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“Occidentalizing Rhodes in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*”  
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Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1610) is notable for its representation of tyrannicide—the just killing of an unjust king—decades before the execution of Charles I in the English Civil War. It is also notable for its setting, whereby the early modern reality of Ottoman Rhodes is silently supplanted by a classical, pagan Rhodes, though this feature has received less scholarly attention. For this reason, reading the play’s politics and setting through Edward Said’s *Orientalism* opens new interpretations. First, it allows us to see how Beaumont and Fletcher’s kingdom is consistent with a discourse of “Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality” (Said 4). Paradoxically, it also reveals the “imaginative geography” with which the playwrights Occidentalize Rhodes to dramatize a very English political fable (Said 73).

This paper argues that through an implicit analogy between the play’s King and James I, *The Maid’s Tragedy* critiques its present as tantamount to imagined Oriental oppression, while gesturing toward a future that fulfills the promise of—and lays claim to—the classical past. Tyranny is Oriental, says *The Maid’s Tragedy*, and if James is a tyrant, he has no place in the West. Thus, the triumph of nascent republican values over the theory of divine right depends on expelling the Orient and restoring the fantasy of Rhodes’ Occidental purity. That is, if *The Maid’s Tragedy* participates in imagining England’s revolutionary experiment, it also participates in constructing an idea of the East that would justify English colonial expansion in the succeeding centuries.

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### Early Modern Science Fiction, Techno-Orientalism and Race-making

In his book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues the West, or the Occident, constructs a backward, anti-progressive, and often primitive East, or Orient. Between this oppositional binary, power flows from the west to the east only. However, Said's Orientalism doesn't fully account for the possibility of a powerful East and its impact on the West, in other words a bi-directional flow of power. This limitation poses a problem in an exploration of early modern science fiction that represents East Asia, particularly China, as an absent presence in English consciousness. To account for the way in which a *palpable presence* of a powerful East threatens the West, and the consequent power dynamic of that structure, this paper begins with Said's traditional Orientalism alongside its revision in speculative fiction, *techno-Orientalism*, to explore early modern science fiction that figures an absent-present Orient. A reading of early modern science fiction through the lens of techno-Orientalism highlights the bi-directional power dynamic in the paradoxical nature of an absent present Other: put in another way, techno-Orientalism stresses the significance and palpable nature of the *presence* despite its invisibility.

## **Seneca's English Avengers: Orientalizing Ibéricos on the Early Modern Stage**

By Victoria Muñoz, Assistant Professor of English, City University of New York Hostos CC

This paper explores how Reformed England Orientalized Catholic Spain, drawing on similar tactics of anti-Islamic denigration that the West has historically executed against the East, as documented by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1979). Focusing on the anti-Spanish propaganda movement, *The Black Legend of Spanish Cruelty*, and its dramatic representations in England, this paper tracks the ways that Reformed Europe interpreted Spaniards' documented cruelty in their global conquests less in terms of theories of empire and more in terms of theories of blood (im)purity, specifically regarding Spanish cruelty as a function the country's historical intermingling with Moors, Jews, and North Africans. This attitude reflected an early Orientalist view of blood descent as "physiological-moral classification" (119) as depicted in popular media. Stereotypes about the Spanish affinity for bloodshed, coupled with renewed interest in the works of the Hispano-Roman dramatist, Lucius Seneca, produced a series of bloody revenge tragedies, including the eponymous *Spanish Tragedy* (1587) of Thomas Kyd. The play features the black-faced Machiavel, Don Lorenzo, seeking murderous revenge for Don Horatio's having courted and bedded the allegorical figure of Bel-Imperia. As this example illustrates, the Black Legend depended upon and helped to construct early Orientalist truisms, especially the de facto association of the Arab to either "lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty" (286). English revenge tragedy's treatment of Ibérico characters therefore evinces Orientalism's malleability as a denigrating concept of racial Otherness, here ironically applied to Catholic Spain as Islam's most famous aggressor in the Reconquest of Europe.

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### Epistemologies of Ignorance: Said and Our Continuing Imperial Legacies

In contrast to the most frequent use made of Said's *Orientalism*, wherein post-colonial methods are applied to early modern texts, I will argue that Said's work is best honored by attending to its trenchant critique of contemporary epistemology, i.e. the generation of knowledge within the Euro-American academy. Said demonstrated that knowledge produced by Orientalist scholarship was partial and self-referential, not valuing or incorporating knowledge traditions that originated outside Western scholarship. He showed how academic knowledge had politically motivated blind spots—forms of ignorance—that it promoted *as knowledge*. I submit that much current scholarship in early modern studies suffers from the same limitation.

We are accustomed, in the Europeanist post-colonial tradition, to seeking out and condemning racist and colonial discourses in our sources and our scholarship. But we tend to do so on a purely theoretical level in the latter instance, failing to take into account the *material* conditions of knowledge production—the way institutional and disciplinary practices shaped by the imperial past (and present) also condition what can be known and published. The imperial legacies of unequal resource access in Western and non-Western institutions result in a situation where, much like Said's condemned Orientalists, Europeanists are *still* largely having conversations about the “Orient” amongst ourselves. We must therefore subject our disciplinary and institutional practices to the same rigorous critique as our methodology, arguing for a truly internationalist form of knowledge production if we wish stand in true solidarity with those injured by the unjust legacies of our imperial past.

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Jurisdiction: Erasure and Subjection in John Dryden's *Ambony*

John Dryden's *Amboyna, or the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants* (1673), sets English, Dutch, and Spanish colonists at odds on the island of Amboyna, or Ambon in modern Indonesia. In the text of the play, Ambon is stripped almost completely of any cultural or natural features that might distinguish indigenous inhabitants or ecological specificity. The island is instead represented, often and explicitly through the dialogue of both English and Dutch merchants, as a theatre of competing European colonial "interests" in all the overlapping irony of that term: religious interests are economic, mercantile interests are political, and racial interests are perversely eugenic. When Edward Said describes Orientalism as a "whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear...when that peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question," he acknowledges that these "interests" might be an evacuation of qualities. Such is the case at Ambon, where Dryden's erasure of indigenous political, geographical, and economic concerns clears space for European imperialist self-determination.

This paper will argue that *Amboyna* erases Ambon in order to re-organize its action around the contemporary problem of colonial jurisdiction, particularly as it pertains to the subjected body. Within the repurposed space of the "East Indies," Dryden's play explicitly addresses the intersection of bodies and all other interests, so that the Hollanders' "most unheard of cruelties [will] seem most just and legal." In Dryden's stage-Ambon, jurisdiction is an Orientalizing tool, an end realized in the politically legible performance of authority, rendered as force exercised on embodied subjects and theatrically constructed to be inseparable from the emergence of empire.