
ELIZABETH CARY

The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry Cary supplied an Argument to the play, but the modern reader may be better served by a succinct summary of the historical situation and the play. Observing the unity of time, Cary brings the pressure of antecedent events and incorporates materials from other parts of the Herod story (drawn chiefly from Josephus's *Antiquities*) to heighten dramatic tension. Before the play begins, Herod the Great, with the aid of Rome, has (in 39 B.C.E.) supplanted Hircanus, the hereditary king and priest of Judea, divorced his first wife, Doris, and married Hircanus's granddaughter, the singularly beautiful Mariam, whom he loves with fierce intensity and jealous passion. To secure his throne he arranged a drowning to remove the new high priest, Mariam's brother Aristobolus (35 B.C.E.), and had old Hircanus executed (30 B.C.E.). Cary's play reverses these two events. Called to Rome to answer accusations leveled by Alexandra, the mother of Mariam and Aristobolus, Herod left orders with his uncle Josephus, who is also the husband of his sister Salome, to kill Mariam in the event of his death so no other man could possess her. Reinstated as king, Herod had Josephus killed for telling Mariam about the decree for her death, taking that as evidence supporting Salome's false charge that the two were lovers. He then married Salome to Constabarus, who, unknown to Herod, had hidden away the sons of Babas, under sentence of death for their opposition to Herod. The play begins with Herod again in Rome, in danger of death as a partisan of the defeated and recently deceased Mark Antony. Before departing, he had left with his officer Sohemus another order for Mariam to be killed in the event of his death; Sohemus also reveals the decree to her.

Act 1, Scene 1 starts as news comes of Herod's death, causing (during three acts) a sense of relief, liberation, and new beginnings under the joint rule of Mariam and her mother, Alexandra (in the minority of Mariam's son). Mariam is at first torn between grief and joy but is relieved that the tyrant who murdered her kin and decreed her death will not return. Pheroras, Herod's brother, who had been under command to marry an infant, now marries his true love, Graphina. The sons of Babas now come out of hiding to serve the state, and Constabarus is no longer in peril for having concealed them. Sohe-

mus will not suffer for his decision to let Mariam live in defiance of Herod's command. Even those who regret Herod's death benefit from it: his sister Salome, who had first plotted to have her second husband, Constabarus, killed by Herod so she might marry a new lover, now determines upon divorce instead—scandalous for a woman in Judea but hardly so wicked as murder.

At Herod's unexpected return, all these hopeful new beginnings are crushed: Babas's sons are executed; Sohemus is accused by Salome of adultery with Mariam and is executed for that (and for revealing Herod's instructions); Mariam refuses Herod's sexual advances and berates him for murdering her kin; Salome engineers a plot by which Mariam's servant offers (supposedly from her) a cup of poison to Herod and then goads Herod to command her death. A messenger recounts the details of Mariam's noble death, and Herod runs mad with grief and remorse, persuaded at last of her innocence and inestimable worth.

In this play Mariam is positioned against several foils. One is the chorus, which in this kind of Senecan tragedy speak from a partial, not an authoritative, vantage point: as a company of Jews, they judge Mariam by their own very conservative notion of a wife's duty, that she owes entire subjection of mind and body to her husband. Another is Salome, who speaks forcefully for a woman's right to divorce and for evenhanded justice for unhappy wives—though she herself is thoroughly wicked, denouncing the innocent Mariam for marital infidelity while she flaunts her illicit affairs and has two husbands killed when she is ready to replace them. Mariam herself recognizes that she has brought her death on herself by refusing to live by the accepted female triad of virtues: she is chaste but manifestly not silent or obedient. Other foils to Mariam are Graphina, Doris, Alexandra, and—by allusion—Cleopatra. Mariam challenges patriarchal control within the institution of marriage, claiming a wife's right to her own speech—public and private—as well as to the integrity of her own emotional life and self-definition.

The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry

Written by that learned, virtuous, and truly noble lady, e.c.

THE NAMES OF THE SPEAKERS

HEROD, <i>King of Judea</i>	GRAPHINA, <i>his love</i>
DORIS, <i>his first wife</i>	BABAS' FIRST SON
MARIAM, <i>his second wife</i>	BABAS' SECOND SON
SALOME, <i>HEROD'S sister</i>	ANANELL, <i>the high priest</i>
ANTIPATER, <i>his son by DORIS</i>	SOHEMUS, <i>a counsellor to HEROD</i>
ALEXANDRA, <i>MARIAM'S mother</i>	NUNTIO
SILLEUS, <i>prince of Arabia</i>	SILLEUS' MAN
CONSTABARUS, <i>husband to</i>	BU[TLER], <i>another messenger</i>
SALOME	SOLDIER
PHERORAS, <i>HEROD'S brother</i>	CHORUS, <i>a company of Jews</i>

*Act 1*SCENE 1¹[MARIAM *alone.*]

MARIAM How oft have I with public voice run on
 To censure Rome's last hero² for deceit:
 Because he wept when Pompey's life was gone,
 Yet when he lived, he thought his name too great.
 5 But now I do recant, and, Roman lord,
 Excuse too rash a judgment in a woman:
 My sex pleads pardon, pardon then afford,
 Mistaking is with us but too too common.
 Now do I find, by self-experience taught,
 10 One object yields both grief and joy:
 You wept indeed, when on his worth you thought,
 But joyed that slaughter did your foe destroy.
 So at his death your eyes true drops did rain,
 Whom dead, you did not wish alive again.
 15 When Herod lived, that now is done to death,

1. The first edition, 1613, contains some obvious misprints here silently corrected.

2. Julius Caesar. At line 5 Mariam addresses the absent Caesar in apostrophe.

Oft have I wished that I from him were free:
 Oft have I wished that he might lose his breath,
 Oft have I wished his carcass dead to see.
 Then rage and scorn had put my love to flight,
 20 That love which once on him was firmly set:
 Hate hid his true affection from my sight,
 And kept my heart from paying him his debt.
 And blame me not, for Herod's jealousy
 Had power even constancy itself to change:
 25 For he, by barring me from liberty,
 To shun^o my ranging, taught me first to range. *prevent*
 But yet too chaste a scholar was my heart,
 To learn to love another than my lord:
 To leave his love, my lesson's former part,
 30 I quickly learned, the other I abhorred.
 But now his death to memory doth call
 The tender love that he to Mariam bare.^o *bore*
 And mine to him; this makes those rivers fall,
 Which by another thought unmoistened are.
 35 For Aristobulus, the lowliest youth³
 That ever did in angel's shape appear,
 The cruel Herod was not moved to ruth;^o *pity*
 Then why grieves Mariam Herod's death to hear?
 Why joy I not the tongue no more shall speak,
 40 That yielded forth my brother's latest^o doom: *final*
 Both youth and beauty might thy^o fury break, *Herod's*
 And both in him did ill befit a tomb.
 And, worthy grandsire,⁴ ill did he requite
 His high ascent, alone by thee procured,
 45 Except^o he murdered thee to free the sprite^o *unless/spirit*
 Which still he thought on earth too long immured.
 How happy was it that Sohemus' mind
 Was moved to pity my distressed estate!
 Might Herod's life a trusty servant find,⁵

3. Some editors emend to "loveliest," given the great emphasis on his beauty.

4. Mariam here addresses the murdered Hircanus.

5. I.e., if Herod alive had been able to find trustworthy servants to kill me, my death had been joined to his.

50 My death to his had been unseparate.
 These thoughts have power, his death to make me bear,
 Nay more, to wish the news may firmly hold:
 Yet cannot this repulse some falling tear,
 That will against my will some grief unfold.

55 And more I owe him for his love to me,
 The deepest love that ever yet was seen:
 Yet had I rather much a milkmaid be,
 Than be the monarch of Judea's queen.
 It was for nought but love he wished his end

60 Might to my death but the vaunt-courier^o prove: *forerunner*
 But I had rather still be foe than friend,
 To him that saves for hate, and kills for love.
 Hard-hearted Mariam, at thy discontent
 What floods of tears have drenched his manly face!

65 How canst thou then so faintly now lament
 They truest lover's death, a death's disgrace:⁶
 Ay, now, mine eyes, you do begin to right
 The wrongs of your admirer and my lord.⁷

70 Long since you should have put your smiles to flight,
 Ill doth a widowed eye with joy accord.
 Why, now methinks the love I bare^o him then, *bore*
 When virgin freedom left me unrestrained,
 Doth to my heart begin to creep again,
 My passion⁸ now is far from being feigned.

75 But, tears, fly back, and hide you in your banks,⁹
 You must not be to Alexandra seen:
 For if my moan be spied, but little thanks
 Shall Mariam have, from that incensèd queen.

SCENE 2

[MARIAM. ALEXANDRA.]

ALEXANDRA What means these tears? My Mariam doth mistake,

6. I.e., her faint laments dishonor his death.

7. Herod.

8. Emotion of grief.

9. Your eyes.

80 The news we heard did tell the tyrant's end:
 What° weep'st thou for thy brother's murd'rer's sake? *why*
 Will ever wight° a tear for Herod spend? *person*
 My curse pursue his breathless trunk and spirit,
 Base Edomite, the damnèd Esau's heir:¹
 85 Must he ere Jacob's child the crown inherit?
 Must he, vile wretch, be set in David's chair?° *throne*
 No, David's soul, within the bosom placed
 Of our forefather Abram,² was ashamed:
 To see his seat with such a toad disgraced,
 90 That seat that hath by Judah's race been famed.
 Thou fatal enemy to royal blood,³
 Did not the murder of my boy suffice,
 To stop thy cruel mouth that gaping stood,
 But must thou dim the mild Hircanus' eyes?
 95 My gracious father, whose too ready hand
 Did lift this Idumean from the dust:
 And he, ungrateful caitiff,° did withstand° *wretch / oppose*
 The man that did in him most friendly trust.
 What kingdom's right could cruel Herod claim,
 100 Was he not Esau's issue, heir of hell?
 Then what succession can he have but shame?
 Did not his ancestor his birth-right sell?
 Oh yes, he doth from Edom's name derive⁴
 His cruel nature which with blood is fed:
 105 That made him me of sire and son deprive,
 He ever thirsts for blood, and blood is red.
 Weep'st thou because his love to thee was bent,
 And read'st thou love in crimson characters?
 Slew he thy friends to work thy heart's content?
 110 No: hate may justly call that action hers.

1. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, who sold his birthright (as firstborn) to his younger brother Jacob for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25. 29–34); Jacob also tricked his father into giving him the blessing intended for Esau. The Israelites were descendants of Jacob; the story was interpreted to signify God's favor to them over Esau's descendants.

2. Abraham. David, one of Israel's first kings (now dead and so said to be in Abraham's bosom), is ashamed to see that throne occupied by Herod.

3. Herod, because he had Alexandra's father, Hircanus, and her son Aristobolus killed.

4. *Edom* was thought to derive from a root meaning "red."

He gave the sacred priesthood for thy sake
 To Aristobulus, yet doomed^o him dead: *commanded*
 Before his back the ephod warm could make,
 And ere the miter settled on his head:⁵
 115 Oh, had he given my boy no less than right,
 The double oil should to his forehead bring
 A double honor, shining doubly bright;
 His birth anointed him both priest and king.
 And say my father and my son he slew
 120 To royalize by right your prince-born breath:⁶
 Was love the cause, can Mariam deem it true,
 That Mariam gave commandment for her death?⁷
 I know by fits he showed some signs of love,
 And yet not love, but raging lunacy:
 125 And this his hate to thee may justly prove,
 That sure he hates Hircanus' family.
 Who knows if he, unconstant wavering lord,
 His love to Doris⁸ had renewed again?
 And that he might his bed to her afford,
 130 Perchance he wished that Mariam might be slain.
 MARIAM Doris! Alas, her time of love was past,
 Those coals were raked in embers long ago
 In Mariam's love and she was now disgraced⁹
 Nor did I glory in her overthrow.
 135 He not a whit his first-born son esteemed,
 Because as well as his he was not mine:¹
 My children only for his own he deemed,
 These boys that did descend from royal line
 These did he style his heirs to David's throne;

5. Priestly vestments: the ephod is a linen garment; the headpiece is termed a "miter," conflating it with a bishop's miter.

6. To make Mariam (or her son) the rightful ruler.

7. I.e., If you think he killed to give you royal power, what about the commands for your death? Did Mariam command her own death?

8. Herod's first wife.

9. The 1613 text reads "Of," not "In." With the emendation the line indicates that the "coals" of Herod's love for Doris had become embers in the fire of his love for Mariam, so that she (Doris) was now out of favor, "disgraced."

1. Herod cared nothing for his firstborn son by Doris (Antipater), since he was not Mariam's son.

140 My Alexander, if he live, shall sit
 In the majestic seat of Solomon;²
 To will it so, did Herod think it fit.

ALEXANDRA Why, who can claim from Alexander's brood
 That gold-adornèd lion-guarded chair?

145 Was Alexander not of David's blood?
 And was not Mariam Alexander's heir?
 What more than right could Herod then bestow,³
 And who will think except for more than right⁴
 He did not raise them, for they were not low,

150 But born to wear the crown in his despite:
 Then send those tears away that are not sent
 To thee by reason, but by passion's power:
 Thine eyes to cheer, thy cheeks to smiles be bent,
 And entertain with joy this happy hour.

155 Felicity, if when she comes, she finds
 A mourning habit, and a cheerless look,
 Will think she is not welcome to thy mind,
 And so perchance her lodging will not brook.^o

accept

160 Oh, keep her whilst thou hast her; if she go,
 She will not easily return again:
 Full many a year have I endured in woe,
 Yet still have sued her presence to obtain:
 And did not I to her as presents send
 A table,^o that best art did beautify,

picture

165 Of two, to whom Heaven did best feature lend,
 To woo her love by winning Anthony?
 For when a prince's favor we do crave,
 We first their minions' loves do seek to win:
 So I, that sought Felicity to have,
 170 Did with her minion Anthony begin.⁵

2. David's son, whose kingship was even more glorious.

3. This Alexander was Mariam's father and Alexandra's husband; as he was of David's blood, and Mariam was his heir, the throne was hers by right, not by Herod's gift.

4. I.e., Herod had his own designs in elevating Mariam and her brother, so they will seem to owe their places to him, not to their own right.

5. In this little allegory, Alexandra, seeking Felicity, began by wooing her minion Anthony, by sending pictures of Mariam and Aristobolus, but he could not decide between them.

