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Nina Ekstein

Trinity University, nekstein@trinity.edu

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Repository Citation

Ekstein, N. (1995). A woman's tragedy: Catherine Bernard's Brutus. *Rivista di letterature moderne e comparate*, 48(2), 127-139.

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A WOMAN'S TRAGEDY: CATHERINE BERNARD'S 'BRUTUS'

The theater has traditionally been a male domain. The ranks of authors, directors, and even actors have long been overwhelmingly dominated by men. In Western drama, no women playwrights have gained admittance to the literary canon. While never absolute, the relative exclusion of women from dramatic authorship is even greater when the type of theater in question is tragedy. Carol Gelderman asks bluntly: "Why is it that no woman has ever written a great tragedy?"¹. A number of explanations have been put forward that suggest deep-seated links between men and tragedy: Susan Gilbert and Susan Gubar find that "the structure of tragedy reflects the structure of patriarchy" and that Western tragedies almost invariably focus on a male "overreacher"². Sue-Ellen Case perceives close links between tragedy and male sexuality³. Gelderman views tragedy as a natural tool for male self-assertiveness⁴. The most categorical, albeit least enlightening, response comes from Voltaire who, when asked why no woman had ever written a tolerable tragedy, replied, "Ah, the composition of a tragedy requires testicles"⁵.

The fact is that women have written plays – including tragedies – and have had them produced. In fact a number of significant women playwrights appeared for the first time in the seventeenth-century: Aphra Behn in England, Ana Caro in Spain, Antonia Pulci in Italy, and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz in Mexico⁶. In France during the 1600's, the female dramatic presence was even greater: Marie-Catherine Desjardins de Villiedieu, Françoise Pascal, Antoinette Deshoulières, Anne de La Roche-Guilhen, and Catherine Bernard all wrote for the stage. Their names are generally unfamiliar, however, because their dramatic production has been almost entirely obscured in the annals of literary history.

While women in the seventeenth-century wrote plays, it would be foolish to claim that they produced a feminist theater. Women playwrights were operating in an essentially male arena, one which, particularly in France, was highly codified and increasingly weighed down by tradition and glorious models of dramatic skill. In order to succeed as playwrights, women had to write in a male, classical mold, and find less obvious ways of expressing their difference as women. Elizabeth Berg articulates the issues well:

Caught in a masculine tradition – one might say a masculine language – and responding necessarily to masculine demands,

women writers must assume a phallogocentric system of representation while at the same time attempting to inscribe their own language or figure in their own work. Like male writers, but for other reasons, they must both reproduce the masculine system of representation and attempt to introduce (or produce) another figure within their representations⁷.

In this study I propose to examine specifically how one female playwright, Catherine Bernard (1662-1712), inscribed a female voice within what appears to be a traditionally male tragedy, *Brutus*. Bernard was a multi-talented and prolific writer. She wrote novels, short stories, fables, poetry, and two tragedies, *Laodamie* (1689) and *Brutus* (1690). Both plays were well received and had successful theatrical runs in their day⁸. They deserve to be reread today, not only for their intrinsic merit (which is considerable), but especially as illuminating examples of how tragedy may be written by women.

While it is on *Brutus* as a work of literature that I wish to focus, the literary fortune of Bernard's dramatic *oeuvre* may help us understand how female-authored plays are traditionally read, and why they are neglected. After publication in 1691, *Brutus* was reprinted twice in the eighteenth century. Since that time, however, there have been no further editions⁹. In fact, until very recently, mention of Catherine Bernard as a playwright was invariably accompanied by the names of two men: Pierre Corneille and Bernard de Fontenelle¹⁰. Catherine Bernard is not perceived as an independent woman writer, but as a woman whose talent is a function of the men of letters around her. Even more alarming, her *Brutus* has been regularly attributed to Fontenelle, and reprinted as his in certain collections of his work¹¹. There is no solid reason to believe that Fontenelle wrote this play; the preface is signed by Catherine Bernard. Two rather unsubstantial facts seem to have supported such a conclusion: 1) they were friends (or relatives) and thus Bernard may well have shown Fontenelle a manuscript of the play, and 2) Bernard demonstrates mastery in *Brutus* of the most classically male components of seventeenth-century tragedy (fathers and sons, honor, glory, and Roman virtue). Bernard's skill in this domain is evidenced by Donneau de Visé's comment on *Brutus*: "Mlle Bernard vient de faire voir qu'elles [les dames] savent pousser avec force les sentiments héroïques, et soutenir noblement le caractère Romain"¹². The attribution of her work to Fontenelle is by no means anomalous; other women playwrights of the period were accused of having received extensive male assistance in the composition of their plays as well¹³.

