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# Ceremonial Theater and Tragedy from French Classicism to German Classicism

THAT TRAGEDY ORIGINATED in political-religious rituals is well known (Cartledge; Easterling), so much so that “It is hard to conceive of ritual without some element of drama or drama without some element of ritual” (Csap and Miller 4). It is, therefore, all the more surprising that the revival of tragedy in modern times has rarely been studied in relation to ritual performance, not even in the case of seventeenth-century French classical tragedy or German classical tragedy around 1800, both of which were billed as reinventions of the classical Greek model. The reason for this inattention cannot be a lack of rituals in modern times. On the contrary, the modern state that began to take shape in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was as much taken up with ritual and festive performances as fifth-century Athens, albeit in rather different forms. Ritualized ceremonies, public spectacles, and theatrical performances shaped, to a great extent, the political life of the early modern period.<sup>1</sup> This was particularly true of early modern France—the epitome of the absolutist state—which spared no effort in displaying and celebrating its power. It was, to quote a term coined by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, a “theater state” (see Briggs). It was in this theater state that tragedy was revitalized and remained, from the outset, highly conscious of its classical Greek parentage. “As a literary genre with its own rules and characteristics,” Jean-Pierre Vernant points out with reference to fifth-century Athens, “tragedy introduces a new type of spectacle into the system of the city-state’s public festivals” (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 23). In a similar fashion, French tragedy from the mid-sixteenth century to the age of Louis XIV introduced a new type of spectacle into ritualized ceremonies of the absolutist state. After French classicism had reached its acme in Jean Racine’s tragedies of the 1670s, tragic theater continued

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<sup>1</sup> The great number of festival books attests to the importance of ceremonial spectacles in the early modern period. See Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly and Anne Simon. For historical overviews and critical studies, see, for example, Alewyn; Béhar and Watanabe-O’Kelly; Mulryne, Watanabe-O’Kelly, and Shewring. For a survey of the ritual dimension of social-political life in early modern Europe, see Muir.

to flourish in Europe, particularly in German classicism at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the process, however, its relationship to political rituals was constantly reconfigured. This essay investigates tragic theater from French classicism to German classicism with regard to ritualized ceremonies and spectacles of the early modern state. I shall refer to these ceremonies and spectacles summarily as ceremonial theater.<sup>2</sup>

From the seventeenth to the turn of the nineteenth century the relationship between tragedy and ceremonial theater went through four major phases:

- Sponsored by the state, tragedy was initially continuous with ceremonial theater;
- Finding a new source of the tragic in the implacable conflict between public sovereign power and insistent desires of the royal flesh, Racine created a tragic theater that contested ceremonial theater;
- After Racine, especially over the course of the eighteenth century, ceremonial theater and tragedy moved in sharply diverging directions, with the former falling into a steady decline and the latter turning towards the sentiments and concerns of private persons;
- In German classicism, and especially in Schiller's classical dramas, ceremonial theater was appropriated by the tragic stage, which established itself as an autonomous realm of the imagination.

In this process, the aesthetics of tragedy changed, and the political world witnessed dramatic transformations. A study of European tragic theater in relation to political rituals during this eventful period, therefore, will provide a new perspective on the interaction between aesthetics and politics.

### 1. Tragedy in the Ceremonial Theater of the Early Modern State

From the outset, a main function of ceremonial theater was the acclamation and glorification of power. The rise of the sovereign state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was thus accompanied by the establishment of a ceremonial apparatus with institutions, practices, and discourses (Duindam 181–219) that operated in conjunction with both the juridical apparatus of sovereignty and the administrative apparatus of government. Accordingly, ceremonial theater performed the function of acclaiming sovereign power, on the one hand, and implementing governmental rationality, on the other.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In referring to ritualized ceremonies and spectacles of the early modern state as ceremonial theater, I follow the eighteenth-century German polymath Johann Christian Lünig, who compiled, over thousands of pages, detailed descriptions of political and ecclesiastical ceremonies under the title *Theatrum Ceremoniale Historico-politicum* (1719–20). The question as to the relationship between tragedy and ceremonial theater has been occasionally raised, but never really answered. Although Béhar and Watanabe-O'Kelly realize the necessity of relating drama and ceremonial theater, their volume merely juxtaposes drama and festivals without analyzing them in relation to one another. Bannister emphasizes the differences between drama and ceremonial theater. For a rare analysis of the relationship between drama and ceremonial theater, see Zanger 112–30.

<sup>3</sup> The existing scholarship does not make this distinction. For Agamben the exclusive function of ceremonial rituals is the glorification of power (see *Kingdom*), whereas for Muir (252–93) ceremonial rituals are associated with government. Duindam distinguishes between domestic and dynastic ceremonials (181–82).

### *Ceremonial Acclamation*

Ceremonial theater's acclamatory function can be divided into two main categories: ceremonies staging internal sovereignty or rule over subjects, and ceremonies staging external sovereignty or the relationship of one sovereign to another. The former category includes coronations as symbolic acts of inaugurating a new ruler, rituals establishing and reestablishing the ties between the king and various constituents of the commonwealth (urban entries, elections, diets or estates, *Erbhuldigungen* and *Belehnungen* in the Holy Roman Empire, and *lit de justice* in France), and rituals of dynastic continuity (royal weddings, births, baptisms, and funerals). The latter category includes the entries of foreign sovereigns or their representatives, *entrevues* and audiences between sovereigns or diplomats, peace conferences and the signing of treaties, peace festivals, celebrations of victory, and the like. Ceremonies staging internal sovereignty enacted public law that governed the relationship between the sovereign person and his or her constituents, whereas those involving external sovereignty enacted international law that governed the relationship between sovereign persons. Both served to affirm, display, and extol sovereign power.

Traditionally, grand ceremonies were mounted to mark extraordinary events or liminal periods either within a realm or between realms. In France, the system of traditional state ceremonials included coronation or *sacre*, royal funeral, entry into Paris or *entrée*, the royal visit to the parlement or *lit de justice*, all described in detail in André Duchesne's *Les antiquitez et recherches de la grandeur et maiesté des Roys de France* (1609) and Theodore Godefroy's *Cérémonial de France* (1619). After the assassination of Henri IV in 1610, the frequency of grand state ceremonials gradually declined. However, with political life increasingly concentrated in the royal court, the everyday life of the ruling elite came under the sway of ceremonial rituals. Under the reign of Louis XIV, grand ceremonies meant to display royal authority on extraordinary occasions gave way to routine ceremonies designed to display and acclaim royal power at every moment (see Giesey, esp. 147–70, 219–38). Indeed, the daily interaction of the court aristocracy was subjected to the strictest etiquette and ceremonial rules. The relationship between sovereign persons was also drawn into the permanent ceremonial theater, as ambassadors of foreign sovereigns took up residence at the court. In the meantime, the festive spectacles that used to accompany or follow grand ceremonies—music, dance, dramatic performances, fireworks, tournaments, and the like—were stylized into refined forms of art and offered not merely on important occasions but also on a regular basis as part of courtly life (see Apostolidès). A good example of this was the *ballet de cour*, the favorite entertainment of the French court. The frequent appearance of the young Louis XIV in ballets established his reputation as an accomplished dancer, and his role as Apollo earned him the name of “Sun King.”