With double sleight I sought to captivate
 The warlike lover, but I did not right:
 For if my gift had borne but half the rate,^o *value*
 The Roman had been overtaken quite.
 175 But now he farèd like a hungry guest,
 That to some plenteous festival is gone;
 Now this, now that, he deems to eat were best,
 Such choice doth make him let them all alone.
 The boy's⁶ large forehead first did fairest seem,
 180 Then glanced his eye upon my Mariam's cheek:
 And that without comparison did deem,
 What was in either but he most did like.
 And, thus distracted,^o either's beauty's might *torn, confused*
 Within the other's excellence was drowned:
 185 Too much delight did bare^o him from delight, *strip, deprive*
 For either's love the other's did confound.
 Where if thy portraiture had only gone,⁷
 His life from Herod, Anthony had taken:
 He would have lovèd thee, and thee alone,
 190 And left the brown Egyptian clean forsaken,
 And Cleopatra then to seek had been⁸
 So firm a lover of her wanèd face:
 Then great Anthonius' fall we had not seen,
 By her that fled to have him hold the chase.⁹
 195 Then Mariam in a Roman's chariot set,
 In place of Cleopatra might have shown:
 A mart^o of beauties in her visage met, *display*
 And part in this, that they were all her own.^o *not artificial*
 MARIAM Not to be empress of aspiring Rome,
 200 Would Mariam like to Cleopatra live:
 With purest body will I press my tomb,
 And wish no favors Anthony could give.
 ALEXANDRA Let us retire us, that we may resolve

6. Aristobolus.

7. I.e., if she had sent only Mariam's picture, Anthony would have loved her and left Cleopatra, "the brown Egyptian."

8. Cleopatra would then have lacked (had to seek for) love.

9. Cleopatra, who abandoned Anthony at the battle of Actium.

How now to deal in this reversèd state:
 205 Great are th'affairs that we must now revolve,
 And great affairs must not be taken late.

SCENE 3

[MARIAM. ALEXANDRA. SALOME.]

SALOME More plotting yet? Why, now you have the thing
 For which so oft you spent your suppliant breath:
 And Mariam hopes to have another king.
 210 Her eyes do sparkle joy for Herod's death.

ALEXANDRA If she desired another king to have,
 She might before she came in Herod's bed
 Have had her wish. More kings than one did crave
 For leave to set a crown upon her head.

215 I think with more than reason^o she laments, *unreasonably*
 That she is freed from such a sad annoy:
 Who is't will weep to part from discontent?
 And if she joy, she did not causeless^o joy. *without cause*

SALOME You durst not thus have given your tongue the rein,
 220 If noble Herod still remained in life:
 Your daughter's betters far, I dare maintain,
 Might have rejoiced to be my brother's wife.

MARIAM My betters far! Base woman, 'tis untrue,
 You scarce have ever my superiors seen:
 225 For Mariam's servants were as good as you,
 Before she came to be Judea's queen.

SALOME Now stirs the tongue that is so quickly moved,
 But more than once your choler^o have I borne: *anger*
 Your fumish^o words are sooner said than proved, *irascible*
 230 And Salome's reply is only scorn.

MARIAM Scorn those that are for thy companions held.
 Though I thy brother's face had never seen,
 My birth thy baser birth so far excelled,
 I had to both of you the princess been.
 235 Thou parti-Jew, and parti-Edomite,
 Thou mongrel: issued from rejected race,

Thy ancestors against the Heavens did fight,¹
 And thou like them wilt heavenly birth disgrace.

240 SALOME Still twit you me with nothing but birth,²
 What odds betwixt your ancestors and mine?
 Both born of Adam, both were made of earth,³
 And both did come from holy Abraham's line.

MARIAM I favor thee when nothing else I say,
 With thy black acts I'll not pollute my breath:
 245 Else to thy charge I might full justly lay.
 A shameful life, besides a husband's death.

SALOME 'Tis true indeed, I did the plots reveal,
 That passed betwixt your favorites and you:⁴
 I meant not, I, a traitor to conceal.
 250 Thus Salome your minion Joseph slew.

MARIAM Heaven, dost thou mean this infamy to smother?
 Let slandered Mariam ope thy closèd ear:
 Self-guilt hath ever been suspicion's mother,
 And therefore I this speech with patience bear.
 255 No, had not Salome's unsteadfast heart
 In Josephus' stead her Constabarus placed,
 To free herself she had not used the art
 To slander hapless Mariam for unchaste.

ALEXANDRA Come, Mariam, let us go: it is no boot^o
 260 To let the head contend against the foot.

use

SCENE 4

[SALOME *alone.*]

SALOME Lives Salome to get so base a style^o
 As "foot" to the proud Mariam? Herod's spirit
 In happy time for her endured exile,

name

1. Edom fought continually against Israel and occupied southern Judea; the Hebrew prophets denounced this as defiance of God's will (Ezekiel 25.13, Jeremiah 49.7–22).

2. Salome complains that Mariam scorns her for her Edomite descent.

3. Salome claims descent from the first father, Adam (whose name means red earth), and through Esau from the common patriarch of both Hebrews and Edomites, Abraham.

4. Salome had before caused Josephus's death by malicious gossip that he and Mariam were lovers and were plotting against Herod; her inclusive statement hints that she may do as much with Sohemus.

For did he live, she should not miss her merit:⁵
 265 But he is dead: and though he were my brother,
 His death such store of cinders cannot cast
 My coals of love to quench: for though they smother
 The flames a while, yet will they out at last.
 Oh blest Arabia,⁶ in best climate place,
 270 I by the fruit will censure^o of the tree: *judge*
 'Tis not in vain they happy name thou hast,
 If all Arabians like Silleus be.
 Had not my fate been too too contrary,
 When I on Constabarus first did gaze,
 275 Silleus had been object to mine eye:
 Whose looks and personage must all eyes amaze.
 But now, ill-fated Salome, thy tongue
 To Constabarus by itself is tied:
 And now, except I do the Hebrew wrong,
 280 I cannot be the fair Arabian's bride:
 What childish lets^o are these? Why stand I now *obstacles*
 On honorable points? 'Tis long ago
 Since shame was written on my tainted brow:⁷
 And certain 'tis, that shame is honor's foe.
 285 Had I upon my reputation stood,
 Had I affected^o an unspotted life, *desired*
 Josephus' veins had still been stuffed with blood,
 And I to him had lived a sober wife.
 Then had I never cast an eye of love
 290 On Constabarus' now detested face,
 Then had I kept my thoughts without remove:
 And blushed at motion of the least disgrace:
 But shame is gone, and honor wiped away,
 And impudency on my forehead sits:
 295 She bids me work my will without delay,
 And for my will I will employ my wits.

5. I.e., Herod's spirit is, happily for Mariam, exiled from his body, for if Herod were alive Mariam would get what she deserves.

6. Salome plays on the name "Arabia Felix," which ancient geographers gave to the fertile parts of Arabia; the "fruit" of the "tree" Arabia is Salome's new lover Silleus (next lines).

7. I.e., she has not blushed for shame in a long time.

He loves, I love; what then can be the cause
 Keeps me [from] being the Arabian's wife?
 It is the principles of Moses' laws,
 300 For Constabarus still remains in life.
 If he to me did bear as earnest hate,
 As I to him, for him there were an ease;
 A separating bill⁸ might free his fate
 From such a yoke that did so much displease.
 305 Why should such privilege to man be given?
 Or given to them, why barred from women then?
 Are men than we in greater grace with Heaven?
 Or cannot women hate as well as men?
 I'll be the custom-breaker: and begin
 310 To show my sex the way to freedom's door,
 And with an off'ring will I purge my sin;
 The law was made for none but who are poor.⁹
 If Herod had lived, I might to him accuse
 My present lord. But for the future's sake¹
 315 Then would I tell the king he did refuse
 The sons of Babas in his power to take.
 But now I must divorce him from my bed,
 That my Silleus may possess his room:^o
 Had I not begged his life, he had been dead,²
 320 I curse my tongue, the hind'rer of his doom,
 But then my wand'ring heart to him was fast,
 Nor did I dream of change: Silleus said,
 He would be here, and see, he comes at last.
 Had I not named him, longer had he stayed.

place

8. A bill for divorce, allowed in Deuteronomy 24.1 only to men.

9. The opening chapters of Leviticus prescribe specific offerings for specific sins; Salome's cynical comment is that the wealthy can afford such offerings and so buy release from any sin.

1. I.e., for the sake of my future husband, I would have told (next lines) Herod that Constabarus did not kill Herod's enemies, the sons of Babas, but instead hid them.

2. Constabarus, while governor of Idumaea under Herod, sought to obtain that kingdom for himself; only Salome was able to persuade Herod to spare his life.

SCENE 5

[SALOME. SILLEUS.]

325 SILLEUS Well found, fair Salome, Judea's pride!
 Hath they innated^o wisdom found the way
 To make Silleus deem him deified,
 By gaining thee, a more than precious prey?

innate

SALOME I have devised the best I can devise;
 330 A more imperfect means was never found:
 But what cares Salome? It doth suffice
 If our endeavors with their end be crowned.
 In this our land we have an ancient use,
 Permitted first by our law-giver's³ head:
 335 Who hates his wife, though for no just abuse,
 May with a bill divorce her from his bed.
 But in this custom women are not free,
 Yet I for once will wrest it; blame not thou
 The ill I do, since what I do's for thee,
 340 Though others blame, Silleus should allow.

SILLEUS Thinks Salome, Silleus hath a tongue
 To censure her fair actions? Let my blood
 Bedash my proper^o brow, for such a wrong,
 The being yours, can make even vices good:
 345 Arabia, joy, prepare thy earth with green,
 Thou never happy wert indeed till now:
 Now shall thy ground be trod by beauty's queen,
 Her foot is destined to depress thy brow.
 Thou shalt, fair Salome, command as much
 350 As if the royal ornament were thine:
 The weakness of Arabia's king is such,
 The kingdom is not his so much as mine.⁴
 My mouth is our Obodas' oracle,
 Who thinks not aught but what Silleus will.

own

3. Moses, who received the Ten Commandments from God.

4. The king of Arabia, Obodas, was said to be slothful; Cary's source, Josephus, said that he entrusted the kingdom's affairs to Silleus.

355 And thou, rare creature, Asia's miracle,
Shalt be to me as it: Obodas' still.⁵

SALOME 'Tis not for glory I thy love accept,

Judea yields me honors worthy store:^o

supply

Had not affection in my bosom crept,

360 My native country should my life deplore.⁶

Were not Silleus he with whom I go,

I would not change my Palestine for Rome:

Much less would I a glorious state to show

Go far to purchase an Arabian tomb.

365 SILLEUS Far be it from Silleus so to think,

I know it is thy gratitude requites

The love that is in me, and shall not shrink

Till death do sever me from earth's delights.

SALOME But whist;^o methinks the wolf is in our talk.⁷

hush

370 Begone, Silleus. Who doth here arrive?

'Tis Constabarus that doth hither walk;

I'll find a quarrel, him from me to drive.

SILLEUS Farewell, but were it not for thy command,

In his despite Silleus here would stand.

SCENE 6

[SALOME. CONSTABARUS.]

375 CONSTABARUS Oh Salome, how much you wrong your name,

Your race, your country, and your husband most!

A stranger's private conference⁸ is shame,

I blush for you, that have your blushing lost.

Oft have I found, and found you to my grief,

380 Consorted with this base Arabian here:

Heaven knows that you have been my comfort chief,

5. The meaning is ambiguous. Line 354 ends with a question mark in the 1613 text. As emended here the passage suggests that Salome, Asia's miracle, will be to him as his own will and will also rule Obodas and, thus, Arabia.

6. I.e., if I did not love you I would deplore the loss of my native land all my life.

7. I.e., crafty ears are listening.

8. For a woman to talk privately with a stranger is shameful.

Then do not now my greater plague appear.
 Now by the stately carvèd edifice
 That on Mount Sion makes so fair a show,⁹
 385 And by the altar fit for sacrifice,
 I love thee more than thou thyself dost know.
 Oft with a silent sorrow have I heard
 How ill Judea's mouth doth censure thee:
 And did I not thine honor much regard,
 390 Thou shouldst not be exhorted thus for me.
 Didst thou but know the worth of honest fame,
 How much a virtuous woman is esteemed,
 Thou wouldest like hell eschew deservèd shame,
 And seek to be both chaste and chastely deemed.
 395 Our wisest prince did say, and true he said,
 A virtuous woman crowns her husband's head.¹

SALOME Did I for this uprear thy low estate?

Did I for this requital beg thy life,
 That thou hadst forfeited to hapless fate,
 400 To be to such a thankless wretch the wife?
 This hand of mine hath lifted up thy head,
 Which many a day ago had fallen full low,
 Because the sons of Babas are not dead;
 To me thou dost both life and fortune owe.

405 CONSTABARUS You have my patience often exercised,

Use make my choler keep within the banks:²

Yet boast no more, but be by me advised.

A benefit upbraided^o forfeits thanks:

reproached

I prithee, Salome, dismiss this mood,

410 Thou dost not know how ill it fits thy place:

My words were all intended for thy good,

To raise thine honor and to stop disgrace.

SALOME To stop disgrace? Take thou no care for me,

Nay, do thy worst, thy worst I set not by:^o

care not for

415 No shame of mine is like to light on thee,

9. The Temple of Jerusalem.

1. Proverbs 12.4, attributed to King Solomon.

2. I.e., may habit ("use") make me control my anger ("choler").

Thy love and admonitions I defy.
 Thou shalt no hour longer call me wife,
 Thy jealousy procures my hate so deep:
 That I from thee do mean to free my life,
 420 By a divorcing bill before I sleep.

CONSTABARUS Are Hebrew women now transformed to men?

Why do you not as well our battles fight,
 And wear our armor? Suffer this, and then
 Let all the world be topsy-turvè^o quite.

turned upside down

425 Let fishes graze, beasts swim³ and birds descend,
 Let fire burn downwards whilst the earth aspires:
 Let winter's heat and summer's cold offend,
 Let thistles grow on vines, and grapes on briars,
 Set us to spin or sew, or at the best

430 Make us wood-hewers, water-bearing wights:^o
 For sacred service let us take no rest,
 Use us as Joshua did the Gibonites.⁴

creatures

SALOME Hold on your talk, till it be time to end,
 For me I am resolved it shall be so:

435 Though I be first that to this course do bend,
 I shall not be the last, full well I know.

CONSTABARUS Why then be witness Heav'n, the judge of sins,
 Be witness spirits that eschew the dark:

Be witness angels, witness cherubins,
 440 Whose semblance sits upon the holy Ark:⁵

Be witness earth, be witness Palestine,
 Be witness David's city,^o if my heart
 Did ever merit such an act of thine:

Jerusalem

Or if the fault be mine that makes us part.

445 Since mildest Moses, friend unto the Lord,
 Did work his wonders in the land of Ham,
 And slew the first-born babes without a sword,

3. The 1613 edition reads "swine," but the context dictates this emendation.

4. I.e., make us into women ("spin or sew") or slaves (hewers of wood and drawers of water), such as Joshua made of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9.21).

5. Two gold cherubim were to adorn the mercy seat, placed above the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25.18–20).

In sign whereof we eat the holy lamb:⁶
 Till now that fourteen hundred years are past,
 450 Since first the Law⁷ with us hath been in force.
 You are the first, and will, I hope, be last,
 That ever sought her husband to divorce.

SALOME I mean not to be led by precedent,
 My will shall be to me instead of Law.

