

## 11 Gold Digger or Golden Girl?

### Purifying the Pursuit of Gold in Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West*, Part I

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In Thomas Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West*, Part I (ca. 1600), a lowborn English barmaid is deemed a "girl worth gold" by the King of Fez (as well as by the play's subtitle). While this tapstress-turned-adventurer grows rich by plundering numerous Spanish ships, she refuses to allow herself to be bought, even for all the gold in Barbary. As she circulates from one English port to another, out to sea, and finally to the Moroccan coast, her value increases until she is seated like a queen next to the King of Fez and promised to be "ballast home with gold" (5.2.37).<sup>1</sup> Though she circulates continuously, Bess becomes a "girl worth gold" precisely by resisting the fungibility and devaluation associated with the circulation of gold in the global marketplace. As Jean Howard has argued, her worth derives from her exceptionality: Bess represents "a paragon of modesty and faithfulness" and "as such she functions as a unifying symbol of the nation and as a catalyst to transform and perfect the men around her."<sup>2</sup> But how are Bess's methods for accumulating gold also informed by a broader global awareness of imperial rivalry that renders gold's meaning multivalent and unstable? By what means does Bess assume the status of golden girl and evade the negative attributes associated with gold digging?

Assessing Bess's labor within an inter-imperial geopolitical context, this essay demonstrates how Bess purifies the pursuit of gold by merging its material accumulation with an economy of moral value. By enacting a sexualized, affective form of labor, Bess links moral virtue to the accumulation of wealth in a global monetary economy. In addition, Heywood's play offers a model of profitable overseas circulation that counters prevailing English concerns about the economic risks of circulation through its mobilization of "a girl worth gold." As suggested by Queen Elizabeth's 1600 proclamation prohibiting the removal of gold and silver from the English realm, particularly by foreign "strangers" operating out of English ports, global trade was perceived as a threat that might drain the English treasury and domestic economy.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, Heywood's play imagines the safe and profitable circulation of English gold through its sexual circulation of a heroine who refuses to compromise her chastity. Reflecting the sense in which "worth" denotes not just a measure of equivalence but also a state of "desert" and "entitlement,"<sup>4</sup> Bess proves to be not merely a "girl worth gold," but a girl *worthy* of it.

As the play's geopolitical contours make clear, gold's multivalent associations were tied to inter-imperial dynamics involving Spain's colonization of the New World as well as to the production and circulation of gold in North Africa and throughout the Ottoman-controlled eastern Mediterranean. The well-known "Black Legend" spawned a demigrating discourse of gold that aimed to expose Spanish greed and cruelty, particularly for Spain's colonial exploitation of the mines of South America and treatment of the Amerindians.<sup>5</sup> For the English, whose New World colonial ventures failed to gain momentum leading into the seventeenth century, global trade offered an alternative means to pursue wealth and empire; however, England's forays into eastern Mediterranean trade required constant negotiation with the Ottoman Empire, as well as contention with piracy practiced by Spanish and other corsairs. In contrast to the tyrannical practices that the English associated with the Spanish and Ottoman empires, Heywood's play offers a model for pursuing gold and strategically navigating Spanish and Turkish imperial dominance while remaining morally untainted. Gold is not represented in the play as neutral or intrinsically good; rather, it is made so through a process of labor and conversion enacted by Bess. Her plunder of Spanish ships purifies gold through its repossession from the Spanish, while her alliance with the sovereign nation of Morocco offers an avenue for trade ostensibly removed from Ottoman control.