When Bernard's plays are not attributed to Fontenelle, they are often dismissed as inferior¹⁴. One focus for the attacks on the plays themselves is the accusation that they are merely derivative of Racine or Corneille¹⁵. While it is difficult to discuss any seventeenth-century French tragedy without reference to Corneille or Racine, in the case of the women playwrights such critical comments are so frequent as to be obsessive. What might be interpreted as intertextual enrichment is frequently cast so as to denigrate the value of the play. Thus critics have employed a variety of strategies to obscure both the authorship and the value of Bernard's theater.

The plot of *Brutus* is relatively simple. Brutus and Valerius are the consuls of Rome. Octavius, an emissary of Tarquin (the overthrown king), arrives and argues unconvincingly for the return of Tarquin to the throne. When Octavius leaves, Brutus announces his plans to have his elder son, Titus, marry Valerius's sister, Valérie, and to have his younger son, Tibérianus, marry Aquilie. This arrangement is problematic because both Tibérianus and Titus are in love with Aquilie, and she loves Titus. Valérie, suspecting Titus's true feelings, sends her slave to spy in Aquilie's household. In the second act we discover that Octavius's true purpose for coming to Rome was to confer with Aquilius (Aquilie's father) to plan an immediate overthrow of the consuls and return Tarquin to the throne. In order to be successful, they need Titus's help. Tibérianus has already gone over to Aquilius's side. Aquilius proposes offering Aquilie's hand in exchange for the gate to the city that Titus controls, and sends Aquilie to make the offer. At first Aquilie refuses to even raise the matter with Titus. When she is finally forced to do so, Titus does not want to listen and is clearly torn by the conflicting demands of his love for her and his loyalty to his father and country. He later capitulates only when his brother boasts that Aquilie will be his. Meanwhile, Valérie's slave has discovered the conspiracy and reveals it to the consuls. Brutus is first confronted with Tibérianus's betrayal and then, far worse, with Titus's. Titus repents wholeheartedly and requests to be put to death in accordance with the law. Brutus is deeply touched by Titus's contrition and courage. Valérie dissuades the consul from simply ordering his sons' death, urging him to turn to the Senate for a final decision. The Senate returns the matter to Brutus, ruling that he alone must decree his sons' punishment. As consul, he decides that he must order their death, but is destroyed by his own decision. Valérie wants to commit suicide over Titus's body but is

prevented from doing so, while Aquilie dies, either from grief or by suicide.

Unlike Bernard's other tragedy, *Laodamie*, which deals with a queen and her choice of a marriage partner, *Brutus* is a male-dominated play; at its center is a male family: Brutus and his two sons. The women, central characters in *Laodamie*, are peripheral here, defined as objects to be desired and/or bartered off. They have family ties each to only one male (father and brother) whose name they share. Women have political power in *Laodamie*; in *Brutus*, as Henriette Goldwyn points out, they are excluded from History¹⁶. The opposition between the two plays extends to their sources. Where *Laodamie* was almost entirely an invention of the author (based on a few lines by Justin), *Brutus* is strongly anchored historically, relying on Livy and Plutarch¹⁷. Plainly, the two tragedies present different universes in terms of gender focus.

It might appear that I am implicitly arguing in favor of Fontenelle's authorship of *Brutus*, but in fact what I hope to demonstrate is how Catherine Bernard employed a traditionally male system of representation (much more overtly male than is the case in *Laodamie*) in order to introduce a less obvious figure of women, as Berg would put it, into her representation. Bernard introduces a female presence into her dramatic universe in three ways, the first of which involves the figure of the double.

