Introduction

As I imagine is true of many books, this book began with a hunch. In my career teaching neoclassical literature between the Restoration and the later eighteenth century, I became increasingly interested in the idea of circulation: some important texts, from Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) and Behn's *The Rover* (1677) to Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), to Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), with its portrait of the benevolent Jew Joshua Manassch, appeared to link ideas of economic circulation or trade with ideas of the circulation of the blood or other bodily fluids. Both of these conceptions in turn seemed to inform, indeed determine, the behavior of the plot, since the resolutions of the plot were often brought about by money or objects either returning literally or symbolically to their point of origin; alternatively the shape of the plot echoed a wider system of circulation played out by objects and bodies in the course of the narrative. A further implication was that the economy of plot so conceived, whether in drama, poetry, or the novel, served as a material expression of the kinds of habits that, however contingently, sustain civil society, so that to admit the satisfactions of the *dénouement* was to welcome the corresponding satisfactions of human intercourse. Literature thus acted to secure as well as to express our need for the institutions that underwrite social life.

The crucial dynamics at play struck me as mainly twofold. First, the idea of circulation was systemic, describing and motivating the entire economy of the text, informing the behavior not only of objects and characters in it, but the machinery of the plot, considered purely as a verbal or literary device. Second, unlike the cruder or more primitive conceptions of barter – in which objects are traded on a one-time basis – circulation was mobile and self-proliferating, involving systems of exchange that assume a certain disequilibrium of the kind expressed, in post-Harveian physiology, in the difference between the diastolic and systolic motion of the blood, not a complete equivalence of value. This differential is endemic to the view,

more fully articulated in the eighteenth century proper, that the competitive atmosphere of commerce partook in a general refinement – and in that sense feminization – of manners, which made the English, in Blackstone's estimation, a polite and commercial people. Thus it is typical that, in sentimental novels offering a late version of what I describe, individuals' intense consciousness of the movements of the pulse corresponds to the forward movement of the plot itself, as well as the fortuitous circulation of objects in it, whether money or atoms in Smollett or snuff-boxes in Sterne. Though incorporated in the action of a given plot, the health of the system presupposes a certain competition or *frisson* among its constitutive elements, so that coherence depends less on complete absorption of *différence* into some kind of literary singularity than on a willingness to sustain ambivalence to the end, an ambivalence bent on projecting the dialectical action of the plot into the world outside itself. For that reason alone, many neoclassical texts involve conclusions in which nothing is concluded.

When I applied those ideas to a field with which, since the 1970s, I have been consistently engaged, namely Restoration drama, it struck me that the dynamic I had defined for myself described, albeit slightly differently, the behavior of tragicomedy, a dramatic mode with a continuous history through the seventeenth century. Tragicomedy is distinguished by enormous internal tensions, in which a technically comic ending seems often violently threatened in the course of the action, in which many different genres and plots compete for attention, and in which the normal demands of probability frequently appear irrelevant. It also seems to relish or celebrate the extent to which all literary devices are purely artificial, and can easily incline to hyperbole, so drawing attention to itself, rather than inviting the illusion of some seamless relation to individual psychology or the external world. As an internally competitive mode, it acts easily as a form of anatomy, and so, according to my thesis, it assisted historically in the clarification of political debate in the course of the seventeenth century, in the gradual emergence of economics as an autonomous discipline, and, following the revolution effected by Harvey's *De Motu Cordis* (1628), in conceptions of the human body, and accordingly in conceptions of the body politic, as well as in conceptions of world trade that more or less demanded something like circulation to explain what might be involved. This confluence of forces forms the general topic of what is to follow.

My first chapter, "'This War of Opinions' in the 'Empire of Wit': tragicomedy, politics, and trade," lays out the major parameters of the argument. This belongs to the first of three main parts of which the book is composed. I argue, first, that John Dryden, the most important writer in the

Restoration period (1660–1700), had highly significant reasons for asserting that, for the later seventeenth century, the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher presented the most valuable models for playwrights, rather than Shakespeare or Jonson. This is of course a well-known story, but it is worth reemphasizing that what will strike many as Dryden's oddly inverted judgment actually stems from period practice: from 1660 and well into the early eighteenth century, plays by Beaumont and Fletcher were performed about twice as frequently as those by Shakespeare and Jonson combined. I then argue that these plays – often spoken of as "tragicomedies" – became, for Dryden and others, heuristic devices by which their age could deliberate on issues which were for it the profoundest sources of anxiety. Because tragicomedy by definition was generically indeterminate, often pitting incommensurable ways of seeing the world against each other, it permitted various kinds of thought experiment, as it were, in the single most obviously contested arena in the seventeenth century, namely political theory. It enabled dramatists and their audiences to ask a number of related questions: what were the sources of power in the state; what was the extent of the King's prerogative; how far was the King obliged to traditional sources of counsel in the political nation or parliament; and what was the relation between the common law and the dispensing power?

