of various types, from the technical-philosophical to the erudite-historical. I wanted more direct confrontation of these approaches. How does Oosterhoff's account of "method" as an outgrowth of Jesuit pedagogy compare with Kamboucher's emphasis on Cicero? How does Roger Ariew's claim that Descartes ultimately offers a "logic" (itself seemingly consistent with a Jesuit view that mathematics derives its soundness from logic) sit with Rabouin's account of imaginative mathematical practice? How does Garrod's emphasis on Descartes's literary decorum relate to Dennis Sepper's call to study Descartes's "psychological anthropology," and how does it sit with widespread emphasis, in the first half of the volume, on technical interpretation?

The contributors may agree on the importance and, broadly, the character of *ingenium* for Descartes; they do not seem to agree on how to read him. Garrod's culminating contribution about the *politesse de l'esprit—esprit* was the French translation of *ingenium*—arranges for this confrontation, arguing that Descartes's views on *ingenium* shaped his writing.

The realization that politeness is "recognition of the diversity of human wits" and that one's own *ingenium* gives rise to a "singular cognitive *style*" (187, italics in original) might lead to dissimulation as a kind of ingenious condescension. Instead, Garrod argues, Descartes looks to politeness as the political prerequisite of an intellectual community characterized by natural difference rather than universally shared reason (200). Garrod's own *politesse* is on display in her deft treatment of other contributions: it is clear enough that she has thought through the contributions' coherence.

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John Fletcher's Rome: Questioning the Classics. Domenico Lovascio.
The Revels Plays Companion Library. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022. xviii + 232 pp. £85.

The False One. Domenico Lovascio.
The Revels Plays Companion Library. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022. xxx + 248 pp. £80.

Published in the newer Revels Plays Companion Library series that complements the meticulously edited Revels plays scholars have relied on for decades, Domenico Lovascio's *John Fletcher's Rome: Questioning the Classics* is even more closely tied than most to the Revels project of expanding the parameters of Jacobean and Caroline drama: his monograph on Fletcher's Roman plays has just appeared in tandem with his superb Revels edition of Fletcher and Massinger's *The False One*, which promises to spur renewed interest in a playwright once considered Shakespeare's and Jonson's near equal. Fletcher's classicism, in contrast with that of the other titans of the

Renaissance stage, is eclectic, irreverent, and unexpected in keeping with his outré plots, though his Roman plays are considerably less sensational than, say, *The Custom of the Country* or *The Sea Voyage* or even *The Maid's Tragedy*. Fletcher notably lacks Jonson's pugnacious reverence for classical writers, proclaimed noisily throughout his career and recorded in the scholarly marginalia to *Sejanus* cataloging his borrowings.

Shakespeare, too, though far less of a classical scholar than Jonson, borrowed extensively from Ovid and Plutarch in constructing his Roman plays and drew on the intensive training he received as a grammar student in "double translating." Not so Fletcher, in Lovascio's view. Fletcher, he argues, does not privilege the reputation accorded to classical writers over his contemporaries, nor does he cede their cultural superiority. Instead, he treats his peers—Shakespeare in particular—as on a par with their classical precursors, leaving him free to draw readily from both past and present texts, avoiding the pitfall of awed or constrained emulation.

Lovascio sheds light on the use Fletcher makes of his various sources in a perceptive reading of the four Roman plays: *Valentinian*, *Bonduca*, *The False One*, and *The Prophetess.* Fletcher is comparatively uninterested in the history of the Roman republic, instead showing a "predilection for the writings of late antique historians . . . [of] imperial Rome" (21) that allows him to explore his fascination with the decadent exercise of autocratic power. Valentinian's court, awash with bawds and panders who enable the emperor's sexual excesses, or the spectacle of Julius Caesar, Egypt's conqueror, aroused and undone by the bait of young Cleopatra's virginity, give Fletcher license to represent a bleak, disillusioned view of Rome that is at odds with the glorification of Roman military virtue and self-sacrifice in most other Renaissance dramas. While Lovascio's focus is understandably on comparing Fletcher and Shakespeare's Roman plays in his monograph, Jonson surely comes to mind here, less in terms of explicit verbal influence than in his ability to conjure up the sinister world of Tiberius's Capri and Sejanus's predatory sexuality as he sleeps and flatters his way into power. As Lovascio points out, the corruption of Roman values under its dissolute emperors is made literal in the putrefying body of Numerian in *The Prophetess* and the poisoned Valentinian, who expires slowly, in agony, on stage. "The scent had almost choked me" (62), Aper remarks of Numerian's decomposing body, recalling not only the foul breath of the Roman masses in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* but the ungodly stench emanating from the cellar in which Edward II spends his last hours before his horrific murder in Marlowe's tragedy.