As if to signal the double-voiced nature of the play – the male voice of dramatic tradition and the female voice of Bernard – doubles abound at all levels of *Brutus*. These doubles, however, are rarely simple duplications; instead they often convey an undercurrent of disproportion and difference. First there are the double names, Aquilius and Aquilie, and Valerius and Valérie. Their perfect symmetry is upset, however, by generational disjuncture: Aquilie has a feminine version of her father's name, while Valérie has the name of her brother. Next, a more classic doubling occurs through the simple presence of brothers: their perfect opposition – the good brother and the bad brother – is symmetrical. Similar too are the pair of spurned lovers, Tibérinus and Valérie, although two spurned lovers (as opposed to two brothers) might be read as excessive. Far less common is the double tragic figure: both Brutus and Titus seem at different moments to have the central tragic role. The play does not give priority to one or the other¹⁸. The absence of a tragic hierarchy which normally would organize our reading of the play may even be interpreted as a calling into question of the very structure of patriarchy. In fact *Brutus* presents twin

patriarchies, two male-dominated political orders competing with each other: a monarchy with a single ruler (the traditional patriarchal structure) and a consulate (with double rulers, Valerius and Brutus). While the point of view of the play clearly favors the consulate, casting the exiled Tarquin in a negative light, there is an undercurrent of an opposing position. The young people of Rome clearly favor the return of Tarquin¹⁹, and their feelings are at least in part shared by Brutus's son(s). If the young support Tarquin, how might we determine which is the old order and which the new? A hierarchization of the two becomes impossible.

The generational organization of the play seems simple, with the old making the laws and the young rebelling against their authority. But here again, there are signs of dissymmetry. Brutus and Valerius are theoretically doubles, but they do not seem to belong to the same generation: Brutus's son is to marry Valerius's sister, not his daughter. Brutus was also consul before Valerius, thus reinforcing the difference between them. There is a pattern in this play of "establishing difference at the heart of similarity", as Linda Hutcheon puts it²⁰, and of creating doubles where normally there should be only one.

The case of the two female characters is particularly complex. On the one hand the contrasts between the two women seem to replicate the oppositional structure found in the case of Titus and Tibérinus. Aquilie is loved and Valérie is spurned. At the end of the play, Valérie is prevented from witnessing the death scene, while Aquilie manages to be present. Valérie is left alive at the end of the play, while Aquilie dies. The opposition between them extends to their respective relations with their confidants: Valérie has perfectly traditional discussions with Plautine in which she takes her into her confidence, while Aquilie repeatedly pushes Albine away²¹. The opposition between Valérie and Aquilie does not, however, extend to the moral domain: unlike Titus and Tibérinus, one cannot be labeled good and the other bad. Unlike the brothers as well, the two women never appear together on stage. Their inability to occupy the same space coupled with their love for the same man suggest identity rather than difference.

A different form of doubling occurs in the context of the intertextual relations between *Brutus* and several of Racine's tragedies. While critics do seem overeager to dismiss Bernard's work as derivative, there are indeed specific similarities between elements of this play and of Racine's work. Like *Bérénice*, *Brutus* is a tragedy of separation. Like *Phèdre*, *Brutus* presents an obsessive, jealous love as well as a father whose role it is to judge his son and condemn him to death. The

references go beyond what might be viewed as unconscious, a simple function of Racine's recent and overwhelming popularity: for example, Aquilie prefaces her presentation of the conspiracy to Titus with an unmistakable echo of Phèdre: "Hé bien, je vay parler; c'est vous qui le voulez" (III, i)²². Bernard seems to invoke Racine repeatedly, thus presenting her own work as a kind of double, similar to his. Why employ such a strategy? Does Bernard believe herself to be the equal of Racine? It is a dangerous strategy, in that it leaves her open to charges of being merely a pale imitation of the great master²³. I would like to suggest that Bernard may have used these similarities, as she does the doubles within the play, in order to draw attention instead to difference. Titus and Aquilie must indeed separate, but unlike Racine's Titus and Bérénice, they reject patriotic and familial reasons for doing so. Valérie's love for Titus, unlike Phèdre's, is an innocent love, and Valérie cannot be held responsible for Titus's fate. Brutus judges his son, but not hastily. The similarities are only superficial ones, which upon the slightest examination reveal diametrical difference²⁴.

