

# The English Reception of Oldenbarnevelt's Fall

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**ABSTRACT** This article examines the ways in which the execution of Dutch statesman John van Oldenbarnevelt in 1619 was understood and represented by contemporaries in England. In contrast to the popular, apocalyptic understanding of the execution as a victory for the Reformed faith, the portrayal of events in Philip Massinger and John Fletcher's play *The Tragedy of John van Olden Barnaveit* was much more ambiguous. In tracing the way the playwrights used classical analogy to represent the Dutch troubles, this essay highlights the function of the play in the polarizing political context of late Jacobean England. **KEYWORDS:** influence of Netherlands politics in England; republicanism and monarchism; Protestant anti-Catholic and anti-Spain sentiment; politics in English drama; Lucan's *Pharsalia*; Arminianism

✎ **TRACING THE INFLUENCE** of the Dutch Republic opens up new ways of understanding the nature and articulation of political ideas in the Stuart period. Yet the role played by this republican model has not received the scholarly attention it deserves.<sup>1</sup> This has some basis in the unusual governmental development of the early Dutch Republic; the state is often seen as working for so long to justify its existence that it neglected to work on its form. In this view, the systematic expression of republican political theory did not emerge until the works of Spinoza and the brothers De la Court in the 1660s.<sup>2</sup> But the neglect of Dutch influence is also partly caused by a general

1. An exception is Thomas C. Fulton's article, "The True and Naturall Constitution of that Mixed Government: Massinger's *The Bondman* and the Influence of Dutch Republicanism," *Studies in Philology* (2002): 152–78. The neglect is not as great for the period during and after the Civil War. See, for example, Jonathan Scott, "Classical Republicanism in Seventeenth-Century England and the Netherlands," in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2002), 1:61–81; Herbert H. Rowen, "The Dutch Republic and the Idea of Freedom," in *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society, 1649–1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford, Calif., 1994), 310–40.

2. E. H. Kossmann, "The Development of Dutch Political Theory in the Seventeenth Century," in *Britain and the Netherlands: Papers Delivered to the Oxford-Netherlands Historical Conference, 1959*,

unwillingness in much early Stuart historiography to admit that anyone in Jacobean England could have conceived of a republican government—defined narrowly as “kingless”—as a plausible alternative.<sup>3</sup> This essay challenges such neglect through an investigation into the ways in which English observers represented and articulated ideas about the Dutch Republic following the high-profile execution of the advocate of Holland, John van Oldenbarnevelt.

The septuagenarian Oldenbarnevelt climbed the scaffold erected in the Inner Court at The Hague on May 3, 1619; spoke his final words, proclaiming: “I die not as a traitor”; and was beheaded by order of the States General.<sup>4</sup> The execution cemented the victory of the “Calvinist” Contra-Remonstrant faction over their “Arminian” Remonstrant rivals in a conflict that had begun in 1605. On another level, it proclaimed the triumph of the stadholder Maurice, Prince of Orange, in the underlying power struggle that had dominated his relationship with the advocate since the turn of the century. The victory enabled the Contra-Remonstrants to assume a mantle of righteousness and to cast the advocate in a traitorous and popish light based on the unproved charges against him for consorting with Spain. In contrast to this portrait, Prince Maurice was depicted as the true Protestant defender of the country’s stability and religion.

News of the events in the Netherlands circulated in England through translations of Dutch proclamations and pamphlets. The Contra-Remonstrant perspective of these publications aligned easily with the prejudices of those in England who were anxious for the king to wake up to the threat of Catholic Spain, turn away from his pursuit of a Spanish bride for his son and heir, and spearhead an international, Reformed campaign against Spain and the papacy. James’s endorsement of the proceedings against Oldenbarnevelt also led to an unexpected harmony of opinion between the king and his militantly Protestant subjects. Alternative views of the execution, informed instead by the circulation of Remonstrant propaganda, also influenced some English observers. The notoriously ambiguous portrayal of events in Philip Massinger and John Fletcher’s contemporary play *The Tragedy of John van Olden Barnaveelt* seems at an initial view to reflect the multiple ways in which the news was received. However, by tracing the classical analogy underpinning the characterization of Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt, we can discern the playwrights’ critical commentary on the political implications of Maurice’s victory—Massinger and Fletcher’s admonitory lesson to their English audience.

ed. J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman (London, 1960), 91–110; Eco Haitsma Mulier, “The Language of Seventeenth-Century Republicanism in the United Provinces: Dutch or European?,” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), 179–196. Cf. Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt, 1555–1590* (Cambridge, 1992); and Wyger R. E. Velema, “‘That a Republic Is Better than a Monarchy’: Anti-Monarchism in Early Modern Dutch Political Thought,” in Gelderen and Skinner, *Republicanism*, 1:9–25.

3. Blair Worden, “Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience,” in Gelderen and Skinner, *Republicanism*, 1:307–28.

4. Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, May 3, 1619, SP 84/90/3, fol. 5, The National Archives, London (henceforth TNA).



The conclusion of the truce between the Netherlands and Spain in 1609 intensified the domestic tensions undermining the fragile union of the Northern provinces, which had been kept at bay during the Dutch Revolt but could now gather the strength to engulf the country. This complex web of political, religious, and commercial antagonisms underpinned the formation of two factions that were symptomatic of socio-economic tensions but predominantly defined by religious differences.<sup>5</sup> By 1617 these factions were spearheaded by the two most powerful men in the country, the Prince of Orange and Oldenbarnevelt, who also had a personal political rivalry. The eventual arrest of Oldenbarnevelt and his chief allies in 1618 was the culmination of the domestic unrest that had been prompted in 1605 by a theological dispute between two divinity professors at Leiden.<sup>6</sup>

The dispute between Franciscus Gomarus and Jacobus Arminius brought into sharp relief the rising agitation of strict Calvinists due to both the broad spectrum of Reformed opinion within the Dutch church and the church's ambiguous relationship to the state.<sup>7</sup> Arminius most famously clashed with Gomarus over the internationally controversial issue of predestination by asserting a modicum of free will for mankind; God, he thought, had preordained all believers, not just the elect, to salvation.<sup>8</sup> The infiltration of Arminius's doctrines into provincial churches ignited an underlying power struggle between the state and church. When several Arminian preachers were disciplined by regional assemblies of the church for contravening the Netherlands Confession and Heidelberg Catechism, a remonstrance was presented to the States of Holland defending the persecuted preachers and proposing a revision of these articles at a provincial synod. In their contra-remonstrance, the Gomarists rejected secular authority over the church and insisted that only a national synod could resolve the issues; in any case, they insisted that revision of the catechism and confession was not a subject for debate. Fearing that a national synod would result in the emergence of a dominant and independent church, the Remonstrants invoked the principle that individual provinces should regulate religious matters within their boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

Oldenbarnevelt's support for the Remonstrant cause arose less from his doctrinal convictions than from his determination to prevent the Contra-Remonstrants from dominating the church and to retain the inclusive, liberal character of the Dutch

5. Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565–1641)* (Manchester, 1999), 126–36.

6. Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), 443.

7. Jan Rohls, "Calvinism, Arminianism, and Socinianism in the Netherlands until the Synod of Dort," in *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Martin Muslow and Jan Rohls (Leiden, 2005), 3–48; Jan den Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1973), 2:423–66.

8. *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)*, ed. Anthony Milton, Church of England Record Society 13 (Woodbridge, U.K., 2005), xvii.

