To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Stephen J. Stedman entitled "Unifying Motifs in the Plays of John Banks with Special Attention to the Imagery." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

J. M. Armistead, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

UNIFYING MOTIFS IN THE PLAYS OF JOHN BANKS WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE IMAGERY

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Stephen J. Stedman

March 1982

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ABSTRACT

John Banks's seven serious dramas written during the years of the Popish Plot and Succession Crisis (1677-1684) have been insufficiently studied from the standpoint of their intrinsic merit. Critics have been, instead, content to analyse subsidiary matters with the result that many now perceive his plays to be merely strings of "affecting incidents staged to provide continuous emotional agitation for his audience." An analysis of the dominant motifs of each of the plays leads, however, to the conclusion that the plays are, in fact, modestly unified dramas which treat directly or indirectly the central concerns of the Restoration audience.

The Rival Kings (1677), an opening effort at heroic drama, employs opposing images to illuminate the enigmatic character of Alexander the Great, who tangentially resembles Charles II. Another effort at heroic, The Destruction of Troy (1678), analyses the dissolution of the heroic code and a heroic civilization, at the same time drawing parallels with Restoration England. Cyrus the Great (c. 1680?) uses motifs which illustrate the virtuous qualities of a heroic civilization, thus offering a response to the two preceding dramas about destructive cultures. In The Unhappy Favourite (1681) Banks develops motifs which illuminate a pair of contrasting worlds, one of a rapidly fading holistic past, the other of a Machiavellian, fragmented present; Restoration England as much as Tudor England is the subject of the play. In Vertue Betray'd (1682) he provides a satire on his own monarch and

reveals an evolving mastery of figurative language, especially that relating to Anne Boleyn's virtual apotheosis. The Innocent Usurper (c. 1683?), perhaps Banks's finest play, comments on the Succession Crisis, offering a virtual doomsday scenario for a Catholic succession, and is pervaded by motifs developing the theme of usurpation. In his last play of this period, The Island Queens (1684), Banks reexamines the problem of succession, using motifs associated with distinguishing appearance from reality.

Given Banks's modestly skillful handling of imagery and motifs, he warrants further consideration as a member of that group of Restoration serious dramatists who reached just short of Dryden in excellence--Lee, Southerne, and Otway.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND CRITICISM

Like many minor Restoration playwrights, John Banks warrants more penetrating scrutiny than he has yet received. Banks's prominence in the evolution of serious drama during the late Seventeenth Century, in fact, led Allardyce Nicoll to assert that this playwright "became one of the most powerful forces in eighteenth-century tragedy. It is not too much to say that in several dramatic schools his influence, direct or indirect, for forty or fifty years after his death was second only to that of Shakespeare himself."[1] Such an accolade demands that critics do more than identify Banks's place in the development of the drama, hitherto a primary concern; we must now begin to assess the artistic merit of the seven plays which Banks wrote during his brief career, which spanned the years of intense political and religious upheaval spawned by the Popish Plot and Succession Crisis, roughly 1677-1684. In so doing, we will accomplish for Banks what has already been done for many other minor Restoration and Eighteenth-Century authors, the reillumination of a literary figure cast for centuries into unjustified obscurity.

By treating each of the plays from Banks's canon as dramatic art, we will dislodge the stereotype which has long clung to him, that of

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[1] Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama: An Historical Survey from the Beginning to the Present Time (New York: Crowell, 1925), p. 237; the 6th ed. (1978), revised by J. C. Trewin, retains this wording.

being a hack writer who merely knew how to draw tears from "the fair sex." In particular, the motifs which Banks uses to create dramatic unity in his plays reveal a finer intellect than has generally been attributed to him in the past. Banks's manipulation of imagery naturally forms no small part of the following argument; however, since motifs can be "words, objects, phrases, or actions that tend to unify the work,"[2] these other iterated items in the plays are also considered. By analysing Banks's use of the motif, we will see that his plays are not simply strings of "affecting incidents staged to provide continuous emotional agitation for his audience"[3] but are modestly unified dramas which treat directly or indirectly the central themes and issues of the Restoration, and especially of the Popish Plot era. Banks did much to qualify for higher and more uniformly positive commentary than he has yet received, for he clearly belongs among that select group of writers of serious drama who fall just short of Dryden's excellence--Lee, Otway, and Southerne.[4]

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[2]C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1972), p. 329.

[3]Matthew H. Wikander, "Strange Truths: English Historical Drama in the Seventeenth Century," Genre, 9 (1976), 209.

[4]This grouping itself results from the recent work of several critics who have brought Lee and Southerne into the company of Otway. Among the more important of these works are J. M. Armistead's Nathaniel Lee (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1980), Robert Root's Thomas Southerne (Boston: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1981), and Julia Rich's unpublished dissertation on Southerne (The Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1979). The groundwork of many critics, of course, prepared the way for these works; Eric Rothstein's Restoration Tragedy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), Eugene Waith's Ideas of Greatness (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1971), and Robert Hume's The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) are among these.

No very rigid rubric has been applied alike to each of Banks's plays, and it is understood that further study of his drama will reveal organizing motifs not discussed hereinafter. In the following discussion the motifs which seem most pertinent to grasping the central theme or themes of each play were made the subject of attention. Thus, for example, in The Rival Kings imagery plays a central role in revealing Banks's attempt to unify his work, while in The Destruction of Troy other motifs are also considered, particularly those which expose the "heroic code" embedded in the play. Additionally, in each of Banks's four historical tragedies the idea of sacrifice surfaces prominently, dictating that all motifs associated with it be explored. However, throughout the study the dominant emphasis has been on the imagery of the plays, and with good reason. This device constitutes the single most important unifying element Banks had at his disposal. Furthermore, the entire body of Banks criticism is almost devoid of any mention of imagery and completely lacks sustained analysis on this matter, especially as it relates to the plays' thematic concerns. The present study, therefore, not only fills a vacuum but also acts to neutralize the considerable negative criticism of the Banks canon. For previous scholars and critics, Banks's alleged "technical crudities" have always overshadowed the emotional power which the playwright generates by being what James Sutherland calls a "natural dramatist."[5]

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[5]James Sutherland, "Headnote," The Unhappy Favourite by John Banks, in Restoration Tragedies (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 182.

Banks's handling of the motif reveals that he is more in control of the technical aspects of his art than has been supposed.

Before examining the scholarship which accounts for Banks's present reputation, we must be aware of the key forces which molded him and his drama. His personal life, as well as his contact with the theatre and with the politics of the times, must especially be briefly outlined. Of his life little is certain. The few definite facts which have been uncovered are detailed by Thomas M. H. Blair in his edition of The Unhappy Favourite.[6] Banks's literary propensities are revealed in his dedications, prologues, and epilogues. He refers familiarly to Homer, Virgil, Cowley, and others. Furthermore, his plays show obvious indebtedness to Shakespeare, Milton, and several dramatists of the Restoration, including Nathaniel Lee.[7] Banks also shared his age's fondness for satire, a trait which is particularly evident in the epilogue to The Destruction of Troy. He dabbled with comedy in one scene from The Rival Kings and in the epilogue to Cyrus the Great, thus allying himself tenuously with the Restoration comic tradition.

Personal qualities which might be deduced from his writing include an ability to conform to the needs of his profession, for in his dedicatory epistles he displays about a normal amount of the obsequiousness distasteful to modern readers but apparently common to

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[6] Thomas M. H. Blair, ed., The Unhappy Favourite (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), pp. 3-7.

[7] See the appropriate notes under "sources" later in this chapter for details.

literary figures of the day. Even Dryden engaged in this fulsome exercise when dedicating plays. Banks was also typically modest, judging from the constant disclaimers about a "mean style" which litter his dedications. Another personal trait he seems to have had was patience, for only such a characteristic could explain how he persistently brought his unperformed plays back before the public ten and twenty years after writing them as he did with The Innocent Usurper, Cyrus the Great, and The Island Queens. He was a careful man, to judge from his requesting that proof sheets of his first play be sent to him in the country for correction. His going into the country also reveals a man who cherished solitude, a quality also suggested by the pastoral motif which permeates nearly all of his plays. Though he created characters who valued loyalty, Banks himself discloses a propensity for shifting allegiance in his connection with the two theatres of the day: after The Rival Kings was staged by the Theatre Royal in 1677, The Destruction of Troy went to the Duke's Theatre in 1678, and a similar turnaround occurred in the 1680s when The Unhappy Favourite was performed by the King's men in 1681 and Vertue Betray'd by the Duke's in 1682. Of all the qualities crucial to understanding the man, however, sensitivity to the climate of the times is perhaps paramount. Banks displayed considerable acuity in picking up signals transmitted by the theatrical and political worlds in which he moved.

London theatre in the 1670s was monopolized by two companies which had received patent letters from Charles II.[8] It was between these two--The King's Company led by Thomas Killegrew and the Duke's headed by William D'Avenant--that Banks shuttled during the first five years of his career, when he had four plays staged, two of which, The Unhappy Favourite and Vertue Betray'd, brought him considerable fame. When the two companies merged following the failure of the King's men in 1682, Banks's career (and those of many other playwrights) suffered drastically because the combined company needed far fewer new productions than was the case when the two companies competed for audiences. Probably as a direct result, Banks's The Innocent Usurper and The Island Queens, both composed after the merger, were never staged and Banks himself apparently ceased writing plays altogether by the mid-1680s, though he did resume his theatrical efforts briefly in the mid-1690s and again in 1703/4. Theatrical conditions clearly affected Banks's career, and we may assume that he was acutely enough aware of them to know the end of it when it came.

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[8]The information presented on pp. 6-8 of the "Introduction" is gleaned from my reading of a multitude of sources, among them John H. Wilson's Preface to Restoration Drama (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), the Nettleton, Case, and Stone British Drama from Dryden to Sheridan (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), Allardyce Nicoll's History of Restoration Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), Montague Summer's The Restoration Theatre (New York: MacMillan Company, 1934), Donald Greene's The Age of Exuberance (New York: Random House, 1970), and many others. I have found Wilson's "Introduction" to the Regents City Politiques by John Crowne (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. x-xix, useful in capsulizing the political events of the time.

While he enjoyed success, Banks's ability to take advantage of audience expectations is implicit in the kind of plays that he wrote. The Rival Kings and The Destruction of Troy are heroic plays, a genre which was just going out of vogue when Banks began writing serious drama. He apparently recognized that the taste for heroics was waning because he radically transformed his subject matter in 1681 with The Unhappy Favourite, which took advantage of recent patriotic fervor by bringing the Virgin Queen, symbolic locus of Protestantism, before his audience. Further, he simultaneously took advantage of the casting revolution which had swept through the theatres of the Restoration. Women like Mrs. Barry, who played Anne Boleyn in Vertue Betray'd, were now available to lend female roles vividness never before possible. This change led in part to audiences which were demographically more female than ever before. Even Banks's dedications reveal his sensitivity to the female portion of his audiences; with but one exception they are all directed to noble or royal ladies. Finally, the 1680s saw a significant shift in audience expectations from the exotic to the domestic and from the heroic to the affective or pathetic. All these shifts Banks either directly or indirectly grasped, for his drama of the 1680s exploits each of them (and, as we shall see, shifts in the political climate as well). At any rate, the four plays of the 1680s are more oriented toward women and the domestic in general than is his earlier drama. The former of these qualities is evident from the change in protagonists which his plays reveal. Whereas the early heroic plays were dominated by men, The Unhappy Favourite balances emphases on Essex

and Elizabeth, and the later plays focus on tragic female protagonists exclusively.

If Banks was shaped by and helped shape the theatrical world of his day, he was equally affected by the political climate of opinions and had least a minor impact on the politics of his day. Indeed, he would have been an unusual man not to have been influenced by the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis of the late seventies and early eighties of the century. His drama, like the literature of nearly every other writer of the age, reveals the definite imprint of these events, and many of his characters offer tantalizing parallels with political figures of the Restoration. Only recently, however, has Banks's sensitivity to the political events of his times been noticed, despite clear contemporary evidence, in the form of censorship, that his plays were considered to be political. The Innocent Usurper, probably written in 1683, was forbidden the stage and not even published until 1694, as a direct result of the political spectres suspected in it. The Island Queens was also banned from the stage, though it did see publication in 1684. Additionally, Banks claims that Cyrus the Great and The Unhappy Favourite came in for careful scrutiny and oppression by the civil powers of the stage, and especially by the Master of the Revels, Killegrew. Just as Banks reacted to the audience of his time in rendering his drama more domestic, affective, and feminine, so his reactions to the politics of the day resulted in plays which catered to the contemporary taste for political satire and paralleling.

Despite now being as nearly anonymous as any man three hundred years deceased can become, John Banks is also as nearly the

quintessential Restoration serious dramatist as we are likely to find. His plays reveal the shifting tides of his times as clearly as any other barometer now available to us. Before we inspect them, however, the scholarship which they have generated demands attention.

Past scholarship about Banks's plays can be divided into six categories: that which deals with Banks as a transition figure in the development of the serious drama of the late Seventeenth Century; that which examines the sources of his plays; that which treats his influence on later literary figures; that which discusses his political and religious ideas and attitudes; that which analyses his language and emotional impact;[9] and that which deals with the plays' theatricality, either from the standpoint of stage history or of play construction. Additionally, each of the plays has received individual emphasis of a greater or lesser nature throughout the last three centuries, mostly with regard to establishing its literary quality relative to his other plays.

The bulk of critical output on Banks focuses on his "place" in the evolution of Restoration and later drama. In particular, scholars have sought to indicate his contributions to the development of "she-tragedy," to the evolution of the "sentimental" or "pathetic" or "domestic" drama, and to the use of history for dramatic purposes. Most

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[9]These seemingly unrelated aspects of Banks's plays have for some reason always been considered together, from the time of Steele, who wrote only three years after the playwright's death, to the present; discussion related to language and emotion makes up a considerable portion of all criticism devoted to Banks.

of the longer works devoted to Banks develop these interests or similar ones. For instance, George Klinger's dissertation on the origins of the she-tragedy places Banks in the context of this form, which Banks is occasionally credited with creating.[10] Fred S. Tupper devotes an entire dissertation to Banks's role in originating the pathetic tragedy,[11] while Arthur Sherbo and many other critics devote considerable space to analysing Banks's sentimentality.[12] Recently, this aspect of his plays came under scrutiny by Laura Brown, who discusses the transformations in dramatic genres which took place between 1660 and 1760 and stresses the place of affective serious drama, including that of Banks.[13] Several scholars have attempted to identify Banks's role in the resurgence of

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[10]George C. Klinger, "English She-Tragedy, 1680-1715: Its Characteristics and Its Relationship to the Sentimental Tragedies," Diss. Columbia University, 1970, 168 pp.; a typical recent comment on Banks's role in the development of this form is offered by Robert Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (London: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 217: "John Banks is the major developer of the historical she-tragedy."

[11]Fred S. Tupper, "John Banks: A Study in the Origins of the Pathetic Tragedy," Diss. Harvard University, 1935.

[12]Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957), pp. 55-57, 65-67, 137, and 139; see also Lewis M. Magill, "Elements of Sentimentalism in English Tragedy, 1680-1704," Diss. University of Illinois, 1950; James Devlin, "The Albion Queens by John Banks: A Critical Edition," Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1958; Sarap Singh, The Theory of Drama in the Restoration Period (Bombay: Orient Longman's, 1963); Eugene Waith, Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971); and Geoffrey Marshall, Restoration Serious Drama (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).

[13]Laura Brown, English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 95-97.

the history play during the Restoration; Samuel Bogorad discusses his fidelity to history, while Glynn Ray Baugher argues that he invented the historical she-tragedy.[14] Many other critics and scholars discuss Banks's use of history briefly, usually with regard to a minor aspect of his manipulation of history.[15] Besides the stress which has been placed on his part in the evolution of "she-tragedy," affective drama, and history play, Banks has also been used by Hans Hochuli as an example of the shift from "baroque" to "classical" which characterizes the later Seventeenth Century according to that critic.[16] Furthermore, Nicoll sees in Banks the trend away from exoticism (discussed above), while Hume views Banks in the context of many shifting generic forms of the Restoration.[17]

The sources of Banks's plays have been the focus of much critical effort, though as yet no thorough study of the sources of all the plays

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[14]Samuel Bogorad, "The English History Play in Restoration Drama," Diss. Northwestern University, 1946, pp. 130-219; Glynn Ray Baugher, "John Banks and the Revival of the English History Play in the Restoration," Diss. Tulane University, 1972.

[15]See Wikander, pp. 207-213; Waith, pp. 267-278; Klinger, pp. 1-168; Hume, pp. 217-218; Melicent Honeycutt, "The Changing Concept of the Ideal Statesman as Reflected in English Verse Drama during the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685," Diss. University of North Carolina, 1968, pp. 1-268; Eric Rothstein, Restoration Tragedy: Form and the Process of Change (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), pp. 96-99; A. H. Scouten, "Plays and Playwrights," in The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol. V, ed. John Loftis, Richard Southern, Marion Jones, and A. H. Scouten (London: Methuen and Company, 1976), pp. 276-278.

[16]Hans Hochuli, John Banks: Eine Studie zum Drama des Spaten 17 (Bern: A. Francke, 1952), pp. 1-96.

[17]Nicoll, 1925, p. 237; Hume, pp. 217-218, 285, 311, 347, and 403.

is available. From the disparate commentary on this topic, however, a fairly comprehensive picture of Banks's borrowings can be visualized. The three early heroic dramas on foreign subjects owe much to seventeenth-century French romances of La Calprènede and Madame de Scudéry, each of whom Banks is said to have plundered with abandon.[18] Bogorad and Baugher provide the best analyses of the sources of the four history plays, with the former being much the more complete.[19] Blair, notably, Tupper, and a few others comment as well on the sources of these plays.[20] Lessing notes the influence of Milton, to whose Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes Banks clearly owes much, while Tupper, besides offering information on the sources of all the plays, has written on the Shakespearean influence reflected in them.[21] The influence of several

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[18]See Gerald Langbaine, An Account of the English Dramatic Poets, ed. John Loftis (1691; rpt. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1971), I, pp. 709; Herbert Wynford Hill, "La Calprenède's Romances and the Restoration Drama," University of Nevada Studies, 2, no. 3 (1910), 1-56, and 3, no. 2 (1911), 57-158; A. T. Bartholomew, "The Restoration Drama, III, Tragic Poets," in The Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (New York: MacMillan Company, 1933), VIII, p. 219; Alexander Beljame, Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Bonamy Dobrée, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubnert, and Company, Ltd., 1948), p. 40, note; and Allardyce Nicoll, 1923, pp. 86-87, 109, and 146.

[19]Bogorad, pp. 130-219; Baugher, pp. 100-137.

[20]Blair, pp. 36-49; Tupper, 1935, pp. 105-107, 136-138, 156-163, and 177-180; Hazelton Spencer, "Improving Shakespeare: Some Bibliographic Annotations on the Restoration Adaptations," PMLA, 41 (1926), 727-746.

[21]G. E. Lessing, Selected Prose of G. E. Lessing, ed. Edward Bell, trans. E. C. Beasley and Helen Zimmern (London: George Bell and Sons, 1879); [Fred S. Tupper], "The Influence of Shakespeare on John Banks," by Thomas Lee [pseud.] Winthrop Sargent Prize Essay, Harvard University, 1934, pp. 1-47.

Restoration playwrights on Banks is noted by Tupper, Van Lennep, and Lewis, the latter two critics concentrating on Nathaniel Lee's effect, especially that of his Rival Queens.[22] No one has delved very deeply into the classical sources of the plays, though Rothstein and Sutherland note their presence fleetingly.[23] Finally, one "source" which led astray several critics of Vertue Betray'd is an anonymous manuscript play entitled Anna Bullen. Backus argues that this play is the source of Banks's Anne Boleyn play, and Tupper, Blair, Bogorad, and many others follow her in this belief. More recently, however, Bastian has convincingly demonstrated that this manuscript play is an eighteenth-century adaptation of Vertue Betray'd by James Ralph.[24]

The merit of the several adaptations (mostly of The Unhappy Favourite) of Banks's plays in the Eighteenth Century by James Ralph, Henry Brooke, and Henry Jones has also been a popular focus of attention. Victor, Potter, Blair (extensively), Horace Walpole, and MacMillan offer the most cogent argument and generally agree that Banks's originals were not superseded by the reworkings of these three

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[22]Tupper, 1935; William Van Lennep, "The Life and Works of Nathaniel Lee, Dramatist (1648-1692): A Study of Sources," Diss. Harvard University, 1933; Nancy Eloise Lewis, "Nathaniel Lee's The Rival Queens: A Study of Dramatic Taste and Technique in the Restoration," Diss. Ohio State University, 1957.

[23]Rothstein, p. 116; Sutherland, 1977, p. 181.

[24]Edythe N. Backus, "The MS. Play, Anna Bullen," PMLA, 47 (1932), 741-752; J. M. Bastian, "James Ralph's Second Adaptation from John Banks," Huntington Library Quarterly, 25 (1962), 181-188.

writers.[25] Blair, and later Knepler at more length, has shown the similarity between several of Maxwell Anderson's plays and those of Banks, notably Vertue Betray'd and The Island Queens, though neither critic believes that Anderson knew either Banks or the sources used by Banks.[26] Quite a bit has also been written about Banks's influence on writers following him or contemporary with him, most of it concerned with the imprint of Banks on Nicholas Rowe. Cibber, Baker, Dunham, Bartholomew, Elwin, Sherbo, and others argue for substantial Banksian influence on Rowe, especially in The Fair Penitent.[27] Sherbo also suggests strong influence on Otway and Southerne, while Nicoll in a passage quoted above asserts widespread influence on a broad spectrum of

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[25]Benjamin Victor, "An Annual Register," in The History of the Theatre of London and Dublin, Vol. II (London: for T. Davies et al., 1761; Anon. [John Potter], "Covent-Garden Theatre, October 7, 1771: The Earl of Essex," in The Theatrical Review, Vol. 1 (London: for S. Crowder, J. Wilkie, and John Walter, 1772), pp. 50-52; Horace Walpole, "Letter III" of "Thoughts on Tragedy" in "Three Letters to Robert Jephson, Esq.," in The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford, ed. Mary Berry, Vol. III (London: G. G. and J. Robinson and J. Edwards, 1798), p. 310; Blair, pp. 121-128; Dougald MacMillan, "Some Notes on Eighteenth-Century Essex Plays," Modern Language Notes, 55 (1940), 176-183.

[26]Blair, pp. 111-113; Henry Knepler, "Maxwell Anderson: An Historical Parallel," Queen's Quarterly, 64 (1957), 250-263.

[27]Theo. Cibber (and Robert Shiels?), The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland . . . from the MS. Notes of the Late Engraver Mr. Coxeter and Others (London: R. Griffiths, 1753), III, pp. 174-177; David Erskine Baker et al., The Companion to the Playhouse, 2 vols. (1764); Samuel Astley Dunham, Lives of the Most Eminent Literary . . . Men of Great Britain, Vol. III of Lardner's Cabinet Encyclopedia (London: Longman, Orme et al., 1838), pp. 195-198 of "William Wycherley"; Bartholomew, p. 221; Malcolm Elwin, The Playgoer's Handbook to Restoration Drama (New York: MacMillan Company, n.d. [1928]), p. 155; Sherbo, p. 65; Tupper, 1935, pp. 251-275.

writers following Banks by forty or fifty years.[28] Lewis, for instance, notes a reference to Banks in a play by Henry Carey.[29] Of course, the burlesque of The Unhappy Favourite found in Fielding's Tom Thumb is widely known.[30] The only foreign influence Banks is suggested to have had was on Heinrich Laube's Essex play.[31] The information currently available about Banks's influence on later and contemporary dramatists, to say nothing of other writers, is obviously rather incomplete.

A similar situation exists regarding the political overtones of Banks's work. Despite the knowledge that he experienced more censorship problems than perhaps any other Restoration playwright, political nuances have not until recently been considered important in the plays, Tupper even going so far as to assert that Banks seldom played with "political fire."[32] Nevertheless, a gradually swelling volume of criticism on Banks's politics has accumulated, most of it centering rightly on the last three plays he wrote, particularly Vertue Betray'd and, more recently, The Island Queens. Nicoll early on suggested that the play about Anne Boleyn was strongly royalist, even ending "on a note

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[28]Sherbo, p. 55; Nicoll, 1925, p. 237.

[29]Peter Lewis, "A Note on 'Chrononhotonthologos,'" Notes and Queries, 223 (1978), 43-44.

[30]Henry Fielding, "H. Scriblerus Secundus: His Preface," The Tragedy of Tragedies; or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great (London: by J. Roberts, 1731).

[31]A. W. Ward, "Some Political and Social Aspects of the Later Elizabethan and Earlier Stewart Period," in The Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (New York: MacMillan Company, 1933), p. 385.

[32]Tupper, 1935, p. 25.

of divine right."[33] Summers then argued that Cardinal Wolsey in that play was a portrait of Shaftesbury, but his position was opposed by Whiting and Bogorad.[34] White discussed the political offenses of The Innocent Usurper and The Island Queens.[35] More recently Hume, Staves, and Dreher have noted the political suggestiveness in the historical tragedies, though Brown argues that Banks "drains" his plays of political overtones.[36] In a long and important essay on the political content of The Island Queens, Denise Sanlaville set the stage for the thorough analysis of Banks's politics which is badly needed.[37] More than has been suspected until quite recently, Banks's plays are political in nature. Indeed, the political overtones in them seem increasingly more important than either their historical or affective

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[33]Allardyce Nicoll, "Political Plays of the Restoration," Modern Language Review, 16 (1921), 224-242.

[34]Montague Summers, ed., The Works of Aphra Behn (London, 1915), II, p. 198 and "Introduction," in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell (London: Fortune, 1927), I, p. clxvii; George W. Whiting, "Political Satire in London Stage Plays, 1680-1683," Modern Philology, 28 (1930-31), 42-43; Bogorad, pp. 130-219.

[35]Arthur F. White, "The Office of Revels and Dramatic Censorship during the Restoration Period," Western Reserve Bulletin, N. S. 34, No. 13 (1931), 39-44.

[36] Hume, pp. 363, note; Susan Staves, Players' Sceptres: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), pp. 50, 79, and 84; Diane Dreher, "Introduction," Vertue Betray'd, by John Banks (1682; rpt. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981 [Augustan Reprint Society, nos. 205-206]), pp. iii-ix; Brown, pp. 95-97.

[37]Denise Sanlaville, "La Politique et L'Histoire Tudor dans The Island Queens de John Banks," Confluents, 5 (1979), pp. 133-195.

overtones, though these last topics have received more attention from scholars in the past.

A much discussed if minor subject regarding Banks deals with the language and emotions of his plays, which are, it has too often been argued, emotionally powerful despite their bad poetry. Ever since Richard Steele initiated this critical position in 1709, nearly every critic of Banks seems to have felt obliged first to find his own examples of Banks's worst lines and then cite them with sarcastic commentary, and, then, to take away some of the sting of these jibes by noting his ability to move the emotions.[38] Apparently critics have not been able to find anything else to say, so they have been thrown back on repeating each other ad nauseam. However, not everyone agrees with Steele that The Unhappy Favourite has "not one good line." Fielding finds "choicest rareties" in the play, Charles Lamb admires the "passionate dialog," and Dobrée notes at least one positive effect of the playwright's verse.[39] Nor has there been unanimity about Steele's positive reactions to the play's emotional temperature, though many later critics do share his view. Cibber and Gildon among the early commentators note Banks's ability to arouse the emotions in The Unhappy

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[38]Richard Steele, "Tatler 14," in The Tatler, ed. George A. Aitken (1898-99; rpt. New York and Hildesheim: George Olms, 1970), I, 122-130; Tupper revels in citing Banks's bad lines, but the practice is also found in Baugher and, more recently still, Hume.

[39]Fielding, Tom Thumb, "Preface"; Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," [in The Reflector, no. 4, 1811], in Charles Lamb on Shakespeare, ed. Joan Caldwell (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), p. 30; Bonamy Dobrée, Restoration Tragedy (Oxford: 1929), p. 61.

Favourite and other plays.[40] Nicoll later on notes that Banks stands with Otway in the imaging of emotions and pathetic scenes.[41] G. Wilson Knight argues that Banks has a "keen eye for the interweaving of human passions with affairs of state," and James Sutherland notes his "truth to human feelings and human behavior," calling him a "natural dramatist for all his technical crudities" (a fine modern example of the syndrome which Steele began).[42] On the other hand, several modern critics find Banks unconvincing as a purveyor of the passions. Nettleton feels that he "stimulated interest without touching real emotion," while Spencer laments that he laid on "emotion with a trowel."[43] Hume, too, castigates the playwright for the "whopping infusions of emotion" which characterize his plays.[44]

Although the theatrical background to Banks's drama is covered by Devlin and Baugher, and the stage history of at least one of the plays, The Unhappy Favourite, is amply treated by Blair,[45] Banks's dramatic

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[40]Theo. Cibber, p. 174; Charles Gildon and Gerald Langbaine, The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets, ed. Arthur Freeman (1699; rpt. New York and London: Garland, 1973), pp. 6-7.

[41]Allardyce Nicoll, A History of English Drama, 1660-1900, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), I, pp. 6-7.

[42]G. Wilson Knight, The Golden Labyrinth: A Study of British Drama (London: Phoenix House, Ltd., 1962), p. 168; Sutherland, 1977, p. 182.

[43]G. H. Nettleton, English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century (New York: MacMillan Company, 1914), p. 118; Spencer, pp. 727-746.

[44]Hume, p. 351.

[45]Devlin, pp. 49-59; Baugher, pp. 58-92; Blair, pp. 30-35.

craftsmanship has been less well analysed than it deserves, perhaps because most scholars have felt that close study of the plays would not be rewarded. In a more general vein, however, Summers uses Cyrus the Great to elucidate some of the theatrical devices of the time.[46] Cibber and Thorndike note that Banks keeps his characters moving, though some modern commentators have felt that his scenes remain too static.[47] His actual techniques of characterization are, however, generally not given much attention. Spencer, for instance, merely notes that Banks's characters are broadly sketched at best,[48] though Edward Young was apparently much taken with Rutland in The Unhappy Favourite, and Knight applauds the complex rendering of Queen Elizabeth in that play.[49] Of a pertinent if unusual nature is Rothstein's finding that many of Banks's heroes are "stupid," an observation which Diane Dreher argues against.[50] The unity of the plays is an occasional topic of discussion, with opinions divided about Banks's skill in creating unity. Nettleton believes that he preferred the Continental unities and simplification of scenes, Knight comments on his "tight" dramas, and Noyes discusses a

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[46]Montague Summers, The Restoration Theatre (New York: MacMillan Company, 1934), in passim.

[47]T. Cibber, p. 174; Ashley Thorndike, Tragedy (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1908), p. 273.

[48]Spencer, p. 737.

[49]Edward Young, "Letter to Martha Lacky Giffard, 17 January [1719/20]," in The Correspondence of Edward Young, 1683-1765, ed. Henry Pettit (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 19; Knight, p. 167.