The figure of the double is one of the means that Bernard employs to inscribe a female presence in her tragedy. It is not, of course, an explicit means of doing so. Rather, doubling sets up a structure that admits a second, and dissonant, voice. A second technique, that Bernard uses is to establish a powerfully patriarchal system and then critique it.

The structure of patriarchy dominates the dramatic universe of *Brutus*, almost to the point of tyranny. The two institutions represented, the political and the familial, are both controlled exclusively by men. The familial domain is a seamless extension of the political: Brutus decides on marriages with the same authority and dispatch with which he rejects Octavius's offer. The sons and the women are no more than pawns, tokens in alliances between the fathers. Bernard draws attention to Aquilius's and Brutus's love for their offspring; yet paternal affection counts for little when contrasted with the fathers' political projects. The child must take his or her place in such projects (the conspiracy, Brutus's choice of a wife for Titus) or be severely punished²⁵. The play begins with Brutus disposing of his sons through marriage and ends with him disposing of his sons through death.

The language in which the males express themselves in this play is redolent of traditional patriarchal values: Brutus, Octavius, Valérius, and later Titus, speak unremittingly in terms of country, honor, and duty, and a constellation of similar values. *Rome* (or *R[r]omain*) is mentioned 63 times in the play, *vertu* (virtue) 29 and *loi* (law) 22²⁶. The

political domain is so fraught with these values that Brutus, the patriarch, associates the political with the absolute. His reaction to learning of the conspiracy is: "On conspire! ô Rome, ô droits sacrez!" (IV, 2). He conflates his own tenuous hold on political power with divine selection.

The patriarchal structure dominates *Brutus*, but is accompanied by an implicit critique. The two male tragic figures, Brutus and Titus, despite their oft-voiced adherence to Roman values, are both torn by internal conflict. Titus wavers between his love of country and father, and his love for Aquilie. Brutus is similarly divided between his love for the law and his love for Titus. Bernard heightens the force of Brutus's internal conflict by making him ironically the source of the very law that condemns his son to death. The law of the land – which is simultaneously and literally the law of the father – triumphs over Titus, but it is a hollow victory²⁷. A law that allows for no repentance or atonement is self-defeating. Indeed, *Brutus* seems to be a representation of the patriarchal system destroying the future of the patriarchy. By rigidly insisting on the death of both sons, by being incapable of distinguishing between them, the law destroys the very males who were to perpetuate the system.

The play is an implicit critique of the traditional conception of male heroism as well. Mazouer notes that Bernard's heroes are different from those of the early Corneille: "avant de choisir l'héroïsme, Titus et son père Brutus connaissent la faute ou la faiblesse". He accounts for the diminishment of the hero by saying that triumphant heroism was no longer fashionable at the end of the seventeenth century: "la tragédie n'exalte plus les héros; elle les abat et les détruit"²⁸. Indeed, tragic heroism is less than pure and triumphant in *Brutus*. Titus adopts the stance of the tragic hero, eager to die for his sins in order to uphold law and country. But his tragic arena is not the battlefield; instead the only heroic act left open to him is to retain his composure while being put to death in disgrace. Brutus too upholds law and country in the face of great personal suffering. But instead of triumphing over his private feelings, he is destroyed by them. Male heroism in this dramatic universe leads to the destruction of the hero.