9. Pollman, *Religious Choice*, 106–8; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 423–25.

Reformed religion.<sup>10</sup> Oldenbarnevelt and his faction failed to restore unity, however, and by 1617 Contra-Remonstrant frustration at the growing Arminian influence had risen to the boiling point in many towns in Holland. In July “mud-beggars”—Contra-Remonstrants who trudged miles to village churches to attend orthodox services—seized the empty Cloister Church in The Hague. Maurice’s attendance at a service there not long afterward made his allegiances clear and firmly drew the battle lines between him and the advocate. As Holland raised troops who owed their first loyalty to that province and not the States General, Maurice toured the southern provinces to purge the Arminian influence on their councils, ensuring the vote for a national synod and for the disbandment of the troops. In response to these moves, the Remonstrants charged Maurice with aspiring to the sovereignty of the country and a pamphlet war began in earnest.<sup>11</sup>

At the eventual showdown in Utrecht, resistance crumbled upon Maurice’s entrance to the city, and the States General granted him the authority to undertake measures commensurate with the security of the country. On this legally tenuous basis, Oldenbarnevelt, Hugo Grotius, and Rombout Hogerbeets were arrested on August 18, 1618; on the next day, the Utrecht secretary, Gilles van Ledenberg, was also detained.<sup>12</sup> Maurice acted without the permission of the provincial states, and the novelty of this course was reflected in the reactions of local diplomats. The English ambassador, Dudley Carleton, reported that deputies had visited him to express their hope that James would support the proceedings; the French ambassadors, whose sympathies lay with the imprisoned advocate, immediately departed the country in shock.<sup>13</sup>

With the chief opposition to it removed, the national synod was promptly convened at Dordrecht (Dort) in November 1618. The Contra-Remonstrant victory at Dort was a foregone conclusion, and James’s understanding and endorsement of the synod’s decision is evident through both his selection of divines for the English delegation and his instructions to them to adhere to the faith as expressed in the Netherlands confession.<sup>14</sup>

The trial of the prisoners took longer to begin, because Maurice decided to first reform the town councils so “he may have plurality of voices in the assembly of Holland.”<sup>15</sup> The trial eventually began in March 1619; Oldenbarnevelt had to provide his own defense, without the aid of books and papers, and continued to deny the main

10. Sir Dudley Carleton to William Trumbull, May 12, 1619, Add. MS 72379, fol. 16, British Library, London (henceforth BL); Carleton to Sir Robert Naunton, May 6, 1619, in Carleton, *The Letters from and to Sir Dudley Carleton, Knt., during his Embassy in Holland from January 1615/16 to December 1620*, 3rd ed. (London, 1780), 364–65. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 426; Pollmann, *Religious Choice*, 107. For an extensive discussion of Oldenbarnevelt’s religious perspective, see Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, 2:423–435.

11. John Lothrop Motley, *The Life and Death of John of Barneveld*, 2 vols. (London, 1874), 2:340; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 446. For instances of these pamphlets, see Carleton, *Letters*, 261, 264, 265. See also Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture in the Early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987), esp. 155–75.

12. Motley, *John of Barneveld*, 2:314.

13. Carleton to James VI/I, August 19, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 279.

14. Milton, *Synod of Dort*, xxviii, xli.

15. Carleton to Sir Robert Naunton, August 29, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 289.

charges. Upon hearing his fate on May 2, 1619, Oldenbarnevelt reportedly protested: "I governed . . . when I was in authority, according to the maxims of that time; and now I am condemned to die according to the maxims of this."<sup>16</sup> The widespread reports of Oldenbarnevelt's constancy reflected incredulity at his treatment by the country he had worked so long for and fueled an increasing sense of unease about the international reception of the news of the advocate's execution.<sup>17</sup> The evident desire to receive royal approval from both James and Louis XIII reveals Dutch awareness of the fragility of the veneer of legality attached to the proceedings.<sup>18</sup> But the simultaneous victory of Calvinism over Arminianism encompassed in the canons of Dort enabled the Contra-Remonstrants to present the resolution of the troubles as the triumph of truth over the malign influence of crypto-Catholic Arminianism and the death of Oldenbarnevelt as the victory of the godly prince over the traitorous rebel.<sup>19</sup>



Translations of pamphlets concerning the Dutch troubles were published in England and ranged from copies of Dutch official documents to bitter invective. The information they conveyed passed through a Contra-Remonstrant filter and consequently both reflected the assumption that the States General had conducted the trial legally and furthered the character assassination of Oldenbarnevelt. The language of Dutch patriotism, invoked to censure Oldenbarnevelt's supposed actions against the state, was the same as that employed to rail against the truce in 1609 and, later, to call for the renewal of war in 1621.<sup>20</sup> The Calvinist, deeply anti-Spanish tone of the propaganda resonated strongly in England with the militantly Protestant would-be heirs of 1588. In one account of the charges, the statesman appeared an arrogant and ambitious author of the religious disputes tearing the young country to shreds and making it vulnerable to foreign invaders.<sup>21</sup> In correspondence with the provinces, the States General claimed that Oldenbarnevelt had not been formally accused of collusion with Spain to spare him the pain of torture at his advanced age, as well as in respect of his services to the country.<sup>22</sup> Such statements did nothing to discourage the widely held suspicions about his Spanish connections, exploited in the pamphlets attacking him. References

16. Carleton to Naunton, May 6, 1619, in Carleton, *Letters*, 363.

17. Carleton later explained that his delay in recovering Oldenbarnevelt's last letters was due to their having been "kept close in regard he stood vpon his innocence vntill the very last." Carleton to Naunton, May 12, 1619, TNA, SP 84/90, fol. 68 (also in Carleton, *Letters*, 366–68).

18. Carleton to Naunton, May 3, 1619, TNA, SP 84/90, fols. 16–17; Carleton to Trumbull, May 17, 1619, BL Add. MS 72379, fol. 17.

19. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 450–60; Ivo Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge, 1996), 142, 147.

20. *Barnevelt Displayed: Or the Golden Legend of New St Iohn* (London, 1619), 1; *A Relation of Some Speciall Points concerning the State of Holland. Or The Prouident Counsellours Companion* [London, 1621]; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 423.

21. *The Arraignment of John van Olden Barneuelte Late Aduocate of Holland and West-Friesland* (London, 1619).

22. States General to the Provinces, May 9/19, 1619, TNA, SP 84/90, fol. 60.

to Oldenbarnevelt's Spanish designs in the rancorous commentary appended to *Barneuels Apology* and in the defamatory account of his life, *Barnevelt Displayed*, invited his condemnation by rabidly Hispanophobic members of the English commonwealth.<sup>23</sup> To those in England committed to rescuing the international Protestant church from the jaws of the ambitious Spanish crown in league with the papacy, Oldenbarnevelt's apparent Arminianism was incriminating enough; the rumors of his Spanish treachery simply added fuel to the fire.

