodian Perseda (as previously dramatised on the English stage) and attempting to correctively recreate the suicide of Dido (as told in the works of Ovid, Vergil, and countless later literary adaptations). These borrowings, analogies and echoes locate the closing action of *The Maid's Tragedy* simultaneously in the recognizable geopolitical sphere of early modern Mediterranean conflict and also in an ancient literary landscape of love and loss. As this article has sought to demonstrate, to consider the Rhodes of *The Maid's Tragedy* exclusively in terms of its geopolitical or mythological resonances limits its potential meanings. Rather, the rich confluence of associations that inform Beaumont and Fletcher's atemporal yet geographically specific setting is invested with a semantic dynamism that invites the play's audience to remark the careful interweaving of past and present, history and literature, physical place and intertextual space.

Notes

[1] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, in *The Norton Shakespeare, Volume II: Later Plays*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 2008), 2.1.252-3. All further references to Shakespeare's works are to this edition.

[2] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy,* in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, eds. David Bevington et al. (New York: Norton, 2002), 1.1.39-40. Although I have keyed all further references to *The Maid's Tragedy* to this edition, while preparing this article I also relied upon *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T.W. Craik, Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988), which contains a useful general introduction to the text as well as extensive appendices detailing some of the play's apparent sources.

[3] Andrew C. Hess, "The Mediterranean and Shakespeare's Geopolitical Imagination," in *The Tempest and Its Travels,* eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000), 121. Hess's work is representative of a growing body of scholarship which attempts to relocate *The Tempest* within the geopolitical context of the early modern Mediterranean. Related work includes: Barbara Fuchs, "Conquering Islands: Contextualizing *The Tempest*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 45-62; Lisa Hopkins, '"Absolute Milan': Two Types of Colonialism in *The Tempest,*" *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 4 (1995): 1-10; Jerry Brotton, "'This Tunis, sir, was Carthage': Contesting Colonialism in *The Tempest*," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares,* eds. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 23-42; Jerry Brotton, "Carthage and Tunis, *The Tempest* and Tapestries," in *The Tempest and Its Travels,* 132-7; and Robin Kirkpatrick, "The Italy of *The Tempest*," in *The Tempest and Its Travels,* 78-96.

[4] Fuchs, 57-8. Emphasis my own.

[5] Richard Hakluyt, *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation made by sea or ouer-land, to the remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth, at any time within the compasse of these 1600. yeres* (London, 1600; STC 12626a), 72.

[6] Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Othoman familie: with all the notable expeditions of the Christian princes against them* (London, 1603; STC 15051), "To the High and Mightie Prince James, by the Grace of god King of England, Scotland, Fravnce, and Ireland" (n.p.). The popularity of this text is attested by its numerous seventeenth-century reprintings (1610, 1621, 1631, 1638, 1679, and 1687).

[7] *The generall historie of the Turkes,* 'To the High and Mightie Prince James, by the Grace of god King of England, Scotland, Fravnce, and Ireland' (n.p.).

[8] *The generall historie of the Turkes,* 3.

[9] *The principal nauigations,* 82.

[10] Encounters with Ottomans were frequently presented on the early modern stage. Recent monographs which touch upon the implications and nature of such encounters include: Daniel J. Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama 1579-1624* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005); and Gerald MacLean, *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire Before 1800* (New York, Palgrave, 2007).

[11] Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, in *English Renaissance Drama,* 1.1.145-6, 1.1.155. All further references to *The Jew of Malta* are to this edition.

[12] On the *Jew of Malta's* relationship to Mediterranean geopolitics, see Lisa Hopkins, "Malta of Gold: Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, and the Siege of 1565," *(Re)Soundings* 1 (1997), <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/1294/2/malta.pdf>.