[50]Rothstein, p. 96; Dreher, p. x, note.

structural song in The Rival Kings.[51] Sutherland, as noted above, complains about Banks's "technical crudities," Wikander sees no unity in the plays at all but finds them to be but strings of emotional incidents, and several critics comment on Banks's wrenching of the unity of Time, as though they had not read Samuel Johnson on that subject.[52] By and large, discussions of Banks's theatrical skills have not been long or detailed, and a similar paucity of analysis exists regarding his verbal skills. In particular his use of imagery has only sparingly been mentioned. Gildon declared long ago that the metaphors in The Innocent Usurper were "oft not just," while Hochuli occasionally generalizes about Banks's imagery but without citing much evidence and always without an attempt to scrutinize an entire play in terms of the unifying effect of its figurative language or motifs.[53] Similarly, there has been no effort to comment specifically about the themes of the plays, even to list them in some organized manner.

Both the specific unifying motifs and the underlying thematic messages of the plays will dominate discussion in the forthcoming chapters. Before we proceed to that analysis, however, a brief review of the individual plays and the criticism which has been directed toward each will familiarize readers with the subjects of the plays and prepare

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[51]Nettleton, 1914, p. 118; Knight, p. 167; Robert Gayle Noyes, "Conventions of Song in Restoration Tragedy," PMLA, 53 (1938), 162-188.

[52]Sutherland, 1977, p. 182; Wikander, p. 209; Dreher, p. iv.

[53]Gildon, p. 7; Hochuli, pp. 29-30, 36, 40-41, 58, and 79-80.

them for the order in which they were most likely written, no small matter when one deals with Banks.

Three plays in the heroic mode occur at the beginning of Banks's career, suggesting that he was feeding the tastes stimulated by such dramas as Lee's The Rival Queens (1677) and Dryden's Aureng-Zebe (1675). That he was also aware of the gradual shift away from heroic drama that was occurring in the late 1670s is illustrated by the last of his heroic plays, Cyrus the Great, as we will see presently. His first venture in the late heroic mode was The Rival Kings (1677), which reveals what must have been a lifelong passion of Banks, for the history and legend of Alexander the Great. At any rate the famous Macedonian is frequently mentioned in Banks's other plays, his dedications, and his prologues and epilogues. Most commentary on the play focuses on peripheral matter: diction, plot, and sources.[54] Of the play's theme--the causes associated with the downfall of the world's greatest man--little is said; similarly, the play's unifying devices have been about equally ignored.

The Destruction of Troy (1678), another effort at heroic, delves into the reasons for Troy's downfall and finds them in the failure of the heroic code. Again, most criticism of the play is superficial, the only penetrating analysis being Rothstein's short character analysis of Achilles.[55]

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[54]About the only extended commentary on The Rival Kings is offered by Tupper, 1935, pp. 41-51; however, Hume also comments on the language of the play, p. 311.

[55]Rothstein, p. 97.

The most maligned of all Banks's plays in his own time and today is undoubtedly Cyrus the Great (c. 1680), which, despite its publication date of 1696, probably was composed between Destruction and The Unhappy Favourite. Most critics see it as a chamber of horrors and matter-of-factly ignore its theme, the attainment of virtue by Cyrus, King of Persia in the sixth century B.C.[56] The play's theme reveals Banks's gradual shift away from the exotic and heroic toward the feminine, more domestic tragedy of the 1680s. In particular the emphasis on Cyrus's attainment of virtue at the expense of the heroic prefigures the virtuous queens of Banks's later plays, Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, and Mary, Queen of Scots. Furthermore, with Cyrus Banks makes a jump forward in his art, for it reveals his imagistic and motif-creating skills developing considerably.

The Unhappy Favourite (1681) has long been honored as the best drama Banks produced. Certainly the Essex play has drawn the bulk of commentary, a fact testified by its being chosen for a modern edition.[57] However, scholars have generally been content to deal with the play as superficially as his other plays. Its place in the development of the Restoration history play has been noted, as well as its place in the shift from heroic to sentimental drama.[58] The artistic core of the

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[56]Hume characterizes critical response, p. 422.

[57]Almost no bibliography for any of the separate plays is available, and only fragmentary compilations are available for Banks's complete canon. However, almost no one fails to mention The Unhappy Favourite, so it would rank high in total number of entries if such compilations did exist.

[58]See note 12.

play, however, has been avoided. In the Essex play Banks presents a symbolic statement about the dissolution of the heroic code and its replacement by a set of values which accelerated the disappearance of the heroic, the idea that most critics use the play to exemplify. The sensitivity Banks displays toward changing dramatic and political attitudes is revealed by the fact that the play is an example of the shift from the heroic to the affective and historical; at the same time its major theme and sets of symbols deal with this shift.

Vertue Betray'd (1682) deserves special attention as being the Banks play whose political nuances have been studied with some degree of completeness. The story of Anne Boleyn allows Banks room to develop a satirical portrait of Charles II[59] at the same time that he paints his first portrait of a virtuous martyr, a Banks trademark in the future. His imagery gains important new power in the play as well.

Ironically, the least discussed of the final four Banks dramas about English history is The Innocent Usurper (c. 1683), for it is almost certainly the finest of them in its richly ambiguous political and imagistic nuances.[60] Its political overtones--Lady Jane Grey was suspected of being a political parallel to Charles II's illegitimate and ambitious son, Monmouth--kept the play in obscurity during Banks's lifetime, as perhaps did the prominence of the Essex and Anne Boleyn

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[59]See notes 14 and 15; also Stephen J. Stedman, "'Political Fire' in John Banks's Vertue Betray'd," a paper delivered to a special session (#263) at the 1980 MLA meeting in Houston.

[60]Gildon, p. 7, indicated that The Innocent Usurper was the finest of Banks's late tragedies, but it has been underrated since that time.

plays after his death. In this play, however, if in no other, Banks may reach the "sternness of majesty" found in high tragedy, the lack of which Allardyce Nicoll claims is Banks's greatest weakness.[61]

The Island Queens (1684) continues the author's emphasis on Restoration politics; this emphasis, indeed, may have resulted in Banks's complete cessation of playwriting, for it surely gained him the enmity of some powerful political figures, who caused the play to be banned. Perhaps the only extended criticism of a Banks play has been devoted to this one, which chronicles the last months in the life of Mary, Queen of Scotland, using deliberately political overtones.[62] Banks's sympathetic treatment of Mary is, interestingly, his only bow to Catholicism.

Let us see, finally, how Banks has fared among those critics in the Twentieth Century who deal with him at all extensively. Until 1940 estimates varied considerably and were only slightly tipped in favor of the playwright. Thorndike and Ward are adamantly negative in their evaluations, while Schelling, Nicoll, Nettleton, and Blair deem Banks worthy of being read, albeit they do not place him in the company of the

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[61]Allardyce Nicoll, An Introduction to Dramatic Theory (New York: Brentano's, 1923), p. 109; also see James Sutherland, English Literature in the Late Seventeenth Century (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 76-78, where it is claimed that Lady Jane Grey's situation is a "truly tragic one."

[62]Sanlaville, pp. 133-195.

best playwrights of the age.[63] Between 1940 and 1970 the tendency was to upgrade the position which Banks held, generally lifting him to the level of poets immediately below Dryden in excellence, i.e., with Lee, Otway, and Southerne. During this period the tendency was, however, to limit his contribution mainly to the pathetic drama. Bogorad and Nicoll--especially in The History of English Drama (4th ed., 1952)--offer important evaluations, while Knight, Rothstein, and Sutherland are a bit more guarded in what they say.[64] Pinto offers the only completely negative comment.[65] Since 1970 the vogue has been to avoid evaluation of a direct nature and to let indirectly positive or negative comments shoulder that burden. Waith likens Banks to Otway and praises parts of The Unhappy Favourite; Hume notes Banks's role as a major developer of affective drama; Staves observes that Banks, Lee, and Otway dominated the stage in the 1680s; and Laura Brown's analysis leads one to approximately the same conclusion.[66] Recently, then, Banks is allowed a high relative position in the serious drama of the age. What

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[63]Thorndike, p. 273; A. W. Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan and Company, 1899), III, p. 429; Felix Schelling, English Drama (London: J. M. Dent, 1914), p. 265; Nicoll, 1923, pp. 155-158; Blair, p. 18; Nettleton, 1914, pp. 117-118.

[64]Bogorad, pp. 130-219; Nicoll, 1952, p. 168; Knight, pp. 167-168; Rothstein, pp. 96-99; Sutherland, 1969, pp. 76-78.

[65]Vivian de Sola Pinto, Enthusiast in Wit: A Portrait of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, 1647-1680 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 103.

[66]Waith, pp. 267-268; Hume, 217-218; Staves, in passim; Brown, pp. 95-97.

remains to be done with him is to show the intrinsic merit of each of his plays by analysing each for elements of dramaturgic unity. In the following chapters such an analysis is begun.

CHAPTER II

THE RIVAL IMAGES OF THE RIVAL KINGS

Given Banks's lifelong passion for the history and legend of Alexander the Great, evidenced by numerous allusions to this great commander throughout the other six plays he was to write, we ought not be surprised by the playwright's first choice of subject. More than some of his contemporaries, Banks admired Alexander, although the darker side of the Macedonian's personality certainly did not escape him.[1] In fact, the theme of The Rival Kings has to do with Alexander's split personality, as Banks examines the reasons for the destruction of the "greatest man that ever was"[2] and finds them in the irreconcilable sides of his character. Fittingly enough, the images of the play bolster the dual focus on Alexander. Opposing image patterns abound: sun imagery is balanced by images of clouds and storms; fire and water images are contrapuntally orchestrated. Also, images which possess two opposing

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[1]For a discussion of attitudes towards Alexander the Great, see George C. Brauer, "Alexander in England: The Conqueror's Reputation in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," The Classical Journal, 76 (1980), 34-47, especially pp. 36-37 which discuss Nathaniel Lee's The Rival Queens, the play which probably prompted Banks to compose his first drama.

[2]Quotations from The Rival Kings refer to the first edition: John Bankes [sic], The Rival Kings: Or, The Loves of Oroondates and Statira, A Tragedy (London: printed for Langley Curtis in Goat Court on Ludgate-Hill, 1677), "Dedicatory Epistle." A microfilm copy of this edition was used. Hereinafter, all page numbers to the play will refer to this edition.

meanings occur, flame and star images among them. Banks's imagery in this play also often foreshadows the fates of the various characters, and, finally, images of order and chaos are used to suggest Alexander's greatness and his potential destructiveness. In total, the imagery of the play represents a not insignificant strength of Banks's first dramatic effort.

The Rival Kings, Or, The Loves of Oroondates and Statira, A Tragedy was apparently first acted in June, 1677, only a few months after the tremendously successful opening of Nathaniel Lee's The Rival Queens, also an Alexander play.[3] Although Banks claims in the "Epilogue" to the play that "it was writ a year before" Lee's heroic extravaganza, no modern critic lends credence to this argument.[4] Since the "Epilogue" also reveals that only minor actors, and not the "great Dons," of the King's Company performed the play, we may safely presume that Banks was attempting to take advantage of the popularity which Lee's play found.[5] The Rival Kings was first published in 1677, presumably after the first performance, with at least two issues of the first edition being printed, though no other edition appeared in Banks's lifetime; nor is there a modern edition of the play.[6] That it was performed and printed

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[3]See Alfred Harbage, Annals of English Drama, 975-1700: An Analytical Record of all Plays, Extant or Lost . . ., revised 2nd ed. by S. Schoenbaum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), pp. 174-75.

[4]Hume (pers. com.), for instance, denies Banks's claim; also see N. Lewis, pp. 131-137, and Van Lennep, pp. 172-182.

[5]I am indebted to Hume (pers. com.) for this suggestion.

[6]Harbage, pp. 174-175.

at all stems from the public taste for heroic drama which had drawn spectators to the theatres during the late 1660s and early 1670s. Perhaps having reached its zenith in such plays as Dryden's Aureng-Zebe (1675) and Lee's The Rival Queens (1677), the mode was waning in popularity, and it would not be long before Banks adapted to public changes in taste by changing the subjects of his plays.

Critics of The Rival Kings have generally slighted the play for its bombastic language, its relatively simplistic characterization, and its heavy reliance on derivative material. Tupper, Lewis, and Hume are representative of those who damn the play for its poor language, delighting in the citation of especially unwieldy passages, of which it must be admitted there are not a few.[7] Tupper also typifies those who adversely criticize the characterization in the play, while nearly every critic from Langbaine down to the present has been quick to note the derivative nature of the play's material, notably Van Lennep and Lewis.[8] These arguments have varying degrees of validity. The verbal "effusions" disparaged by Lewis and the "ringing triplets"[9] castigated by Hume are characteristic not only of The Rival Kings but of heroic drama in general, and similar passages can be quoted out of context with damaging effect even from plays of the best heroic dramatists of the period. Similarly, the heroic drama ordinarily did not lend itself to

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[7]Tupper, 1935, pp. 48-50; Lewis, pp. 131-137, and Hume, p. 311.

[8]Tupper, 1935, pp. 45-46; Langbaine, p. 7; Van Lennep, pp. 172-182; and Lewis, pp. 131-137.

[9]Lewis, pp. 133-137; Hume, p. 311.

complex characterization; the Alexander we find in The Rival Kings, however, is surely as complex a creation as inhabits any of the heroic worlds staged to gratify the "heroic fever" of the times. And, finally, Banks's dependence on sources is neither so much greater than that of many other dramatists who adapted the French romances nor entirely surprising when found in a first dramatic effort. Despite these mitigating factors, however, consensus judgment has it that The Rival Kings is "poor stuff."[10]

A reason not yet put forward for the shortcomings of the play, one which may account for the reservations which readers have when they come away from a reading of it, has to do with its uncertain genre. As its full title--The Rival Kings, Or, The Loves of Oroondates and Statira, A Tragedy (emphases added)--indicates, the play is a hybrid of comedy and tragedy which we have come to know as tragicomedy, but which in this case might very well be termed "heroicomedy." Many of the conventions of romantic comedy are to be found in the plots of the two love triangles involving Alexander-Oroondates-Statira and Lysimachus-Hephestion-Parisatis. Grating against this element of the play is the heroic (perhaps tragic) plot which details the last day in the life of Alexander the Great and all the varicolored strands of his life which make that day his last. As a result of this dual generic focus, the play clanks along a bit clumsily at times, perhaps in part justifying the qualms which have been expressed about it. However, we still owe

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[10]Hume, p. 311.

Banks's play more careful analysis than has yet been accorded it, particularly in areas yet untouched. One of these, of course, is the playwright's use of unifying motifs, especially imagery.

Before entering into a discussion of the imagery of the play, however, we will find it useful to become familiar with the play's characters and with its plot.[11] Unlike many other seventeenth-century authors who dealt with Alexander, Banks apparently felt somewhat positive towards his subject. However, he still presents both sides of the famous Macedonian, whose personality was enigmatic in the extreme. Alexander is "the greatest Man that ever was" ("Dedicatory Epistle"), military strategist par excellence, and conqueror of the known world even "to the utmost India" (p. 11). At the same time as this side of Alexander is revealed, however, we are also confronted with traits stemming from the darker side of his personality: his murderous dealings with Clytus, Phylotas, and Parmenio (among others), his Persian decadence, and his destruction of the Persepolis. Throughout the play these rival sides of the king compete for our attention, with neither finally achieving dominance.

If in the character of Alexander we are presented with two irreconcilable sides of one person, the other characters in The Rival Kings belong to more straightforward types in the heroic drama. Lysimachus and Oroondates are noble lovers; the objects of their attention, Parisatis and Statira, are virtuous and self-sacrificing

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[11] Each chapter will briefly describe the characters of the play in question as well as the plot.

maidens; Hephestion is a decadent if handsome parasite; Cassander is a watered-down Iago, bent on revenge; Bagistanes a bombastic bureaucrat of almost modern vintage; and Araxis an absolutely loyal slave. If the argument for simplistic characterization in The Rival Kings holds true, it does so only for the minor characters of the play and not for Alexander, whose complexity is manifest.

The action of the play commences on the last day of Alexander's life as we learn that Cassander has previously been embarrassed by his commander and nurses a grudge against him. The minor love plot also begins in Act One, when Lysimachus reveals that he saved Parisatis from a fire and then fell in love with her; his love, however, is imperiled because Alexander has promised to bestow Parisatis upon Hephestion. Act One ends with Oroondates's relating his love for Statira to Araxis and claiming that the world is not big enough for both him and Alexander. Acts Two through Four witness the unraveling of these three plot strands: Cassander successfully administers poison to the King; Lysimachus first quarrels with Hephestion over Parisatis and then wounds him in a duel; and Statira rebuffs Alexander in favor of Oroondates and then prevents the king from executing her lover as a sacrifice. In Act Five we witness Alexander's death, which comes upon him with ever-increasing torment. Before Alexander dies, however, Hephestion enters to beg for Lysimachus's life and to request that his former enemy be united with Parisatis. When Hephestion dies, Alexander kills Cassander and then expires himself, leaving Statira for Oroondates and his kingdom for the "worthiest" remaining captain.

The Rival Kings is an imagistically rich drama which focuses on the twin personality of Alexander. Much of the play's imagery reinforces this duality. For instance, an important image pattern in the play associates Alexander with the sun; however, the king is also portrayed as a threatening cloud which covers the sun. Similarly, Alexander is simultaneously likened to the great sea of life and said to be a destructive ocean or a great river in flood. The duality of the water images in the play is bolstered by a related complexity found in imagery relating to heat, especially flame images: Alexander is both a flame which lights the world and one which consumes itself like the Phoenix. Interestingly, the contrasting images of the sun and storm are echoed by the contrast of flame and water. In turn another essential motif in the play, that related to poison, merges both the sun-storm and flame-water images, for the liquid poison which Alexander drinks in Act Four causes him to die in burning agony in Act Five.

Minor imagistic eddies swirl on the periphery of these mainstream image clusters, many of them intensifying the dual personality of Alexander. However, they also function to foreshadow the demise of the King. In fact, Banks is quite skillful at using imagery to suggest the fates of most of the characters, especially Cassander. That he is able to do so while reemphasizing the same imagery which characterizes Alexander is a tribute to his early mastery with figurative language. Among the most important of the minor patterns is star imagery. Alexander is associated with the meteor, which burns brightly if briefly before consuming itself in a final burst of radiance, and also with the

fixed stars, which shine on eternally in the sight of the mortal changes occurring in the sublunary world. Imagery of imprisonment operates with the same bifocal effect; though Alexander can imprison conquered nations and their monarchs, he is ultimately a prisoner of his own mortality, one who is called to his eternal prison at play's end.

Of all the image patterns residing in the poetic structure of The Rival Kings, the most dominant are those associated with water, such as images of the sea, rivers, clouds, or rainstorms, and a contrasting set related to heat, especially images of the sun and of flames. At one time or another in the play, Alexander is likened to all these images, suggesting that Banks reinforced the ambiguous characterization which he offered of Alexander with a poetic fabric of irreconcilable images associated with the king. The opening scene of the play resonates with many of these same images, setting the stage for their continuing development as indicators of character, both that of Alexander and those of lesser personages like Lysimachus and Cassander.

In fact, these two characters are onstage during the first scene, and their initial speeches set vibrating major imagistic chords. First, Lysimachus compares Alexander with the great sea of life:

> From Ganges, and beyond Nyle's secret Bed,
> Strange conquer'd Nations have Euphrates spread,
> By Heavens eternal Power, ordain'd to meet
> In the Worlds center, and it's Royal Seat.
> . . . . . .
> So the great Sea maintains it's swelling Pride
> By lesser streams, that thither daily glide;
> All things contribute to this mighty King,
> To Alexander flowing, leave their Spring,
> And Aids from the remotest Places bring.
> (p. 1)

Banks was always fond of imagery of the sea and from sea-faring, perhaps principally for the contradictions which they offered: the eternal sea offers the chance of accidental shipwreck or drowning to every merchant, mariner, or swimmer who ventures on its waves. The picture which Lysimachus paints of Alexander with this imagery suggests that the King is a repository of the civilization produced by the three great river valleys of mankind's early history, but the reference to "swelling Pride" offers a subtle foreshadowing of the King's ultimate demise. Lysimachus's impressive opening speech is immediately bolstered by Cassander, who introduces the first reference to another important image pattern of the play, of the sun. In redolently symbolic terms Cassander balances the image presented by Lysimachus of Alexander as a great sea receiving the bounty from lesser rivers, streams, and springs with the image of Alexander as a quasi-sun god, dominating lesser luminaries, who are likened to the light of dawn or of the moon:

> We but appear like Day break after night,
> Where e're He comes, he fills the Skye with Light.
> So the base Moon does oft Eclipse the Sun,
> And shade that Beauty, whence her light begun.
> (p. 1)

Like the sea of life, the sun of light is here paralleled with Alexander, allowing the play to open on two dominantly positive images of the king. Notably, the second of these passages is also a forewarning of Cassender's eventual treason toward Alexander, whom he will eclipse quite permanently at the end of the play when he acts the part of the "base Moon." Through these images, these lines serve a double function, as do many in the play, of characterizing the king and

of foreshadowing some later action. Cassander then goes on to echo the water imagery initiated by Lysimachus, again portraying himself and others as lesser figures dominated by Alexander:

> He sends us forth, like Nylus in a Floud,
> To drown the World, and Court him with the good.
> (p. 1)

Thus, our introduction to Alexander is an imagistic one, wherein we are allowed to view the positive side of the Macedonian monarch, as well as to receive intimations of storms brewing on the horizon (for "Nylus'" flood, like Cassander, is potentially overwhelming and destructive).

Banks carefully preserves our first impression of Alexander by reviving the sea and sun images later in the play. The former are renewed by Alexander himself in Act Three when, debating with Oroondates, he asserts that his

> . . . fortunes like the Ocean that indures
> Contrary windes, and all less streams devours,
> Can ne're be Jealous, or afraid of yours [Oroondates's fortune]. (p. 29)

And immediately thereafter Alexander claims that he "shall a stand of greatness be, Where Nations flow, as Channels to the Sea" (p. 29).

In contrast with these affirmative sea images in which the king is portrayed as a repository of greatness, however, is an equally dominant series of sea and river images which reveal the darker, more destructive side of Alexander, thus providing an ambiguous set of references with which we must judge him. For example, in Act Two when Araxis warns Oroondates that the latter's activities to secure possession of Statira are uncommonly dangerous, he uses imagery which is symbolically pertinent:

> Stay Oroondates, are you in a dream?
> Beware the Gulph, y'are led to by the stream.
> (p. 17)

Similarly, when Cassander discusses the poison concocted by Aristotle for the assassination of Alexander, his imagery connects the King to the destructive forces of the sea:

> But this [poison] shall be of greater fame to thee
> [Aristotle].
> Never let that disturb thy curious mind,
> That canst an Ebb for the worlds Torrent find.
> (p. 33)

Elsewhere Alexander is equated with "torrents"; though these are often rivers in flood, they are as destructive as the sea. In Act Three, when Araxis enters to warn Oroondates and Statira of Alexander's approach, the latter is said to enter "like a huge Torrent that does overflow" (p. 27), while earlier Oroondates makes the same comparison (p. 9).

Just as the dual role of sea and water imagery in the play underscores the two sides of Alexander's personality, so do the sun images. As before, the positive imagery of the sun in the first scene of the play is repeated; Alexander is frequently likened to a quasi-sun god who provides beneficent influence. When he restores Oroondates to the Scythian throne, Statira is moved to passionate praise:

> This Act beyond the Glass of time shall run,
> This gallant Act as clear as is the Sun,
> Which none but <u>Alexander</u> could have done.
> (p. 38)

When in Act Five Hephestion enters wounded and discovers Alexander in agony, he, too, recalls Alexander's sun-like radiance:

> Long may you live, and Guide us like the Sun,
> And we shine by your light, as does the Moon.
> (p. 45)

Opposed, however, to these positive images of the sun, which recall the opening lines of the play, are those in which the sun is clearly an invidious force; Alexander's personality is thus tarnished. A typical example occurs when Oroondates notes late in Act One that the king opposes his love for Statira:

> The Sun approaches and a plot hath laid
> To cover Oroondates with his shade.
> (p. 8)

Much more prevalent, though, are the numerous images in which Alexander is associated with clouds. His plotting to kill Parminio causes a "thick cloud" to appear and make the sun's "glorious body shine less clear" (p. 2); the king is compared to "thickening clouds" (p. 9) which might keep Oroondates and Statira apart; he is a "cloud" (p. 35) which cannot prevail over Statira's beauty; and actions of his apparently cause the "cloud with thunder" (p. 37) to scatter holy fire during the temple scene.

The cloud image is frequently used to counterpoise the beneficial image of the sun associated with Alexander. Related to this set of oppositions is another frequent image associated with clouds, that of showers or, more crucially, storms. Alexander is often portrayed as a bringer of stormy weather. The opposition of "Gulph" and "Torrent" images with those of the sea of life is reinforced by the opposed images of sun and cloud/storm. These contraries make judging Alexander's character difficult since all are clearly associated with him. Though cataloguing the storm images would be tedious, brief mention of a few of them is necessary; after Lysimachus saves Parisatis from the fiery tent,

Alexander "like a storm did come" (p. 5) to take her away for Hephestion; when the king is described in the act of preparing for Oroondates's sacrifice, he is a "labouring Tempest" and a "blasting storme of lightning" (p. 34); and Alexander is a "threatening shower" (p. 41) to Lysimachus and Oroondates near the end of the fourth act.

Sets of mutually incompatible images surround Alexander throughout The Rival Kings. He is life-sustaining sea and torrent, sun and storm. Other image patterns, particularly those of stars and chains, operate the same way. However, before these images are analysed in detail, an important motif which opposes the water images and underpins the sun images remains to be dealt with: fire. It is well known, at least in the legends associated with Alexander, that he died in burning agony from a dose of poison. One important way in which Banks was able to foreshadow this death, in which, ironically, the sun shoots fire into the king's brain (p. 46), is through the extensive use of fire imagery.

The importance of flame imagery can be seen in miniature as it informs the character of Cassander. We learn in Act One that Cassander nurses a grudge against the king because the latter once struck his captain an embarrassing blow to the cheek. This affront smolders in Cassander's mind, gradually gathering to murderous proportions, as his administering the cup of poison to Alexander reveals. Cassander's desire for revenge is communicated early in the play when he tells Lysimachus that "there is a smother'd shame, / When thus fomented breaks into a flame" (p. 2). He goes on to state that he could have better withstood a "thunderbolt" than the humiliation of Alexander's blow. In

Act Three Cassander's cheeks still "burn" (p. 34) from the ignominy which he has been forced to bear. Clearly, these flame references are ironic precursors of the kind of death Cassander plans for his king; his smothered hatred does indeed break out into a flame which takes the life of the greatest man the world had yet known--or its Nemisis, depending on one's viewpoint.[12]

The irony of the many flame images associated with Alexander is now manifest. When he "burns" (p. 15) with "ambition," the reader recognizes an irony latent in the king's statement; similarly ironic are the times when he becomes a "flaming horrour" (p. 18), a "flaming beacon" which "frights" (p. 28) the world, a "flame that sets the world on fire" (p. 31); his being enflamed by letters from Aristotle which castigate Olympia (p. 33) is an indirectly similar incident. The appropriateness of Hephestion's dream, in which a "flaming chariot" (p. 39) comes down to take Alexander aloft to the gods, is obvious. Finally, the equation of Alexander and the Phoenix (p. 51) solidifies his association with flames and fire. Banks has carefully foreshadowed Alexander's death throughout the play with his manipulation of flame imagery.

An even more important consideration regarding Banks's imagery must be studied, however. It seems at least possible that the patterns of imagery thus far studied--sea, sun cloud, storm, and flame--are brought together in the crucial, if more limited, motif of poison. The

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[12]Statira calls Alexander a "Scourge of Empires" (p. 18) and predicts his imminent downfall.

coalescence of sun and flame with water images imagistically results in the liquid poison which causes Alexander to expire in fiery torment. Banks prepares for the poisoning early in the play, for when Alexander's counselors advise him to seek peace now that he has conquered the world, Alexander responds ironically:

> Confusion seize thy [one of the counselors] tongue--
> I'le hear no more of such a Syren's Song.
> To Clytus death I owe a deadly shame;
> Swell'd with a Sound, and poyson'd with a Name
> I hurt my self, and madly was to blame.
> (p. 11)

The very same poison which hurt him when he "madly" killed Clytus persists in Alexander throughout the play, as his killing of Phylotas and Parmenio indicates. It is poetically just that poison brings about his own death in Act Five.

In fact, poison seems to haunt Alexander wherever he goes; his victory over Darius, Statira notes, had the important side effect of polluting the Araxis River:

> Is not the sweet and cleer Araxis Flood
> Choak'd with dead Bodyes, poyson'd with their blood?
> (p. 13)

Here Banks joins water imagery with that of poison quite appropriately, and in Act Four when Cassander discusses the poison sent to him by Aristotle, flame imagery introduces the subject of poison:

> Phillip. The King I left inrag'd, and in a Flame
> At Letters too that from my Father came.
> Cass. Let him be so, as long as 'tis his last;
> It is decre'd he cannot burn too fast.
> See here the greatest, and most powerful spell [the poison].
> (p. 33)

Quite fitting also is the imagery of the speech which Alexander gives at the Temple of Hamon, as he holds the cup of poison prepared for him by Cassander:

> Accept, great Joves, the Son whom thou hast crown'd,
> Who was the first thy secret Temple found,
> Seated beyond the world in holy Ground.
> Past barren Libia, and it's dearest Lands,
> Through hot parch'd Grounds, and over burning sands--
> As the first fruites of all thou gav'st to mee,
> I sacrifice the world again to thee,
> And drink this Cup of Immortality.
> (p. 39)

The "burning sands" anticipate the aftermath of the drink which he is about to quaff, while the "Cup of Immortality" is immortal in far more ironic ways than Alexander as yet understands. Again, poison occurs on stage in contiguity with flame and water images.

While the main imagistic currents of The Rival Kings have been dealt with, lesser image patterns which support the main patterns also demand scrutiny, as they illuminate the character of Alexander (and other characters) and foreshadow the action of the play. One well-developed image cluster which prefigures the downfall of the King is that associated with stars, both falling stars (or meteors) and fixed stars (or constellations). The dual function of this imagery brilliantly underscores the ambiguous portrait of Alexander (as famous conqueror and tyrant ripe for overthrow) with which we are presented in the play. References to stars first appear in Cassander's meditation over the reported death of Parmenio:

> . . . like a Star, one sudden shoot we give,
> Then fall an empty Vapour on the Ground,
> Ingrateful Alexander, has now repaid
> Those many Fights, ne're won but by his Aid.
> (p. 3)

Though here the image of the shooting star is connected to Parmenio's death, there is perhaps reason to wonder whether or not the immediate reference to Alexander which follows might not be an ominous portent for the King himself. That Cassander, the instrument of Alexander's death, should speak these lines is also suggestive of events yet to unfold.