The development of tragedy in France was keyed to the transformation of ceremonial theater. Traditional state ceremonials had a pronounced theatrical quality. As the historian Ralph Giesey points out, “the *entrée*, like all other royal ceremonials, existed to honor the king, and he was the principal actor; but each performance of the event called for original theatrical creations that could be used to edify the king; he was therefore also the principal spectator. The scenario

of 1549 established an admirable tension between classical ideas and national aspirations as the new French king, appareled *à l'antique*, had the leading role in a play that instructed him in classical models of rulership" (*Rulership* 159). Étienne Jodelle's *Cléopâtre captive*, generally considered the first original French tragedy, was akin to ceremonial spectacles in honor of the king. Performed in 1553 before the royal court to celebrate the French victory over the Holy Roman Empire in Metz, the play staged the king's sovereign authority in front of the king's own eyes. The prologue directly addressed Henri II, extolling him as the mightiest of monarchs and thanking him for bringing the muses back to France. These same muses, in turn, acclaimed the king's glory by means of a drama that represented him as Octavian, the greatest monarch of the ancient world.

In the seventeenth century, Giesey tells us, pompous state ceremonials "went out of style everywhere . . . as the art of creative entertainment by and for rulers moved from the streets to the salons and gardens of the palace" (*Rulership* 164). What he does not mention is the fact that the function of state ceremonials—the acclamation of the sovereign—had been taken over by the theater. At the behest of Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII's chief minister, Abbé d'Aubignac drew up a *Projet pour le rétablissement du théâtre Français* (d'Aubignac 698–706). In *La pratique du théâtre*, a kind of manual for theater practitioners, d'Aubignac counts tragic theater among the public spectacles that redound to the glory of princes: "Les Souverains ne peuvent rien faire de plus avantageux pour leur gloire, et pour le bien de leurs Sujets, que d'établir et d'entretenir les Spectacles et les Jeux publics avec un bel ordre, et avec des magnificences dignes de leur Couronne" (d'Aubignac 43; Sovereigns can do nothing more advantageous for their own glory, nor for the well-being of their subjects, than to establish and maintain public spectacles and games, in the beautiful order and the magnificence worthy of their crown).<sup>4</sup> Thus, in Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637), *Horace* (1641), and *Cinna* (1643)—the first masterpieces of French classical tragedy<sup>5</sup>—bloody conflicts and vicious circles of revenge are all resolved by a benign king under the sign of love. Just as dramatic persons on stage submitted themselves to the sovereign rule of the monarch, so the spectators in the theater were united in a collective body by the applause. Acclamations of performers imperceptibly turned into acclamations of the king, and the collective body of the theater audience became the collective body of subjects (see Auerbach; and Merlin-Kajman, *L'absolutisme and Public*).

After the beginning of Louis XIV's personal rule in 1661, traditional state ceremonials were replaced by ceremonies regulating daily life at the court. A new genre of tragedy—the *tragédie en musique*, a spectacle that united music, dance, drama, and other arts—was created to celebrate royal power and add to the splendor of the court. In contrast to tragedies played at theaters geared to a paying audience, *tragédie en musique* was primarily a court entertainment that emphasized music and spectacle, and it usually featured a prologue making clear the link between the magnificence of the spectacle and the grandeur of the monarch

<sup>4</sup> My translation here and throughout unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>5</sup> Although *Le Cid* was billed as a tragi-comedy because of its happy ending, according to Abbé d'Aubignac, a play is designated a tragedy because of the events and characters it depicts, not because of its ending (d'Aubignac 211).

(Naudeix 199–217). For example, in the prologue of Baptise Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione* (1673), billed as a *tragédie lyrique*, the Sun—symbol of the King—moves slowly over the stage, offering itself to be admired. In the dramatic action itself, the mythological figure of Cadmus, embodying the king, astounds the audience with his valor and gallantry. In a similar fashion, Lully's *Atys* features a prelude that begins with a choral hymn to the King:

Leur justes loix  
Et leurs Exploits  
Rendent leur mémoire éternelle:  
Chaque jour, chaque instant,  
Ajoûte encore à leur nom éclatant  
Une gloire nouvelle.

His just laws / And his exploits / Make his memory eternal: / Every day, every instant / Add to his resounding name / One more new glory.

Thereupon, Melpomene, the tragic muse, appears on stage, invoking her “l'appareil magnifique” (magnificent device) and “spectacles pompeux” (pompous spectacles), and proposes that all the figures on stage (as well as the audience) “Preparez de nouvelles festes; / Profitez des faveurs du plus grand des Heros” (prepare new festivals and gain the favors of the greatest of heroes). The tragedy of *Atys* then follows in five acts.

### *Ceremonial Governance*

As public display and acclamation of power, ceremonial theater glorifies the ruler. But in so doing, it also makes visible the ranking of all those who participate in the acclamatory act. Theodore and Denys Godefroy note in the preface to their *Le Cérémonial François*: “Quant au but & dessein d'iceluy, il n'est autre que pour seruir à appaiser & terminer tant de debats qui suruiennent chaque iour en matieres de preseances. . . . En tous Royaumes & Estats bien policez on a tousiours eu esgard à ce que l'ordre requis és Rangs fust exactement obserué” (1: iii; As to the goal and design of this volume, it is meant to serve to quell and terminate the debates that occur in matters of precedence all the time; . . . In all the well-governed kingdoms and states, it is always important to make sure that the requisite order of ranks be exactly observed.) Insofar as ceremonial theater displays and enacts the hierarchical order constitutive of well-governed states, it represents a vital tool of governance. This was true of great assemblies at major ceremonial occasions such as coronations and royal funerals, but even truer of ceremonial ordinances and conventions in the daily operation of state apparatuses such as the military, diplomacy, law court, and central administration. Particularly worth emphasizing in this regard are the etiquette and ceremonies in the daily interactions of court society (Elias 78–116). Rules for the ceremonies of chamber, table, stable, chapel, and other aspects of daily life required perfect government of the body, which was stylized and displayed in courtly dances, epitomized by the king himself, and considered a symbol of the good government of the state.

Tragedy implemented this good government by poetic means. However acrimoniously theorists as well as practitioners of tragedy argued with one another, they converged in their insistence on the lawfulness and orderliness of the poetic text. Although tragic composition had always abided by a set of specific rules, which

Aristotle, both descriptively and prescriptively, worked into a system, it was in the French classical age that rules of tragic composition assumed paramount importance. They included basic dramaturgic conventions such as the division of a play into five acts, principles of plot-making such as the three unities and verisimilitude, prescriptions for characterization such as *bienséance*, norms of diction and versification such as rhyming alexandrines and rhetorical ornamentation, as well as the declamatory and gestural code inscribed in the dramatic text (see Lyons; and Forestier, *Passions*). The rules prescribed for tragic theater were comparable to ceremonial ordinances and regulations, even though they performed their function in their own specific way, namely by transforming the disorder and anxiety that reign on stage into order and pleasure. The highly codified tragic composition at once mirrored and enacted the law and order ceremonial theater aimed to visualize.

