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“SHAKESPEARE’S *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* &
THE ‘PRODUCTIONS’ OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE FACE OF THE OTHER”

By

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“SHAKESPEARE’S *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* &
THE ‘PRODUCTIONS’ OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE FACE OF THE OTHER”

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University of Nebraska, 2013

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This examines the development of England’s national identity from the middle to the end of the sixteenth century, and specifically the role that its nascent imperial projects in the New World play in that development. As the questions of nationhood surface during Mary’s turbulent reign, these in turn prompt England’s ambivalence in openly emulating a proposed Spanish colonial model. This ambivalence is turned into a positive strength during the reign of Elizabeth I, where the question of her marriage becomes an essential tool to keep foreign powers guessing and hoping for an alliance. My analysis of England’s developing imperial identity turns to the nation’s infamous public rejection of Spain known today as the Spanish Black Legend. By publicly denigrating Spain’s activities in the New World, such as its immoral pursuit of gold, England is able to forge its own national identity. England’s rejection of Spain, and its growing sense of national identity, is encoded on the stage by numerous playwrights, including William Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, and by English adventurers like Sir Walter Raleigh, whose account of his activities in the New World draw on the same discourse as Shakespeare’s casket scene. This thesis thus traces the development of England’s national identity vis-à-vis Spain, and explores the ways England’s ultimate rejection of the Spanish imperial model drives the casket scene in *Merchant* and underlies the rhetoric of Raleigh’s *Discovery of the Guiana*.

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In Belmont is a lady richly left,
 And she is fair, and fairer than the world...
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
 For the four winds blow in from every coast
 Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
 ...And many Jasons come in quest of her.¹

Such are Bassanio's embellished words to describe fair Portia in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. As Bassanio's language conveys, Portia's courtship is a contest where the "many Jasons" that "come in quest of her" must choose wisely (if justifiably) from the three caskets made out of gold, silver and lead. Better known as the casket plot, the contest for Portia's hand has traditionally been seen as a less important theme in the play, and thus only recently has the plot been quietly catching the attention of scholars.

Recent readings of Portia's courtship such as that by Mark Netzloff have unearthed fresh subtleties within the play's representation of the casket plot. Netzloff situates *The Merchant of Venice* "within a contemporary debate that attempts to justify England's entrance into a colonial economy by uniting the heroic dimension of colonial expansion, a chivalric discourse appealing to England's gentry, with the interest of commerce and capital."² For Netzloff, as for this study, the pivotal point of interpretation in the casket plot centers on the function of Bassanio's allusion to the "golden fleece". Netzloff acknowledges that the reference to the "golden fleece" was "an image frequently used to represent the precious metals of the Americas."³ His readings, however, favor other early modern text that "applied the metaphor of the 'golden fleece' to domestic woolen and cloth industries in conscious opposition to the quick profit of

¹ Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. In *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*.

² Netzloff, Mark. *England's Internal Colonies: Class, Capital, and the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 27.

³ Ibid.

New World gold.”⁴ Through the play’s representations of Morocco and Aragon, Netzloff argues, England “distances its economy from an older chivalric model of ‘adventure,’ one still evoked in the literature of English privateering of the 1590s, foregrounding, instead, an emergent ethos of capitalist ‘venturing’.”⁵ Furthermore, in Netzloff’s estimation, Bassanio plays the role of English “venturer” as he becomes “less like a young member of the gentry and more like a member of the merchant class,” and is thus capable of displacing his stereotypical image of the spendthrift “prodigal” while he prepares to make his casket choice.

Netzloff’s views are grounded within a period when England’s futile endeavors to find precious metals in the Americas were followed by an English commercial ideology that “attempted to differentiate English colonialism from Spanish imperialism by locating the sources of England’s own wealth in more traditional, stable, and perhaps mundane networks of commerce.”⁶ He thus reads Bassanio’s casket choice as an English discourse that rejects gold with the proverbial rebukes of that “Hard food for Midas” (*Merchant* 3.2. 105). The allusion to King Midas, as Netzloff also points out, was an unmistakable reference to figure King Phillip II of Spain and his insatiable thirst for New World gold, most famously depicted in John Lyly’s *Midas*.⁷ Staged around the years of the Spanish Armada, Lyly’s play was not the only production that questioned the quest for New World gold. Ives Peyre, for example, points to a conspicuous interweaving of the “golden fleece” reference in Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* which suggests that “the enthusiastic urge to discover new territories hides a somewhat less noble thirst for

⁴ Ibid, 28.

⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

gold.”⁸ The drama of the late 1580s was heavily invested in defaming Spain’s wealth and corrupt power, a prime example being Thomas Kyd’s renowned play, *The Spanish Tragedy*.⁹ If Shakespeare’s *Merchant* follows such a tradition, Bassanio’s casket choice, and in particular his rejection of gold reflect “a concern that in the late Elizabethan period was often associated with the contaminating circulation of Spanish gold.”¹⁰

Although Netzloff is right to highlight (the futility of) England’s quest for New World gold, the idea that the nation discouraged itself from pursuing said riches is simplistically dismissive. In fact, as much as England’s colonial proposers condemned the Spanish quest for gold, their reasons to do so often resulted in encouragement for those that sought their share of the “golden fleece”. Those that actually attained the coveted “fleece” were known to receive high praise from fellow supporters. In his poem “The Trumpet of Fame,” Henry Roberts honors Sir Francis Drake (as well as John Hawkins) for his achievements “that fetch more woorth, then Iasons fleece.”¹¹ The poem also celebrates the quest for the “fleece” as being but “Englands honor that you haue in hand,” and further encourages its prospects that “if you do loue our land./ The gaine is yours, if millions home you bring.”¹² Furthermore, Roberts’ poem closes with wishes of fortune, with a particular emphasis on “so much store of wealth/ That Phillipps Regions

⁸ Peyre, Yves. “Marlowe’s Argonauts.” In *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare’s Time*. Maquerlot, Jean-Pierre (ed. and introd.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP; 1996. Ives Peyre examines how Elizabethan dramatists of the late sixteenth century appropriate classical texts to explore modern concerns. Such is the case of Marlowe’s text where the allusion to the “golden fleece” exposes a “thread of overseas exploration” running through Tamburlaine’s imagination.

⁹ See: Griffin, Eric. “Nationalism, the Black Legend, and the Revised ‘*Spanish Tragedy*’”. In *English Literary Renaissance*. vol. 39; issue 2 (March, 2009). 336-370.

¹⁰ Netzloff, 29.

¹¹ Roberts, Henry. “The Trumpet of Fame, [...] Sir Fraunces Drakes and Sir Iohn Hawkins Farew[...] with an encouragement to all Sailers and Souldiers, that are minded to go in this worthie enterprise: with the names of many famous ships[...].” Imprinted at London by Thomas Creede, and sold by William Barley, at his shop in Gra[ti]ous streete, 1595. A3r.

¹² Roberts. B3r.

may not be more stord,/ with Pearle, Jewels, and the purest gold.”¹³ What Robert’s poem suggests is that the achievements of figures such as Drake and Hawkins are not only celebrated for the riches they gained but, just as importantly, for keeping said riches from filling the Spanish Crown’s coffers.

England’s desire for gold in the late sixteenth century was not so much obscure as it was complicated, and nowhere was this conundrum better manifested than in Sir Walter Raleigh’s *Discoverie of the rich and beautiful Empire of Guiana*. It is true, as Netzloff maintains, that in his address to the reader, Raleigh denounces Phillip’s New World gold as a dangerous source of corruption: “It is his Indian Golde,” Raleigh describes, “that indaungereth and disturbeth all the nations of Europe, it purchaseth intelligence, creepeth into Councils, and setteth bound loyalty at libertie, in the greatst Monarchies of Europe.”¹⁴ What Netzloff misleadingly omits is the fact that the entire discourse of Raleigh’s *Discoverie* focuses on promoting the quest for New World gold. Raleigh, in fact, is rather calculating when denouncing Phillip’s “Indian Golde”. An outspoken and known contributor to the anti-Spanish slander of his day, Raleigh was well aware of contradictions in condemning Spanish gold all the while promoting its acquisition. In this case, his allusion to the tainted Spanish gold is carefully placed so as better to outweigh the corrupting elements of gold with its empire-making potential. For instance, at the same time that he condemns Spanish gold, Raleigh’s deliverance marvels at “how many kingdoms he hath indaungered, how many armies, garrisons, & nauies, he hath &

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Raleigh, Walter, Sir. *The discoverie of the large, rich, and bevtiful empire of Guiana with a relation of the great and golden citie of Manoa (which the spanyards call El Dorado) and the prouinces of Emeria, Arromaia, Amapaia, and other countries, with their riuers, adioyning. Performed in the yeare 1595*. By Sir W. Ralegh Knight, captain of her Majesty’s Guard, Lo. Warden of the Sannerries [sic], and her Highness’ Lieutenant general of the county of Cornewall. 1596. ¶3v.

doth maintaine, the greate losses which he hath repaired.”¹⁵ In condemning Phillip’s “Indian Golde” with hints of praise towards the power gained thence, Raleigh shrewdly suggest the urgency of challenging what he deems a threat in Phillip’s power: “If the spanish king can keepe vs from forraine enterprizes, and from the impeachment of his trades, eyther by offer of inuasion, or by beseiging vs in Britayne, Ireland, or else where, he hath then brought the worke of our perill in greate forwardness.”¹⁶

Simply put, Raleigh envisions an English Empire by means of challenging Spain’s source of power, and I will argue that his quest for New World gold can be seen as parallel with Bassanio’s contention for the “golden fleece”. So while Netzloff is right to suggest that *Merchant* exemplifies England’s need to differentiate its colonial discourse from Spanish imperialism, what he seemingly overlooks is the extent to which England continued to seek New World gold. At this point, we can better account for the significance of Morocco’s and Aragon’s presence on the stage, as each of their casket choices further reveals the intricacies within both Raleigh’s and Bassanio’s attempts to justify their pursuit for (New World) gold. Indeed, Shakespeare’s staging of these princes corresponds to England’s need to differentiate itself from Spain—a necessity that further manifests itself in the anti-Spanish propaganda campaign known today as the Spanish Black Legend.¹⁷ Furthermore, the fact that efforts to make such a distinction can

¹⁵ Ibid. ¶3v.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The Spanish Black Legend is a term coined by Julian Juderías in his book *La leyenda negra y la verdad histórica* (1914) to describe the anti-Spanish propaganda that originated in the sixteenth-century. Most attacks against Spain derived from an imperial envy by Protestant nations including England. Through a series of anti-Spanish pamphlets, England collaborated in the denigrating process that condemned, among other things, Spain’s greed and cruel methods in the conquest of New World territories. For more on the Spanish Black Legend, see: Maltby, William S. *The Black Legend in England: The Development of anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660*. Duke University Press. Durham, N. C. 1971. And also: Gibson, Charles.

be traced back to England's voluntary participation in the process of denigrating Spain's image also reveals an eccentric component in England's national identity.

My focus in this thesis is to examine the development of England's national identity from the middle to the end of the sixteenth century, and specifically the role that its nascent imperial projects in the New World play in that development. I trace the uncertainty surrounding English identity under Mary's reign, which prompted England's ambivalence in openly emulating Spain (and thus consequently becoming subservient to it). This ambivalence is turned into a positive strength by Elizabeth upon her succession, as she uses the question of her marriage to keep foreign powers guessing and hoping for an alliance—one that would never come since Elizabeth remained faithful to her promise of marriage to England. One clear decision she, and England make however, is to reject merging with Spain. As England publicly eschewed Spain's immoral and avaricious pursuit of gold through its engagement in the Spanish Black Legend, the nation was able to forge its own imperial identity. This Spanish rejection, and England's growing sense of its national identity, is encoded on the stage by numerous playwrights, including Shakespeare in *Merchant of Venice*, and by English adventurers like Raleigh, whose account of his activities in the new world draw on the same discourse as Shakespeare's casket scene. This thesis thus traces the development of England's national identity vis-à-vis Spain, and explores the ways England's ultimate rejection of the Spanish imperial model drives the casket scene in *Merchant* and underlies the rhetoric of Raleigh's *Discovery*.

The emergence and later development of the Black Legend in England was, as Eric Griffin rightly suggests, “far more pervasive in English public culture, and more important to England’s emerging sense of nationhood, than we have recognized.”¹⁸ In fact, a reexamination of the Black Legend in England shows that Raleigh’s vision of England as a destined empire emerges as an emphatic and pronounced distinction from the very enemy that once threatened England’s national identity. The first section of this thesis revisits a peculiar instance where the arrival of the Black Legend in England collides with Mary Tudor’s marriage to King Phillip II. This episode in English history can be characterized by the nation’s frail sense of nationhood, which was further threatened by the Crown’s promotion of colonial expansion in the attempt to follow a Spanish model. Here I focus on two particular works that simultaneously emerged amidst the turbulent reign of Mary I: Richard Eden’s *The decadēs of the newe worlde*, which is the English translation of Pietro Martire de Anghiera’s (or Peter Martyr) *De Orbe Novo* (1555), and Andrew Borde’s *fyrst boke of the introduction of knowledge* (1555). I contend that whereas Eden’s translation promotes English expansion in the New World, the aggressive approach of his address to the reader reveals the dangers of emulating the Spanish model he promotes. The threats of the Spanish model are reinforced (though perhaps indirectly) by Borde’s depiction of his naked “English man” whose characteristics illustrate the frailty of England’s sense of nationhood at the time of Mary’s reign. Not surprisingly, Eden’s translation witnessed the rejection of the Spanish model and may have triggered responses that would in turn contribute to the Black Legend. Nevertheless, I also maintain that as menacing as Eden’s promotions were to

¹⁸ Griffin, Eric. *English Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain: Ethnopoetics and Empire*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009. 2.