455 CONSTABARUS I fear me much you will too late repent,
 That you have ever lived so void of awe:
 This is Silleus' love that makes you thus
 Reverse all order: you must next be his.
 But if my thoughts aright the cause discuss,
 460 In winning you, he gains no lasting bliss;
 I was Silleus, and not long ago
 Josephus then was Constabarus now:
 When you became my friend^o you proved his foe, *lover*
 As now for him you break to me your vow.⁸

465 SALOME If once I loved you, greater is your debt:
 For certain 'tis that you deserved it not.
 And undeservèd love we soon forget,
 And therefore that to me can be no blot.
 But now fare ill,⁹ my once belovèd lord,
 470 Yet never more belov'd than now abhorred. [*Exit SALOME.*]

CONSTABARUS Yet Constabarus biddeth thee farewell.
 Farewell, light creature. Heaven forgive thy sin:
 My prophesying spirit doth foretell
 Thy wavering thoughts do yet but new begin.
 475 Yet I have better scaped than Joseph did,
 But if our Herod's death had been delayed,
 The valiant youths that I so long have hid,
 Had been by her, and I for them, betrayed.¹

6. Passover celebrates this last of the ten plagues by which Moses delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (the "land of Ham," line 446).

7. The Law of Moses.

8. I.e., not long ago I was in Silleus's place as your lover and Josephus in my place as your husband; now for Silleus you break your marriage vow to me.

9. As opposed to "farewell."

1. Babas's sons.

Therefore in happy hour did Caesar give
 480 The fatal blow to wanton Anthony:
 For had he lived, our Herod then should live,
 But great Anthonius' death made Herod die.
 Had he enjoyed his breath, not I alone
 Had been in danger of a deadly fall:
 485 But Mariam had the way of peril gone,
 Though by the tyrant most belov'd of all—
 The sweet-faced Mariam, as free from guilt
 As Heaven from spots, yet had her lord come back,
 Her purest blood had been unjustly spilt,
 490 And Salome it was would work her wrack.^o *destruction*
 Though all Judea yield her innocent,
 She often hath been near to punishment. [Exit.]

CHORUS

Those minds that wholly dote upon delight,
 Except^o they only joy in inward good, *unless*
 495 Still hope at last to hop upon the right,²
 And so from sand they leap in loathsome mud.
 Fond^o wretches, seeking what they cannot find, *foolish*
 For no content attends a wavering mind.

 If wealth they do desire, and wealth attain,
 500 Then wondrous fain^o would they to honor leap: *willingly*
 If mean degree they do in honor gain,³
 They would but wish a little higher step.
 Thus step to step, and wealth to wealth they add,
 Yet cannot all their plenty make them glad.

 505 Yet oft we see that some in humble state,
 Are cheerful, pleasant, happy, and content:

2. To land upon the right foot was a portent of a good result.

3. The line begins with "Of" in the 1613 text. The emendation is indicated both by parallelism with line 499 and by the sense, i.e., that if persons attain but a moderate degree of honor they will wish for a higher degree, "step" (next line).

When those indeed that are of higher state,
 With vain additions do their thoughts torment.
 Th'one would to his mind his fortune bind,
 510 Th'other to his fortune frames his mind.

To wish variety is sign of grief,
 For if you like your state as now it is,
 Why should an alteration bring relief?
 Nay, change would then be feared as loss of bliss.
 515 That man is only happy in his fate
 That is delighted in a settled state.

Still Mariam wished she from her lord were free,
 For expectation of variety:⁴
 Yet now she sees her wishes prosperous be,
 520 She grieves, because her lord so soon did die.
 Who can those vast imaginations feed,
 Where in a property^o contempt doth breed? *what is possessed*

Were Herod now perchance to live again,
 She would again as much be grieved at that:
 525 All that she may,⁵ she ever doth disdain,
 Her wishes guide her to she knows not what.
 And sad must be their looks, their honor sour,
 That care for nothing being^o in their power. *that is*

Act 2

SCENE 1

[PHERORAS *and* GRAPHINA]¹

PHERORAS 'Tis true, Graphina, now the time draws nigh
 530 Wherein the holy priest with hallowed right,^o *rite*

4. The chorus assumes from its own limited perspective that Mariam's disaffection from Herod must stem from a (stereotypically female) desire for variety. They impute to her Salome's motives.

5. Whatever she in fact possesses she disdains.

1. Pheroras was Herod's younger brother; Cary draws out the subplot of Pheroras and Graphina from a brief comment in Josephus that Pheroras refused to marry Herod's daughter because he was in love with a slave girl. Cary makes Graphina a servant ("handmaiden," line 56; "vassel," line 62) but not necessarily a slave.

The happy long-desired knot shall tie,
 Pheroras and Graphina to unite:
 5 How oft have I with lifted hands implored
 This blessed hour, till now implored in vain,
 Which hath my wishèd liberty restored,
 And made my subject self my own again.
 Thy love, fair maid, upon mine eye doth sit,
 10 Whose nature hot doth dry the moisture all,
 Which were in nature, and in reason fit
 For my monarchal^o brother's death to fall: *royal*
 Had Herod lived, he would have plucked my hand
 From fair Graphina's palm perforce: and tied
 15 The same in hateful and despisèd band,
 For I had had a baby to my bride:²
 Scarce can her infant tongue with easy voice
 Her name distinguish^o to another's ear: *make clear*
 Yet had he lived, his power, and not my choice,
 20 Had made me solemnly the contract swear.
 Have I not cause in such a change to joy?
 What though she be my niece, a princess born?
 Near blood's without respect: high birth a toy,
 Since love can teach us blood and kindred's scorn.³
 25 What bootèd it^o that he did raise my head, *use was it*
 To be his realm's copartner, kingdom's mate?
 Withal, he kept Graphina from my bed,
 More wished by me than thrice Judea's state.
 Oh, could not he be skilful judge in love,
 30 That doted so upon his Mariam's face?
 He, for his passion, Doris did remove;
 I needed not a lawful wife displace.
 It could not be but he had power to judge,
 But he that never grudged a kingdom's share,
 35 This well-known happiness to me did grudge:
 And meant to be therein without compare.

2. Cary represents Pheroras's intended bride, his niece, as still an infant and plays on the Latin *infans*, speechless.

3. I.e., love can teach scorn for high rank ("blood") and the wishes of relatives.

Else had I been his equal in love's host,^o *army*
 For though the diadem on Mariam's head
 Corrupt the vulgar judgments, I will boast
 40 Graphina's brow's as white, her cheeks as red.
 Why speaks thou not, fair creature? Move thy tongue,
 For silence is a sign of discontent:
 It were to both our loves too great a wrong
 If now this hour do find thee sadly bent.^o *inclined*
 45 GRAPHINA Mistake me not, my lord, too oft have I
 Desired this time to come with wingèd feet,
 To be enrapt with grief when 'tis too nigh.
 You know my wishes ever yours did meet:
 If I be silent, 'tis no more but fear
 50 That I should say too little when I speak:
 But since you will my imperfections bear,
 In spite of doubt I will my silence break:
 Yet might amazement tie my moving tongue,
 But^o that I know before Pheroras' mind. *except*
 55 I have admired^o your affection long: *wondered*
 And cannot yet therein a reason find.
 Your hand hath lifted me from lowest state,
 To highest eminency wondrous grace,⁴
 And me your handmaid have you made your mate,
 60 Though all but you alone do count me base.
 You have preserved me pure at my request,
 Though you so weak a vassal⁵ might constrain^o *force*
 To yield to your high will; then last not best,⁶
 In my respect a princess you disdain;
 65 Then need not all these favors study crave,
 To be requited⁷ by a simple maid?
 And study still, you know, must silence have.
 Then be my cause for silence justly weighed,
 But study cannot boot^o not I requite, *help*
 70 Except your lowly handmaid's steadfast love

4. I.e., such elevation would have been a "wondrous grace" even for one of high station.

5. I.e., as your "weak vassel" you might have forced me to your bed.

6. I.e., that favor is even greater than your disdain for me.

7. I.e., must I not study how to requite (repay) all these favor?

And fast^o obedience may your mind delight,

firm

I will not promise more than I can prove.

IPHERORAS That study needs not let^o Graphina smile,

hinder

And I desire no greater recompense:

75 I cannot vaunt me in a glorious style,

Nor show my love in far-fetch'd eloquence:

But this believe me, never Herod's heart

Hath held his prince-born beauty-famèd wife

In nearer place than thou, fair virgin, art,

80 To him that holds the glory of his life.⁸

Should Herod's body leave the sepulchre,

And entertain the severed ghost^o again,

spirit

He should not be my nuptial hinderer,

Except he hindered it with dying pain.^o

my death

85 Come, fair Graphina, let us go in state,

This wish-endearèd time to celebrate. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2

[CONSTABARUS *and* BABAS' sons.]

BABAS' FIRST SON Now, valiant friend, you have our lives redeemed,

Which lives, as saved by you, to you are due:

Command and you shall see yourself esteemed

90 Our lives and liberties belong to you.

This twice six years, with hazard of your life,

You have concealed us from the tyrant's sword:

Though cruel Herod's sister were your wife,

You durst in scorn of fear this grace afford.

95 In recompense we know not what to say,

A poor reward were thanks for such a merit,⁹

Our truest friendship at your feet we lay,

The best requital to a noble spirit.

CONSTABARUS Oh, how you wrong our friendship, valiant youth!

100 With friends there is not such a word as "debt":

8. I.e., Herod's heart does not hold Mariam closer than you are held by him (Pheroras) who in you holds "the glory of his life."

9. I.e., mere thanks would be a poor reward for such merit.

Where amity is tied with bond of truth,^o *trust*
 All benefits are there in common set.
 Then is the golden age with them renewed,
 All names of properties^o are banished quite: *private ownership*
 105 Division, and distinction, are eschewed:
 Each hath to what belongs to others right.¹
 And 'tis not sure so full a benefit,
 Freely to give, as freely to require:^o *ask*
 A bounteous act hath to glory following it,
 110 They cause the glory that the act desire.
 All friendship should the pattern imitate,
 Of Jesse's son and valiant Jonathan:²
 For neither sovereign's nor father's hate
 A friendship fixed on virtue sever can.
 115 Too much of this, 'tis written in the heart,
 And needs no amplifying with the tongue:
 Now may you from your living tomb depart,
 Where Herod's life hath kept you overlong.
 Too great an injury to a noble mind,
 120 To be quick^o buried; you had purchased ^o fame, *alive/won*
 Some years ago, but that you were confined,
 While thousand meaner did advance their name.
 Your best of life, the prime of all your years,
 Your time of action is from you bereft.
 125 Twelve winters have you overpassed in fears:
 Yet if you use it well, enough is left.
 And who can doubt but you will use it well?
 The sons of Babas have it by descent:^o *heredity*
 In all their thoughts each action to excel,
 130 Boldly to act, and wisely to invent.
 BABAS' SECOND SON Had it not like the hateful cuckoo been,
 Whose riper age his infant nurse doth kill:³
 So long we had not kept ourselves unseen,

1. A variation on the ancient saying that friends hold all things in common.

2. The biblical David and Jonathan were constantly cited as an example of friendship, for which Jonathan defied the authority of Saul, both his father and his king (1 Samuel 18.4, 20.1–42).

3. The cuckoo hides its eggs in other birds' nests, and, according to Pliny, the young cuckoos kill the birds that fostered them.

But Constabarus safely^o crossed our will: *for safety's sake*
 135 For had the tyrant fixed his cruel eye
 On our concealèd faces, wrath had swayed
 His justice so, that he had forced us die.
 And dearer price than life we should have paid,
 For you, our truest friend, had fallen with us:
 140 And we, much like a house on pillars set,
 Had clean depressed our prop, and therefore thus
 Our ready will with our concealment met.
 But now that you, fair lord, are dangerless,
 The sons of Babas shall their rigor show:
 145 And prove it was not baseness did oppress
 Our hearts so long, but honor kept them low.
 BABAS'S FIRST SON Yet do I fear this tale of Herod's death
 At last will prove a very tale indeed:
 It gives me strongly in my mind,⁴ his breath
 150 Will be preserved to make a number bleed:
 I wish not therefore to be set at large,
 Yet peril to myself I do not fear:⁵
 Let us for some days longer be your charge,^o *in your care*
 Till we of Herod's state the truth do hear.
 155 CONSTABARUS What, art thou turned a coward, noble youth,
 That thou beginn'st to doubt undoubted truth?
 BABAS' FIRST SON Were it my brother's tongue that cast this doubt,
 I from his heart would have the question out
 With this keen falchion,^o but 'tis you, my lord, *broadsword*
 160 Against whose head I must not lift a sword:
 I am so tied in gratitude.
 CONSTABARUS Believe
 You have no cause to take it ill;
 If any word of mine your heart did grieve,
 The word dissented from the speaker's will.
 165 I know it was not fear the doubt begun,
 But rather valor and your care of me;
 A coward could not be your father's son.

4. I.e., I have a strong presentiment.

5. The 1613 text reads "leare," an evident mistake.

Yet know I doubts unnecessary be:
 For who can think that in Anthonius' fall,
 170 Herod his bosom friend should scrape unbruised?
 Then, Caesar, we might thee an idiot call,
 If thou by him should'st be so far abused.
 BABAS' SECOND SON Lord Constabarus, let me tell you this,
 Upon submission Caesar will forgive;
 175 And therefore though the tyrant did amiss,
 It may fall out that he will let him live.
 Not many years agoe it is since I,
 Directed thither by my father's care,
 In famous Rome for twice twelve months did lie,⁶
 180 My life from Hebrews' cruelty to spare.
 There though I were but yet of boyish age,
 I bent mine eye to mark, mine ears to hear,
 Where I did see Octavius, then a page,
 When first he did to Julius' sight appear:
 185 Methought I saw such mildness in his face,
 And such a sweetness in his looks did grow,⁷
 Withal, commixed with so majestic grace,
 His phys'nomy⁸ his fortune did foreshow:
 For this I am indebted to mine eye,
 190 But then mine ear received more evidence,
 By that I knew his love to clemency,
 How he with hottest choler^o could dispense.
 CONSTABARUS But we have more than barely heard the news,
 It hath been twice confirmed. And though some tongue
 195 Might be so false with false report t'abuse,
 A false report hath never lasted long.
 But be it so that Herod have his life,
 Concealment would not then a whit avail:
 For certain 'tis, that she that was my wife,
 200 Would not to set her accusation fail.
 And therefore now as good the venture give,

anger

6. The 1613 text reads "live," which does not rhyme.

7. Various classical writers, especially Suetonius, testified to the grace and youthful promise of the young Octavius (Augustus Caesar, 63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).

8. The 1613 text reads "phismony," a misprint for "phys'mony," a contraction of "physiognomy."

And free ourselves from blot of cowardice
 As show a pitiful desire to live,
 For, who can pity but they must despise?

205 BABAS' FIRST SON I yield, but to necessity I yield;
 I dare upon this doubt engage mine arm:⁹
 That Herod shall again this kingdom wield,
 And prove his death to be a false alarm.

BABAS' FIRST SON I doubt^o it too: God grant it be an error,
 210 'Tis best without a cause to be in terror:
 And rather had I, though my soul be mine,
 My soul should lie, than prove a true divine.¹

fear

CONSTABARUS Come, come, let fear go seek a dastard's nest,
 Undaunted courage lies in a noble breast. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 3

[DORIS *and* ANTIPATER.]

