Christian Weise's *Masaniello*: ReWriting the Peace of Westphalia

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In a very general sense, the political developments of the European 17th century resemble those of the 20th century. During their first halves, these centuries had witnessed devastating wars, and a number of treaties between major powers secured a power constellation that was intended to achieve peace through a balancing of power. While this power equilibrium assured relative peace in the second halves of these centuries, hegemonical endeavors continued to disturb the power balance and put peace at risk. The 350th anniversary of the Treaty of Westphalia is an opportune time to investigate how this peace was received by a 17th century European intellectual and artist, who has been considered representative of the political outlook of his era: Christian Weise.

Order and stability were *desiderata* after the chaos and devastation of the Thirty Years' War, which was concluded by the exhaustion of all parties involved and a long and difficult negotiation process resulting in the Peace of Westphalia. This treaty sought to institute order and stability mainly by undercutting the absolutist ambitions of the Holy Roman Emperor. By granting the German princes autonomy, the treaty allowed them to strengthen their power externally and internally. The Peace of Westphalia settled, or postponed, major disputes on an international level. It also quieted down conflicts within the Empire caused by France and Sweden, the signatory powers with a tendency to intervene. However, peace was not gained within the territories. Here absolutist ambitions threatened economic development and security of the social structure. The war had increased societal differences, since the less wealthy had been less able to protect themselves from losses due to war taxation, confiscation, and robbery. This situation facilitated a centralization and concentration of power by those who had succeeded in preserving their assets during the war. The empowered princes sought absolutist governance

over the impoverished estates, bourgeoisie and peasantry. The wealthier members of the landed gentry pursued similar interests (Duchhardt 9-14).

The emerging field of political science was a response to this situation, and a noteworthy example is Hermann Conring's scholarship. A proponent of political Aristotelianism, Conring devised a political theory to check the absolutist tendencies of the territorial princes and the landed gentry. Emphasizing the political role of the estates and their parliamentary organization, he sought to limit the political power of the territorial princes and counterbalance the influence of the wealthy gentry with other parts of society. He defined the objective of government as *utilitas rei publicae* and aspired to withdraw any legitimation from a government which solely pursued the interests of a *majestas privata* (Dreitzel, "Conring" 166-67). Insisting on the primacy of common and constitutional law, he strove for the establishment of an administrative basis which prevented the interests of the *majestas privata* from gaining control of the state. As one of the most prominent scholars in the 17th century, Conring was very influential in his own time.[1] His stance was elaborated and popularized by other scholars. Ludolf Hugo and Johann Nikolaus Hertius, for instance, addressed the political situation in the territorial states more directly (Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe* 2: 556-61). Weise not only brought Conring's political theory down from the university and the chancellery into the classrooms of secondary schools, he also put it on stage.

Weise was born in Zittau in 1642 to Protestant parents who had emigrated from Bohemia to Upper Lusatia during the Thirty Years' War. From 1660 to 1668, he studied and taught at the University of Leipzig, but failed in his attempts to acquire the *venia legendi*. For a few years, he worked as secretary of a Saxon government official at the court in Halle and as the Master of Ceremonies at the Schulenburg court in Magdeburg. He left courtly life for a professorship in Political Science, Rhetorics, and Poetry at the Weißenfels secondary school, the *Gymnasium illustre Augusteum*, where he acquired a reputation for his modern teaching methods. In 1678, Weise became the rector of the Zittau secondary school and performed this function until shortly before his death in 1708.

Weise attracted an international student body to the Zittau

Gymnasium. The outstanding reputation of this secondary school motivated sons of the aristocracy to study there instead of a conventional *Ritterakademie*, and stipends from the city as well as teaching assistantships enabled students of a lower social standing to attend Weise's school. Thus the student body was of great social diversity.[2] His students were future merchants, lawyers, professors, counselors, and rulers; a substantial number of them became involved in secondary education like Weise himself and were sources of great influence for generations to come. Although he did not remain unchallenged in his modern teaching methods, Weise was a distinguished and highly influential intellectual and an important and well-respected citizen of Zittau,[3] the richest of the cities in the Lusatian *Sechsstädtebund*.