Although the plot of the play derives from the realm of fantasy and imagination, it pointedly engages Anglo-Spanish geopolitical developments from the recent past as well as topical events related to Anglo-Moroccan relations. Set during war with Spain, the action of the play begins just after Essex's attack on the Spanish port of Cádiz in 1596. It follows Essex's Islands Voyage to the Azores, an expedition intended to intercept and plunder the gold-laden Spanish fleet on its return from the New World. It is this expedition that Bess's lover, Spencer, joins; Bess initially departs from England to reclaim Spencer's body from the Spanish-controlled island of Foyal, where she believes Spencer has been killed in combat with the Spanish in a colonial struggle over the island. The play's overt investments in anti-Spanish politics are interrelated with its interests in representing Morocco. Bess's alliance with the King of Morocco, a mutual enemy of Spain, accords loosely with Queen Elizabeth's attempts throughout the 1590s to establish diplomatic ties with Morocco, an endeavor that generated a stream of correspondence discussing trade, piracy, and a potential joint enterprise against Spain. In 1600, around the time of the play's first performance, Elizabeth's court hosted a formal embassy from the Moroccan king, which took up residence in London for six months. As Virginia Mason Vaughn has discussed, the visit was also facilitated by the Barbary Company and members of the Merchant Tailors' Company, suggesting its commercial objectives.<sup>6</sup> Trade with Morocco was appealing not just for its own sake, but also because it offered an alternative to the large portion of Mediterranean trade controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Thus, an Anglo-Moroccan alliance served as counter to

both Spain and the Ottoman Empire—two hugely powerful empires that achieved dominance through imperialism and trade and also threatened England's subjugation.

The play's engagement of Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-Moroccan relations, as well as the interrelated dominance of the Ottoman Empire that necessarily informed these relationships, invites not just a transnational but also an inter-imperial analysis to illuminate the complex dynamics of empire operating in the play. Laura Doyle's theoretical framework of "inter-imperiality" proves helpful here in apprehending how multiple empires interact simultaneously and in relation to capitalist formations across a *longue durée*.<sup>8</sup> As I demonstrate, such an approach to the imperial dynamics of Heywood's play makes visible the ways that England's relationships to both Spain and Morocco are mutually shaped by Moroccan imperial struggles, Ottoman imperial dominance, and—as I discuss further below—Spanish New World colonialism. Within this inter-imperial context, the play negotiates tensions about the production of value, both economic and moral, through its depiction of a heroine who circulates widely without ever compromising her sexual virtue.

In her pioneering essay on *The Fair Maid of the West*, Jean Howard demonstrates how the play mobilizes representations of gender, sexuality, race, and class to forge a model of English nationhood that coalesces around its lowborn heroine's female virtue. She argues that the play's representation of Anglo-Spanish hostility is ultimately overshadowed by the "much vaster gulf of distance [that] yawns" between the English and the racially-marked Moroccans, a difference expressed by Mullisheg's sexual threat to Bess and the act of castration inflicted on her servant.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, Barbara Fuchs emphasizes how the play couples the English with the Moroccans in a way that registers an othering of England itself, as a nation that is important compared to other empires and in danger of over-reaching.<sup>10</sup> Despite their differences, both Howard and Fuchs are ultimately interested in how this play constructs English national identity in relation to Spain and Morocco. My reading seeks to extend their analyses by focusing on how nations are interrelated within a larger global web of empires.

Locating early modern England within this global web enables us to consider England's awareness of itself as not just a state but as an empire in the making. Our most familiar narratives of early British imperialism center on colonial expansion, most notably in the Americas and Ireland, and later in India. My discussion foregrounds English participation in a global economy that preceded England's colonial expansion and that in some sense pointedly rejected a colonial model of expansion. In doing so, I adopt a *longue durée* view that locates the roots of modern-day globalization, which takes the form of global capitalism, in an early modern world-system, wherein Europe—and in particular England—was decentralized and decidedly marginal. While certainly England's commercial reorientation in the late sixteenth century and nascent involvement in global commerce did

not constitute a coherent imperial agenda, these developments importantly informed England's early conceptions of itself as an empire in the making. In addition, they enabled the English to embrace a particular model of empire that was articulated in contradistinction to empires amassed through colonization.

*Fair Maid's* over-determined representation of gold, a commodity/currency that is persistently prized and pursued by its characters, functions as a touchstone for assessing the complex, multi-lateral dynamics of empire that are imaginatively rendered in *Fair Maid*. In addition, gold reveals the potentially transformative effects of inter-imperial conflict on England and its citizens. In the opening scene an English gentleman and two sea captains discuss current news events outside of a tavern in the English port city of Plymouth; in particular, they marvel at the influx of gold as the result of Essex's recent attack on the Spanish port of Cádiz:

CARROL: The great success at Cales [Cádiz] under the conduct  
Of such a noble general hath put heart  
Into the English; they are all on fire  
To purchase from the Spaniard. If their carracks  
Come deeply laden, we shall tug with them  
For golden spoil.  
2 CAPTAIN: Oh, were it come to that!  
1 CAPTAIN: How Plymouth swells with gallants! How the streets  
Glisten with gold! (1.1.5–12)

As Carrol attests, Essex led the English to an important victory by sacking the city of Cádiz, which served as a crucial point of departure for the Spanish treasure fleet to the New World. Plymouth, as the site of Essex's embarkation and return, is reported above to bear the evidence of the venture's success through its golden transformation (though in actuality, the Spanish minimized England's gains by setting fire to their fleet before the English could capture it). Fueled by their success at Cádiz (and perhaps by the desire for more profitable plunder), the seamen discuss their eagerness to make further attacks on the Spanish. The men, like the streets of Plymouth, also bear a transformation, though in their case it manifests in their embodied affects: "Their success 'hath put heart' into them; 'they are all on fire.'" Theodore Levinwand has drawn attention to the early modern theater's interests in exploring the affective dimensions of economic practices, though his discussion of venturing mainly uncovers an affective response of painful endeavor and toil.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, the above exchange emphasizes fiery passion, which, according to the humoral system, is associated with yellow bile and a choleric or aggressive temperament. Though an overbalance of heat could prove pathological in certain contexts, it is rendered appropriate and fructifying when directed at redistributing the golden booty of colonial Spain to the streets of England. Of course, the

influx of gold is not entirely risk-free in its effects on the English population and requires a kind of further purification once it enters the English realm. As the banter outside the tavern suggests, foreign gold has transformed English men into "gallants"—or "men of fashion and pleasure"<sup>11</sup>—but not necessarily into gentlemen. Even the extent to which the streets "glisten" with gold conveys the potential superficiality of Plymouth's newfound sparkle and brilliance. As we shall see, the gallants will need Bess to transform them further into gentlemen.

It seems important to recognize that the form of venturing that generates this response is specifically that of plunder aimed against the Spanish. The prospect about which the English "are all on fire" is not the opportunity to legitimately "purchase" gold from the Spanish, but rather to pilage their conquered ships for "golden spoil." Whereas today the word "purchase" usually indicates acquisition in exchange for payment, its more familiar early modern meanings included "to obtain in any way," "to take possession of," and "to amass wealth."<sup>12</sup> Despite the violent force implied by this form of purchase, the conversational tone here is celebratory; morally triumphant, and even wondrous. Acts of plunder against the Spanish have virtually transformed England into a mystical El Dorado. Plymouth "swells with gallants" and the streets "glisten with gold." By targeting Spain's New World gains in a form of morally justifiable plunder, the English capitalize on New World colonialism and even the score with Spain. Bess's acts in particular elucidate the ways that plunder can facilitate not just masculine ferocity but a transmission of affective mercy that is morally redemptive.

If the English were acutely aware of Spain's extensive gains in the New World, predicated largely on the subjugation and exploitation of natives in the gold mines, they were also sorely cognizant of their own failures to claim or even access gold through the same means. Walter Raleigh's notorious voyage to Guiana, widely disseminated through the publication of his *Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), charted his failure to catch more than a glimpse of Manoa, the fabled city of El Dorado, from the Caroni River. As William West discusses, when Raleigh returned to England with samples of black ore given as evidence of the gold he did not access but which he insisted lay beneath the impenetrable black ore, people speculated that his ore actually came from Barbary, "and even that he never went to America at all, but had hid out in Cornwall."<sup>13</sup> Raleigh's mission was partly thwarted by weather and bad luck, but more definitively by the obstacle of Spanish dominion in the area. Thus, the English plunder of Spanish ships transporting gold back home from the New World offered an alternative means of enrichment that was not only attractive for (ostensibly) moral reasons but also for the practical reason that the English were incapable of extracting gold through New World colonization. In *Fair Maid*, plunder transforms England into an El Dorado without the English ever having to go there.