England's vulnerable national identity, the allure of gold and other New World riches he promises would captivate the minds of later colonial enthusiasts, including the renowned Walter Raleigh.

As Elizabeth's succession to the throne inherited the residues of Mary's turbulent reign, the nation's anxieties were manifested in a frailty that was further threatened by the possibility of another foreign king. Elizabeth's succession is paired with what Claire Jowitt sees as coinciding with "an emerging sense on the part of her subjects that England deserved to be more influential in European politics."¹⁹ As the second section of this thesis will argue, Elizabeth's role in such endeavors cannot be overlooked. Here I focus on Elizabeth's achievement as queen regnant, which I suggest was an enabling factor for England to balance and eventually maintain its sense of nationhood. I will highlight episodes in Elizabeth's reign where she played an influential role in the development of an English national identity. From her ability to escape the pressures of marriage, to maintaining her promise to be England's faithful wife, Elizabeth's shrewd skills allowed England the time to mature. Despite Phillip's might, Elizabeth successfully manipulated her relations with the Spanish King, which in turn encouraged her courtiers to challenge Spain's monopoly in the New World. I also examine how Elizabeth's prestige notably influenced the performative essence in a courtly behavior that mimicked the queen's courtship. So that as Elizabeth continued to maneuver around the pressures of her courtship, her achievements eventually won her alluring prestige as Virgin Queen, an unattainable quality that employed a number of references including that of the "golden fleece".

¹⁹ Jowitt, Claire. *Voyage drama and gender politics, 1589-1642: Real and Imagined Worlds*. New York/Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003. 15.

Although Elizabeth's image was partly self-constructed, her prestige is also indebted to the number of representations her subjects crafted during her reign as well as posthumously. Recent scholarship has turned to *The Merchant of Venice* to note Portia as "a character who reflects certain aspects of Elizabeth's representation that were in tension" throughout her reign.²⁰ Critics such as Griffin see deeper allegorical elements in the play and maintain that while "Elizabethans were shaping both the history of their monarch's reign and the 'origins' of their nation, it appears evident that Shakespeare participates in a collective historiographical project."²¹ In section 3, I employ Griffin's formulation of a "collective historiographical project" to further examine the narrative of Shakespeare's *Merchant*. I will argue that the intricacies of the casket plot portray England's unfolding sense of nationhood vis-à-vis Spain—a denigrated image depicted through a conflation of Portia's suitors, Morocco and Aragon. Through the figure of Portia, *Merchant* recalls the role Elizabeth played in the production of England's national identity. This sub-textual narrative is concisely presented within Bassanio's description of Portia in association with the "golden fleece," which was also a known trope to describe Elizabeth's courtship and her allure as the Virgin Queen. In light of the proximity between Shakespeare's staging *Merchant* and the circulation of Raleigh's *Discouerie*,²² the reference to "golden fleece" in the former strikingly resonates with the embellished riches that the latter so emphatically promises. In examining the casket plot

²⁰ Villanponteaux, Mary. "A Goodly Musicke in Her Regiment': Elizabeth, Portia, and the Elusive Harmony of Justice." In *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*: vol.37: Summer 2011. 71-81.

²¹ Griffin, 137. Griffin also points out that Shakespeare's full title *The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice or Otherwise Called the Jew of Venice*... "has not generated substantial critical comment," but can easily be considered as implied by its preface, *Comical History*. 135.

²² Raleigh's voyage took place in 1595; his accounts were published 1596. Shakespeare's *Merchant* is speculated to have been first staged between 1596-1597, after Raleigh's accounts.

as a stage for colonial justifications, I will argue that Bassanio's discourse is not entirely a form of rejection, as Netzloff maintains, but is rather a subtle claim of righteousness for the riches he clearly has mind when describing to Antonio of "a lady richly left".

The last section of this thesis addresses the colonial rhetoric of Walter Raleigh's accounts in his *Discovery*, where in the process of establishing a colonial discourse in the name of England Raleigh accentuates the nation's desired imperial identity. As I examine the discourse Raleigh constructs through his accounts, I employ the language of the casket riddles in *Merchant of Venice*: for Raleigh to achieve "as much as he deserves," he must carefully balance his "desire" for gold and silver and avoid wasting "all he hath". Raleigh's success depends highly on a peculiar performative skill that characterized his career. So that as Raleigh looks to navigate his way through a maze of rivers in order to reach the legendary land of Guiana, it is his behavior throughout the journey which will grant him access thence. Raleigh's endeavors, of course, prove fruitless, but it is his performative essence that seemingly defines his identity—one that he hopes will be adopted by other English adventurers in search for the "golden fleece".

Section I

In understanding how England's national identity was shaped by the Tudor dynasty of the sixteenth century, one must take into account the frustrated endeavors of Henry VIII to produce a male heir to the English throne—other than the short-lived Edward VI. While these frustrations subjected the nation to three different monarchs in the span of a decade, the flux saw both the testing and strengthening of England's nationhood. The death of Edward VI gave way to Mary's ascension to the throne, after which England saw the daunting presence of its foreign king, Phillip II of Spain. Mary I's marriage to Phillip II, as critics and historians agree, proved an unpopular union as it “stirred up fears among of English of their country becoming a mere satellite of Spain, whose king was ready to defend the Roman Church at all cost.”²³

The marriage of Mary to the Spanish King was also unpopular for the threat it posed to England's sense of nationhood. The anxieties this union produced can be seen in likely responses to Richard Eden's *The decades*, the English translation of Pietro Martire de Anghiera's *De Orbe Novo*.²⁴ Commissioned by both Mary and Phillip in 1555, Eden's work introduced England to its first and most influential model for colonizing unexplored territories in the New World—an enterprise that promised to be the foundation to imperial formation. The translation, however, was also problematic for England's national identity in that it was explicitly intended to serve England as the ultimate Spanish model—a guide from which Eden's fellow Englishmen could emulate

²³ Pi Corrales, Magdalena de Pazzi. “The View from Spain: Distant Images and English Political Reality in the Late Sixteenth Century.” In *Material and Symbolic Circulation between Spain and England, 1554-1604*. Cruz, Anne J. (ed. and introd.). Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. 16

²⁴ Anghiera, Pietro Martire de. *The decades of the newe worlde or west India conteynyng the nauigations and conquestes of the Spanyardes, with the particular description of the moste ryche and large landes and ilandes lately founde in the west ocean perteynyng to the inheritaunce of the kinges of Spayne. ...* Written in the Latin tongue by Peter Martyr of Angheria, and translated into English by Richard Eden. London, 1555.

Spain's colonial methods and thus match its achievements. Thus Eden's address to the reader routinely advocates the ideal that "[t]he Spanyardes haue shewed a good exemple to all Chrystian nations to folowe."²⁵ Given the nation's state of political and religious turmoil at the time, such an ideal would be problematic for England's Protestants and those who remained unsympathetic to Queen Mary I. Eden's use of "the Spanyardes" as the model for "all Chrystian nations to folowe" may not have been the wisest preface to his purpose. Nor was Eden naïve of this. He seemingly expects resistance from his readers, especially when he tries to anticipate a number of ongoing concerns throughout his address.²⁶ This section will examine how Eden's address to the reader appeals to the very sensitivities that prompt his reader's resistance, such as the need to strengthen England's feeble sense of nationhood. Initially, the Crown's purpose of establishing Spain as "a good exemple" would prove problematic for numerous reasons, more so than even Eden could have hoped to anticipate. In time, however, what Eden called "a good exemple" would serve a complementary role in the recent emergence of Spanish Black Legend in England, the subject of which became the basis for England's distinct colonial approach.

While the rhetorical approach of Eden's address appeals to England's national identity, he deems it necessary to constantly highlight the established imperial force of his model. In this process, Eden can predictably prompt a fair share of resistance merely on the glorified tones he employs to celebrate the Spanish's achievements. In Eden's

²⁵ Eden, C1r.

²⁶ Although anti-Spanish sentiments were common during the time of Eden's translation, Black Legend discourses in England were not as proliferated in print as they would be in the early 1560s and throughout the reign of Elizabeth I. But, as Eden often reveals in his address, anti-Spanish sentiments concerning the Black Legend were also not uncommon.

words, “the heroicall factes of the Spanyardes deserue so greate prayse that thautour of this booke (beinge no Spanyarde) doth woorthely extolle theyr doynge aboute the famous actes of Hercules and Saturnus and such other which for theyr glorious and vertuous enterpryses were accounted as goddes amonge men.”²⁷ While it seems counterproductive enough for Eden to engage in such hyperbolic praise, to attempt objectivity by asserting himself as “no Spanyarde” may only hinder his purpose further. It is quite ironic that while claiming to be “no Spanyard,” Eden conversely promotes a formula that encourages his English readers to become more Spanish, if not the subjects of Spain. Nowhere are these troubling implications within Eden’s formula better captured than in his most famous lines where he aggressively calls to his countrymen: “Stoope Englande stoope, and learne to knowe thy lorde and master, as horses and other brute beastes are taught to doo.”²⁸

With Mary’s unpopular marriage to Phillip II lurking behind Eden’s publication, as well as the already present concerns for the nation’s susceptibility to Spanish rule, Eden’s words were more likely to be taken as a blatant and scandalous subjugation than as the ideal model to emulate. This transition from emulation to subjugation is further triggered by each instance in which Eden reminds his readers of England’s frail sense of nationhood, such as his praises for the achievements of the “Catholike Kyng of Aragon Don Ferdinando.”²⁹ In fact, out of all the highly acclaimed “heroicall facts of the Spanyards,” none could have been more poignant for the English reader than the reminder of “the progenie of kyngs that in so short a time have lineally descended from”

²⁷ Eden, A2r.

²⁸ Ibid, B1v.

²⁹ Ibid, B3v.

King Ferdinand II—which is a non-too subtle reference to Phillip II.³⁰ That this particular praise was so troubling for Eden’s audience had mostly to do with the painful reminder that England had no “progenie of kyngs” to boast about in recent memory. In fact, not only had England been at opposite ends with the “progenie of kyngs” that Spain had produced since Ferdinand II, but it was this the very reason why the country was in such a susceptible state, namely, the frustrated endeavors of Henry VIII to produce a male heir to the English throne, other than the short-lived Edward VI. It was, after all, in large part Henry’s frustration in producing a male heir that caused so much distress in the realm.

Eden’s approach to establish the Spanish model was thus bound to spark some resistance, for in boasting of the Spanish lineage, he quietly indicts the Tudor dynasty and what little could be praised of its lineage at the time. Furthermore, the consolation he attempts in return is no less discomfoting as he reminds his readers that: “Thou haste nowe a kynge and queene that desyre thee to remember thy dewtie, and holde theyr armes abrode to embrase thee yf thou wylt drawe nere vnto them.”³¹ We can imagine what little reassurance Eden’s readers would take from England’s anemic lineage, especially when asked to take comfort in having a “kyng and queene” that will make amends for so poor a pedigree. Eden seemed well aware of this when he attempts to solicit his readers by pleading “yf thou wylt drawe nere vnto them”. Whereas the mere need to “draw nere” evokes a fragile and divided England, implying however subtly that England’s lack of male progeny will be amended by Spanish pedigree further confirms the very concerns that were dividing the nation. That is, in the case that Mary and Phillip produced a male

³⁰ Ibid, B1r.

³¹ Ibid, B2r.

heir, England's future was bound to become part of that "progenie of kyngs" that Eden so highly celebrates. And, as England's lineage was threatened by Spanish blood, so too was the rest of the nation vulnerable to losing its sense of identity.

These imminent threats of an Anglo-Spanish conflation were not limited to England's future generations. In fact, as far as Eden's readers were concerned, England's current generations were facing a more immediate threat of becoming Spanish. In his continuing efforts to reconcile his readers with their "kyng and queene," Eden incidentally suggests that not only will this transition take place, but it will be rather scourging. He reassures his readers that "They," Mary and Phillip, "are sory to occupie the whyppe yf thou mightest otherwyse bee brought to obedience."³² Eden's appeal for his readers to find comfort in their current "kyng and queene" is not only based on a meager apologetic gesture for the Crown's violent approach, but the gesture is also more likely to pose more threats than it alleviates. For Eden to evoke so violent an image in association with "obedience" presents the threat of conquest in a fashion similar to Spain's methods in the New World. Such are Eden's concluding warnings that "yf thou take pleasure to persist in frowarde stoobbernesse, knowe thou that they are Lions whelpes and conquerours of monsters."³³

Eden's warnings may only have been part of his tactics, a strategic bluff rather, appealing to England's deepest fears. But the threat of becoming Spanish must have resonated in the ears of his countrymen that it was not long before others would exploit this same fear in order to discourage Spanish emulation. In 1556, just a year after Eden's

³² Eden, B2r.