215 DORIS You² royal buildings, bow your lofty side,
 And scope to her that is by right your queen:
 Let your humility upbraid the pride
 Of those in whom no due respect is seen:
 Nine times have we with trumpets' haughty sound,
 220 And banishing sour leaven from our taste,
 Observed the feast that takes the fruit from ground.³
 Since I, fair city, did behold thee last,
 So long⁴ it is since Mariam's purer cheek
 Did rob from mine the glory, and so long
 225 Since I returned my native town to seek:
 And with me nothing but the sense of wrong,
 And thee, my boy, whose birth, though great it were,
 Yet have thy after fortunes proved but poor:

9. Upon this fear ("doubt") of Herod's return, I dare prepare to defend myself in arms.

1. I.e., I would rather be proved a liar than a true prophet in this case.

2. The 1613 text reads "Your," but this is most likely an apostrophe to the buildings.

3. At the end of the feast of unleavened bread (associated with Passover), the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God (Leviticus 23.5–14).

4. I.e., nine years.

When thou wert born, how little did I fear
 230 Thou should'st be thrust from forth thy father's door!
 Art thou not Herod's right begotten son?
 Was not the hapless Doris Herod's wife?
 Yes: ere he had the Hebrew kingdom won,
 I was companion to his private life.
 235 Was I not fair enough to be a queen?
 Why, ere thou wert to me, false monarch, tied,
 My lack of beauty might as well be seen,
 As after I had lived five years thy bride.
 Yet then thine oath came pouring like the rain,
 240 Which all affirmed my face without compare:
 And that if thou might'st Doris' love obtain,
 For all the world besides thou didst not care.
 Then was I young, and rich, and nobly born,
 And therefore worthy to be Herod's mate:
 245 Yet thou ungrateful cast me off with scorn,
 When Heaven's purpose raised your meaner fate.
 Oft have I begged for vengeance for this fact,^o *deed*
 And with dejected knees, aspiring hands
 Have prayed the highest power to enact
 250 The fall of her that on my trophy⁵ stands.
 Revenge I have according to my will,
 Yet where I wished this vengeance did not light:
 I wished it should high-hearted Mariam kill,
 But it against my whilom^o lord did fight. *former*
 255 With thee, sweet boy, I came, and came to try
 If thou before his bastards might be placed
 In Herod's royal seat and dignity.
 But Mariam's infants here are only graced,
 And now for us there doth no hope remain:
 260 Yet we will not return till Herod's end
 Be more confirmed. Perchance he is not slain;
 So^o glorious fortunes may my boy attend. *in that case*
 For if he live, he'll think it doth suffice,
 That he to Doris shows such cruelty:

5. The spoils taken from the vanquished and displayed in a triumphal procession.

265 For as he did my wretched life despise,
 So do I know I shall despisèd die.
 Let him but prove as natural to thee,
 As cruel to thy miserable mother:
 His cruelty shall not upbraided be
 270 But in thy fortunes. I his faults will smother.⁶
 ANTIPATER Each mouth within the city loudly cries
 That Herod's death is certain: therefore we
 Had best some subtle hidden plot devise,
 That Mariam's children might subverted be,
 275 By poison's drink, or else by murderous knife,
 So we may be advanced, it skills^o not how:
 They are but bastards, you were Herod's wife,
 And foul adultery blotteth Mariam's brow.
 DORIS They are too strong to be by us removed,
 280 Or else revenge's foulest spotted face
 By our detested wrongs might be approved,⁷
 But weakness must to greater power give place.
 But let us now retire to grieve alone,
 For solitariness best fitteth moan. [*Exeunt.*]

matters

SCENE 4

[SILLEUS *and* CONSTABARUS.]
 285 SILLEUS Well met, Judean lord, the only wight^o
 Silleus wished to see. I am to call
 Thy tongue to strict account.
 CONSTABARUS For what despite
 I ready am to hear, and answer all.
 But if directly^o at the cause I guess
 290 That breeds this challenge, you must pardon me:⁸
 And now some other ground of fight profess,
 For I have vowed, vows must unbroken be.

*creature**rightly*

6. I.e., only your restored good fortune will, by contrast, upbraid his cruelty to me and earlier to you; I will not do so.

7. I.e., if they were not so strong, our detestable wrongs would justify even the ugliest revenge.

8. I.e., excuse me from taking up your challenge.

SILLEUS What may be your exception?⁹ Let me know.

CONSTABARUS Why, aught concerning Salome; my sword

295 Shall not be wielded for a cause so low,
A blow for her my arm will scorn t' afford.

SILLEUS It is for slandering her unspotted name,

And I will make thee in thy vow's despite,
Suck up the breath that did my mistress blame,

300 And swallow it again to do her right.

CONSTABARUS I prithee give some other quarrel ground

To find beginning; rail against my name,
Or strike me first, or let some scarlet wound
Inflame my courage, give me words of shame;

305 Do thou our Moses' sacred laws disgrace,
Deprave our nation, do me some despite:
I'm apt enough to fight in any case,
But yet for Salome I will not fight.

SILLEUS Not I for aught but Salome: my sword,

310 That owes his service to her sacred name,
Will not an edge for other cause afford,
In other fight I am not sure of fame.

CONSTABARUS For^o her, I pity thee enough already,

because of

For her, I therefore will not mangle thee:

315 A woman with a heart so most unsteady
Will of herself sufficient torture be.

I cannot envy for so light a gain;
Her mind with such unconstancy doth run:

320 As with a word thou didst her love obtain,
So with a word she will from thee be won.

So light as her possessions for most day
Is her affections lost, to me 'tis known:¹

As good go hold the wind as make her stay,²

She never loves but till she call her own.³

325 She merely is a painted sepulchre,

9. The 1613 text reads "expectation," but this emendation is indicated by both sense and meter.

1. The syntax is obscure: the meaning seems to be that her affections are so light that the possession of her lasts no more than a day.

2. A proverbial expression for impossibility.

3. I.e., she loves only until she possesses her lover.

That is both fair, and vilely foul at once:
 Though on her outside graces garnish her,
 Her mind is filled with worse than rotten bones.⁴
 And ever ready lifted is her hand,
 330 To aim destruction at a husband's throat:
 For proofs, Josephus and myself do stand:
 Though once on both of us she seemed to dote.
 Her mouth, though serpent-like it never hisses,
 Yet like a serpent, poisons where it kisses.

335 SILLEUS Well, Hebrew, well, thou bark'st, but wilt not bite.
 CONSTABARUS I tell thee still for her I will not fight.
 SILLEUS Why then, I call thee coward.
 CONSTABARUS From my heart
 I give thee thanks. A coward's hateful name
 Cannot to valiant minds a blot impart,
 340 And therefore I with joy receive the same.
 Thou know'st I am no coward: thou wert by^o *there*
 At the Arabian battle th'other day,
 And saw'st my sword with daring valiancy,
 Amongst the faint Arabians cut my way.

345 The blood of foes no more could let it shine,
 And 'twas enamellèd with some of thine.
 But now have at thee; not for Salome
 I fight, but to discharge a coward's style:^o *name*
 Here 'gins the fight that shall not parted be,
 350 Before a soul or two endure exile.⁵ [*They fight.*]

SILLEUS Thy sword hath made some windows for my blood,
 To show a horrid crimson phys'nomy:^o *physiognomy*
 To breathe^o for both of us methinks 'twere good, *pause*
 The day will give us time enough to die.

355 CONSTABARUS With all my heart take breath, thou shalt have time,
 And if thou list, a twelvemonth; let us end:
 Into thy cheeks there doth a paleness climb,
 Thou canst not from my sword thyself defend.

4. Echoes Matthew 23.27: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

5. I.e., until one or both of our souls depart our bodies.

What needest thou for Salome to fight?

360 Thou hast her, and may'st keep her, none strives for her:
I willingly to thee resign my right,
For in my very soul I do abhor her.

Thou seest that I am fresh, unwounded yet,
Then not for fear I do this offer make:

365 Thou art with loss of blood to fight unfit,
For here is one, and there another take.⁶

SILLEUS I will not leave, as long as breath remains
Within my wounded body: spare your words,
My heart in blood's stead courage entertains,
370 Salome's love no place for fear affords.

CONSTABARUS Oh, could thy soul but prophesy like mine,
I would not wonder thou should'st long to die:
For Salome, if I aright divine,
Will be than death a greater misery.

SILLEUS Then list,^o I'll breathe^o no longer.

listen/rest

375 CONSTABARUS Do thy will;
I hateless fight, and charitably kill. Ay, ay, [*They fight.*]
Pity thyself, Silleus, let not death
Intrude before his time into thy heart:
Alas, it is too late to fear, his breath
380 Is from his body now about to part.
How far'st thou, brave Arabian?

SILLEUS Very well,
My leg is hurt, I can no longer fight:
It only grieves me, that so soon I fell,
Before fair Salom's wrongs I came^o to right.

was able

385 CONSTABARUS Thy wounds are less than mortal. Never fear,
Thou shalt a safe and quick recovery find:
Come, I will thee unto my lodging bear,
I hate thy body, but I love thy mind.

SILLEUS Thanks, noble Jew, I see a courteous foe,
390 Stern enmity to friendship can no art:⁷
Had not my heart and tongue engaged me so,

6. I.e., probably, here is one wound ("take" of my sword) and there another.

7. I.e., stern enmity knows ("can" in the Old English sense) no way to turn into friendship.

I would from thee no foe, but friend depart.

My heart to Salome is tied too fast⁸

To leave her love for friendship, yet my skill

395 Shall be employed to make your favor last,

And I will honor Constabarus still.

CONSTABARUS I ope my bosom to thee, and will take

Thee in as friend, and grieve for thy complaint:

But if we do not expedition^o make,

400 Thy loss of blood I fear will make thee faint. [*Exeunt.*]

haste

CHORUS

To hear a tale with ears prejudicate,^o

prejudiced

It spoils the judgment, and corrupts the sense:

That human error, given to every state,

Is greater enemy to innocence.⁹

405 It makes us foolish, heady, rash, unjust,

It makes us never try^o before we trust.

examine

It will confound the meaning, change the words,

For it our sense of hearing much deceives:

Besides, no time to judgment it affords,

410 To weigh the circumstance our ear receives.

The ground of accidents^o it never tries,

appearances

But makes us take for truth ten thousand lies.

Our ears and hearts are apt to hold for good

That^o we ourselves do most desire to be:

that which

415 And then we drown objections in the flood

Of partiality, 'tis that¹ we see

That makes false rumors long with credit passed,^o

believed

Though they like rumors must conclude at last.

8. The 1613 text reads "so fast"; the emendation seems indicated by context.

9. I.e., every rank and condition of humankind is subject to and harmed by prejudice, but it is a greater danger to the naive and inexperienced.

1. Our wishful thinking ("partiality" to ourselves) is what makes us credit false rumors for so long.

The greatest part of us, prejudicate,
 420 With wishing Herod's death do hold it true:
 The being once deluded doth not bate^o *abate*
 The credit to a better likelihood due.
 Those few that wish it not, the multitude
 Do carry headlong, so they doubts conclude.²

425 They not object the weak uncertain ground,
 Whereon they built this tale of Herod's end:³
 Whereof the author scarcely can be found,
 And all because their wishes that way bend.
 They think not of the peril that ensu'th,
 430 If this should prove the contrary to truth.

On this same doubt, on this so light a breath,
 They pawn their lives and fortunes. For they all
 Behave them as the news of Herod's death
 They did of most undoubted credit call:
 435 But if their actions now do rightly hit,^o *hit the mark*
 Let them commend their fortune, not their wit.

Act 3

SCENE 1

[PHERORAS. SALOME.]

PHERORAS Urge me no more Graphina to forsake,
 Not twelve hours since I married her for love:
 And do you think a sister's power can make
 A resolute decree so soon remove?

5 SALOME Poor minds they are that honor not affects.^o *does not move*

PHERORAS Who hunts for honor happiness neglects.

SALOME You might have been both of felicity
 And honor too in equal measure seized.^o *possessed*

PHERORAS It is not you can tell so well as I,

2. The many overwhelm the few who do not want Herod dead, so they give over their doubts.

3. The few doubters ("They") do not object to the weak and uncertain grounds on which the multitude ("they") constructed their tale of Herod's death.

10 What 'tis can make me happy or displeas'd.

SALOME To match for neither beauty nor respects.^o

fortune

One mean of birth, but yet of meaner mind,

A woman full of natural defects —

I wonder what your eye in her could find.

15 PHERORAS Mine eye found loveliness, mine ear found wit,

To please the one, and to enchant the other:

Grace on her eye, mirth on her tongue doth sit,

In looks a child, in wisdom's house a mother.

SALOME But say you thought her fair, as none thinks else,

20 Knows not Pheroras, beauty is a blast:^o

brief gust

Much like this flower which today excels,

But longer than a day it will not last.

PHERORAS Her wit exceeds her beauty.

SALOME Wit may show

The way to ill as well as good, you know.

25 PHERORAS But wisdom is the porter of her head,

And bars all wicked words from issuing thence.

SALOME But of a porter, better were you sped,

If she against their entrance made defense.¹

PHERORAS But wherefore comes the sacred Ananell,

30 That hitherward his hasty steps doth bend?

Great sacrificer, y'are arrivèd well,

Ill news from holy mouth I not attend.^o

expect

SCENE 2

[PHERORAS. SALOME. ANANELL.]

ANANELL My lips, my son, with peaceful tidings blessed,

Shall utter honey to your list'ning ear:

35 A word of death comes not from priestly breast,

I speak of life: in life there is no fear.

And for the news I did the Heavens salute,

And filled the Temple with my thankful voice:

1. I.e., you would be better served by the porter ("wisdom") if it barred wicked words not only from issuing out from but also from entering into her head.

- For though that mourning may not me pollute,²
 40 At pleasing accidents I may rejoice.
 PHERORAS Is Herod then revived from certain death?
 SALOME What? Can your news restore my brother's breath?
 ANANELL Both so, and so, the King is safe and sound,
 And did such grace in royal Caesar meet:
 45 That he, with larger style^o than ever crowned, *higher honors*
 Within this hour Jerusalem will greet.
 I did but come to tell you, and must back
 To make preparatives for sacrifice:
 I knew his death your hearts like mine did rack,
 50 Though to conceal it proved you wise. [Exit.]
 SALOME How can my joy sufficiently appear?
 PHERORAS A heavier tale did never pierce mine ear.
 SALOME Now Salome of happiness may boast.
 PHERORAS But now Pheroras is in danger most.
 55 SALOME I shall enjoy the comfort of my life.
 PHERORAS And I shall lose it, losing of my wife.
 SALOME Joy, heart, for Constabarus shall be slain.
 PHERORAS Grieve, soul, Graphina shall from me be ta'en.
 SALOME Smile, cheeks, the fair Silleus shall be mine.
 60 PHERORAS Weep, eyes, for I must with a child combine^o *marry*
 SALOME Well brother, cease your moans. On one condition
 I'll undertake to win the King's consent:
 Graphina still shall be in your tuition,^o *protection*
 And her with you be ne'er the less content.
 65 PHERORAS What's the condition? Let me quickly know,
 That I as quickly your command may act:
 Were it to see what herbs in Ophir grow,
 Or that the lofty Tyrus might be sacked.³
 SALOME 'Tis not so hard a task: It is no more
 70 But tell the King that Constabarus hid
 The sons of Babas, done to death^o before: *supposed executed*
 And 'tis no more than Constabarus did.