The inflow of transnational capital into England is processed through the privately owned tavern where Bess works. Importantly, *Fair Maid*'s transformation of England into a place swelling with gallants and filled with gilded streets centers not on London but on Plymouth, a port city in the southwestern part of the country. Bess, who hails from Somersetshire and is sent to service in Plymouth before taking ownership of a tavern in Foy, which is even further West in Cornwall, firmly associates Bess's business with a specific region of England. Heywood's emphasis on the smaller western ports of Plymouth and Foy detaches the influx of gold from the London-based Mediterranean trade and from the state-regulated mechanisms of the Royal Exchange, the Royal Mint, and Royal Treasury. The business of the tavern depends upon international port traffic and serves to draw the wealth of this traffic into the domestic economy. Bess says she welcomes the pirates who frequent the tavern, for "Here they vent / Many brave commodities by which some gain accrues" (2.1.54–55). Her use of the word "vent" draws attention to the process of exchange by which her customers' "brave commodities" pass into domestic circulation. Perhaps ironically, the name of the tavern in Plymouth where Bess works is called "The Castle," which suggestively relocates royal authority to the space of a local business. This Castle in turn contains a room called the "Portcullis," which was also the name of a coin issued by Elizabeth in 1600–01 exclusively for the East India Company.<sup>14</sup> It was in this same year that the East India Company first received a license to export English bullion for the purchase of foreign wares, and likely that *Fair Maid* was first performed.

In addition to drawing beer in exchange for income drawn from overseas, Bess conducts another form of exchange in the tavern through her conversion of the customers themselves. As a sexually desired agent who resists sexual exchange against all odds, she serves as a gold standard for measuring the value of others and as an agent for the moral redemption of those with whom she comes in contact. As Mario DiGangi observes in his examination of another exemplary female heroine elsewhere in this volume, taverns and other public places were sites where women exercised agency that had implications beyond the domestic realm.<sup>15</sup> DiGangi is interested in how Doll Williamson (of *Sir Thomas More*) projects a link between the household and London civic government, whereas I am interested in how Bess's virtues are projected into an international context. However, in both of our readings, female virtues are affectively transmitted into traditionally male realms. In particular, Bess catalyzes the moral transformations of Roughman and Goodlack so that they may usefully serve her and the English cause on the high seas.

Such transformations are premised in part upon Bess's affective labor. While Bess's chastity and self-restraint may seem to foreclose affective experiences, she herself feels things deeply. She reports being "ecstasied," or "thrown into a state of frenzy or stupor,"<sup>16</sup> upon Spencer's bestowal of the Windmill Tavern upon her (1.3.42), and is a second time "ecstasied"

after learning that her lover is alive and well in Fyral (3.3.20). By the same token, she is brought to an emotionally embodied state of despair upon learning (incorrectly) of Spencer's death: "Wilt thou not break, heart? / Are these my ribs wrought out of brass or steel, / That canst not craze their bars?" (3.3.29-31). Though she soon regains her "gentle temper" (3.3.34), she is subsequently outraged and devastated when she is told falsely by Goodlack of Spencer's distrust of her chastity. But, as Goodlack attempts to convince Bess of Spencer's betrayal, he is shamed into reform by Bess's unwavering loyalty to Spencer. Moved by Bess's sad distress in parting with Spencer's portrait, Goodlack undergoes an affect-driven moral transformation: "Had I a heart of flint or adamant, / It would relent at this" (3.4.77-78). Teresa Brennan's theorization of "socially induced affect," which describes the involuntary transmission of emotion from one person to another, offers a useful model for understanding how Bess operates on the embodied affects of others.<sup>17</sup> It is Goodlack's witnessing of Bess's affective response that prompts his own and leads to his conversion to mercy, honesty, and generosity. Similarly, when Roughman witnesses Bess's bravery in standing up to his bullying, he is cured of his own cowardice: "She hath waken'd me / And kindled that dead fire of courage in me / Which all this while hath slept" (3.1.131-33).