³³ Ibid.

Decades, John Ponet presents *A shorte treatise* [...].³⁴ As his full title announces, Ponet’s “exhortacion to all true naturall Englishe men” is in fact an appeal to England’s sense of nationhood and the loyalty owed by its subjects. He thus warns against the dangers of favoring the Spanish model. While referencing some of the earliest rumors to reach England of Spain’s cruel exploitation of the natives in the Americas, Ponet warns readers of what will happen once these excruciating labor conditions wipe out the native population:

Than shall they inuade Englande, and shalbe by shiploades (if no worse happen vnto you) caried in to newe Spaine, and ther not lyue at libertie, but bicause ye are a stubburne and vnfaithfull generacion, ye shalbe tyed in chaynes, forced to rowe in the galie, to digge in the mynes and to pike vp the golde in the hotte sande.³⁵

While Ponet takes Eden’s menace to more vivid and scourging details, conversely, Eden’s idea that England’s “stoobbernesse” makes the nation susceptible at the hands of Spain resonates in different ways when Ponet refers to “a stubburne and vn faithfull generation”—a defect that will indeed lead to their conquest, and to being “tyed in chaynes.”

Although Eden may have underestimated the blowback of his rhetorical warnings, the logic of learning from Spain’s achievements was not without merit, even if these were expressed in the form of unappealing comparisons between the English “monsters” and their civilized Spanish counterpart. The very fact that Eden constantly employs beastly images throughout his address speaks to the frailty of England’s national identity, especially as most of these images convey a sense of the English as uncivilized. “For

³⁴ Ponet, John. *A shorte treatise of politike pouer and of the true obedience which subiectes owe to kynges and other ciuile gouernours, with an exhortacion to all true naturall Englishe men*. compyled by. D. I.P. B. R. W. Printed by the heirs of W. Köpfel, 1556.

³⁵ Ponet, L4r.

shame,” Eden pleads with his countrymen, “let vs not be woorse then oxen and asses, & lyke vnto horses and mules in whom is no vnderstandynge.”³⁶ The “shame” that Eden references here pertains to an unwillingness to learn, a “stoobbernesse” he deems as an impediment to acquire knowledge. And because Eden’s argument is against “stoobbernesse,” he may have felt justified when calling his countrymen to “stoop” before “thy lorde and master” to add “as horses and other brute beastes are taught to doo”. Further, with ignorance being the main obstacle to England’s success, Eden is also prompted to plead with his readers to reflect on their own image:

Looke I say in that pure glasse and beholde Thy owne deformities, which thou canste not or wylt not feele... I feare greatly that if thou looke therein diligently and looke euen through thy selfe thou wylte abhorre thy selfe to see howe many monsters lye hid in the vnder the shape of man.³⁷

The “deformities” that Eden points to here, along with the “many monsters,” may indeed have been hidden as he suggests. But given the subjectivity in his tone throughout the address, Eden’s work could hardly have been considered an adequate model of “that pure glasse” from which England could “beholde” itself and explore what truly lies beneath “the shape of man”.

Other works, however, would not spare England of “that pure glasse” in which its deformities might be seen and exposed. If the depiction of a naked Englishman can be considered an unmitigated self-reflecting mirror, few works provided a more effective “pure glasse” than Andrew Borde’s *The fyrst boke of the introduction of knowledge*[...].³⁸

³⁶ Eden, B1v.

³⁷ Ibid, B1v-B2r.

³⁸ Borde, Andrew. *The fyrst boke of the introduction of knowledge The whych dothe teache a man to speake parte of all maner of languages, and to knowe the vsage and fashion of al maner of countreys. And for to know the moste parte of all maner of coynes of money, the whych is currant in euery region Made by Andrew Borde, of Physycke Doctor. Dedyicated to the right honorable [and] gracio[us] lady Mary doughter of our souerayne lorde king Henry the eyght. London, 1555.*

First printed in 1547 (the year that Edward VI succeeded Henry VIII), a reprint of Borde's book that includes a special dedication to Queen Mary I makes a second conspicuous appearance in 1555, the same year that Eden's translation of *De Orbe Novo* circulates the streets of England. Borde was well known for travelling the continent in the quest of knowledge, studying other cultures and bringing his findings to fill the voids of a relatively still isolated England.³⁹ His description of England is thus set in contrast to the customs and manners of a number of nations, including England's island neighbors, continental Europe, and other entities such as the Moors, Turks, Egyptians, and Jews. His depiction of his "English man" amidst all of these representative figures is spared no insult:

I am an English man and naked I stand here,
Musyng in my mynd what raiment I shal were;
For now I wyl were thys, and now I wyl were that;
All new fashyons be pleasaunt to me.⁴⁰

At first glance, we may interpret the English man's words as his reassurance to dress as he pleases, when he pleases. Notwithstanding, Borde's characterization of a naked English man can be taken as an urgent recommendation to dress the nation uniformly, whether in nationalistic, political or religious terms. Further, his nakedness is paired with hopeful promises to "learne Latin, Hebrew, Greek, and Frenche,/ And I wyl learn Douche sitting on my benche."⁴¹ The lack of said languages, particularly the classical ones, appears as a quintessential example of England's perceived disadvantage in knowledge compared to its European counterparts. After all, England was in constant need for

³⁹ Loomba, Ania, and Jonathan Burton. *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007. 87.

⁴⁰ Borde, A3v-A4r.

⁴¹ Ibid.

translations into the vernacular, such as Eden's version *De Orbe Novo*. It is not clear whether the second edition of Borde's work was published post Eden's translation of *De Orbe Novo*, much less if the former was reacting directly to the latter. Still, we cannot ignore that both editions were circulating fresh off the printers during critical times in England, and that they were loaded with self-critique appealing for Englishmen to consider the frail state of their nation.

Despite Eden's condescending tone towards his fellow Englishmen, and as much resistance as his poignant claims would have provoked, readers could not ignore the larger incentive of his proposed enterprise, i.e., New World riches. Eden must have been aware of how enticing these riches were, or so we can gather by his attempts to discredit the rumors that "the sandes of the ryuers and the mountaynes of the Indies bee so emptied with golde that no more can be founde there."⁴² That is, if the skepticism behind these rumors can also be seen as a sign of curiosity, then this also implies that at least a portion of Eden's countrymen had expressed interest in the prospect of New World riches. Eden, for his part, must have felt so compelled to deny these rumors that he complements the collection of *Decades* with his "booke of metals," where the reader "shall fynde by experience that metals growe and increase, and that after certeyne yeares, suche owlde caues of the mynes as haue byn dygged, are ageyne replenysshed with vre."⁴³ However much reassurance Eden's readers could find in his "booke of metals," the fact remained that, even if plausible, these self-replenishing mines were currently under the control of Spain. Hence, Eden was ultimately providing his readers an image of rich mines forever filling Spain's coffers.

⁴² Eden, C1r.

⁴³ Ibid.

In turn, Eden's metallurgical expertise would ultimately prove needless if only he could deliver on his most significant promise:

there yet remayneth an other portion of that mayne lande reachyng
towards the northeast, thought to be as large as the other, and not yet
known but only by the sea coastes, neyther inhabyted by any Christian
men: in this lande there are many fayre and frutefull regions, hygh
mountaynes, and fayre ryuers, with abundaunce of golde and dyuers
kyndes of beastes.⁴⁴

Although the “northeast” that Eden points to would eventually fail to deliver on his promise, the allure of this fable of undiscovered/uninhabited land full of natural riches—none more coveted than its “abundaunce of golde”—would become quite the popular trope to describe the New World in the decades to follow. Forty years later, in fact, the essence of Eden's passage would continue to echo throughout popular media such as the stage, as evidenced by Bassanio's description of Portia as the “golden fleece” sought after by a range of national and racial rivals. And, of course, it would be most popularly revived by the vivid and embellished details of Raleigh's firsthand account of his *Discoverie of the large, rich, and bevtiful empire of Guiana*.

But as popular and alluring as the trope of the fabled land “with abundance of golde” would prove, Eden's advice did not come without its complications, particularly for anyone attempting to construct a righteous colonial justification. Eden, in fact, recognizes the challenge of building such righteous justification within his writing process, especially as he tries to circumvent the contradictions of his promotion that “[t]he Spanyardes haue shewed a good exemple to all Chrystian nations to folowe”. At least initially, Eden's notion of “a good exemple” presumably refers to Spain fulfilling its

⁴⁴ Ibid.

God given duty to expand Christendom. He describes how essential it was for the New World that the Spanish had “brought vnto these newe gentyles the victorie of Chrystes death wherby they beinge subdued with the worldely sworde, are nowe made free from the bondage of Sathans tyrannie, by the myghty poure of this triumphante victourer.”⁴⁵

On the other hand, the impulse to expand Christendom also served the more secular purpose of expanding its wealth; hence the promise offered an undiscovered and supposedly unoccupied rich land.

Reasons to keep the wealth-seeking approach as a justified purpose were mostly concerned with avoiding any association with the already damaged reputation of Spain’s alleged cruel exploitation of the New World natives. That Eden was aware of these accusations against Spain can be inferred by his tact when describing “the worldely sworde” as the main tool for Christian conversions. He is similarly prudent when describing Spain’s activities as “mercyfull warres ageynst these naked people,” for by depicting Spain as “mercyfull” he is better able to establish the notion that the “greater commoditie hath therof ensewed to the vanquished then the victourers.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Eden may have anticipated the difficult time his readers would have in accepting his suggestion of so much generosity deriving from New World natives, much less believe his depiction of the selfless Spaniards who: “haue taken nothyng from them but such as [the natives] them selues were wel wyllynge to departe with, and accounted as superfluties, as golde, perles, precious stones and such other.”⁴⁷ And if Eden’s task was depict the “greater commoditie” belonging to the natives, what a better way to do so than

⁴⁵ Ibid. A2v.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

by claiming that in exchange for these “superfluities,” the Spaniards “recompensed them with suche thynges as they muche more esteemed,” such as liberation “from the bondage of Sathans tyrannie.”⁴⁸

As is evident from his own words, Eden recognized the need to construct this exchange as a “greater commodity” for the natives as much as he also understood what the larger incentive would be for his fellow Englishmen. As noble as the God given duty to expand Christendom might sound, the idea that such duty came with earthly rewards such as gold was indeed Eden’s major selling point. And although the very promotion of the “abundance of golde” would later be condemned in the Black Legend, this colonial paradox begins to manifest itself even within Eden’s efforts. In what appears as a moment of desperation, and after carefully guarding against a disreputable pursuit of gold, Eden can no longer help but to address the ongoing accusations against Iberian colonial motives:

although summe wyll obiecte that the desyre of golde was the chiefe cause that moued the Spanyard and Portugales to searche the newe founde landes, trewly albeit we shulde admitte it to bee the chiefe cause, yet dooth it not folowe that it was the only cause, forasmuch as nothyng letteth but that a man may bee a warriour or a marchaunte, and also a Christian.⁴⁹

Surprisingly, Eden admits to what he previously had been so cautiously guarding, namely that “the desyre of golde” was, after all, “the chiefe cause that moued the Spanyard and Portugales to searche the newe founde lands”.

What is even more striking is how hastily he abandons his cautious ways for a more blatant push for English imperialism: “Therefore,” he adds, “what so euer owre chiefe intente bee, eyther to obteyne worldely fame or rychesse,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, B3v.

(althrough the zeale to encrease Christian religion ought chiefly to moue vs) I wolde to god we wolde fyrst attempte the matter.”⁵⁰ It is this last promotion of gold-seeking exploration that England’s colonial promoters such as Raleigh would attempt, albeit with specific discursive motives that were both opposed and distinguished English colonialism from the Spanish model.

⁵⁰ Ibid, C3r.

Section II

While the end of Mary's reign enabled Elizabeth's succession, the divergent ideals and Protestant beliefs of the new monarch did not immediately provide the nation with a stable identity. The England Elizabeth inherited was once again held hostage by the question of marriage and the urgency of securing the lineage by means of producing a male heir to the throne. Thus, as notable scholars such as Ilona Bell point out, Elizabeth was under great duress to marry from the beginning of her reign—a quandary that would prove problematic for all parties involved.⁵¹ What Elizabeth recognized in her dilemma was that while the pressures for her marriage would not cease, finding a match had the potential to bring as much turmoil as it sought to alleviate. In the event of a match, England's nationhood would once more be held captive to its new, perhaps foreign, King. In turn, as Bell points out, Elizabeth sought out ways to “maintain the mutual force of both choices, neither precluding marriage altogether nor conceding to a marriage she did not desire.”⁵² How she was able to “maintain” this “mutual force” and rhetorical tools she employed in the process became essential characteristics for England's maturing sense of nationhood. In this section, I therefore will consider the savvy ways in which Elizabeth channeled the pressures of her courtship to favor both her image and, by the same means, England's national identity.