[13] Later in this same scene, we hear further details about the 1522 siege:

> For when their hideous force environed Rhodes,
> Small though the number was that kept the town,
> They fought it out, and not a man survived
> To bring the hapless news to Christendom. (2.2.47-51)

[14] The real-life history of the Knights of St John played out a bit like a restaging of Aeneas' journey in search of Latium; after the fall of Rhodes in 1522, the Grand Master spent nearly a decade visiting European monarchs—including Henry VIII—prior to receiving the Maltese islands as a gift from Charles V.

[15] This picture of the walled city of Rhodes would have been familiar to Jacobean audiences, for historical that sources expound at length upon the nature and design of the Rhodian fortifications. *The Generall Historie of the Turkes,* for example, describes: "The citie of the RHODES is scituat on a plaine ground, on euerie side to be besieged, onely Northward it is defended with a goodly hauen, from whence it lieth all Westward….But what by nature wanted, was by the hand and industrie of man supplied; for it was compassed about with a most strong double wall and deepe trenches, threatning the enemie with thirteene stately towers: and sure against all assaults, with fiue mightie bulwarks: with diuers goodly faire gates" (581).

[16] *The generall historie of the Turkes,* 582.

[17] *The generall historie of the Turkes,* 427; *The principal nauigations,* 73.

[18] *The generall historie of the Turkes,* 430.

[19] We may, in fact, hear another echo of this same story in the conversation about poisoning that transpires between the King of Rhodes, Melantius, and Calianax in act 4. The King, by this point wary of Melantius' motives, meditates "I am now considering / How easy 'twere, for any man we trust / To poison one of us in such a [wine] bowl" (4.2.56-8).

[20] Related to my comments about the play's general sense of atemporality is Ronald Broude's argument that the play "assiduously avoids a discussion of specific topics that might have been construed to have relevance to Jacobean politics": "Divine Right and Divine Retribution in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*," in *Shakespeare and Dramatic Tradition Essays in Honor of S.F. Johnson,* eds. W.R. Elton and William B. Long (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1989), 252.

[21] This is possibly a reference to the city of Patras, onetime part of the Byzantine Empire but conquered by Mehmed II in 1458. It was a site of numerous fifteenth century conflicts, particularly between Venetian, Genoese, and Ottoman forces.

[22] My remarks throughout this section are partially inspired by the plethora of scholarship detailing the relationships between Shakespeare's *Tempest* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. Such work includes: Donna B. Hamilton, *Virgil and The Tempest: The Politics of Imitation* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1990); David Scott Wilson-Okamura, "Virgilian Models of Colonization in Shakespeare's *Tempest,*" *ELH* 70 (2003): 709–37; Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson, Shakespeare, and Early Modern Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); and Mihoko Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989).

[23] Michael C. J. Putnam, "Troy in Latin Literature," *New England Classical Journal* 34 (2007): 195.

[24] Raphael Lyne, "Intertextuality and the Female Voice after the *Heroides*," *Renaissance Studies* 22 (2008): 314-23. As readers of *The Maid's Tragedy* have often observed, Aspatia's literary clichés also draw upon Shakespeare's prior characterization of Ophelia; memorably, both lovesick heroines sing songs about the willow.

[25] Lisa Hopkins has also noted a potential allusion to a *fourth* classical heroine (Cleopatra—yet again a character associated with the ancient Mediterranean) in Aspatia's 2.2 mention of "aspics": *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 60. To this I would add the further observation that "asp" contained in Aspatia's very name is also suggestive of Cleopatra.

[26] Alexander Leggatt, *English Drama: Shakespeare to the Restoration 1590-1660* (New York: Longman, 1988), 205. Such statements about Aspatia's artistry are commonplace in scholarship on *The Maid's Tragedy*. William Shullenberger, for example, similarly asserts that "She is the self-conscious artist who weaves out her history as an emblem of the forsaken woman": '"This For the Most Wrong'd of Women': A Reappraisal of 'The Maid's Tragedy,'" *Renaissance Drama* 13 (1982): 153.

[27] Emphasis my own.

[28] As Eileen Allman puts it, "Ariadne disappears into Aspatia, who becomes the sole embodiment of woman betrayed": *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1999), 142.