The first mention of stars in direct connection with Alexander is an important one, as it clearly links the King with falling stars (even while he is literally and metaphorically at the height of a victorious battle). During the council scene early in Act Two, when various factions are attempting to turn the King's mind to peace or to war, Hephestion urges Alexander to recall his warlike deeds and especially to

> Forget not . . . the time [he was] so bold,
> When clad in Armour made of shining Gold,
> As on the Oxydracon's Wall [he] fought,
> Thence like a Star into the Town [he] shot.
> (p. 11)

This image is an ironic one, for it shows Alexander at the point of victory in battle and descending like a shooting star into the town. Thus, it foreshadows Alexander during the play, when he is at the height of his achievement but also on the verge of death. Imagistically, Hephestion sets the stage for Alexander's downfall. However, immediately following this description of Alexander fighting on the Oxydracon wall, the King is referred to as a "fixed star" (p. 12) which directs Hephestion's wandering youth. The counterpointing of the King as falling star and as fixed star illustrates the binary quality of his character. And the images are historically accurate: though Alexander did die a mortal death due to his excesses, he remains in the memory of

man, if not in the firmament, to this day. The counterpointing of the image continues throughout the play with Alexander alternately a meteor, blazing out in a burst of brilliance, or a constellation, shining eternally in the heavens. Statira and Oroondates characterize him as a meteor in Act One (p. 18); Alexander so styles himself in Act Five (p. 44); and Lysimachus uses the image in Act Five (p. 47). Opposing these references are those which mention the King as a permanent astronomical entity: in his dream of the "flaming chariot" Hephestion believes that his monarch will be made into a shining constellation (p. 39); in Act Five Alexander sees himself after death mounting heavenward on a star (p. 46); and in a crucial passage Alexander likens himself and Hephestion after death to "twin-starres" shining together in the heavens (p. 51). These opposing star images occur with almost equal frequency; resolution of the enigmatic character of the king is again made difficult, if not impossible.

Star imagery is also associated with other characters in The Rival Kings. With the exception of the meteor image used in connection with Parmenio, the star images associated with other characters are always fixed stars, and thus the characterization is a positive one. Statira is called a "star above the reach of Oroondates" (p. 40), while both these characters are said to be like "darting starres" who "shoot and stick in the sky with the brightest planets" (p. 35)--that is, who significantly do not fall to earth as Alexander is so often described as doing, who are unequivocally the "twin-starres" that the king wishes he and Hephestion were.

Another important strand of images involves chains or fetters which the characters are forced to wear, either literally or figuratively. During most of the play Alexander holds all other characters in some sort of bondage; his "godlike arm," in fact, is said to hold the very "world in chains" (p. 4). Parisatis laments "Alexanders chains" (p. 6); Statira sarcastically reminds Alexander of the "gaudy chains" (p. 15) he forces her to wear; Oroondates complains of the "fetters" (p. 31) he must don; and, finally, each of these lovers feels like a "pent Bird" which would fly to the other, forgetting how each is "ty'd" (p. 35). During the first three and one-half acts of the play Alexander holds the upper hand, and imagery of chains shows his dominance. After being poisoned, however, Alexander naturally loses control over his subjects. The most important image of this loss combines chain and sun imagery in an impressive manner:

> . . . see too the furious and rebellious Sun,
> Slave to the many Battails I have won,
> Ha's in this very moment broke his chain,
> And in revenge shot all his fire into my Brain.
> (p. 46)

Finally, all that Alexander has control over is his own death, and he characteristically wants Hephestion with him at that point: "Our lives together in one chain are ty'd" (p. 49).

Related to the imagery of chains is the snow image connected with Alexander's death, cold replacing fire and embracing the king as he lapses into death. Banks prepares for this image of chilling enchainment early in the play when Alexander complains about the easy life in Babylon:

> Millions of pleasures on Euphrates lye,
> Swelling her Bankes with plagues of luxury,
> They more than all the dangers you withstood
> Will dant your Courages, and chill your blood.
> (p. 12)

An adroit, ironic foreshadowing indeed. Hephestion, too, feels the numbing cold during his death scene in Act Five, and his experience with cold is also prepared for in several early images which suggest that his springlike youth will turn to wintry cold all too soon (pp. 6-7, 13, 20, and 36). In Act Five the king and his minion feel the "deadly frost" of a great "Abysse of snow" (p. 50). Banks provides an appropriate image of their transition from fire into the bondage of icy death when Hephestion states that he will "freeze / As snow upon the burning Ætna lyes" (p. 50). Importantly, the only other reference to ice involves Oroondates, who is said to melt and warm in the presence of sun-like Statira:

> As the kind Sun does to a frozen boat,
> Bridle the poor Bark into a float
> Then gently bathing o're it's melting sides,
> It lifts it self above the swelling tides!
> All those thick joyes that lay conjeal'd below
> Swell o're the brink, and their large bounds o're flow.
> (p. 26)

Unlike Alexander, who moves from master of all men to thraldom in the icy grip of death, Oroondates moves from a position of subservience to one in which he is free to enjoy the warmth of Statira's love. Much of Banks's imagery in The Rival Kings similarly reinforces the shift in power which takes place during the play.

Though mainly centered on the character of Alexander, Banks's first play is in many ways a symbolic discussion of politics and kingship as well, and much of the symbolism in it derives from a worldview which Banks and other Restoration writers inherited from the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.[13] The symbols which poets of those periods used in depicting order--including images of the sun, stars, and sea--have a prominent place in Banks's plays, as we have seen. However, other symbols which Banks inherited from the past also require exegisis; among them especially are musical images, garden images, and hierarchical images.

In The Rival Kings Alexander, despite his military exploits and prowess, is ultimately a source of chaos in the world, one which must be eliminated if peace is to be achieved, if Oroondates and Statira are to enjoy their love. A motif in the play which reveals Alexander's alignment with the forces of disorder is that of music. The king is often associated with musical discord, suggesting that his presence in the world keeps it in continual upheaval. Bagistanes, in reporting the death of Parmenio, likens that general's death to a discordant voice in a chorus:

> But o're our Sun does a thick Cloud appear,
> That makes his glorious body shine less clear.
> As oft in multitudes of Shouts ascend
> A loud and goodly noise, till at the end,
> Some single voice behind, does flagging lye,
> And Robs the whole, of it's full harmony.
> (p. 2)

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[13] Most notable among the critics who deal with this imagery is E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York: Vintage Books, [n.d.]), pp. 61-100 especially.

In killing Parmenio (and his son, Phylotas, as well as Clytus), Alexander has interjected an unharmonious note into the universal chorus, one which will bring about his own catastrophe; Banks uses the musical motif, which he may well have borrowed from the worldview of the Elizabethans, to make this point clear. And Alexander is equated with disharmony elsewhere in the play. Araxis notes that the king brings "Noise" (p. 8) with him where he goes; and, when reporting the results of their sacrifice to Jupiter Hamon, the priests report their negative results using imagery of music to convey their message:

> Just in that moment which our thoughts inspire,
> A clou'd with thunder did from Heav'n retire
> And quench'd, and scatter'd all the holy fire;
> A horrid darkness fill'd the Temple round,
> And of faint Groves was heard a dreadful Sound.
> (p. 37; emphases added)

The application of images of disharmony to Alexander suggests his discordant activity in the world. This is opposed by musical images which are more positive, though these are connected with other characters in the play. At the end of Act Two, when Statira and Oroondates envision a life away from the strife of Alexander's conquered kingdom, they employ an important image to suggest the happiness of their condition:

> And we our selves will King and Queen create,
> And each to other shall a Subject be,
> Living on Earth, like Spheres in Harmony.
> (p. 19)

Another image of order is the garden, which when rightly cultivated symbolizes order in the political world, but when poorly managed emblemizes civil discord. Though this image appears only a few times in

The Rival Kings, each time its presence seems to point to the political dimension of the play. It first appears in the description of Parmenio's death, which we have seen is crucial to understanding Alexander. That the King should have had his henchmen assassinate the great general "in his own garden, where he us'd to breath / Pure Air for Life" (p. 3), suggests a violation of the rightful order of things, a violation for which Alexander must eventually pay with his own life. If Alexander kills a worthy man in a garden and thus profanes it, Lysimachus dispatches Hephestion in "the Cyprus walk" (p. 42), another garden, in an act of political pruning which clearly benefits the political order of the time. That same garden walk provides the meeting place for Oroondates and Statira at the end of Act Two, when these lovers pledge themselves to each other eternally. At one point they suggest that their lives, if they could fashion them so, would partake of an Edenic atmosphere:

> Hence we'le repair to some blest love Isle,
> On whose fair Breath, both Heav'n and Nature smile.
> (p. 19)

That Statira is elsewhere termed a "Goddess of life" and "soft Elisium of eternal rest" (p. 35) bolsters the positive garden imagery associated with this pair in contrast to the desecration of the garden which Alexander perpetrates. In fact, the barbaric death of Parmenio in his garden is but a precursor of another violated sanctuary, for Alexander's presence in the temple of Jupiter Hamon results in chaos there just as his men bring chaos to Parmenio's garden. In turn, however, each of these desecrations prepares us for Alexander's death.

Hierarchical imagery from the "correspondences" and the "great chain of Being" also occurs in The Rival Kings. In particular, two of the "primates" of the animal world, the eagle and the lion, symbolically represent order in the play. Taken in conjunction with the notion that the sun is the primate of the celestial world, these correspondences assist in interpreting the play. Alexander is called a "Lyon" in the first scene (p. 2), clearly demarcating his supremacy at that point. He is also early on called an Eagle (pp. 11, 14, 29). However, as the play progresses, Oroondates assumes the qualities of the lion (pp. 31 and 41), and Alexander comes to see that his "gallant Eagle . . . lyes dead" (p. 46). These changes in the alignment of the lion and eagle are borrowings from an earlier, hierarchical scheme of world order which still retained some potency in Banks's time. The shift in power which occurs in The Rival Kings is in part manifested by the sort of imagery which Banks chose to employ.

The imagery of Banks's first play is very nearly orchestral. Many of the image clusters which he uses are reiterated like the themes of a musical composition, especially those relating to heat, water, poison, stars, chains, and, of course, music itself. Taken together they do much to modify the usual critical opinions which have been voiced about the play. While The Rival Kings may indeed be "poor stuff," it yet possesses enough organic unity and poetic structure, created in large measure as a result of its imagistic complexity, to merit a somewhat higher play in the Restoration serious drama than it has yet been accorded. The play can be read as Banks's opening commentary on the

politics of his own times, with Alexander representing the contrasting qualities of kingship which kept so many of Charles II's subjects in a quandary. Though the Stuart king's dual personality and his qualities of kingship are unlike those of Alexander, the generally enigmatic quality of the two monarchs unites them. Later in his career Banks was to create kings who much more closely resembled his own. As a first dramatic effort, The Rival Kings is noteworthy for the complexity of its imagery and the portrait of a king which it presents.

CHAPTER III

MOTIFS OF SOCIAL DISSOLUTION IN THE DESTRUCTION OF TROY

Having dealt with the last day in the life of the "greatest Man that ever was" in The Rival Kings, Banks turned in The Destruction of Troy to the last days in the history of the first great mythological city of western civilization, and did so at least in part in order to comment on his own times. Much as he had dissected the causes of Alexander's death in his first play, Banks proceeded to analyse the reasons for Troy's downfall, using imagery apposite to the subject. In particular, images of rape, stains, infection, and storms underscore the theme of destruction. Also important, however, are the motifs of vows and oaths, while references to the classical infernal regions are frequent, indicating much about the social structure of the Greeks and Trojans. The imagery of the play, though it does not entirely eschew that developed in The Rival Kings, is distinctive and appropriate to the themes and characters of The Destruction of Troy. Furthermore, in suggesting as he does in the "Prologue" and "Epilogue" the connection between Troy and England, Banks participates in a dialogue with his audience on a subject crucial to the heroic drama of the Restoration, that relating to the bonds which hold society together. Finally, it is not too incidental to note that he draws ever nearer to the historical subject matter of his later plays, for it is only a short step from

dramatizing the mythical ancestors of "Troy-nouvant" to depicting historical ones of much more recent vintage.

The Destruction of Troy, A Tragedy was probably first acted in November of 1678 at the Duke's Theatre, Banks having shifted his theatrical allegiance from the King's Company which had produced The Rival Kings a year earlier.[1] Banks's financial exigencies may have dictated this move, though the pattern of shifting allegiance was to continue. The Destruction of Troy closely follows several other "destruction" plays, including George Lesley's Fire and Brimstone, or The Destruction of Sodom (1675) and I and II The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian (January, 1677) by John Crowne. Perhaps seeking a fitting encore to these plays and Banks's Destruction of Troy, Edward Ecclestone wrote Noah's Flood, or The Destruction of the World in 1679. Thereafter, the vogue for such plays began to run out, though the lode was still being mined in Lee's The Massacre of Paris, first performed in 1686.

If Banks followed the lead of other dramatists in writing in the "destruction" mode, he seems to have pioneered in reopening the dramatic commentary on Troy. Though John Crowne's translation of Racine's Andromache appeared in 1674, little else on the Trojan theme preceded Destruction, at least during the heroically inclined seventies of the century. Dryden adapted Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida in April of 1679, only five or six months after Banks's play, and Edward Sherburne's

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[1]Harbage, pp. 176-177; other dates come from the same source.

Troades, or The Royal Captives, a translation from Seneca, appeared also in 1679; the same Senecan tragedy was again translated and staged in 1686 as Troas by John Talbot. Thus, with Destruction Banks seems to have initiated a spate of Trojan plays in much the same manner that Lee popularized Alexander plays (including Banks's) with The Rival Queens.

Critical assessments of Destruction have generally been cursory, though not altogether negative. Langbaine noted that "how unkind soever the Criticks were to it [The Destruction of Troy], I believe they have seen worse Tragedies on the Stage."[2] Genest, however, asserts that it is a "poor play both as to plot and language."[3] More recent critics have also been divided in their findings. Blair calls Destruction the "most deserving of attention" of "Banks's three attempts in the heroic manner."[4] On the other hand, Nicoll dismisses both Destruction and The Rival Kings as "ephemeral things obviously produced simply to satisfy the tastes of the public of the seventies of the century."[5] "Readable" and "worthy of mention" are John Harold Wilson's judgments on the play.[6] Hume notes "great" improvement over The Rival Kings, though he claims that a "melodramatic swagger" overtakes some of the scenes.[7] Nowhere, however, is sustained and detailed criticism of the play offered,

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[2] Langbaine, p. 7.

[3] [John Genest], Some Account of the English Stage, from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830 (Bath: H. E. Carrington; London: Thomas Rodd, 1832), I, pp. 241-242.

[4] Blair, p. 12.

[5] Nicoll, 1923, p. 155.

[6] Wilson, 1968, p. 81.

[7] Hume, p. 321.

Rothstein's short character analysis of Achilles being the closest critics have come to such an effort.[8]

Character development in The Destruction of Troy shows no great improvement over The Rival Kings. For the most part Banks is content to echo the characterizations established by Homer. Thus, Priam is aged and honorable; Paris is bold and not entirely honorable in love or war (i.e., the "rape" of Helen and the assassination of Achilles); Andromache is a faithful wife, who, however, shows signs of becoming a termagant, bent on revenge, at the end of the play; Polyxena is a faithful sister to Troilus, though somewhat empty-headed; Troilus is overbold; Hector is suitably honorable and skillful in war; Cassandra is a shrewish prophetess. Clearly, the Trojan characters conform quite well to their Homeric prototypes. Many of the Greeks are similarly treated. With just enough kingly authority to pass muster, Agamemnon reveals himself to be putty in the hands of Ulysses; Diomedes is valiant (there being no mention of Cressida in the play); Patroclus is eager for glory if unable to withstand Hector's prowess; Ajax is similarly eager for fame; and Menelaus is revealed as somewhat stupid and as a none too capable fighter whom cuckoldry has made neurotic.

Three remaining characters--Helen, Ulysses, and Achilles--are more complex. Banks's Helen, though a minor character, plays a crucial role at the play's political level. Though committed to Paris and Troy, she nonetheless saves Menelaus's life in Act Three, thus playing both ends

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[8]Rothstein, p. 97; also see Tupper, 1935, pp. 67-83.

against the middle. Her performance is a miniature of the intriguing of Ulysses, whom Banks treats not as the wily warrior of Homer but as an outright Machiavel, breaking allegiances, oaths, and the heroic code continually throughout the play. That Ulysses is allowed to speak the last lines of The Destruction of Troy indicates the fullness of meaning latent in Banks's title, for when the Machiavels survive in a position of power, while persons of honor--Hector, Priam, and Andromache---disappear, the destruction of civilization is indeed complete.

Achilles is noteworthy in Banks's play not so much because he is unlike his Homeric forebear--indeed, he is much like the sulking Achilles of the epic though he is also, as Rothstein notes, a bit "stupid"--as because he shows the one clear case of characterization spilling over from The Rival Kings into the new play. Much of Alexander's character is present in Banks's Myrmidon warrior. Each is likened to Hercules, particularly in the fact that each dies as Hercules did by poison; Achilles even claims lineage from Hercules in Destruction in contradiction to his real parentage through Thetis and Peleus, just as Alexander claims to be a son of Jove in The Rival Kings. Their golden armor also links the two. Other similarities include their exorbitant love of another man, Patroclus or Hephestion, and their kissing these lovers on-stage at the point of death. Each hero is also able to kill his assassin by throwing a dart just prior to his own expiration. Finally, in death each is set on a throne as an object of veneration, dominating the end of the play. These points of similarity serve to underscore the likeness to Alexander which Banks drew when he

created Achilles. Both were rash, overbearing leaders bent on self-destruction.

Beyond detailing the dissolution of one man, however, The Destruction of Troy has the larger purpose of revealing a civilization careering toward chaos. The action of the play takes place during the last two days of Troy's existence, prior to being sacked and burned by the Greeks, who have been spurred to this action by Paris's ravishment and abduction of Helen. The play opens with a debate among the Greeks about continuing the war. Following Ulysses's advice, they opt to maintain the seige. In order to whet the Greeks's appetites, Ulysses then arranges to steal the Palladium, a statue given to Troy by Athena with the stipulation that Troy shall last only so long as the Palladium remains within the city walls. Ulysses succeeds in capturing the statue, causing the Trojans to issue a challenge to the Greeks for a triple combat; the Greeks readily accept. When Patroclus is slain in this combat, Achilles, who has been sulking because of the success of Ulysses in capturing the Palladium, returns and slays Troilus and, eventually, Hector. Achilles, however, falls in love with Polyxena and insists on bringing peace between the two sides by marrying her. Ulysses and the other Greeks agree to attempt the horse strategem during the marriage ceremony, which is disrupted in any case by Paris's wounding Achilles in the heel with a poisoned dart. The Greeks then overrun Troy as the dying Achilles watches.

In a play focussing on the destruction of the first mythological city in western civilization, imagery of rape and defloration is

appropriate, since the "rape of Helena"[9] initiated the action of the play, including the seige of Troy. Banks, however, widens the association of rape in the play, making it refer clearly to the fall of Troy itself and, interestingly, also to the death of Achilles. What had been merely an exciting reason for the Greeks's conquest of Ilium becomes in Banks's play a dominant image revealing much about the playwright's concept of civilization and about heroes as well.

If "long ravish'd Helena" (p. 3) and the consequent psychological loss of manhood suffered by the Greeks (Menelaus fittingly refers to the "shame of ravish'd Greece" (p. 4) which he is attempting to "expiate") started the Trojan conflict, a similar or reciprocal ravishment of Troy, Banks suggests, is an appropriate response by the Greeks, who seek to reassert the dominance they lost when Paris abducted Helen. It is poetically just that the actual rape of Helen (and the metaphorical or psychological rape of Greece or Greek manhood), which occurred ten years before the play opens, be expiated by a metaphorical rape of Troy, specifically of its chief religious shrine, the Palladium. Acts One and Two of The Destruction of Troy contain, in fact, an extended metaphor of the rape of the city by Ulysses and Diomedes, a metaphor which is unusual for its anatomic specificity and daring.

Banks makes the ravishing of Troy somewhat more believable because he personifies the city frequently during the first two acts. Achilles,

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[9] John Banks, The Destruction of Troy (London: Printed by M. G. and J. P. . . . Sold by Charles Blount, 1679), p. 4 [from a microfilm copy]; all future citations are to this, the first, edition.

when describing the seven famous walls of the city, invests them with human attributes:

> Such walls by Mercury fram'd,
> With subtil folding Arms, its Waste embracing
> Sev'n times.
>
> (p. 3)

Hector refers to the "drooping head" (p. 14) of the city, and Priam notes it possesses "bowells" and "intrails" (p. 16). Most of the personification, however, relates to the rape metaphor and is much more specifically oriented as a result. When Ulysses informs Diomedes about his plan to bribe one of the Trojans, Anthenor, and to divest the city of its shrine, he commences a series of images which suggest that the metaphorical rape of Troy will be an anatomicaly correct one, down to the last details. Ulysses has learned from Anthenor that a tunnel runs under the walls of the city to the Palladium itself. This tunnel is called a "long and slender vault" (p. 11); vaginal overtones are thus suggested, a nuance reinforced by Diomedes, who calls the tunnel a "Private place" (p. 12), with a pun on "privates." The sexual image is completed, finally, when the soldiers sent to inspect the tunnel report that only a "weak mud wall" (p. 12) separates the end of the tunnel from the room in which the Palladium resides. The unviolated shrine, in other words, still retains proof of its virginity, which virginity, however, is soon ravished by the "engins" which Ulysses uses to "break through the wall" (p. 12) to seize the statue.

As soon as the "rape" of the Palladium is known, the Trojan heroes all lament the ravishment of Troy, "A City all distract, without a head, / Her ravish'd Temples, naked Altars, left / Without a God"

(p. 15). However, the justness of the rape is reinforced by the angry verbal outpouring visited upon Paris by the Trojan citizens, who note that the "Gods have justly punish'd us for Rape" and urge him to "give back the ravish'd Helena" (p. 15). Furthermore, the rape of the Palladium in the beginning of the play is merely a precursor of the larger destruction which is to befall Troy at the end, when another metaphorical rape occurs. The entrance of the giant horse into Troy in Act Five nicely balances the rape of the Palladium in Acts One and Two, though this later ravishment is a more catastrophic one for the Trojans, as ravished virgins and matrons (pp. 66-67) stream through the city streets before the Grecian conquerors.

Since Destruction deals with the death of Achilles as well as with the razing of Troy, it is fitting that imagery of defloration is also associted with him, perhaps as a means of preparing for the death he meets as the Greeks overwhelm the city. Achilles likens himself, when he is under the spell of love for Polyxena, to a "ravish'd Globe" (p. 68) beneath the influence of the spring sun; only a few minutes later he is struck by Paris's poisoned dart and dies during the sack of the city. This image is also present when Achilles complains earlier in the play about Ulysses having stolen his glory by stealing the Palaldium. He asserts that Ulysses "spoiled the promis'd Flower that deck'd my Garland" (p. 26). Since Ulysses planned the stratagem of the wooden horse which led to Troy's downfall and Achilles's death, the earlier defloration image is a probable premonition of the later fate of the city and of Achilles.

The imagery of rape and defloration is completely suited to the theme of The Destruction of Troy, and Banks makes the imagery all the more effective by relating it not only to the doomed city but also to the doomed warrior who in large measure is responsible for the city's destruction. Troy and Achilles are destroyed because each violated some part of the code of honor which Banks undoubtedly viewed as holding civilization together. When the bonds of that code are violated, then the civilization which adhered to the code is also violated, sometimes utterly destroyed.[10]

Banks's concern with the violation of the code of honor is at least in part a reflection of his own interest in Restoration England, which at the time of the first staging of The Destruction of Troy was experiencing the first wave of turmoil associated with the Popish Plot. We know that Banks deliberately paralleled England and Troy, since he speaks directly about this connection in his "Prologue" and "Epilogue." In the former he reminds the audience that Troy was the seed from which the English nation grew:

> Yet we're in hopes you will be kind to hear
> The Lives of those whose Successors you are:
> For when Troy fell, its Remnant here did plant,
> And built this Place, and call'd it Troy-novant.

And in the "Epilogue" Banks draws a series of parallels between characters in the play and their Restoration counterparts, many of whom were even less endowed with honor and a sense of the chivalric code than the characters in Banks's play. As a result, we may read The

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[10]See below, p. 64.

Destruction of Troy as a warning play in which Banks lays bare the social ills which led to the destruction of Troy and which could well have the same effect on Troy's English descendants. After developing several image patterns which are thematically associated with rape, we will return to the social and political ramifications of the play.

Related to the images of ravishment and defloration which occur throughout The Destruction of Troy and especially permeate its opening and closing acts are many images referring to stains, infections, and plagues. These are surely appropriate to the dominating theme of the play--the dissolution of a civilization--particularly since these images are frequently related to dishonorable actions or to characters who act dishonorably. In fact, these images often occur together, as when Menelaus speaks of the long seige to win back his wife:

> If you repent it [the seige] now, I wish the Gods,
> To expiate the Shame of ravish'd Greece,
> And wash the Stain away, had done it only
> With Menelaus Blood.
>
> (p. 4)

Bloody stains reappear (perhaps as a way of recalling indirectly the rape of Helen?) several times in the play. When Ulysses and Diomedes abduct the Palladium, they attack the priests protecting the statue and leave them all in bloody shambles:

> The Priests came forth with their white holy Linnen
> All stain'd with ruful spots of deepest red,
> As if't had rain'd a mighty shower of Blood.
>
> (p. 16)

Cassandra, the prophetess, is called a "stain to Priam's blood" (p. 33), and, when Achilles seeks to avenge Patroclus' death against orders from

Agamemnon to maintain peace, Ulysses urges him to "stain not the Blood" of his parents (p. 40).

Mention of infection also occurs frequently, again underscoring the concern that Banks has for the reasons for Troy's downfall; at its base, the rape of Helen must be expiated in the play and Troy must suffer the unavoidable consequence of that act, which destroyed the social bonds of two peoples. Thus, Achilles feels that Ulysses does "infect a Camp" (p. 16) with his constant emphasis on words, not action; Cassandra is said to "infect" all of the Trojans with her words (pp. 33, 35, and 64--plagues are also often associated with this unfortunate seer).

Also underscoring the theme of dissolution in the play are images of storms and tempests, which abound in the latter half of Destruction; these are perhaps the only significant images in the play which are important in the imagistic structure of The Rival Kings, and fittingly many are associated with Achilles, who is in part modeled on the Alexander of the earlier play. Most of the storm images (pp. 42, 43, 48, 49, 50, and 72) relate to Achilles's wrath (or less frequently to his love for Polyxena). However, when Cassandra utters her prophecy of the apocalyptic ending of Troy, the storm image is certainly an effective one:

> Heark, heark--The Noise begins--Tempest rolls,
> That swallows up your misbelieving Souls--
> Pale fac'd Revenge with tall red Murther meets,
> With noise of Blood, and Horrour in the Streets--
> The Horse has litter'd, see, and from it breaks
> A thousand untam'd, mad, and furious Greeks.
> (p. 67)

A storm indeed inundates Troy immediately after her words are issued. Of related interest is the monstrous birthing of the Trojan horse mentioned in this passage; monsters, like storms, are pertinent to the social discord loosed by the rape of Helen. Mention of monsters is also common in the play (pp. 7, 33, 41, 61, 64, and 66). Along with other images already discussed, monster images underscore the coming destruction of Troy, which is due to infections within its own ranks.

A motif in Destruction which reveals Banks's preoccupation with the dissolution of Trojan culture (and by extension which could cause the destruction of Restoration culture) is that concerned with vows, oaths, bonds, and the swearing of them. J. Douglas Canfield has shown how most heroic dramas of the Restoration deal with the bonds which unite society and with the words which give those bonds voice.[11] Canfield suggests that the heroic plays are intended to reinvigorate the "chivalric code which had underwritten aristocratic society for centuries," by stressing the words which men use to articulate the chivalric code.[12] Vows, oaths, and bonds spoken between members of society are pledges of "trust, constancy, loyalty, fidelity"--all part of the "reaffirmation of the binding force of words."[13]

Banks certainly shares this concern with reinvigorating the old values (or perhaps it is fairer to say that he is concerned with how

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[11] J. Douglas Canfield, "The Significance of the Restoration Rhymed Heroic Play," ECS, 13 (1979), 49-62.

[12] Canfield, p. 50.

[13] Ibid.

much of a failure this attempt has become), and The Destruction of Troy is much taken up with the swearing of vows and with discussions of the fates of those who have chosen to transgress against the potency of the social bond. Ultimately, in fact, the destruction of the city of Troy stems from the initial trespass of Paris in abducting another man's wife. The first important oath sworn during the play is uttered at the end of Act One after the Greeks have debated about continuing the war; after convincing the other leaders to continue the seige, Ulysses urges them to

> . . . take an Oath, by all the Gods, our Lives,
> Our Faith, Religion, and our Honors,
> Ne're to forsake these cursed Walls of Troy,
> Till we have bury'd them deep in the Earth.
> (p. 9)

The Greek captains then all swear an oath in turn:

> Aga. By all the Gods I swear.
> Ach. By Thetis I.
> Ulyss. By Jupiter I vow, and by my Honour.
> Patr. I by Achilles.
> Men. I vow by Juno, and by sweet Revenge.
> Ajax. By all th'Immortal Souls of Hero's I.
> Dio. By Mars I swear, or in the Act to die.
> (p. 10)

Such an orchestrated, almost incantatory, "swearing" implies that the issue of pledging one's word had great importance for the Restoration playwright and for the audience before whom the play was acted. Banks's audience almost certainly would have seen in this performance a reiteration of the very bonds which still presumably held their own society together. However, they also would have been somewhat skeptical about the results, especially since the entire scene is managed by the consummate vow-breaker of the play, Ulysses, who has as much compunction

about keeping his word as did Machiavelli's Prince. When this vow-swearing scene is immediately followed by Ulysses's revealing to Diomedes (and significantly not to the entire Greek contingent, which has just exited) the plan to ransack the Palladium, the real potency of the vows themselves is diminished. Ulysses usually works by underhanded means and does not scruple to discard a vow if doing so means gaining victory. He will do the same in Act Five (in another of the parallels that unite Acts One and Five).

If we needed any further proof that Ulysses's plan is considered a dishonorable one, beneath the dignity of a truly honorable man, the comments of the Trojans in the next act are sufficient evidence. Priam (about whom there is little in the play to suggest intrigue or dishonor) calls the stealing of the Palladium a "cowardly act" (p. 19), and when Troilus offers the challenge of triple combat to the Greeks at the end of Act Two, he calls the perpetrators of the theft cowards and villains (p. 28). Achilles in Act Three makes the same argument.