Certain critics have voiced reservations about the two male protagonists. Specifically, they find both Titus and Brutus to be inconsistent. Lancaster is troubled by Titus: "[t]he fact ... that so fine a man consents to betray his father and his city is not made convincing"²⁹. Mazouer notes this inconsistency in Titus's character as well, but is more struck by a similar dissonance in Brutus: "on est frappé de voir

Brutus, père dur et assez proche des pères de comédie à l'acte I, devenir ce père pathétique et héroïque des deux derniers actes"³⁰. I would suggest that the inconsistency and fragmentation that these critics note in the characters is not accidental nor is it a sign of Bernard's lack of dramaturgical skill. I read these strong shifts in character as a splintering of the traditional model of male tragic heroism. This model is no longer operational, nor even inhabitable by a mere mortal. The two heroes cannot remain equal to themselves throughout the play.

In both cases, the inconsistencies of character arise as a result of love, be it erotic or paternal. Titus agrees to betray his father and country because of his love for Aquilie, while Brutus questions the law and his own authority out of love for his son. Love as a value is situated in a position diametrically opposed to law-honor-country. Private, as opposed to public, love is closely associated with women. This leads us to the third and most direct means that Catherine Bernard employs to inscribe a female presence in *Brutus*: the valorization of both the female voice and the values associated with women.

Women are valorized, first of all, by their representation as desiring subjects. Both love Titus³¹. While the action they take in support of that desire is mediated – Aquilie is forced by her father to offer herself to Titus as a reward for betraying Rome, and Valérie employs a spy to discover the secrets of Titus's heart – their defense of the condemned Titus is direct and forceful.

Unlike the male heroes, the two women experience no internal conflict. They are not divided, fragmented, or inconsistent. Bernard grants the realm of the absolute, traditionally associated with tragedy, to the women characters. Aquilie and Valérie, although they never meet or speak, are both equally and totally committed to love³². In their unwavering adherence to this particular absolute value, they seem to belong to a universe different from that of the men. The male ethos of law-honor-country is completely alien to Aquilie and Valérie. Aquilie expresses to Titus her indifference to all matters political: "Et que me fait à moy leur [les Tarquins] retour, leur absence?" (III, i)³³. Most interesting, despite the unequal balance of power between the sexes, feminine-coded love triumphs over the male values of law-honor-country, at least temporarily. Titus betrays his country and his father for the love of Aquilie. Goldwyn reads the end of the play as a final victory for masculine values³⁴, but I disagree. Titus cannot simply go back to his former values, as his condemnation makes clear. Brutus cannot simply act the role of consul and judge. Titus's espousal of "Roman" values and Brutus's condemnation of his sons in accordance

with the law merely mask the fact that for both men love has taken the upper hand.

The role of women in this play is not particularly large³⁵. It is, however, crucial. Without Aquilie, Titus would have no reason to betray his father and country, and without Valérie, the conspiracy would not have been discovered in time. Although divorced from the political universe by their powerlessness and by their refusal of male values, Aquilie and Valérie nonetheless speak. Their voices formulate an assault on male values. Like their acts, their language can focus only on love, excluding male values and thereby calling into question the pertinence of such values. Tibérinus's betrayal comes to light in IV, iii. Through the following scenes Valérie repeatedly injects her voice and interpretation, blaming Aquilie for Tibérinus's crime: "Que par son amour seul son crime fut commis; / Aquilie a tout fait" (IV, v). Satisfying Valérie's desire for revenge against her rival, these accusations also have the effect of denying any political motivation on Tibérinus's part. Brutus tries to protect his son from Valérie's perspective, claiming: "L'amour à des forfaits ne peut servir d'excuse" (IV, v). Valérie, however, is tenacious in interjecting her voice in the scenes between father and son(s) in the last two acts. The confrontations are very much between men, and focus on loyalty, betrayal, patriotism, and the law. Valérie will not, however, allow Brutus full control of the scenes. In IV, vii, Valérie herself claims responsibility for Titus's crime: "Par moy ce que j'adore est tout prest d'expirer. / Je prepare le fer qui doit trancher sa vie". Her voice is matched by that of her female counterpart: Aquilie appears before Titus in the next scene and insists on revealing to Brutus that she is to blame for what Titus has done. The women actively strip Titus and Tibérinus of their own responsibility for their choices, and of any possible motivating factors other than love. In a situation that excludes them, both Aquilie and Valérie insist on their own role and their own centrality.