Despite his enormous productivity and popularity in his own time, Weise and his works do not belong to the Canon of German Studies today. Being considered a typical representative of his era, however, Weise has attracted rather continuous interest from scholars focusing primarily on his political intent. For several reasons, the establishment of this intent has proven very difficult: First, scholars do not see Weise's dramas as part of his comprehensive educational concept, which included political philosophy, rhetoric, and practical political prudence and was designed to suit sons of peasantry, bourgeoisie, and nobility alike,[4] or they fail to provide a content-based analysis of Weise's educational design.[5] With the exception of Marianne Kaiser's and Klaus Reichelt's studies, Weise emerges as an opportunistic ideologist of absolutist government, although Reichelt conceives of Weise as a schoolman quite limited in his political and ethical outlook. He defines "die beiden — für Weise einzig denkbaren — Auffassungen von politischen Ordnungssystemen" as absolutist rule or *Ständestaat*, i. e. an aristocratic governance checked by the Diet of the Estates (139). To support this assumption, Reichelt presumes that Weise possessed a "von lausitzischen und kursächsischen Verhältnissen geprägte Vorstellungswelt" (139). Yet, Weise's political writing belies the limitedness and provinciality which Reichelt attributes to the scholar. Instead, Weise observed international developments and sought to find universally applicable principles of government. While he, as Kaiser suggests, might not have been a supporter of a quasi-democratic state form,[6] governmental models which de-emphasized aristocratic rule may not have been inconceivable to Weise as the po-

litical scientist. After all, he puts the role of the nobility in a historical perspective (*Politische Fragen* 82), which, while left without conclusion, is reminiscent of his mentor's historicizing acumen:

> Underdessen lobe ich die Klugheit des Königs, der lieber eine begrenzte Macht will als vollständig machtlos zu sein. Sicher ist, daß heute alles, was der König an Autorität besitzt, ein Geschenk des Volkes ist. Welche Macht er in Zukunft hat, wird die Zeit lehren. (qtd. in Dreitzel, *Absolutismus* 65-66)

Except for Kaiser, scholars conceive of Weise as a teacher of political science who propagated deception, political murder, and the breach of constitutional law as governmental principles in the name of *ratio status* and the education of a *Politicus*.[7] Scholars mistake these popular notions for Weise's own conception of "Politische Staats=Klugheit" (*Politische Fragen* 410) and practical political prudence. Weise's definition of *ratio status* strictly prohibits extra-legal means (419), and he demands that practical political prudence be founded in justice, honor, and *utilitas rei publique* (Politische Fragen 440).

Second, as Reichelt points out, historical reality, 17th century political theory, and definitions of absolutist rule are disregarded to the extent that princes and landed gentry are misconceived as guarantors of the traditional feudal system.[8] The thoughts of authors such as Balthasar Gracián are misconstrued to the effect that broad intellectual support is ascribed to the political strategies of absolutist regimes, a support, in which Weise is implicated (Burger 89).

Heinz Otto Burger, for instance, claims that Gracián's notion of political prudence justifies the ruler's deception of the title character in Weise's drama *Vom Neapolitanischen Haupt=Rebellen Masaniello*. According to Burger, Gracián maintains that the difference between appearance and reality is irrelevant because things are not regarded as what they are but what they seem to be (89). Such a conception, however, is contradictory to Gracián's text. It is one of Gracián's foremost concerns to differentiate between "[r]ealidad y apariencia" (178), since mistaking one for the other is detrimental to one's social and spiritual well-being (128, 178). For Gracián, "[l]a virtud es cosa de veras," virtue is a matter of truth (228).

Similarly, contemporary notions of absolutism may be inadequate to understand conceptions 17th century scholars employed to evaluate governments of their time. Through empirically analyzing European governments, Conring, for instance, arrived at a catalogue of characteristics pertaining to absolutist regimes. He found that absolutist rulers tended to leave governmental responsibility to self-serving and conniving counselors and were selfish and indulgent themselves. They were inclined to violate ancient privileges and constitutional law; they also gravitated toward the establishment and use of military force and, in order to finance the military, introduced unproductive taxation. Yet, these characteristics were not unique to absolutist monarchies, but also reflected developments to which the richer members of the landed gentry were prone. Thus, Reichelt's restriction to "die Auseinandersetzung innerhalb der herrschenden adligen Elite" (138), i. e. the conflict between the monarchy and the estates, may impose a limitation which prevents us from understanding the full scope of 17th century political thinking and Weise's teaching.