### *Semiotics of Ceremonial Theater*

In both its acclamatory and governmental functions, ceremonial theater employed a welter of signs to create a theatrical performance. As a semiotic system, theatrical performance consists of the spatial arrangement of the stage, the actors' activities, the actors' appearance, language, and nonverbal acoustic signs (Fischer-Lichte 13–141). In ceremonial theater, the princely court, occasionally even the entire city, provided a splendidly decorated stage (Mösender). Visual and acoustic signs such as “colours, apparel, sounds (‘sons lugubres’)” were as indispensable as symbolic artifacts such as “scepter, orb, ring, crown, etc.,” which served as props (Theodore Godefroy, qtd. in Duindam 183). At the center of ceremonial theater were, of course, the activities of the ceremonial actors—their movements and positions, their gestures, their facial and vocal expressions. Most of the considerations listed in *Cérémonial François* regarding meetings between royal persons and ambassadors concern gestural, facial, and vocal signs (Godefroy 2: 771). They indicate that the theatrical signs employed by ceremonial theater were invested with fixed meanings independent of particular ceremonies. Laid down prior to any performance, these signs applied to all occasions. For instance, depending on rank, one could speak to the king covered or uncovered, and one could give the right hand or the left hand. Ceremonial rules observed by sovereign persons were, in Lünig's words, introduced “aus eigener Bewegniß und Willkür, durch einen stillschweigenden *Consens*, ausdrücklichen Vergleich, *Usurpation*, *Possess* und *Praescription*” (1: 2; by their own volition and arbitrary decision, through tacit consensus, explicit comparison, usurpation, possession and prescription). In short, ceremonial rules were really nothing more than arbitrary signs. A ceremonial performance selected, combined, and arranged them in specific ways, thereby evoking a vision of order through the relationship between the ideas associated with them.

The semiotic regime of ceremonial theater was part of the rhetorical doctrine of *actio*—that is, delivery or performance. As such, it was also shared by tragic theater in the seventeenth century. Developed in parallel with the poetics of drama, theatrical performance in the seventeenth century was, as a historian of theater puts it, “structuré progressivement à partir des règles de l'*actio* oratoire. Le jeu

tragique a pu s'épanouir dans la mesure où il était le plus proche de l'action de l'orateur, fondée sur la modération, l'élégance et la sobriété" (Chaouche 361; structured progressively on the basis of the rules of oratorical *actio*. The tragic performance could flourish insofar as it took place in the closest proximity to the activity of the orator, founded on moderation, elegance, and sobriety). A book on Molière published in 1706 notes that "Le Comédien doit se considérer comme un Orateur, qui prononce en public un discours fait pour toucher l'Auditeur" (Grimarest 35; the actor must consider himself an orator, who delivers in public a discourse created for the purpose of moving the audience), and the Jesuit Franz Lang's *Dissertatio de Actione Scenica*—arguably one of the most important treatises on the art of theater in the baroque—characterizes acting as "the art of modifying the entire body in a fashion calculated to create feeling in an audience" (Lang 1). Such an oratorical conception of acting implies that certain gestural, facial, and vocal signs are correlated with certain affects. In both ceremonial and tragic theater an actor must learn to master these signs and then display them on stage in a specific arrangement in order to evoke in the audience the appropriate responses.

## 2. Contesting Ceremonial Theater: Racine's Tragedy

Jean Racine's works in the 1660s and 1670s appeared at a time when ceremonial theater shone with the greatest splendor under the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>6</sup> Although greatly appreciated by the court, Racinian tragedy implicitly counteracted ceremonial theater. A comparison between Racinian tragedy and Lully's *tragédie en musique* can help us appreciate this changing relationship. Although Racine and Lully both claimed Greek tragedy as their model, Lully's indebtedness largely involved one crucial dramaturgical device: the singing and dancing chorus that bears witness and responds to the actions of individual dramatic persons. In his tragic operas the chorus serves as a conduit for acclamation, thus ensuring the continuity between operatic performance and ceremonial theater. By contrast, in Racine's tragic dramas of the 1660s and 1670s the chorus is replaced by the figure of the confidant (or confidante). The chorus places the protagonist under public scrutiny, thereby making him into a public figure. The confidant, by contrast, is a figure who allows the protagonist to confess what is hidden from public view, "opening up the secret, defining the exact status of the hero's dilemma," and producing a solution "by naively representing to him a hypothesis contrary to his impulse" (Barthes 53–54). Indeed, it is only by proposing alternatives and solutions that the confidant abets the protagonist's confession of his secret passions,

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<sup>6</sup> In 1653, the young Louis XIV was presented to his people as the Sun in Benserade's *Ballet royale de la Nuit*. In 1660, having taken over the reins of power and married the Spanish Infanta Maria Teresa, the Sun King staged a grand royal entry into Paris. Two years later, he staged the "Grand Carrousel" to mark the birth of the Dauphin and the end of the *Fronde*. Other spectacles followed: *Les Plaisirs de l'Isle Enchantée* (1664) in honor of his mistress, Louise de la Vallière; the festival celebrating the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668); and the celebrations for the Conquest of the Franche-Comté (1674). Apart from these grand spectacles, daily life at Louis XIV's court was entirely shaped by ceremonials. Racine's first tragedy, *La Thébaine*, appeared in 1664, and his career as a tragic dramatist reached its peak with *Phèdre* in 1677. Thereafter he was appointed to the position of royal historiographer at the court of Louis XIV.



thus serving as an instrument for what Michel Foucault has called “the incitement to discourse.”<sup>7</sup> Racine’s heroes are royal persons. Incited by their confidants to talk, again and again, about the stirrings of their hearts, they counter with hidden forces and secret urges the public roles prescribed to them by ceremonial theater.

The figure of the confidant was of course not Racine’s invention. Its dramaturgical significance in Racinian tragedy turns on the use to which it is put. As someone in whom the hero confides, the confidant incites him or her to engage in a confessional discourse. What is confessed is, above all, love, desire, an irrepressible passion, an inexplicable impulse of the flesh. This Racinian love is thrown into sharp relief in *Andromaque* (1667), which concerns the aftermath of the Trojan War. The drama opens with the arrival of Orestes, Agammenon’s son, at the court of Pyrrhus, Achilles’ son, in his capacity as the envoy of the alliance of Greek cities. His mission is to ask Pyrrhus to deliver Hector’s son, so that the Trojan royal line can be exterminated once and for all. This official mission, however, also makes it possible for him to see once again his beloved Hermione, who has been sent by her father Menelaus to marry Pyrrhus. In the meantime, Hermione has fallen passionately in love with Pyrrhus, who has in turn fallen in love with Hector’s widow, Andromache, who still spends all her time mourning her dead husband. In short, the dramatic plot is constructed according to the following formula: Orestes loves Hermione, who loves Pyrrhus, who loves Andromache, who loves Hector, who is dead. The love that connects the protagonists—who are, in turn, accompanied by their respective confidants—has a number of salient characteristics. First, it overrides all other concerns. For the sake of love, Pyrrhus is willing to betray his Greek allies, Orestes to commit regicide, Hermione to swallow shame and humiliation, and Andromache to sacrifice her own life. Second, this love is indivisible: it has a single object and can under no circumstances be shared with another person. Even though Pyrrhus, rejected by Andromache, considers marrying Hermione in order to fulfill his duty, and even though Hermione, rejected by Pyrrhus, considers giving in to Orestes’ pursuit, both of them rush back to their true love object at the first opportunity. Third, this love is absolute, not conditional on, or explicable by, any particular qualities of the individuals involved. Pyrrhus loves Andromache in spite of her captive status; Hermione rejects Orestes in spite of his “mille vertus” (535, great virtues).<sup>8</sup> Fourth, this love is perpetual. Once it comes into being, it never changes and never ceases, not even after the death of the beloved. Andromache loves Hector as deeply after he is dead as she did when he was alive. Hermione’s love for Pyrrhus even intensifies after his murder, as his death robs her love of any possibility of satisfaction.