Elizabeth displays her deft political skills as early as her inaugural ceremony in January of 1559, where she anticipated the court's demands to wed by embracing the role of the faithful wife. In the account of her coronation speech that Elizabeth's biographer William Camden provides, for example, Elizabeth closes with the attention-getting

⁵¹ Bell, *Elizabeth I: The Voice of a Monarch*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

⁵² Bell, 93.

assertions that she was “already bound vnto an Husband, which is the Kingdome of England.”⁵³ Surely, such statement was designed to catch the attention of her audience, particularly those who sought with urgency the procreation of an heir to the throne. But what made Elizabeth’s assertions even more profound was that she implicitly recalled Mary Tudor’s promise to do the same early in her reign. Of course, Mary did not only fail to keep said promise, but her choice of husband ultimately proved an unpopular match. For Elizabeth, however, making the same promise as Mary suggests that she was also taking on the same challenge—thus setting the stage to prove herself a worthier queen, not to mention queen regnant.

Forestalling her marriage proved invaluable for England’s nationhood, but the task was challenging for Elizabeth. However, maintaining her promise as a faithful wife was less pressing once Elizabeth recognized that within the constant demands for her marriage existed sources of power she could harvest—none more significant than the allure of forming an alliance. While said approach meant sustaining favorable relations with other European nations, it also prompted Elizabeth to be cautiously evasive in her relationship with Phillip II of Spain. Charles V had long advised his son Phillip to maintain an alliance with England; Phillip’s marriage to Mary Tutor was thus no surprise. Elizabeth too was of great significance to the Spanish King, even while married to Mary.⁵⁴ In the case of a childless Mary, for example, an illegitimate Elizabeth would enable the succession of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, who was at the time betrothed to

⁵³ Camden, William. *Annales the true and royall history of the famous empresse Elizabeth Queene of England France and Ireland. &c. True faith's defendresse of diuine renowne and happy memory. Wherein all such memorable things as happened during hir blessed raigne ... are exactly described.* London, 1625.

⁵⁴ Pi Corrales, Magdalena de Pazzis. “The View from Spain: Distant Images and English Political Reality in the Late Sixteenth Century.” In *Material and Symbolic Circulation between Spain and England, 1554-1604*. Cruz, Anne J. (ed. and introd.) Aldershot, England: Ashgate; 2008. 16.

the French dauphin, a known threat to Phillip. Phillip became transparently anxious with the mere thought of a dynastic union between England and France. His efforts to frustrate said alliance were quite evident when he pushed Elizabeth to marry one his allies, Emmanuel Philbert of Savoy. After Mary Tudor's death, Phillip was also known to have had an insatiable lust for Elizabeth, to the point that he even asked to marry her himself. Elizabeth turned both proposals down flat, but not before establishing a friendly relationship with Phillip—a friendship that would be best remembered for Elizabeth's testing of Phillip's patience, and indeed, exploiting it for all of its worth.⁵⁵

Despite his absence from Elizabeth's catalog of memorable suitors, the aspirations that Phillip II had with Elizabeth I—whether truly marital or not—played a significant role in England's early attempts at imperialism while competing against Spain. Initially, Elizabeth's personal relationship with Phillip allowed her to support her countrymen's indiscriminate plundering of New World riches throughout the Atlantic. Between 1559 and 1561, English ships disguised as merchant vessels were in the business of intercepting Spanish cargo on their way back from the New World. As England's activities throughout the Atlantic continued, it became clear to both nations that England's recent ambitions clashed head-on with the trading monopoly that Spain had established in the Americas.⁵⁶ Rather predictably, the Anglo-Iberian alliance began to deteriorate. By 1561, English ships had become notorious for their piracy assaults, and despite Phillip II's endeavors to appease his countrymen over the constant raids and other indiscriminate English behavior, the strained atmosphere had caused enough mistrust for the two nations to maintain a relationship.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 14-19.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The English may not have helped their cause when they made no efforts to cease these piracy attacks. The Spanish, for their part, believed English piracy was countenanced, if not encouraged, by Elizabeth herself. If the Spanish had good reasons to suspect Elizabeth's involvement, their hesitation to break off relations entirely was in large part thanks to Elizabeth's savvy ways: despite these provocations, her acting skills enabled the Anglo-Iberian alliance to linger until 1566. In turn, the short-term alliance with Spain enabled Elizabeth to establish a model of foreign relations wherein appearances as well as intentions were shrewdly disguised. By the time England and Spain had officially parted ways, Elizabeth had bought enough time for England to pursue its interest in colonial enterprise outside the dominance of Spain, and to begin to develop a uniquely English imperial identity.

As the second half of the sixteenth centuries witnessed Elizabeth's continuing defiance of Phillip, Anglo-Iberian relations would eventually reach the breaking point of the Spanish Armada assault. In the lead up to this military conflict, part of England's strategy to fend off its Iberian neighbors was to use the allure of Elizabeth's hand in marriage to form alliances. During the 1560s and 1570s, for example, both the English and French courts recognized the need to unite against Spain, and hence made efforts to arrange a marriage between Elizabeth and Henry, the Duke Anjou. While the efforts to secure this union were frustrated in large part by the St. Bartholomew's day massacre in Paris, 1572, the mere negotiations for the marriage gave Phillip cause to be concerned.⁵⁷

Years later, the English and French reopened the marriage negotiations, although this time the courtship was with Anjou's younger brother, Francis the Duke of Alençon

⁵⁷ Ibid, 20.

(later the Duke of Anjou). This courtship is known as the closest Elizabeth came to a marriage, but after years of marriage negotiations between the parties, as well as two separate visits to the English court from the French Duke, the endeavors for this alliance proved fruitless. Elizabeth's true motives in the marriage negotiations with Alençon, however, were often the subject of speculations. Carole Levin, for example, notes that "in explaining Elizabeth's shifting views on marriage to Alençon," Walsingham hoped that the metaphor of the Queen's two bodies "was of value so that Alençon would not feel insulted by Elizabeth's decision not to marry him."⁵⁸ Such diplomatic measures were also taken by Elizabeth herself in her famous dedicatory poem, "On Monsieur's Departure". Bell, for instance, treats the poem as an example of Elizabeth I's craft in what is clearly a "deliberately ambiguous poem" that was to serve "Elizabeth's complicated rhetorical purposes to smoothly extricate herself from the negotiations and to allow Alençon to leave with his dignity intact."⁵⁹

As effective as Elizabeth's strategy of ambiguity proved in the Duke's courtship, it was also her performative quality that well complemented her rhetoric. Throughout her reign, Elizabeth was known for her rhetoric and performative skill, a quality that also characterizes her era. In a report to the Spanish court, Spanish ambassador Mendoza reveals that upon Alençon's leave: "both the Queen's tears and his tender regrets are equally fictitious and feigned," and that albeit "she displayed grief publicly at his departure, I understand that in her own chamber she danced for very joy at getting rid of

⁵⁸ Levin, Carole. *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994. 122.

⁵⁹ Bell, *Elizabeth I: The Voice of a Monarch*, 154.

him, as she desired of all things to get him away from here.”⁶⁰ Perhaps the most evident effect of Elizabeth’s performative quality can be seen in the adopted courtly behavior where her courtier fashioned their appeals to Queen in ways that mimicked her courtship. Incidentally, the performative essence seen at court was also used in the popular trope of the world as a stage, which (as the following section will demonstrate) was suitably employed by poets and playwrights.

Elizabeth’s strategic approach to her courtship not only benefitted the nation with potential allies: she was also able to keep her promise to serve as England’s faithful wife—a feat that significantly enhanced her image in a manner that elevated her status as well as the nation’s, especially since it casted England in the role of the husband. As Ilona Bell rightly points out, “it is an axiom of English literary history that the Petrarchan language of love became a dominant symbolic system of language in Elizabethan England because it suited Elizabeth’s reign as Virgin Queen.”⁶¹ And where Elizabeth I’s reign is largely characterized by her image of the Virgin Queen that both she and her subjects constructed, this trope was also used to portray her allure. A particular instance in which the Petrarchan unattainable trope was clearly displayed was in a show presented at the Tilt-yard on Whitsun Monday 1581. The show featured four champions, the Foster Children of Desire, that laid siege to the fortress of Beauty while “venturing to win the golden fleece without Medea’s help.”⁶² As Yves Peyre point out, “[o]n realizing that it is in the nature of Perfection to frustrate Desire, they submitted to Elizabeth and

⁶⁰ *CSP Spain*, vol. 34. Dec. 25, 1581. Item 186. *British History Online*. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/Default.aspx> (accessed June 9, 2013).

⁶¹ Bell, *Elizabeth I: The Voice of a Monarch*, 19.

⁶² Wilson, Jean. *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*. New Jersey: Boydell & Brewer Ltd. 1980. 63-85.

withdrew from the contest.”⁶³ The purpose behind such show, as Peyre further maintains, was to “impress the French Ambassadors, who had crossed the Channel to seek the Queen’s hand in marriage on behalf of the Duke of Alençon.”⁶⁴ The allusion to the “golden fleece,” of course, is in this case employed to convey Petrarchan unattainability.

Certainly, the myth of Jason and the “golden fleece” was a suitable reference to burnish Elizabeth’s status as Virgin Queen. And although this reference was less often recorded to convey Elizabeth’s unattainable quality, the trope remained a popular one even after her death. For instance, Diana Primrose’s “A Chain of Pearle,” a 1630 eulogy for Elizabeth I, recalls Elizabeth as not only a Virgin Queen, but one that had enough allure to bring many renowned suitors: “How many kings and princes did aspire/ To win her love” but “never would she condescend/ To Hymen’s rites.”⁶⁵ Here, the poem associates Elizabeth with the coveted “golden fleece” with references to such suitors as Alençon whom “though much she did commend/ That brave French Monsieur who did hope to carry/ The golden fleece and fair Eliza marry.”⁶⁶ The poem also references “the Spanish Phillip, husband to her sister,” who is described as “her first suitor, and the first that missed her.”⁶⁷ As Primrose’s poem suggests, the “golden fleece” reference conveys an unattainable quality that celebrates Elizabeth’s elusive hand in marriage. In the following section, I turn to dramatic representations of Elizabeth’s courtship such as Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, where the allusion to the “golden fleece” is central to both her evasive achievements and her influence in England’s colonial ambitions.

⁶³ Peyre, “Marlowe’s Argonauts.” 107.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Primrose, Diana. *A Chaine of Pearle, Or a Memoriall of the peerles Graces, and Heroick Vertues of Queene Elizabeth of Glorious Memory. Composed by the Noble Lady, Diana Primrose*, London, 1630. B2r.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Section III

Scholars such as Claire Jowitt have carefully analyzed the role Elizabeth I played in England's colonial enterprise as dramatized on the stage during the latter half of her reign.⁶⁸ In her analysis of Thomas Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West*, Jowitt sees the depiction of its main character Bess as bearing a direct parallel with Elizabeth I, and raises the question of whether the play's applicability depicts "a criticism of England's Queen who has failed to make such an appropriate marriage and whose unmarried state provokes a crisis in the behaviour of her male subjects," or if instead "we should read Bess's adventures as a celebration of all that a virgin can achieve."⁶⁹ Despite the validity of Jowitt's assessment of that text's ambiguity, other theatrical productions during this period make clearly favorable references to an influential queen. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, for example, has recently drawn scholarship attention that note the figure of Portia as exhibiting characteristics reminiscent of Elizabeth I.⁷⁰ Perhaps the most striking association of the lady of Belmont and Elizabeth is the one captured by Bassanio's early description of Portia, namely the reference to the "golden fleece". Other features in Bassanio's description of Portia, however, also account for qualities that characterized Elizabeth's image, such as her faithfulness and also her shrewd skills to evade suitors. This last dimension is particularly akin to the Portia of the "golden fleece" in that the combination of the two implicitly recalls the role Elizabeth played in the nation's endeavors to strengthen its identity. So that when critics like Griffin rightly

⁶⁸ Jowitt, 38, Jowitt points to representations of "feminised colonial landscapes" conveyed in works such as Raleigh's *Discovery* and Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the West* that suggest "an increasing hostility towards the female monarch who is failing in her duty to facilitate and enable expansionist and heroic English male colonial endeavour".

⁶⁹ Jowitt, 43.

⁷⁰ Villanponteaux, Mary. "A Goodly Musicke in Her Regiment": Elizabeth, Portia, and the Elusive Harmony of Justice." In *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*: vol.37: Summer 2011. 71-81.

suggest that “*The Merchant of Venice* participates in the writing of English national identity,”⁷¹ the presence of the faithful and yet coveted Elizabeth in the figure of Portia stands significantly amidst the play’s sub-textual narrative of national self-definition.