Thirdly, the question whether Weise supported any party engaged in the conflicts of the 17th century - the lower classes,[9] the estates,[10] or the absolutist monarchy[11] - fails to address his ultimate concern and the comprehensiveness of his political design. Scholars assume a partisanship on Weise's part for a specific social class or institution, as John Lindberg's question "Höfisch oder gegenhöfisch?" poignantly summarizes. But Weise might not have restricted his thinking to such a bipolar scheme. Instead, Weise might have been "höfisch," if the court in question promoted the well-being of the state through prudent politics and obedience to constitutional law; and he might have been "gegenhöfisch," if the court in question abused its power, disregarded constitutional law, and thus endangered the state. In other words, Weise was far less interested in legitimizing the rule of a certain social class or institution than in finding optimal governmental principles and in teaching these to his students.

In this context, one must look to the plays which Weise wrote for the annual school performances at the Zittau *Gymnasium*. These performances were at once an integral part of his teaching program and a public advertising campaign, not only for the school seeking funding from the city, but also for the city aiming to establish business and government contacts.[12] This dual character is important to

the interpretation offered here, since Weise very likely intended for his diverse audiences to gain various experiences from his plays.

For his students, Weise certainly wanted these performances to be a learning experience. His plays provided an opportunity for his students to test his teachings by acting out social roles similar to the ones they were supposed to play in later life. Hence, Weise designed the parts of his plays with the individual characteristics of his students in mind. These roles functioned as didactic models similar to the examples which he uses amply in his textbooks to illustrate his points.

Only some of the audience, such as the social elite of the city, may have understood Weise's plays in the same way his students did. Considering the social and intellectual diversity of the audience, it would have been very difficult to construct a single mode of reception according to which Weise's dramas were supposed to be understood. Each spectator probably understood the plays according to his or her own situation, problems, and concerns. The tax issue of Weise's *Vom Neapolitanischen Haupt=Rebellen Masaniello*, for instance, was of crucial importance to the Zittau bourgeoisie who were dependent on the export of linen, and whose businesses were thus vulnerable to heavy taxation. Unlike Saxon government officials, these bourgeois spectators might have sympathized with a revolt against unfair taxation. They might have objected to financing the nobility if that nobility no longer fulfilled its original function of military protection, as had become painfully evident for Zittau citizens during the Thirty Years' War (Weise, *Politische Fragen* 82).

With respect to this heterogeneous audience, Weise wrote distorting summaries of *Masaniello* and other plays as well as apologetic epilogues. Delivering interpretations, which would be well received by the ruling aristocracy, he sought to place himself above suspicion of political opposition or subversion. These additions to the actual play seem to contradict the issues dealt with and pose problems for the interpretations of Weise's dramas. Some scholars deal with this contradiction,[13] while others, especially Burger and Reichelt,[14] strongly rely on the summaries and epilogues for their interpretation. Moreover, while social upheaval, *coup d'états*, and socio-political reversals are prominent topics of his plays, their plots are difficult to define due to their paradoxical character. Aiming at changes in the administration and the preservation of the state at the same time, Weise's revolts

defy the schemes of bottom-up or top-down revolutions. It may be argued that Weise deliberately invites different interpretations by rendering disclaiming self-interpretations, by the complexity of his plays, and by rarely providing positive figures with whom the audience could identify. This ambivalent design allowed the different spectators to understand the play according to their own political notions, ideas, and interests.