The most profound influence of the women in *Brutus* can be seen in what we might call the feminization of the male hero. Titus's crime is that he accepted the female value of love and relativized, albeit temporarily, the masculine values of patriotism and honor. In the last act of the play he returns to these masculine values, championing them now as absolute. He recognizes his crime, demands to be put to death for it, and absolves everyone but himself of responsibility. He has become the consummate Roman. But the mark of the feminine is upon him, as his imminent death indicates. Brutus, too, is overcome by love, but interestingly, not at the same time as his son. At the very moment

that Titus returns to the fold, Brutus, in reaction to the valor of his son, begins to relativize the values that the masculine code presents as absolute. Most striking is that Brutus is convinced by Valérie to appeal to the Senate. He is seduced into believing that some solution might be found to his tragic situation. Valérie thus imposes a feminine logic that prioritizes questions of the heart, and relativizes all else: law, politics, and country. In contrast to Titus, who seeks to bring his father back to traditional values ("Adoptez la Patrie au lieu de vos deux fils", V, vii), Brutus comes to see his own cruel decision in relative terms: "A Rome en te perdant ... / Peut-estre je deviens plus criminel que toy" (V, vii). He acknowledges that another (non-heroic) perspective on his decision exists. It is Valérie who provides that perspective in V, ix, accusing Brutus of parricide. The female perspective which discounts all considerations of law and country can only see Brutus as a criminal. That Brutus can admit this perspective himself is a sign that he has been to a certain degree feminized. As the play ends, Brutus is transformed from the self-righteous, absolute patriarch to a divided and destroyed ex-father. The reaction of the two women to Titus's death is as painful as that of Brutus – Aquilie dies and Valérie seeks the same fate for herself – and yet they are in no way divided and fragmented. They remain absolute to the end.

It is clear by the denouement that a female figure of representation has been inscribed deeply within the play. Specifically, it operates in large measure by subtly subverting the traditional forms and structures of male dramatic representation: patriarchy, symmetry, hierarchy. To conclude, I would like to quote Elizabeth Berg once more:

French classicism is one of the great masculine fantasies. As a 'return to order' after a period dominated by women – by a queen mother on the political plane and by salon women on a literary plane – and as a body of literature created primarily by 'great men', French classicism may serve to illustrate the phallogocentric structures inherent in Western representation, as well as the ways in which those structures may break down to allow another figuration to become perceptible (176).

The theater, and more specifically tragedy, belongs by and large to men. Nevertheless, as Catherine Bernard demonstrates in *Brutus* – a tragedy that at first seems eminently typical of the standard tragic canon – phallogocentric structures may indeed break down and allow another, a female, figuration to materialize on stage.

¹ Carol Gelderman, *The Male Nature of Tragedy*, "Prairie Schooner", 49 (1975), p. 220.

² Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1979, p. 67.

³ The form of tragedy can be understood "as a replication of the male sexual experience. Tragedy is composed of foreplay, excitation and ejaculation (catharsis)", in Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre*, New York, Methuen, 1988, p. 129. See also Nancy S. Reinhardt, *New Directions for Feminist Criticism in Theatre and the Related Arts*, "Soundings", 64 (1981), p. 373.

⁴ Gelderman, p. 225.

⁵ Voltaire is cited in a letter from Byron to John Murray (April 2, 1817); *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979. This statement is particularly ironic if one considers that Voltaire found Catherine Bernard's *Brutus* not unworthy of plagiarizing in his own *Brutus* (1730)! See Charles Mazouer, *Le 'Brutus' de Catherine Bernard et Fontenelle: la tradition de l'héroïsme*, "Études normandes", 26, 3 (1987), p. 58.

⁶ I am indebted to Perry Gethner for this information.

⁷ Elizabeth Louise Berg, *Classical Depictions: Figures of Women in French Classicism*, diss., Cornell U. 1982, pp. 177-78.