[29] In his seminal article on the image of the forsaken woman in this play, Ronald Huebert offers a complimentary reading of this scene, suggesting that "mythological allusion serves a double purpose: it underlines the inevitability of Aspatia's plight by placing her among the lovelorn women of legend, and it predicts her death by association with heroines who died for love": "'An Artificial Way to Grieve': The Forsaken Woman in Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ford," *ELH* 44 (1977): 608. As Craik has noted, the mythological references to Ariadne in this scene also echo Shakespeare's prior allusions to this story in act 4 of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: Introduction in *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed.T.W. Craik, 8.

[30] "Carthage and Tunis, *The Tempest* and Tapestries," 132. Brotton's further observations (in this article and elsewhere) about how early modern accounts of contemporary Mediterranean geography and politics were habitually "negotiated through the deployment of classical parallels" dovetail nicely with my own readings of Rhodes' plural resonances within *The Maid's Tragedy*: '"This Tunis, sir, was Carthage,'" 33.

[31] Shullenberger, 152; Stephen Guy-Bray, *Homoerotic Space: The Poetics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002), 195; Christian M. Billing, *Masculinity, Corporality and the English Stage, 1580-1635* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 156; Mark E. Bingham, "The Multiple Plot in Fletcherian Tragicomedies," *SEL* 33 (1993): 407.

[32] Thomas Kyd, *Soliman and Perseda* in *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. Frederick S. Boas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901), 1.5.5-6. All further references to *Soliman and Perseda* are to this edition, though I have modernised the use of u/v in Boas' text where appropriate.

[33] Lucas Erne has identified Kyd's ultimate source for Perseda's death scene as François de Belleforest's 1575 edition of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographie Universelle*, which relates a tale of cross-dressing that supposedly took place during the 1522 siege of Rhodes: *Beyond The Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), 164. An English translation of the passage from *Cosmographie Universelle* can be found in Vivian Thomas and

William Tydeman, eds., *Christopher Marlowe: The Plays and their Sources* (London: Routledge, 1994), 157-8. The most relevant segment reads: "she rushed to the place where lay the body of her lover, put on her lord's coat of mail…, and taking his short sword in her hand, made her way into the midst of the enemy, where doing the deeds the bravest men perform, she was killed by the Turks, whom she believed would shortly take the town by assault." Additionally, in Craik's Revels edition of *The Maid's Tragedy*, he (in turn relying on the earlier observation of Alexander Dyce) points to "resemblances of situation and emotion" between Aspatia's death and Parthenia's death in *Arcadia*, and he posits Philip Sidney's text as Beaumont and Fletcher's source "though the circumstances of the two incidents are quite different": Introduction in *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T.W. Craik, 4. While I find Craik's suggestion of an Aspatia/Parthenia connection a plausible alternative, it would appear that any influence Sidney's *Arcadia* may have had on Aspatia's demise was refracted through the more direct lens of Kyd's Rhodian play.

[34] Soliman falls dead shortly after this in another plot twist that perhaps bears a resemblance to the regicide in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Kyd's sultan is entrapped by a kiss stolen from the poisoned lips of the dying Perseda. It is thus that the lascivious tyrant in Kyd's play is also murdered in an erotically suggestive manner by the female object off his inappropriate lust.

[35] My reading of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Soliman and Perseda* quotation compliments Mark Hutchings' arguments in "The 'Turk Phenomenon' and the Repertory of the late Elizabethan Playhouse," in which—advocating a repertory-based approach in understanding the so-called Turk plays of the period —he observes that such plays "were part of a narrative that operated collectively": *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 16 (2007): 5. <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/si-16/hutcturk.htm>.

[36] Naomi Liebler,"'A Woman Dipped in Blood': The Violent Femmes of *The Maid's Tragedy* and *The Changeling,*" in *Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature: Essays Honoring Paul Jorgensen,* eds. Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), 366.