Since Weise had acquainted his students with contemporary political thinking and with Conring's theory in particular, his plays may have been far less ambiguous for them than for the original audience or present-day scholars. His textbook *Politische Fragen / Das ist: Gründliche Nachricht von der POLITICA* is an example of the effort to make the academic discourse accessible for his students. *Politische Fragen* covers a wide variety of topics such as the hierarchy of laws, the responsibilities of rulers and subordinates, and optimal principles to guide the development of administrative measures. It also provides an overview of the political situation of the major European powers. Furthermore, it discusses the means of practical political prudence and its ethics. Even in this scholarly context, however, Weise is apprehensive about rendering information that might be considered subversive to the political situation in the German lands. He cautiously omits Conring's affirmative treatment of the right to political resistance. He does not discuss different governmental models, but passes over issues of power structure. And he avoids any specific reference to the German territories, although he diligently analyzes the social, economic, and political systems of Denmark, England, France, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, Venice, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the Vatican. The fact, however, that he addressed the problems neglected in *Politische Fragen* in his plays suggests that he dealt with these delicate issues in his classes or at least introduced his students to the respective literature. After all, his students, once they had mastered his *Politische Fragen*, could access the writings of major political theorists such as Conring by using either Weise's own library or the city's, which Weise had greatly expanded and improved.

Taking into account that Weise's plays were part of his pedagogical effort and relating them to his teaching, one is able to read them as rather unambiguous political propositions. Such a reading of the *Trauer=Spiel von dem Neapolitanischen Haupt=Rebellen Masaniello*

will be presented in the following; a drama which has proven to be the most difficult as well as the most provocative of Weise's works to literary scholarship.

The absolutist government of the viceroy Roderigo has economically and socially destabilized the Spanish province of Naples. The unhappy state of Naples very likely reflected negatively on its administrators, since, according to Weise, economic welfare and social balance are primary tasks of any government, and the most effective guarantee for the security of the state is for the government to achieve "daß alle und jede Einwohner glückselig leben" (*Politische Fragen* 414). Weise's students found their teacher's criticism of the heavy taxation Spain levied on its provinces illustrated in the play (*Politische Fragen* 308). This taxation, they had learned, stifled the economies of Italy and the Netherlands "obwol in beyden ein gesegneter Boden und gute Bequemlichkeit zu vielfältiger Kauffmanschafft gefunden wird" (*Politische Fragen* 295). Furthermore, the viceroy most blatantly violates every principle of taxation which their teacher had proposed. While Weise's students had learned "[m]an soll die Last mehr auf die Wohlhabenden / als auff die Armen legen" (*Politische Fragen* 502), the Neapolitan administration put the tax burden exclusively on the lower social classes. Using the same reasoning as Weise in his *Politische Fragen*, the viceroy's secretary Donato states after the outbreak of the revolt: "Man hätte das Armuth nicht so beschweren sollen" (*Werke* 1:177). While Weise's students had learned "[d]ie nöthigen Wahren / welche die Armen nicht entrathen können / sol man nicht so theuer beschweren als die anderen / welchen den Reichen zur Delicatesse dienen" (*Politische Fragen* 502), the Neapolitan administration levied heavy taxes on the most basic food stuffs of the poor, such as flour and fruit, to the effect that the people were starving (*Werke* 1:176). The many luxury items, however, destroyed by the revolutionaries attest to the fact that the aristocracy had had little difficulty in obtaining them. And while Weise's students had learned "[m]an soll nicht EXEMTOS machen / welche von den anderen übertragen werden" (*Politische Fragen* 502), the Neapolitan administration even made the nobility a beneficiary of the taxes on fruit and flour, as the students could learn from a conversation between Duke Ferrante and the viceroy's secretary Donato:

FERRANTE. Der Adel muß unterhalten werden.

DONATO. Aber nicht mit dem Ruin des andern Volcks. (Werke 1: 177)

Weise's students might have also remembered that, according to their teacher, taxation should not hamper economic development. They had learned that the best way to raise more taxes was to let the economy, and thus the exchange of goods, thrive. If the lower classes did not even have enough money to feed themselves, they surely were not able to foster an advantageous economic climate through their consumption of other goods. Thus the poverty of the Neapolitans encumbered economic activity, because they had no ability to partake in, and hence promote, the exchange of goods. Consequently, the heavy taxation of Naples' citizens could not even lead to increased revenue. Instead, it would result in economic devastation.

Considering the violation of every principle of just and prudent taxation, Weise's students probably found the viceroy's government incapable of pursuing what should be its most important function, that is, to achieve the state's security through the welfare of its inhabitants. Unwilling to consider changing its detrimental tax policies, the Neapolitan government offered very few incentives for Weise's students to identify with its objectives.