All-powerful, indivisible, unconditional, perpetual—the characteristics Racine assigns to love mirror the hallmarks of sovereignty theorized by Jean Bodin a century earlier in his *Six livres de la République*: “the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth”—that is, as a power “not limited . . . in function, or in length of time” (Bodin 1, 3). The prince, in whom sovereign power is vested, recognizes nothing, after God, that is greater than himself. He neither shares his power nor

<sup>7</sup> *History of Sexuality* 17–35. For a detailed Foucauldian analysis of the confessional discourse in Racinian tragedy, particularly in *Phédre*, see Balke 357–89.

<sup>8</sup> Quotations from Racine’s plays are taken from the *Pléiade* edition. The English translation is provided by *Complete Plays of Jean Racine*, translated by Samuel Solomon. Verse numbers are given in the brackets following each quotation.

allows anyone to encroach upon it. He exercises his power by making, altering, and enforcing laws without himself being bound by them. This power “has no other condition than what is commanded by the law of God and of nature” (8). Once acquired, the power of the sovereign prince can neither be delegated nor transferred, not even after the prince’s death. In fact, as a public, symbolic person, the king never dies (see Kantorowicz). In short, sovereignty means a supreme power that is indivisible, unconditional, and perpetual. Yet precisely at the moment when monarchical absolutism found its consummate realization in Louis XIV, the absolute and perpetual power that was sovereignty encountered an uncanny double that Racine called love. If the rights of sovereignty are public and appertain to the prince as a public person, love is a passion lurking behind and beneath the public persona, reigning over the private interior of the self. Racinian tragedy, then, opens up a secret dimension in the royal person and, at the same time, pits this secret dimension against his public rights. The royal person is now split violently apart by two countervailing powers: the public rights of sovereignty, on the one hand, and the secret demands of the heart, on the other. Furthermore, because love is as absolute, indivisible, and perpetual as sovereignty, the conflict between these two powers cannot find a solution. This conflict and its necessary outcome—death—are perhaps nowhere more poignantly articulated than in Pyrrhus’s threat to Andromache: “Je vous le dis, il faut ou périr, ou régner” (972; “I tell you, you must die or reign”). Either public rights and private desires converge, in which case Andromache is crowned queen, or they do not, in which case Andromache dies. In Racine’s tragedies, however, they never converge. Accordingly, his dramatic plots demonstrate the inevitability with which royal persons meet their doom, although in some cases—such as *Bérénice*—death does not actually take place.

By positing love as the secret double at cross-purposes with public sovereign power, Racine uncovers a new source of the tragic: the conflict between the political and the sexual, between public persona and private desire. Whereas in many of Corneille’s tragedies the dramatic conflict resides in a dilemma between sexual desire and political imperatives that are exterior to and go against this desire, the conflict in Racine is “an internal division that can never be sutured” (Greenberg 14). Racinian tragedy is thus a theatrical form that disturbs and disrupts ceremonial theater by pitting passions and desires against public sovereign power and tracing the ways in which this conflict drives the royal person into destruction.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, it contests ceremonial acclamation and governance, while heralding a new semiotics of theatrical performance.

### *The Racinian Contestation of Ceremonial Acclamation*

*Bérénice* illustrates the ways in which Racinian tragedy challenges ceremonial acclamation. At the center of the drama is the star-crossed love between Bérénice, the queen of Palestine residing at the Roman imperial court, and Titus,

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<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault once speculated that the function of Racinian tragedy “is to constitute the underside of the ceremony, to show the ceremony in shreds, the moment when the sovereign, the possessor of public might, is gradually broken down into a man of passion, a man of anger, a man of vengeance, a man of love, incest, and so on” (“*Society Must Be Defended*” 176).

who has just acceded to the throne after his father's death. Bérénice makes her first appearance on stage fleeing from the acclamation accorded her as the beloved of the new emperor (135–39). In a language echoing that of Bérénice, Titus himself flees from the praise of a “shallow court”:

Et je l'ai vue aussi cette Cour peu sincère,  
 À ses Maîtres toujours trop soigneuse de plaire,  
 Des crimes de Néron approuver les horreurs.  
 Je l'ai vue à genoux consacrer ses fureurs.  
 Je ne prends point pour Juge une Cour idolâtre,  
 Paulin. Je me propose un plus ample Théâtre;  
 Et sans prêter l'oreille à la voix des Flatteurs,  
 Je veux par votre bouche entendre tous le Cœurs. (351–57)

And I have also seen this shallow Court,  
 Too ready always to obey its masters,  
 Approving Nero's most revolting crimes;  
 I've seen them praise his madness on their knees:  
 I will not take these sycophants as judge,  
 Paulinus. I desire a nobler audience;  
 And without listening to the voice of flatterers,  
 I wish your mouth to speak for every heart.

Both Bérénice and Titus are in love, and love has its home in the private interior of the self. Once the private inner self is discovered as a dimension other than the public persona, it also requires a new mode of communication opposed to the ceremony that offers praise to the public person. It creates new norms—such as sincerity—and discredits the ceremonial acclamation of public power as sycophancy, flattery, dissimulation.

However, the rise of the private self as the counterpart to the public persona, or the concomitant assertion of secret desires over and against public rights, does not lead to the disappearance of acclamation altogether. Rather, it has the effect of shifting acclamation away from ceremonial theater and towards another kind of theater: tragic theater. Titus and Bérénice love each other, but the public law of Rome does not allow an emperor to marry a foreign queen. Caught in this quandary, Titus weighs different courses of action. Initially, he asks Bérénice to leave so that he can do his duty as an emperor, and Bérénice resolves to die. For Titus, to follow the public law of Rome at the expense of love would elicit praise from the people (1219–24), yet, because love is as absolute as public sovereign power, the glory that redounds to sovereign power at the expense of love is mere cruelty (499–501). Indeed, sovereign power without love deserves pity rather than praise (719–22). On the other hand, to renounce the empire for the sake of love, and thus to forswear glory altogether, would be cowardly and shameful (1399–1406). Titus, himself, can imagine no other way out of the quandary than death. To die or to reign: Titus's fate echoes Pyrrhus's words to Andromache. In the fifth act, Titus, with great theatrical panache, announces to Bérénice his decision to die. He makes sure there is an audience, choosing for this purpose his trusted friend Antiochus, a king from Asia who resides at the Roman court and who is secretly in love with Bérénice (1291–92). He then assures Bérénice of his love, vowing to end his life if she still resolves to die. His performance has the desired effect: Bérénice agrees to leave Rome without killing herself so that Titus can reign without violating the public laws of Rome. Titus's is here a stage death—a death that is immedi-

ately cancelled once it has achieved its effect on the audience. As such, it illustrates the basic aesthetic principle of tragic theater.

Bérénice's response to his action provides an even more explicit reference to tragic theater:

Adieu, servons tous trois d'exemple à l'Univers  
De l'amour la plus tendre, et la plus malheureuse,  
Dont il puisse garder l'histoire douloureuse. (1514–16)

Farewell. Let us—all three of us—portray  
To all the world the sweetest, saddest love.  
Whose painful tale it ever will preserve.