A ballad penned not long after the advocate's downfall, *Murther Unmasked; or Barneviles Base Conspiracie Against His Owne Countrie*, encapsulates this absorption and easy manipulation of Oldenbarnevelt's fate into a vindication of Protestantism and a dire warning to English crypto-Catholic Arminians.<sup>24</sup> Oldenbarnevelt's conspiracy was placed alongside the Gunpowder Plot in an easily identifiable tradition of treason, serving as a warning to all Machiavellian statesmen and those who harbored the "fell poyson" of popery in their hearts.<sup>25</sup> The ballad's assimilation of Arminianism with Catholicism, of Oldenbarnevelt with Spain, and of his conspiracy with English treasons identified the advocate as an enemy of the Protestant church and English nation. This immediately fit the Netherlands' dispute into the simple dichotomy that pervaded Protestant polemic, suggesting that the influx of Contra-Remonstrant propaganda had some hand in shaping an English understanding of Oldenbarnevelt's fall. Furthermore, while the extent to which these cheap forms of publication offer a comprehensive insight into the attitudes and understanding of their readers has been rightly questioned, it is clear that in general many were well disposed to their message.<sup>26</sup> One correspondent noted "It hath bin confidently reported here that monsieur Barnevelt's head was cut of [*sic*] on Munday last; which hath caused much joy."<sup>27</sup>

Tracts against Spain and the papacy published during the tense political period of the Spanish match made direct and polemical use of the Dutch pamphlets. Two such publications, *Vox Coeli* and *Vox Populi*, both urging a realignment of English foreign policy in the early 1620s, depicted Oldenbarnevelt as a Spanish agent. The former tract, by John Reynolds, held up Spain's corruption of the experienced statesman as an example of how Spain's Indian gold could corrupt princes and statesmen internationally into fulfilling their ambitious and iniquitous aims.<sup>28</sup> This message was sure to resonate strongly in an England headed by an insolvent monarch seeking to fill his coffers with a Spanish dowry. In a similar vein, Thomas Scott's *Vox Populi* exploited the rumors that

23. John van Oldenbarnevelt and Petrus Holderus, *Barneuels Apology: Or Holland Mysterie. With Marginall Castigations* ([London], 1618), sigs. B4v, F4; *Barnevelt Displayed*, 34–35, 44.

24. See Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 141.

25. *A Pepysian Garland: Black-Letter Broadside Ballads of the Years 1595–1639*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 104, 108; Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 141–42.

26. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 38–39. Ivo Kamps describes this ballad as representing the popular, although not universal, view of the execution; *Historiography and Ideology*, 141.

27. Nathaniel Brent to Carleton, May 8, 1619, TNA, SP 14/109, fol. 25.

28. John Reynolds, *Vox Coeli* ([London], 1624), 44–45; cf. John Ford, *A Line of Life Pointing at the Immortalitie of a Vertuous Name* ([London], 1620), 79–81.

Oldenbarnevelt had a Spanish pension, identifying Spain as the chief cause of Dutch domestic turmoil. This polemical tract purports to be a relation from the notorious Spanish ambassador Gondomar in which the wily diplomat mourns the fall of Oldenbarnevelt, whose “succeeding plots” aimed at disuniting Holland and England so Spain could more easily conquer them both.<sup>29</sup> Scott additionally presented Arminianism as another Spanish tool that Oldenbarnevelt used to fragment the Reformed religion. Underlining the indivisible correlation between Oldenbarnevelt’s Spanish treachery and his patronage of the Arminian faction, Scott encouraged his readers to see the necessity of remaining religiously unified with the Netherlands, as James was threateningly close to a dynastic alliance with the Habsburgs.<sup>30</sup>

The growing fears, underpinning much political tension in the 1620s, that an Arminian faction was creeping toward a position of power and influence originated in part from the association of Arminianism with the otherness of Spain and Catholicism in the context of Jacobean foreign policy. Pamphlets from this period made a cascade of references to the Spanish threat in an effort to urge a more active foreign policy. By the later 1620s, the more immediate concern of those still invoking this strand of self-defined “patriot” opinion was with the perceived rise in Arminian influence that threatened a return to Rome as insistently as did the Habsburgs’ military might.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, publications from this period suggested that Oldenbarnevelt’s responsibility for the civil disturbances in the Netherlands stemmed from his insidious religious persuasion.<sup>32</sup> The lesson for England this time was the disastrous consequences of allowing Arminianism to creep into the country.

Other republished and translated texts from Holland underlined and built on the reputation of Maurice as a Protestant hero in the mold of the idealized Elizabethan martial courtiers.<sup>33</sup> A 1620 reprint of Jan Jansz Orlers’s eulogistic *The Triumphs of Nassau* offered its prospective readers a catalogue of Maurice’s military achievements in aid of the Netherlanders’ fight for liberty against Spain. The English translator’s dedicatory epistle to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, who spearheaded the international anti-Spanish Protestant faction in the early 1620s, emphasized its militant Protestant agenda and the stark contrast with James in Orlers’s praise of Maurice.<sup>34</sup>

29. [Thomas Scott], *Vox Populi* ([London], 1620), sigs. B4v (quotation), Dv.

30. *Ibid.*, sig. C2.

31. David Colclough, *Freedom of Speech in Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2005), 118.

32. [Matthew Sutcliffe], *A Brief Censure upon an Appeale to Caesar* [Oxford, 1626], 18. On the attribution of the tract to Sutcliffe, see Cyndia S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, 2001), 248n58. See also: J[ohn] R[ussell], *The Spy Discovering the Danger of Arminian Heresy and Spanish Treachery* ([Amsterdam], 1628), sigs. A, C4.

33. The influence of this reputation is evident in English-authored tracts. See Reynolds, *Vox Coeli*, 45; [Thomas Scott], *The Second Part of Vox Populi* ([London], 1624), sig. Av–A2, 45–47. Kamps in particular highlights this depiction of Prince Maurice: Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 141.

34. Jan Jansz Orlers and Henrick van Haestens, *The Triumphs of Nassau*, trans. W. Shute (London, 1620), n.p. For examples of Orlers’s praise of Maurice that may have struck notes of contrast with James, see 25, 50–81, 383. See also Anthony Miller, “Domains of Victory: Staging and Contesting the Roman Triumph in Renaissance England,” in *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. John Gillies and Virginia Mason Vaughan (Madison, N.J., 1998), 260–87, 274–75.

A relation of Maurice's exemplary Christian death, published in London in 1625, reaffirmed the prince's position as a true defender of the Reformed faith and the liberty of his country, just as Dutch Calvinist propaganda had earlier in the decade.<sup>35</sup>

The king's Spanish-oriented foreign policy suggests that this anti-Spanish polemic would not have made much headway with him. However, when given the full report of Oldenbarnevelt's death five days after the event, James felt there was "no greate cause to mourne."<sup>36</sup> The king's support for the execution should be viewed within the context of his personal distrust of Oldenbarnevelt, his regard for Prince Maurice, and his firm position against instigators of religious unrest.<sup>37</sup> He patently approved of the course taken to remove Oldenbarnevelt as a principal malefactor in the religious turmoil plaguing the security of the Netherlands and the chief opponent of the proposed synod—an attitude which James found "contrary to the public service."<sup>38</sup> A few weeks after the execution, James spoke in praise of Maurice and compared him to Henry IV of England "for wysdome, prowesse, [happie] fortune & like fame of Gouernment & purifying all troubles prosperouslie as well in peace as warre."<sup>39</sup> In aligning the stadholder with Henry IV in this way, James disclosed his monarchical understanding of the stadholder's role in the Netherlands' government.