2. The Hebrew priests were forbidden to defile themselves by performing ceremonies for the dead, save for their near relations (Leviticus 21.1–2).

3. Ophir and Tyre were cities of great riches and power; Pheroras suggests that, however distant and inaccessible, he would explore or raid them to get whatever Salome might want.

And tell him more that we for Herod's sake,
 Not able to endure our brother's foe⁴
 75 Did with a bill our separation make,
 Though loath from Constabarus else to go.
 PHERORAS Believe this tale for told, I'll go from hence
 In Herod's ear the Hebrew to deface:
 And I that never studied eloquence,
 80 Do mean with eloquence this tale to grace. [Exit.]
 SALOME This will be Constabarus' quick dispatch,
 Which from my mouth would lesser credit find:
 Yet shall he not decease without a match,
 For Mariam shall not linger long behind.
 85 First, jealousy — if that avail not, fear —
 Shall be my minister to work her end:
 A common error moves not Herod's ear,⁵
 Which doth so firmly to his Mariam bend.
 She shall be chargèd with so horrid crime,
 90 As Herod's fear shall turn his love to hate:
 I'll make some swear that she desires to climb,
 And seeks to poison him for his estate.^o *throne*
 I scorn that she should live my birth t'upbraid.
 To call me base and hungry Edomite:
 95 With patient show her choler I betrayed,⁶
 And watched the time to be revenged by sleight.^o *trickery*
 Now tongue of mine with scandal load her name,
 Turn hers to fountains, Herod's eyes to flame:
 Yet first I will begin Pheroras' suit,
 100 That he my earnest business may effect:
 And I of Mariam will keep me mute,
 Till first some other doth her name detect.^o *bring into question*
 Who's there, Silleus' man? How fares your lord,
 That your aspects^o do bear the badge of sorrow? *countenance*
 105 SILLEUS' MAN He hath the marks of Constabarus' sword,
 And for a while desires your sight to borrow.

4. The 1613 text reads "he" in line 73 and "our" in line 74, an evident error; the emendation seems the only way to make sense of these lines.

5. I.e., Herod would not pay any attention to charges of some common fault.

6. I.e., by holding on to my patience, I made her display her anger ("choler").

- SALOME My heavy curse the hateful sword pursue,
 My heavier curse on the more hateful arm
 That wounded my Silleus. But renew
 110 Your tale again. Hath he no mortal harm?
 SILLEUS' MAN. No sign of danger doth in him appear,
 Nor are his wounds in place of peril seen:
 He bids you be assured you need not fear,
 He hopes to make you yet Arabia's queen.
 115 SALOME Commend my heart to be Silleus' charge,
 Tell him my brother's sudden coming now
 Will give my foot no room to walk at large,
 But I will see him yet ere night, I vow. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 3

[MARIAM. SOHEMUS.]

- MARIAM Sohemus, tell me what the news may be
 120 That makes your eyes so full, your cheeks so blue?
 SOHEMUS I know not now how to call them. Ill for me
 'Tis sure they are: not so, I hope, for you.
 Herod—
 MARIAM Oh, what of Herod?
 SOHEMUS Herod lives.
 MARIAM How! Lives? What, in some cave or forest hid?
 125 SOHEMUS Nay, back returned with honor. Caesar gives
 Him greater grace than e'er Anthonius did.
 MARIAM Foretell the ruin of my family,
 Tell me that I shall see our city burned:
 Tell me I shall a death disgraceful die,
 130 But tell me not that Herod is returned.
 SOHEMUS Be not impatient, madam, be but mild,
 His love to you again will soon be bred.
 MARIAM I will not to his love be reconciled,
 With solemn vows I have forsworn his bed.
 SOHEMUS But you must break those vows.
 135 MARIAM I'll rather break
 The heart of Mariam. Cursed is my fate:

But speak no more to me, in vain ye speak^o

advise me

To live with him I so profoundly hate.

SOHEMUS Great queen, you must to me your pardon give,

140 Sohemus cannot now your will obey:

If your command should me to silence drive,

It were not to obey, but to betray.

Reject and slight my speeches, mock my faith,

Scorn my observance, call my counsel nought:

145 Though you regard not what Sohemus saith,

Yet will I ever freely speak my thought.

I fear ere long I shall fair Mariam see

In woeful state, and by herself undone:

Yet for your issue's sake⁷ more temp'rate be,

150 The heart by affability is won.

MARIAM And must I to my prison turn again?

Oh, now I see I was an hypocrite:

I did this morning for his death complain,

And yet do mourn, because he lives, ere night.

155 When I his death believed, compassion wrought,

And was the stickler^o 'twixt my heart and him:

mediator

But now that curtain's drawn from off my thought,

Hate doth appear again with visage grim:

And paints the face of Herod in my heart,

160 In horrid colors with detested look:

Then fear would come, but scorn doth play her part,

And saith that scorn with fear can never brook.^o

put up with

I know I could enchain him with a smile:

And lead him captive with a gentle word,

165 I scorn my look should ever man beguile,

Or other speech than meaning^o to afford.

what I mean

Else Salome in vain might spend her wind,

In vain might Herod's mother whet her tongue:

In vain had they complotted and combined,

170 For I could overthrow them all ere long.

Oh, what a shelter is mine innocence,

To shield me from the pangs of inward grief:

7. Mariam's sons by Herod, Alexander and Aristobulus.

'Gainst all mishaps it is my fair defence,
 And to my sorrows yields a large relief.
 175 To be commandress of the triple earth,⁸
 And sit in safety from a fall secure:
 To have all nations celebrate my birth,
 I would not that my spirit were impure.
 Let my distressèd state unpitied be,
 180 Mine innocence is hope enough for me. [*Exit.*]
 SOHEMUS Poor guiltless queen! Oh, that my wish might place
 A little temper^o now about thy heart: *moderation*
 Unbridled speech is Mariam's worst disgrace,^o *fault*
 And will endanger her without desert.^o *her deserving it*
 185 I am in greater hazard. O'er my head,
 The fatal axe doth hang unsteadily:⁹
 My disobedience once discoverèd
 Will shake it down: Sohemus so shall die.
 For when the King shall find, we thought his death
 190 Had been as certain as we see his life:
 And marks withal I slighted so his breath,^o *command*
 As to preserve alive his matchless wife—
 Nay more, to give to Alexander's hand¹
 The regal dignity; the sovereign power,
 195 How I had yielded up at her command,
 The strength of all the city, David's Tower²—
 What more than common death may I expect,
 Since I too well do know his cruelty?
 'Twere death a word of Herod's to neglect;
 200 What then to do directly contrary?
 Yet, life, I quit thee with a willing spirit,
 And think thou could'st not better be employed:
 I forfeit thee for her that more doth merit,
 Ten such^o were better dead than she destroyed. *such as I*
 205 But fare thee well, chaste queen, well may I see

8. Probably Rome, Egypt, and Jerusalem.

9. An allusion to the sword of Damocles; Damocles was a courtier to Dionysius of Syracuse, who suspended a sword by a single hair over Damocles' head to illustrate the precariousness of a king's fortunes.

1. Mariam's son.

2. A fort Herod built by the western wall of Jerusalem; it was named David's Tower later, by the crusaders.

The darkness palpable, and rivers part:³
 The sun stand still, nay more, retorted be,⁴
 But never woman with so pure a heart.
 Thine eyes' grave majesty keeps all in awe,
 210 And cuts the wings of every loose desire:
 Thy brow is table to the modest law;⁵
 Yet though we dare not love, we may admire.⁶
 And if I die, it shall my soul content,
 My breath in Mariam's service shall be spent.

215 CHORUS 'Tis not enough for one that is a wife
 To keep her spotless from an act of ill:
 But from suspicion she should free her life,
 And bare^o herself of power as well as will.
 'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,
 220 As by her proper^o self restrained to be.

*strip**own*

When she hath spacious ground to walk upon,
 Why on the ridge should she desire to go?
 It is no glory to forbear alone^o
 Those things that may her honor overthrow.
 225 But 'tis thankworthy if she will not take
 All lawful liberties for honor's sake.

only

That wife her hand against her fame doth rear,
 That more than to her lord alone will give
 A private word to any second ear,
 230 And though she may with reputation live,⁷
 Yet though most chaste, she doth her glory blot,
 And wounds her honor, though she kills it not.

3. Darkness was one of the ten plagues called down on Israel by Moses; "rivers part" refers to the parting of the Red Sea that enabled the Israelites to escape from Pharaoh (Exodus 14.21–22).

4. Joshua commanded the sun to stand still (Joshua 10.12–14); Herod imagines it traveling backward.

5. Sohemus compares Mariam's brow to the tablets ("tables") on which the Ten Commandments were engraved.

6. Cf. the speech which Antonio speaks of the duchess in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* 1.2.96–114.

7. I.e., the wife that gives a private word to any besides her husband may not lose her reputation but blots it.

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,
 Do they not wholly give themselves away?
 235 Or give they but their body, not their mind,
 Reserving that, though best, for others' prey?
 No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,
 And therefore should to none but one be known.

Then she usurps upon another's right,
 240 That seeks to be by public language graced:
 And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,
 Her mind if not peculiar^o is not chaste. *exclusive*
 For in a wife it is no worse to find,
 A common^o body than a common mind. *shared, public*

And every mind, though free from thought of ill,
 245 That out of glory^o seeks a worth to show, *desire of praise*
 When any's ears but one therewith they fill,⁸
 Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow.
 Now Mariam had (but that to this she bent)⁹
 250 Been free from fear, as well as innocent.

Act 4

SCENE 1

[*Enter HEROD and his attendants.*]

HEROD Hail, happy city, happy in thy store,^o *abundance*
 And happy that thy buildings such we see:
 More happy in the Temple where w'adore,
 But most of all that Mariam lives in thee. [*Enter NUNTIO.*]

5 Art thou return'd? How fares my Mariam?

NUNTIO She's well, my lord, and will anon^o be here *soon*
 As you commanded.

HEROD Muffle up thy brow,

8. I.e., when they fill any other ears (besides the husband's) with speech to show their worth.

9. Except that she talked too freely to others.

Thou day's dark taper.¹ Mariam will appear,
 And where she shines, we need not thy dim light,
 10 Oh, haste thy steps, rare creature, speed thy pace:
 And let thy presence make the day more bright,
 And cheer the heart of Herod with thy face.
 It is an age since I from Mariam went,
 Methinks our parting was in David's days:²
 15 The hours are so increased by discontent,
 Deep sorrow, Joshua-like, the season stays:³
 But when I am with Mariam, time runs on,
 Her sight can make months minutes, days of weeks:
 And hour is then no sooner come than gone
 20 When in her face mine eye for wonders seeks.
 You world-commanding city,⁴ Europe's grace,
 Twice hath my curious eye your streets surveyed,
 I have seen the statue-fillèd place,
 That once if not for geese had been betrayed.
 25 I all your Roman beauties have beheld,
 And seen the shows your ediles⁵ did prepare;
 I saw the sum of what in your excelled,
 Yet saw no miracle like Mariam rare.
 The fair and famous Livia, Caesar's love,⁶
 30 The world's commanding mistress did I see:
 Whose beauties both the world and Rome approve,
 Yet, Mariam, Livia is not like to thee.
 Be patient but a little while, mine eyes,⁷
 Within your compassed^o limits be contained:
 35 That object straight shall your desires suffice,
 From which you were so long a while restrained.

circumscribed

1. The sun, described as a candle that will be darkened when Mariam appears.

2. I.e., in the days of King David, about a thousand years before.

3. At Joshua's command, the sun stood still at Gibeon (Joshua 10.12) and so stopped the passage of time, while the Israelites destroyed their enemies.

4. Rome.

5. Aediles: Roman officials who managed games and ceremonies.

6. Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus Caesar, whom he married after divorcing his first wife and forcing Lina's husband to divorce her.

7. The 1613 text places the comma after "little," apparently a compositor's error since the lines are an address to Herod's eyes.

How wisely Mariam doth the time delay,
 Lest sudden joy my sense should suffocate:
 I am prepared, thou need'st no longer stay:
 40 Who's there? My Mariam, more than happy fate?
 Oh, no, it is Pheroras. Welcome, brother.
 Now for a while I must my passion smother.

SCENE 2

[HEROD. PHERORAS.]

PHERORAS All health and safety wait upon my lord,
 And may you long in prosperous fortunes live
 45 With Rome-commanding Caesar at accord,
 And have all honors that the world can give.
 HEROD Oh brother, now thou speak'st not from thy heart,
 No, thou hast struck a blow at Herod's love:
 That cannot quickly from my memory part,
 50 Though Salome did me to pardon move.
 Valiant Phasaelus, now to thee farewell,⁸
 Thou wert my kind and honorable brother:
 Oh hapless hour, when you self-stricken fell,
 Thou father's image, glory of thy mother.
 55 Had I desired a greater suit of thee
 Than to withhold thee from a harlot's bed,
 Thou would'st have granted it: but now I see
 All are not like that in a womb are bred.⁹
 Thou would'st not, hadst thou heard of Herod's death,
 60 Have made his burial time thy bridal hour:
 Thou would'st with clamors, not with joyful breath,
 Have showed the news to be not sweet but sour.
 PHERORAS Phasaelus' great worth I know did stain
 Pheroras' petty valor: but they lie
 65 (Excepting you yourself) that dare maintain
 That he did honor Herod more than I,

8. Phasaelus, also a brother of Herod, when captured dashed his head against a rock rather than submit to death from his enemies.

9. I.e., all are not alike that come from one womb: Pheroras has none of Phasaelus's nobility.

For what I showed, love's power constrained me show,
And pardon loving faults¹ for Mariam's sake.

HEROD Mariam, where is she?

PHERORAS Nay, I do not know,

70 But absent use of her fair name I make:
You have forgiven greater faults than this,
For Constabarus, that against your will
Preserved the sons of Babas, lives in bliss
Though you commanded him the youths to kill.²

75 HEROD Go, take a present order for his death,
And let those traitors feel the worst of fears:
Now Salome will whine to beg his breath,
But I'll be deaf to prayers: and blind to tears.

PHERORAS He is, my lord, from Salome divorced,
80 Though her affection did to leave him grieve:
Yet was she by her love to you enforced
To leave the man that would your foes relieve.

HEROD Then haste them to their death. [*Exit* PHERORAS.] I will requite
Thee, gentle Mariam — Salom, I mean.

85 The thought of Mariam doth so steal my spirit,
My mouth from speech of her I cannot wean.

SCENE 3

[HEROD. MARIAM.]

HEROD And here she comes indeed: happily met,
My best and dearest half: what ails my dear?
Thou dost the difference^o certainly forget

90 'Twixt dusky habits^o and a time so clear.^o

MARIAM My lord, I suit my garment to my mind,
And there no cheerful colors can I find.