With these lines, the curtain falls and the audience applauds. The painful tale the heroine Bérénice speaks of is nothing other than the tragedy called *Bérénice*, with the audience's applause directed at the tragic dramatist who tells this painful tale. The end of *Bérénice* thus enacts, I argue, a shift in the practice of acclamation—from ceremonial to tragic theater. In the former, the object of acclamation is the person embodying public power. Yet once that figure begins to contain a private self, ceremonial acclamation is difficult to distinguish from disingenuousness. Indeed, it can feel like a cruel mockery of the private self, as Titus's case demonstrates. Acclamation is now due to the tragedian who puts on stage the pathos caused by the division of the royal person into a public persona and a private self, and who, in so doing, produces pleasure—tragic pleasure.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Racinian Contestation of Ceremonial Governance*

Racine's *Phèdre* (1677) provides a good example of his contestation of ceremonial governance. The ceremonial theater performs its governmental function by enacting law and order in visually effective ways. The carefully choreographed appearance and conduct of individual persons, and their configuration as a well-ordered ensemble, are its key components. In Racine's tragedy, irrepressible desires welling up from the depths of the private self weaken the ability of the individual person to keep up appearances and to mind his or her conduct, thereby undermining ceremonial governance—indeed, governance in general. Thus, Phaedra, queen of Athens, enters the stage entirely incapacitated by her love for her stepson Hippolytus:

N'allons point plus avant. Demeurons, chère Oenone.  
Je ne me soutiens plus. Ma force m'abandonne.  
Mes yeux sont éblouis du jour que je revois,  
Et me genoux tremblants se dérobent sous moi. (153–56)

<sup>10</sup> The tragedian Racine's need for acclamation is particularly pronounced in the case of *Bérénice*. Competing with Pierre Corneille, who wrote a tragedy on the same subject at the same time, Racine seeks to present *Bérénice* in the preface to this piece as the epitome of a good tragedy: it has the capacity for holding the audience "through five acts, by a simple plot, sustained by the depth of the passions, by the beauty of the sentiments and by the elegance of the expressions." He then continues: "I am very far from imagining that all these qualities are found in my work; but also cannot imagine that the public will bear me a grudge for having given it a tragedy honoured by so many tears and the thirtieth performance of which has been followed with as much attention as the first" (*Complete Plays* 1: 377). For a detailed account of Racine's effort to gain recognition for this piece, see Forestier 383–414.

Let us stay awhile, Oenone, go no further.  
 I cannot stand, my strength is failing me.  
 My eyes are blinded by the light I see,  
 My faltering knees are giving way beneath me.

Because the government of the body lies at the heart of ceremonial governance, Phaedra's incapacity for governing herself, caused by her illicit obsession, implies the breakdown of ceremonial governance. In fact, she is so conscious of her own incapacity that she dreads appearing in public. No sooner does she appear on stage than she wants to hide herself from the Sun, who is her maternal grandfather (165–72) and who, in his incarnation as the Sun-King, stands for ceremonial theater. She opens the third act, in which the dramatic conflict reaches its climax, by announcing her wish to disappear (737–40). The stage on which Phaedra appears is the tragic stage. The stage from which she wishes to disappear is the ceremonial one. The dramatic person of Phaedra exposes the fault-line between the ceremonial stage and the tragic stage and acts out the shift from the one to the other.

Phaedra's failure to govern herself also leads to the breakdown of governance in general, since desire interferes with the exercise of will and reason on which governance depends. Phaedra's obsession with Hippolytus is "du fol amour qui trouble ma raison" (675; "the insane love that troubles my reason"). When her confidante Oenone asks her to assume the government of the state after Theseus (her husband, the king of Athens) has reportedly died on his sojourn abroad, she answers:

Moi règne! Moi ranger un état sous ma loi!  
 Quand ma faible raison ne règne plus sur moi,  
 Lorsque j'ai de mes sens abandonné l'empire,  
 Quand sous un joug honteux à peine je respire,  
 Quand je me meurs. (759–63)

I, reign! Impose my will upon the people,  
 When my weak reason reigns no more over me!  
 When I have lost dominion over my passions!  
 When I can barely breathe beneath my shame!  
 When I am dying!

In the seventeenth-century absolutist state, the will of the sovereign was believed to be, with nature, the main source of law (Schröder 97–117). In Racinian tragedy, however, the sovereign will is endangered by the urgings of the flesh. The law, then, is bound to collapse; indeed, there can be no government to speak of.

One example is the juridical failure evident in Theseus's condemnation of his son Hippolytus. When Theseus returns in the third act, Phaedra has already confessed her love to Hippolytus and been politely spurned. Fearing Theseus's revenge, Phaedra acquiesces to Oenone's proposal to accuse Hippolytus of trying to seduce her. Believing that Phaedra's accusations are true, Theseus flies into a rage, banishes his son, and calls upon the sea god to punish him. Hippolytus's savage death follows shortly thereafter. This catastrophic series of events attests to a crisis of testimony: how can the truth about the private self be ascertained? Faced with the accusation leveled against him, Hippolytus pleads with his father to consider his entire life (1092–96), maintaining that the truth about a person does not reside in one particular act, but in the pattern of behavior developed over the course of a lifetime. Testimonies serving to ascertain this

truth, accordingly, are not to be sought in a report about a particular act, but in continuous observations of long-term behavior patterns. Such a view forms an integral part of what Foucault calls the disciplinary apparatus, which prevailed in the nineteenth century (see Balke 367–71). In Racine, we see its origin: the private self asserts itself vis-à-vis the public persona and requires a new method of establishing the truth and making judgments. Yet it comes into being only to be stymied immediately. Theseus still knows nothing about the private self and regards Hippolytus's arguments as denial and perjury. His judgment thus remains within the register of ceremonial governance: he listens to an allegation about an egregious act and then delivers the putative culprit to spectacular punishment. The consequence of this adjudicative act is disaster.

The breakdown of ceremonial governance also contrasts starkly with the poetic perfection of *Phèdre*, which fulfills completely the standards of lawfulness and orderliness required by French classicism (see Forestier 538–72). Indeed, it seems almost as if the poetic text and tragic stage have taken over all forms of lawfulness, leaving ceremonial theater to implode. Tragic theater is now the custodian of law and order.

### *Racinian Tragedy as Harbinger of a New Theatrical Semiotic Regime*

Ceremonial theater, like theater in general throughout the seventeenth century, was governed by a semiotic regime that conceived of signs as customary or arbitrary representations of ideas. Within this regime, theatrical performance was meant to display certain corporeal signs—in conjunction with scenic and other signs—in order to evoke the ideas associated with them. For all its theatrical innovations (Chaouche 301–59), Racinian tragedy was still beholden to this semiotic regime. On the most basic level, *bienséance*—norms of conduct required of public persons—is strictly observed. Yet in staging the clash between love and sovereignty, between private desires and public rights, Racinian tragedy also brings into view a new conception of corporeal signs, thereby heralding a new semiotic regime. The private self speaks a different language from the public person, and desire uses other signs than public power. More precisely, love has its own corporeal language—a language radically different from, indeed opposed to, the ceremonial corporeal language used by the public person. Behind and beneath their public interactions, Racine's characters exchange secret glances, evince sudden blushes, make inadvertent gestures—all corporeal signs that originate not from arbitrary or customary conventions but from the feelings and affections of the body itself.

Racine's oriental tragedy *Bajazet* offers a perfect example in this regard. Roxana, initially the Sultan's favorite concubine, now made Sultana and granted supreme power at the court, is in love with the Sultan's brother Bajazet, while Bajazet is in love with a princess by the name of Athalida. Roxana gives Bajazet a quintessential Racinian choice: reign as her consort or die. In order to save his life and gain power, Bajazet pretends to love Roxana, but with little success, as he confesses to Athalida:

Mais quelque ambition, quelque amour qui me brûle,  
Je ne puis plus tromper une Amante crédule.