As this section will argue, *Merchant* dramatizes England’s ongoing sense of nationhood through a twofold function of the mythical allusion of the “golden fleece”. That is, the contest of Portia’s hand has also been noted to echo England’s New World aspirations, and efforts to discern English economical discourses within the Bassanio’s casket choice have been made by many critics.⁷² The conflation of the “golden fleece” would hence give a particular shape to the characterization of Bassanio as one of Portia’s suitors: he is at once a courtier and colonial proposer seeking to win the “golden fleece”—as in attaining the queen’s favor—by in turn promising to win the “golden fleece” of New World riches. It is with this conflated version of the “golden fleece” in mind that this section will further illustrate the sub-textual narrative of *The Merchant of Venice* where England’s New World prospects are situated in light of the Anglo-Iberian tensions throughout the second half of the sixteenth century.

From its opening act, the play echoes concerns with England’s frail national identity similar to those the kingdom endures under Mary I’s reign. As early as Antonio’s famous opening lines of melancholy, for example, the play establishes a setting that is (at least initially) overwhelmed by the absence of knowledge. Here Antonio

⁷¹ Griffin, *English Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain*, 136.

⁷² Netzloff primarily treats Bassanio’s casket choice in terms of English colonial discourses. For more on the economical implications of Bassanio’s choice, see: Cohen, Walter. “*The Merchant of Venice* and the Possibilities of Historical Criticism. In *ELH* vol. 49, 1982. 765-89; And also: Ferber, Michal. “The Ideology of *The Merchant of Venice*.” In *ELR* vol. 20, 1990. 431-64.

curiously fills the play's opening passage with an anxiety (or at least an instability) to understand the nature of his sorrows:

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you.
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself. (*Merchant of Venice*, 1.1. 1-7)

Antonio's melancholic expression prompts Solanio and Salarino to speculate on the source of his sadness, to which both Solanio and Salarino present their own hypotheses. Not surprising, the nature of Antonio's sadness have stimulated the curiosity of critics and commentators to the point where our speculations model those of Solanio and Salarino. Too often perhaps we may do so at the expense of the overwhelming concerns with knowledge that the passage reveals. In fact, the source of Antonio's sadness may simply be embedded in what seemingly impedes him from recognizing the very nature of his woes. Ironically, it is not sadness, but rather, as Antonio says, what "I know not" that conversely "wearies" him and company. It is thus that we notice the emphasis in his frustrating efforts to explain "how I caught it, found it, or came by it,/ What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born". So that when Antonio refers to "a want-wit sadness," he encapsulates his paradoxical condition: he is sad and "knows not why," yet it is his very ignorance that sustains this sadness. Still, and despite his state of "want-wit sadness," Antonio exhibits a sense of hope when he recognizes the urgency of what, to use his words, "I am to learn," in the same way that he also acknowledges "That I have much ado to know myself".

Antonio's inability to explain his sadness may be no more than nostalgia for the absence of knowledge that England once suffered from, as was the case of Borde's depiction of his "English man".⁷³ It is true that the ambiguity of Antonio's sentiment is so loose a reference that one can easily place its evocative themes in any prior instance of English history. But the lack of knowledge that Antonio points to is fitting with the contextual frame of Portia's wearisome entrance to the stage. That is, in its most pronounced respect, Antonio's melancholic expressions are echoed with remarkable resonance by Portia's opening lines in the play: "By my troth, Nerissa," says Portia, "my little body is aweary of this great world" (1. 2. 1). It is worth noting here that whereas Bassanio's early description of Portia recalls an already renowned Elizabeth I, our first glance of the lady of Belmont is that of a frail figure whose "little body is aweary of this great world". Of course, unlike Antonio's "want-wit sadness," Portia is well aware that the source of her troubles is the predicament her deceased father left her in: "Is it not hard, Nerissa," Portia reveals, "that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none" (1.2. 25-26). What is most peculiar about Portia's troubles is that she faces restrictions highly reminiscent of what the recently crowned Elizabeth encountered in the court's intensive demands for her marriage. Similar to the ways the young Elizabeth was restricted by her choice of husband while also urged to wed, *Merchant* depicts a seemingly powerless Portia who is confined by her inability to neither "choose one nor refuse none".

Particular features within Portia's marital quandary suggest that the entire casket plot is generally a playful representation of Elizabeth's courtship. One may point to the play's added humor through Portia's mocking catalog of suitors, for example, which in

⁷³ See Section I.

turn animate the Queen's feelings towards potential husbands. Despite the comedic relief of Portia's attitude towards her suitors, however, a sense of frailty lingers within her courtship dilemma. For instance, if Portia's "weary body" alludes to the challenges Elizabeth faced early in her reign, the particulars of the frail nation Elizabeth inherited as she took to the throne are also present in the play. Indeed, Portia's burdens of "this great world" may partially stem from a familiar volatile entity among her mocked suitors. As Portia ridicules her way through the catalog of suitors listed by Nerissa, one Falconbridge, "the young baron of England," sits quietly awaiting his turn. Without hesitation, Portia points to the young baron's limited language proficiency, having "neither Latin, French, nor Italian" (1.2. 69-70). And while Portia finds Falconbridge to be handsome enough to pose "a proper man's picture," he is nonetheless a "dumb show" whose unusual wardrobe seemingly aspires for a style of his own: "How oddly he is suited!" Portia continues, "I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in/ France, his bonnet in Germany and his behavior every-where" (1.2. 72-76).

Similar to the limitations Borde conveys through his "English man," Falconbridge exhibits feeble qualities such as a limited language repertoire and a distorted sense of wardrobe. The resemblances between Falconbridge and Borde's "English man" have not been overlooked, and some commentators believe the latter was in Shakespeare's mind when depicting Portia's catalog of suitors.⁷⁴ Whether Shakespeare in fact cataloged Portia's suitors directly after Borde's model is not entirely clear. In either case, we

⁷⁴ Chambers, Robert and David Patrick. *Chamber's Cyclopedia of English Literature: A History of Biographical of Authors in the English Tongue from the Earliest Times Till the Present Day, with Specimens of Their Writing*. Vol. 1. Google Books: Without reference, Chamber notes that "some have thought it was in Shakespeare's mind when—to Nerissa—Portia criticizes her English suitor in the *Merchant of Venice*".

cannot circumvent Falconbridge's peculiar presence in Portia's list of suitors, nor can we overlook the significance of his qualities conveying a similar frailty once depicted by Borde. What is also striking about said resemblance is that in describing Falconbridge as a "young baron," the play points to an infantile stage in England's national identity. So that as the play introduces a Portia embodying the recently crowned Elizabeth I, the casket plot also recalls the conflicts surrounding her marriage prospects by an already frail national identity embodied in the "young baron," Falconbridge. Moreover, insofar as *Merchant* is concerned with identity formation, Falconbridge's qualities reveal the tension within England's promising and yet precarious qualities. That is, if the slightest sense of optimism can be detected in Falconbridge's diverse attire, it is that he seems to have fulfilled what Borde's English man promised when declaring "now I wyll were thys, and now I wyl were that."⁷⁵ And yet, despite no longer standing naked like Borde's "English man," Falconbridge's wardrobe still lacks the slightest symbol of national uniformity. The play is thus also concerned with providing a setting where "the young baron" can achieve maturation.

Although Falconbridge's qualities may be as frail as those of the naked "English man" Borde depicts, from the point of view of the playwright, even Borde's "English man" possesses promising qualities in his assurance to dress as he pleases. Borde's "English man," for instance, is further animated by a woodcut image of a naked man holding a pair of scissors with which he may tailor his desired suit. Portia's depiction suggests that his Falconbridge actually made use of a similar tool to compile his diverse wardrobe. But it is through the means by which the young baron is constructed that we

⁷⁵ Borde, A3v-A4r.

are able to account for these features as having the potential to indeed tailor not only his suit, but more importantly, his identity. By this, of course, I'm referring to the popular meta-theatrical devise of "wearing" the part. Indeed, no other place was more suitable for such qualities to make the maturation from volatile to versatile than the stage. That is, once on the stage, the volatile qualities that both Borde's "English man" and Falconbridge possess can be exploited as the versatile ability to tailor an identity to a more desirable fashion.

As far as the enabling features that the stage has to offer, the core of Falconbridge's strength rests not on his flexible wardrobe. In fact, what may be Falconbridge's most malleable quality is also his most promising one in that he is described as attaining "his behavior everywhere". On the one hand, and despite lacking the knowledge still encoded within the classical languages, not to mention wanting the slightest sense of uniformity in his attire, Falconbridge shows an essential ability to learn from (or imitate) other European nations. What is most significant in possessing such emulating skills is that it hints at an even more sophisticated meta-theatrical devise in the ability to "play" the part. Combined with his facility to "wear" the part, the addition of a skill where Falconbridge can also "play" said role may just enable him to fully fashion his desired identity. And yet, just when it seems as though the young baron's volatile skills can mature into the versatile qualities that will enable him to solidify his character, his skills show another vulnerable spot.

The very concept that Falconbridge's "behavior" derives from a subtly vague "everywhere" is a detail particularly relevant to England's colonial ambitions (a subject I will later discuss in the play's dramatization of the casket plot where suitors compete for

the coveted “golden fleece”). Such subtlety may help explain why the nations Falconbridge imitates are curiously (if not explicitly) major European countries with the exception of Spain. That is, if imitation is the essence of the skill at hand, it is worth recalling England’s well-known disposition to reject the Spanish model, especially since the emergence of Richard Eden’s *Decades*. Most of the threats that the Spanish model posed on England’s frail sense of nationhood stemmed from the turbulent reign of Mary I, and were of course furthered by her unpopular marriage to Phillip II of Spain. In this case, Falconbridge’s quality in attaining “his behavior everywhere” is threatened by the presence of one of Portia’s most notorious suitors, the Prince of Aragon. Critics have not overlooked the title of the Prince of Aragon as a rather obvious representation of Phillip II of Spain.⁷⁶ Indeed, we can assume that most Elizabethans would have enjoyed the humiliating failure of Spain’s most notorious figure. Shakespeare’s choice in casting Phillip in the not-too-subtle guise of Aragon, however, is more significant than the inevitable ridicule that awaits the prince. In depicting Aragon as one of Portia’s suitors, for instance, the play may also recall Elizabeth’s relationship with Phillip. Indeed, from Phillip’s early marital intentions with Elizabeth, to England’s later contention against Spain’s monopoly in the New World, *Merchant* recalls the Anglo-Iberian tensions in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

“Brutus’ Portia”

The play’s introduction of the wearied Portia in scene II as symbolic of Elizabeth’s nuptial quandary is contrasted by an earlier depiction of Portia that commemorates the role Elizabeth played as the faithful wife throughout distinct stages of

⁷⁶ Netzloff, 31; and Griffin, 143.

her reign. Elizabeth's fidelity (as discussed in the earlier section) not only provided time for England's sense of nationhood to gain some stability, but it also encouraged the nation to pursue imperial status. Similarly, *Merchant's* depiction of a faithful Portia can be seen as representing her enabling role for Falconbridge's qualities to make the transition from volatile to versatile, all while avoiding the Spanish model. The portrayal of Portia as a faithful wife, for example, is captured in the words of Bassanio to whom Portia is "nothing undervalued/ To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia" (1.1. 165-66), the Roman matron most famous for her fidelity. For an Elizabethan audience, the allusion to "Brutus' Portia" alone may have sufficed to associate the lady of Belmont with matrimonial fidelity—the same that Elizabeth had shown throughout her reign.

The extent to which Shakespeare depicts a faithful wife in Portia can also be seen through the appropriation choices the playwright makes from the casket plot's source story, Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*. A brief revisit to *Il Pecorone* offers a grasp of how the play projects the faithful figure in Portia. John Watkins has dissected the way Ser Giovanni's characters are portrayed in *Il Pecorone*, and describes the figure of Portia as "a descendant of Circe, a figure of romance who removes the hero and his old friend alike forever from Venetian society and places them in the magical security of Belmonte."⁷⁷ As the hero, figured as Bassanio, is in the course of a voyage:

[...] he lands at the estate of the infamous lady of Belmonte, a rich widow who promises herself and her wealth to any guest who is able to bed her without falling asleep. There is, of course, the usual romance trick: she drugs her would-be lovers with a sleeping potion before they come to her chamber, and the next day they must suffer the consequence of having all their worldly possessions confiscated.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Watkins, John and Carole Levin. *Shakespeare's Foreign Worlds: National and Transnational Identities in the Elizabethan Age*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009. 122.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 122.

While the original Portia figure, as Watkins sharply points out, is portrayed as a modern day Circe, Shakespeare's Portia is not only the faithful wife of Brutus, but in specific contrast to Circe, she is the faithful wife Penelope. And just as Penelope has to elude a number of suitors while she faithfully awaits the arrival of Odysseus, both Elizabeth and Portia accomplish the task of evading their wooers long enough for the nation's identity to mature.

“And many Jasons come in her quest”

With the faithful Portia forestalling her courtship until the “young baron of England” can mature, the arrival of Bassanio in the court of Belmont sees Falconbridge's volatile qualities at last make the transition onto the versatile skills of performativity. This performative quality can be seen in the inescapable meta-theatricality surrounding the play, the essence of which is captured in Antonio's famous reference to the world as “a stage where every man must play a part” (1.1. 82). So that as Bassanio looks to attain the coveted “golden fleece,” Belmont's court serves as the world's multi-national stage “where every [*suitor*] must play a part”: From Morocco and Aragon, to the English-disguised Bassanio,⁷⁹ each suitor seeks to convey a highly desired identity that fittingly represents their respective nation's colonial ambitions, all the while obscuring any uninvited images that might hinder said aspirations.