HEROD Is this my welcome? Have I longed so much
To see my dearest Mariam discontent?

95 What is't that is the cause thy heart to touch?

disparity
clothes/favorable

1. I.e., faults committed for love.

2. Pheroras fulfills his contract with Salome, revealing that Constabarus hid the sons of Babas but pretending Herod already knows that.

Oh speak, that I thy sorrow may prevent.
 Art thou not Jewry's queen, and Herod's too?
 Be my commandress, be my sovereign guide:
 To be by thee directed I will woo,
 100 For in thy pleasure lies my highest pride.
 Or if thou think Judea's narrow bound
 Too strict a limit for thy great command:
 Thou shalt be empress of Arabia crowned,
 For thou shalt rule, and I will win the land.
 105 I'll rob the holy David's sepulchre
 To give thee wealth, if thou for wealth do care:
 Thou shalt have all they did with him inter,
 And I for thee will make the Temple bare.
 MARIAM I neither have of power³ nor riches want,
 110 I have enough, nor do I wish for more:
 Your offers to my heart no ease can grant,
 Except they could my brother's life restore.
 No, had you wished the wretched Mariam glad,
 Or had your love to her been truly tied:
 115 Nay, had you not desired to make her sad,
 My brother nor my grandsire had not died.
 HEROD Wilt thou believe no oaths to clear thy lord?
 How oft have I with execration^o sworn:
 Thou art by me belov'd, by me adored,
 120 Yet are my protestations heard with scorn.
 Hircanus plotted to deprive my head
 Of this long-settled honor that I wear:
 And therefore I did justly doom him dead,
 To rid the realm from peril, me from fear.
 125 Yet I for Mariam's sake do so repent
 The death of one whose blood she did inherit:
 I wish I had a kingdom's treasure spent,
 So I had ne'er expelled Hircanus' spirit.
 As I affected that same noble youth,⁴

curse

3. I.e., I neither have [desire] of power nor want riches.

4. I.e., since I was fond of Aristobolus (Mariam's brother, murdered by Herod's plot). There may be a line missing here, since the rhyme scheme is disrupted.

- 130 In lasting infamy my name enroll
 If I not mourned his death with hearty truth.
 Did I not show to him my earnest love,
 When I to him the priesthood did restore,
 And did for him a living priest remove,
 135 Which never had been done but once before?⁵
 MARIAM I know that, moved by importunity,
 You made him priest, and shortly after die.
 HEROD I will not speak, unless to be believed,
 This froward^o humor will not do you good:
 140 It hath too much already Herod grieved,
 To think that you on terms of hate have stood.
 Yet smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile,
 And I will all unkind conceits exile.
 MARIAM I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught
 145 My face a look dissenting from my thought.
 HEROD By Heaven, you vex me, build^o not on my love.
 MARIAM I will not build on so unstable ground.
 HEROD Nought is so fixed, but peevishness may move.^o
 MARIAM 'Tis better slightest cause than none were found.
 150 HEROD Be judge yourself, if ever Herod sought
 Or would be moved a cause of change to find:
 Yet let your look declare a milder thought,
 My heart again you shall to Mariam bind.
 How oft did I for you my mother chide,
 155 Revile my sister, and my brother rate:^o
 And tell them all my Mariam they belied;
 Distrust me still, if these be signs of hate.

*peevish**rely**dislodge**berate*

SCENE 4

[*Enter* BUTLER.]

HEROD What hast thou here?

BUTLER A drink procuring love,

5. Herod removed Ananelus from the priesthood to give it to Aristobolus; but such a removal had happened twice before.

The queen desired me to deliver it.

160 MARIAM Did I? Some hateful practice^o this will prove, *plot*
 Yet can it be no worse than Heavens permit.

HEROD [*To the BUTLER.*] Confess the truth, thou wicked instrument
 To her outrageous will, 'tis poison sure:

165 Tell true, and thou shalt scape the punishment,
 Which, if thou do conceal, thou shalt endure.

BUTLER I know not, but I doubt it be no less,
 Long since the hate of you her heart did seize.

HEROD Know'st thou the cause thereof?

BUTLER My lord, I guess
 Sohemus told the tale that did displease.

170 HEROD Oh Heaven! Sohemus false! Go, let him die,
 Stay not to suffer him to speak a word: [*Exit BUTLER.*]

Oh damnèd villain, did he falsify

The oath he swore ev'n of his own accord?

Now do I know thy falsehood, painted devil,

175 Thou white enchantress. Oh, thou art so foul,
 That hyssop⁶ cannot cleanse thee, worst of evil.

A beauteous body hides a loathsome soul.

Your love Sohemus, moved by his affection,

Though he have ever heretofore been true,

180 Did blab forsooth, that I did give direction,
 If we were put to death to slaughter you.

And you in black revenge attended^o now

To add a murder to your breach of vow. *waited*

MARIAM Is this a dream?

HEROD Oh Heaven, that 'twere no more,

185 I'll give my realm to who can prove it so:

I would I were like any beggar poor,

So I for false my Mariam did not know—

Foul pith containèd in the fairest rind

That ever graded a cedar. Oh, thine eye

190 Is pure as Heaven, but impure thy mind,

And for impurity shall Mariam die.

6. An herb used to treat lepers. "White enchantress" may allude to the Renaissance idea of a white devil, a fair-seeming hypocrite.

225 And made me for delight my freedom sell.
 Give me my heart, false creature, 'tis a wrong,
 My guiltless heart should now with thine be slain:
 Thou hadst no right to lock it up so long,
 And with usurper's name I Mariam stain.

[*Enter* BUTLER.]

230 HEROD Have you designed^o Sohemus to his end?

dispatched

BUTLER I have, my lord.

HEROD Then call our royal guard
 To do as much for Mariam. [*Exit* BUTLER.] They offend
 Leave⁹ ill unblamed, or good without reward. [*Enter* SOLDIERS.]

Here, take her to her death. Come back, come back,

235 What meant I to deprive the world of light:

To muffle Jewry in the foulest black,

That ever was an opposite to white?

Why, whither would you carry her?

SOLDIER You bade

We should conduct her to her death, my lord.

240 HEROD Why, sure I did not, Herod was not mad.

Why should she feel the fury of the sword?

Oh, now the grief returns into my heart,

And pulls me piecemeal: love and hate do fight:

And now hath love acquired the greater part,

245 Yet now hath hate affection conquered quite.

And therefore bear her hence: and, Hebrew, why

Seize you with lion's paws the fairest lamb

Of all the flock? She must not, shall not, die.

Without her I most miserable am,

250 And with her more than most. Away, away,

But bear her but to prison, not to death:

And is she gone indeed? Stay, villains, stay,

Her looks alone preserved your sovereign's breath.

Well, let her go, but yet she shall not die;

255 I cannot think she meant to poison me:

9. Who leave.

But certain 'tis she lived too wantonly,
And therefore shall she never more be free. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 5

BUTLER Foul villain, can thy pitchy-colored soul
Permit thine ear to hear her causeless doom,
260 And not enforce thy tongue that tale control,^o *block*
That must unjustly bring her to her tomb?
Oh, Salome, thou hast thyself repaid
For all the benefits that thou hast done:
Thou art the cause I have the queen betrayed,
265 Thou hast my heart to darkest falsehood won.
I am condemned, Heav'n gave me not my tongue
To slander innocents, to lie, deceive:
To be the hateful instrument to wrong,
The earth of greatest glory to bereave.
270 My sin ascends and doth to Heaven cry,¹
It is the blackest deed that ever was:
And there doth sit an angel notary,
That doth record it down in leaves of brass.²
Oh, how my heart doth quake: Achitophel,
275 Thou founds^o a means thyself from shame to free:³ *found'st*
And sure my soul approves thou didst not well;⁴
All follow some, and I will follow thee. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 6

[CONSTABARUS, BABAS' SONS, *and their guard.*]

CONSTABARUS Now here we step out last, the way to death;

1. Butler, like Cain after the murder of Abel, finds that the blood of Mariam cries out to heaven for vengeance (Genesis 4.10).

2. I.e., etched as on a brass tablet by the recording angel and thereby permanent.

3. Achitophel advised Absalom in his rebellion against his father, King David, and when his counsels failed, hanged himself. The reader would also think of Judas, who betrayed Christ and then hanged himself.

4. The line may mean, I agree, "approve," that you did right to kill yourself because you did evil.

We must not tread this way a second time:
 280 Yet let us resolutely yield our breath,
 Death is the only ladder, Heav'n to climb.

BABAS' FIRST SON With willing mind I could myself resign,
 But yet it grieves me with a grief untold:
 Our death should be accompanied with thine,
 285 Our friendship we to thee have dearly sold.⁵

CONSTABARUS Still wilt thou wrong the sacred name of friend?
 Then should'st thou never style^o it friendship more: *name*
 But base mechanic^o traffic that doth lend, *vulgar*
 Yet will be sure they shall the debt restore.⁶

290 I could with needless compliment return,
 'Tis for thy ceremony I could say:
 'Tis I that made the fire your house to burn,⁷
 For but^o for me she would not you betray. *except*
 Had not the damnèd woman sought mine end,

295 You had not been the subject of her hate:
 You never did her hateful mind offend,
 Nor could your deaths have freed her nuptial fate.⁸
 Therefore, fair friends, though you were still unborn,
 Some other subtlety devised should be:

300 Whereby my life, though guiltless, should be torn.
 Thus have I proved, 'tis you that die for me,
 And therefore should I weakly now lament,
 You have but done your duties; friends should die
 Alone their friends' disaster to prevent,

305 Though not compelled by strong necessity.⁹
 But now farewell, fair city, never more
 Shall I behold your beauty shining bright:
 Farewell, of Jewish men the worthy store, *storehouse*
 But no farewell to any female wight.^o *creature*

5. I.e., being friend to us has cost you dear.

6. I.e., friendship is not vulgar commerce that lends only when certain of repayment.

7. I.e., I could say as a courteous response to your self-blame that I am the cause of all your destruction.

8. I.e., she cared nothing about your deaths as such, which would not affect her marital status (as my death would).

9. I.e., such laments are "weak," since friends should die simply ("alone") to save their friends even if not compelled (as is the case here) by "strong necessity."

310 You wavering crew: my curse to you I leave,
 You had but one to give you any grace:
 And you yourselves will Mariam's life bereave;
 Your commonwealth doth innocency chase.^o *drive out*
 You creatures made to be the human curse,
 315 You tigers, lionesses, hungry bears,
 Tear-massacring¹ hyenas: nay, far worse
 For they for prey do shed their feignèd tears.
 But you will weep (you creatures cross^o to good), *opposed to*
 For your unquenched thirst of human blood:
 320 You were the angels cast from Heav'n for pride,²
 And still do keep your angels' outward show,
 But none of you are inly beautified,
 For still your Heav'n-depriving pride doth grow.
 Did not the sins of man require a scourge,
 325 Your place on earth had been by this withstood:³
 But since a flood no more the world must purge,
 You stayed in office of a second flood.⁴
 You giddy creatures, sowers of debate,
 You'll love today, and for no other cause
 330 But for^o you yesterday did deeply hate; *except that*
 You are the wreck of order, breach of laws.
 Your best are foolish, froward,^o wanton, vain, *peevish*
 Your worst adulterous, murderous, cunning, proud:
 And Salome attends the latter train,^o *retinue*
 335 Or rather she their leader is allowed.
 I do the sottishness of men bewail,
 That do with following you enhance your pride:
 'Twere better that the human race should fail,
 Than be by such a mischief multiplied.
 340 Cham's servile curse to all your sex was given,

1. Hyenas were thought to weep "feigned tears" over their victims as they consumed them.

2. I.e., the angels who were cast out of heaven for rebellion against God.

3. The 1613 text reads "many," but this emendation is called for both by meter and by meaning—i.e., if you women were not needed to scourge the sins of man, you would by this time have been erased from the earth. Constabarus's tirade draws themes from a long tradition of misogynist writing.

4. Since God promised Noah never again to destroy the world by flood (Genesis 9.11), women do that office of punishment.

Because in Paradise you did offend:⁵
 Then do we not resist the will of Heaven,
 When on your wills like servants we attend?
 You are to nothing constant but to ill,
 345 You are with nought but wickedness indued:
 Your loves are set on nothing but your will,
 And thus my censure I of you conclude.
 You are the least of goods, the worst of evils,
 Your best are worse than men: your worst than devils.
 350 BABAS' SECOND SON Come, let us to our death: are we not blessed?
 Our death will freedom from these creatures give:
 Those trouble-quiet^o sowers of unrest, *calm-disturbing*
 And this I vow, that had I leave to live,
 I would forever lead a single life,
 355 And never venture on a devilish wife. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 7

[HEROD *and* SALOME.]

HEROD Nay, she shall die. Die, quoth you? That she shall:
 But for the means. The means! Methinks 'tis hard
 To find a means to murder her withal,
 Therefore I am resolv'd she shall be spar'd.

SALOME Why, let her be beheaded.

360 HEROD That were well,
 Think you that swords are miracles like you?
 Her skin will ev'ry curtl'ax edge refell,⁶
 And then your enterprise you well may rue.
 What if the fierce Arabian notice take
 365 Of this your wretched weaponless estate:
 They answer, when we bid resistance make,
 That Mariam's skin their falchions did rebate.⁷

5. Because he looked on the nakedness of his father Noah (Genesis 9.22, 25), Cham(Ham)'s descendants (Canaan) were cursed by being enslaved to his brothers and their descendants; Constabarus associates that curse with Eve's punishment after the Fall, that "thy husband . . . shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3.16).

6. I.e., her skin will repel every slashing sword.

7. I.e., blunt their broadswords.

Beware of this, you make a goodly hand,
If you of weapons do deprive our land.

SALOME Why, drown her then.

370 HEROD Indeed, a sweet device.

Why, would not ev'ry river turn her course
Rather than do her beauty prejudice,^o
And be reverted^o to the proper source?

*harm
turned back*

375 So not a drop of water should be found
In all Judea's quondam^o fertile ground.

once

SALOME Then let the fire devour her.

HEROD 'Twill not be:

Flame is from her derived^o into my heart:
Thou nursest flame, flame will not murder thee,
My fairest Mariam, fullest of desert.

diverted

SALOME Then let her live for me.^o

for all I care

380 HEROD Nay, she shall die:

But can you live without her?

SALOME Doubt you that?

HEROD I'm sure I cannot; I beseech you try:

I have experience but I know not what.

SALOME How should I try?

HEROD Why, let my love be slain,

385 But if we cannot live without her sight
You'll find the means to make her breathe again,
Or else you will bereave my comfort quite.

SALOME Oh ay: I warrant you. [*Exit.*]

HEROD What, is she gone,

And gone to bid the world be overthrown?

390 What, is her heart's composure hardest stone?
To what a pass are cruel women grown! [*Re-enter SALOME.*]

She is returned already: have you done?

Is't possible you can command so soon

A creature's heart to quench the flaming sun,

395 Or from the sky to wipe away the moon?

SALOME If Mariam be the sun and moon, it is:

For I already have commanded this.

HEROD But have you seen her cheek?

SALOME A thousand times.

HEROD But did you mark it too?