My argument may invite resistance because I believe, with Dryden, that the history of early Stuart drama and the history of Restoration drama are more closely related than is often thought. In short, Dryden's fondness for Fletcher has something to tell us both about the behavior of Restoration drama and about our deepest assumptions about what "literature" is or should be in the first place. Accordingly, it is important to recognize that although there are a good number of scholars who also wish to see seventeenth-century drama on a continuum, what one might call "the Shakespearean prejudice" has of course great popular appeal and is still visible in some scholarly or quasi-scholarly attitudes. The problem is both subtle and real, because it is largely through a mythic version of "Shakespeare" that, both in Germany and England, the Romantics developed criteria of literary judgment from which we still have difficulty freeing ourselves. For the Romantics, the specter of "Shakespeare" guaranteed the coherence of the author *vis-à-vis* his text, the coherence of the literary career, and the coherence of stage character and language. The idea of genius, the appeal to biography to explain literary effects, and the notion of the internal integrity of "literature" all militate against the humanist (or Ciceronian) conception that all constituents of culture are perennially in mutual competition in a kind of open-ended game.

Even if increasingly under challenge by sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century scholars, this reverential view of Shakespeare evidently persists. Thus a recent article in the *London Review of Books* in effect castigates Dryden for not being Shakespeare, the test case being *Hamlet* treated as a naturalistic masterpiece. This is an instance of the Eliotic dissociation of sensibility writ large, for here we see how the Romantic Shakespeare supports the demand that literature should express life itself, whereas, the objection goes, the Restoration – apart from Pepys's diary – is altogether a more mechanical, technical, artificial, specious, and hollow age. However, I do not think it is a case of special pleading in response to say that what is at stake is not a matter of literary quality. The point is much more cogently an opposition between two very different conceptions of language in general and literary language in particular. On the one hand, we have what we might call the lyric and expressive view of the literary, which inclines to a certain naturalism; on the other we have a more thoroughgoing commitment to the artificial nature of all linguistic expressions, with the result that utterances do less to describe a given state of things than draw attention to themselves and, in so doing, seek to alter their circumstances. That is, on this view, the effectiveness of an expression is rhetorical in a special sense: because it foregrounds its own argumentative devices, it seeks not to describe a given state of things, but by depending on the audience recognizing and relishing the mechanisms involved, attempts to draw the audience into its contestatory and even polemical atmosphere, so that naturalistic appeals are characteristically treated as a form of bad faith.

The opposition between the lyric and rhetorical modes that I have perhaps inadequately sketched is endemic to the history of modernism, for the modernists, in reacting against the Romantic naturalism of the Victorians, found themselves confronted with the problem of how they were to explain the exaggerated artifice of the baroque. Was this merely a hyperbolic, empty, and histrionic mode, or was there some way to intellectualize its ambitions? In a nutshell, this was the problem that, in the wake of Jacob Burckhardt's valuation of the high Renaissance in *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* [1860]), occupied figures like Heinrich Wölfflin (in *Renaissance und Barock* [1888]) and Walter Benjamin (in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [*The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1928]), and more indirectly, Johan Huizinga, whose book on the late middle ages (*Herfstij der Middeleeuwen* [*The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, 1919; 2nd edn. 1924]) confronts the problem of how we are to make sense of a culture that on the face of it appears merely decadent. Though he mapped his account against a scrupulous description of the level of violence and

ambition that infused public life in the fourteenth century, Burckhardt, influenced by Hegelian idealism, saw in Renaissance Italy the vindication of the self-possessed, psychologically coherent individual, now capable of a rich private life, so that for him the Renaissance expressed "human nature in its deepest essence"; and he treated the sonnet as a literary genre capable of elegantly reconciling all the different realms of experience and an expressive vehicle of the "inward life." Indeed for him, in this moment in human history – also expressed in the genius of Shakespeare – "the human spirit had taken a mighty step towards the consciousness of its own secret life." Given the comprehensiveness of this conception, it was almost inevitable that, like Wölfflin, who saw the baroque as the style "into which the Renaissance degenerated," Benjamin turned his attention to the German baroque *Trauerspiel*, defending its excessive and artificial forms as a special case of the purely rhetorical condition of all human activities. As he writes, "The new theatre has artifice as its God."