The meta-theatricality surrounding the casket plot is, of course, one of the most popular conventions of the Elizabethan era. Throughout the sixteenth century, several works and renowned figures influenced the play-within-the-play concept, few more

⁷⁹ As with most Shakespearean characters, critics generally (if at all safely) assume the Venetian Bassanio stands as a not-too-subtle English figure. See Mark Netzloff and Eric Griffin.

significant than Queen Elizabeth I, who was no stranger to performance herself. Critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, describe Elizabeth as “a figure who perfectly embodied the idea of the individual as an actor totally committed to a role.”⁸⁰ The essence of her performativity was not only a model for courtly behavior, courtier’s appeals to Her Majesty took the shape of courtship. And it is within the many roles that Elizabeth played in support of England’s colonial ambitions that the twofold action of the “golden fleece” allusion takes full shape. In this particular case, Elizabeth’s role as patron comes into play. As was the case with all New World endeavors, adventurers needed to acquire the approval of their queen before embarking on such a quest. In the context of the casket plot, Bassanio’s quest to win the “golden fleece” represents his petition to win the queen’s favor, whereby he may also explore the New World for its riches.

The meta-theatrical action of the casket plot highly resembles the performative skill of courtiers, and thus the ideals presented in Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* strongly resonate with the action dramatized in the play’s casket plot.⁸¹ Although it is clear that its purpose is to piece together an assortment of qualities that make for the ideal courtier, Castiglione’s work takes care to note it is also meant “in order to put down the many fools who in their presumption and ineptitude think to gain the name of good courtiers.”⁸² What *The Book of the Courtier* highlights as actions to

⁸⁰ Greenblatt, Stephen. *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973. 52. Greenblatt further points out that “Both by temperament and intellect she understood, as no one before or since, the latent drama in kingship and exploited it to the fullest: “We princes,” she told a deputation of Lords of Commons in 1586, “are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed.”

⁸¹ Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Book of the Courtier*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books Doubleday Inc., 1959.

⁸² *Ibid*, 25.

avoid, or negative qualities to avoid displaying, *The Merchant of Venice* employs to characterize both Morocco and Aragon. So when the assembled court at the Ducal palace agrees to “not wish him [the Courtier] to make a show of being so fierce that he is forever swaggering in his speech, declaring that he has wedded his cuirass,”⁸³ Morocco’s boastful speech where he vows by his scimitar comes to mind. As for the arrogant Aragon, he is conspicuously portrayed as the antithesis of what the ideal courtier must be: “humane, modest, reserved, avoiding ostentation above all things as well as that impudent praise of himself by which a man always arouses hatred and disgust in all who hear him.”⁸⁴

In addition to suggesting what behaviors to avoid, *The Book of the Courtier* focuses on building the perfect courtier through a compilation of qualities that fit the meta-theatrical essence of the stage. The ideal courtier, for instance, is one who learns to play any given part, or rather one who “has taken the greatest care to study with good masters and to have about him men who excel, taking from each the best of what they know.”⁸⁵ Again and again, Castiglione stresses the significance of compiling multiple qualities in that “it is very profitable to observe different men of that profession; and, conducting himself with that good judgment which must always be his guide, go about choosing now this thing from one and that from another.”⁸⁶ This peculiar approach to the ideal courtier, where “taking the part from each that seems most worthy of praise”⁸⁷ is at its core, may actually allow for Falconbridge’s frail traits to flourish. Falconbridge’s “behavior”, attained “everywhere”, seemed to have threatened England’s New World

⁸³ Ibid, 33.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 34.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 42.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 43

aspirations, but Castiglione also provides a subtle antidote to this colonial paradox. That is, in order for the courtier's anthology of qualities to be effectively utilized, the courtier must "practice in all things a certain *sprezzatura* [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it."⁸⁸ What Castiglione hints at in his promotion of *sprezzatura* is a camouflage quality, the nature of which also advocates concealing any flaws. It is thus that Castiglione further stresses how "one must be more careful of anything than of concealing it, because if it is discovered, this robs a man of all credit and causes him to be held in slight esteem."⁸⁹

"Who chooseth me..."

Shakespeare's design of the casket plot dramatizes the intricate Anglo-Iberian tensions over colonial matters through the riddles engraved on each of the caskets: the gold casket has a deceptively appealing riddle that reads "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire" (2.7. 5); the silver casket allures its reader with the equally misleading riddle "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves" (2.7. 9); whereas the lead casket has the less attractive riddle of "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath" (2.7. 12). Whereas the riddles are assigned to the casket metals so as to deceptively allure its suitors, each riddle also conveys common motives for New World exploration. English promoters of New World exploration, for instance, made it very clear to any potential patron or maritime recruits that "what many men desire" was New World gold and silver. It may have also been well known that in order to fund such a

⁸⁸ Ibid, 43

⁸⁹ Ibid, 43

quest, most parties “must risk and hazard” everything they had, both in terms of resources and reputation.

To “give and hazard,” on the other hand, also implies a kind of reckless behavior, one that seems dangerously similar to the ways Spain was depicted by the English. That is, as England’s colonial aspirations sought to challenge Spain’s monopoly in the New World, it had been clear that the former was in dire need of an approach that highlighted its differentiation in behavior from the latter. For England’s colonial promoters, a useful contrast was found in images of the Spanish Black Legend, especially when its primary features included Spain’s sinful greed for New World riches as well as the colonial savagery that resulted therewith.

In light of England’s portrayal of Spanish greed and cruelty, the dangers were not so much admitting openly to “what many men desire,” but to pursue these in a similar fashion as the Spanish. At the same time, however, if England was to reject Spain’s sole claim to the New World, English’s colonial discourse had also to challenge what the silver casket prefaces as “as much as [*they*] “deserve”. But with both gold and silver representing the caskets of entrapment, any attempts to justify a choice for either metal will inevitably associate its suitor with proverbial images of corruption and sinful greed for New World riches. The challenge for Portia’s suitors is thus to cautiously avoid the allure of gold in “what many men desire,” as well as to establish “as much as he deserves” by means other than a discourse of righteousness.

While colonial discourses embedded within the casket plot have been analyzed by critics such as Netzloff, little progress has been made to explain Morocco’s place within these Anglo-Iberian tensions over colonial ambitions. One way in which Morocco’s role

can be discerned is through what recent scholarship has noted as later images of the Black Legend. Barbara Fuchs, for example, turns her attention to a series of English anti-Spanish pamphlets in the late 1580s and throughout the 1590s in which Spain is characterized as a “nation physically tainted by the 800 years of Moorish occupation.”⁹⁰ The product of these pamphlets, Fuchs further maintains, was a “sustained *Orientalizing* discourse that animates the Black Legend, figuring Spain’s supposed cruelty and depravity in terms of the Mediterranean rather than the New World.”⁹¹ And as Black Legend pamphleteers were commonly aided by dramatists in the dissemination process, it was not long before the orientaling of Iberia made its way onto the Elizabethan stage. Fuchs thus examines traces of this orientaling method in one of the most influential plays of its time, Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*. Focusing primarily on Hieronimo’s play-within-the-play, Fuchs treats Balthazar’s role of Sultan Suleiman as a figure that often represented excess and tyranny in English versions of Iberia, and in this case, was commonly associated with Phillip II of Spain.⁹²

With the orientaling of Iberia emerging as another proverbial Black Legend devise among Elizabethan dramatists and audiences of the 1590s, we can only wonder whether these same theatergoers would have intuitively conflated Morocco and Aragon at first glance. Indeed, it is very likely that this conflation effect was enhanced by a common method in Elizabethan drama to double-cast two characters that never shared the stage. In such case, the player in the role of Morocco would strongly encourage an

⁹⁰ Fuchs, Barbara. “Sketches of Spain: Early Modern England’s ‘Orientalizing’ of Iberia.” In *Material and Symbolic Circulation between Spain and England, 1554-1604*. Cruz, Anne J. (ed. and introd.) Aldershot, England: Ashgate; 2008. 64-65.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

orientalizing association the moment he returned to the stage in the role of Aragon. Of course, much of the evidence above seems rather circumstantial. But the notion that a conflation between both Morocco and Aragon is at hand can be textually based on the reasoning behind each of their casket choices. So that as Morocco ponders over his choice, his discourse conveys conventional images of the Black Legend that will, in turn, inevitably mirror the undesired image of the next suitor in line, Aragon. It is up to Aragon to renounce any allegations that Morocco's incriminating discourse implicates against Spain, such as their unquenchable thirst for New World gold.

From the moment Morocco sets foot on the stage, he is betrayed by his discourse, one that essentially exposes the "complexion" he seeks to discern. In his opening lines, for example, Morocco addresses Portia by asking her not judge him for his outer appearance: "Mislike me not for my complexion" (2.1. 1). Rather ironically, Morocco's emphatic efforts to confront and dismiss any negative associations from his "complexion" are also the basis for his casket choice. That is, he dismisses "dull lead" on the basis of the metal's outer appearance, all the while forgetting his request to Portia not to be judged in such fashion. His reaction to the engraving on the lead casket—"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath"—further highlights his gold-thirst motives: "A golden mind," he states, "stoops not to shows of dross." To have a "golden mind," Morocco is most likely suggesting, is to have a mind as valuable as gold. But his phrase also implies that he has gold *on* his mind, so much so that—as if responding to Eden's call to his countrymen to "stoop"—Morocco will "stoop" to nothing of lesser valuable.

If the prospect of New World gold was among the top incentives for any nation with colonial aspirations, it is not surprising that Morocco is instantly captivated by the gold casket's engraving, "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire" (2.7. 42). So much is conveyed by the phrase "what many men desire" that when Morocco notes how "Never so rich a gem/ Was set in worse than gold" (2.7. 60-61), he equates the gold casket with a golden price. But where the casket plot figures the riddles engraved on each of the caskets as the key for suitors to successfully attain the coveted "golden fleece," so too do the scrolls inside the caskets expose hidden motives within their discourses. The error of Morocco's unsophisticated rational is thus exposed by the moral aphorism written on the scroll within the gold casket:

'All that glisters is not gold;
Often have you heard that told.
Many a man his life has sold
But my outside to behold'. (2.7. 65-68)

As the scroll points out, Morocco is deceived in his choice when he favors gold for its "outside to behold". His deception also speaks to a corrupting element that accompanies the "desire" for gold, to the point where indeed, "Many a man his life has sold". And if the desire for gold was ever so infamously described as a corrupting agent of a nation, the title belonged to Spain and its reputed colonial approach. Indeed, as Black Legend commentators depicted Spain as unquenchable in its thirst for New World gold, it was rather the means and methods with which it sought to attain those riches that stained its reputation. Such methods are partially echoed when Morocco boastfully declares the means with which he comes prepare to attain so coveted a price:

By this scimitar,
That slew the Sophy and Persian prince

That won three fields of Sultan Suleiman,
 I would o'erstare the sternest eyes that look,
 Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
 Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
 Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
 To win thee lady. (2.2. 24-31)

Within the context of attaining the coveted lady of Belmont, Morocco's images convey the violent conquest of one entity over another in a similar fashion to Spain's alleged colonial savagery. So, despite Portia's early warnings that such means will not aid him in his courtship, Morocco's failure seems imminent from the outset. And though he leaves Belmont in sheer humiliation, his greater damage is in the Black Legend residues that will linger long enough for his successor to need to defend against them.

By the time Nerissa announces that "The Prince of Aragon hath ta'en his oath," a skeptical Elizabethan audience eagerly awaits Aragon's response to accusations that were normally imputed to his nation of Spain. Indeed, as if sensing the judgmental eyes from spectators, Aragon is rather cautious, and above all concerned with disclaiming any association with the Morocco's poor choice. Hence Aragon's initial effort is to disassociate himself from his predecessor by engaging in the same process by which Spain actively sought to cleanse itself from its Moorish and Jewish ancestry.⁹³ When reading the inscription on the gold casket "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire," Aragon suspiciously hesitates before rejecting its premise. For Aragon, what "many men desire" points to "the fool multitude, that choose by show,/ Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach" (2.9. 25-26). This "fool multitude" seemingly points to Morocco who does indeed make his erroneous casket choice "by show." Certainly,

⁹³ Fuchs point out how "Spain's national identity in the late sixteenth century was largely predicated on the loud refusal of its Semitic heritage" (66).

Aragon has reason to distance himself from any association with Morocco, if only to claim a sophisticated superiority. But as Aragon's loud protesting voice conveys in his final denouncement of the gold casket, his reasoning is primarily focused on matters of lineage: "I will not choose what many men desire," he concludes, "Because I will not jump with common spirits/ And rank me with the barbarous multitudes" (2.9. 31-32).