The ideal of Roman Stoicism is represented as futile and pointless in Fletcher's plays, where his Roman women are either marginal figures or expendable paragons of virtue, easily outshone by such formidable and charismatic foreigners as Bonduca and Delphia. In Fletcher's tragedies, decadence prevails in dispirited leaderless courts, unpaid soldiers must resort to prostitution to eat, and the military valor once associated with the empire has eroded. Comparing Fletcher's Roman plays with German *Trauerspiel* as depicted by Walter Benjamin, Lovascio points out that both kinds of plays "enact a painfully disenchanted apprehension of a bleak present that is mixed with a sorrowful sense of

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being immersed in a permanent state of historical crisis" (93), in which Stoicism proves to be an inadequate (because passive) response to the reckless and destructive hedonism of the powerful.

Fletcher's classicism can also be playful, witty, and deliciously vulgar. In his deft conclusion, Lovascio turns to Fletcher's reworking of the famous myth of Curtius's heroic self-sacrifice when he saves Rome from disaster by leaping armed, on horseback, into the fatal chasm that closes over his body. Fletcher invokes this story in utterly unpredictable ways in his non-Roman plays. In some instances, the example of Curtius is "used perversely in attempts to cloak with glory enterprises that are in fact not remotely as noble or . . . selfless" (178). In others, Curtius is invoked in order to set up outrageous jokes, as when Rutilio, despairing of his sexual labors in the brothel in *The Custom of the Country*, compares his work of servicing women to leaping into "Curtius' gulf" (179) or when Maria, in Fletcher's sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew*, imagines herself as a feminist Curtius leaping into "this gulf of marriage" (179) on behalf of other women's rights. This unexpected introduction of a sacrosanct Roman myth into his salacious and funny comedies helps to set Fletcher's classicism apart from that of his contemporaries.

Over the past three decades, Fletcher's plays have been performed with more regularity, inspired first by Gordon McMullan's brilliant reassessment of Fletcher's collaborative genius in the 1990s and then showcased in well-received productions of Shakespeare's and Fletcher's *Taming* plays in England and the United States that juxtaposed their rival handling of sexual politics in marriage. The new Revels edition of *The False One*, written by Fletcher and his collaborator Massinger, could serve a comparable function now. The prologue to *The False One* positions the play as a prequel to Shakespeare's Roman plays, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Lovascio's edition, the first in modern spelling and by far the most extensive in the wealth of introductory material treating the play's obscure and limited performance history, its literary sources and its critical reception, among other matters, is ever alert to "the high theatrical potential that the play still retains" (50). His footnotes provide roadmaps to future directors about how they might stage certain scenes: the display of severed heads at key moments of the play, for example, or the arrival of Cleopatra on stage on a "packet" or mattress, and her long ambiguous silence after her startling entrance.

This Revels edition points us to the value of reviving *The False One* as a staged play, quite possibly in the company of one of Shakespeare's Roman plays or paired with Massinger's mesmerizing tour de force, *The Roman Actor*. Lovascio's twin publications of 2022 fill in a lacuna in our awareness of early modern drama centering on the Roman empire. In that sense, Lovascio has demonstrated his own willingness to emulate Curtius, by leaping into the gulf to preserve this vital but long-neglected Roman play.

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