SALOME Ay, very well.

HEROD What is't?

400 SALOME A crimson bush, that ever limes
The soul whose foresight doth not much excel.⁸

HEROD Send word she shall not die. Her cheek a bush—
Nay, then I see indeed you mark'd it not.

SALOME 'Tis very fair, but yet will never blush,
405 Though foul dishonors do her forehead blot.

HEROD Then let her die, 'tis very true indeed,
And for this fault alone shall Mariam bleed.

SALOME What fault, my lord?

HEROD What fault is't? You that ask,
If you be ignorant I know of none.

410 To call her back from death shall be your task,
I'm glad that she for innocent is known.
For on the brow of Mariam hangs a fleece,⁹
Whose slenderest twine is strong enough to bind
The hearts of kings; the pride and shame of Greece,
415 Troy-flaming Helen's not so fairly shined.¹

SALOME 'Tis true indeed, she lays them^o out for nets,
To catch the hearts that do not shun a bait:
'Tis time to speak: for Herod sure forgets
That Mariam's very tresses hide deceit.

her tresses

420 HEROD Oh, do they so? Nay, then you do but well,
In sooth I thought it had been hair:
Nets call you them? Lord, how they do excel,
I never saw a net that showed so fair.
But have you heard her speak?

SALOME You know I have.

HEROD And were you not amazed?

425 SALOME No, not a whit.

HEROD Then 'twas not her you heard; her life I'll save,

8. I.e., her hair is as a bush smeared with birdlime to catch unwary souls.

9. Invites comparison with the golden fleece that Jason undertook to fetch from its place in the sacred grove of Colchis.

1. Her tresses are also compared with those of Helen of Troy, whose beauty led the Trojan Paris to abduct her from her Greek husband, Menelaus, the act that sparked the Trojan War.

For Mariam hath a world-amazing wit.

SALOME She speaks a beauteous language, but within
Her heart is false as powder:^o and her tongue

cosmetics

430 Doth but allure the auditors to sin,
And is the instrument to do you wrong.

HEROD It may be so: nay, 'tis so; she's unchaste,
Her mouth will ope to ev'ry stranger's ear:

435 Then let the executioner make haste,
Lest she enchant him, if her words he hear.

Let him be deaf, lest she do him surprise
That shall to free her spirit be assigned:

Yet what boots^o deafness if he have his eyes?
Her murderer must be both deaf and blind.

helps

440 For if he see, he needs must see the stars
That shine on either side of Mariam's face:

Whose sweet aspect will terminate the wars,
Wherewith he should a soul so precious chase.^o

dispatch

445 Her eyes can speak, and in their speaking move;
Oft did my heart with reverence receive

The world's mandates. Pretty tales of love
They utter, which can human bondage weave.

But shall I let this heaven's model^o die,
Which for a small self-portraiture she drew?

image

450 Her eyes like stars, her forehead like the sky,
She is like Heaven, and must be heavenly true.

SALOME Your thoughts do rave with doting on the queen.

Her eyes are ebon-hued, and you'll confess:
A sable star hath been but seldom seen.

455 Then speak of reason more, of Mariam less.

HEROD Yourself are held a goodly creature here,
Yet so unlike my Mariam in your shape

That when to her you have approachèd near,
Myself hath often ta'en you for an ape.

460 And yet you prate of beauty: go your ways,
You are to her a sun-burnt blackamoor:²

2. English writers typically conflated Moors and African blacks, and many supposed their dark pigmentation resulted from exposure to the sun.

Your paintings^o cannot equal Mariam's praise,
 Her nature is so rich, you are so poor. *cosmetics*
 Let her be stayed from death, for if she die,
 465 We do we know not what to stop her breath:
 A world cannot another Mariam buy;
 Why say you ling'ring? Countermand her death.
 SALOME Then you'll no more remember what hath passed,
 Sohemus' love and hers shall be forgot?
 470 'Tis well in truth: that fault may be her last,
 And she may mend, though yet she love you not.
 HEROD Oh God: 'tis true. Sohemus—earth and Heav'n,
 Why did you both conspire to make me cursed
 In cozz'ning^o me with shows and proofs unev'n?^o *deceiving/unjust*
 475 She showed the best, and yet did prove the worst.
 Her show was such, as had our singing king,
 The holy David, Mariam's beauty seen,
 The Hittite had then felt no deadly sting,
 Nor Bethsabe had never been a queen.³
 480 Or had his son, the wisest man of men,
 Whose fond delight did most consist in change,
 Beheld her face, he had been stayed again;⁴
 No creature having her, can wish to range.
 Had Asuerus seen my Mariam's brow,
 485 The humble Jew, she might have walked alone:
 Her beauteous virtue should have stayed below,
 Whiles Mariam mounted to the Persian throne.⁵
 But what avails it all? For in the weight^o *scales*
 She is deceitful, light as vanity:
 490 Oh, she was made for nothing but a bait,
 To train^o some hapless man to misery. *entice*
 I am the hapless man that have been trained

3. David, to whom authorship of many of the Psalms is attributed, is the "singing king"; he sent Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, into the front lines of battle so his death (which occurred) would allow David to make Bathsheba his queen (2 Samuel 11).

4. Solomon, reputed the wisest king but also keeper of a thousand concubines and wives, would have stopped ("been stayed") with Mariam had he known her.

5. Queen Esther ("the humble Jew") would not have won favor with Ahasuerus and become queen (Esther 2) had Mariam been there.

To endless bondage. I will see her yet:
 Methinks I should discern her if she feigned;
 495 Can human eyes be dazed by woman's wit?
 Once more these eyes of mine with hers shall meet,
 Before the headsman do her life bereave:
 Shall I forever part from thee, my sweet,
 Without the taking of my latest leave?

500 SALOME You had as good resolve to save her now,
 I'll stay her death; 'tis well determinèd:^o
 For sure she never more will break her vow,
 Sohemus and Josephus both are dead.

decided

HEROD She shall not live, nor will I see her face;
 505 A long-healed wound a second time doth bleed:
 With Joseph I remember her disgrace,
 A shameful end ensues^o a shameful deed.
 Oh, that I had not called to mind anew
 The discontent of Mariam's wavering heart:
 510 'Twas you: you foul-mouthed Ate,⁶ none but you,
 That did the thought hereof to me impart.
 Hence from my sight, my black tormentor, hence,
 For hadst not thou made Herod unsecure,
 I had not doubted Mariam's innocence,
 515 But still had held her in my heart for pure.

follows

SALOME I'll leave you to your passion: 'tis no time
 To purge me now, though of a guiltless crime. [*Exit.*]

HEROD Destruction take thee: thou hast made my heart
 As heavy as revenge; I am so dull,
 520 Methinks I am not sensible of smart,
 Though hideous horrors at my bosom pull.
 My head weighs downwards: therefore will I go
 To try if I can sleep away my woe. [*Exit.*]

SCENE 8

MARIAM Am I the Mariam that presumed so much,

6. In Homer, the goddess of strife and discord, who leads men into rash actions.

525 And deemed my face must needs preserve my breath?
 Ay, I it was that thought my beauty such,
 As it alone could countermand my death.
 Now death will teach me: he can pale as well
 A cheek of roses as a cheek less bright,
 530 And dim an eye whose shine doth most excel,
 As soon as one that casts a meaner light.
 Had not myself against myself conspired,
 No plot, no adversary from without
 Could Herod's love from Mariam have retired,
 535 Or from his heart have thrust my semblance out.
 The wanton queen that never loved for love,
 False Cleopatra, wholly set on gain,
 With all her sleights did prove,^o yet vainly prove, *try*
 For her the love of Herod to obtain.
 540 Yet her allurements, all her courtly guile,
 Her smiles, her favors, and her smooth deceit
 Could not my face from Herod's mind exile,
 But were with him of less than little weight.
 That face and person that in Asia late
 545 For beauty's goddess, Paphos' queen,⁷ was ta'en:
 That face that did captive^o great Julius' fate, *take captive*
 That very face that was Anthonius' bane,^o *destruction*
 That face that to be Egypt's pride was born,
 That face that all the world esteemed so rare:⁸
 550 Did Herod hate, despise, neglect, and scorn,
 When with the same, he Mariam's did compare.
 This made that I improvidently wrought,
 And on the wager even my life did pawn:
 Because I thought, and yet but truly thought,
 555 That Herod's love could not from me be drawn.
 But now, though out of time,^o I plainly see *too late*
 It could be drawn, though never drawn from me,
 Had I but with humility been graced,

7. Venus.

8. The Egyptian queen Cleopatra was the beauty who captivated both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony (lines 547–48).

As well as fair I might have proved me wise:
 560 But I did think because I knew me chaste,
 One virtue for a woman might suffice.
 That mind for glory of our sex might stand,
 Wherein humility and chastity
 Doth march with equal paces hand in hand.
 565 But one, if single seen, who setteth by?^o *takes account*
 And I had singly one, but 'tis my joy,
 That I was ever innocent, though sour:
 And therefore can they but my life destroy,
 My soul is free from adversary's power.
 570 You princes great in power, and high in birth,
 Be great and high, I envy not your hap.^o *lot*
 Your birth must be from dust, your power on earth;
 In Heav'n shall Mariam sit in Sara's lap.⁹
 DORIS Ay, Heav'n — your beauty cannot bring you thither,
 575 Your soul is black and spotted, full of sin:
 You in adult'ry lived nine year together,
 And Heav'n will never let adult'ry in.
 MARIAM What are thou that dost poor Mariam pursue,
 Some spirit sent to drive me to despair?
 580 Who sees for truth that Mariam is untrue?
 If fair she be, she is as chaste as fair.
 DORIS I am that Doris that was once beloved,
 Beloved by Herod, Herod's lawful wife:
 'Twas you that Doris from his side removed,
 585 And robbed from me the glory of my life.
 MARIAM Was that adult'ry? Did not Moses say,
 That he that being matched did deadly hate:
 Might by permission put his wife away,
 And take a more beloved to be his mate?
 590 DORIS What did he hate me for: for simple truth?
 For bringing^o beauteous babes for love to him? *bearing*
 For riches, noble birth, or tender youth?
 Or for no stain did Doris' honor dim?

9. Mariam envisions herself not in Abraham's bosom but in its female counterpart, the lap of Abraham's wife, Sarah.

Oh, tell me, Mariam, tell me if you know,
 595 Which fault of these made Herod Doris' foe?
 These thrice three years have I with hands held up,
 And bowèd knees fast nailèd to the ground,
 Besought for thee the dregs of that same cup,
 That cup of wrath that is for sinners found.
 600 And now thou art to drink it: Doris' curse
 Upon thyself did all this while attend,
 But now it shall pursue thy children worse.

MARIAM Oh, Doris, now to thee my knees I bend,
 That heart that never bowed to thee doth bow:
 605 Curse not mine infants, let it thee suffice,
 That Heav'n doth punishment to me allow.
 Thy curse is cause that guiltless Mariam dies.

DORIS Had I ten thousand tongues, and ev'ry tongue
 Inflamed with poison's power, and steeped in gall:
 610 My curses would not answer for my wrong,
 Though I in cursing the employed them all.
 Hear thou that didst Mount Gerizim command,
 To be a place whereon with cause to curse:
 Stretch thy revenging arm, thrust forth thy hand,
 615 And plague the mother much: the children worse.
 Throw flaming fire upon the baseborn heads
 That were begotten in unlawful^o beds.
 But let them live till they have sense to know
 What 'tis to be in miserable state:
 620 Then be their nearest friends their overthrow,
 Attended be they by suspicious hate.
 And, Mariam, I do hope this boy of mine
 Shall one day come to be the death of thine.¹ [*Exit.*]

illegitimate

MARIAM Oh! Heaven forbid. I hope the world shall see,
 625 This curse of thine shall be returned on thee:
 Now, earth, farewell, though I be yet but young,
 Yet I, methinks, have known thee too too long. [*Exit.*]

1. A prophecy: Doris's son, Antipater, does raise Herod's ire against Mariam's sons, Aristobolus and Alexander, by spreading slanderous tales.

CHORUS

The fairest action of our human life
 Is scorning to revenge an injury:
 630 For who forgives without a further strife,
 His adversary's heart to him doth tie.
 And 'tis a firmer conquest truly said,²
 To win the heart than overthrow the head.

If we a worthy enemy do find,
 635 To yield to worth, it must be nobly done:
 But if of baser metal be his mind,
 In base revenge there is no honor won.
 Who would a worthy courage overthrow,
 And who would wrestle with a worthless foe?

We say our hearts are great and cannot yield;
 Because they cannot yield it proves them poor:
 Great hearts are tasked^o beyond their power but seld,^o *taxed/seldom*
 The weakest lion will the loudest roar.
 Truth's school for certain doth this same allow,
 645 High-heartedness doth sometimes teach to bow.

A noble heart doth teach a virtuous scorn:
 To scorn to owe a duty^o overlong, *obligation*
 To scorn to be for benefits forborne,³
 To scorn to lie, to scorn to do a wrong,
 650 To scorn to bear an injury in mind,
 To scorn a freeborn heart slavelike to bind.

But if for wrongs we needs revenge must have,
 Then be our vengeance of the noblest kind:
 Do we his body from our fury save,

2. Forgiveness is proverbially said to be the noblest kind of vengeance, winning a conquest that is greater than physical victory could be.

3. I.e., given special treatment in recompense for former benefits.

655 And let our hate prevail against our mind?⁴
 What can 'gainst him a greater vengeance be,
 Than make his foe more worthy far than he?

Had Mariam scorned to leave a due unpaid⁵
 She would to Herod then have paid her love:
 660 And not have been by sullen passion swayed.
 To fix her thoughts all injury above
 Is virtuous pride. Had Mariam thus been proved,
 Long famous life to her had been allowed.

Act 5

SCENE 1

NUNTIO When, sweetest friend,¹ did I so far offend
 Your heavenly self, that you my fault to quit
 Have made me now relator of your end,²
 The end of beauty, chastity and wit?
 5 Was none so hapless in the fatal place
 But I, most wretched, for the queen t'choose?
 'Tis certain I have some ill-boding face
 That made me culled^o to tell this luckless news.
 And yet no news to Herod: were it new
 10 To him, unhappy 't had not been at all:
 Yet do I long to come within his view,
 That he may know his wife did guiltless fall:
 And here he comes. Your Mariam greets you well.

chosen

[*Enter* HEROD.]

HEROD What? lives my Mariam? Joy, exceeding joy!
 She shall not die.

4. I.e., it is not enough merely to save an enemy's body from harm; we must subdue hate in our minds.

5. The chorus believes that Mariam should have acted "nobly" by forgiving Herod and paying the marriage debt (giving her sexual favors) to him. In the background is 1 Corinthians 7. 4–5: "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. / Defraud ye not one the other."

1. The messenger apostrophizes the dead Mariam.

2. The 1613 text reads "her" but the grammar requires "your." Cary follows the classical practice of having violence occur offstage, to be reported by, in this case, a messenger.