When the two sides meet for the trial by combat in Act Three, the action is momentarily halted while Menelaus speaks with Helen, his wife and the root cause of the entire war. After reminiscing about their first walk together and then recalling Helen's "perjur'd Soul" (p. 36), Menelaus proceeds to assert that his wife is the "walking Image" of "Falsehood" (p. 36):

> Then [in Greece], with a longing Sigh, you'd
> cry, my Dear,
> And on my Trembling hand, let fall a Tear,
> Will you be Mine, and be for ever True?
> May I be Curst when I am false to you.

> Cou'dst thou more Vows repeat, and Oaths recal,
> Thou then hadst said, and then hadst broak 'em all.
> (p. 37)

In this scene, which presents the root of all the Trojan problems--the rape, abduction, and subsequent willing falsehood of Helen--Banks emphasizes vows and vow-breaking as one of the central issues of the play, though the swearing scene in Act One is sufficient testimony to their importance. Exhaustive citation of the evidence of Banks's concentration on this issue would be tedious, but several of the more important occurrences should be discussed. Upon finding Patroclus slain by Hector, Achilles demands that his Myrmidons swear revenge "Eternal, and implacable" (p. 40) against the Trojan warrior. This oath, however, clashes with Agamemnon's command for a truce between the warring sides, and Achilles violates that truce by cutting down Troilus. That act--and his violation of Troilus's body as well as Hector's--provides the rationale for Achilles's death during his marriage. Interestingly, here Paris once again destroys a social bond and finalizes the destruction of Troy which his abduction of Helen had initiated.

The motif of vows and vow-breaking is present in The Destruction of Troy as a reminder of the playwright's concern (and his society's) with the bonds which unite communities, including Restoration society. This motif is underscored by appropriate imagery, particularly that referring to the mouth and tongue. These images pervade the play, which is much concerned with words that men use to precede or cloak action: from the reference to the "cunning tongue" (p. 21) of Paris, to Achilles's demeaning of men like Ulysses by calling them "wide gaping mouths"

(p. 25), to Achilles's reference to Ulysses's "lew'd tongue" (p. 25) and his calling Ulysses a "tongue-man" (p. 26), to later mention of lips (pp. 35, 40, and 43), tongues (pp. 56 and 72), and mouths (pp. 43, 64, and 65). Nor can this stress be accidental. Banks clearly highlights his concern with vows, oaths, and swearing with pertinent imagery.

Banks often prepares for vow-breaking by linking vow-breakers with the infernal. Thus, Destruction is full of references to Hell and devils.[14] That vow-breaker extraordinary, Ulysses, is by his own words almost immediately linked with the underworld. As he prepares to steal the Palladium, he urges Diomedes to join with him in supper "and be merry, / Er'e we approach the Regions of the Dead" (p. 12). Upon discovering what Ulysses has done, Achilles upbraids him with similar allusions:

> A Thief, a Conjuror wou'd have done as much,
> To rise, as if from Hell, in Devils shapes,
> And scare a Crew of heartless, naked Preists.
> (p. 25)

By associating Ulysses early in the play with Hell, Banks clearly slants the attitude of the audience against the wily Ithacan. Paris is similarly treated, perhaps since this character is the instigator of the Trojan woe. By calling her brother "Cerberus" (p. 33) and claiming that he has a "burning Hell about his heart" (p. 34), Cassandra prepares us for the vow-breaking which Paris so often enacts. However, the character most often associated with Hell is Achilles, whose having been

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[14] Naturally, Banks's underworld is pagan, given the subject matter of the play; however, the "preists" of the play have decidedly Catholic overtones on occasion.

dipped in Acheron by his mother, Thetis, is turned to good account by Banks, for the playwright uses this myth as part of his Hellish imagery, in this case mainly to prepare for Achilles's eventual downfall. Achilles's actions towards dead Troilus and Hector are far from honorable, as Diomedes and even Ulysses point out.

Destruction is a play much concerned with the social bonds which hold a civilization together. Banks seems to suggest that part of the reason for Troy's downfall was one important character's decisions to break social bonds. Paris seems to be the Achilles heel, as it were, of Troy. However, the Greeks present no better alternative, since their ranks are full of vow-breakers as well, Ulysses and Achilles being only the most prominent. The former is portrayed in such a negative light, in fact, that we must conclude that a society of such men had scant chance of survival. Perhaps Banks asks his audience to view the wrangling of the Greeks and Trojans as an analogue of the internecine rivalries of the late 1670s in England.

The imagery of The Destruction of Troy thus far discussed amplifies the theme of destruction crucial to the play. The imagery of ravishment, stains, and storms is pertinent to a play which is pointed toward an ultimate scene of chaos, while the motif of vows and the imagery of mouths and tongues underscores the reasons for that very chaos: the inability of men to maintain the social bonds required by any civilization. Other images operate in the play simply as a means of unifying the action. In fact, much of Banks's artistic effort is expended to show how one event in the past is reciprocally matched by another during

the play. Thus, the rape of Helen is balanced by the rape of Troy. Banks also injects minor images which suggest the coming action. Act Two, for instance, begins with Hector's admonition to Andromache to

> Go to thy rest, . . . Thy Eyes are heavy,
> Like Tapers, that in Urns, do burn neglected,
> and give a Melancholy light.
> (p. 13)

Much of the succeeding action of the play is suggested by these lines. The burning of the tapers foreshadows the burning of the city, the "urns" remind us of the one in which Hector will be deposited in Act Five (p. 60), and the melancholy light is apposite to the plight of Troy throughout the play.

Similarly, Banks prepares for Achilles' death not only by linking him with the infernal regions and by mentioning the oracle which stated that he would die if Troy were to fall, but also in subtle ways through the use of imagery. For example, when Paris likens Achilles to Phaethon who rode the "Chariot of the sun" (p. 70), we are reminded of a previous passage in the play, where, while describing his armor, Achilles asserts that it was made of the "same impenetrable stuff, / that the bright Chariot of the Sun is made of" (p. 3). Banks balances one such image at the beginning of the play with another at its ending.

Finally, we must note at least one image in the play which strikes an aesthetic note, not just a functional one. When Polyxena is described by Diomedes while she is in her mourning for Troilus, Banks uses an image which is simply beautiful:

> The Virgin-Daughter of Queen Hecuba,
> Follow'd the mangl'd Course with lamentable Cries,

> In a distracted Meen--
> Her golden Hair dishevel'd round her wast,
> As bright, as if the Sun had her embrac'd.
> (pp. 53-54)

Not only is the image of Polyxena a poignant one, but the latent suggestion is that her hair becomes something like her armor in this scene, for she immediately meets Achilles, who falls in love with her. His own armor, which was made also of the bright stuff of the sun, is unable to protect him from a woman wearing "armor" of a different sort but remarkably similar in description to his own. Finally, however, armor linked to the sun is unable to protect either the Gredian warrior or the Troman maiden, since the bonds of society have been rent asunder by others.

The Destruction of Troy uses imagery and thematic motifs in a more sophisticated manner than was the case in The Rival Kings. Particularly, Banks's daring use of the rape image stands out. Also important is the use he makes of vows and vow-breaking, since these link him with many other Restoration playwrights.[15] After one more attempt in the heroic mode Banks would be ready to write the plays for which he is most remembered. But even in the heroic drama a residue of artistic merit is present, as his imagery reveals.

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[15] See Canfield, pp. 50-57, especially for the material on Dryden's The Conquest of Granada.

CHAPTER IV

MOTIFS OF VIRTUE IN CYRUS THE GREAT

Having portrayed the dissolution of a civilization and the great men associated with it in his last play, Banks turned in Cyrus the Great to an opposite concern--the delineation of the qualities in men which foster greatness in their civilization. He dramatizes the triumph of almost Christian virtue over the lesser passions and the resultant military triumph this conquest insures for the hero, Cyrus the Great (died c. 529 B.C.). Images that Banks employs to assist the development of these themes include those relating to banquets, to innocence (and its maintenance or desecration), to sleep, and, harkening back to The Rival Kings and The Destruction of Troy, to flame and water.[1] Important motifs which relate to Cyrus's eventual attainment of virtue embrace references to patience, pity, and forgiveness. Each of these images and motifs is supported by allusions to Genesis and the Book of Daniel.

Though Cyrus the Great was first played in late 1695 and initially published in the following year, most commentators accept Banks's claims, made in the "Epistle Dedicatory" to Princess Anne, that he had, in fact, written the play before The Unhappy Favourite, which was first performed in the late spring of 1681. Since those who doubt this

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[1] In The Frontiers of Drama (London: Methuen and Company, 1964), pp. 77-95, Una Ellis-Fermor argues that imagery in drama can serve to reveal spiritual experiences of the characters; certainly that is the chief purpose for which much of the imagery in Cyrus the Great is marshalled.

theory, such as Hume, have found no hard evidence to negate Banks's claim, it seems best for the present to believe that the play was "Writ and design'd" before Banks's "then happier Favourite took place,"[2] in other words probably during 1680. Indeed, the two and one-half year hiatus between the playing of The Destruction of Troy in late 1678 and that of The Unhappy Favourite in 1681 is most perplexing unless we postulate that Banks was engaged on Cyrus during this time.[3] There is not, at any rate, another period between The Rival Kings and The Island Queens for which such a gap in Banks's productivity is discernible. The reasons for the long hibernation of the play--over fifteen years--are unclear. Banks merely notes that Cyrus was but one of three plays with which the authorities were dissatisfied:

> Two Labours of her [Banks's Muse] Brain, this
> Play the third,
> Through Spite and Envy were the Stage debarr'd,
> Cast and ne'er Try'd, Condemn'd and never Heard.
> (Epistle Dedicatory)

Though no political overtones which might have aroused the antipathy of the Master of the Revels (or anyone else for that matter) have yet been detected in the play, several nearly contemporaneous accounts suggest

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[2]John Banks, "Epistle Dedicatory," Cyrus the Great (London: for Richard Bentley, 1696) [a microfilm copy was used]; all future citations refer to this edition by page number or by reference to appended material.

[3]Further evidence that Cyrus dates from before the time of The Unhappy Favourite resides in the Essex Play, which contains allusions to the Cyrus story; see The Unhappy Favourite, ed. James Sutherland (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 236, note. Since Banks was familiar with this material when he wrote The Unhappy Favourite, presumably during late 1680 and early 1681, it is plausible to presume the Cyrus could have been written earlier.

that the play was "cast" but that the actors found enough fault with it to prevent its taking the stage in 1680.[4] The "horror" scenes are usually pointed to when attempts are made to explain reservations the actors might have had. Indeed, those scenes provide the most objectionable elements of the play to modern critics, thereby causing them to gloss over or ignore Banks's major thematic concern. No conclusive evidence has been offered which would prevent dating the play from the period after Destruction and before The Unhappy Favourite, and since Cyrus is the last of Banks's efforts in the formally heroic vein, studying it now instead of after his four English historical tragedies seems to be the most effective course of action.

Probably the least appreciated of all Banks's underappreciated plays, Cyrus the Great has received a remarkably bad press during the last three centuries. Indeed, since Gildon claimed that the play "held up its head about Six Days together, and has been since Acted several Times," very little positive commentary has been offered.[5] Nicoll dismisses Cyrus quickly, noting it to be "of no interest as a play" and "full of horrors," which latter quality Knight reiterates, as does Hume, who claims it is "the worst of the late heroic love-and-drivel mode."[6] The longest commentary, containing the most scathing criticism, is, however, that of Tupper who cites the horror element of the play and notes that Banks's intentions were to "provide a maximum amount of furor

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[4]Gildon, p. 16; Genest, p. 84-86.

[5]Gildon, p. 16.

[6]Hume, p. 422.

within the compass of five acts," and ends by contending that "Cyrus the Great is simply a very bad specimen of the heroic drama."[7] Beyond noting the sources of Banks's drama, Tupper offers little that assists in getting at Banks's thematic concerns. Most of this adverse commentary no doubt stems from these critics' having been more affected by the attitudes of previous commentators than by the play, for Cyrus is not inept, nor is it even about the subject which most critics claim it to deal with. Far from being, in fact, as Tupper claims, "the story of Cyrus's love for Panthea,"[8] the play chronicles Cyrus's conquest over his enemies in Asia Minor and over his passions, including foremostly his adulterous love for Panthea. Indeed, the two triumphs are intertwined, for it is only after he has conquered his passion for Panthea and asserted his virtue that Cyrus is able to conquer his military foes and become "assertor of the Hebrew God."

Since the most damning criticism of Cyrus the Great concerns its "horror" element, a review of this aspect of the play is in order. What Banks presents hardly qualifies the play as one "filled" with horror. We view a battlefield covered with the dead of conflict, three Shakespearean witches (who did not make MacBeth "horrible" in any inartistic sense), a mad princess, and a hand which is no longer connected to its owner (whose mangled remains have been assembled offstage and are presented onstage in a more or less intact manner). This relatively modest collection of "horrors" hardly matches the

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[7]Tupper, 1935, p. 83.

[8]Tupper, 1935, p. 67.

atrocities in the late Jacobean tragedies, just to name one group of plays which bear comparison to Cyrus on this score. Indeed, more than one play by Shakespeare contains as much or more horror.[9] Opposed to the delineation of horror that we do see onstage are elements of the play in which horror is deliberately reduced. Thus, Croesus is not burned to ashes but is saved by Cyrus from death, while 200,000 dead from the battle scene in Act Five are all left offstage for some unlucky stage hand to store away.

The characterization in Cyrus the Great reveals no particularly notable developments over those in Banks's other two heroic dramas. The female personages are relatively standard characters of this genre: Panthea is the faithful and virtuous wife; Lausaria a lovelorn suicide, having much resemblance to Shakespeare's Ophelia; and Thomyris a somewhat lascivious and dominant Amazon. The male characters are about equally standard: Cyaxares, Cyrus's uncle, is prone to rashness (i.e., his suspecting Cyrus of plotting a coup d'état and his fighting, with fatal results, against Abradatus); Hystaspes is a typically faithful general who is unjustly cashiered and who has his own sense of self-worth; Croesus is a type of the king in whom calamity has bred virtue; Abradatus is a rash and headstrong prince, barely worth Panthea's love; and Artabasus is the faithful servant to Cyaxares. Cyrus himself, the only other major character, is a fairly typical hero except that his inner battle is not between love and honor, but between

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[9] King Lear, for instance, with its on-stage blinding of Gloucester, is at least as horror-filled as Cyrus.

virtue and his baser passions. He is not complex in the manner of Alexander, for he rises to greatness by conquering the inner uncertainties which Alexander (and Achilles) perhaps never understood, and which are at least in part responsible for the downfall of those other heroes.

The action of Cyrus the Great is as complex as the characters are fairly simple. The play opens by concentrating on Cyaxares and his jealous response to Cyrus's many military victories. First Cyaxares laments the excess of power which he has given to his nephew; then he hears an ominous prophecy which predicts his own death when next he fights; and finally he rejects gifts of conquest, including Panthea, from Cyrus. The stage is set for a confrontation between the uncle and his prosperous nephew. When Cyrus first appears, we see him reversing a previously made decision to execute Croesus when that recently conquered king reveals his adherence to the philosophy of Solon, an Athenian monarch and philosopher. Croesus then vows allegiance to Cyrus, whereupon Lausaria, Croesus's daughter, falls in love with Cyrus, partly because of his kingly bearing and partly due to the clemency which he has shown her father. Hystaspes, one of Cyrus's generals, then enters with Panthea and explains Cyaxares's rejection of her, which turns out to be just as well for the young conqueror because he is immediately smitted with love for his captive, though she is the wife of his enemy, Abradatus. Hystaspes then reveals his own love for Panthea and suffers banishment for this admission. Cyaxares and Cyrus meet in council, with the former accusing his nephew of attempting to usurp authority;

however, Cyrus convinces his uncle that his battles have been fought only in Cyaxares's name, whereupon Cyaxares reaffirms that Cyrus is his heir and requests that Hystaspes be forgiven, which Cyrus grants. But Cyrus proceeds to offer Lausaria to Hystaspes in marriage, which causes Hystaspes's refusal and subsequent second banishment as well as Lausaria's admission of her love for Cyrus and subsequent lapse into madness. Abradatus then enters to claim his wife but is rejected by the lovelorn Cyrus. After Abradatus fights with and fatally wounds Cyaxares, fulfilling the prophecy made in Act One, he is captured. However, with his dying breath Cyaxares pleads for Cyrus to forgive his enemy. Cyrus does so though he is badly shaken by the death of his uncle, as well as that of Lausaria. Panthea is subsequently reunited with her husband, only to see him killed in battle by Cyrus's forces; she then commits suicide, while Cyrus is saved from Thomyrus by the ghost of Lausaria. He remains triumphantly in control of his land at play's end.

Many of the historical accounts about Cyrus the Great indicate that he was responsible for reestablishing the power of the Jews in Palestine.[10] Thus, Banks's emphasis on Cyrus's virtuous exploits has a solid basis in his sources, and his portrayal of Cyrus as a man of virtue rather than as a man of honor is a logical controlling theme of the play. Cyrus, in fact, begins the play having remained virtuous in the face of all temptations except that of love; his encounter with

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[10]Herodotus mentions this idea.

Panthea is the severest test of his virtue, since she is not only the archetypal beautiful woman but a married one at that. On the symbolic level of the play she is also "panthea," i.e., all gods, and it is these other gods besides the one great god of the Hebrews that Cyrus must resist on his way to becoming the champion of the Hebrew god. Banks carefully works in Biblical echoes dating from the time before the action of the play, especially references to Eden, Adam and Eve, the Flood, the Egyptian captivity, and the life of Daniel, with whom Cyrus is specifically mentioned. All these references underscore Banks's attempt to reveal Cyrus as the support for a religion which was eventually to control western Europe. In fact, due to this support Cyrus rises from obscurity to become the most powerful monarch of his day. Much of the imagery and many of the motifs in the play buttress the theme of Cyrus's attainment of virtue.

The banqueting motif operates as such an indicator. Those characters who engage in sybaritic banqueting doom themselves by their action, while Cyrus, who actively dislikes the dissolution and softness associated with this activity, rises to sole power of the Middle East by play's end. Certainly the most dominant of the banqueting references is that associated with Balthazar, Abradatus's confederate who never appears onstage. We are told in Act Four that Balthazar has put his trust in Thomyris's "Scythian Bowmen" and that

> . . . fed with lyes of Soothsayers, he remains
> Close in his Tent, Carrouses, Feasts, and Revels,
> Scorning the Gods, the Fates, and thinks them poor,
> And all besides his boasted Power but mean.
> (p. 36)

Balthazar's feasting is here closely connected with dissolution and sacrilege, themes which recur when Act Five opens. Immediately preceding her entry into battle Thomyris alludes to her erstwhile confederate in scornful terms:

> Let Balthazar still drown in Luxury,
> Devour'd by Cycophants, undone by Harlots.
> (p. 45)

Later in the same act Croesus describes Balthazar's last night of dissipation, in which once again sacrilege plays an important role:

> Last Night the Drunken Balthazar Carous'd
> With all his vicious Concubines about him,
> And Beardless Minions, far more lewd than Women;
> Then in a Pride he took the Holy Treasure
> Brought from the wondrous Fane of Solomon,
> And in the Sacred Cups made impure Healths
> Go round, and drank to th'Immortality
> of their proud King, who had in spight of Heav'n,
> And its scorn'd Power committed such a Rape
> Upon the Richest Shrine of all the World.
> (p. 47-48)

Cyrus then asks how such "Sacriledge" (p. 48) could occur without retribution from heaven; thereupon ensues the passage in the play most clearly indebted to the Book of Daniel, where Balthazar's blasphemy results in the famous handwriting on the wall.[11] It is without much wonder then that we learn of Balthazar's defeat in the final battle scene which results in Cyrus's victory. The dissolute banqueting, coupled with repeated acts of sacrilege, assuredly prepares us for Balthazar's downfall.

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[11] See Book of Daniel, chap. 5.

It is with this symbolic linkage of banqueting and defeat in mind that we must view an earlier scene in the play. At the end of Act Two, when Cyrus argues about his faithfulness to his uncle, the young hero relates how he "denied" himself

> The soft Retirement of the Court, in which
> Your [Cyaxares's] meanest Parasite enjoys more
> Pleasure--
> Have not my Courriers found you in the Height
> Of Banqueting, inform'd you of the Dangers
> That I had pass'd in ev'ry dreadful Fight,
> Which only the Relation of 'em made
> Your trembling Courtiers spill their brimming Bowls,
> And with the Palsie lift 'em to their Mouths.
> (p. 21)

This scene of luxurious court banqueting is associated deliberately with Cyaxares to suggest that his rule is not that which the God of the Hebrews wishes to dominate the chosen people. Cyaxares's death is thus prepared for as a result of this seemingly minor incident, which takes on symbolic value only when it is placed in the context of Balthazar's similar fate. Importantly, Cyrus has chosen deliberately to avoid the "soft Retirement of the Court" (p. 21), and his rise to power is the result. Indeed, the very first words which Cyrus utters in the play, at the beginning of the second act, disclose his distaste for luxurious living of the sort engaged in by his uncle and by Balthazar:

> Enough--These splendid Vanities I loath,
> The boast of Fools, and Pageantry of Cowards;
> It sits too heavy on your Cyrus Arms--
> O let me rise, and let 'em loose, my Soldiers,
> To throw about your Necks, and thus embrace
> My Valiant Friends, and all my brave Confederates,
> By whose sole Aid (Gods by my Witnesses)
> I own it with a Pride, I have restor'd
> The World to its dear antient Liberty.
> (p. 11)

Cyrus then commands his retainers to escort Croesus off to execution but prevents them from fulfilling his command when Croesus reveals his adherence to the creed of Solon, a virtuous Athenian philosopher. The renunciation of worldly luxuriousness by Croesus, then, bolsters Cyrus's own inclination away from that vice; thus, Croesus makes an ideal confidante to Cyrus as the latter is about to confront the last real challenge to the virtue destined for him, Panthea. The motif of banqueting and sybaritic revelry is employed by Banks as an indicator of men's souls in Cyrus the Great. Fittingly, only the play's title character and his mentor manage to avoid the virtue-sapping entanglements of hedonistic banqueting. It is worth noting that when Cyrus prepares to mourn for Lausaria's death he does so in terms of sack cloth and ashes, not golden coffins and magnificent mourning attire. His denial of the pleasures of the court prepares for his success as "assertor" of the Hebrew God (pp. 48 and 57).

We have seen how Balthazar's sacrilegious treatment of holy Hebrew vessels was associated with his banqueting and how both these activities participated in his demise. Cyrus the Great contains a number of similar episodes. In fact, the desecration of temples and of the human body is an important motif in the play, with Balthazar's despoiling of the "wondrous Fane of Solomon" (p. 48) being merely the most famous example. Cyaxares, too, has engaged in such activity and, like his participation in banqueting, it is an ominous portent. Early in Act One Cyaxares recounts for his friend Artabasus (whose name is curiously indicative of his master's story, which is about the debasement of

religious art) a richly symbolic tale about the destruction of a nation clearly associated with the Edenic and virtuous:

> When Young, and scarcely risen from my Cradle,
> Thou [his father] leadst me round the Frontiers of
> the Globe,
> And brought me to a Nation blest by Heav'n,
> Elysium sure it was, a Land of Wonders,
> Whose Leaves and Trees still blossom'd like the Spring,
> And Fields were clad with everlasting Green;
> Its Streams ran Chrystal, and its Sands were Gold.
> This Orient Miracle shone like a Gemm
> Sate in the golden Circle of the World,
> So swarm'd on by the fairest of the Living;
> As if't had been indeed that happy Place
> Where Souls are blest with an Eternal Being:
> For there no Want was found, but all Increase
> Sprung from the great and unknown Deity.
> Through this Immortal Land we pierc'd our Arms,
> Climbing the lofty Hills that rear'd the City,
> And from their Temple of shining Gold,
> Bore all the holy Vessels of their God,
> And took Five hundred thousand Slaves away.
> (pp. 3-4)

Like Balthazar, Cyaxares has participated in the desecration of a holy shrine dedicated to a single "great and unknown Deity," including carrying off "holy Vessels" (p. 4). Such activity clearly prepares us for Cyaxares' death, as had his banqueting. That Banks intended to parallel the sacriligious actions of Cyaxares and Balthazar is made clear by a similar falling of darkness over the stage when each of these stories is told. In Act One just as Cyaxares finishes his account of the despoiling of the holy city, "Darkness seems to cover the Field" (p. 4) in which he is standing; similarly, just after Balthazar's blasphemous toasts with vessels taken from the fane of Solomon have been made, a "thick Darkness" (p. 48) enshrouds his banquet. Each has angered the "great and unknown Diety" and each suffers the same punishment for such sacrilege: death.

Underscoring the desecration of holy temples which occurs in Cyrus the Great is the related motif having to do with the mangling of the human body. Those characters who lack the proper respect for the temple of the soul usually do not live long. For example, when a "dead Carkass" (p. 5) rises to predict Cyaxares' death, the latter is so incensed that he orders his men to "throw it to wild Beasts to be devour'd" (p. 6). Appropriately, when Cyaxares dies, he suffers a minor mutilation of his own body at the hands of Abradatus. As we might expect, Abradatus's clearcut disregard for the sanctity of the body, which is apparent from his stabbing of Cyaxares and his driving of hook-wheeled chariots designed to cut his enemies literally to shreds, leads in turn to his own death, fittingly, also a dismemberment. Indeed, the careful piecing together of the body of Abradatus by Panthea and the famous episode where Cyrus lifts Abradatus' hand only to have it come away from the body are symbolic episodes which reveal the punishment in store for those who do not have reverence for the human body. Thus, the "horror" element of the play possesses a symbolic importance which has not heretofore been recognized. Panthea's suicide, in which she violates her own body, can be interpreted on the play's religious level as an indication that "all gods" do not have efficacy in the play, only the great and unknown deity of the Hebrews. Certainly Cyrus's saving Croesus from execution may be interpreted as an indication of the hero's reverence for the virtuous man whose body should not be violated. At any rate, the mangled body is an image which appears often enough in the play for us to suppose that it has more

significance than merely to reflect Banks's predilection for "horror"; those critics who read the play as primarily an unabashed attempt to feed the sadistic cravings of the Restoration audience do it a disservice.

A further motif which Banks uses to underpin his concern with Cyrus's development of virtue involves sleep, which Banks uses emblematically to indicate the presence or absence of virtuous behavior in his characters. Like those who engage in hedonistic banqueting, those who slumber at ease, who do not rouse themselves from sloth, are doomed to defeat. Early in the play Cyaxares, for example, wishes that his martial father, Astyages, had waked him from the slumber in which he remained while Cyrus gained victory in battle:

> Why Father, great Astyages, did not
> Thy Martial Ghost affright me in this Slumber?
> (p. 3)

At the end of Act One Panthea explains that she was captured by Cyrus's men because she had fallen into a "slumber" (p. 10). Sleep is narcotic in the world of Cyrus the Great, making one lose sight of one's objectives. In Cyrus's case that objective is virtue, but his passion for Panthea is nearly his undoing, as Thomyris notes, using appropriate terminology, in Act Three:

> Cyrus has reach'd the utmost brink of Greatness--
> The Gods no longer will dispute thy Fate,
> Since they have punish'd thee with lawless Love;
> A cursed Charm that slumbers all thy Virtues,
> That thou shalt never more awake to Glory.
> (p. 29)

Thomyris believes that her son Abradatus will gain the glory that Cyrus loses because of his slumbering; however, Lausaria manages to arouse

Cyrus from his slumber during her famous mad scene, when she plays Cupid and hits Cyrus with a harmless dart. He responds in appropriate language:

> Thou hast indeed [hit him], and touch'd me to the quick;
> I thank the Gods there wanted but this sight
> To rouze my slumbering Vertue.
> (p. 42)

Interestingly, Abradatus is now the one "soft slumbering in Panthea's Arms" (p. 43); he will meet the Fate that Thomyris predicted for Cyrus and for the same reason, embracement of Panthea instead of the Hebrew God.

A minor set of paired images important to Cyrus the Great is borrowed from The Rival Kings in order to reveal Cyrus's progress toward virtue. The opposed images of flame and water are used to characterize Cyrus's illicit love for Panthea and to indicate his conquering that passion, which causes his Virtue to "tire" (p. 33) and almost succumb. Indeed, it is in terms of these two images that Cyrus characterizes his love for Panthea when he and Hystaspes are reconciled to one another by Cyaxares after the former two quarreled about Panthea. Cyrus is apologetic and believes that he can conquer his passion:

> Thou art good Hystaspes;
> 'Tis thou hast cause to blame thy Cyrus's Temper,
> When like a Man infected, made in Love,
> I threw at random; hurt my dearest Friends;
> So rag'd I with wild Promethean Fire;
> But I will quench it, quench it ev'ry Spark,
> And the bright Venus then, that glitter'd in
> My Eyes, I will behold hurtless as shadows,
> Or as Jove's Bird the Eagle does the Sun.
> (p. 34)

However, when Abradatus kills Cyaxares in an attempt to recover Panthea, Cyrus responds by falling even deeper in love with Panthea, and again the imagery is pertinent:

> Away Panthea, hence, thou plead'st against
> Thy self, and hast recall'd each wandering Spark
> That stray'd without my Breast, and fann'd 'em to
> A Flame, that if thou talk'st, will ne're be quench'd.
> (p. 40)

Cyrus's adulterous love for Panthea is usually characterized in terms of flame; his ability to conquer that passion and assert his virtue is symbolized by water. Only after the death of Cyaxares and Lausaria's madness, particularly the latter, is Cyrus able to "quench" this passion. The sign of his mastering the passion of love might very well be the tears which he weeps at seeing Lausaria mad as a result of her unconquerable love for himself; that it, Cyrus is able to do what she could not--conquer his baser passions:

> Sweet Lausaria,
> Thou 'ast pierc'd my rocky Heart, and see it melts.
> [Cyrus weeps]
> (p. 42)

He thereupon returns Panthea to Abradatus, symbolically conquering the last of the baser passions which prevented him from being the virtuous prince who would become the "assertor" of the Hebrew God.

Besides the motifs of banqueting, shrine desecration, sleep, and flame used to delineate Cyrus's successful conquering of his baser passions, other motifs relating to his achievement of virtue are important. Among these especially are references to virtue, notably the qualities of patience, pity, and forgiveness. Cyrus gradually exhibits each of these qualities, which replace his passion for Panthea as the

dominant motivating forces in his life. Cyrus's forgiveness is twice proffered to Hystaspes, for example, indicating the considerable bounty of that quality which Cyrus possesses (pp. 22 and 34); his pity for the fate of others is also frequently alluded to (pp. 13, 14, 16, 25, 29, 34, 35, 43, 52, and 56), while his patience, though less alluded to, is at least twice discussed when it refers to his need to quell mounting passions. For instance, when Hystaspes announces his love for Panthea, Cyrus twice asks Croesus for "a rule in all Philosophy / To teach me Patience" (p. 17), and when Cyaxares accuses Cyrus of excessive ambition, the latter keeps his passions valiantly under control, saying that he hears with "Patience" (p. 19).