To James's ambassador in the Netherlands, Dudley Carleton, Oldenbarnevelt seemed "vindictive," and those supporting him needed their eyes opened "to see and know their enemies."<sup>40</sup> In contrast to the scheming counsels of the Arminian party, Carleton claimed, Maurice was going "the plain and open way, professing his purpose to live and die in the maintenance of the reformed religion."<sup>41</sup> Carleton was a seasoned diplomat, however, and evidently understood the factional political motives that underlay the religious disputes. His efforts to report the common talk in the Netherlands, which questioned the legal foundation of the proceedings, convey a sense of uneasiness about the business. While the "well-affected" party "generally" approved of Oldenbarnevelt's arrest as a means to secure the state, Carleton remarked that the Arminians thought it insufferable "in libera republica" and viewed the assembled States "as unlawfully chosen, and put into place by violence."<sup>42</sup> And it was not just the

35. Johannes Bogerman, *The Godly and Christian Decease of the Illustrious and High-borne Prince, Mauritius of Nassau, Prince of Orange, of Happy Memory* (London, 1625).

36. Sir George Calvert to Carleton, May 8, 1619, TNA, SP 84/90, fol. 48.

37. The controversy over the appointment of Conrad Vorstius to the divinity chair at Leiden in 1611 created an atmosphere of animosity between James and Oldenbarnevelt. For an overview of this affair and James's role in it, see Tex, *Oldenbarnevelt*, 2:526–536; and Frederick Shriver, "Orthodoxy and Diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius Affair," *English Historical Review* 85 (1970): 449–74 at 453–57. Cf. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 162. For the continued evidence of the controversy's effect, see Carleton to Naunton, December 16, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 320; Sir Edward Vere to Naunton, August 20, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 283.

38. Carleton to Naunton, September 8, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 290.

39. Gerard Herbert to Carleton, May 31, 1619, SP 14/109, fols. 121–22.

40. Carleton to Thomas Lake, April 5, 1618, and Carleton to Naunton, October 3, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 261, 304. See also Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 142.

41. Carleton to Lake, April 14, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 264.

42. Carleton to James VI/I, August 19, 1618, and Carleton to Naunton, October 29, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 281, 309.



disgruntled Arminian party that had reservations about Maurice's undertakings; Carleton noted that those who were indifferent to either faction found the arrests unnecessary, as the synod had already been decided upon.<sup>43</sup> The French ambassadors' protest had cast the legitimacy of the proceedings into question, making them "appear rather a persecution than a trial; and the cause itself rather matter of faction than justice." Such earnest efforts on Oldenbarnevelt's behalf were in vain, for "a purpose continueth . . . of making [Oldenbarnevelt] shorter by the head." But following the execution, Carleton betrayed apprehension at the inflexible resolve with which it had been effected, reporting that the French ambassador had been denied an audience on the morning of the execution and that his subsequent letters "were not read in the assemblée of the States but *apres le coup*."<sup>44</sup> The French ambassadors' consistent objections in the face of substantial Dutch Calvinist propaganda reveal the reluctance of many observers to swallow the dichotomous understanding that lent itself so easily to confessional politics.

Opinions in the Netherlands were also mixed with regard to the arrest and execution of the advocate.<sup>45</sup> A translation of a pamphlet from the vitriolic pen of the minister Henricus Slatius appeared in England the following year; it drew an alarming portrait of Maurice's encroachment upon the Netherlands' liberty.<sup>46</sup> The pamphlet related how the stadholder, "following the footstepps of that vnsatiabile bloodehound Nero, endeoured to bring-in all manner of Tyranny," reasserted that the proceedings against Oldenbarnevelt were without legal foundation or political precedent, and charged the prince with aspiring to the sovereignty of the country.<sup>47</sup> Such pamphlets apparently influenced English interpretations of the trial. The same year, John Chamberlain related "that diuers of goode iudgement thinck he [Oldenbarnevelt] had hard measure, considering that no cleare matter of conspiracie with the enemies of the State appears, or can be proued, so that yt seemes to be meere matter of faction and opposition rather than infidelitie or treacherie." Chamberlain concluded that the business was not fitting for the Netherlands because Oldenbarnevelt's actions,

which though perhaps in England might be found treasonable or within that compasse, yet in a new vpstart commonwealth that hath so long contended and stands so much vpon libertie, they were not to proceed

43. Carleton to James VI/I, August 19, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 281.

44. Carleton to Naunton, April 23 and 27, 1619, in Carleton, *Letters*, 359–61; TNA, SP 84/90, fol. 16v. Italics mine. It is also apparent that Carleton grasped Maurice's personal role in securing the execution, as he subsequently related to Naunton that "his Ex[cellent]cy was ye grain w[hi]ch turned the balance to [Oldenbarnevelt's] ruine w[i]th ye Judges when they were in chiefe deliberation about his cause"; Carleton to Naunton, May 12, 1619, TNA, SP 84/90, fol. 67.

45. *Newes out of Holland: Concerning Barnevelt* (London, 1619); Carleton to Naunton, September 8, October 12, October 29, 1618, in Carleton, *Letters*, 294, 307, 309; "Advertisement of Nicolas Abeel, Views of Barnevelt," TNA, SP 84/90, fol. 134.

46. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture*, 255.

47. "A Morning Waker to the Old and True Hollanders," TNA, SP 84/98, fols. 168–69v. For the trend to criticize Maurice, see Motley, *John of Barneveld*, 2:339–43; and Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing, and Political Culture*, 171.

with such rigour against a man of his yeares and seruice, specially when  
the sparing of the rest makes manifest shew that they shot only at  
[Oldenbarnevelt].<sup>48</sup>

This alternative reception of the Dutch news articulates political concerns that were not tied solely and inexorably to the cause of international Protestantism, anti-Catholicism, and Hispanophobia. The death of Oldenbarnevelt alarmed many because of the hypocrisy of Maurice and the States in overriding the liberty that was the Netherlands' foundation. Chamberlain's statement suggests that some perceived Oldenbarnevelt's execution as the fulfillment of a personal vendetta, raising questions over the growing authority of the Prince of Orange. These concerns and the political lessons they offered underpinned the portrayal of the Dutch troubles in Massinger and Fletcher's tragedy, and this play provides further insight into the role of the Dutch Republic in Stuart political thought.



*The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnavelte*, performed just three months following Oldenbarnevelt's execution, is accounted as one of the several collaborative works by John Fletcher and Philip Massinger. The play has received considerable scholarly interest due to its rather exceptional depiction of contemporary events in the Netherlands and to the evidence of censorship on the play's manuscript.<sup>49</sup> Although the censorship of the manuscript once stood as evidence for an oppressive Jacobean regime, it is now more frequently viewed as indicative of a more accommodating climate, for a good deal of effort went into making the script playable.<sup>50</sup> *Olden Barnavelte* was ready for the stage by August 14, 1619, but the well-known intervention of the bishop of London temporarily halted the play's performance until August 27.<sup>51</sup>

48. Chamberlain to Carleton, May 31, 1619, TNA, SP 14/109, fols. 119–20.

49. For an earlier example of contemporary portrayal onstage, see George Chapman's *Byron* plays, discussed by: Richard Dutton, "Methinks the truth should live from age to age": The Dating and Contexts of *Henry V*," in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, Calif., 2005), 173–204 at 183. See also Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 145; Paulina Kewes, "Contemporary Europe in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama," in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Paul Hammond (London, 2004), 150–92 at 192. For the revisions to the manuscript and their significance, see T. H. Howard-Hill, "Buc and the Censorship of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelte in 1619," *Review of English Studies* 39 (1988): 39–63; Kewes, "Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama," 160; Richard Dutton, "Censorship," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York, 1997), 287–304 at 298; [John Fletcher and Philip Massinger], *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelte*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill (London, 1980), 13 (referring to lines 385–403); and Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke, U.K., 1991), 207–9.