Weise's students also might have reflected upon the situation in Upper Lusatia or their home territories, where social unrest and upheaval over taxation were common (Schulze 130). If their parents were merchants or peasants, they were probably acquainted with such problems first-hand. Weise's students certainly knew from the very recent peasant uprising in the neighboring Bohemia that such issues could easily take on large-scale proportions of social upheaval. Since the end of the Thirty Years' War, the Bohemian landed gentry had drastically increased the amount of mandated labor to be rendered by the peasants, against which they had petitioned several times in vain. In 1680, the peasants resorted to an armed uprising, the events of which find some remarkable parallels in the plot of *Masaniello* (Kaiser 157-58).[15]

The people of Naples rise against the viceroy's administration. The insubordination was very likely viewed as a natural consequence of the Neapolitan administration's unjust and imprudent tax policies. Weise taught his students that the abuse of power entails expenditures to fight off the injured parties seeking retribution. He

noted that because of the Spanish exploitation, the citizens of Naples had to be brutally suppressed in order for Spain to keep its province: " . . . so müssen doch die Untertanen sehr scharf gehalten werden / damit sie nicht das Spanische Joch vom Halse werffen" (*Politische Fragen* 295).

The uprising in *Masaniello* aims at the re-installment of a written customs and tax privilege granted to the people of Naples by Charles V. The great emphasis which the revolutionaries place on obtaining the original document indicated to Weise's students that the privilege represents constitutional law. In a similar context, Weise equates the violation of a *Privilegium* with overthrowing the state: "Wir haben das Privilegium Ihre Königliche Majestät zu sehen / wer uns daran hindern will / der will den Staat von Spanien über den Haufen werffen" (*Werke* 2: 246). Weise's students may have also been reminded that Conring defined absolutist rule as the breach of constitutional or fundamental law: "Rex non curat antiqua privilegia urbinum, ordinum et populi, sed omnia rescindit et abrogat pro libitu" (qtd. in Dreitzel, *Absolutismus* 63). This is the second aspect, according to which they would have recognized the viceroy's administration as an absolutist reign, and not as "ständestaatlich orientiert[ ]," as Reichelt claims (140).

Re-installing constitutional law would not only have been a legitimate cause in the opinion of Weise's students, but also a politically prudent one. After all, their teacher defined the purpose of *ratio status*, or "politische Staats=Klugheit" (*Politische Fragen* 410), in accordance with Conring's political theory:

> Erstlich gehet man darauff / daß die Verfassung des Staates richtig verbleibet / und daß man von dem FUNDAMENte durchaus nicht abweicht / darauff das Einkommen und die Sicherheit gegründet ist [...] Darnach ist sie [i. e. ratio status] auch bekümmert / wie die Regiments=Personen bey ihren Wachsthum und bey guter Sicherheit verbleiben. Die Gelehrten nennen es FINEM REI PUBLICÆ und FINEM IMPERANTIS.
> (*Politische Fragen* 419)

Weise's students had probably also learned about Conring's position on the right to resistance. The violation of constitutional law and the endangering of the state by the viceroy represented a situation which warranted resistance. According to the prevalent Protestant political theory of their age, Weise's students would have found Masaniello's initial actions fully legitimate.

Weise's students very likely knew of communities that had not succeeded in securing their rights in court, and consequently took their causes to the streets in Upper Lusatia (Kaiser 157-8) and elsewhere in the German lands (Schulze 129-32). The 1680 peasant uprising in Bohemia showed that this issue harbored the potential of great social disruption. The Bohemian landed gentry was not able to control the situation and asked the Emperor to intervene. The Emperor crushed the uprising with his military. Weise's students may have understood an exchange such as the following as a mocking rejoinder regarding the adequacy of means employed by the landed gentry and the Emperor in Bohemia:

> FERRANTE. Gegen rasende Leute gebraucht man sich der Schärffe: Ob Neapolis hundert tausend Köpffe weniger hat / so wird dem Königreiche gar wenig abgehen.
> DONATO. So wollen wir diese hundert tausend Personen ohne Zoll passiren lassen / und damit würde dem Königreiche gleichfals nichts abgehen. (*Werke* 1: 178)