En vain pour me sauver je vous l'aurais promis.  
 Et ma bouche, et mes yeux, du mensonge ennemis,  
 Peut-être dans le temps que je voudrais lui plaire,  
 Feraient par leur désordre un effet tout contraire,  
 Et de mes froids soupirs ses regards offensés  
 Verraient trop que mon cœur ne les a point poussés. (741–49)

But yet, despite my burning hopes and love,  
 I can deceive her credulous heart no more.  
 In vain I would have sworn it, to be saved:  
 My mouth, my eyes, that cannot bear to lie,  
 Perhaps precisely when I wished to please,  
 Would speak the opposite by their unease;  
 While sensing my cold sighs her wounded eyes  
 Would know they did not from my heart arise.

Theatrical signs employed by ceremonies are arbitrary signs. But signs of love are natural expressions of feelings; as such they are not susceptible to arbitrary change. In dramatizing the struggle between desire and sovereign power, Racinian tragedy likewise dramatizes a struggle between two semiotic regimes: ceremonial *bienséance* and the natural language of the heart. In the eighteenth century, the latter came to dominate European theater.

### 3. The Decline of Ceremonial Theater and the Rise of Domestic Tragedy in the Eighteenth Century

Racinian tragedy came into being at the historical juncture when the ceremonial theater of the early modern state reached a peak of splendor and magnificence under the reign of Louis XIV. In a time when life at the court was subjected completely to ceremonial regulation and supervision, when one could be nothing but a public person identified with a certain ceremonial role, Racine created a tragic theater that anatomized the mortification undergone by the individual in this condition. It was a theater that staged the irruption of what ceremonial theater kept at bay, and that, in so doing, disrupted ceremonial theater itself. What ceremonial theater kept at bay was the hidden power of a private self that was as absolute as the public power of the sovereign. That Racine's royal personages perish because of the tension between these two powers can be read as the reenactment of a sacrifice in the mythic past that founded the monarchical state (see Apostolidès, *Le prince sacrifié* 10). Yet within the historical context of Racinian tragedy the stage-death of royal personages can also—and more importantly—be read as a sacrifice that instituted a new social-political order that recognized secret desires and public power as belonging to separate and equally autonomous realms. In this sense, Racinian tragedy contributed to the genesis of the separation between the private and the public realms in the eighteenth century and beyond. Indeed, towards the end of the seventeenth century, and still within Racine's lifetime, the prince came to be regarded as a person invested with public rights and driven by private passions. With regard to the history of princes, Leibniz thus distinguishes, in the preface to his *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus* (1693), between a person's public and secret history. He then states that such a distinction resides in the "nature of things":

and just as in legal controversies the parties and their lawyers use many arguments before the judges which do not appear in their writings and are not put into the records—since both the attractions of women and the splendor of gold often have more force than the laws and testimonies—thus also many things remain secret in the acts of the powerful and in the causes of treaties, especially because often facts which pass unobserved have a greater effect than is thought. Thus sometimes a report which is maliciously reported or invented strikes the soul of a prince or of his minister, and leaves its sting; from which issue hidden impulses of hatred and revenge, masked by colours sought for their appearance. And not rarely great revolutions are brought about by noble souls, simply to refute something which they take as contemptuous of them. (Leibniz 168)

Given such a “natural” division, ceremonial theater and tragic theater moved in opposite directions. The former fell into a decline, while tragic theater came to concern itself mainly with the feelings and actions of the private person.

The first sign of the decline of the ceremonial was that, beginning around 1700, it became the object of scholarly attention. Leibniz's *Codex juris gentium diplomaticus* marked the beginning of the professional compilation and study of the ceremonial archive, and during the first decades of the eighteenth century publications on ceremonial topics mushroomed. Some publications (the anonymous *Ceremoniale Brandenburgicum*) describe ceremonial practices at certain courts, while others (Dumont and Rousset's *Le Ceremonial Diplomatique des cours de l'Europe*) deal with ceremonial customs across Europe. In contrast to the very small number of ceremonial publications in the first half of the seventeenth century, which acclaimed and legitimized royal power and thus formed an integral part of ceremonial theater itself,<sup>11</sup> these early eighteenth-century publications aimed to offer objective knowledge to a wide reading public. Indeed, the study of the ceremonial became a scholarly pursuit, which was called in German *Zermonialwissenschaft* or the “science of the ceremonial.” With Stieve's *Europäisches Hoff-Ceremoniel* and Lünig's *Theatrum Ceremoniale* as its representative works, this science was concerned with the nature, function, and history of ceremonial theater, as well as with its generic classification (see Vec).

At the same time, ceremonial theater also began to lose its luster and political functions. Stieve called ceremonial theater “Comoedien” (comedies)—part curiosity, part entertainment (Preface, unpaginated)—and enlightened intellectuals had hardly anything more to say about it than ridicule. The only place where ceremonial theater still retained some significance was the international arena. But, even there, it only drew some attention as “ein wichtiges Stück des Europäischen Völkerrechts” (Moser, *Versuch, Zweiter Theil* 7; an important part of the European law of nations) in order eventually to become a mere diplomatic formality.

In the meantime, the tragic stage gradually moved away from issues of public rights and turned towards matters of private life. In *Entretiens sur “Le Fils naturel,”* Diderot calls upon tragedians to “get close to real life” (56)—that is, the life with which a bourgeois audience can identify. The tragic stage best suited to this goal was, of course, bourgeois domestic tragedy: “It represents the misfortunes which are all around us. What! can you not imagine the effect upon you of a real background, authentic dress, speeches adapted to actions, simple actions, dangers which you cannot fail to have feared for your relations, your friends, yourself?”

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the dedication to the king (“AV ROY”) at the beginning of Godefroy's *Le Cérémonial François* (unpaginated).



(Diderot 57). The feelings, emotions, and sentiments, around which domestic tragedy revolves, dominated the semantics of humanity, whereas public power was viewed as opposed to human nature. Thus, in his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Lessing—the German advocate of domestic tragedy—famously argues that a king is interesting for the theater not as a king, but only as a human being who has the same kind of feelings and sentiments as every other private person (251). Diderot and Lessing sought, as it were, to ban public persons from the tragic stage. They declared war against the *opera seria* that continued to populate its stage with princes and heroes throughout the eighteenth century.

A tragic stage dealing with matters of private life necessarily rested upon a new semiotic regime, the core of which was the notion of natural signs. Racinian tragedy indicates that desires and feelings are naturally accompanied by certain corporeal expressions that defy control either by the will or by conventions. The eighteenth-century concern with the psychological nature of the human being led to the insight that certain conditions of the mind manifest themselves through certain visible signs of the body. Because these signs are natural insofar as they figure as psychologically necessary indices of mental states, they starkly contrast with those signs established by conventions or arbitrary decisions. Such a psychologically grounded conception of corporeal expression went hand in hand with a new theory of acting crucial to Diderot's and Lessing's vision of bourgeois domestic tragedy (see Košenina). In his *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, Diderot urges actors to be “a close imitator and thoughtful disciple of nature” (Diderot 103). Here “nature” means a psychological understanding of human nature that correlates desires, feelings, and all other mental states to specific gestural, facial, and vocal signs. Actors must apply this understanding on stage with cool-headed precision.