Cyrus's patience and his ability to forgive and pity others eventually lead him to the leadership position he attains by the end of the play, for he, unlike any other character, except Croesus perhaps, has controlled the baser passions which undo the others. Indeed, the other characters act as foils to Cyrus, revealing faults that he is finally able to control. Lausaria succumbs to madness because she is unable to control her infatuation with Cyrus; Cyaxares's preference for ease marks him out for eventual destruction; Abradatus's willingness to violate the sanctity of the human body comes back to plague him with a particularly apposite death. Only Cyrus overcomes each of these temptations and marks himself out as a man worthy of the attentions of the Hebrew God.

Cyrus the Great resultantly becomes a play in which the action of The Rival Kings and The Destruction of Troy is inverted. Whereas those

two plays analysed the destructive elements within men, especially in Alexander and Achilles, Banks's third play probes the frontiers of those positive elements in men that lead to their glory and to the glory of God. Indeed, the egocentricity which characterizes Alexander and Achilles is exactly the quality which Cyrus seems finally to eschew, as his return of Panthea to her rightful husband indicates. By his many acts of altruism (sparing Croesus, forgiving Hystaspes, and returning Panthea among them) he takes a special place in the history of the Old Testament as preserver of the Judaic way of life. It is not accidental certainly that in the first act when Cyrus is discussed he is likened to Adam:

> Recall your [Cyaxares'] Temper, Sir, and blame
> not Cyrus,
> Who, bating his Ambition, still is Virtuous.
> His Soul, pure as the first created Mortals,
> Who in the Worlds prime Innocence began,
> 'Ere Lust and Power defac'd the tender Image,
> And crept into the Frailties of Mankind.
> (p. 6)

In fact, the entire action of the play is suggested by these lines, for it is lust and power which delay the movement of Cyrus toward virtue. His conquest of them makes him a type of Adam and preserver of the tradition of Adam, as the writer of the Book of Daniel also recounts. Banks, at any rate, alludes so specifically to this episode in the Bible that there is absolutely no room for doubt about his intentions regarding his hero.

Cyrus is the magnificent exception in the Banks canon to the rule that the heroes and heroines must fall due to frailties within (Alexander, Achilles, Essex) or to the forces of evil without (Anna

Bullen, Lady Jane Grey, Mary, Queen of Scots). Cyrus survives because of his attainment of virtue and because of the providential position in history which he holds. In the latter regard he is luckier than his later counterparts in Banks's plays: he alone is able to attract the "angel Guide" (p. 52) that the later protagonists of Banks so sorely need, but do not find. The thematic focus of Cyrus the Great is on Cyrus's gradually achieved virtue, which strongly resembles, in its emphasis on pity, forgiveness, and patience, Christian sainthood in its final form. Many of Banks's later protagonists will have already arrived at this position when their dramas begin to unfold; as a consequence, the thematic focus in the later plays is usually on the inability of Christian ideals to survive in the modern world. Before, portraying such characters, however, Banks will return one last time to the flawed character (Essex) whose inner drives result in destruction.

CHAPTER V

UNIFYING MOTIFS IN THE BINARY WORLD OF THE UNHAPPY FAVOURITE

After three ventures with heroic drama about foreign subjects, Banks turned in his next play to a different genre and subject matter. The Unhappy Favourite, while retaining vestiges of the heroic drama, is more nearly historical tragedy in genre, and its subject is one which would absorb the remainder of Banks's dramatic energy: English history. Given the historical prominence found in his heroic plays and the emphasis which he places on the connection between England and Troy in The Destruction of Troy, this new choice of subject matter might have been anticipated. However, in the heroic plays Banks had only tangentially commented on the Restoration situation in which he lived; in the four English history plays he was to take a much more direct stance toward his own times. This shift in dramatic purpose may be noticed in the thematic concerns of The Unhappy Favourite. Whereas his first three plays deal, respectively, with the downfall of "the greatest man that ever was," with the destruction of the greatest city of early civilization (from whence England itself was said to have sprung), and with the rise to virtue of a proto-Christian hero, in the Essex play Banks deals with the dimly but surely perceived shape of the world in which he lived. It was a world balanced, like his new hero, on "the brink of fate," a world composed partly of a gloriously fading past and partly of a future whose portentous outline was sharply enough defined

to assure intelligent minds that it would inevitably overwhelm that portion of the past still existent in the 1680s. The Unhappy Favourite, in short, offers a binary worldview.[1] The golden age of the past, embodied by Elizabeth's monarchial government, is contrasted to a new world order or rule by ministers and parliament; these two worlds are in conflict, with fatal results for the Earl of Essex who attempts to share the two worlds but who is unable to reconcile them and is destroyed by them.

In order to delineate these opposed worldviews, Banks employs images which characterize each of them and which suggest where his own sympathies lie. His frequent labeling of Burleigh as an agent of Hell suggests that the playwright's sympathies are with the old, hierarchical monarchy of the Queen (and, by extension, of Charles II) and not with the new, power-hungry and corrupt ministers and parliamentarians who foment faction in England. Elizabeth is identified with the sun and with the circle of harmony, Burleigh with designs and intrigue. Essex, caught between these two contending forces, is destroyed because he is unable to align himself with either one, though he dies with his allegiance to Elizabeth and monarchy finally stabilized. Images of earth and vegetation link him with Elizabeth, but imagery from shipping

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[1]This idea is implicit in Susan Staves's discussion of Restoration drama in Players' Sceptres (pp. 87-88), though she does not apply it to The Unhappy Favourite. The idea is also latent in David Vieth's "Divided Consciousness: The Trauma and Triumph of Restoration Culture," TSL, 22 (1977), 52. Ellis-Fermor, pp. 77-95, discusses the use of imagery in creating the "universe" behind a play, exactly what Banks does, though he creates a double universe, as it were.

and especially from Milton's crew of devils associate him with Burleigh. These binary allegiances are the root of his downfall.[2]

If Banks might be said to have ignited interest in the matter of Troy with his play on that subject, there is no doubt about his having originated dramatic interest in Elizabeth and Essex. No other English play on the subject had appeared before his play was staged in 1681, though three French plays, to which he seems not to have been indebted, preceded The Unhappy Favourite.[3] For many decades thereafter, however, Banks's Essex play influenced the staging of this historical relationship, as evidenced by the three eighteenth-century adaptations of his play, by the many benefit performances which this play saw in the first half of the Eighteenth Century, and by the royal performance in 1681, for which Dryden wrote both a Prologue and an Epilogue. Banks's dramatic fortune was created quite literally overnight by the success of his fourth play.

Critical reception of The Unhappy Favourite has certainly been more enthusiastic than that of any of the heroic dramas, though to the present day a certain perverseness regarding Banks's versification and technical skills is to be seen in the criticism of it. When he concludes that "with all his technical crudities Banks was a natural dramatist,"[4] James Sutherland typifies the double standard to which Banks has been subjected. Generally, with the exception of the attacks

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[2]Vieth, p. 52.

[3]Blair, pp. 36-49.

[4]Sutherland, 1977, p. 182.

on the blank verse, the criticism of the play has been increasingly favorable, with most critics classifying it as the playwright's finest work. Almost all the extended discussion of the play, however, emphasizes its role in the development of the sentimental tragedy and the historical "she-tragedy."[5] While it is important to establish Banks's contribution to these dramatic modes, little has been written to clarify his thematic concerns. The critical tendency has, in fact, been to ignore the themes of the play and the means by which these themes are generated, among them the play's imagery.

Not only has the imagery been ignored, however; the characters of the play, who are far from the simple creations of a second-rate hack, have been neglected also. The complexity of the characterizations of Elizabeth, Burleigh, and Nottingham, to say nothing of Essex, is what makes the play as fine as it is. Much of the complexity is the result of Banks's theme, which deals with the fracturing of the old political order by a new order and the social upheaval which results. More surely than was the case with any of his previous dramatic efforts, The Unhappy Favourite is a clear effort to mirror conditions of the political scene in Restoration England, which was in turmoil due to the tensions existing between Parliament, ministers, and monarch. Perhaps Banks intended a mild political satire, with Burleigh parodying Shaftesbury, Essex representing Monmouth, and Elizabeth becoming Charles II. The complexity of Banks's characterization of each of these

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[5]See Introduction, note 10.

personages in the play makes such an interpretation tenable. However, even if we lay aside such theories, what still resides in the play is its portrait of a world torn between two great political poles, the inherited monarchy and the representative parliament. These two political orders differed in so many vital ways that their clash almost certainly spelled doom for most men caught between them, as it did for Essex.

The action of the play commences when Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, returns to England from Ireland against royal orders, after having led an unsuccessful campaign against Tyrone, chief of the Irish rebels. Subsequently, the play deals with Essex's efforts to clear himself from charges of treason brought against him by members of Parliament who have been spurred on by Burleigh. Though Queen Elizabeth knows that Essex is guilty of the charges, she nonetheless desires his acquittal, mainly because she loves him. However, the forces of parliament and her ministry, led by Burleigh and Rawleigh, desire Essex's execution. Between the Queen, who cannot find quite enough resolve to save him, and Burleigh, who has resolve aplenty, Essex is doomed. Added to his "unhappy" (in the sense of unlucky) situation are his secret marriage to the Countess of Rutland, which angers the Queen, and his attempt to generate rebellion among the citizens of London, which angers everyone. A further complication is added by the Countess of Nottingham, a lover whom Essex has spurned; she finds it in her power to cause the Earl's death by withholding a ring, which would betoken Essex's plea for clemency, from the Queen until after the Earl has been

executed. Though Elizabeth discovers Nottingham's crime and takes the Earl's wife as friend, the play ends with her unconsolable knowledge that she played a key role in Essex's death.

The images and motifs of The Unhappy Favourite are the primary means by which Banks conveys the binary nature of the play's universe. The qualities with which he invests each of the two potent opposing forces are quite clearly etched in the first act. Burleigh, representing the forces of the new order, is presented as an intriguer, a plotter, whose allegiance is basically to self and self-aggrandizement, though he is also concerned with English domination abroad, both politically and religiously; his main support comes from Parliament, the elected body which later caused so much grief for Charles II. Elizabeth represents the older order of monarchy and wishes to exercise mercy, pity, and justice without interference from her ministers;[6] she is, however, just capricious enough in her use of royal power to cause concern, especially to Burleigh. The Queen represents the glorious past, the defeat of the Armada by England, and monarchial Protestantism. Toward the end of Act One, a clearcut clash between monarchy and parliament is presented; and it is in the tensions thus created that the fate of Essex is determined, as it so often was during the Restoration for favorites of Charles II. Although in this scene the Queen is temporarily victorious, she is finally unable to match the machinations of Burleigh, who is successful in destroying Essex.

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[6]See pp. 99-101 below.

Though Banks is careful to present the two opposing political orders in the first act, he supports this bifurcation with references throughout the play to other periods in history which, like the Restoration, acted as a watershed between two vastly different modes of existence. For instance, upon receiving the ring of forgiveness from Elizabeth, Essex compares his joy to that of post-Flood man when he perceived the new covenent emblemized in the sky:

> Thus I receive it with far greater joy
> Than the poor remnant of mankind that saw
> The rainbow token in the heavens, when straight
> The floods abated, and the hills appeared,
> And a new smiling world the waves brought forth.[7]

Just as the Flood had separated human history into two distinct eras, each with its own characteristics, so had the Restoration of Charles II to the throne of England created such a watershed in the history of his country. A second analagous situation runs through the play in the form of references to Eden, a favorite Banks's allusion. New the end of the play explicit reference is made to the Fall and its division of human history into the post- and pre-Lapsarian epochs. Here (V, 530-541) again the dual worldview of the play is amplified by citation of a similar crucial watershed in the history of mankind. As though these two Biblical comparisons to the world of Elizabeth and Essex (and by extension to the world in which Banks actually lived) were not enough to clarify the thematic impetus, Banks supplies the same sort of

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[7]John Banks, The Unhappy Favourite, in Restoration Tragedies, ed. James Sutherland (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 243 (IV, 385-389); all future citations to the play will refer to this edition, the only modern one of a Banks play, by act and line number(s).

amplification when he has Essex refer to having made "England like the Roman Empire / In great Augustus's time, renowned in peace, / At home and war abroad" (III, 465-467). The time of Augustus was viewed by the Restoration authors and those of the early Eighteenth Century as being a period that witnessed one of the great changes in the history of man. Christ was born at that time, the Pax romana allowed art to flourish, and, perhaps most importantly of all, a period of monarchial rule was initiated, overwhelming a preceding republican regime.[8]

That each of these "high watermarks" in the history of civilization was thought to retain tremendous importance, especially as analogues of the Restoration world, can be seen by their reiteration in the "Prologues" to The Unhappy Favourite, one written by Banks and the other significantly penned by the Restoration writer par excellence, John Dryden. The Laureate in his "Prologue, Spoken [be it noted] to the King and Queen at their coming to the House [the Theatre Royal]," mentions both the watershed of the Flood and that of the Fall, perhaps echoing the use of these references to Biblical history in the play. And Banks himself, in the "Prologue" appended to the end of the play (not the one "Spoken by Major Mohun, the first four days"), cites the time of Augustus as an analogue to that of Elizabeth and, in turn, suggests the connection to Restoration times:

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[8] See James W. Johnson's The Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) and Howard D. Weinbrot's Augustus Caesar in "Augustan" England: The Decline of a Classical Norm (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) for background material.

'Tis said, when the renowned Augustus reigned,
That all the world in peace and wealth remained,
And though the school of action, war, was o'er,
Arms, arts, and letters then increased the more,
All these sprung from our royal virgin's bays,
And flourished better than in Caesar's days;
And only in her time at once was seen
So brave a soldier, statesman, and a queen.

The analogies of the Fall, the Flood, and the Pax romana are applied to the time of Elizabeth because her reign, at least according to Banks's presentation of it, like that of Charles II, was one in which fundamentally opposed orders of existence were struggling for dominance. Certainly the struggle between Queen and ministers/parliament in The Unhappy Favourite reminded not a few theatre-goers in 1681 of a similar struggle occurring within the government of England.

That Elizabeth I represents the old, divinely sanctioned world order is unmistakably revealed by the imagery with which Banks invests her. She is repeatedly identified with the sun and other "correspondences" to monarchy in the world. Perhaps the finest example of this imagery occurs at the end of Act One, when she laments the fate of monarchs who must contend with troublesome parliaments and ministers who pursue "close designs" (I, 430) against the royal will:

For 'tis not reason now that rules the world:
There's order in all states but man below,
And all things else do to superiors bow;
Trees, plants and fruits rejoice beneath the sun,
Rivers and seas are guided by the moon;
The lion rules through shades and ev'ry green,
And fishes own the dolphin for their queen;
But man, the verier monster, worships still
No god but lust, no monarch but his will.
(I, 435-443; italics mine)

The image of the sun occurs frequently in the play (I, 350; II, 135, 176-81, 331, and 380; III, 66-67, 260; IV, 500, etc.) in connection with Elizabeth, as do a few of the other correspondences, and always with the seeming intention of identifying her with the old, divinely sanctioned world order. However, in the passage cited above, this older order is clearly seen to be in jeopardy.

Allied to the image of the sun is that of the circle.[9] Though most obviously presented in the well-known ring episode of Act Four, this image occurs earlier in the play, suggesting the power which the Queen possesses to protect her favorites from ministers and parliaments. In Act One the Countess of Nottingham, seeking revenge for the refusal of love she offered to Essex, uses this image in connection with the power of the monarch:

> Lift me, my rage, nay, mount me to the stars,
> Where I may hunt this peacock though he lies
> Close in the lap of Juno-Elizabeth,
> Though the Queen circles him with charms of power,
> And hides her minion like another Circe.
> (I, 67-71; italics mine)

This image clearly prepares for Elizabeth's giving the ring to Essex in Act Four. However, this passage also reveals the vulnerability of the Queen and her inability to protect Essex. Like Circe, Elizabeth is finally unable to prevent her lover from leaving her.[10] The potency of her rule is threatened and reduced as Burleigh's power increases.

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[9] See Marjorie Hope Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the "New Science" upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1950) for background.

[10] This episode derives from The Odyssey, Book 10.

Throughout the play there are other signs that the Queen's power is on the wane. She herself recognizes this change, as she poignantly reveals in Act Three while discussing Essex with the Countess of Nottingham:

> I am in health, and thank thee for thy love,
> Only a little troubled at my people.
> I have reigned long, and they're grown weary of me:
> New crowns are like new garlands, fresh, and lovely;
> My royal sun declines towards its west,
> They're hot and tired beneath its autumn beams.--
> (III, 62-67)

The "golden time" (II, 441) for which Essex and Elizabeth yearn is passing from the scene in The Unhappy Favourite, and the images surrounding the Queen and her favorite clearly articulate this change. Indeed, the yearning for a carefree pastoral world, or other Eden, which is so prevalent in the play (see, for instance, III, 450-452), is symptomatic of a society in which stability is no longer the rule.

A further indicaton of Elizabeth's diminishing power is suggested late in the play by the Countess of Rutland, who, upon hearing of her husband's execution, angrily replies to the Queen's sympathetic condolences:

> Oh, never think to charm me with such sounds,
> Such hopes that are too distant from my soul,
> For 'tis but preaching heaven to one that's damned.
> Oh, take your pity back, most cruel Queen,
> Give it to those that want it for a cure,
> My griefs are mortal, remedies are vain,
> And thrown away on such a wretch as I.--
> (V, 551-557; italics mine)

The "cure" to which the Countess refers might possibly be a reference to the "sovereign touch" which royalty was supposed to possess during the

period of the Tudors and Stuarts (the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne, is said to have touched Samuel Johnson for scrofula--the "King's evil"---late in her reign).[11] This practice was fairly prevalent during Elizabeth's time. However, it was a dying custom during the Restoration. Perhaps Banks's possible allusion to it means that his play is more a commentary on Restoration times than on those of Elizabeth, since he seems to attribute little potency to the practice in the play. In fact, we might see the giving of the ring to Essex as an extension of the "sovereign touch" which also proves fruitless.[12]

Despite the reduced efficacy of her power, Elizabeth clearly believes that she still derives that power from a divine source, as she reveals in a passage derived, no doubt, from Milton and echoing a speech from Cyrus the Great (see p. 48 of that play for comparison):

> Help me, thou infinite Ruler of all things,
> That sees at once far as the sun displays,
> And searches every soul of humankind,
> Quick, and unfelt, as light infuses beams,
> Unites, and makes all contradictions centre [agree],
> And to the sense of man, which is more strange,
> Governs innumerable distant parts
> By one entire same providence at once.
> Teach me so far thy holy art of rule
> As in a mortal reason may distinguish
> Betwixt bold subjects, and a monarch's right.
> (II, 134-144)

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[11] James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. R. W. Chapman (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 32.

[12] While this idea is merely conjectural, it does help tie together a number of otherwise unrelated scenes from the play: i.e., the scene where Elizabeth boxes Essex on the ear (a sovereign touch indeed!), the ring-giving scene, and the execution scene.

However, at the end of the play Elizabeth realizes that she has not that divinity of power which she requested of the "infinite ruler":

> Pity my fate, but lay no guilt on me,
> Since 'tis th' Almighty's pleasure, though severe,
> To punish thus his faithful regents here,
> To lay on kings his hardest task of rule,
> And yet has given 'em but a human soul.
> The subtle paths of traitors' hearts to view
> Reason's too dark, a hundred eyes too few;
> Yet when by subjects we have been betrayed,
> The blame is ours, their crimes on us are laid,
> And that which makes a monarch's happiness,
> Is not in reigning well, but with success.
> (V, 614-624)

Her attitude here, where she is probably an historical substitute for Charles II, is far different from that of Henry VIII, her father and the subject of Banks's next play, Vertue Betray'd. In that play divine right is absolutely upheld, as indicated by Henry's closing thrust at haughty subjects:

> If Subjects thus their Monarchs Wills restrain,
> 'Tis they are Kings; for them we idly Reign:
> Then I'le first break the Yoak; this Maxim still
> Shall be my Guide (A Prince can do no Ill!)
> In spite of Slaves, his Genius let him trust;
> For Heav'n n'ere made a King, but made him just.[13]

Though Henry's claim to divine justness is seriously undercut by his own actions in that play, he at least does end up absolutely in command. His daughter, however, as Banks perceived, was not in the same position. Her role as divinely anointed monarch was more and more threatened by her ministers and her Parliament, and the qualities of

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[13] John Banks, Vertue Betray'd (London: for R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1682), p. 79 [a microfilm edition was used]; all future references to this play will refer to this, the first edition.

pity, remorse, and mercy which such a monarch could exercise were more subject to the minister's influence; Elizabeth's effort to extend mercy to Essex is thwarted, in fact, by the Queen's administrative officials. The old world order of her father is indeed crumbling around her. Needless to say, this disintegration was also an evident fact of life in Charles II's court, of which the court of Elizabeth is surely a mirror.

In the clash of political orders evident in The Unhappy Favourite Banks's sympathies seem to remain with Elizabeth and Essex. However, the playwright had a clear enough vision of the new order to see that it was inevitably going to thwart royal prerogative. Though he paints a rather unflattering portrait of Burleigh, the main representative of the new order, he still allows this minister to destroy Essex, just as he probably saw the slowly eroding power of the monarch in his own times. The Unhappy Favourite is, then, perhaps a warning of the coming victory of the parliamentarians (which in fact did occur only seven years after this play was staged). The trouble that Banks claims he experienced with staging the play becomes more understandable, at any rate, if we view the play from this angle.[14] Parliament and ministers would have seen slander in the portrait of Burleigh, while the king would have seen the play (and we must remember that he quite literally did see it) as a tedious warning about circumstances over which he felt he had control (a

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[14]See "Epistle Dedicatory" to the first edition, reprinted by Sutherland, 1977, for suggestions that Banks's play met with some resistance.

fact proved by his dissolution of Parliament in March, 1681, two months before the first playing of The Unhappy Favourite).[15]

Several motifs surrounding the characterization of Burleigh suggest that his power is viewed negatively by Banks, albeit the playwright grudgingly portrays the statesman's eventual victory over Essex. Motifs of political intrigue dominate scenes in which Burleigh has a part, while hellish images, perhaps recalled from The Destruction of Troy and that intriguer superb, Ulysses, are also commonly associated with him. Like Ulysses (and for that matter his devilish ancestor, Satan) Burleigh is a master of words, and this motif is noted occasionally. Finally, vegetation imagery, so often associated with Essex, is also attached to Burleigh, though always in such a manner as to subordinate the minister to the Earl.

Since the overall pattern of The Unhappy Favourite is one wherein the machinations of Burleigh and Nottingham to destroy Essex are pitted against the mainly merciful attempts of the Queen to save him, it is not surprising to find imagery of intrigue surrounding the former two characters, thus calling forth the negative aura of the new political order they represent. Burleigh's forte is his mind (as the Queen's is her heart), his wit, and his thought, from which he devises means to destroy his enemies. When Nottingham responds to Burleigh's claim that Essex is a traitor, she immediately suggests how Burleigh's mental energy is channeled toward ruining others:

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[15] Among many historical accounts of the dissolution see Antonia Fraser, Royal Charles (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 405-406.

> Ha! Traitor, say you! Speak that word again--
> Yet do not; 'tis enough that Burleigh says it,
> His wit has power to damn the man that thinks it,
> And t'extract treason from infected thought.
> (I, 118-121; italics mine)

Here the motif of words is strongly emphasized as well as the almost magical capacity of Burleigh's active mind to discover treason where it is merely thought. His ability to intrigue is also clearly predominant here. A bit later in the same act, Essex's friend and companion, Southampton, again characterizes Burleigh as an intriguer who manipulates words in order to gain personal, not truthful, ends:

> . . . Your nice and fine distinctions
> To make a good man vicious, or a bad
> Man virtuous, even as please the sophisters.--
> My lord, you are engend'ring snakes within you,
> I fear you have a subtle stinging heart;
> And give me leave to tell you that this treason,
> If any, has been hatched in Burleigh's school.
> I see ambition in the fair pretense,
> Burleigh in all its cunning, dark disguises,
> And envious Cecil everywhere.
> (I, 153-162; italics mine)

The motif of words is continued here in "nice and fine distinctions" and "sophisters," while the intriguer's art is suggested by "cunning, dark disguises" and "fair pretense" (one of many oxymorons in this play about contradictory worldviews); the devil images in the passage are also characteristic of Burleigh.

While only Nottingham, in a telling combination of allusion and pun, is called a "Machiavile" (V, 280) in The Unhappy Favourite, that epithet certainly fits Burleigh as well, for each practices the intriguer's art of creating devious designs to attain dubious goals. And "design" is, fittingly, a common motif in the play, underscoring the

other imagery associated with this pair. Elizabeth accuses Burleigh of being behind the "close design" (I, 431) to accuse Essex of treason in Act One, while Nottingham, fearing that the Queen will pardon Essex, says with worried truculence, "Then I am lost, and my designs unravelled" (III, 37). Nor is it accidental that the motif is buttressed by references to the designs of the Spanish (I, 219, 293, and 369), to Cataline's design to murder Cicero (III, 3), a nicely ironic reference for Nottingham to make, or to Essex's "close designs" (I, 204), another ironic reference, this time by Burleigh. Southampton perhaps touches the quintessential Burleigh when he notes that the Lord's brain is "stuffed with cabals and projects for the nation" (I, 189), a reference with probable overtones of political satire. After all, Shaftesbury's Cabal had been a major influence on Restoration politics during the three years preceding Banks's play. Clearly, the new political order represented by Burleigh is shot through with intrigue, design, and pretense. To Banks, these qualities are as characteristic of Burleigh's world as pity, mercy, and remorse are of the Queen's.

Another motif which reveals Banks's negative portrayal of Burleigh is that relating to the Satanic. Indeed, Elizabeth's foremost minister is often described in terms of his association with the devil. These allusions probably have their origin in Banks's reading of Paradise Lost.[16] Southampton is especially persistent in aligning Burleigh with

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[16]Lessing was perhaps the first to detect the Miltonic echoes in Banks; see Introduction, note 21.

the hellish. He accuses the minister of being a "devil" (I, 192), calls him a "subtle fiend" who conjures up a storm (I, 301), and notes that the surprisingly early news of Essex's return from Ireland came from "Hell, . . . Where Cecil too is privy councilor" (II, 61-62). Burleigh is also called a "foul Leviathan" (II, 246) by Essex and, for good measure, "Lucifer" (V, 396) by the Countess of Rutland. Such damning iteration characterizes Burleigh and in turn casts a distinctly negative light upon the world order that he represents.

Milled between the stones of divinely appointed monarchy and ministerial intrigue is, of course, Essex, who fits in neither of these worlds completely and is ultimately destroyed because of this ambivalence. Banks orchestrates the imagery surrounding Essex to achieve this ambivalence, which lasts until the Earl is taken off to execution. Essex is both the savior of his country ("Drake did not more"--I, 397) and Satan figure (he likens himself to "the Fiend / Of Hell"--IV, 360-61); he is the vain peacock (I, 68) and the innocent dove (II, 479); he is a loyal subject and a rebellious "hot-spur" (IV, 315); and finally in a pair of paradoxical phrases which perhaps best illustrate his ambiguous stance in the play, he is a "base imperious man" (I, 80) and a "most <u>unhappy happy</u> man" (I, 21; italics mine). Essex's fate, in fact, as the very title of the play suggests, is largely due to a series of misfortunes or unlucky accidents which plague him, though this possibility has not previously been suspected. Essex is "unhappy" not in the pathetic sense, which is so often considered the dominant denotation of this word in connection with Banks's play; rather

he is unhappy in merely being, like Romeo and Juliet, unlucky. I.e., if he had chosen any other messenger than the Countess of Nottingham to send the ring to the Queen he would have been saved. This concept emerges repeatedly in connection with the images associated with Essex, especially those which pertain to his place in the binary world of the play: those relating to ships, Hell, earth, and vegetation.

The complexity of the images associated with Essex is perhaps best illustrated by the iteration of the ship motif, which is used to prepare for the Earl's fatal ending. The most obvious of these preparations occurs in the closing lines of Act Two, when Essex compares himself to a "tall rich ship of India" (II, 498; italics mine) that he has seen split into "pieces" upon a "hidden rock" (II, 508) in the sea. Essex, too, is tall and rich in position throughout much of the play, and he, too, is destroyed (literally being split into separate pieces) due to several unlucky political rocks that he strikes. Southampton also compares Essex to a ship when he addresses the Earl following Essex's first, fruitless encounter with the Queen:

> As an ill bird that perches on the side
> Of some tall ship foretells a storm at hand,
> I come to give you warning of the danger.--
> (II, 241-243; italics mine)

Here the image closely parallels the one which Essex uses at the end of Act Two. Again the Earl is a tall ship approaching imminent danger. The same image appears in Act Five just prior to the Earl's execution, when Essex describes himself as a "glad vessel that has long been crossed" (V, 327). Banks's use of the organic image is at this point in his career much more carefully controlled than at any previous point.

Further solidifying this notion is a similar ship image which occurs early in the play before we meet the Earl. During the patriotic declamations about the defeat of the spanish Armada in Act One, Southampton prophetically describes a Spanish ship destroyed "when the first broadsides were given":

> A tall brave ship, the tallest of the rest,
> That seemed the pride of all their big half-moon,
> Whether by chance, or by a lucky shot
> From us, I know not, but she was blown up,
> Bursting like thunder, and almost as high,
> And then did shiver in a thousand pieces.
> (I, 272-277; italics mine)

As in the previous images, a strikingly tall ship is destroyed, importantly by chance, and blown into pieces. The details found in the later occurrences of this image are all first presented in the patriotic discussion of the Armada's destruction; consequently, we may conclude that this initial ship image also indirectly describes Essex, who is seen by Burleigh as a threat to England, who is ultimately destroyed by chance, and who will fall in pieces under the headsman's blade.

The image of a tall ship destroyed by chance, whether in battle or upon a rock, is bolstered by another, minor, image in The Unhappy Favourite, that of tall towers being destroyed. In Act Two, besides comparing himself to a ship, Essex likens himself to a "tall-built pyramid, whose height / And golden top confronts" the sun and is tumbled down by lightning from that celestial body (II, 382-382). Here the sun, as we have seen earlier, represents the Queen, who has a distinct hand in Essex's death, albeit an unwilling one. Like the tall ship, the "tall-built pyramid" is vulnerable to destruction despite its seeming

solidity. Banks's use of this image is given additional reinforcement in the epigraph from Juvenal affixed to the title page of the first edition of 1682. This quotation describes a tall tower built by Sejanus, a tower whose height makes its fall greater and more horrible than it otherwise would have been.[17]

The ship and tower images provide Banks with a dual focus on Essex, who is both a striking leader and exceeding vulnerable due to the very nature of his position. Something of the ambivalence of the man is suggested by the imagery. That Essex may fall is suggested by his being associated with both the world of Burleigh and that of Elizabeth. His position midway between these extremes of power surely is a major source of his vulnerability. He is linked to Burleigh by his ability to manipulate words (the Queen comments that he wants "no cunning skill to talk"--III, 361) and by his associations, some of them self-professed, with Burleigh's mentor, Satan. This latter motif is iterated throughout the play: Essex is compared to a dragon (I, 400); he asks, when he meets the queen for a second interview, to be allowed to roar "like a fiend in darkness (III, 359) if the Queen believes him to be a traitor; and he likens himself to Satan during the ring episode (IV, 277-279 and 360-363).