That Bess's transmission of affect relies on her continuous circulation as a virgin whose sexual integrity remains intact also addresses a set of English worries about economic circulation and the loss of English bullion through London trade. Whereas proponents of "free trade" argued that foreign investment would be returned in the form of profit that exceeded the initial investment, creating a surplus of value, detractors focused on the risk of loss and on the debasement of English bullion engendered through the process of circulation. Both views associated global trade with a potential imbalance between investment and return. Jonathan Gil Harris reads *Fair Maid* as a play directly concerned with the drain on English bullion threatened by trade and piracy.<sup>18</sup> Identifying Mullisheg's castration of the clownish Clem with "the castration of England's national treasure," Harris contends that it "lends comic expression to a fear ... that bullion flows are not unidirectional, and treasure (or 'best jewels') can be expropriated from England as much as appropriated by it."<sup>19</sup> In other words, if circulation entails the flow of bullion both in and out of England, then *Fair Maid* addresses the possibility that circulation will lead to greater losses than gains. As Harris illustrates, economic debates about the benefits or drawbacks of overseas investment, the scope of the East India Company's sovereignty, and the appropriate means of regulation were prominently reignited and recorded in the 1620s through a series of pamphlets by Thomas Mun, Edward Misselden, and Gerard Malynes, but a number of the same issues debated in the 1620s were of active concern in the early 1600s. Malynes's *The Canker of England's Commonwealth*, published in 1601, expresses the same core principles that Malynes articulates in his later *Maintenance of Free Trade*

(1622). Specifically, Malynes blames foreign bankers and merchants for the devaluation of English bullion traded abroad by accusing them of manipulating exchange rates to their own advantage. In turn, he argues for fixed exchange rates based on the intrinsic metal value of a nation's currency and for monarchical regulation centralized in the mint and royal treasury.

*Fair Maid* seems to offer an alternative to fixed exchange rates and monarchical regulation through its fantasy of a circulating female body whose intrinsic value resists exchange altogether. Its grounding of intrinsic worth in Bess's sexually—and morally—embodied virtue seems consonant with a bullionist conception of value that emerges from a set of residual mercantilist values. As Mark Nezlloff has discussed, "one of the primary assumptions underlying mercantilist economics was an equation of value with its material embodiment in bullion and coin."<sup>20</sup> According to a bullionist conception of value, circulation threatened to debase gold because it rendered it vulnerable to unfavorable rates of exchange as well as to the debasement of its material form through clipping and counterfeiting. As Stephen Deng has persuasively argued, early modern "monetary conceptions vacillated between intrinsic and extrinsic value theories, between the value embodied in a coin's material and that ascribed by the state's stamp."<sup>21</sup> Belief in a coin's intrinsic or materially embedded value persisted well into the seventeenth century rather than undergoing an abrupt shift with the commencement of English global trade. Thus, as Deng explains, "by taking precious metal from a coin, one could have the value of the coin—assuming the person could still pass it at face value—as well as the value of any precious metal extracted from it."<sup>22</sup>

Through its depiction of Bess's unbreakable virtue, Heywood's play offers an analogy to the anchoring of intrinsic value in gold. At the same time, this stabilization of value depends not on confinement or stasis but rather on an economy of movement and redirection. Both at home and abroad, Bess circulates freely while simultaneously resisting sexual exchange. Despite her production of desire among male customers in taverns at Plymouth and Foy, she draws a firm line at compromising her virginity and thus converts her customers' desire into wonder and admiration. As her lover Spencer attests, "She'll laugh, confer, keep company, discourse, / And something more, kiss; but beyond that compass / She no way can be drawn" (1.2.61-63). Similarly, while Bess's sojourn with the Moorish King of Fez threatens to tarnish her golden reputation, she goes so far as to kiss Mullisheg but does not go any further. In courting male desire while staunchly retaining her constancy, patience, and self-control, Bess resists exchange and in turn prompts the exchange of others' wealth into her own coffers. Rather than lose value through circulation, she retains and even accumulates new value as she travels within and then away from England.