#### 4. Ceremonial Theater on the Tragic Stage: Schillerian Tragedy

In the waning days of the *ancien régime*, the connection between ceremony and tragedy, between the politics of the absolutist state and the aesthetics of the tragic stage, thus seemed to have been sundered completely. Politics was depleted of the theatrical and the aesthetic, while theater turned towards private life and aimed to provide aesthetic pleasure for the bourgeois audience. However, during the decades following the French Revolution the ceremonial theater that had been in steady decline throughout the course of the eighteenth century experienced a remarkable revival—on the tragic stage. The relationship between ceremony and tragedy had come full circle.

If at the beginning of our story—the seventeenth century—the greatest innovation in tragic theater took place in Paris, at the turn of the nineteenth century it took place in Weimar, where Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Friedrich Schiller's literary productions laid the foundation of what was to be called German classicism. Both Goethe and Schiller were tragedians, and ceremonial spectacles formed an integral part of their dramaturgy. *Faust II*, Goethe's final work and crowning achievement, features an hour-long court masque (Goethe 217–46), and Schiller's classical tragedies—the dramatic oeuvre produced in the final years of his life, beginning with the *Wallenstein* trilogy—contain a range of ceremonial spectacles. *Die Piccolomini*, the second part of the *Wallenstein* trilogy, reaches its

climax in a banquet scene (act 4), in which high officers in Wallenstein's army swear allegiance to their wavering general. The scene itself takes place in a ceremonial space: a grand, festively illuminated hall with richly decorated tables (*Werke* 4: 122). *Maria Stuart* features a series of ceremonial scenes, including spectacles merely reported—ecclesiastical festivals in Rome (act 1, scene 6) and a tournament at Elizabeth's court (act 2, scene 1)—as well as spectacles actually shown on stage—for example, the meeting of the two queens (act 3, scene 4) and the Catholic sacrament (act 5, scenes 6 and 7). *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* dedicates act 4 to a grand coronation ceremony, while *Wilhelm Tell* dedicates act 2 to the founding assembly of the Swiss nation. The unfinished *Demetrius* opens with a grand assembly of the Polish Estates General. In German classicism, ceremonial theater migrates onto the tragic stage and is offered to the aesthetic gaze of a bourgeois audience. Indeed, Schiller's appropriation of ceremonial theater inaugurated the dramaturgy of spectacular scenes on the nineteenth-century tragic stage (see Vogel), a dramaturgy cultivated especially by the *Grand Opéra* (Williams).

The revival of the ceremonial theater on the tragic stage at the turn of the nineteenth century was a milestone in the intertwined histories of politics and aesthetics. The decline of ceremonial theater in the eighteenth century testified to the fact that politics in the modern age had gradually divested itself of theatrical, spectacular, and aesthetic elements. The modern state no longer needed spectacles to exercise power and perform its governmental functions, at least not until the totalitarian states of the twentieth century again resorted to spectacles and an aestheticized politics. When ceremonial theater was reborn on the tragic stage, it became clear that the theatrical and the aesthetic were now being transferred and entrusted to the theater as a realm of the imagination, as an artistic institution. With this transfer, the work of the imagination assumed a political function in its own right. According to the aesthetic philosophy Schiller developed in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, the work of art becomes a political force by substituting aesthetic semblance (*Schein*) for the somber, drab reality of politics, the utopian freedom of the aesthetic state for political compulsion.

Schillerian tragedy, of course, does not merely reproduce the ceremonial theater of a bygone era. Rather, it places political ceremonies within complex political, legal, and psychological contexts, lays bare their functions, and uncovers the reasons for their efficacy or failure—usually failure. As one particular element in the dramatic composition, ceremonial theater is subordinated to the aesthetics of the tragic. *Maria Stuart* provides a particularly illuminating example in this regard (see Tang).

### *The Dramatic Discourse of the Ceremonial*

*Maria Stuart* is loosely based on the trial and execution, in 1587, of Mary, Queen of Scots, for her involvement in plots to assassinate Elizabeth, Queen of England. Schiller's drama depicts the last day of Mary's life, when the death sentence is announced to her and signed by Elizabeth after much wavering. The plot revolves around the conflict between the two queens. Since the early modern period, the relationship between sovereign persons has been regulated by international law—a branch of jurisprudence known as *ius gentium*, *ius inter gentes*, or, in English, the

law of nations (Steiger). The very first scene makes it clear that what follows is an international legal drama, when Mary's nurse, Hanna Kennedy, points out that Mary's incarceration by Elizabeth goes against the "Völkerrecht und Königswürde" (*Werke* 5: 90; law of nations and royal dignity). Indeed, the appeal to, the negotiation over, and finally the suspension of international law make up the main stations in the unfolding of the plot. Exactly at the mid-point of the drama—act 3, scene 4—the two queens meet each other in person. Such a meeting was one of the most important political ceremonies in early modern Europe, and its dramaturgical centrality here indicates that the ceremonial in the international arena is a key concern of the drama as a whole.

As the law governing the relationship between sovereigns, international law was from the outset bedeviled by an intrinsic paradox, insofar as the sovereign, by definition, did not submit to any superior authority that would make and enforce laws. With the rise of the modern state, the sovereign will asserted itself as both the source and the ultimate interpretative authority of the law. The relationship between states thus became an irresolvable legal problem. In the absence of both a legislative and a jurisdictional authority, legal norms supposed to regulate international relations, be they custom and usage or treaties, could always be redefined, renegotiated, violated, and revoked by sovereigns, if doing so seemed to be advantageous. Given this impotence of international law, ceremonial theater provided an attractive alternative for establishing order in the world of sovereign states by simulating world order performatively. Not surprisingly, then, inter-state ceremonies came to prominence in the late sixteenth century and became more and more sophisticated in the course of the seventeenth century. Denys Godefroy's *Le Cérémonial François*, published in 1649, already contains much more material pertaining to inter-state ceremonies than does his father's *Cérémonial de France*, published in 1619, and in the early eighteenth century inter-state ceremonies seemed to take over ceremonial theater altogether. According to Gottfried Stieve, "könnte man das *Ceremoniel* ungefehr also beschreiben: Daß es eine unter den *Souverains*, oder ihnen gleichenden Personen, *ex Pacto, Consuetudine, Possessione* eingeführte Ordnung sey, nach welcher sie sich, derer Gesandten und Abgesandten bey Zusammenkünfften zu achten haben, damit keinem zu viel noch zu wenig geschehe" (2; one could define *ceremonial* roughly in this way: it is an order among sovereigns or persons of the same rank, which is introduced by pact, custom, or possession, and which they as well as their emissaries and delegates must observe at meetings, so that no one gets too much or too little.)