Essex's reputation for rhetorical skill and the equation of his conduct with that of Satan are not entirely unwarranted. Indeed, the

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[17] I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Heffernan for a translation of this, and other, Banks epigrams. Dr. Heffernan's version follows: "Who coveting no little honors / And in seeking no little help (wealth) / He was making ready numerous floors of a tall tower / Whence the fall might be higher (greater) / And the striking (the crash) of headlong ruin more horrible (greater)."

Earl prepares the way for his own demise by several questionable actions during the course of the play. The first of these is related by Burleigh, and later confirmed by Essex himself. He is accused of "treating" (I, 308) with Tyrone, the leader of the Irish rebels whom he was sent to subdue. Essex's declared decision to talk with Tyrone, emblematically at a ford in a river between the two armies (Essex seems always in the middle, rather than on any single side), reflects the Burleigh within him, the diplomat, not the conquering soldier of the old world order. He is tainted by this action, as Elizabeth makes abundantly clear when they first meet. Though the Queen forgives him this blunder, the Earl is quick to reinfect himself with another traitorous act. After the Queen boxes him on the ear, he goes to London and tries to foment a revolution among the citizens. Here, as in his negotiations with Tyrone, the unauthorized use of language makes Essex "unhappy." His infection with the rhetorical tricks of Burleigh accounts in part for his final downfall.

However, Essex is not just a man steeped in the villainy of an English statesman. He is also allied with the old world order of the Queen, thus explaining in part her efforts to preserve him from the fate of a traitor. The images which link the Earl to the Queen's world are many, but the most crucial are those dealing with earth and vegetation. The resonant qualities of earth, especially English earth, as a symbol of the Kingdom were perhaps suggested to Banks by Shakespeare's Richard II in which the protagonist's fate is much like that of the Earl of Essex, and whose predilection for apostrophizing the earth is as

common as is Essex's. At any rate, Banks associates Essex with earth and natural landforms frequently and invokes the same traditional world order with this association as he had with that of Elizabeth and the sun. Essex's connection to the earth suggests his natural position beneath the sun (i.e., beneath the monarch). This image is first mentioned when Southampton defends Essex from Burleigh by noting that his friend has stood "like a promontory" (I, 399) in defense of his country. Thereafter most of the references are Essex's own. When he first confronts the Queen in Act Two, he kneels and dares not rise but insists upon crawling on the "earth" (II, 183) until after he clears his "wronged . . . innocence." During a soliloquy at the end of that act he calls himself a "son" of "Earth" (II, 389), which is his "loving centre" (II, 395). The linkage between Essex and the earth is elsewhere emphasized in The Unhappy Favourite (II, 459; IV, 220). Perhaps the most crucial of these references, however, occurs in late Act Four during the ring episode. The Queen decides to protect Essex from the consequences of his treasonable activity and vows to raise him from the "vile dust of man, / And place [him] as a jewel" (IV, 249-250) in her crown. Just as God raised Adam from the earth, so does the queen raise up Essex. The Edenic allusion latent in Elizabeth's lines equates Essex with the first man, who lived in and fell from Paradise. Essex's connection with the old world order is suggested here, as is his extreme vulnerability. Just as God could not save Adam from himself, Elizabeth is unable to protect the Earl from the consequences of his actions, albeit the Earl's death is ultimately the result of simple bad luck.

The imagery of earth in the play links Essex with the Queen, as does another image cluster, which is related to that of earth: vegetation. Essex calls himself an oak, "the loftiest of the wood" (II, 200). The oak is not only the vegetal equivalent of the sun among the planets, the lion among beasts, the eagle among birds, but it was in Restoration England a royal tree, stemming from Charles II's ensconcement in an oak during his flight from England after Worcester. Banks's likening his hero to an oak clearly aligns him with the royal, monarchial world of Elizabeth. Essex is also compared to a laurel, Roman sign of conquest and success (II, 373; III, 446; and IV, 183). Such vegetation imagery is used to separate Essex from Burleigh as well as to link him with the Queen. When the Earl calls himself an oak, he calls Burleigh the "humble suckers nourished by" his root and "ivy" (II, 202-203) twined about the bole, while Elizabeth makes the same distinction at the end of Act One when she vents her anger at Burleigh's instigation of a plot against Essex:

> . . . Essex is too great for thee to grow--
> A shrub that never shall be looked upon
> Whilst Essex, that's a cedar, stands so nigh.
> (I, 426-428)

Even in death Essex is associated with vegetation imagery, as is evident from his words at parting with his wife in Act Five:

> Now I am shocked, <u>torn up</u>, and <u>rooted</u> all
> That's human in me.
> (V, 457-468; italics mine)

Perhaps we may view Essex's death as something like a vegetation rite for England. In order for the country to make a successful transition from one world order to another, a monumental sacrifice had to take

place, and Essex's sacrifice provides exactly for this need.[18] Sacrificial implications arise out of the hunting motif which is associated with Essex regularly throughout the play (I, 68; III, 522; and IV, 61-63). In Act One Southampton directly indicates the potential for sacrifice posed by the Earl's presence in England:

> She [the Queen] must, though gainst her will,
> deliver him
> A sacrifice to all his greedy foes.
> (II, 50-51; italics mine)

Nevertheless, in his death Essex glorifies the old order that passes with him into a position of secondary power. His function in The Unhappy Favourite is a somewhat muted preview of the sacrificial women who throng Banks's next three plays, all of whom represent the values that Elizabeth stands for in this play--innocence, simplicity, emotional loyalty. Something of the loss which occurs with their death and with that of Essex is suggested when the Earl, not unlike Alexander and Achilles, goes in death to "Mix with the sun" (V, 515), reaffirming his allegiance to the old order of politics.[19] But the world itself switches allegiance, with Burleigh and his successors, Shaftsbury among them, now gradually accruing the power which will give Parliament control of the monarchy in 1688.

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[18]Vegetation rites involve sacrificial acts of some sort, though not often of a human being. Sir James George Frazer's The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1969), especially pp. 492-517, offers the needed background material. Sanford Budick's Poetry of Civilization: Mythopoeic Displacement in the Verse of Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Johnson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974) offers related material, pp. 7-17.

[19]Staves, pp. 87-88.

The Unhappy Favourite is a departure from Banks's earlier drama not just in the use of history or the emphasis on the pathetic which has been the play's previous claim to favorable criticism. In it Banks displays a control of a significantly more complex thematic design than had been evident in any of the heroic dramas. His use of imagery reveals the intricacy of this achievement and exposes the central issue of Restoration culture, one which has been succinctly formulated by Robert Adams:

> . . . The English community changed from one founded on the concepts of hierarchy, uniformity, and personal relatedness, to one founded on the concepts of multiplicity, disparity, and toleration. In less than a hundred years, the nation had passed from enlightned, inept autocracy to a vigorous, materialistic pluralism.[20]

One might argue that The Unhappy Favourite is the quintessential Restoration play, for just as the Restoration was a period which saw a major political realignment, so Banks's drama has as its central focus the symbolic portrayal of the realignment as it is mirrored by events of an earlier, similar era.

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[20] The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), I, p. 1053.

CHAPTER VI

PROTEAN MOTIFS AND POLITICS: VERTUE BETRAY'D

After his triumph with The Unhappy Favourite, Banks was apparently motivated to write further plays on subjects drawn from Tudor history, for his dramatization of the downfall of Anne Boleyn, Vertue Betray'd, ensued within a year after the Essex play. As he had in that play, Banks continued to comment obliquely on his own times. The harsher glints of the political scene in the early 1680s flicker in the background of the new play, making it far more than just another sad and sentimental history of a betrayed queen. In Vertue Betray'd Banks also offers a satiric portrait of Charles II, one which involves some typically cynical Restoration discussion of sex and marriage. Furthermore, the betrayal and intrigue which characterized the Popish Plot years are embedded in the play. In presenting these thematic nuances, Banks creates perhaps his most complex play to date, especially regarding his structuring of characters and his development of imagery. Indeed, Vertue Betray'd offers the richest orchestration of images that Banks had yet achieved. Particularly important to note is his ability to transmute the meaning of several symbolic motifs during the course of the play--what stains, floods, and blood come to mean in Act Five is far different from earlier meanings attached to them--and to weave several image strands together in a powerful conclusion. It is also incidentally interesting to note that the play represents an advance in theme over Cyrus: whereas the earlier play reveals the development of virtue in

the hero, Vertue Betray'd concentrates on the maintenance of virtue under a painful burden (as the epigraph indicates).[1] Further, the idea of the sacrificial hero latent in The Unhappy Favourite is made more explicit in the new play. Banks seems to have taken material from his previous plays in order to write the new one, as Tupper notes in another context.[2]

Vertue Betray'd was first acted perhaps as early as March, 1681/2 and was published in the latter part of that year by Banks's favorite stationer, Richard Bentley, to whom he was later to dedicate The Innocent Usurper.[3] Together with The Unhappy Favourite, Vertue Betray'd has been recognized as a pivotal play in the renewed interest in English history which characterizes the later years of Charles II. Though Roger Boyle's Henry V (1664; not an adaptation of Shakespeare) was an early representative of the history play, the first years of the 1680s saw its greatest flowering with Nahum Tate's adaptation of Shakespeare's Richard II (1680) and Crowne's Shakespearean adaptation of 2 and 3 Henry VI (1680 and 1681).[4] Considerable emphasis has been laid on the crucial role of Vertue Betray'd in the development of the sentimental drama also, especially in the form soon to be known as "she-tragedy," which Nicholas Rowe was to master, though not without instruction from Banks.[5]

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[1] Again, I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Heffernan for his assistance with the translation of Banks's epigram to this play.

[2] Tupper, 1935, p. 177.

[3] Harbage, pp. 182-183.

[4] Harbage, pp. 180-183.

[5] See Introduction, note 10.

Critical assessment of Vertue Betray'd, besides concentrating unduly on sources, has also tended to deliberate rather too much on the play's sentimental qualities.[6] As a result of these undue emphases, critics have ignored the deeper thrust of the play, which is far more than just a "bungling sequel to Henry VIII" or a "bathetic tearjerker," as Hazelton Spencer and Robert Hume, in 1927 and 1976, respectively, have averred.[7] Almost to the present day critics have shunted aside consideration of other aspects of this play--its symbolically resonant imagery and its minor characters, both of which add immeasurably to the breadth of vision which Banks achieved.

The characters in the play, as will be seen, are worthy of more attention than they have yet received, not only because they reveal part of Banks's concept of Restoration culture, but also because the relationships among them reveal a high degree of structural sophistication. While no very lengthy analysis of the characters is called for here, a brief discussion may serve to open doors which have been for too long nailed shut. Most notable is Banks's emphasis on love triangles, which are the bedrock, so to speak, of the play's structural unity. The interlocking nature of these triangles suggests the complexity of vision which Banks has gained at this point in his career, for every important character is portrayed torn between two partners, one beloved but unattainable, the other unloved but quite approachable. Thus, Anna

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[6] See Introduction, note 11.

[7] Spencer, p. 735; Hume, p. 351.

Bullen, as Banks calls her, exists in tension between Piercy, to whom she had hoped to consecrate her married life but who is impossibly cut off from her because of her marriage, and the King, a husband whom she finds basically unattractive. Piercy is similarly poised between Lady Diana Talbot, who loves him but for whom he has little interest, and Anna, unapproachable now because of her royal marriage but very much the woman he loves. Lady Elizabeth Blunt's situation is a bit more complicated but is actually just a variation of the main design: she wants the King's attention but is, in fact, his castoff mistress; she is loved by both Woolsey and Rochford but is interested in them only in order to manipulate them for her own benefit, the latter fatally. Of course, the King's position is similar, though he occupies part of one triangle at the play's opening and another at its close. Initially he is newly married to Anna, but is still loved by his divorced wife, Katherine of Aragon, who neither excites him nor gives him heirs. At play's end he is similarly situated, though now he is between a new sex object, Jane Seymour, and Anna, newly executed. The intricate patterning of characters in Vertue Betray'd makes it a richer dramatic experience than has hitherto been acknowledged.

While abounding in complex love triangles, the play's action is quite uncomplicated, dealing as it does with the machinations of Cardinal Woolsey and Lady Elizabeth Blunt to overthrow Anna in the King's affections. The play opens with Anna's marriage to Henry and her coronation, the former action possible because she has been duped into thinking that Piercy has married someone else and played her falsely.

Anna has powerful enemies at court, however, Woolsey and Blunt, who plot her downfall, the former because he sees her Lutheran leanings as a threat to Catholic England and the latter because she wishes to secure a legitimate place in the King's bed. Woolsey sets Henry against Anna by tempting him with Jane Seymour and by alleging Anna's infidelity with Piercy, who has unluckily returned to court. Lady Blunt uses Anna's brother, Rochford, by having him bring Anna and Piercy together in a compromising situation. When Rochford fulfills this request, Woolsey appears to arrest the unfortunate trio, presenting letters written by Rochford as proof of Anna's incest with her brother. Anna and Rochford are condemned, while Piercy allows himself to be wounded when detained by the King's men. When he receives proof of Anna's death, he reopens his wound and dies. Lady Blunt, eagerly watching Anna's decapitation, goes mad when the victim's head rolls into her lap; she then admits her complicity in the plot. The king mourns Piercy's death, urges the capture of Blunt and Woolsey, but refuses to admit Anna's innocence, asserting that a "king can do no wrong,"[8] though he obviously has been wrong.

Henry's stubborn, indeed stupid, refusal to believe in Anna's innocence is merely one sign among many that Banks's play is an indictment of that monarch and by extension a criticism of Charles II as well. One of the special effects of this play is how much it reveals, in spite of its superficial sentimentality, of the darker side of

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[8]See p. 103 above.

Restoration politics, of which the portrait of Henry is only a part. Indeed, Henry comes in for rough treatment throughout the play, where he is nowhere portrayed in a positive light. He is vilified as hot-brained (p. 6) as well as hot-loined. His inconstancy is frequently mentioned (pp. 5, 15, 16, 23, 37, and 39), while other traits are suggested by classical and biblical allusions directed at him. He is "Janus"-like (p. 39) and is called a "Philistine-king" (p. 77) by Piercy. Of course, his marital faithlessness (p. 71, e.g.) is proverbial. But the portrait of Henry is not merely one whereby his name is blackened by name-calling, however seemingly justified.

In his portrait of Henry, Banks also looses a volley of images which discredit the monarch. While only a few of the images are repeated more than once, they are all negative, and taken together they reveal a monarch of scarcely honorable qualities. The first character to describe Henry is Woolsey, who has been angered by Anna's coronation:

> A Buxon King, that for a wanton Smile
> Will pawn his Faith, and turn an Heretick!
> (p. 3)

While Henry's lechery is clearly indicated, the verb which Banks uses in this instance is a telling one, for a "pawn" is exactly what the king becomes in Woolsey's hands, even offering to allow the Cardinal to rule for him while he enjoys Jane Seymour. Later in the first act Henry is described in metaphors from falconry, and again the application of the image to the King is far from complimentary:

> Some cry'd-up Beauty, ne're yet seen at Court,
> Must be found out, to put her in his way,
> And <u>take</u> the Amorous King: 'Twill certain do;

> For then no greedy Falcon, when he sees the Lure
> Will flye down swifter to be catch'd and hooded,
> Than he into the Fetters of her Charms.
> (p. 6; italics mine)

The image of a king in bondage to his passions, like a falcon to its greedy hunger, is not an inspiring one. Similarly the King is often associated with beds (for instance, pp. 14 and 59), his fickleness in love is underscored by tidal imagery (p. 15), he is likened to a child (p. 20) who "prattles" (p. 68), he is diseased (p. 38), and he himself appropriately describes his arms as a grate (p. 39) and his body as a prison (p. 39) trapping Anna. The same image is also suggested when the King, recalling how lacking in eagerness the Queen was when he sought her embraces, says that Anna struggled "like the quarry in the Toil" (p. 38). "Quarry" emphasizes the desperate situation that Anna finds herself in, while the king's imprisoning possessiveness is made clear by the "toil," a large trap.

Besides all these negative motifs, a final one, also applied, ironically, by Henry to himself, occurs when the King is being petitioned to save the life of one of the men accused of committing adultery with Anna. Henry describes his stubbornness to the petitioners:

> Have I not like a Rock against the Seas,
> And Mountain 'gainst the Winds stood thus unshaken . . . ?
> (p. 65)

Henry's resemblance to a rock is more unflattering than he imagines, for this image is one which Banks reiterates throughout the play, almost always in contexts where rocks are dangerous, particularly to the innocents in the world, as Anna and Piercy so clearly are. In Act One

when Woolsey gloats that Anna is an easy victim to destroy, he initiates this image cluster:

> . . . in her heedless Innocence she sails,
> Shunning no Rocks, no Quick-sands, nor no Danger.
> (p. 6)

Later, Anna describes her fatal meeting with Piercy in Act Three, using the same motif:

> See where he [Piercy] stands, the Mark of Pity,
> Heav'n!
> Shut, shut they eyes, and fly with speed away;
> Or view the Rocks and Quick-sands, if thou stay,
> Lest this Hellispont I venture on,
> And like Leander tempt my fate, and drown.
> (p. 40)

Again, when Piercy and Lady Diana Talbot discuss their forthcoming, joyless marriage, the former employs the same image to describe their future habitation:

> . . . on some dreadful Rock we'll chuse to lye,
> Whose dismal top seems fasten'd to the Skye.
> (p. 44)

Anna's judges, including her own father, who condemns her, are implied to have "Rocky hearts" (p. 64) and Rochford--whose name is at least once punned upon (p. 25) perhaps with ominous irony--bids goodbye to his sister while lamenting the "Rocky world" (p. 70). Thus, Henry's comparing himself to a rock in Act Five has been prepared for, and the meaning that the audience or reader derives from this symbolic image is one which works to undercut the status of the king.[9]

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[9]Cf. Cyrus the Great, p. 42, where Cyrus's "rocky" heart melts at sight of Lausaria in madness.

Descriptive epithets, classical allusions, and symbolic imagery clearly are marshalled in order to besmudge the king's character. Banks's portrait of Henry, however, has deeper residual meaning. What he appears to have created in his portrait of Henry VIII is a satire of Charles II. Like Henry, who was deeply dependent on his Catholic minister, Cardinal Woolsey, for political assistance, Charles laid himself open to charges of collaboration with Catholics by keeping many of them in high places in his government. Also, like Henry, whose sexual appetite was voracious, Charles II was notorious for his amorous attachments. Though he never divorced his barren wife, as Henry did, Charles was not unlike the Tudor monarch in his entanglement in many a romantic liaison. The temptation is strong, at any rate, to argue for a political parallel in Vertue Betray'd, with Henry VIII seen as an early replica of Charles II, over-dependent on sensual gratification and Catholic ministers, and with Anna Bullen symbolizing virtuous English Protestants being cashiered by their misled monarch. Given the parallel-hunting nature of most Restoration theatre-goers, it is hard to see, as Robert Hume has wondered about the ending of the play, how indeed any of this got by the censor, at least one with even modest Royalist inclinations. In the character of Henry, whom most critics pass by with only a line or two, Banks presents a commentary on his own monarch, and Vertue Betray'd is the richer for the political nuances which are associated with Henry VIII.

It is not only the character of Henry which reveals Banks's interest in the politics of this play. Other characters are also caught

up in the intrigue which characterized the courts of Henry VIII and Charles II. Indeed, as we will see, an important, related motif in the play deals with dissembling. Such a minor character as Northumberland has not been studied as one who reinforces the play's dominant interest in the degradation caused by political concerns; but his involvement in intrigue, however tangential, together with that of the king, Woolsey, and Blunt, demonstrates just how pervasively such intrigue is in Vertue Betray'd. Northumberland plays only a minor role in this regard, but it is a telling one, for he essentially betrays his son in Act Four. At the end of that act, the Cardinal and Northumberland enter to arrest Rochford and Anna; however, to get Piercy safely out of the way, the Cardinal insists that he has no designs upon the Queen. When Piercy turns to his father for confirmation of the Cardinal's intentions, he receives an affirmative response. With this paternal assurance he departs, but immediately thereafter the Cardinal announces that the King has given orders for the arrest of the Queen on charges of incest. We can only presume that Northumberland was privy to these orders and that he deliberately lied to his own son, admittedly to protect him. Northumberland's intriguing, however, is a trait of all the characters in the play with the possible exception of Piercy.

Even Rochford and Anna are not exempt from this denigrating activity. Rochford, of course, and Northumberland had concocted the ruse which enabled the King to marry Anna, thus betraying his own sister, as Northumberland did his own son. In fact, it is with the conversation of these two men, Rochford and Northumberland, about their

parts in the plot to delude Anna, that the play opens, suggesting how important the motif of political betrayal is to be. Rochford, like Northumberland, has one more betrayal to make, however, in part explaining his fatal end. When he is well ensnared by Blunt's wiles and she tells him that only the King had enjoyed her previously, Rochford denigrates his sister, while castigating the King for leaving Blunt to enjoy Anna:

> Roch. And he [the King] th'unworthiest of Mankind,
> Who having such a Jewel [Blunt] in his Breast,
> The Crown not half so Sacred, were it mine,
> To sell it for a false and glittering trifle [Anna]:
> So silly Indians barter Gold and Pearls
> For Baubles.
> Blunt. What your Sister, treach'rous Man!
> (p. 33)

Even worse, Rochford implicates himself knowingly in what he thinks is Blunt's treasonous hatred for Henry (p. 34).

Since Rochford's fate is prepared for by his various betrayals, Anna's advice to him as they are led off to the Tower to await trial is all too convincing:

> But think, Dear Rochford, that both you and I
> Have once committed, in our erring Lives,
> Something for which we justly merit Death,
> Though not, perhaps, the Thing we are accused of.
> (p. 59)

Of course, Anna, too, has committed sins which perhaps precipitate her death, though her guilt is less than her brother's. The motif of dissembling, which recurs in connection with the Queen, prepares us for her fate. Cardinal Woolsey initiates this motif, as he does so many others, when he tells Blunt how easy it will be to start Anna on the

course of dissembling that is his and Blunt's trademark, but will be Anna's downfall:

> An easie way I'le chalk to your Revenge,
> A Road not steep, nor dangerous, but smooth;
> So unsuspected, and so fatal too;
> That the Queens Fancy and deluded Genius,
> Shall tempt her in the same dissembled Path,
> Taking her by the other hand with us,
> And lead her in the Pit prepar'd for her.
> (p. 5; italics mine)

The Queen herself recognizes how fatal a place the court is, how prevalent intrigues are, and how difficult it is to remain apart from them, when she commands Woolsey and other court retainers to give her some solitude:

> Am I got loose, loose from this worrying Scene
> Of dismal State, that always loads a Monarch,
> And racks him with dissembling Torturers?
> (p. 9; italics mine)

Immediately thereafter, however, she ironically must resort to this very way of living. Lady Diana Talbot, who Anna thinks has married Piercy, enters and causes the Queen to feel the need to hide her feelings:

> How proud she [Diana] bears her self to see my pain!
> Whilst I look up to her, and sigh in vain!
> But I will hide it, and forgive me Heav'n;
> For 'tis the first time that I e're dissembled--
> (p. 10; italics mine)

When she learns from Diana that the latter is not married to Piercy, Anna, now knowing that it is she, not Piercy, who has been false, continues to hide her true feelings:

> Ah Piercy! injur'd Piercy! injur'd Bullen!
> But hold, there's yet a greater task behind,
> And that is to Dissemble well. (p. 13; italics mine)

Having once dipped her wing in soot, Anna finds that a second time proves much easier. The motif of dissembling continues throughout the

play, adding bit by bit to the "crimes" which in some measure cause her downfall. After discovering Anna's marriage, Piercy indulges in some misogyny and makes "dissembling" (p. 29) one of the vices he derides. He attributes the same quality to Anna during their last meeting (p. 50). And it is worth noting that Anna wishes to be thrown into "the blackest of Hells Dungeons, / Where all Dissemblers at their Death shall howl" (p. 70), if it can be proved that she is guilty of her crime.

In a small but significant way, then, Anna is partly responsible for the fate which she suffers. Essex-like, she entered the world of Woolseyan dissembling and is punished therefore. She is not, as is so often asserted, entirely innocent at the end of the play, though she surely does not deserve the punishment she is forced to endure. In part the tragic nature of the play is generated by her own acts. In fact, Vertue Betray'd is closer to tragedy as a result of Anna's participation in her own fall. That her punishment is all out of proportion to the crime she committed only underlines the tragic situation in which she becomes embroiled.

Besides the motif of dissembling which is associated with Anna's ruin, the play also relies heavily on images related to acting; these are often applied to Anna, though they are also attached to other dissemblers. A more appropriate image under the circumstances would be hard to utilize. We have already seen one of these images. When Anna laments the continual presence of dissemblers at court, she mentions the "worrying Scene / Of dismal State" (p. 9; italics mine), reinforcing her thoughts with an apt image from a profession where dissembling occurs

even more prevalently than it does at court. Woolsey also uses this image when he talks of Anna as a "Poppet-Queen"

> Drest up by me, to Act her Scene of Greatness,
> And all her motions guided by this Hand!
> (p. 31)

And Blunt makes use of the same motif in Act Four:

> She comes, she comes, this Player-Queen; but know.
> This is the last proud Act of all thy show.
> (p. 48)

Acting images are also associated with the King (p. 23) and Rochford (p. 31) and thus help to reveal how pervasively the habit of behaving with duplicity has become in the court of Henry VIII, at least as Banks portrays it.

Besides Banks's obvious interest in mirroring the political scene in Restoration England, he also displays in this drama some typically cynical Restoration views on sex and marriage. In particular Henry VIII's lurid imagination makes him at least as vivid a purveyor of perverse sex as any of the dramatic creations of the Restoration rake playwrights. The dramatist who wrote the following example of sexual voyeurism or dementia can hardly be only the priggish indulger in the pathetic and sentimental which dozens of previous readers and commentators have insisted upon. Henry is here describing how he believes Anna reacts to his love-making:

> You yield to me indeed, 'tis true: but most
> Unwillingly you part with your dear Sweets,
> Unless it be to him that has your Hoard,
> But guard your fatal Honey with a Sting
> 'Gainst those you hate--Your Person you resign
> But as to Prison; my Arms are but the Grates
> Through which your Mind is longing still to be abroad:

> Nay in the very Moment of Enjoyment:
> And who would think but then I should be Happy?
> There's still another's Picture in your Heart,
> On which you look, and fancie I am He,
> And all the while I'm sporting for another.
> (pp. 38-39)

Henry later calls Anna a modern Messalina (p. 59) and his lurid imprecations about "incestuous twins" mingling their blood together in death (p. 60), as well as his general tendency to think in terms of copulation and beds, combine to further dissociate this play from the purely sentimental and pathetic. The late Jacobean and Caroline plays of Ford, Tourneur, and Shirley are at least as close literary relatives of Vertue Betray'd as are Jane Shore or The Fair Penitent. The motif of lurid sexual visions is not confined to Henry either, as can be seen in the following lines spoken by Piercy after he learns of Anna's betrayal and agrees to marry Lady Diana Talbot:

> . . . These triumphant Arms may seize my Bride,
> And clasp her gently like a wanton Tide.
> In Floods of Extasies I'le drown; and say,
> Thus Harry and his Queen live all the day;
> Thus he embraces her all o're, and o're;
> Whilst for each Kiss I'le reap a thousand more:
> And for each Pleasure they shall act that Night
> I'le pattern then, and double with delight:
> (p. 29)

Furthermore, two common Restoration ideas about marriage are expressed by Piercy and Diana at the end of Act Three, where each pledges to the other that their marriage will be loveless and where Piercy cynically postulates that their marriage will begin as most others end, that is without love. Piercy's verbal picture of loveless marriage, his somewhat demented imaginings about Henry and Anna's love life, together

with the King's clearly lurid voyeurism, reveal the underlying dominance in Vertue Betray'd of the motif of sexual visions; this motif, as well as those which reveal the corruption of court life, makes Banks's play a considerably more complex drama than has hitherto been recognized. The rough texture of Restoration court life clearly is a dominant concern, and Banks's imagery assists considerably in bringing that concern vividly before the audience or reader.

Besides the concern with politics and court life that underpins Vertue Betray'd and makes of it a more diverse and richly textured drama than has been felt to be the case, Banks's use of imagery shows a greater sophistication than he demonstrates in any of the four preceding plays. While the images and motifs thus far studied are of great importance in interpreting the political themes of the play, three other image clusters associated with Anna Bullen reveal Banks's increasing skillfulness with this dramaturgic resource. His manipulation of the imagery involving blood, stains, and flooding deserves particular attention.

While the opening scene unobtrusively develops the theme of betrayal which plagues Anna, it is also crucial in beginning a play-long concern with blood imagery. Rochford and Northumberland discuss there the marriage of Henry and the former's sister. Rochford expresses ominous feelings about the marriage:

> Something of boding whispers to my Soul,
> And tells me Oh! this Marriage will be fatal--
> Methinks I see a Sword ty'd to a Thread,
> Small as a Hair, hang o're our Pageant Greatness;
> Believe me friend; Thrones are severest Touch-stones;

> And like the Emblem of their Guard, the Lyon,
> All but of Royal-Blood they will destroy.
> (pp. 1-2; italics mine)

The "sword," of course, prefigures Anna's later execution, but more importantly the image of blood here suggests that Anna lacks the lineal royalty of blood which will preserve her from the rigors of ruling as Henry's consort. The royal lion, Henry, will indeed destroy Anna. Later in the play blood is again associated with Anna in portentous ways. When she and Piercy meet for the final parting, Anna realizes her "Fatal Doom's at Hand" when "Three Drops of Blood" fall from her nose and stain her handkerchief (p. 56). Here it is not too incidental to note that Banks concatenates two other significant images of the play. The "stain" of blood is important to note as is the image of flooding or dangerous waters:

> Ah Piercy! fly, and leave me here alone
> To stem this mighty Torrent of my Fate.
> (p. 56; italics mine)

At the end of Act Five another handkerchief appears, this one stained with Anna's dying blood. When Piercy receives it, he reopens a wound he has received earlier and mingles his own blood with that of Anna, uttering a speech which nicely balances that of Rochford at the beginning of the play:

> Thus when the Generous Lyon sees the Blood
> Of his once Royal master shed like this;
> Taking the Lawn, stain'd with Imperial Gore,
> At first he Frowns, and then begins to Roar.
> Lashes his Sides; his Fiery Eye-balls rolls,
> And with his awful voice Revenge he calls;
> Till finding no Relief, at length He's mute,
> And Weeps, Tears falling from the Kingly Bruite;
> Then gently on it, as his Death-bed lies,
> And with a Groan, breaks his stout Heart, and Dies.
> (pp. 77-78)

Though these lines are rather inferior bombast the image in them still retains vital symbolic import. Here Anna's blood is clearly royal, if not lineally, then spiritually. Banks has transformed the ominous meaning of blood in the course of the play so that by the last act it is no longer a fatal sign, but rather a positive, symbolic indication of Anna's ultimate spiritual victory.