50. William W. Appleton, *Beaumont and Fletcher: A Critical Study* (London, 1956), 89; Jerzy Limon, *Dangerous Matter: English Drama and Politics in 1623–4* (Cambridge, 1986), 6. Cf. Howard-Hill, "Censorship"; and Dutton, *Mastering the Revels*, 206–17.

51. Thomas Locke to Carleton, August 14, 1619, SP 14/110, fol. 25; Locke to Carleton, August 27, 1619, SP 14/110, fol. 57.

Part of what drew the attention of the censors was the nuanced portrayal of both Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt, which influenced differing interpretations of the play from the outset. In 1619 it was reported that, while the play had had many spectators and received applause, “some say that (according to the proverb) the diuell is not so bad as he is painted,” a clear reference to Oldenbarnevelt.<sup>52</sup> The editor of the play’s first published version, greatly influenced by Motley’s *Life of Barneveld*, commented appreciatively that the playwrights had at least refused to accept outright the popular caricature of Oldenbarnevelt.<sup>53</sup> As Ivo Kamps has noted in his perceptive analysis, Barnavelt is initially shown as arrogant, ambitious, and conspiratorial, and the prince as the wise and provident protector of the country. But as the story unfolds, Barnavelt is increasingly seen as reasonable, so that, following a formula familiar from Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, the contrast between the two breaks down, and by the play’s finale it is by no means obvious who was the intended hero and who the villain.<sup>54</sup> The depiction of the two men has produced varied interpretations of both the play’s underlying message and Massinger and Fletcher’s religio-political stance.

Barnavelt’s speeches warning about dangers to the country’s republican liberties, under threat from Orange’s monarchical ambitions, most significantly put his villainy into question. In a well-known passage marked for deletion by the censor, Barnavelt drew classical comparisons with Orange’s encroaching authority, aligning the prince with the imperial domination of Octavius and himself with the persecuted, free-speaking Cato (ll. 2434–40).<sup>55</sup> Barnavelt warns that Octavius took the same course now “practis’d on you” and invites his audience to “apply” the lesson of the autocratic outcome to their own time; critics have noted that the contemporary London audience could find applications to England as well.<sup>56</sup> In this view, Barnavelt’s fate could evoke parallels with Raleigh’s execution the previous year, both representing the autocratic exercise of political authority against those committed to a virtuous and free style of government.

Yet some studies have attempted to assimilate *Olden Barnavelt* to the tide of anti-Spanish sentiment washing over England, with Barnavelt squarely remaining the popish, Spanish-influenced conspirator.<sup>57</sup> This reading does not fit easily with the ambivalent characterization of Orange and Barnavelt, however, particularly if Barnavelt’s speeches are still seen as topical. The “anti-court” elements of Barnavelt’s protestations would take on added complexity if they were viewed as part of a theatrical tradition of plays that “all ringingly affirm an English national identity impelled to

52. Locke to Carleton, August 27, 1619, SP 14/110, fol. 57.

53. *A Collection of Old English Plays*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 4 vols. (New York, 1964), 2:205.

54. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 147. I am grateful to Paulina Kewes for highlighting the characterization of Richard II.

55. *Olden Barnavelt*, ed. Howard-Hill. All further references are to this edition and reproduce its spelling and use of contractions.

56. See, in particular, Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 157–58; and Kewes, “Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama,” 184–87.

57. Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1980), 136, 203–5. See also Limon, *Dangerous Matter*, 5–6.

assert itself against Spanish imperialism.”<sup>58</sup> Barnavelt’s speeches certainly contain anti-monarchical sentiment and promote a free, independent Netherlands government. Yet for Massinger and Fletcher, there would surely have been the contradictions inherent in making Barnavelt the mouthpiece of anti-Spanish propaganda. If we are to use this play to understand the ways in which Dutch politics were perceived and applied to investigations into political authority in England, we must resolve some of these complications.

Kamps’s analysis of the characterization of Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt has rightly identified the contest between providentialist and Machiavellian politics in the play and has thereby uncovered Orange’s hypocrisy in espousing an ideology of government at odds with his actions.<sup>59</sup> Here I want to build on this analysis by exploring how Massinger and Fletcher interpreted the unique political arrangement of the United Provinces, so that we can more fully understand their views of authority and so assess the influence of Dutch republicanism on the playwrights’ thinking. Furthermore, by identifying the play’s broad political affiliations, we can investigate its significance to an English audience.

The contemporary subject matter of *Olden Barnavelt* allowed Massinger and Fletcher to reference topical attitudes toward the Dutch. Their depiction of Dutch neglect of, and ingratitude toward, the English and Scottish soldiers fighting for the Dutch cause drew on current prejudices (ll. 637–49).<sup>60</sup> These were prompted in part by Dutch commercial success during the Twelve Years Truce, which highlighted the contrast between English stagnation and the rise of this new country that the English had helped to secure.<sup>61</sup>

In signaling the theme of Dutch ingratitude, the playwrights were able to develop their characterization of the lead figures. Throughout the play both Orange and Barnavelt expect more recognition and reward from the country for their deeds safeguarding it—it is Barnavelt’s perception of the people’s ingratitude toward him that motivates his conspiracy against Orange at the outset. Railing against the people’s high estimation of Orange, Barnavelt cries: “this ingratefull Cuntry, [and this bold / vsurper of what’s mine], shall first wth horror / know that he that could defeat the Spanish counsailes, / and countermyne their darck works, he that made / the State what ’tis, will change it once againe / ere fall with such dishonor” (ll. 50–55).<sup>62</sup> Bar-

58. Albert H. Tricoli, *Anticourt Drama in England, 1603–1642* (Charlottesville, N.C., 1989), 151–56, 192.

59. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 140–58 at 150.

60. For contemporary evidence of this perception, see Richard Verstegan, *A Tounge-Combat, Lately Happening, Between two English Soldiers; in the Tilt-boat of Grauesend* ([Mechelen, Flanders], 1623), 29–30; [Henry Hexham], *A Tongue-Combat, Lately Happening Betweene Two English Souldiers in the Tilt-boat of Grauesend* (London [i.e., Netherlands], 1623), 61–63.

61. For example, see Patrick Copland, *A Second Courante of Newes from the East India in Two Letters* ([London], 1622), 2. See also *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 1, 1547–1629 (1802), April 27, 1621, 594, available at British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=4096>.

62. Square brackets denote the words deleted by the Master of the Revels, George Buc. In their place was interlined “this base people / most base to my deserts.”

navelt's expectation of recompense is based on his sense of the significant role he played in shaping the newly independent country. This sentiment mirrors the English attitude that the Dutch remained indebted to them for helping to emancipate the Netherlands.<sup>63</sup> Thus, although Barnavelt appears as the scheming Machiavellian villain in the initial scenes, the English audience might also have identified with him as a victim of Dutch ingratitude.