The first two acts of *Maria Stuart* perform this turn to the ceremonial in order to establish a peaceful order between sovereigns. Before the curtain lifts, a grand jury, at the behest of Elizabeth, has already condemned Mary to death. But, as her nurse puts it, "nicht Elisabeth, / Nicht Englands Parlament ist euer Richter" (*Werke* 5: 374–75; not Elizabeth, / Not England's parliament is your judge). It is a fundamental principle of international law that a sovereign, as is Mary, or at least as she claims still to be, is not subject to the law of a foreign country. In this capacity, she can then reject, point by point, the arguments of Burleigh, who comes to read the verdict to her (act 1, scene 7). Referring to the queen of England, she says: "Ermorden lassen kann sie mich, nicht richten!" (5: 971; she can have me murdered, but she cannot judge me). Her incarceration, let alone her condemnation, violates all

the rights of nations (5: 936–37). As an international legal subject, she may, in her situation, exercise the right of alliance and the right of war (5: 946–51). The heated exchange between Mary and Burleigh makes it amply clear that her conflict with Elizabeth can have no legal solution. It is a conflict between two international legal subjects, which one of the parties seeks to resolve by means of the law of one particular state. But, because the law of one particular state is not applicable to international legal transactions, and because international law itself, in turn, has no recourse to courts of law, the conflict between the English and the Scottish queens is mired in a legal quandary. Mary views a personal meeting with Elizabeth as the last and only possible way of solving this quandary and bringing about reconciliation (829–31). In the meantime, Elizabeth hesitates to sign Mary's death sentence, as she herself doubts its legitimacy. Shrewsbury reminds Elizabeth that the English law does not apply to a foreign sovereign (5: 1318–19) and recommends a personal meeting; Burleigh is against such a meeting (5: 1525–27); the opportunistic Leicester sits on the fence. However contrary these three positions may seem to be, they converge in the estimation that a personal meeting of sovereigns—in short, an inter-state ceremony—represents an alternative to legal action, suspends litigation, and can thereby lead to a new, more conciliatory relation between Mary and Elizabeth.

If the first two acts, which prepare the ground for the meeting of the queens in the third act, stage the turn from law to the ceremonial in the international arena, the third act, in which this meeting takes place, stages the decline of the ceremonial. Initially, Elizabeth cannot quite decide whether or not to meet the Scottish queen, whom she perceives as her competitor, and, in fact, no historical record shows that the two queens ever met. In Schiller's drama, however, Elizabeth decides, almost unwillingly, in favor of a meeting at the end of the second act. The factor that tips the balance is a psychological one. Dissatisfied with her own private life, envious of Mary's putative successes in matters of love, and at the instigation of her lover Leicester (who was once in love with Mary and now considers leaving Elizabeth for her again), Elizabeth is curious to see Mary's famed beauty with her own eyes. This psychological motivation clearly threatens to derail the inter-state ceremonial, and, indeed, when Elizabeth and Mary finally face each other in the third act, all ceremonial considerations are canceled as much by the psychological mechanism of female competition as by a struggle for political power. After having heaped accusations on Mary and sworn to enact revenge against her, Elizabeth comes to speak of Mary's vices *in eroticis* (*Werke* 5: 2407–18). Exclaiming indignantly that "Das ist zu viel!" (5: 2419; This is too much!), Mary responds by ridiculing Elizabeth's lack of feminine charm as well as her sexual inhibition (5: 2421–32). Instead of recognizing the dignity of the other, a recognition crucial to the acclamatory function of a ceremony, each queen sees her counterpart as merely a sexual body. And instead of following rules of conduct, also crucial to the governmental function of the ceremony, both of them are beside themselves with fury. In essence, the meeting of the two queens, which should have remedied the inadequacy of law in the international arena by means of the ceremonial, proves to be anything but ceremonial (see Vogel 228–29), and this collapse of the ceremonial displays, in turn, the decline of ceremonial theater in the second half of the eighteenth century. One of the main reasons for this decline

was, as I have argued above, the triumph of the psychological view of human behavior. Once the individual was divided into a visible public persona and a secret private self, there was a possibility that his or her public actions might always already have been contaminated by private considerations. Johann Jakob Moser, a prominent public lawyer in the eighteenth century, identified a number of “geheime Triebfeder” (secret motives) in international relations, including the “Leidenschaft derer grossen Herren und ihrer Ministers” (passions of princes and their ministers) and “die Begierde, noch mehrere Länder, Reichthum und Macht zu erwerben” (the desire to acquire more lands, wealth, and power) (*Versuch* 34–35). Given such “secret motives,” the public actions of sovereign rulers, particularly those that were ceremonial, could be nothing more than charades. In Moser’s words, they often served as a “Vorwand” (pretext) for dubious political and personal calculations (*Beyträge* 5).

Taken together, the first three acts of *Maria Stuart* rehearse some key turning points in the attempt of the sovereign state to tackle international relations: the rise of the ceremonial as an alternative, or at least a supplement, to the law of nations in the seventeenth century and its subsequent decline in the eighteenth century. Yet the dramatic action does not end in the third act. It moves beyond both the inadequacy of law and the collapse of the ceremonial. The failure of all attempts to reconcile the conflict between the queens leads to a new possibility for imagining world order: the aesthetics of the tragic.

### *The Tragedy of Ceremonial Theater*

An exposition of Schiller’s aesthetics of the tragic and its instantiation in *Maria Stuart* belongs elsewhere. In the present context, it is sufficient to mention its basic principle. According to his treatise *Über das Pathetische*, suffering—that is, what Aristotle calls pathos—is the core of tragedy. Suffering pertains to man as a sensuous being. As such, it is the necessary precondition for representing the moral freedom of man, insofar as the latter, as something unsensuous, is representable only *ex negativo* by means of the resistance that it is capable of exerting against physical suffering. In this view, the art of tragedy ultimately consists in a dramaturgy of affects that brings to light the transcendental realm of morality through the visible signs of its resistance to physical suffering (Schiller, *Werke* 8: 425–51).

Schiller’s theory of tragedy implies a new conception of corporeal signs. As the medium of pathos, gestures, facial expressions, and voices all refer indirectly to the invisible working of moral freedom. Such a conception is diametrically opposed to the semiotic regime governing ceremonial theater. In the latter, corporeal signs are conventions in accordance with the imperatives of etiquette and decorum, tactfully deployed to suggest moderated affects and orderly actions. Schiller’s appropriation of ceremonial spectacles on the tragic stage, then, not only transposes them from political reality into the realm of the imagination, thereby neutralizing their acclamatory and governmental functions, but also subjects them to an entirely different semiotic and aesthetic regime, thereby neutralizing their theatrical principles. Ceremonial theater appears on the tragic stage to die a beautiful death—like a tragic heroine.

In *Maria Stuart*, the tragedy of ceremonial theater is all the more pathetic because it makes itself known only through its absence. At the beginning of the meeting of the two queens—in other words, at the moment when a ceremonial spectacle is about to start—Mary loses her composure. Schiller's stage direction reads:

MARIA welche diese Zeit über halb ohnmächtig auf die Amme gelehnt war, erhebt sich jetzt und ihr Auge begegnet dem gespannten Blick der Elisabeth. Sie schaudert zusammen und wirft sich wieder an der Amme Brust. (2232)

Mary has all this time been leaning on her nurse, almost fainting, but now straightens up, and her eyes meet Elizabeth's tense gaze. She shivers and throws herself back at her nurse's breast.

Before ceremonial theater can even begin, its corporeal signs are replaced by a psychologically motivated semiotic regime that relates the language of the body to the conditions of the mind. But the latter is immediately replaced by yet another regime of corporeal signs—one central to Schiller's theory of tragedy—according to which the visible signs of the suffering body may point toward the transcendental realm of moral freedom:

Maria rafft sich zusammen und will auf die Elisabeth zugehen, steht aber auf halbem Weg schauernd still, ihre Gebärden drücken den heftigsten Kampf aus. (2242)

Mary pulls herself together and tries to walk towards Elizabeth, but stops halfway there and stands shaking, her gestures expressing the strongest inner conflict.

Three regimes of theatrical signs follow each other in rapid succession, from the one shared by ceremonial theater and French tragedy in the seventeenth century through that of domestic tragedy of the eighteenth century to that of German classical tragedy at the turn of the nineteenth century. Ceremonial theater is thus preserved by the tragic stage as that which has long met its demise.

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