Despite its oracular and hermetic aura, there is much in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* which might apply to my argument. Centrally, I think I agree with Benjamin that the hyperbole and theatricality of the baroque is argumentatively and ideologically instrumental in the culture at large. And I think we share the notion that the lyric postulate encourages the view that literature is epiphenomenal, operating as a reflection on and at a remove from the messy business of the world, while the rhetorical view cleaves to the notion that literature competes for attention with the entire panoply of human activities, however mundane, which take place within language. This is one reason for its aesthetic urgencies and extremes.

I therefore argue in my first chapter that tragicomedy served as an heuristic device not only for the ambiguities built into different forms of political argumentation, but, less expectedly, for a series of related imponderables which accompanied the massive growth in trade during the century. The East India Company was founded in 1600, and England went to war with the Dutch thrice (in 1652, 1665, and 1672). This produced two conundra: how was economics to become a theoretical field in its own right; and how was the perception that national power increasingly depended on trade to inform political theory more largely? As the century wore on, it became increasingly clear that there were conceptual analogies between debate in the trade pamphlets and political debate. The one centered on the difference between the value of bullion – which seemed absolutely guaranteed by the nature of precious metals ("intrinsick" value) – and the value of trade, which depended on complex forms of agreement, habit, trust, and custom among the worldwide community of merchants ("extrinsick" value).

The other could be said to focus on a related distinction between the potentially absolute powers of the monarch by virtue of prerogative, and the customary and vernacular world best expressed in the common law; or alternatively between law as a potentially rigid and a priori code of behavior, and equity as a flexible means of securing proper ends, given the endless variations in human nature and the contingencies of historical experience. This analogy, I show below, is clarified fully for the first time in the context of the first Dutch War, when, in publishing *Gondibert*, Davenant begins to attach by now familiar elements of political debate to more recent debates in the discourse of trade, of the kind that prompted the 1651 Navigation Act, though one could imagine that his participation in *Britannia Triumphans*, performed during the ship money crisis, might have prepared him for that connection. (In *Mammon's Music* [2002], Blair Hoxby has recently argued that the same polemical climate made Milton sympathetic to trade as a basis of republican power under the Rump.) But I also argue that a number of other events allowed an increasing consciousness of the theoretical parameters at stake in both discourses: the coinage crisis of 1620; William Harvey's announcement of the circulation of the blood in 1628; the calling of the Long Parliament in 1640; and the King's *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions* (1642).

As I proceed with an account of the heuristic role that drama seems to have played in political and economic theory, however, I am engaged on a more covert methodological exercise in intellectual history. Because the oppositions within political theory were only dimly understood at first, and because at the beginning of the seventeenth century there was as yet no such discipline as "economics," I am also asking my reader to notice two related effects. First, as drama tests and retests various postulates to observe how they either match or collide in some way, it allows the outlines of what we now regard as a discipline to emerge with greater clarity than hitherto. This is very much the problem that occupies Joseph Schumpeter's epic *History of Economic Analysis* (1954), in which Schumpeter suggests that a discipline in embryo might emerge in the context of discourses which we no longer associate with that science or which even, to us, may be implicitly opposed to it. Thus echoing the conflictual nature of tragicomedy, it might be that greater disciplinary specificity is achieved by testing a half-formed conception against analogies that either reinforce that specificity or undercut it, in both cases helping to distill what is at stake.

In the case of the particular relationship between physiology and emerging economic models, the situation, it transpires, is yet more complex. Because early disputants in the discourse of trade knew they were debating

matters of national importance, they naturally resorted to the metaphor of the body politic, even though they were writing in a climate as yet uninformed by Harveian circulation. When Malynes, Mun, and Misselden lock horns in the 1620s, we see that one of the theoretical difficulties for them is the role of bills of exchange, signifying systems of credit that bind, for example, traders in Europe, the Levant, India, and the Spice Islands. To accommodate what is in effect a cycle of obligation, it becomes clear that in the interests of disciplinary clarity, and well before *De Motu Cordis*, the physiological presumptions inhabiting the discourse of trade are clearly putting pressure on physiology proper to develop a full theory of circulation.