Additionally, the playwrights have the Prince of Orange claim responsibility for the Netherlands' successes at the expense of Barnavelt—and by implication the English soldiers. Barnavelt's speech protesting against the country's new devotion to Orange casts the advocate in the role of the cuckold and underlines his bitterness at his country's neglect, now that it is no longer dependent on him (ll. 1099–112). This response echoes English indignation at the United Provinces' forgetfulness of earlier favors. The connection to the “jilted” English soldiers is made explicit when Barnavelt charges the prince with usurping the glory of the renowned English army officers, the Vere brothers, at the siege of Ostend (ll. 2360–61). Orange is represented as usurping the contributions of others in liberating the Netherlands, and Barnavelt's reference to the Veres as “those vnparelleld paire of warlike Brothers” (l. 2359) would have further worked to endear the advocate to the English audience.

The playwrights' representation of the Dutch political state more generally is neatly summarized in a brief scene that allowed them a foray into the mechanics of Dutch governance. Drawing on a popular, derisive perception of Dutch gender equality that linked this unusual social setup with the Netherlands' democratic government, Massinger and Fletcher depict a group of Dutch Arminian women whose grandiose claims to equal authority are shown to be empty.<sup>64</sup> The women are introduced in a potentially sympathetic way, as opponents of tyranny (ll. 771–73). The liberties they claim reveal a free and open form of government that encouraged citizen participation. They rhetorically enquire of the English gentlewoman, “are we shut out of Counsailes, privacies . . . ? / No, certaine, Lady; we pertake with all, / . . . why this man / workes theis, or theis waies, with o<sup>r</sup> against the State, / we know, and give allowaunces” (ll. 785–90). Such sentiments may have invited an English audience to consider their own ignorance of the king's unfathomable policies. The obedience and respect for the *arcana imperii* subsequently exhibited by the scene's English gentlewoman therefore becomes a reflection on the English citizen's exile from the decision-making process, as she remarks “nor dare we thinck of what is don above vs, / not talk of *Graues*” (ll. 817–8). The emptiness of the Dutch women's claims to knowledge, however, implies that the laudable political inclusion claimed by the government was not actually in operation. This understanding reflects the playwrights' representation of the Netherlands as failing to exercise its republican ideals because the political machinery had broken down. The shrewd observation of the English gentlewoman—that “two heads

63. Martine J. van Ittersum, “Three Moneths Observation of the Low Countreys, Especially Holland”: Owen Felltham (c. 1602–1668) and Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Seventeenth Century,” *Lias—Sources and Documents Relating to the Early Modern History of Ideas* 27 (2000): 95–196 at 157–61.

64. For an example of this view, see *ibid.*, 159–61.

make monsters” (l. 816)—succinctly conveys Massinger and Fletcher’s identification of the chief political failing in the Netherlands: Orange and Barnavelt’s destabilizing power clash. In their presentation of it in the play, they subtly point to the increasingly familiar classical analogy with Caesar and Pompey.



The influence of classical ideas upon the histories, drama, literature, and practical politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been the subject of significant study.<sup>65</sup> Scholars have emphasized the importance of the Roman historian Tacitus, whose works inspired critical readings of imperial Rome that cast it in an authoritarian light.<sup>66</sup> Other factors that informed the intellectual framework of the period, however, should not be overlooked, particularly Continental examples.<sup>67</sup> In *Olden Barnavelt*, both classical and Continental influences can be seen in the playwrights’ exploration of political authority and governance and, in turn, their development of some domestic observations.

The English translation of Lucan’s classical war epic, *Pharsalia*, in 1614, underscores the rising importance of this anti-Caesarian poet.<sup>68</sup> Lucan’s epic challenged the imperial rendering of the Caesars as ushering in an age of peace. In *Pharsalia*, Caesar attains power by contravening Rome’s laws. He is set in opposition to the liberty of the weakening republic and motivated by self-interested ambition.<sup>69</sup> James I’s early translation of Lucan, in which he employed parts of the text in support of an argument against rebellion, suggests that the most ardent monarchist could be reconciled to the poet.<sup>70</sup> But the Lucan that influenced much of late Elizabethan and Jacobean literary culture was more commonly the “freedom-loving, aristocratic, and tyrant-hating

65. For example, Blair Worden, “English Republicanism,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, 1991), 443–75 at 445–49; Quentin Skinner, “Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War,” in Gelderen and Skinner, *Republicanism*, 2:9–28 at 14; Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1995); Malcolm Smuts, “Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c. 1590–1630,” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Basingstoke, U.K., 1994), 21–43. Cf. Johann P. Sommerville, “English and Roman Liberty in the Monarchical Republic of Early Stuart England,” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson*, ed. J. F. McDiarmid (Aldershot, U.K., 2007), 201–16.

66. On the significance of Tacitus, see Smuts, “Court-Centred Politics,” 25–30; P. Burke, “Tacitism,” in *Tacitus*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London, 1969), 149–71 at 155; and Alan T. Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism and the ‘Utility’ of Tacitus,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983): 127–55.

67. Kewes, “Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama”; Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2004), 1–8.

68. David Norbrook, “Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Literary Republican Culture,” in Sharpe and Lake, *Culture and Politics*, 45–66 at 53.

69. Lucan’s republicanism has not gone unqualified. See Norbrook, “Lucan,” 47; Frederick M. Ahl, *Lucan: An Introduction* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1976), 54–61; and Christine Walde, “Caesar, Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*, and their Reception,” in *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, ed. Maria Wyke (Oxford, 2006), 45–61.

70. Paulina Kewes, “Julius Caesar in Jacobean England,” *Seventeenth Century* 17 (2002): 155–86 at 175–76.

poet.<sup>71</sup> His were the values informing the work of Ben Jonson and Thomas Kyd, who borrowed from Lucan during times of political anxiety.<sup>72</sup> Samuel Daniel's epic on the Wars of the Roses, *The Civil War*, has long been recognized for its debt to Lucan in both style and theme, while George Chapman's closet drama *Caesar and Pompey* has been described by one critic as the most "Lucanic conception of Caesar on the English stage."<sup>73</sup> Massinger and Fletcher's contribution to this growing interest in Lucan is most directly revealed in their collaborative play *The False One*.

*The False One* has been dated to around 1620, just one year after *Olden Barnavelt*.<sup>74</sup> The action centers on the period following the battle at Pharsalus, when Caesar arrived in Egypt. Lucan and Plutarch are both identified as key influences in this play; Lucan's negative depiction of Caesar as the villainous rebel, however, predominates. This reading is intimated almost immediately, as the Roman soldier relating the news of the battle to Ptolemy's court describes the charge of Caesar's troops: "His army came on as if they had been / So many Caesars, and like him ambitious, / To tread upon the liberty of Rome" (1.1.208–10) Massinger and Fletcher build upon this characterization of Caesar throughout the play, following Lucan in portraying his rise to power as unlawful and his authority derived from a victorious rebellion.<sup>75</sup> Paulina Kewes reads the play in the context of the tense political climate generated in England during the Palatinate crisis of 1619–20, highlighting Massinger and Fletcher's application of classical texts to the present; it is within this context that *Olden Barnavelt* too can be read.<sup>76</sup>

In *The False One* Massinger and Fletcher focus upon the crowned rebel. Pompey's fate is sealed by the end of the first scene and the play moves on to investigate the problems arising from rebellion and illegitimate authority. In *Olden Barnavelt* the plot builds up to its climax in Barnavelt's execution, concentrating on the power struggle between him and Orange, and examining the ways in which they justify their actions. To some degree, therefore, we can see *Olden Barnavelt* as a prequel to the themes that Massinger and Fletcher carried on to investigate in *The False One*. If so, *Olden Barnavelt* may have drawn inspiration from a Lucanic representation of Caesar and Pompey. Scholars have noted the play's loose identification of Orange and Barnavelt with the political values associated with Julius and Augustus Caesar, on one side, and Pompey and Cato, on the other, but have not fully explored the implications of the analogy.<sup>77</sup> The parallel is not consistent, but the playwrights invoke some familiar aspects of Rome's civil war to represent the disturbances in the Netherlands in a new and

71. This is Norbrook's paraphrase of Hugo Grotius on Lucan in 1614; Norbrook, "Lucan," 54.

72. W. Blissett, "Lucan's Caesar and the Elizabethan Villain," *Studies in Philology* 53 (1956): 553–75 at 567–69; Lukas Erne, *Beyond The Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester, 2001), 208.