⁸ Henry Carrington Lancaster reports twenty-three performances of *Laodamie* in 1689 and three more in the 1690-91 season. *Brutus* had twenty-seven performances from Dec. 18, 1690 to Aug. 12, 1691, and 16 more in the eight years that followed (*French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, New York, Gordian Press, 1966, Pt. 4, vol. 1, pp. 236-37, 358). Given the standards of the time, both plays were considered successful.

⁹ Catherine Plusquellec identifies the following editions of *Brutus*: Paris, Veuve L. Gontier, 1691; Paris, Veuve P. Ribou, 1730; *Théâtre français*, 1737; in *L'Oeuvre de Catherine Bernard*, diss., Université de Rouen Haute-Normandie, 1984, p. 147. Perry Gethner has just published a most welcome anthology entitled *Femmes dramaturges en France (1650-1750)*, Tübingen, Biblio 17, 1993, which includes Bernard's *Laodamie*.

¹⁰ Legend has it that Bernard was related to both of them. Alain Niderst finds no evidence of any blood relation between her and either Corneille or Fontenelle (*Fontenelle*, Paris, Plon, 1991, p. 33).

¹¹ According to Lancaster, *Brutus* was included in editions of Fontenelle's oeuvre in 1758, 1761, 1766, and 1818 (p. 356, n.6). Plusquellec and Niderst cite the Abbé Trublet as the source of the assertion of Fontenelle's authorship of the play. The Abbé Trublet was Fontenelle's admiring biographer: his work was composed around the time of Fontenelle's death in 1757 (some 45 years after Bernard had died). In discussing this issue, Plusquellec seems undecided about the true extent of his participation. She does point out that "on ne possède aucun témoignage de l'époque attestant que Fontenelle l'écrivit" (p. 127). Niderst, on the other hand, appears to believe that Fontenelle is responsible for virtually all of Bernard's work (pp. 115, 136, 140, 144, 155!)

¹² *Mercur Galant*, December 1690, cited by Claude and François Parfait, *Histoire du théâtre français (1734-49)*, Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1967, Vol. 3, p. 199.

¹³ Perry Gethner, in the Introduction to his *Femmes dramaturges*, discusses how common the practice of mentoring between males was during the period. He continues: "Ces écrivains ne furent jamais blâmés, que l'on sache, d'avoir sollicité ou reçu les conseils d'un maître estimé. Mais les femmes dramaturges furent souvent condamnées pour avoir eu un mentor: de plus, leurs détracteurs osèrent même prétendre qu'elles ne servaient que de prête-noms pour un auteur masculin, quoiqu'ils sussent que c'étaient de purs mensonges. [outes les dramaturges dece recueil [Pascal Desjardins, La Roche-Guilhen, Bernard, Barbier, and Graffigny] durent subir de telles attaques à leur réputation littéraire au cours de leur carrière" (p. 11).

¹⁴ This is the position of the Frères Parfait who mention the possibility of Fontenelle's authorship only to dismiss it, but who think very little of Bernard's dramatic skill (pp. 196, 202). Lancaster takes a similar stance (p. 357).

¹⁵ See, for example, Mazouer, pp. 52 and 57; Jacques Morel, *Catherine Bernard et Fontenelle: l'uri de la tragédie*, in *Fontenelle. Actes du congrès tenu à Rouen*, ed. Alain Niderst, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1989, p. 185; and Plusquellec, pp. 113, 134-35, and 141.

¹⁶ "Catherine Bernard ou la voix dramatique éclatée", in *Ordre et contestation au temps des classiques*, ed. Roger Duchêne et Pierre Ronzeaud, Tübingen, Biblio 17, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 208.

¹⁷ Lancaster, pp. 235, 356.

¹⁸ Indeed, in terms of speech and presence on stage, they are remarkably similar. Brutus speaks 21.8% of the lines of the play, while Titus has 20.3%. Brutus is on stage for 14 scenes while Titus is present for 13.

¹⁹ "[L] inflexible rudesse [des consuls] / A choqué les esprits d'une libre jeunesse / Et tous avec les Rois veulent voir de retour / Les plaisirs, la licence, et l'éclat d'une Cour" (II, i), in Catherine Bernard, *Brutus*, Paris, Veuve L. Gontier, 1691. All references are to this edition.