Second, this disciplinary clarity issues in large part from the fact that, because they are forced to occupy the same frame or stage space, incommensurable positions increasingly clearly emerge as the conceptual opposites or choices that we now understand them to be. I see this activity as assisted by several different circumstances or kinds of circumstance: the projection of incommensurables into the generically competitive atmosphere of tragicomedy; the effect of the Harveian model that now subordinates the variety of physiological elements into the workings of a single coherent system, namely circulation; the polemical machinery through which, after 1620 and 1640 respectively, the discourse of trade and political argument could increasingly descry the outlines of opponents, a process assisted by rapid publication in print, and (especially in the discourse of trade) the habit of republishing key pamphlets in response to new crises, so that a given point of view appeared increasingly less occasional and increasingly generalizable; the fact of print alone, which, as happened with architectural theory in the sixteenth century, allowed the development of a more disciplined second-order discourse; and the increasing formalization not only of stage space, as the indoor theater develops into the true proscenium stage, but, in the wake of Inigo Jones, the spatialization of English culture as a whole in the form of neo-Palladian architecture, which, I argue in Chapter Four, supplies the context for Davenant's reform of the stage in 1656.

As regards drama specifically, there is also a third consequence of these changes. The extremities of Fletcherian tragicomedy help account for the powerfully histrionic effect of a play like *Philaster*, where the dramatic effect issues from sudden and surprising twists which seem in many cases unmotivated by the usual expectations of plot and character. But the effect is both spectacular and somewhat ingrown, as if the play were preoccupied by the enormous irrational energies it unleashes. As the seventeenth century progresses, however, and as tragicomedy becomes more comfortable with

itself, so to speak, the energy of the play – certainly by the Restoration – is now directed out from the stage and towards an implied audience: the history of tragicomedy in the period also becomes, I submit, a history of the creation of a specific kind of theatrical public. That audience becomes identified increasingly, I believe, with the King and the political nation, so that the purpose of drama in the Restoration is almost invariably advisory.

Hence by the time the Restoration occurred, drama was confident of its role as a vehicle of political economy, though this confidence seems most assured after the third Dutch War in the 1670s. My first chapter therefore concludes with readings of the Lord Mayor's shows mounted by Thomas Jordan after the Great Fire; *The Adventures of Five Hours* – one of the most successful plays in the 1660s; and *The Country Wife*, whose "china scene," the most famous moment in Restoration drama, simultaneously deliberates on language, politics, stage space, and the consumerism made possible by trade. Taken together, these plays and public performances show how metaphors of trade and politics serve as mutually enforcing analogies, and how the new proscenium stage allows theatrical space itself to serve as another symbolic expression of the conceptual issues involved. Though Evelyn meant his phrase in the singular to apply to the world of commerce, I am arguing that the constitutive role that literature played in this period truly made Davenant and the inheritors of the Fletcherian tradition "Authors of Traffick."

To lend contemporary weight to my argument that the drama of this period was understood to be hortatory in intent, I consider humanist rhetoric. My second chapter, "'This Mimic State': Cicero, Quintilian, and the theatrical scene of culture," has two sections. The first shows how, with the emergence of histories of drama at the end of the seventeenth century, and with the emergence of general aesthetic theories of the role drama plays in culture as a whole, especially in France, seventeenth-century drama became an "institution" in the way Homer Brown describes: not just a practice on the ground, but an entire cultural matrix readable through a theoretical lens afforded by its now having its own history and genealogy. One consequence of this shift is the emergence among late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writers of a consistent view that English drama, like that of the Greeks and Romans, was a prime vehicle of political debate in the state, and that the closest equivalents in that role were the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero. In the second section of the chapter I then turn to a close reading of the major texts of humanism, namely Cicero's *De Oratore*, *Brutus*, and *Orator*, and Quintilian's *Institutes*. This shows how, since *actio* (delivery) is for both thinkers the crown of oratory,

the closest competitor to the fully finished orator is of course the actor. For Cicero this figure is commonly Roscius, his friend; but since both Cicero and Quintilian see the criteria of persuasive speech as being *copia* (ideally knowing everything that can be known) and *aptus* (speaking effectively to the occasion), the dramatic expression of the well-rounded speaker is the actor who excels both in comedy and tragedy, or two different actors representing both genres. Since for Cicero and Quintilian the orator serves to mediate between law and equity in the state, it follows that the competition between tragedy and comedy in the actor's training represents that symbolic function.