Despite what Aragon may deem as a more sophisticated reasoning, his casket choice proves as futile as his efforts to cleanse his lineage from its Moroccan neighbors. The futility of Aragon's purifying endeavors is reiterated by the scroll inside the silver casket: although "[t]he fire seven times tried this" (2.9. 62), the purification process was ultimately unsuccessful in its attempts to entirely separate silver from its alloys. Thus, in a similar fashion in which Morocco is exposed and humiliated by his poor rational, the scroll from Aragon's casket choice fittingly describes a Narcissistic figure "that shadows kiss," though having "but a shadow's bliss" (2.9. 65-66). In other words, the scroll depicts Aragon as an arrogant prince—a characterization that resonates with his title-name, while being mindful of the arrogance with which the Spanish were regarded.

While the scroll reiterates Aragon's place within an undistillable orientalization, it is worth noting that Aragon's choice is just as much prompted by his efforts to cleanse Spain's lineage as it is by the incriminating discourse of the gold-corrupted mindset in Morocco. So that where Morocco's choice conveys a greed for gold similar to what the Black Legend actively denounced Phillip II for, Aragon is not surprisingly compelled to a rebuttal. Nor is it surprising that as he ponders over the silver casket's inscription, "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves" (2.9. 35), Aragon finds the validation he

desperately needs. The inscription has such profound appeal for Aragon that he instantly retorts:

And well said too, for who shall go about
To cozen fortune, and be honourable
Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
To wear an undeserved dignity.
O, that estates, degrees, and offices
Were not derived corruptly, and that clear honour
Were purchased by the merit of the wearer. (2.9. 36-42)

As his reasoning reveals, the engraving on the silver casket is noticeably attractive for Aragon, as it conveys a kind of rhetoric that resonates with the righteous claims he seeks to establish. On the Elizabethan stage, however, Aragon's sense of righteousness only reaffirms the sense of entitlement that was often attached to Spain. Most ironic about Aragon's condescending claims are the rather self-incriminating remarks that allude to other proverbial anti-Spanish features, such as the "estates, degrees, and offices" that were indeed, according to the Black Legend, "derived corruptly". So that just as Morocco's failure is originally predicated on his efforts to distract from his "complexion," Aragon's downfall stems from the very careless arrogance that brings attention to his nation's flaws.

If the purpose behind alluding to these denigrating elements of the Black Legend pertained strictly to staging Aragon's failure, then Bassanio's discourse would be rendered as little more than redundancy. As it is, frustrating Aragon's efforts to establish his righteous claims over the "golden fleece" is but a microcosm to England's strategic ways of asserting its noble place within colonial discourses. Hence, when Bassanio references popular anti-Spanish views during his casket choice, these are not only meant to further discredit Aragon's earlier claims, but more significantly, are employed to

support his own claims to the “golden fleece”. While contemplating over the gold casket, Bassanio reflects thus:

So may the outward shows be least themselves.
 The world is still deceived with ornament.
 In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
 But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
 Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
 What damned error but some sober brow
 Will bless it and approve it with a text,
 Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
 [...] Thus ornament is but the guiled shore
 To a most dangerous sea, the beauteous scarf
 Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
 The seeming truth which cunning times put on
 To entrap the wisest. [*Aloud*] Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
 Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee. (3.2. 74-102)

From its traditional function of the theatrical aside, Bassanio’s long speech works as an intimate moment with his audience—one where he looks to convey reassurance that England’s ultimate renunciation of the Spanish model in many ways merits the “golden fleece”. It is hence that Bassanio catalogs a list of Black Legend items, most of which are directed at Aragon’s previous attempts to dissociate from them. Bassanio’s mention of the “law” being “so tainted and corrupt,” for example, points to what Aragon tries to defend in his wish “that estates, degrees, and offices/ Were not derived corruptly”.

Perhaps the most poignant point Bassanio makes in seeking to challenge Aragon’s righteous claim to the “golden fleece” is in matters of “religion”. Here, Bassanio employs Protestant language in questioning the “sober brow” who “[w]ill bless it and approve it with a text,” all the while “[h]iding the grossness with fair ornament”. While Bassanio’s reference to the “grossness” of “fair ornament” most likely points to the Protestants renunciation of what they viewed as luxurious and misleading opulence (ornamentation) that was so characteristic of Catholicism, that “sober brow” he alludes to

must be none other than the Pope (or one of his apologists). In such a case, the “text” which this “sober brow” uses to “bless it and approve it” may be a reference to his papal bulls, perhaps the same that Aragon references as “the stamp of merit”. For Bassanio to challenge this particular “sober brow” and his “text” is significant when no other document gave the Spanish a righteous claim to New World more than the one granted by the Pope Alexander VI, *Inter caeter*—the controversial papal bull of donation of 1493.⁹⁴ The reference could not be more suitable as England had long been inclined to mock and challenge the authority of such an unpopular entity. In *The Spanish Masquerado*, to name but one instance, Black Legend pamphleteer and dramatist Robert Greene extensively describes English hate towards the Pope as the “Antichrist” adding that “nor his Bull would not carrie any credite, he lieth to incense princes to bende their forces against this our little Iland.”⁹⁵

Of course, it is not surprising that Bassanio employs such denigrating themes during his casket choice, especially when these merely follow the prototypical anti-Spanish discourse that England so heavily relied upon. Still, what is disquieting about Bassanio’s casket choice is how insightful he seems. One conspicuous detail that critics constantly overlook is that, unlike Morocco and Aragon, whose choices are based off

⁹⁴ *Inter Caeter* papal bull emerged amidst the disputes between Spain and Portugal over possession over New World territories in the early 1490s. Urged by King Ferdinand II of Spain, Pope Alexander VI issued his bull of donation *Inter Caeter*, which the Spanish Crown understood in the broadest sense as granting Spain full political sovereignty over New World territories. While Spain and Portugal settled their disputes in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, Spain had little success in asserting the bull’s legal validity among other European nations, especially England. For an ample discussion on the bull’s origin, see: Linden, H. Vander. “Alexander VI. And the Demarcation of the Maritime and Colonial Domains of Spain and Portugal, 1493-1494. In *The American Historical Review*, vol. 22, No. 1 (October, 1916). 1-20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1836192> (accessed September 20, 2013).

⁹⁵ Greene, Robert. *The Spanish masquerado VWherein vnder a pleasant deuise, is discouered effectuallie, in certaine breefe sentences and mottos, the pride and insolencie of the Spanish estate: with the disgrace conceiued by their losse, and the dismaied confusion of their tronbled [sic] thoughtes*. Artibus Magister, 1589.

what they read in the caskets' inscriptions, Bassanio makes his choice without so much as glancing at the riddles. Instead, his immediate instinct is to approach the gold casket, where he spends most of his energy denouncing "ornament" for all of its corrupting ways. "Nor none of thee," he says shortly after as he quickly dismisses the silver casket as the "pale and common drudge" (3.2. 103-04). Surely, Bassanio stands before the caskets with some kind of advantage that enables him to choose the correct one in lead. Indeed, Bassanio's success has inspired numerous interpretations, including an old tradition that suggests his choice is influenced by the hints within the rhyme scheme of Portia's song, where "bred," "head," and "nourishéd" strikingly resonate with "lead". Such views, however, are quite problematic, especially as these distract from the richness of Bassanio's discourse. In other words, if Bassanio enjoys the benefits of such an advantage, his efforts to disdain "ornament" to such length are rather unnecessary.

What begs for Bassanio's success to be examined in relation to his discourse—one that rejects "ornament" on the basis that "[s]o many the outward shows be least themselves"—is a peculiar quality he exhibits even prior to his casket choice: a performative skill that can conceal any undesired character flaws by means of disguise and modified behavior. Bassanio's regard for disguising flaws, in fact, is such that he mildly scolds Gratiano for having "too wild, too rude and bold of voice" (2.2. 163), a behavior he deems harmful for his chances at Belmont:

Pray thee, take pain
To allay with some cold drops of modesty
Thy skipping spirit, lest through thy wild behavior
I be misconstered in the place I go,
And lose my hopes. (2.2. 166-169)

As his words of caution denote, Bassanio arrives at Belmont understanding the need for “modesty”—and particularly to avoid “wild behavior”—for reasons that pertain strictly to his “hopes” of attaining Portia. Conversely, the implication of Bassanio’s concerns for a “wild behavior” that can hurt his chances is that he has good reason to disguise such behavior. This brings to question Bassanio’s motives in seeking to attain Portia. He incidentally reveals as much in his plea to Antonio when he describes the abundance of wealth waiting to be gained. It is this conspicuous motive that Bassanio evidently feels compelled to conceal as he rejects the superficial value of the gold casket. Of course, if Bassanio, like Falconbridge, attains “his behavior everywhere,” he is compelled to conceal his materialistic motives and any “wild behavior” therewith, lest his approach is “misconstrued” with the Spanish model.

With such a thorough understanding of disguises, it is rather fitting that Bassanio opens his discourse by pointing towards “[s]o many the outward shows be least themselves”. Of course, much like Aragon attempts to disassociate his character from Morocco’s, part of Bassanio’s efforts here are to create a distinction between him and Aragon. But whereas Morocco and Aragon are ironically exposed by the very qualities each looks to conceal, Bassanio’s performative skills allow him to dissimulate his interest in wealth, i.e., gold, as well as his own “outward shows”. That Bassanio successfully dissociates himself and his discourse from Aragon’s has much to do with the essence of his meta-theatrical skill which, in this case, resembles a popular model such as Castiglione’s ideal courtier. In fact, where Morocco and Aragon exemplify the qualities Castiglione discourages from his model courtier, Bassanio suitably embodies its essence. For instance, Bassanio appears to have mastered what Castiglione calls *sprezzatura* (or

nonchalance), a kind of art that can “conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it.”⁹⁶ Nowhere is this nonchalance better executed than when Bassanio overlooks the casket riddles. So that as Bassanio engages in his long aside, in which he intimately converses with the audience, his discourse seems rather effortless, perhaps even more genuine and sincere. And hence, just as Castiglione emphasizes that “one must be more careful of anything than of concealing it, because if it is discovered, this robs a man of all credit and causes him to be held in slight esteem,”⁹⁷ Bassanio fulfills this role, calling less attention to his hidden purposes than the other suitors.

Despite the insightful aspects of Bassanio’s meta-theatrical essence, these do not fully explain the peculiarity of his acute knowledge to choose successfully where others have failed. As he concludes his long aside, Bassanio seemingly recognizes the function of the casket riddles by pointing to “[t]he seeming truth which cunning times put on/ To entrap the wisest”. In the same way that the riddles engraved in the caskets convey colonial motives, their function is also to indeed “entrap the wisest”: that is, while the two losing casket riddles in silver and gold have the allure to “entrap the wisest,” the winning riddle in lead is designed to discourage suitors from choosing thence. Of course, Bassanio overcomes these traps when he avoids consulting the casket inscriptions altogether. But what is most significant about his approach is that his insight to such devices derives from a journey Bassanio describes as that “guile shore”. Specifically, he understands the significance behind so deceptive riddles in that “ornament” is the chief cause of the “guile shore,” which makes its journey “a most dangerous sea”. This

⁹⁶ Castiglione, 42.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

journey Bassanio describes as endangered by “ornament” most likely points to the proverbial quest for New World gold that drove most colonial endeavors. In this case, Bassanio is hinting at Spain’s tainted greed for gold, an approach that leads to a corruption where “Veiling an Indian beauty” enables Spanish cruelty with the New World natives. His apparent rejection of “gaudy gold, as that “[h]ard food for Midas” thus implies a colonial discourse that capitalizes merely on its pronounced disassociation from Spain. As the next section will show, this model or rejection is employed by colonial promoters such as Raleigh, whose journey to discover the rich land of Guiana resembles what Bassanio calls a “guiled shore” corrupted by gold-seeking Spaniards.

Section IV

Bassanio's success on the stage of Belmont suggests the fulfillment of an English fantasy that may date back to the riches Richard Eden had promised. Bassanio's performance also exhibits a fulfilled sense of nationhood, one that is specifically coupled with the ideology of English imperialism through the achievement of its colonial ambitions. Such visions are displayed by the notable Sir Walter Raleigh in his *Discoverie of the rich and beautiful Empire of Guiana*. As he would later hint at in his *History of the World* (1614), Raleigh understood his place in life within "this stage-play world" where he played many leading roles.⁹⁸ His performative skills are ever-so-present in his quest for the rich land of Guiana, and are most pronounced in his rhetoric and a discourse that has been well documented for its intricate and unusual circumstances. In a similar way to that with which Bassanio seeks to win a conflated "golden fleece," Raleigh's accounts have been treated as his desperate, though no less performative supplication to regain Elizabeth's favor.⁹⁹

While Raleigh's efforts were partly made to appeal to the Queen, he was just as much compelled to relay his explanation for his humiliating empty-handed return to England to a broader audience. Indeed, his narrative is replete with apologetic frustration for the gold that constantly eludes Raleigh and his men. He describes instances of bad fortune, such as the canoes his men capture which contain enough food supplies to restore the spirits of his starving crew, all the while "those *Canoas* which

⁹⁸ Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles*

⁹⁹ Fuller, Mary C. *Voyages in Print. English Travels to America, 1576-1624*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Fuller looks at Raleigh accounts in connection with falling out of favor with the Elizabeth. The *Discovery*, Fuller argues, "attempted to reenact and rewrite the scene of Raleigh's transgression as one of fidelity and continence, returning to that moment of royal favor when a feminized America could figure as the target of a licit sexuality not only permitted but fostered by an approving Queen" (75).

escaped there was a good quantity of ore and gold.”¹⁰⁰ At other points, when Raleigh actually encounters the source of gold in the mines, these seem rather impenetrable: “that could have been the best profit of farther search or stay,” Raleigh states with some regret, “for those mines are not easily broken, nor opened in hast, and I could have returned a good quantitie of gold readie cast, if I had not shot at another marke, than present profit.”¹⁰¹ With so many close misses (or gains), Raleigh’s *Discoverie* is seemingly a narrative of that which, to use his words, “could have been”. But for Raleigh the rhetorician, success can be found even in the depths of failure; he thus adds a didactic component to his narrative, one where his abstinence may not only redeem his failure, but, most importantly, promises to establish a noble colonial model that features an approach worthy of the very New World wealth that Raleigh deems essential for England’s imperial rise.