This same process is reproduced regarding the images of stains and of flooding, which are woven into the fabric of Vertue Betray'd. At first they are both negative images, holding threatening, often fatal meaning. Images of floods or dangerous water occur from the outset of the play, when the prophetic "dreadful sea of matrimony" (p. 3), uttered by Northumberland, sets the tone for them. Anna speaks of the "never to be fathom'd Ocean" (p. 14) at the end of Act One, where the image suggests her own predicament in understanding her situation, and she returns to the image a few lines later when she feels that her miseries "come rolling on apace" (p. 14) like waves of the sea. When she meets Piercy in Act Three, Anna again mentions this image while describing the dangerous court world in which she now lives:

> Under this Mask of Gallantry and Beauty,
> Is a rude Wild; nay, worse, a dangerous Ocean,
> Into whose Jaws, Love, like a Calenture,
> Will tempt us, where we both must Sink and Perish.
> (p. 40)

The image of the "calenture" (a sailor's disease which causes delirium and makes men jump into the sea, thinking it is land or safety) here underscores the theme of betrayal which runs through the play. Of course, the "dangerous Ocean" also epitomizes the desperateness of the

Queen's situation. This image recurs frequently up until Act Five ("wide and desart seas," p. 43; "wrack-devouring seas," p. 44; "sluces," "torrents," and "deluges," p. 52; "the world's a deluge," p. 56). However, in the fifth act Banks alters the meaning of the image, which until then is one of threat, of danger, of ultimate destruction. When Piercy receives the handkerchief stained with Anna's blood, he decides to die while uniting his blood with hers, and he does so while uttering lines of considerable symbolic importance:

> I feel my Soul beat at my Wound,
> And bid me to remember now's the time;
> Now to let out Life's Navigable Stream,
> And mix it with this most Celestial Flood,
> Thus, as kind Rivers to their Ocean run.
> (p. 76; italics mine)

Banks here transmutes the entire meaning of the image of dangerous waters which previously held true. Clearly, Anna's blood becomes a "celestial" ablution which kindly enables Piercy to die as fulfilled as the Queen was able to do.

Both blood and flooding images occur at the end of the drama, although the meaning of each image is considerably changed from that of the preceding acts. The same kind of evolution takes place with the image of stain in the play. Whereas before the last scene the image is one which has negative nuances, in which whiteness and purity are soiled by stains, at the end of Vertue Betray'd the meaning alters. Anna's blood stains a piece of "Linnen" (usually white in color) with its "Sacred Crimson" (p. 76; italics mine). Just as the flood became "celestial," so does the stain become "sacred" because of Anna's

influence. She is virtually apotheosized in this scene, both in her own words--

> First from a humble Maid he [Henry] lifted me
> To Honour; then he took me to his Bed,
> The highest State that I could be on Earth;
> And now, as if he thought he ne're could do
> Enough for me, has mounted me to Heav'n.
> (p. 75)--

and in the triple transmutation of images which occurs immediately thereafter.

Banks finally treats Anna's death as a sacrifice, much as he had done for Essex, where that noble's death was necessary if England was to successfully shift from one mode of existence to another. Anna also enables England to change, though in a much more positive manner than was the case with Essex's death. Her daughter, Elizabeth, became Queen and fostered Protestantism for the first time in the nation. Perhaps Anna's sacrifice was necessary for this change to take place. At any rate, Anna herself perceives that her progress as Queen is something very like a sacrificial rite, when she muses over the fate of Katherine of Aragon at the end of Act One:

> But Henry's Guilt amidst my Pomp is weigh'd,
> And makes my Crown sit heavy on my Head,
> To banish from his Bed, the chastest Bride,
> That twenty years lay loving by his side!
> How can I give it, without Tears, a Name,
> When I reflect my Case may be the same?
> And I, perhaps, as Slaves are by the Priest,
> Thus gay and fine for Sacrifice am drest.
> (p. 14; italics mine)

In its more explicit concentration on politics and its rich complexity of iterated motifs, Vertue Betray'd reveals qualities which clearly allow it to rival The Unhappy Favourite as Banks's finest play

to date. However, the playwright had yet one finer dramatic effort in him, as his treatment of the death of Lady Jane Gray reveals.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTIFS OF THE INNOCENT USURPER: A CATHOLIC SUCCESSION

Even more so that his two previous plays, Banks's The Innocent Usurper is intensely political, dealing with an issue of vital import to Englishmen of the 1680s (and 1690s)--the matter of the royal succession vis á vis religion. Far from being simply a play about "pure feminine distress," as a noted scholar of Restoration drama has recently asserted,[1] The Innocent Usurper deals also with the volatile subject which fomented upheaval in England during the last years of Charles II's reign, all the years of James II, and not a few of those during the reign of William and Mary. Indeed, Banks's new play might be properly said to offer a "doomsday scenario" of a Catholic succession to the throne of England, portraying as it does the tremendous casualties among Protestants which such a succession almost inevitably brings with it. The Innocent Usurper seethes with the politically charged atmosphere of the time when Banks claims it was first written, that is, about 1682.[2] It has been said to be perhaps Banks's finest work, and certainly the handling of the motifs in it reflects Banks at the top of his form. Almost all the images of the play have a direct bearing either on the theme of usurpation or on the fate of the usurper, while the images which many critics have seen as emphasizing the sentimental qualities of

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[1] Hume, p. 403.

[2] See below, pp. 139-140.

the play are fewer than in The Unhappy Favourite or Vertue Betray'd.[3] In particular the theme of usurpation is bolstered by several motifs, some of them crucially placed at the beginning and ending of acts, referring to vegetation, rivers, music, chaos, precipices, and falling. Those motifs which are associated directly with Lady Jane and assist in interpreting her role as usurper and the play itself include references to flowers and sunbeams.

The composition date of The Innocent Usurper: Or, The Death of Lady Jane Gray is uncertain, mainly due to Banks's own statements, as is also the case with The Rival Kings and Cyrus the Great. In the "Dedication," directed to the Stationer, Richard Bentley, Banks claims that this play was written ten years before the time of the "Dedication," which is dated October 5, 1693, and asserts that Bentley can substantiate this claim.[4] While it is possible that these statements are designed to assuage the civil powers of the stage, who might have been disposed to find political spectres in Banks's subject, and to presume that this play was actually composed in the early 1690s, we can more safely conjecture that the play comes out of the years between the writing of Vertue Betray'd (1682) and The Island Queens (1684); probably, the new play belongs to the year 1683. No internal evidence belies this

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[3] In particular, the pastoral images of this play and Banks's other history plays are analysed, especially by Tupper, to shed light on Banks's tendency toward the sentimental. More needs to be done with the idea of benevolism inherent in this motif, however.

[4] John Banks, "Dedication," The Innocent Usurper (London: for R. Bentley, 1694 [a microfilm copy was used]; future citations to the play will refer to this edition.

placement,[5] and the political situation in the play closely parallels that which existed during the Succession Crisis of the early 1680s: Jane Gray (Monmouth) is manipulated by friends and relatives, especially Northumberland (Shaftesbury), in order for her to succeed Edward VI (Charles II) and displace Catholic Mary Tudor (James, Duke of York). However, it is curious that Banks did not attempt to publish The Innocent Usurper in 1683, even if he had had trouble with getting it acted. After all, the next play he wrote, The Island Queens, was forbidden performance in 1684, yet Banks managed to have it published (by Bentley). Furthermore, the political action of the play parallels the events of 1688 nearly as closely as they do the events of the Succession Crisis: Lady Jane (William and Mary) is manipulated by Northumberland (Parliament) in order to replace a Catholic successor, Mary Tudor (James II), to an at least nominally Protestant king, Edward VI (Charles II). Of course, the Glorious Revolution succeeded where Lady Jane failed, but Banks makes it clear that this difference was not enough to deter some critics from drawing political parallels with the events in his play. Whatever the date of composition Banks never saw this play acted during his lifetime; only in published form did it find a Restoration audience and that well after the debacle of the early 1680s, and six years after the Revolution of 1688. This singular circumstance suggests that the politically charged theme of the play made it dangerous material during the entire late Restoration.

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[5]Hume, pers. com.

The critical reception of The Innocent Usurper has been less hospitable than that accorded either of Banks's last two plays, though the Lady Jane play is fine enough to compete with the Essex play as Banks's best work. Several critics have argued that the characterization in The Innocent Usurper is superior to everything that Banks had done or would do, with one of them also suggesting that the motivation of the characters is the best Banks provided.[6] In particular, The Duchess of Suffolk and Lady Jane are seen as masterful creations. Guilford, most scholars agree, is a poorly conceived character, Rothstein going so far as to say that he is the most stupid of all Banks's heroes.[7] Otherwise, critical attention seems stubbornly to point out the play's alleged maudlin sentimentality, or to dissect the resemblance to historical fact which Banks preserves.[8] As a result, critics neglect literary qualities of a higher order, including Banks's rather finely controlled manipulation of imagery and his appropriate use of sources. When taken into consideration, they may make The Innocent Usurper Banks's finest achievement.

The action begins as Edward VI's death is imminently expected, causing Northumberland and the Suffolks to plot to put Lady Jane Gray on the throne instead of the legitimate heir, Mary Tudor, a Catholic. The

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[6]Tupper, p. 163; Baugher, p. 129.

[7]Rothstein, p. 96.

[8]Hume, pp. 402-403, is a good example of the entrenched state of scholarship regarding the sentimentality of the play; see also Baugher, pp. 129-137, and Bogorad, pp. 130-219, for historical analyses.

plotters succeed in convincing the dying prince to name Jane his heir but have a much more difficult time convincing Jane herself that she should ascend the throne. After all other arguments fail, Guilford, Jane's husband, threatens to fall on his sword if she will not accept the crown. At this point Jane feels compelled to capitulate to their demands, though she does so with grave misgivings. Mary, who always remains an offstage presence in the play, is in the meantime aided by many members of the Council and urged to seek her place on the throne. The usurpers are soon captured, with Jane exuberant at the loss of her crown. She and Guilford are tried for treason and freely admit their guilt, making execution inevitable. Northumberland is captured and tries to save himself by converting to Catholicism; he is told, however, that he must convert Jane and her family as well or be doomed. Though successful with everyone else, Northumberland cannot alter Jane's conviction of the rightness of her chosen religion. Consequently, all the conspirators are led to the block, with Jane asserting to the last that her faith is more important than her life.

The issue at the core of The Innocent Usurper is the conflict between legitimate succession and religious belief which the death of Edward VI sets in motion. Much of the imagery of the play amplifies the tensions which are created by this conflict. Furthermore, the strategic placement of many of these images reveals Banks's now skillful dramaturgy. For instance, the opening lines of all five acts of the play insistently stress the chaos into which the succession and religious issues have thrown the nation. Though these images appear

elsewhere in The Innocent Usurper, their careful placement as the opening chords, as it were, of each act provides a unifying structure for the play and leads us immediately to the central thematic concerns which Banks develops. Such is the main result of the play's first two lines:

> Let the Sun's fruitful Rays abhor this Isle,
> And smile no more on this unfaithful Land.[9]

Here Suffolk predicts the coming chaos caused by the succession crisis, which he feels will plunge the nation into a state of desolation similar to that which might be created by the sun's failing to shine. Additionally, the second line touches on the reason for the strife to come: faith, that is, the religious faith or faiths which have precipitated the succession issue. England will become "unfaithful" indeed under the rule of Mary, with many Protestants, including Suffolk himself, martyred to accommodate her Catholic zeal.

Act Two is initiated with similar lines:

> The spiteful Stars have Blasted our Designs,
> And ballanc'd our proud Hopes with dire Success.
> (p. 11)

Here the impending disaster suggested by the opening lines of Act One has been realized as a result of the usurpation plot, which has been

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[9] The Innocent Usurper, p. 1; compare The Island Queens's opening lines:

> Remember Davison, how much thou ow'st;
> (For thou hast Wit, and Honour to be faithful,
> As well as to be great). . . .
> (italics mine)

The stress on faith in the opening lines of each play is probably not simple coincidence, but rather the sounding of an important theme which will concern the characters in each play.

"Blasted" with failure. Banks opens Act Three with a pair of images suggesting the political chaos into which the nation has been thrust, thus doubling the effect (at least in theory). Bishop Gardner, loyal to Mary and speaking from the Tower in which he has been imprisoned by Northumberland, reflects on the violent origins of the Tower structure and how that violence has remained in England as a curse:

> Omnipotence! what mean'st thou! fatal Caesar!
> Curst be the Winds that drove thee on our Shore;
> A Storm brought thee to us, and ever since
> The Storms of War has lodg'd within our Bowels.
> And curst be the Foundation of these Walls;
> When thou didst build this Castle to maintain
> Thy ill got Empire, 'twas first rear'd in Blood,
> And since with Blood of Princes often stain'd;
> A citadel for this Rebellious City,
> The scene of Murders, Slaughter-House for Kings!
> And Court of Hellish Plots--Ha! younder comes
> Northumberland like a Prodigious Meteor,
> That threatens Desolation where it hovers, ...
> (p. 22; italics mine)

Lines more loaded with images of chaotic violence would be hard to find, and the imagery continues in the last two acts.

In Act Four Pembroke begins the action with a speech supercharged with images of chaos, desolation and destruction. This Lord, who has pretended fealty to Jane in order to thwart her usurpation (though he is aware of her own personal goodness), enters and soliloquizes about the unjust political situation which has doomed Jane despite her manifest goodness:

> Weep Heav'ns, fall Hail and Torrents from the Skye,
> And when Y'ave drein'd the Briney Ocean dry,
> Weep on, and pour the Watery Globe and Night,
> On the World's back, and quench this Orb of Light;
> Or, for a dire presage of this black Day,
> Throw all your Thunder, sportive Balls away,

> Till with one horrid Universal crack,
> The frighted Earth, and Frame of Nature shake;
> As from wild Chaos, with one stroak 'twas born,
> So back to nothing let the Mass return.
>
> (p. 32)

The opening image of the play, where the sun is about to cease smiling on England, again appears when Pembroke urges the heavens to "Quench this Orb of Light"; the image of blasted hopes at the beginning of Act Two is here reemphasized in the "horrid Universal Crack" which Pembroke conjures; and the storm and desolation found in the commencing lines of Act Three return with a vengeance in the Armageddon image of "wild Chaos" with which Pembroke ends his speech. This concatenation of imagery, reminiscent of Banks's practice in Vertue Betray'd, comes, of course, at the very moment when Pembroke and all loyal English Catholics should be happiest, for Mary Tudor is now securely in power. And yet it is at this very time that the direst imagistic portents appear. The Succession Crisis and concomitant religious turmoil of the Restoration period are mirrored by vividly recurring motifs in Banks's play; the early 1680s (or middle 1690s) were indeed times that tried men's souls, Catholics, as here, and Protestants alike.

Though without the grandiose insistence of the lines which begin Act Four, those which initiate Act Five nonetheless continue the images of chaos which are a hallmark of act openings in this play. As the fifth act commences, Northumberland ruminates about his downfall, noting that he has been "Storm'd in a Night" (p. 45). Here again an image of elemental chaos mirrors the religious and political chaos of the succession crisis occurring in Tudor England.

As important to the unity and theme of the play as the opening lines of each act are the closings, where Banks emphasizes the motif of falling, often from a precipice of some kind. This motif underscores the downfall of Protestant hopes, notably those of Jane. Additionally, several act endings incorporate "storm" imagery, thus linking the ending of one act with the beginning of the next. At the end of Act Two, for instance, Jane, who has just reluctantly accepted her succession to the throne and views the crown and other royal regalia, contemplates them thus:

> Is this the fatal Glory of Mankind!
> The dazling Object that so fires his Mind!
> Curst as in Mines thou art, dug up with pain,
> With Labour got, and Sorrow lost again,--
> Methinks when I ascend yon dreadful height,
> [Putting on the Crown]
> I am like one, who when a Storm's in sight,
> Climbs up some dangerous Cliff that hits the Skies,
> To view the Labouring Barks with weeping Eyes;
> How they against the raging Billows strive,
> And wonders that the little Wretches live;
> But still forgets what slippery place he's on,
> How safe they are, how near he is to drown.
> (p. 21)

The "storm" image is immediately found again at the beginning of Act Three and is thus an important linking and unifying device (albeit the entr'acte might reduce this linkage for a viewing audience). However, the image of the cliff from which one might precipitately fall of a sudden illustrates the precarious position in which Jane now sits on the throne of the nation; it is an image which only a few lines beforehand is anticipated when Guilford assures his father than Jane will "mount the Precipice of younder Throne" (p. 21). Though the irony of his own description is perhaps lost on Guilford, it is not lost on

the reader, especially since this image is repeated earlier still by Jane, who attempts to warn her husband of the danger involved in assuming the throne:

> Rouze, rouze my Gilford from this deadly slumber,
> Start from this Lethargy of vile Ambition,
> A fatal Vision of deceitful Glory;
> Lest it shou'l prove with thee, like him who dreamt
> That he was mounted on a Precipice,
> And, finding it was real when he wak'd,
> Did in a Frenzy to the bottom fall,
> And dasht his Bones to pieces.
>
> (p. 16)

An image of falling also occurs at the end of Act Three, when Jane learns that she has been deposed:

> My Lords, farewel; divided here from State,
> Gilford and I will make our glad Retreat,
> Quit this high ground, nor dread the Brambly Soyl,
> But make it Pleasant with our Mutual Toyl,
> And tho' you see us Poor and Naked driven,
> Like our first Parents, from the Groves of Heaven;
> Say not; alas! but Act your Queen's Command,
> Guarding as Angels the forbidden Land;
> And let your Loyalties for ever be,
> Like Edens Bounds, to part the Throne and Me.
>
> (p. 32)

Not only does Jane fall from the "high ground" to lower, "Brambly Soyl," but her fall is likened to the Fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise and, like theirs, hers is a felix culpa, for she finds greater spiritual rewards in her resulting martyrdom than ever would have occurred had she remained on the throne. This Miltonic allusion is also perhaps ironically present at the end of Act One where Guilford compares himself to the "first Man in Paradise" (p. 10), thus giving every act ending of the play except the last some reference, allusive or otherwise, to the motif of falling, for the speech with which Jane ends Act Four clearly touches this chord resoundingly:

> Behold us here, thus tost, thus driv'n thus hurl'd,
> Gilford and I be warnings to the World;
> For popular Applause, and false Renown
> Make but a barren Title to a Crown.
> A rash Usurper with no Right but these
> Rides like a Ship unballast on the Seas;
> Flatter'd with gentle winds, does proudly Sail;
> But when the Billows rage, and Storms prevail,
> Her glorious Bulk to empty for its height,
> The Sea and dreadful Ruin swallow straight.
> (p. 44-45)

Here not only does the motif of the ship falling from its "height" amplify the downfall of Jane, but the "storm" which causes the fall also prepares for the same image at the beginning of Act Five, already discussed above.

The opening and closing of acts are freighted with symbolic resonance in The Innocent Usurper, certainly to a greater degree than Banks reveals in his previous plays. His ability to develop important image clusters and motifs continues to grow. While it would be a simple matter to show the presence of a considerable number of other images of chaos and motifs of falling in other parts of the play, these elements will be dealt with hereafter only as they coincide with other important motifs, many of which are tied to the dominant theme of proper and improper rule or government.

Vegetation imagery underscores the theme of proper rule, in particular the opposed images of the cedar and the bramble. We have already seen at the end of Act Three that Jane employs the bramble image when she falls from power; from "high Ground" she descends to "Brambly Soyl" (p. 32) more suitable to her proper station in the legitimate scheme of things. She knows her proper place and is at pains to make

others know it when she argues against her own succession to the monarchy in Act Two:

> Be not so rash, as in the Fable, once
> The Woods and Trees, the Rebels of the Forrest,
> That sought t'elect a Monarch of their own,
> And basely chose the Bramble for their King,
> Whilst the tall Princely Cedar stood neglected.
> (p. 18)

Jane knows that she belongs to a lower station and that it would be base for others to attempt to raise her to a higher one than she deserves. Bishop Gardner uses a similar image when he castigates Northumberland for having executed Lord Somerset, a staunch supporter of Edward VI; Gardner, whose name itself lends some credence to what he says, calls Somerset a "Cedar" who was "too tall" for the "shrub"-like Northumberland (p. 23). Finally, when Northumberland attempts to convert Jane to Catholicism at the end of the play, he argues that she should want Guilford to "grow to [be] a Cedar" (p. 51), forgetting that this image is one which will discourage Jane's agreeing with him. It is precisely a "Cedar" that Jane and Guilford are seeking not to be at this point in the play.

River images also underscore the theme of proper rule versus usurpation in The Innocent Usurper. In Act One, when Northumberland kneels to his son in order to reveal to him that he is now husband to the Queen, Guilford, believing this motion to be unnatural, cries:

> All Heav'n forbid!
> Rivers no more shall pay the Ocean duty;
> But rushing back, shall mingle with their Source,
> And like a Deluge, drown the Springs, from whence
> They flow: . . .
> (p. 9)

The proper duty of son to father is here reversed, as Guilford knows, and the proper duty of a subject is to flow toward his monarch, the Ocean; when this motion is reversed and subjects pay homage to persons without royal legitimacy, chaos ensues, as the "Deluge" image reveals. Guilford here prophesies the destruction of his family, "the Springs" which will be drowned when he assumes the monarch's place. Later, Pembroke notes while talking with Bishop Gardner that the Council had difficulty accepting Jane as Queen, and he uses the same image:

> How hard it is to tug against the Stream
> Of Royal Right.
>
> (p. 25)

For those who do tug against the stream, destruction follows, as the frequent mention of "deluges" (pp. 6, 9, 20, 28, 43, and 58) and other watery images suggests.

Banks also uses a musical motif effectively in this play. Usually this motif functions to reveal the ambivalent position many Englishmen found themselves in while trying to decide between two queens, one a usurper who is of the "right" religion and the other a legitimate heir who is of the "wrong" religion. For example, when Northumberland is asked to explain why Jane might not be as risky a monarch to enthrone as Mary because she, too, could marry a foreign monarch with larger holdings in his own right than he gained by marriage, he introduces his explanation with a telling image:

> There you are come to touch the String that will
> Soft Musick yield, or jar in England's Ear.
>
> (p. 5)

Whichever choice Northumberland--and by extension the average Englishman in 1683--makes, he will please some citizens and displease others.

Northumberland defends his own choice with another mention of the ambivalent nature of music:

> No Musick can beget a Harmony without some discord, ...
> (p. 11)

Jane also uses the same image when she explains to Guilford her acceptance of the result of the trial they endure in Act Four:

> Sweet Harmony of Life, just Musick flows
> From Souls, and strings, by stops, that interpose.
> (p. 44)

The stops, or pauses, in music are part of the reason for its sweetness, and similarly the adversity in life ultimately is in part responsible for the overall sweetness which it holds for us. Jane, at any rate, finds the moment of her greatest triumph to be in the trial which resulted from her greatest error. In order to produce "just Musick" one must have "stops"; in order for one to know the "Sweet Harmony of Life" its darker episodes must be experienced. In order, one might go on to say, to crown a legitimate monarch, her religion must be accepted in the bargain, and, conversely, to crown Jane and embrace her Protestantism is also to condone her usurpation. Banks places the audience of The Innocent Usurper in exactly the political dilemma which they faced in their everyday lives, except that his answer is to accept legitimacy at however great a price, in terms of the political and religious chaos which might ensue.

The reiterated motifs of Banks's Lady Jane Gray drama are clearly designed to illuminate the political and religious issues of his own times. Equally illuminating are his allusions, Classical, Biblical, or literary. Though many scholars have pointed out Banks's borrowings in

The Innocent Usurper, and they are legion, none has discussed how apposite most of them are to the themes of the play. Tupper notes that most of the Shakespearean allusions come from three plays, Macbeth, Richard II, and Julius Caesar.[10] That each of these plays is centrally concerned with usurpation seems to have escaped him, however, as the probable reason for the preponderance of allusions from them in Banks's drama. The many allusions to Paradise Lost, especially to the Fall, are certainly apropos to Lady Jane, who "falls" in every save a spiritual way. Classical allusions also abound in The Innocent Usurper and usually do more than "mercilessly pepper" the text,[11] for Banks is now fully in control of most, if not all, of the dramatic devices available to the playwright. Though Tupper is right in saying that Jane's quotation ("A Tyrant is the greatest Plague / The Gods can send to man"--p. 26) from Plato does not exist in this precise form anywhere in Plato's works, Tupper does note that the idea of the quotation is implied in nearly everything which the author of the Republic wrote.[12] However, Tupper entirely ignores the apposite allusion which immediately follows, when Jane compares herself to those "who vainly try, / With waxen Wings to mount the Angry Skye" (p. 26). The reference to Icarus here exactly parallels Jane's case, for she, albeit unwillingly, has also attempted to fly too near the sun, that is, the throne. Banks's references to the war between the giants and the Olympian gods (p. 7) is

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[10]Tupper, pp. 228, 231, and 233.

[11]Sutherland, 1977, p. 182.

[12]Tupper, p. 158.

also intended as an example of usurpation foiled. In general, then, the allusions found in the play, like the imagery, buttress the theme of the play.

Since Banks's play is not only about the foiling of a usurper but also about the undesirable consequences of a Catholic succession to the throne, he had to make Jane herself as positive a character as he made her usurpation negative. Indeed, part of the proof that Banks was not altogether happy with the historical outcome of the Mary Tudor--Jane Gray altercation resides in the positive motifs which are associated with Jane and with characters in sympathy with her, particularly Gilford and that dying or dead offstage presence, Edward VI. As described by other characters, the personality of Edward VI is especially appealing. More crucially, however, Banks not only balances his death at the beginning of the play with Jane's at the end, but he also describes Edward in such a way as to invite direct comparison with Jane and thus transfer much of the appeal which we have for the legitimate young monarch to Jane herself. This transfer occurs notably when Pembroke announces Edward's death in Act One. His speech has startling aptness to Jane at a later point in the play:

> You mist a sight wou'd fix your admiration;
> For oh! to see this Miracle depart,
> Was such instruction to Mankind, that all
> The volumes of Disciples, Chronicles of Martyrs
> Cou'd never parallel; He liv'd like Age,
> Yet dy'd as if he ne'er had known the World.
> (p. 3)

Not only does Jane die in Act Five the "Miracle of her Sex" and for the instruction of mankind, but Banks's recollection of her in his Dedication to the play clearly echoes the description of Edward found in the lines above:

> She had. . . . the Beauty of Yough, the Solidity
> of Old Age, the Learning of a Clerk, the Life of
> a Saint, and the Death of a Malefactor.

Edward VI's living "like Age" balances Jane's "solidity of Age," while his having "dy'd as if he ne'er had known the World" is paralleled by her having lived the life of a "Saint." The two are also brought together in an ironic parallel when Northumberland states his loyalty to the new Queen: "May she Reign long, and dye at last like him [Edward VI]" (p. 4). Neither reigned long, for each died in the bloom of youth and innocence. In fact, flower imagery is associated with each character, further cementing the parallel between them. Edward is a "Rose of Kings," a "Blooming youth" whose "blossoms" (p. 8) fall from the shaken tree, while Jane is a "drooping flower" (p. 38) whose head is successively adorned by a "golden wreath" (p. 21)--the crown--and a "beamy Garland" (p. 50)--the saint's halo.

The images of flowers and sunbeams, in fact, coalesce both at the beginning and ending of the play to reveal the saintly quality of Lady Jane and to point out something of the anguish which Banks probably faced in making his most sympathetic character a locus of political chaos. In Act One Northumberland urges his son to be the first to tell Jane of her newly acquired crown:

> Wrestle no more with doubts, but haste, my Son,
> Swift as an Angel from th'Immortal Throne,
> Holding a Beamy Garland in his hand
> To wreath the Temples of the dying just,
> And be the first salutes her with a Crown,
> As both her Merit's and her Beauty's due.
> (p. 9)

The "crown" is both the present monarch's crown and the future saint's halo. The ambivalent syntax of the lines makes it uncertain whether Guilford or the angel in the simile is performing the coronation. This uncertainty lends an acute irony to Northumberland's words and prepares for Jane's final execution, after which we must presume that she will indeed find "both her Merit's and her Beauty's due," for she finds no justice in life.

Balancing the passage quoted immediately above is another in Act Five where Jane relates a dream which she experienced while she and Guilford sleep in prison (with, significantly, a "basket of flowers and a garland" set conspicuously in view of the audience):

> Methought I softly stole from thee away,
> As thou safe sleeping on my Bosom lay,
> And, glad that I had pass'd from Death alone,
> Mounted on Pinions that out-flew the Sun,
> But on the Confines of that Heavenly Race
> A Warlike Angel stood to Guard the place,
> The same whom Sacred Story says to be,
> 'Twas Raphael sure, or one more great than he;
> Who looking terrible (with this Command)
> A Beamy Garland put into my hand.
> Return, said he, Crown him thou lov'st most dear,
> Without thy Gilford there's no entrance here.
> At that last word, I starting back did fly
> Swift as a falling Meteor from the Skie,
> And come to fetch thee on my Cherubs wings,
> Where we will Raign more absolute than Kings.
> (p. 50)

Where in Act One Guilford was likened to an angel bringing Jane a "beamy Garland," in the dream in Act Five Jane reciprocates by bringing him one, so that they may enter heaven together and "mingle and unite [their] beams together" (p. 58; italics mine). Immediately after this speech Jane reaches for the garland of flowers placed nearby and wreaths

them about Guilford's temples, thereby suggesting their readiness to die and the assurance which they feel of a heavenly reward. The last lines of the speech she utters while performing this act are relevant to the kind of death which Banks has in mind for the two of them:

> Now Spring and Paradise are on thy Brow,
> And richer Flowers in Eden never grew.
> The spotless Ram thus Hymen's Victim dies,
> To Love an Off'ring, Death a Sacrifice.
> (p. 50)

Jane and Guilford, like Essex and Anna Bullen before them, are sacrificial victims who die so that some necessary change in their society could be effectuated. In the case of the current play, the country's peace--what Dryden in Absalom and Achitophel called the "common quiet" a short time before The Innocent Usurper was written--is possible only with the destruction of those elements in society which threaten the peace, in this case, Jane and her husband. Later in Act Five, Banks makes the sacrificial aspect of Jane's death absolutely clear, when she is preparing for her death. She takes off her scarf in which she had embroidered the

> . . . Tale of Iphegenia
> (A Fatal Omen of this Fatal Day)
> Doom'd by her Cruel Parent to be Slain.
> In this, when th'Ax has done its welcome office,
> Be sure you wrap my Husband's Head, and with it
> This Head that's to be Sacrific'd to Peace.
> (p. 59; italics mine)

The Innocent Usurper is Banks's finest play, for in it all the elements of a rich and satisfying dramatic experience are fused. The motifs of the play underscore its major themes, these motifs are placed in strategically important places in the five acts, and there is a

concatenation of images surrounding the main character which fully illuminates her personality and her tragic destiny. Nowhere else does Banks achieve such a unified and richly ambiguous effect. Indeed, the effectiveness of the play is partly to be measured in its having been banned performance throughout the Restoration. One hesitates to believe that such treatment would be accorded a second rate hack writer who could do little more than draw tears from the fair sex. Banks was surely recognized as a powerful dramatist, at least by those readers who could detect the presence of political satire in the drama (and who doubts that success with satire was one test of literary merit during this period?). Like the Succession Crisis of the 1680s, the crisis of 1553 could be solved only by a violent wrenching of the body politic. Either legitimate succession or Protestantism could be salvaged, not both. Banks was not altogether happy with the solution which history reached in 1553, so in his last play of the 1680s, before censorship imperiled his livelihood, he tackled the same issue, though this time with distinctly different results.