As noted at the opening of this essay, Bess is a golden girl not just because she is chaste and virtuous; she also facilitates the accumulation of gold and grows rich herself. If, as Howard argues, Bess's sexual virtue is mobilized to unite

"men of different classes into a homosocial community of brothers," it also serves as an economic model for the accumulation of wealth.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, Bess's virtue and wealth are drawn into the same economy where they are interrelated, and their value is directly dependent upon the circulation of Bess's body. It is through this process of circulation—out to sea, in the waters of the Azores, and finally to the Barbary Coast—that Bess's fame and wealth grow in relation to her constant virtue. In repossessing Spanish gold, Bess diverts it from the Spanish treasury into the English tavern. Prior to this repossession, the gold booty taken from the Indian mines is still a virginal commodity, so to speak, not yet marked by national affiliation. Simply put, it is not (yet) coinage, something stamped with a monarch's likeness and exchanged for real commodities. If coinage is part of a national identity, one that necessitates the literal circulation of a female image stamped onto coins, then bullion both precedes and reconfigures that national identity in terms of a global network of multiple, flexible borders. Bess fixes the value of gold and *Englishes* it—as though pressing it into coins stamped with the monarch's image.

If Bess's circulation addresses concerns about the devaluation of currency through the circulation of trade, *Fair Maid* also sidesteps these concerns to some degree by advocating plunder as the means to profit and decoupling plunder from trade. While Harris's conflation of trade and piracy accurately reflects their close intertwining during the early seventeenth century, *Fair Maid* conspicuously distinguishes them so as to represent piracy as the less risky venture and as one dependent on individual valor and virtue, rather than on the autonomous vagaries of the market. Moreover, the play represents Bess's targeted plunder of the Spanish as a moral and affective form of labor that produces mercy and compassion as well as profit.

Bess's acts of plunder are morally justified in the play not just by war with Spain but also by Spain's role in an inter-imperial history attached to the commodity of gold. Having in actuality taken Cádiz in 1596 without substantial financial gain, the English targeted the Azores in the hope of capturing the Spanish treasure fleet, loaded with gold from the Americas, as it left the Azores for Spain. The Spanish tyranny associated with the Black Legend centered on Spain's disregard for the lives of Amerindians whom they slaughtered through excessive uses of violence to gain control of the gold and then exploited for their labor in the mines.<sup>24</sup> *Fair Maid's* depiction of the Spanish accords with this picture. When the male protagonist (Spencer) is en route to Morocco, hoping there to gain passage back to England, he is captured by a Spanish ship. Defeated not in a fair fight but because they are outnumbered, he and his shipmates are told that they will "pay no other ransom than their lives" in revenge for England's defeat of Foyal (4.1.13). Spencer's response articulates a familiar discourse of the Spanish annihilation of defenseless victims:

Degenerate Spaniard, there's no noblesse in thee,  
To threaten men unarm'd and miserable.

Thou might'st as well tread o'er a field of slaughter  
And kill them o'er that are already slain,  
And brag thy manhood. (4.1.14–18)

In pointed contrast to the Spanish treatment of their English captives, Bess spares the lives of her captives when she defeats the same Spanish ship and unwittingly rescues Spencer. Even after being told that Spencer has been killed by a Spaniard and denied a proper burial, Bess mercifully spares the lives of her Spanish captives, exclaiming, "Las, these poor slaves! Besides their pardon'd lives, / One give them money.—And, Spaniards, where you come / Pray for Bess Bridges, and speak well o' the English" (4.4.57–59). Hearing of this, the captain of the Spanish ship says he is not sure who "Bess" is, but "bet your queen, / Famous Elizabeth, I shall report / She and her subjects are both merciful" (4.4.121–23). In this way, Bess becomes identified with the British monarch and her mercy becomes *Englised*. Through her transmission of mercy as an English affective value, Bess seeks to morally transform her Spanish adversaries. Such mercy is bound up not just with the granting of life but also with that of money in exchange for prayers and favorable reports. Unlike annihilation or physical violence, this form of subjection involves a consensual exchange of mercy and money for goodwill and good credit. It thus implies an English alternative to Spanish colonial methods that is characterized by consent, compassion, and their affective value.