At this point I take issue with Benjamin's implication that baroque drama served the interests of political absolutism, because, in England, I believe the opposite to be true. Cicero had already linked the notion of *copia* – the contingent and composite grounds of effective speech – to Roman ideals of a mixed constitution, so Englishmen trained in humanist rhetoric were in effect expected to translate the multiple effects of tragicomedy into a symbol of the "mixed" and vernacular modes of imagining the English polity, which were, if anything, anti-absolutist in implication. Thus while the regimen of a single genre could denominate the strictures of "law," the unstable combinations of genres in tragicomedy, echoing Ciceronian copiousness, could denote a world of contingency and the possibility of equity. Consequently, not only many Restoration plays, but also the masques that Davenant wrote in the 1630s were, I believe, forms of advice to the King and political nation, not instruments of Stuart absolutism.

The second part of my book is devoted to the career of William Davenant. Because Davenant is proof of powerful continuities between early and late Stuart drama, I originally planned Chapter Three to discuss his entire career. Davenant is critically important in the history of the theater because he got his start as a playwright in the 1620s; collaborated with Inigo Jones on the last few Stuart masques performed after Jones fell out with Ben Jonson in 1631, famously producing the last-ever Caroline masque, *Salmacida Spolia*, in 1640; introduced the modern proscenium stage, with actresses and moveable scenery, in *The Siege of Rhodes* in 1656, working now with Jones's collaborator since 1628, John Webb; and was one of the two figures granted theatrical patents at the Restoration in 1660. In the 1660s shortly before his death he "revised" *The Tempest* with John Dryden, who, when Davenant did die, assumed the post of Poet Laureate. Davenant poses something of a problem for the intellectual and cultural historian because he is a middling playwright and worse poet whose intellectual ambitions

are nevertheless of the highest order: it is not for nothing that he was a personal friend of Hobbes, Milton, and Dryden. The consequence of his literary mediocrity is that scholars have tended not to read his work carefully and have almost universally failed to see how intelligent his various projects are.

The present Chapter Three restricts itself to a close account of Davenant's early career as a playwright, culminating in the plays of the 1630s. I demonstrate how the tradition of performances for "private" theaters increasingly exploits two possibilities afforded by the indoor stage, for all that we are still a long way from the staging conventions initiated by *The Siege of Rhodes*. First, the epistemological limitations symbolized by a more distinct and confined acting space, and a space moreover shared by members of the audience to which the players must therefore appeal, becomes a means of underscoring the public and entirely artificial nature of human endeavor: stage space alone serves as a device to rebuke the kind of naturalistic urges of the dogmatist or absolutist, who often remains blithely unconscious of the generic conventions, and so constraints, by which all dramatic characters must realize themselves. A consciousness of the artifice and necessity of genre is often further urged by a satyr–satirist figure in the plot, whose behavior places him at odds with those who are more deeply embedded within it: it is he who often reminds us that stagecraft and statecraft have much in common. In parallel with that development, and echoing the importance of the biometric metaphor in architectural theory (which, we discover, is central to ideas of stage design), as well as responding after 1628 to the Harveian conception of the body-as-space, characters also experience the spatial limits of their own bodies as a similar form of constraint, as if the theater as building were a kind of body (as Vitruvius would say), or the body a kind of theater.

Second, Davenant uses the position of characters on the stage as a symbolic device in its own right, one not truly available to Shakespeare, and one which partly explains the fact that the linguistic temperature of the plays cools relative to Shakespeare, where all the work – at least until the late plays – is done by the language alone. The contrasts between characters placed differently, I argue, serve to make the audience conscious of how the stage visually manufactures examples out of arrangements of characters on stage, yet serve to reveal the limiting force of perspective, and correspond to two other kinds of difference that Davenant seeks to harness. The differences between men and women in the audience and in the plots of these "Fletcherian" plays are, among other things, means to address the Caroline cult of platonic love, which Davenant shows to be functionally impossible