CHAPTER VIII

MOTIFS IN THE ISLAND QUEENS: THE PROTESTANT SUCCESSION

Though an artistic success, The Innocent Usurper never saw the stage during the playwright's lifetime, obviously due to its overtly political subject. Banks's decision to write another play about the succession matter which rocked England during the early 1680s perhaps stems from the failure which he experienced with the stillborn Lady Jane Gray drama. At any rate, The Island Queens also explores the intractable problem of the succession as if Banks were determined to have his dramatic say about the issue. Almost predictably, this new play, too, was suppressed, though unlike its predecessor it was at least published soon after its original composition. A testament to Banks's apparently having liked this play rather a lot was his effort twenty years later, during the early years of Queen Anne's reign, to revise the play (as The Albion Queens) and have it performed, albeit with many of the religious and political nuances stripped away. Given the diluted thematic texture of the revised play, the present discussion will confine itself to the original version, which better reveals Banks's grasp of the complexity and uncertainties associated with the problem of the succession to the throne, a matter of paramount concern to Englishmen in 1684. One way by which Banks conveys the complex and uncertain nature of the problem is through his choice of dominant motifs. Most of them are constellated about a prevailing concern of

many of the play's characters, that of distinguishing appearance from reality. Thus, motifs of counterfeiting or forging are prevalent as are mirror images, dreams, motifs of confusion, and an abundant use of chiaroscuro. Indeed, Banks's effective use of light and shadow images is very nearly painterly. Other dramatic devices also underscore the problem of distinguishing appearance from reality; among the most important of these is his subtle manipulation of scene changes.

The Island Queens: Or, The Death of Mary, Queen of Scotland, A Tragedy was first published by Bentley in 1684. The civil powers barred its performance, and Banks, perhaps a bit piqued at his run of bad luck, apparently sought publication in order to vindicate his name. The title page, at any rate, boldly states that the play is being published "in Defense of the Author and the Play, against some mistaken Censures, occasion'ed by its being prohibited the Stage." Only after the coronation of Queen Anne in 1704 did Banks have the opportunity to stage the play and then only in a much watered down version, The Albion Queens. He probably deleted much of the religious and political material due to the controversy which grew out of Collier's Short View and to the need to placate the new monarch if he hoped to convince her to allow his play on the boards. After all, it contained in its original version parallels with Queen Anne's uncle, Charles II, and it would not do to explicitly debunk him before his newly crowned niece.

The critical reception of The Island Queens until quite recently was uniformly uninformative. Critics have felt that it is less affective than The Innocent Usurper, that it is a "noble tearjerker,"

and that it is an important work in the development of the "she-tragedy."[1] Of only slightly more interest are Rothstein's comments on the characters in the play, which he says are by and large reanimated versions of characters found in his previous plays.[2] By far the most exciting work done on The Island Queens has been that of Denise Sanlaville.[3] In a long essay she persuasively argues that the Succession Crisis of the early 1680s is at the heart of the play and that the Babington Plot to murder Queen Elizabeth is but a thinly veiled reference to the Popish Plot of the late 1670s. Sanlaville's identification of James with Mary, Queen of Scotland, is especially convincing, and her argument makes the censoring of The Island Queens more plausible and disposes once and for all of the longheld belief that Banks seldom plays with political fire in his work.[4] Furthermore, Sanlaville prepares the way for a much-needed argument that Banks's four historical plays form a political tetralogy about the problems of the monarchy during the Restoration. Her work is supported in part by Diane Dreher's comments on Banksian history plays.[5]

The action of The Island Queens focusses on the last days of Mary, Queen of Scots, whose efforts to clear herself of complicity in a plot to murder Queen Elizabeth are insufficient and lead to her death. The play opens with Cecil and Davison, the English Queen's chief ministers,

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[1] Tupper, 1935, p. 177; Hume, p. 217; Staves, p. 175; Baugher, p. 129.

[2] Rothstein, p. 96.

[3] Sanlaville, pp. 133-195.

[4] Tupper, 1935, p. 25.

[5] Dreher, p. vii.

agreeing to watch Mary closely since her presence in the country breeds faction and discontent. Norfolk, who loves Mary, and Morton, Regent of James VI of Scotland and an inveterate hater of the Scots Queen, argue before Elizabeth, one urging her to protect, and the other to cashier Mary. Norfolk prevails and gains an audience for Mary with Elizabeth. In spite of her envy and dismay at Mary's popularity with the commoners, Elizabeth becomes reconciled to her. Morton, however, has laid a plot to overthrow Norfolk by urging that noble to marry the Scots Queen, thereby infuriating Elizabeth. Additionally, the Babington Plot to assassinate Elizabeth is revealed by a priest to Davison. When letters are found which implicate Norfolk in treasonous activity and Mary's complicity in the Babington Plot cannot be disproven, the two are tried and condemned. News of Mary's innocence reaches Elizabeth too late to prevent the former's execution. As in The Unhappy Favourite, at the end of this play Elizabeth remains disconsolate, this time about the misfortune which has attended her relationship with Mary.

The Island Queens is a play about the difficulty of choosing between rival monarchs of different religious persuasions, making it indirectly a play about the dilemma which faced all Englishmen in the 1680s, who had to choose between James, Duke of York, and some prominent Protestant--at first Monmouth, but later William of Orange--as heir to Charles II. Admittedly, Banks tones down considerably the outright contest for the crown which dominates The Innocent Usurper, but even so the new play lies solidly on the bedrock of political and religious controversy deposited in England by the uncertain succession to the

throne following the death of Charles II. No absolutely satisfactory solution to this dilemma ever evolved, though events finally conspired to make most Englishmen content. A major part of the problem inherent in the succession issue centered on knowing what was right, what, in effect, was real, and the difficulty in distinguishing reality from appearance of reality tested men to their limits. For some the test of reality was legitimacy and for others, religion. Neither side could claim to satisfy the other, making for some contentious times at court, a situation which is recreated at the beginning of this play:

> Now when the madness of the Nation's grown
> To such a height, 'tis to be fear'd--Death walks
> In Masquerade, in strange and many shapes;
> Is grown into Rebellion with itself;
> Fears, Jealousies, and Factions crown her Stage;
> Two Queens, the like was never seen before,
> By different sides maintain each others Right.[6]

While instances of faction in the play are manifold, what these lines also suggest is a prevailing sense of confusion and uncertainty among men. And Banks reinforces this condition throughout the play, for he frequently stresses the idea of confusion. In Act One Norfolk recounts Mary's tribulations to Elizabeth in the hopes of causing a reconciliation between the two queens; one cacophonous passage stands out as emblemizing the world of The Island Queens:

> Birds of frightful Omen, Scriech Owls, Batts,
> And Ravens, such as haunt old ruin'd Castles,
> Make no distinction here 'twixt Sun and Moon,

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[6]John Banks, The Island Queens (London: for R. Bentley, 1684), p. 2 [a microfilm copy was used]; all future citations of this play will refer to this, the first edition.

> But join their chattering Wings with their loud croaks,
> And sing hoarse Midnight Dirges all the Night.
> (p. 11)

The sounds of confusion in this passage are matched by visual images of confusion and uncertainty. With just such an image Mary communicates her own sense of irresolution about marrying Norfolk:

> Like one that in a Desart seeks his way,
> Sees several Paths, yet doubting of the right
> Stands in a maze, and fears to venture upon any.
> (p. 33)

The confusion attendant on her choice is characteristic of the other personages in the play. While relating the plot to kill Elizabeth, the priest-conspirator, Gifford, uses an image of ultimate confusion to describe the "Deed," which the plotters attempted; it "Wou'd startle Nature and unfix the Globe, / And hurl it from its Axel Tree and Hinges" (p. 45).

In such a world of uncertainty and confusion, there should be little wonder if characters have difficulty knowing how to distinguish appearance from reality or have an inclination to question the reality of what they see or hear. For instance, after listening to Morton claim allegiance to Mary, Norfolk utters what becomes a standard qualifier in the play: "And if thou real art" (p. 15; italics mine). Morton naturally assures the Duke that his statements, which in fact are absolute fabrication, are true, claiming "I'me real" (p. 16), though only someone of Norfolk's immense credulity would believe him.

The matter of what constitutes reality is the concern of other characters as well. When Queen Elizabeth finally overcomes her fear of

Mary and rushes to embrace her during Act Three, Mary is startled and asks, "Can this be real?" (p. 37). And Elizabeth, hearing Gifford expose the details of the Babington Plot to her, wonders about the truth of the allegations: "If this be real, I had soon been dead" (p. 47). These are crucial moments in the play, pointing to the importance of the theme of distinguishing appearance from reality. In Act Two Norfolk, while telling Mary that she may soon see Elizabeth, further enunciates this concern:

> What do I see! the Person or the Shadow
> Of the most bright Divinity of Scotland?
> Is this her <u>real</u> Body on the Floor?
> (p. 23; italics mine)

Just previous to Norfolk's entrance, Mary herself emphasizes this motif, when she first requests a mirror to view herself and then dashes it to the ground because she feels it is "false," (pp. 22-23), that it misrepresents what she should look like after "eighteen years of sharpest Miseries." The mirror image returns during Gifford's revelation of the Babington Plot:

> No Necromancer ever shew'd the Face
> Of a suspected Stealer in a <u>Glass</u>,
> As I the lively Figures of these Monsters.
> (p. 30; italics mine)

Here the mention of black magic and the mirror repeats the basic concern of the play with what is real and what is merely appearance. Only God, it seems, can view men and see them for what they are, as Mary mentions in a powerful denial of the accusations made by Gifford in his exposure of the details of the Babington Plot:

> You high, imperial, and eternal Truth,
> That of disjoynted Atoms form'd the Sun,
> The shining Heav'ns, the Planet, and the World,
> So wonderful and glorious as they are;
> Who sees into the Soul and all its walks
> Through this dark Mould transparent as a Glass?
> (p. 51; italics mine)

For mortals, however, the human body is not a glass and we are unable to see the reality within another person. Thus, the basic problem for the characters in The Island Queens is to find some way of making rational decisions based on incomplete or fraudulent information. Of course, such a task is doomed to partial, if not complete, failure. Innocent persons, like Mary, will be executed; malefactors may be stripped of their evil intentions too late. Elizabeth's command to "Strip" Davison of his "borrow'd Plumes" (p. 70) is just such an instance of this situation, for only after Davison has successfully participated in the collusion to bring about Mary's death is he removed from his position of authority.

Besides the mirror motif which reinforces the play's concern with distinguishing between appearance and reality, the motif of forgery or counterfeiting is also frequently enunciated. The world in which the characters live is one in which what seems to be often is not. There are obvious uses of this motif, as when Norfolk calls the charges brought against Mary "false" and "forged" (pp. 9 and 10), or when Elizabeth insists that the complicity of Mary in the Babington Plot is "forg'd" (p. 46), or when Davison intercepts letters from Mary and causes them to be "neatly counterfeited" (p. 30), or when Morton, that "Serpent of Delusion" (p. 40), convinces Norfolk that lies are truth

(pp. 14-15). But there are also more subtle examples of this motif in the play. For instance, when Mary sees Norfolk being led to the block for execution, she learns that the headsman is, in fact, not "the publick Heads-man, / But one whose horrid Zeal has brib'd his Hand" (p. 57). Mary then asks the executioner to doff his "Vizour" and not be ashamed to show his face; when he does not, she realizes he is "some Bungler," who comes to learn the trade at Norfolk's expense (p. 57). The headsman is but one of many characters whose true identities are hidden, albeit in less obvious ways than behind a hood. Morton's machinations, those of Davison, and those of many offstage plotters including Babington's coconspirators, are symptomatic of the ills in the world of The Island Queens. Even nature itself has developed the annoying habit of appearing to be other than it actually is. Just before the dawn which will be Mary's last, Elizabeth broods over the unfortunate situation at hand and notes the strange appearance of the world about her:

> A midnight Silence sits upon the Morn;
> The Eye of Day shuts, as afraid already,
> And seems the setting, not the rising Sun.
> (p. 58; italics mine)

So much "seems" to be one way and is another in this play that such odd meteorology is entirely apposite.

Adding to the general uncertainties of the characters, as they struggle to know whom to support and for what reasons, is the dream-like quality of experience which several of them comment upon. Mary uses this motif to compare her past life to her present one in prisons:

> O tempt me not with thoughts of any State
> But this that I am in; it was a Vision.
> The World till now was but a Dream to me.
> (p. 24)

As part of an attempt to dupe Norfolk into believing lies, Morton recounts an alleged dream which he experienced and which changed his mind about Mary. He calls the dream a "Vision," and it is so in a very ironic sense, for in reality Morton either never had the dream or deliberately misconstrues what it meant in order to gull Norfolk. His false dream is, however, opposed by the prophetic dream which Douglas relates to Mary. Even Douglas cannot tell surely whether his dream prophesies truth or is merely the ravings of "madness" (p. 31). The insubstantial stuff of dreams hovers tantalizingly close to reality in the play and makes all the characters uncertain about what they do and do not perceive about others. In such a world no decisions can be made without some chance of error; Elizabeth's final decision to accept Mary's guilt and to allow her execution is merely the most striking of many decisions in the play which are exposed as inadequate, incorrect, or reversed later on.

A final important strand of images in the play deals with the opposition of light and shadow; this motif reflects the problem of telling appearance from reality. When Norfolk urges Mary to wed him, he indicates that it is she, not her crown, that is most important to him:

> By Heav'n! You are above all Queens to me;
> Your glorious Head was shadow'd with a Crown,
> And lovely Body seem'd but coursely clad
> With Robes of Majesty, like Stars beclouded;
> Those cast away, the Cherubin [sic] appears
> Bright as the World was in its Infant years.
> (p. 25; italics mine)

The imagery of chiaroscuro here underscores the major concern of the play with appearance and reality: the "real" Mary is hidden in clouds of darkness by her royal regalia; when that is stripped away, her brightness is able to shine through.

The same imagery is used in conjunction with Norfolk when he is arrested for treason in Act Four. Cecil describes him as "a brave Vessel in a Storm, [which] scatters / Bright Beams of Majesty through all his Clouds" (p. 41; italics mine). Even in adversity the honesty and forthrightness of the Duke is visible, as it so clearly is not in so many of the other characters in the play. Norfolk himself employs the same image in the speech immediately following the one quoted above:

> Man is the truest Dial of his Fate,
> His Princes Favour and the Sun at Noon
> Shews not a thing so beautiful and great;
> Whilst he,
> (As the proud Peacock that abhors his Feed)
> Sees not his growing Shadow on the Ground.
> (p. 41; italics mine)

The verbal chiaroscuro which Banks creates and uses to surround the two principal characters in The Island Queens is one of his finest touches. This motif is omnipresent, though a final example which clearly shows the relationship of chiaroscuro to the theme of appearance versus reality will suffice to show Banks's use of it. When Davison relates in Act Five how affrighted the common people are by the spectre of the Spanish Armada's being sent to England to save Mary from Protestantism, this effect dominates his description:

> The affrighted People hasten to their Shores,
> And scarcely can perceive a Cloud far off,
> Darkening the Sky, and blacking all the Sea
> But cry, th'Armado's coming.
> (p. 63; italics mine)

Though the imagery of the play emphasizes the central concern with which Banks deals, he uses other devices to suggest that appearance and reality are not always easily separable, and he does so in such a way as to draw the audience into the experience (in much the same way as he had one in The Innocent Usurper). Most notably, the scene changes in the last act suggest the deceptive nature of reality. In that act we are presented with a distraught Elizabeth, who only barely is able to sign Mary's death warrant, which reads

> To Our Lieutenant of the Tower, Commanding
> That the next morning after sight of this,
> You shall deliver to the Sheriffs of London,
> The Body of your Prisoner Mary Stewart.
> (p. 64; italics mine)

A few lines later Davison shows the warrant to Cecil and says "Tomorrow She [Mary] shall dye" (p. 65). Presumably the warrant has been signed a day in advance of the execution. Yet only eight lines later after a short scene change, Douglas states that the "Sun is ris'n, whose setting you'l [Mary will] ne're see" (p. 65). This incredibly swift passage of time wrenches the credulity even of those among us who have read Dr. Johnson on the unities. Perhaps what Banks attempts to highlight by this torturous and painfully obvious truncation of time is the very nature of reality as the audience views it. If we can allow ourselves to be convinced that many hours have lapsed in what are clearly only a few minutes at most, then how much more convincing are changes in time (and in people) less obviously wrenched out of context? Finally, how difficult a time must the average Englishman have had in trying to decide who bears legitimacy, Catholic Mary or Protestant Elizabeth, Catholic James or Protestant Monmouth (or William or Orange)?

Once we get past its surface emphases on the pathetic and sentimental, which have blocked critical sensibilities effectively until recently, the last of Banks's plays reveals a deep structure of considerable resilience. Sanlaville has probed the subtle political superstructure of the play and its relation to Banks's times. We have herein begun to reveal the artistic merits of the play, which deserves more sensitive attention still, as do all of the plays in the Banks canon. While Banks's contributions to the drama of the Restoration will be the subject of the concluding section of this study, it is perhaps relevant here to comment on the legacy which this particular play carried with it. We can see in Banks's revision of The Island Queens the elements of Restoration drama that the Eighteenth Century most cherished. Once stripped of its political and religious freight, as The Island Queens became in The Albion Queens, the play would have admirably fed the sentimental cravings of early eighteenth-century audiences, for very little save sentimentality was salvaged during the revision of the original play. Further, once any remaining political overtones were obscured by time, the main interest of this play and his others undoubtedly lay in their pathetic qualities, or so the audiences of the new century seem to have reacted to then. The deeper resonances of the Restoration political scene, however, still lie latent in this play and in all Banks's English history plays, and we would do well to revaluate them in the light of their obviously dense thematic concerns.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

John Banks's place in Restoration drama has been moving upward steadily ever since the bold revaluation by Allardyce Nicoll in 1925. Several reasons why Banks deserves solid stature alongside Otway, Lee, and Southerne as a writer of serious drama may be advanced over and above those which recent critics have articulated. First of all, Banks is a surprisingly sharp reflector of many prominent social and intellectual concerns of the Restoration. Students of this period can learn nearly as much from a careful perusal of The Unhappy Favourite or The Innocent Usurper as they can from a study of other late seventeenth-century literary barometers, such as Absalom and Achitophel, City Politiques, or Hudibras. If is is demurred that Banks doesn't mirror all the major social and intellectual forces of his times, then it may be rejoined that scarcely any single author save Dryden did so. Secondly, Banks made a more significant contribution to Restoration dramatic art than hitherto recognized. His satiric touch and his molding of the history play are each of considerable and lasting interest. Finally, much remains yet to be elucidated within the confines of the Banks canon. If one sign of the prominent literary artist is the depth or richness of his material, then Banks's plays have come of age, for there are many little-explored pathways down which future readers of his plays may travel.

The social climate of the time lies embedded in Banks's plays in at least two important veins. His heroic dramas, The Rival Kings, The Destruction of Troy, and Cyrus the Great, especially the second of these, reflect a concern with the heroic code which the restoration of monarchy in 1660 in some measure attempted to keep alive; one important function of this genre, as Canfield has shown, was to reinvigorate the aristocracy with the notions of chivalry which had underpinned their social stratum for centuries.[1] Banks's The Destruction of Troy in particular calls attention to the breakdown of the heroic foundations of Restoration society, for the dissolution of Troy symbolically mirrors Restoration London (as Banks's "Prologue" and "Epilogue" show). Banks apparently viewed his own times as a great watershed in history where one world view was gradually replacing another, where modern Machiavellian ministers were supplanting a king who desperately sought to buttress his sagging monarchy by invoking the heroic code and the concept of the divine right of kings. The Unhappy Favourite fairly exudes this conflict, as it does the Restoration interest in the great chain of being, a theory often marshalled to support the divinity of kings. Banks's Elizabeth I is frequently associated with those "correspondences" which act as Nature's vouchers for the divinity of the earthly monarch; the end of Act One of The Unhappy Favourite, for example, contains a forceful enunciation of this doctrine, though one which shows the cracks in the system which antimonarchial pressures have generated:

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[1]Canfield, pp. 49-62.

> There's order in all states but man below,
> And all things else do to superiors bow;
> Trees, plants, and fruits rejoice beneath the sun,
> Rivers and seas are guided by the moon;
> The lion rules through shades and ev'ry green,
> And fishes own the dolphin for their queen;
> But man, the verier monster, worships still
> No god but lust, no monarch but his will.
> (I, 436-444)

The "lust" and "will" which exert pressure on monarchy were often associated by Tories with the Parliamentarian forces which caused the Civil Wars of the 1640s and which were mobilizing toward the Revolution of 1688 even as The Unhappy Favourite was being played in May of 1681. It is incidentally interesting to note in this passage also the presence of the theriophilic argument of which Butler and Rochester were so fond and which would be enjoyed by many later readers of Swift, who felt that man is indeed a "verier monster" than the animals.[2]

The intellectual climate of Restoration England is reflected in other ways in Banks's drama. The late seventeenth-century interest in Epicureanism appears in them, for instance. Again, The Unhappy Favourite provides an example. When Essex is being led to execution, his very last speech contains a reference to this philosophy:

> Come, push me off then; since I must swim o're,
> Why do I thus stand shivering on the shore!
> 'Tis but a breath, and I no more shall think,
> Mix with the sun, or into atoms shrink.
> (V, 512-515; italics mine)

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[2] I am indebted to Dr. James Gill for sharing with me his study of theriophily soon to be published as "Mind Against Itself: Rochester's Satyr Against Reason and Mankind" in Texas Studies in Language and Literature.

Besides reflecting this classical philosophy, Banks also shows an abiding interest in the classics generally; a vogue for classical models had persisted during the Restoration, and Banks is not in the rear of those who indulge in pursuing them. Five of his plays have epigrams from classical authors, including Horace and Juvenal, affixed to the title page. Usually the epigram subtly illuminates a major character or theme of the play; for instance, the phrase "Crescit sub Pondere Virtus" ("Character increases under a burden") appears on the title page of Vertue Betray'd, aptly commenting on the character of Anna Bullen in the play. Of course, the very subject matter of The Destruction of Troy reverberates with a rich classical inheritance of ideas. And to a lesser extent the interest which Banks shows in the Alexander myth in The Rival Kings and in his numerous Alexander allusions throughout his other plays also reveals his homage to the classics.

Perhaps Banks's greatest reflection of the intellectual milieu in which he lived and wrote resides in the benevolism latent in his three English tragic heroines. The concept of the innate goodness of mankind is latent in the characters of Anna Bullen, Lady Jane Gray, and Mary Queen of Scotland, as well as in a host of minor characters: Rutland in The Unhappy Favourite, Piercy in Vertue Betray'd, Guilford in The Innocent Usurper, and Norfolk in The Island Queens. Banks's benevolent characters reflect an ever-increasing tendency on the part of thinking men of the Restoration to find natural goodness in man, though of course the Rochesters still persisted, as did the Mandevilles. But the

emphasis Banks placed on benevolence as an important feature of his tragic heroines gradually led to such works as Shaftesbury's Characteristics (1711) and to such later characters as that ultimate benevolent hero, Tom Jones. For all of his scoffing at the poetry in Banks's drama, Fielding may have learned as much about benevolence from Banks as from any other writer. One of the most important elements of Banks's affective quality is the omnipresence of naturally virtuous, altruistically-motivated heroes and heroines in his drama from Cyrus onwards. Allardyce Nicoll's belief that Banks may rank second only to Shakespeare as an influence on the drama of the early Eighteenth Century (and we do well to recall that Fielding began as a dramatist) no doubt stems in considerable measure from the benevolism which Banks articulates.[3]

It goes almost without saying that Banks does not reflect all of the major social or intellectual currents of the Restoration. In his

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[3]Nicoll, 1925, p. 237. Banks's role in the development of literary benevolism deserves further study, for it would shed needed light on his affective qualities and it would help resolve the question of his influence on later writers. Additional shadowy areas in the Banks canon are myriad. We need, for instance, to know more precisely what Banks's politics were and how he fits into the political arguments of his age. As will be noted elsewhere in this concluding chapter, the possibility of viewing the four Banks history plays as a tetralogy needs to be explored. Furthermore Banks's stagecraft is a topic virtually devoid of commentary; are there other ways by which he underscores the themes of his plays than by maneuvering scene changes, as he does in the last scenes of The Island Queens? Also, the influence of Milton on Banks requires study on the order of what Tupper conducted on the Shakespearean influence, for the presence of the great Puritan writer is never very far away in Banks, especially when the latter is indulging in pastoral solioquies. Another area of genuine ignorance is the classical influence on his plays. The currents of Greek and Roman literature, mainly the latter, which run beneath the surface of his plays are badly in need of study.

drama is almost no mention of the "court rakes" who dominate, for instance, the drama of Etherege and Wycherley. We cannot say that this paucity of reference stems from Banks's lack of access to the Court, for he had enough influence to gain a reading of The Island Queens from the Duke of York, or at least so the "Dedication" to that play avers. Banks simply did not react very strongly toward the Rochesters of the time, at least not nearly so much as did many of his contemporaries. There is not in Banks, furthermore, much to indicate that he shared with so many of his countrymen an interest, even a wan one, in science, invention, or experimentation. Nothing of the virtuoso or of the Baconian empiricist may be found in Banks's plays or in the man himself. These missing elements of the Restoration intellectual climate are hardly surprising, however, in a man who seems so clearly to have been drawn to the rapidly fading holistic political vistas of the Tudor and pre-Tudor eras rather than to the politically fragmented time in which he lived. If Banks places little emphasis on the rowdy courtiers of Charles II's entourage or on the heady scientific discoveries of Boyle or Newton, this very lack of interest emphasizes those ideas which did captivate his mind. Banks appears more concerned with how the past is reflected in the present than with the innovations of the present. Thus, his history plays have their point because past events mirror those of the present; Lady Jane resembles Monmouth in certain disturbing ways, and here Banks finds an intellectually stimulating idea which can be worked into the stuff of drama.

Besides being a fairly accurate reflector of certain important ideas hovering persistently in the Restoration intellectual and social milieu, Banks merits attention from students of the age, especially its literary culture, because his plays make a significant contribution to the theatre of the time. In the past much attention has been directed at Banks's role in shifting the emphasis of Restoration serious drama from the exotic, public, and heroic to the domestic, private, and affective, and this emphasis is rightly applied to Banks, but it is hardly the end of his significance. There are other reasons for singling out his drama for further study.

Banks's satire, for instance, is of a higher calibre than has been previously suspected. Since he lived in an age which has become famous for the political satire of its major writers, it is surprising that Banks's own political satire has been so neglected. Certainly there is reflected in his portrait of Charles II as a philandering and minister-dependent latter day Henry VIII as successful a satire as a dozen or so others of the king which throng the serious drama of the age. There is little doubt that Banks's contemporaries found his work heavily loaded with satiric freight as well as political commentary, for he has been judged to be the single most censored playwright of the Restoration.[4] It is hard to believe that his satire was blatant enough to inspire censorious response in his own day and yet is so neglected by modern audiences. We need to approach his plays with a sensitive ear, one

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[4]White, p. 39.

attuned to potential satiric nuances of a political nature, for Banks has proved that he repays such treatment.[5]

Banks's employment of history in his plays has been much studied, but the analyses to date have placed little emphasis on the plays as history plays. Consequently, the four dramas on English historical subjects have further potential as objects of scholarly research. In particular these four plays require a study which views them as related parts of an historical tetralogy, similar in scope to either of the two tetralogies of Shakespeare. Indeed, just as Shakespeare gave his audience a dramatic history of the Yorks and Lancastrians painted across a mammoth dramatic canvas, so Banks has chronicled the history of the Tudors. As Tupper has shown,[6] Banks knew Shakespeare quite well, and so he could very well have found a model in the Bard's treatment of the Wars of the Roses. Perhaps Shakespeare inspired Banks to produce a tetralogy of plays on the evils of the succession conflict (as the history plays of the earlier author are about the evils of civil war). The similar themes and characters of Banks's four histories, which have been seen as an example of artistic bankruptcy by some, may have more profound structural consequences than we have yet discovered. If we view the plays of Banks's later career as interrelated segments of a large dramatic design, the similarities of theme and character become ways of unifying the plays into a sort of quasi-Shakespearean superdrama. If even tenuously confirmed, such a theory would do much to improve Banks's position among the Restoration serious dramatists.

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[5]Sanlaville, pp. 133-195.

[6]Tupper, 1934, pp. 1-47.

Whether or not we wish to grant the possibility of Banks's writing a tetralogy of plays, we now have no reason to doubt the unity of his individual dramatic efforts. The present study has shown how Banks uses the motif to emphasize thematic concerns. Almost without exception the plays are bound together by highly organic image clusters and motifs which reveal definite dramatic craftsmanship in operation. Banks's sophistication in handling these devices increases during his career. From the relatively commonplace images of The Rival Kings and The Destruction of Troy Banks moves to the highly orchestrated motifs underlying the binary world of The Unhappy Favourite, the motifs with protean meanings of Vertue Betray'd, and the structurally apt placement of images in The Innocent Usurper. Much more, of course, remains to be done in explicating the motifs of the seven plays, but the present study has opened a route to Banks which was previously obstructed by generations of critics bent on wringing every ounce of available sentimentality from Banks and then leaving him to dry, slowly twisting in the wind. While his drama may never attain to the excellence of poetic texture found, say, in All for Love, the evidence is sufficiently well in hand to firmly plant several of his plays--including The Innocent Usurper, Vertue Betray'd, and The Unhappy Favourite--alongside the better plays of Lee, Otway, and Southerne. While each of these dramatists has certainly one or two plays better than any of Banks's works, none of them wrote consistently on a level significantly superior to that of John Banks.

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