This section will examine how the respective pattern of Raleigh’s quest follows a similar design to what Shakespeare conveys in *The Merchant of Venice*. As with the task of solving the riddle of the casket plot, Raleigh’s narrative depicts a journey with a puzzling obstacle, one where he must navigate his way through the maze of rivers that form the Orinoco. That is, in order for Raleigh to reach Guiana, he must learn the layout of the rivers that lead to its entrance. To learn this path, he must first establish alliances with the native tribes, for which he must also separate his motives and behavior from that of his Spanish predecessors. The language Raleigh also employs in his account draws on the proverbial colonial discourses embedded within the riddles in each of the three caskets. The connotation of the phrase “what many men desire,” for example, conveys a

¹⁰⁰ Raleigh, *Discoverie of the rich and beautiful Empire of Guiana*. H.1. recto.

¹⁰¹ Raleigh, H2r.

familiar association with gold and silver—or so Raleigh emphatically promotes in his account. Raleigh’s “desire,” however, must be kept from the native tribe, who might associate the English with the disreputable mark left by the Spaniards. It is hence that Raleigh’s account repeatedly shows his concern with establishing “as much as he deserves,” more so than his actual pursuit of valuable metals. Once he establishes “as much as he deserves” through the consent of the native tribes, Raleigh is also able to restructure the notion that to “give and hazard all he hath” is rather threatening to the latter. That is, once Raleigh finds righteous access to the rich land of Guiana, he must manage his “behavior” so as to *not* “give and hazard all he hath”.

Early in his narrative, Raleigh proclaims the righteousness of England’s claim over the land of Guiana in the essence of the silver casket’s riddle, as if “as much as [*England*] deserves” (my italics). From his point of view, the Empire of Guiana has been “reserued for her Maiestie and the English nation, by reason of the successe which all these and other Spaniards found in attempting the same.”¹⁰² Surely, the mere reference to Spanish lack of success could partly help overshadow Raleigh’s own shortcomings. Raleigh, however, also understands that England’s New World prospects can be best appreciated by first highlighting Spain’s frustrated endeavors. His narrative, in fact, follows a strategic pattern similar to the way the casket plot allows Bassanio to choose lead by emphasizing where others have failed. Raleigh thus dedicates large sections of his narrative to describe Spanish efforts to reach Guiana, with a strategic emphasis on

¹⁰² Ibid, D1r.

Spanish cruelty and greed for gold. Such is the case of the traitor Agiri who, corrupted by his desire for gold, “raised a muteny, of which hee made himself the head.”¹⁰³

Raleigh’s most useful and extensive example, of course, is the case of Berreo. Berreo is initially Raleigh’s main source for the whereabouts of Guiana, its riches and other kinds of descriptions that capture Raleigh’s attention. But the most significant piece of information that Raleigh gathers from Berreo is where the latter has failed. Raleigh, for instance, notes that Berreo’s behavior has damaged his reputation: “Berreo for executing of Morequito and other cruelties, spoiles, and slaughters done in Arroimaia hath lost the loue of the Orenoqueponi.”¹⁰⁴ Hence, insofar as Berreo’s experience provides Raleigh with a blueprint to Guiana, it is in understanding the importance of establishing relationships with the native tribes. Consequently, throughout his narrative, Raleigh focuses on his efforts to communicate with the native tribes. His exchanges with other tribes soon show positive results with the natives in that “they began to conceiue the deceit and purpose of the Spaniards, who indeed (as they confessed) tooke from them both their wiues, and daughters daily, and vsed them for the satisfying of their owne lust.”¹⁰⁵ Not to be misconstrued by conflation with his Iberian neighbors, Raleigh asserts his distinction from them by being “contraire to the Spaniards (who tyrannize ouer them in all things).”¹⁰⁶ Much like Bassanio demands of Gratiano to take some “drops of modesty,” Raleigh is rather emphatic with his men, who are under strict orders not to engage in any kind of “wild behavior,” in this case pertaining to native women.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, F1r.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, H2r.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, H2v.

Berreio also warns Raleigh that: “the Kings and Lords of all the borders and of Guiana had decreed, that none of them should trade with any Christians for gold, because the same would be their owne ouerthrow, and that for the loue of gold the Christians meant to conquer and dispossesse them of all together.”¹⁰⁷ As Berreio’s warnings imply, for Raleigh to befriend these “Kings and Lords,” he must also resist, or rather disguise “what many men desire,” such as the “loue of gold”. In some instances, Raleigh disguises “the cause of my comming thither” in relation to the “Queenes pleasure,” and with the noble purpose to “vndertake the voiage for their defence, and to deliuer them from the tyranny of the Spaniardes.”¹⁰⁸ At other points, Raleigh inquires rather subtlety about gold so as not to make it the subject of his main desires: “And therefore I desired him to instruct me what hee could, both of the passage into the golden partes of *Guiana*, and to the ciuill townes and apparelled people of *Inga*.”¹⁰⁹ Although he inquires about “the golden parts,” his apparent interest in “ciuill townes and apparelled” is rather distracting from the former. Still, at other stages in the voyage, the desire for gold proves far more difficult to disguise. He describes an instance where as the crew is walking the edge of the rivers, Raleigh and his men are deceived by their desire:

and euery stone that we stooped to take vp, promised eyther gold or siluer by his complexion... when both our companies returned, each of them brought also seueral sorts of stones that appeared very faire, but were such as they found loose on the ground, & were for the most part but cullored, and had not any gold fixed in them, yet such as had no iudgement or experience kept all that glistered, and would not be perswaded but it was rich because of the luster.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, F2v.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, J3v.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, L1v.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, K2v.

The passage above is strikingly similar to Morocco's casket choice based on its "complexion," only to realize from the scroll that "all that glisters in not gold". Such is the case of Raleigh and men, as it is only after they are drawn by what "promised eyther gold or siluer by his complexion" that they understand the deception in choosing from "all that glistered".

Despite the occasional discrepancy, Raleigh successfully disguises his desire from most of the native tribes he encounters. But as he confesses to his readers, however, Raleigh was also compelled to resist his urge due to his lack of resources: "I did not in any sort make my desire of gold knowen," he states, "because I had neyther time, nor power to haue a greater quantity."¹¹¹ And it is through these efforts to resist the allure of "what many men desire" that Raleigh further characterizes his impoverished return to England as a testament of a man who would not "risk and hazard all he hath":

I thought it were euill counsell to haue attempted it at that time, although the desire of golde will aunswere many obiections: But it would haue beene in mine opinion an vtter ouerthrow to the enterprize, if the same should be hereafter by her Maiesty attempted: for then (whereas now they haue heard we were enemies to the Spaniards & were sent by her Maiesty to relieue them) they would as good cheape haue ioyned with the Spaniards at our returne, as to haue yeelded vnto vs, when they had proued that we came both for one errant, and that both sought but to sacke and spoyle them, but as yet our desire of gold, or our purpose of inuasions not known vnto those of the empire.¹¹²

Here, Raleigh describes his restraint as a small sacrifice for a larger investment, in the name of the Queen and England, and for all of those who could benefit from the profits waiting to be gained. Raleigh thus further states that he "would rather haue lost the sacke of one or two townes (although they might haue been very profitable) then to haue

¹¹¹ Ibid, L4v—M1r.

¹¹² Ibid, L4r.

defaced or indangered the future hope of so many millions, and the great good, & rich trade which England may bee possessed off thereby.”¹¹³

For all his claims of noble and selfless abstinence, Raleigh’s acknowledgement that “the desire for golde will aunwere many obiections” brings attention to the hypocrisies embedded within his discourse. That is, his claims of a noble restraint are as much in the name of English profit in that, to use his words, “our desire of gold, or our purpose of inuasions” are “not known vnto those of the empire”. But, at the same time that Raleigh reveals part of his hidden agenda, he finds other ways to maintain a discourse that conveys “as much as [England] deserves”. And knowing well that “inuasion” is as much a part of his discourse, Raleigh looks to portray a noble cause in a disreputable approach. He hence relies on the consent granted by one of his sources and allies in Topiawari who describes the rulers of the Empire of Guiana as ruthless men who have stolen the wives and daughters of neighboring tribes, including Topiawari’s. According to Raleigh, Topiawari “yielded for a chief cause [...] in the wars with the *Epuremei*,” provided that Raleigh and his English troops helped rescued their women.¹¹⁴ Such chivalric deed, Raleigh further claims, provided the noble justification need to justify plundering as much gold as can be found, especially when Topiawari’s people “desired nothing of the gold or treasure, for their labors, but onely to recouer women from the *Epuremei*.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, L3v.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

As Raleigh nears the end of his voyage (and so too, his narrative), he reassures his readers of the number of allies he continues to acquire by means of conveying the distinctions between the English and the Spaniards:

after these *Cassiqui* of *Winicapora* and *Saporatona* his followers perceiued our purpose, and sawe that we came as enimies to the Spanyardes onely, and had not so much as harmed any of those nations. . . they affured vs that *Carapana* woulde bee as readie to serue vs, as any of the Lordes of the prouinces, which wee had passed.¹¹⁶

This validation from so many tribes, Raleigh also suggests, seems to fulfill a prophecy where England is once again portrayed in opposition to Spain:

And I farther remember that *Berreio* confessed to me and others (which I protest before the Maiesty of God to be true) that there was found among prophecies in *Peru* (at such time as the Empyre was reduced to the Spanish obedience) in their chiefest temples, amongst diuers others which fore shewed the losse of the said Empyre, that from *Inglatierra* those *Ingas* shoulde be againe in time to come restored, and deliuered from the seruitude of the said Conquerors.¹¹⁷

Raleigh's final claim has a nonchalant tone where at the last instance he calls to mind ("I farther remember") so significant a detail as Berreo's confession. For Raleigh's readers, such a confession portrays a sense of Spanish consent, which in turn is hence meant to stand as the ultimate manifestation of the righteousness of England's claims in the New World.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. M3v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, O2v.

Conclusion

Early colonial proposals such as Richard Eden's *Decades* may have been hindered in part by the turbulent reign of Mary I and Phillip II. But Eden's endeavors to establish a Spanish colonial model were not entirely futile. Albeit indirectly, Eden's aggressive calls to his fellow Englishmen also called attention to the nation's frailties. In doing so, he may have prompted his countrymen to find ways to strengthen England's sense of nationhood. At first the use of the Spanish model seemed counterproductive in this process, but its presence had a peculiar use for England's emerging generations of New World enthusiasts. While English colonial promoters were cautious to avoid any resemblance to their Spanish rivals, a colonial discourse was established on the grounds that England's intentions in the New World were explicitly dissimilar to Spain's.

This process of identity production was further facilitated as the nation welcomed its new queen in Elizabeth I. Her influence in England's developing identity was significantly marked by her ability to sustain her promise as the faithful wife of England—a feat that would in turn enhance her renowned image as a Virgin Queen as well as the status of nation. As Elizabeth's shrewd skills allowed her to evade the pressures of marriage, her courtiers were also encouraged to contend against Phillip's imperial might. The relationship between Elizabeth and her courtiers was so critical for England's open challenge against Spain that its effectiveness was often subjected to dramatic representations. The sub-textual narrative of the casket plot in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* depicts a contest for the "golden fleece": although Bassanio's triumph is partly aided by a faithful figure in Portia, his success is also the result of a convincing rejection of the tainted Spanish pursuit of New World gold. Attaining the

coveted “golden fleece” conveys an English fantasy of attaining New World riches similar to what Walter Raleigh promises in his *Discovery*. Raleigh’s colonial fantasy, of course, is never fully achieved. But even as Bassanio’s successful performance on the Belmont stage suggests, England’s claims at imperialism required effective performances by “professional” actors on the global stage such as Elizabeth I and the real life player Raleigh proved to be. Raleigh’s discourse thus shows an essential component in England’s national identity in that imperialism could be achieved by means of a self-fashioned identity that established itself by denigrating Spain.

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