Likewise, Weise's students could gain the insight that the peasants killed by the Emperor's army or punished by the Imperial Investigative Commission with death or imprisonment could not render the statute-labor, which had been the issue of contention in the first place. Indeed, Weise trained his students to analyze historical models "durch Beyhülffe der gesunden Vernunfft" in order to extract guidelines of political prudence, which could be applied to similar situations (*Politische Fragen* 4). Consequently, Weise required analogical thinking from his students. The analogies had to be drawn between historical events and present situations. History, or historical drama for that matter, is thus used as a vehicle to transmit ideas about current problems and issues: "Man thut einen Blick in die Historien / weil man doch zu den gegenwärtigen Exempeln nicht gelassen wird" (Politische Fragen 4).

While Weise's drama is supposed to function as a model for his students to learn about the governmental problems and contemporary political issues, it proves to be unfaithful to its title. The title character only enters the play in the middle of the first act and does not assume a dominant role throughout the play, neither through his actions nor through his stage presence: " . . . his speaking part is no greater than that of some dozen other main characters" (Aikin 148).

Elected by the people to be their leader, the fisherman Masaniello at first seems to be an honest, unselfish, and dedicated representative of their cause (*Werke* 1: 214). With these characteristics, he may have reminded Weise's students of a model statesman. But soon his actions become debatable. In order to cut the supplies of the complicit aristocracy and to prevent the people from disuniting over property disputes, he orders the houses and the goods of the aristocracy to be destroyed. He also proceeds to administer justice, obviously with good intent (237-38), but with little regard for proper procedure and commensurate punishment (238-44). Eventually, his family turns insolent and avaricious, and pressures Masaniello with ambitious expectations, to which he succumbs.

Despite these failures, Weise's students may have considered Masaniello the better ruler in comparison to the viceroy and his aristocratic entourage who show utter neglect of the city's economic and social needs. They have nothing but contempt for their "Regiments=Personen" (*Politische Fragen* 419), the people for whom they are supposed to provide a better life. The plans to murder Masaniello, to poison the wells, and to set the city ablaze from all ends would have clarified for the students that the viceroy's administration was illegitimate.

Masaniello finally acquires the legal document in question as well as the viceroy's written and publicly sworn promise to respect the law in the future, complete with a general pardon for all revolutionaries. The people's leader sees his mission fulfilled. In a dramatic gesture of utmost modesty, he begs the archbishop and the viceroy to rid him of the pompous garb which they had persuaded him to wear. Yet, this seemingly happy ending is only the turning point of the play, a cheap trick to make Masaniello feel at ease and to disarm the people. Instead of securing the results of the revolt, Masaniello follows the invitation of the archbishop and the viceroy, and is poisoned

with wine which he had unduly accepted as a royal gift.[16] The poison causes Masaniello to go mad. The viceroy presents himself as a savior to the people, has Masaniello murdered, takes bloody revenge on the revolutionaries, and strengthens his military control over the province with Spanish troops.

Weise's students certainly perceived Masaniello as lacking any kind of practical political prudence. Their teacher had warned them: "wer nicht simuliren und dissimuliren kan / der wird bey der REPUBLIQUE wenig Nutzen schaffen" (*Politische Fragen* 440). Consequently, Masaniello causes the revolt to fail and becomes responsible for even more misery for the Neapolitans. Likewise, however, the viceroy and the archbishop possess only what Weise called "Machiavellische Boßheit" (*Politische Fragen* 444), not political prudence. The teacher demanded that one not only be able to recognize betrayal, but proscribed betrayal itself: "Inmittelst muß man den Betrug kennen lernen / wie man die gifftigen Kräuter kennet / nicht / daß man sie braucht/ sondern daß man sich dafür hütet" (*Poltische Fragen* 445). The viceroy's deceitful actions even attack the very basis of the societal organization, because they destroy the faith necessary to establish and maintain such organizations:

> Ein redlicher Mann hält dasjenige / was er einem andern versprochen hat. [...] Nun bestehet das gantze Politische Wesen auff gewissen PACTIS dadurch die Leute miteinander verbunden werden. [...] Wo Treue und Glaube nicht gelten / da sind die Vorschläge zu allen Tractaten, die Alliances, Handel und Wandel verdorben. (*Politische Fragen* 433-34)