73. Blissett, "Lucan's Caesar," 570.

74. John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *The False One*, ed. R. Kean Turner, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1966–96), 8:115–202 at 115. Further references are to this edition and are to act, scene, and line.

75. See 5.2.1–9 and 5.2.39–52; Kewes, "Julius Caesar," 173–79; Eugene M. Waith, *Patterns and Perspectives in English Renaissance Drama* (Newark, N.J., 1988), 55.

76. Kewes, "Julius Caesar," 179.

77. For example, Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 152–53, 156–57.

provocative light. This is most apparent in the ambivalent characterization of the lead protagonists, which reflects an equation with the two Roman figures.<sup>78</sup> Neither Barnavelt nor Orange is shown as capable of providing the more favorable alternative government: their actions contravene the liberties of the state and so remain unjustifiable. The rhetoric opposing good and bad or right and wrong is stripped away, revealing that individual ambition motivates the war.

In *Olden Barnavelt* the failing republic is at the mercy of this personal struggle. The meritocracy through which it had functioned has created an ambition in both men that it does not have the volition to check. Both Orange and Barnavelt feel entitled to exercise chief authority in the Netherlands—an entitlement that neither can justly claim. We learn early on that Barnavelt has exercised sole authority for thirty years: “onely the name of King / you haue not had, and yet yo<sup>r</sup> absolute power / hath ben as ample.” (ll. 100–102) Sovereignty should rest with the States, as is freely admitted, but the political machinations of both Orange and Barnavelt demonstrate that sycophancy has corrupted the effective control of power. Barnavelt himself identifies this key failing in the republic, addressing the lords of the States with contempt: “when I am a Sycophant, / and a base gleaner from an othe<sup>rs</sup> fauo<sup>r</sup> / as all yo<sup>u</sup> are, that halt vpon his [Orange’s] crutches / shame take that smoothnes, and that sleeke subiection” (ll. 1095–98). The words unmistakably derive from Barnavelt’s envy of the prince; his subsequent protestation that he himself is as deserving as Orange suggests he objects only to the recipient of the flattery, rather than to the practice itself. This is re-emphasized when Barnavelt, upon his arrest, vows to “shake the servile soules of those poore Wretches / that stick his slight deservings about mine” (ll. 2076–77). As Barnavelt is not offered as the virtuous alternative to Orange, the accusations instead demonstrate the ubiquity of corruption in the republic.

As with Caesar, in the play it is Orange’s military successes that have enabled him to rise to a position from which he can fight for power. Barnavelt’s initial scheming therefore points to a new necessity for military reinforcement, in order to “strengthen o<sup>r</sup> side / against the now vnequall opposition / of this [prowd] Prince [of Orange]” (ll. 279–81). Yet, as with Caesar and Pompey, it soon becomes manifest that the contest is unbalanced. In a preview of the contest’s end, Orange suggests to Barnavelt that the cure of his own faults “would make ye shrinck & shake too, / shake of your head” (ll. 516–7). The character Orange’s battlefield achievements have won him *de facto* authority and his military superiority ensures that at the close of act 2 he has triumphed over Barnavelt’s faction, a victory that in reality took a year.<sup>79</sup> From this moment the play focuses more on the threat posed by the power and political maneuverings of the rising star, Orange. As Kamps has highlighted, Orange manipulates the lords of the States in order to pursue his vendetta against Barnavelt under the cloak of official authority.<sup>80</sup> Hiding his true intention, Orange feigns care for the greater good of the

78. See Norbrook, “Lucan,” 48–49, on the characterization of Caesar and Pompey.

79. That is, from the time of the enactment of the Sharp Resolution in August 1617, which allowed towns to raise their own troops, to Maurice’s subjugation of Utrecht the following July.

80. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 150–152.



country, provocatively suggesting that the lords stay the “just” punishment of Barnavelt’s faction. The lords’ response again highlights the contradiction between the theory and practice of power in the Netherlands:

such mild proceedings in a Government  
new settled, whose maine strength had it’s dependaunce  
vpon the powre of some perticular men  
might be given way to, but in ours, it Were  
vnsafe and scandalous; then the *Prouinces*  
haue lost their liberties, Iustice hir Sword,  
and we preparad a way for our own ruyn.

(ll. 1254–60)

This speech subtly reveals the hypocrisy at work in the state. The first lines describe the current state of the Netherlands, which is dependent “vpon the powre of some perticular men.” Yet Orange’s manipulation has been effective: protesting against appearing to be so weak, the lords resolve to punish the “treason.” Orange has thus criminalized his opponent while legitimating his own actions.

The depiction of Orange reflects anxieties about the usurpation of authority and its justification that Massinger and Fletcher later examined in *The False One*. In *Olden Barnavelt* they exploited the contrast between the legally dubious foundation of Maurice’s coup in 1618 and its official representation as the exercise of a true and just authority. Orange’s victory over Barnavelt and cunning manipulation of his own image allow him to portray the advocate’s faction as traitors and Barnavelt’s execution as justice.<sup>81</sup> Barnavelt’s support among the people serves to emphasize Orange’s betrayal of democracy in favor of authoritarian rule.<sup>82</sup> At his trial, Barnavelt denounces the evidence against him as faked, warning that “this elaborate forme / Of Iustice to delude the world, [is] a cover / For future practises” (ll. 2422–24).

Just as Pompey’s supporters are revealed in the end to be fighting for the liberty of the republic against Caesar’s tyrannical ambitions, so the redundant Barnavelt can become the voice of Dutch liberty against the ambitions of Orange.<sup>83</sup> No longer splenetic from envy, Barnavelt in his later cautionary speeches against the stadholder

81. This understanding of the presentation of state-legitimized violence is indebted to Alan Sinfield’s reading of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. See Alan Sinfield, “*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals,” in *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, ed. Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (London and New York, 1992), 167–80; and Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 164–65. Cf. *The True Description of the Execution of Iustice, Done in the Grauenhage, by the Councill of the Generall States Holden for the Same Purpose, vpon Sir Iohn van Olden Barnaueit* (London, 1619), 2.

82. See ll. 2663–67 and ll. 2795–801. The latter is an exchange between two captains just before Barnavelt’s execution that serves to remind the audience that Barnavelt’s death was not demanded by the people, in whose name it is done.

83. Lucan suggests that liberty lay at the heart of the defense against Caesar. Inspiration would no longer come from Pompey, “but by that pair of rivals always with us—/ Liberty and Caesar . . . / the Senate showed by dying that it was fighting for itself”; Lucan, *Civil War*, trans. S. H. Braund (Oxford, 1992), bk. 7, ll. 695–97. See also Norbrook, “Lucan,” 49.

sheds the mantle of the scheming Machiavelli.<sup>84</sup> With Orange's own schemes becoming more apparent, Barnavelt speaks with a consistency that gives credibility to his words and makes him temporarily a mouthpiece for the dying ideals of the republic. His indictment of Orange upon his arrest as the true author of his demise brings to light the prince's underhanded practices, so that Barnavelt's allegations no longer seem unjustified: "this is the *Prince*, the cruell *Prince* your Master, / the thirstie *Prince* of this poore life" (ll. 2070–71).