In addition, Bess's sparing of Spanish lives offers moral justification for her plundering of the booty of Spanish ships. In effect, plunder, as a merciful alternative to execution, is cast as an extension of an English policy of mercy. Leading into the final act of the play, the Chorus narrates the sea victories of Bess's crew:

Much prize they have ta'en.  
The French and Dutch she spares, only makes spoil  
Of the rich Spaniard and the barbarous Turk,  
And now her fame grows great in all these seas.  
Suppose her rich, and forc'd for want of water  
To put into Mamorah in Barbary. (4.5.6–11)

A barmaid-turned-privateer, Bess has grown both "rich" and "famous" through acts of plunder. That these acts may be cast as moral victories reflects a view of plunder as a legitimate form of revenge and economic gain aimed against specific, powerful enemies, in contrast to Spanish acts of aggression against defenseless victims. In setting Bess's plunder of Spanish ships in contradiction to Spanish tyranny, the play suggests in effect that the repossession of Spanish gold by the English purifies it of the taint of tyranny. Whereas gold signified sin and greed in the Black Legend, it "glisters" with glory in the streets of Plymouth. Because of their moral desert, the English can celebrate the warm pleasure of wealth.

In addition, the Chorus's coupling of the Spanish with "the barbarous Turk" invokes the imperial dominance of the Ottoman Empire, which though nearly absent within the immediate frame of the play, significantly informs England's relationships to both Spain and Morocco. An alliance between England and Morocco offered access to Morocco's rich stores of gold, sugar, and salt, as well as providing access to eastern Mediterranean trade that did not rely upon the Ottoman Empire. As Susan Iwaniszewicz discusses, during the reign of Ahmad al-Mansur, "the coastline of a unified Morocco stretched from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, providing vital ports for shipping—both legitimate and pirate—en route to and from the Americas and the East."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Turkey's annexation of all of the North African Barbary States outside Morocco—including the major port entrepôts of Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis—made Morocco's resistance and retention of sovereignty a particularly appealing model for the English. The play's representation of Morocco opens with the king and his attendants discussing their recent imperial victories that have enabled them to retain their sovereignty from the Ottoman Empire. As Harris has observed, Heywood's play represents the Moroccan king's economic methods for refilling his state coffers as strikingly similar to Bess's justification for piracy.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, Mullishag employs an aggressive customs system that expropriates treasure from foreign visitors. From the English perspective, this method of expropriation is morally justifiable, even merciful, if it punishes one's enemies and spares one's allies.

During her sojourn in Morocco, Bess teaches the Moroccan king how to make this crucial distinction. She successfully negotiates free and protected conduct in Morocco, secures clemency for French and Italian merchants who have violated customs, and secures a promise to be "ballast home with gold" from Morocco—again linking mercy to economic gain (5.2.37). Such an alliance is presented as a relationship that retains English virtue, a condition demonstrated by the play's deployment of Bess's vulnerable, yet resolutely chaste, virginal body as a stand-in for England. Insisting upon the protection of her virtue, Bess cautions, "Keep off, for till thou swear'st to my demands, / I will have no commerce with Mullishag, / But leave thee as I came" (5.1.46–48). Bess's use of the term "commerce" encompasses both a personal, affective relationship and an economic and diplomatic relationship between nations. As theynchpin for this relationship, Bess's sexualized body functions as a commodity that refuses to be commodified. Mullishag deems Bess an English "girl worth gold" precisely because she cannot be bought or sold. In addition, the play's model of Anglo-Muslim alliance suggests an alternative to the Spanish pursuit of empire through New World colonization as well as to trade or alliance with the Ottoman Empire. Bess's attempts to forge the beginnings of an English empire through strategic political alliance and the plunder of enemy ships reflects an inter-imperial awareness that understands targeted plunder as a merciful alternative to empires based on colonial expansion or tyranny.<sup>27</sup> In this way, the Spanish

New World and the Ottoman Empire crucially impinge upon the play's representation of Anglo-Moroccan alliance.

Ultimately, and self-servingly, *Poor Maid* rails against the idea of an economic system that operates independent of morality, and uses affective response as a barometer for determining the moral desert of financial loss or gain. In both implicit and explicit ways, it conflates financial economics with a greater cosmic system whose unjustness or immorality is revealed through its secondary production of affect. Having been forced to separate from Bess and flee Plymouth after killing Carrol, Spencer bemoans the unfairness of a cosmic system that is ruled by the logic of fortune and thus blind to desert or morality. His musings on the interrelations between gain and loss describe a system of balance in which any gain must necessitate an equivalent loss someplace else:

To imagine that in the same instant that one forfeits all his estate, another enters upon a rich possession. As one goes to the church to be married, another is hurried to the gallows to be hang'd, the last having no feeling of the first man's joy, nor the first of the last man's misery. At the same time that one lies tortured upon the rack, another lies tumbling with his mistress over head and ears in down and feathers. This when I truly consider, I cannot but wonder why any fortune should make a man ecstasied. (2.2.5–13)

Spencer's rendering of this balanced economy of gain and loss evokes the wheel of fortune, which though it may turn unpredictably, follows a predictable path of up and down. Within the contexts Spencer invokes (the forfeit or gain of an estate, marriage or execution, torture or sexual ecstasy), the gain of one man automatically necessitates the loss of another, which is experienced in the form of suffering. Through his linking of gain and loss to an economy of affect that is also compounded by the system's blockage of empathy—"the last having no feeling of the first man's joy, nor the first of the last man's misery"—Spencer suggests that gain and loss should bear moral weight and responsibility. In suggesting, "I cannot but wonder why any fortune should make a man ecstasied," he calls attention to the immorality of such ecstasy and, by extension, to the unjustness of a system in which gain and loss must create an equal and opposite effect someplace else.

By contrast, Bess's principles of moral virtue, which become attached to an economic strategy of targeted plunder, and which resist exchange, commodification, and subjugation, avoid the arbitrary whims of fortune. Bess is the antithesis to the blind and inconstant figure of fortune: She links gain and loss with desert and refuses to turn or to be converted into a whore. She further imagines plunder to extend mercy to the lives of her adversaries and empathy to those harmed by her gains. Within the inter-imperial framework of the play, her affective labor converts tainted gold into morally purified English gold. In doing so, Bess invites pleasurable affect to enter unambivalently into an inter-imperial economy of gain.

## NOTES

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1. Thomas Heywood, *The Fair Maid of the West*, ed. Robert K. Turner (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967). Subsequent references are in the text.
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3. *By the Queens. A proclamation concerning coyne, plate, and bullion of gold and silver 1600*. [STC 82731]
4. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "worth, n.2," <http://www.oed.com>.
5. For a discussion of gold and the Black Legend, see Edmund Campos, "West of Eden: American Gold, Spanish Greed, and the Discourses of English Imperialism," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, eds. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
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7. Laura Doyle, "Inter-Imperiality: Dialectics in a Postcolonial World History," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16, no. 2 (March 2013).
8. Howard, "An English Lass," 113.
9. Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. 129-34.
10. Theodore Levinward, *Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), see esp. Ch. 4.
11. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "gallant, adj. and n." B. n. 1. a., <http://www.oed.com>.
12. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "purchase, n." n. II. a. and b., <http://www.oed.com>.
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14. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "portcullis, n." 3, <http://www.oed.com>. Many thanks to Will Steffen for drawing my attention to this definition of the term.
15. See DiGangi, "Civic Affect and Female Political Agency in Sir Thomas More," this volume, 170.
16. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "ecstasy, v." 1, <http://www.oed.com>.
17. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).
18. Jonathan Gil Harris, see chapter "Hepatitis/Castration and Treasure: Edward Misselden, Gerard Malynes, *The Fair Maid of the West*, *The Ranegado*," in *Harris's Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
19. Harris, "Hepatitis/Castration," 156.
20. Mark Netzloff, *England's Internal Colonies: Class, Capital, and the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 21.
21. Stephen Deng, *Coinage and State Formation in Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
22. Deng, *Coinage*, 10.
23. Howard, "An English Lass," 102.
24. See Campos, "West of Eden." On the Black Legend, see also María DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
25. Susan Iwaniszew, "England, Morocco, and Global Geopolitical Upheaval," in *Envisioning an English Empire: Jamestown and the Making of the North Atlantic World*, eds. Robert Appelbaum and John Wood Sweet (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).
26. Harris, "Hepatitis/Castration," 154-55.
27. Valerie Forman makes a related argument about John Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (19-21), though she contends that, within the context of the 1620s debate over trade, proponents of overseas investment over colonialism were motivated by "reasons of profitability, not honor." See chapter "Captivity and 'Free' Trade: Fletcher's *The Island Princess* and English Commerce in the East Indies in the Early 1600s," in Forman's *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economies and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 115.