²⁰ *A Theory of Parody*, New York and London, Methuen, 1985, p. 8.

²¹ In II, iii, Aquilie refuses to tell Albine what is troubling her and two scenes later she orders Albine to leave her alone ("Laisse-moy, tu contrains mes plaintes et mes larmes", II, v).

²² Aquilie's line is a conflation of two lines that Phèdre speaks to Oenone, the first when she agrees to reveal her secret to her confidant, "Tu le veux, Lève-toi" (I, iii), and the second when she learns that Thésée has returned, "Je te l'ai prédit, mais tu n'as pas voulu" (III, iii) (*Théâtre complet*, ed. Jacques Morel et Alain Viala, Paris, Garnier, 1980).

²³ Such accusations are fairly common. See for example, Alain Niderst, *Fontenelle à la recherche de lui-même*, Paris, Nizet, 1972, p. 428; Mazouer, pp. 57-58; Plusquellec, pp. 134-35.

²⁴ Plusquellec presents a different perspective on intertextuality: "La pièce de Mlle Bernard présente cette double particularité: c'est une oeuvre digne du théâtre de Corneille dans laquelle Titus incarne les valeurs morales, mais c'est également une oeuvre proche du théâtre racinien, avec des héros non exempts de faiblesses qui les humanisent. D'où l'étonnement du spectateur: les fières attitudes choquent un peu dans une pièce où il entre trop de tendresse. Cet assemblage de deux esthétiques opposées montre les lacunes de l'une et de l'autre" (pp. 134-35).

²⁵ In one example of how the children are victimized by their fathers, Aquilius plays a role with his daughter, trying to discover her true feelings for Titus; his choice of verb is disquieting and revealing: "je veux pénétrer au fond de votre coeur" (II, ii).

²⁶ Rome is, in English Showalter's words, "the archetypal symbol of virile order" (*Writing Off the Stage: Women Authors and Eighteenth-Century Theater*, in *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*, ed. Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, p. 153). It is interesting to note that Republican Rome, the site of *Brutus's* action, was the image chosen by Louis XIV for his reign (Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 91).

²⁷ Goldwyn finds a critique of the "loi du père" in her reading of this play (*Catherine Bernard*, p. 208).

²⁸ Mazouer, pp. 54 and 58.

²⁹ Lancaster, p. 356.

³⁰ Mazouer, p. 55.

³¹ The male characters are less than willing to recognize the women as desiring subjects, however: Brutus, Aquilius, and Valerius use them as political pawns, and both Titus and Tibérinus refer to Aquilie, as a *bien* (II, 231, 636).

³² Goldwyn notes that Bernard uses the value system of love as a means of inscribing women forcefully in the play: "il est dans cette pièce, malgré son titre masculin, un accent visible posé sur les personnages féminins qui, en dépit de leurs hésitations, leur servitude, donnent une allégeance complète aux sentiments de l'amour, l'emportant sur tout autre loyauté" (*Catherine Bernard*, p. 209).

³³ Goldwyn notes as well the profound alienation of women from male values: "[c]e sont des héroïnes situées dans le hiatus, extérieures à l'Histoire. Elles n'ont d'appartenance à aucune loi, à aucun système. Ce qui les distingue, c'est l'amour et l'auto-élimination finale", *Femmes auteurs dramatiques au dix-septième siècle*, "Cahiers du dix-septième", 4 (1990), p. 54.

³⁴ At the end of *Brutus*, "c'est la loi du père qui prime"; "c'est finalement la loi de Brutus – représentant de l'Etat – qui gagne contre l'amour sincère d'Aquilie ... Titus revient au père, à Rome, à la loi" (*Femmes auteurs*, p. 58).

³⁵ Males dominate the play at every level. The first two acts of the play open with male characters; in fact no female appears onstage until the last scene of the first act. Men speak 69.5% of the lines, a number which is obviously quite high. In Racine's tragedies, for example, women speak less in only *Bérénice* and *Mithridate*, both plays that have a single woman protagonist.