Barnavelt's gradual emergence as the country's defender further signals the loose identification of Orange with Caesar.<sup>85</sup> Barnavelt's proselytizing speech near the beginning of act 2, while evidently stemming from his destructive envy, paints a picture of Orange that resembles Lucan's Caesar. He calls Orange a "popular S<na>ke, that hath / stolne like a cuning theif the Armyes harts / to serve his owne ambitious ends" (ll. 727–29). Barnavelt therefore calls for action: "Freemen, and Masters of what yet is yours / rise vp against this Tirant, and defend / w<sup>th</sup> rigo<sup>r</sup>, what too gentle lenitie / hath almost lost" (ll. 735–38). The 1620 Dutch pamphlet "A Morning Waker" made a similar call for Hollanders to recognize that they were voluntarily entering slavery by allowing Maurice to achieve his ambitious designs. Significantly, it invoked the woeful precedent of the Romans who suffered their "free Republique" to become a "Tyrannicall monarchy."<sup>86</sup> Barnavelt's similar charge of tyranny in the play suggests that Massinger and Fletcher drew on the arguments advanced by Remonstrant propaganda in their use of a Roman narrative to represent the Dutch struggle. In characterizing Orange's aims as tyranny, the playwrights alluded to Caesar's similar ambition and so reinforced their depiction of the Netherlands as a republic endangered.<sup>87</sup>

Massinger and Fletcher directly allude to other Roman exemplars in the play, underlining the appointment of Orange as the Dutch Republic's Caesar. The executioner who wins the game of dice and performs the execution uses the "Sword that cutt of *Pompeis* head" (l. 2738), implying that Barnavelt is like the conquered Pompey and Orange like his victorious rival.<sup>88</sup> Leidenberch's appeal to Cato—"and yo<sup>u</sup> brave *Romaine* speritts, famous more / for yo<sup>r</sup> true resolutions on Yo<sup>r</sup> selues, / then Conquest of the world" (ll. 1664–6)—at the hour of his suicide aligns Barnavelt's party with Cato, that staunch defender of Roman republican values, and their adversaries with Caesar.<sup>89</sup> To return to the famous passage excised by Buc: Orange is compared to Octavius, so signaling the utter death of the republic and rise of the empire left incomplete by

84. For example, ll. 329–31, ll. 1121–81; Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 147.

85. For Caesar's reputation, see Mackenzie, "Imitation Gone Wrong," 132.

86. TNA, SP 84/98, fol. 168.

87. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 153. There is debate about what sort of monarchy, if any, Caesar aimed to establish. See Howard H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68* (New York, 1976), 437. For an analysis of seventeenth-century readings of Lucan's Caesar, see Blissett, "Lucan's Caesar," 560. See also Norbrook, on the comparison of Cromwell with Caesar, in *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge, 2000), 299.

88. Cf. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, 152–53.

89. Cf. *ibid.*, 157. Cato is often identified as Lucan's third hero in Pharsalia, as he assumes a position opposite to Caesar after Pompey's defeat at Pharsalus. See Ahl, *Lucan*, 231–79.

Caesar's assassination. The subsequent reference to the elimination of Cato and like-minded free spirits (ll. 2437–39) again suggests the influence of a Lucanic rendering of the civil war.

In his last speech, Barnaveit resignedly admits that the country's future now rests in Orange's hands unopposed: "Comend my last breath to his Excellence, / tell him the Sun that he shot at, is now setting, / setting this night, that he may rise to morrow, / for ever setting: now let him raigne alone" (ll. 2981–84). Orange's victory is therefore complete, and he has achieved all he covertly worked toward. The closing exchange between two lords reflects the ambivalence of the characterization while maintaining the hint of trepidation about the future. Vandort, a consistent supporter and flatterer of Orange throughout the play, espouses what would become the official justification of Oldenbarnevelt's execution: "vaine glory thou art gon: / and thus must all, build on Ambition" (ll. 3000–3001). However, an unnamed lord offers the final words of the play, which betray insightful remorse and question both Orange's conduct and Vandort's unperceived hypocrisy in charging Barnaveit alone with ambition: "Farwell, great hart: full low thy strength now lyes, / he that would *purge ambition* this way dies" (ll. 3002–3; italics mine). In alluding to Barnaveit's attempt to prevent the triumph of Orange's ambitions, the play closes with a chilling appraisal of political reality under a successful usurper.



The political commentary in and admonitory function of the play reflect a much wider practice in early modern drama and highlight the theater as an invaluable resource for those studying social, cultural, and political history in the period. *Olden Barnaveit* is unusual, although not unique, in portraying contemporary events, offering an opportunity to hear the playwrights' voices among others commenting on the same events. This allows us not only to compare how different genres deployed the same story, but also to appreciate the multiplicity of political ideas current in the period because of the focus upon the Netherlands' government. English observations and commentary on political power in the Dutch Republic reflected to some degree the evolving views of authority and government in the Jacobean period. The militant Protestant framework through which many in England represented and understood Oldenbarnevelt's execution was greatly influenced by the pamphlet propaganda of Dutch Contra-Remonstrants. In these confessionally exploitative ephemera, Maurice stood as the godly courtier-soldier against the pro-Spanish, Arminian-Catholic traitor Oldenbarnevelt. Massinger and Fletcher challenged this understanding of Maurice's victory as the triumph of princely rule over the instability of civil war, of the monarch over the rebel, through their analogies to Roman rule. In doing so, they emphasized the antitheses in the classical precedent between Rome as a self-governing republic and as an empire, and between liberty and the tyranny of Caesar. Applied to the Netherlands, Massinger and Fletcher's analogy could suggest a similar antithesis between the direction of

Maurice's monarchical ambition and the liberty that the United Provinces had fought so hard for. Through this they conveyed the need for safeguards upon power to prevent the emergence and dominance of ambitious individuals, especially through military strength. The political message emerging from the play was that the United Provinces should look to the reign of the Caesars to understand the implications of their inaction against Maurice's encroachments.

On the English stage, *Olden Barnavelt* presented a dark and oppressive account of the origins of monarchical authority and its potential for excess, which, as noted earlier, may well have evoked memories of Raleigh's execution the previous year. A number of studies have rightly noted the expression of a pervasive anxiety about the exercise of autocratic authority that resonated with James's style of government. Yet the play's admonition only functions effectively when Barnavelt's rhetoric can be trusted. Necessarily, therefore, Massinger and Fletcher's representation transcended the dichotomous interpretation of the rivalry between the advocate and the prince as between wrong and right, Arminianism (read Catholicism) and the Reformed. The absence of a clearly identifiable hero in *Olden Barnavelt* functioned to reject such easy alignments in favor of a Tacitean exploration of motives that asked the audience to look beyond the propaganda.<sup>90</sup>

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90. For Massinger and Fletcher's use of these pamphlets, see [John Fletcher and Philip Massinger], *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt*, ed. W. P. Frijlinck (Amsterdam, 1922), xxvi–lviii.