- 15 NUNTIO Heav'n doth your will repel.^o *reject*
 HEROD Oh, do not with thy words my life destroy,
 I prithee tell no dying-tale: thine eye
 Without thy tongue doth tell but too too much:
 Yet let thy tongue's addition make me die,
 20 Death welcome comes to him whose grief is such.
 NUNTIO I went amongst the curious gazing troop,
 To see the last of her that was the best:
 To see if death had heart to make her stoop,
 To see the sun-admiring phoenix' nest.³
 25 When there I came, upon the way I saw
 The stately Mariam not debased by fear:
 Her look did seem to keep the world in awe,
 Yet mildly did her face this fortune bear.
 HEROD Thou dost usurp my right, my tongue was framed
 30 To be the instrument of Mariam's praise:
 Yet speak: she cannot be too often famed:
 All tongues suffice not her sweet name to raise.
 NUNTIO But as she came she Alexandra met,
 Who did her death (sweet queen) no whit bewail,
 35 But as if nature she did quite forget,
 She did upon her daughter loudly rail.^o *shout abuses*
 HEROD Why stopped you not her mouth? Where had she words
 To darken that, that Heaven made so bright?
 Our sacred tongue no epithet affords.
 40 To call her other than the world's delight.
 NUNTIO She told her that her death was too too good,
 And that already she had lived too long:
 She said, she shamed to have a part in blood
 Of her that did the princely Herod wrong.
 45 HEROD Base pickthank^o devil! Shame, 'twas all her glory, *sycophantic*
 That she to noble Mariam was the mother:
 But never shall it live in any story —
 Her name, except to infamy, I'll smother.
 What answer did her princely daughter make?

3. The mythical bird of the sun lived five hundred years, then in its nest immolated itself in fire, and a new phoenix emerged from the ashes. For Christians it became a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection.

- 50 NUNTIO She made no answer, but she looked the while
 As if thereof she scarce did notice take,
 Yet smiled, a dutiful, though scornful, smile.
- HEROD Sweet creature, I that look to mind do call;^o *remember*
 Full oft hath Herod been amazed withal.
 Go on.
- 55 NUNTIO She came unmoved, with pleasant grace,
 As if to triumph her arrival were:
 In stately habit, and with cheerful face:
 Yet ev'ry eye was moist but Mariam's there.
 When justly^o opposite to me she came, *exactly*
- 60 She picked me out from all the crew:
 She beckoned to me, called me by my name,
 For she my name, my birth, and fortune knew.
- HEROD What, did she name thee? Happy, happy man,
 Wilt thou not ever love that name the better?
- 65 But what sweet tune did this fair dying swan⁴
 Afford thine ear? Tell all, omit no letter.
- NUNTIO "Tell thou my lord," said she —
- HEROD Me, meant she me?
 Is't true,^o the more my shame: I was her lord, *if it is true*
 Were I not mad, her lord I still should be:⁵
- 70 But now her name must be by me adored.
 Oh say, what said she more? Each word she said
 Shall be the food whereon my heart is fed.
- NUNTIO "Tell thou my lord thou saw'st me loose my breath."
- HEROD Oh, that I could that sentence now control.^o *overrun*
- 75 NUNTIO "If guiltily, eternal be my death" —
- HEROD I hold her chaste ev'n in my inmost soul.
- NUNTIO "By three days hence, if wishes could revive,
 I know himself would make me oft alive."⁶
- HEROD Three days: three hours, three minutes, not so much,
 80 A minute in a thousand parts divided;
 My penitency for her death is such,

4. The swan was thought to sing most sweetly (or only) before its own death.

5. I.e., if I had not been her (tyrannical) lord, I still would be her husband and lord.

6. Mariam predicts that Herod will wish her alive after three days, with apparent allusion to Jesus' prediction that he would rise from the dead after three days.

As in the first⁷ I wished she had not died.

But forward in thy tale.

NUNTIO Why, on she went,

And after she some silent prayer had said,

85 She died as if to die she were content,

And thus to Heav'n her heav'nly soul is fled.

HEROD But art thou sure there doth no life remain?

Is't possible my Mariam should be dead?

Is there no trick to make her breathe again?

90 NUNTIO Her body is divided from her head.

HEROD Why, yet methinks there might be found by art

Strange ways of cure; 'tis sure rare things are done

By an inventive head, and willing heart.

NUNTIO Let not, my lord, your fancies idly run.

95 It is as possible it should be seen,

That we should make the holy Abraham live,

Though he entombed two thousand years had been,

As breath again to slaughtered Mariam give.

But now for more assaults prepare your ears—

100 HEROD There cannot be a further cause of moan,

This accident shall shelter me from fears:

What can I fear? Already Mariam's gone.

Yet tell ev'n what you will.

NUNTIO As I came by,

From Mariam's death, I saw upon a tree

105 A man that to his neck a cord did tie:⁸

Which cord he had designed his end to be.

When me he once discerned, he downwards bowed,

And thus with fearful voice he cried aloud,

“Go tell the King he trusted ere he tried,^o

110 I am the cause that Mariam causeless died.”

HEROD Damnation take him, for it was the slave

That said she meant with poison's deadly force

To end my life that she the crown might have:

tested

7. In the first thousandth of a minute.

8. Recalls the manner of Judas's suicide after his betrayal of Jesus (Matthew 27.5).

Which tale did Mariam from herself divorce.⁹
 115 Oh, pardon me, thou pure unspotted ghost,
 My punishment must needs sufficient be,
 In missing that content I valued most:
 Which was thy admirable face to see.
 I had but one inestimable jewel,¹
 120 Yet one I had no monarch had the like,
 And therefore may I curse myself as cruel:
 'Twas broken by a blow myself did strike.
 I gazed thereon and never thought me blessed,
 But when on it my dazzled eye might rest,
 125 A precious mirror made by wondrous art,
 I prized it ten times dearer than my crown,
 And laid it up fast folded in my heart:
 Yet I in sudden choler^o cast it down, *anger*
 And pash'd^o it all to pieces: 'twas no foe *smashed*
 130 That robbed me of it; no Arabian host,
 Nor no Armenian guide hath used me so:
 But Herod's wretched self hath Herod crossed.
 She was my graceful moiety;^o me accursed, *half*
 To slay my better half and save my worst.
 135 But sure she is not dead, you did but jest,
 To put me in perplexity a while;
 'Twere well indeed if I could so be dressed:^o *made right*
 I see she is alive, methinks you smile.
 NUNTIO If sainted Abel yet deceased be,
 140 'Tis certain Mariam is as dead as he.
 HEROD Why, then go call her to me, bid her now
 Put on fair habit, stately ornament:
 And let no frown o'ershade her smoothest brow,
 In her doth Herod place his whole content.
 145 NUNTIO She's come in state weeds^o to please your sense, *garments*
 If now she come attired in robe of Heaven:
 Remember, you yourself did send her hence,

9. The Butler's accusation that Mariam was plotting to take over the throne from Herod is not in Cary's chief source, Josephus's *Antiquities*.

1. Proverbs 31.10 calls a good wife more precious than jewels. Cf. *Othello* 5.2.346–47: "one whose hand / (Like the base Indian) threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe."

And now to you she can no more be given.

HEROD She's dead, hell take her murderers, she was fair,²

150 Oh, what a hand she had, it was so white,

It did the whiteness of the snow impair:^o

darken

I never more shall see so sweet a sight.

NUNTIO 'Tis true, her hand was rare.

HEROD Her hand? her hands;

She had not singly one of beauty rare,

155 But such a pair as here where Herod stands,

He dares the world to make to both compare.³

Accursèd Salome, hadst thou been still,^o

silent

My Mariam had been breathing by my side:

Oh, never had I, had I had my will,

160 Sent forth command, that Mariam should have died.

But, Salome, thou didst with envy vex,^o

fret

To see thyself outmatchèd in thy sex:

Upon your sex's forehead Mariam sat,

To grace you all like an imperial crown,

165 But you, fond fool, have rudely pushed thereat,

And proudly pulled your proper glory down.

One smile of hers—nay, not so much—a look

Was worth a hundred thousand such as you.

Judea, how canst thou the wretches brook,^o

endure

170 That robbed from thee the fairest of the crew?

You dwellers in the now deprivèd land,

Wherein the matchless Mariam was bred:

Why grasp not each of you a sword in hand,

To aim at me your cruel sovereign's head?

175 Oh, when you think of Herod as your king,

And owner of the pride of Palestine,

This act to your remembrance likewise bring:

'Tis I have overthrown your royal line.

Within her purer veins the blood did run,

180 That from her grandam Sara she derived,

2. The rhythm of the line invites comparison with *The Duchess of Malfi* 4.2.245: "Cover her face. Mine eyes dazzle. She died young."

3. I.e., Herod dares the world to find any comparable two hands anywhere.

Whose beldame age the love of kings hath won;⁴
 Oh, that her issue had as long been lived.
 But can her eye be made by death obscure?^o *dark*
 I cannot think but it must sparkle still:
 185 Foul sacrilege to rob those lights so pure,
 From out a temple made by heav'nly skill.
 I am the villain that have done the deed,
 The cruel deed, though by another's hand;
 My word, though not my sword, made Mariam bleed,
 190 Hircanus' grandchild died at my command —
 That Marian that I once did love so dear,
 The partner of my now detested bed.
 Why shine you, sun, with an aspect so clear?
 I tell you once again my Mariam's dead.
 195 You could but shine, if some Egyptian blowse,
 Or Aethiopian dowdy lose her life:⁵
 This was — then wherefore bend you not your brows? —
 The King of Jewry's fair and spotless wife.
 Deny thy beams, and, moon, refuse thy light,
 200 Let all the stars be dark, let Jewry's eye
 No more distinguish which is day and night:
 Since her best birth did in her bosom die.
 Those fond idolaters, the men of Greece,
 Maintain these orbs are safely governèd:
 205 That each within themselves have gods apiece,
 By whom their steadfast course is justly led.⁶
 But were it so, as so it cannot be,
 They all would put their mourning garments on:
 Not one of them would yield a light to me,
 210 To me that is the cause that Mariam's gone.

4. Sara, wife of Abraham, was at least sixty-five when she attracted Pharoah and almost ninety when King Abimelech sought her favors. "Beldame" suggests one very ancient, but Cary may also evoke the French "*belle dame*."

5. I.e., you [sun] could shine in the same way only if a beggar's prostitute [blowse] or shabby old woman [dowdy] died; "Egyptian" and "Aethiopian" mark them as dark-skinned (not fair like Mariam) and may allude to Cleopatra.

6. Ptolemaic astronomy held that the spheres holding the various planets were guided by intelligences or spirits; Herod supposes they thought the god for whom the planet was named was that intelligence.

For though they feign their Saturn melancholy,⁷
 Of sour behaviors, and of angry mood:
 They feign him likewise to be just and holy,
 And justice needs must seek revenge for blood.
 215 Their Jove, if Jove he were,⁸ would sure desire,
 To punish him that slew so fair a lass:
 For Leda's beauty set his heart on fire,
 Yet she not half so fair as Mariam was.
 And Mars would deem his Venus had been slain;
 220 Sol to recover her would never stick:⁹
 For if he want the power her life to gain:
 Then physic's god is but an empiric;^o *quack*
 The queen of love would storm^o for beauty's sake; *rage*
 And Hermes too, since he bestowed her wit;¹
 225 The night's pale light for angry grief would shake,
 To see chaste Mariam die in age unfit.
 But, oh, I am deceived, she passed^o them all *surpassed*
 In every gift, in every property:^o *quality*
 Her excellencies wrought her timeless^o fall, *untimely*
 230 And they rejoiced, not grieved, to see her die.
 The Paphian goddess did repent her waste,
 When she to one such beauty did allow:²
 Mercurius thought her wit his wit surpassed,
 And Cinthia³ envied Mariam's brighter brow.
 235 But these are fictions, they are void of sense;^o *meaning*
 The Greeks but dream, and dreaming falsehoods tell:
 They neither can offend nor give defence,⁴
 And not by them it was my Mariam fell.
 If she had been like an Egyptian⁵ black,

7. Saturn was said to produce cold and excessively severe temperaments (saturnine), but also he was the god who presided over the Golden Age of plenty, justice, contentment, and peace.

8. I.e., if there were such a supreme god as Jove.

9. Sol (Apollo) was also god of medicine ("physic").

1. Venus, "queen of love" and also beauty, would rage to see such beauty as Mariam's destroyed; Hermes (Mercury) is the god of wit and eloquence.

2. Venus ("the Paphian goddess") regretted both her own wastefulness in bestowing all her beauty on Mariam and the waste of that beauty in Mariam's death.

3. Goddess of the moon.

4. The Greek gods cannot give harm or protect against it.

5. Another allusion to Cleopatra.

240 And not so fair, she had been longer lived:
 Her overflow of beauty turnèd back,
 And drowned the spring from whence it was derived.
 Her heav'nly beauty 'twas that made me think
 That it with chastity could never dwell:⁶
 245 But now I see that Heav'n in her did link
 A spirit and a person^o to excel. *body*
 I'll muffle up myself in endless night,
 And never let mine eyes behold the light.
 Retire thyself, vile monster, worse than he⁷
 250 That stained the virgin earth with brother's blood.⁸
 Still in some vault or den enclosed be,
 Where with thy tears thou may'st beget a flood,
 Which flood in time may drown thee: happy day
 When thou at once shalt die and find a grave;
 255 A stone upon the vault someone shall lay,
 Which monument shall an inscription have,
 And these shall be the words it shall contain:
Here Herod lies, that hath his Mariam slain. [Exit.]

CHORUS

260 Whoever hath beheld with steadfast eye,
 The strange events of this one only day:⁹
 How many were deceived, how many die,
 That once today did grounds of safety lay!
 It will from them all certainty bereave,
 Since twice six hours so many can deceive.

265 This morning Herod held for surely dead,
 And all the Jews on Mariam did attend:
 And Constabarus rise^o from Salom's bed, *rose*
 And neither dreamed of a divorce or end.

6. The idea that chastity and beauty cannot co-exist is a misogynistic commonplace.

7. Herod addresses himself.

8. Cain, who murdered Abel.

9. The play takes place in one day, thereby observing the neoclassical unity of time.

270 Pheroras joyed that he might have his wife,
And Babas' sons for safety of their life.

Tonight our Herod doth alive remain,
The guiltless Mariam is deprived of breath;
Stout Constabarus both divorced and slain,
The valiant sons of Babas have their death,
275 Pheroras sure his love to be bereft,
If Salome her suit unmade had left.¹

Herod this morning did expect with joy,
To see his Mariam's much beloved face:
And yet ere night he did her life destroy,
280 And surely thought she did her name disgrace.
Yet now again, so short do humors last,
He both repents her death and knows her chaste.

Had he with wisdom now her death delayed,
He at his pleasure might command her death:
285 But now he hath his power so much betrayed,
As all his woes cannot restore her breath.
Now doth he strangely, lunaticly rave,
Because his Mariam's life he cannot save.

This day's event were certainly ordained,
290 To be the warning to posterity:
So many changes are therein contained,
So admirably strange variety.
This day alone, our sagest Hebrews shall
In after times the school of wisdom call.

1. Pheroras avoided losing his Graphina only because of his nefarious bargain with Salome (which morally destroyed him).