Since the archbishop was instrumental in the deception and murder committed by the viceroy, it is hardly conceivable that Weise's students would have considered his character "der einzige wirkliche Politicus in diesem Stück" (Szarota 205). Scholars have sought to identify Weise's own voice with either the archbishop or the fool, both of which have a clear understanding of the situation and provide critical, at times sarcastic commentary on the viceroy's actions. Both side opportunistically with the party that has the better prospect to win the political struggle, whereby the fool is a bit more short-sighted than the sly archbishop. The assumption, however, that Weise's voice could

be identified with either of these characters is untenable, since both of these figures contribute only to the reproduction and deepening of the conflict, not to its solution. In fact, the characters of the politicking archbishop and his entourage of rather worldly monks could have served as a reminder of Weise's criticism concerning political involvement of the Catholic Church. The teacher had explicitly criticized the cooperation of the Catholic church with Spain in order to keep the provinces of Sicily and Naples under Spanish rule:

> Was Italien betrifft / ist Spanien mit dem Pabst und den übrigen Staaden deshalben einig / daß man alles IN STATU QUO fein ruhig soll bleiben lassen. Drum werden sie wol allen möglichen Fleiß anwenden / damit um selbige Gegend kein weitläufftiges Kriegs=Feuer ausbrechen möge. (*Politische Fragen* 303)

Accordingly, the archbishop is called "ein Erhalter des Estaats" (*Werke* 1: 197) for abusing his religious authority over the citizens of Naples and Masaniello, that is, as a keeper of the Spanish estate, not a keeper of the state of Naples. Again, Weise implicitly equates the violation of constitutional law with the annihilation of the state of Naples. Conring, who supported the complete separation of state administration from religion and advocated religious tolerance, even made the Catholic clergy responsible for the rise of absolute monarchies: "Immer wenn Kleriker als Stellverteter des Monarchen regieren, wird der Freiheit des Volkes Abbruch getan; den geistlichen Dienern verdanke die 'monarchia herilis' ihren Aufstieg" (Dreitzel, *Absolutismus* 64). Weise's students might have deduced that Conring's opinion was not only formed by contemporary politics, but also inspired by historical observation. The Thirty Years' War had been started for presumably religious reasons. The Catholic Emperor sought absolutist control over the Holy Roman Empire, and the Protestant princes and estates endeavored to counteract these absolutist ambitions of the Catholic central power. Apart from the war being a subject of history, we can assume that it still was very vivid in the public and private imagination of the time. Except for a few commemorative plaques, there was hardly any physical evidence of the impact the Thirty Years' War had on Zittau (Pescheck 1: 37, Dudeck 37). Still, Weise's students primarily belonged to the generation which had been born into the horrors of this war.

With respect to the impact of the Thirty Years' War on the political outlook of the 17th century, it is important to emphasize the play's comment on militaristic institutions and their use by absolutist rulers; a topic, which has been entirely neglected by scholars so far. Immediately after the defeat of the Neapolitan revolt, the archbishop advises the viceroy to secure his victory: "Es wird rathsam seyn [...] daß also fort die Spanischen Soldaten wiederum auf ihre Posten angewiesen werden" (*Werke* 1: 386). Given the portrayal of the armed forces throughout the drama, Weise's students were unlikely to perceive this advice as the reestablishment of law and order. In *Masaniello*, the armed forces stand for chaos and unlawfulness. The army of bandits assassinate Masaniello in a church while he is negotiating the reinstatement of constitutional law. The unarmed and helpless Masaniello is shot by four men. According to the most prominent character of the play, the fool, the army is an organization of robbers: "Und wie sprechen die Soldaten: es ist keine Sünde / das ich stehle / der Herr behält doch nichts davon: nehm ichs nicht / so nimts ein ander" (179).

The portrayal of the armed forces in *Masaniello* was reminiscent of the way in which the Thirty Years' War was fought. The fact that the military plays such an important part in this school drama also has a concrete historical background. As examples may serve the military defeating the Bohemian peasant uprising and the absolutist policies of Johann Georg III, who was preoccupied with militaristic institutions. After becoming the Elector of Saxony in 1680, Johann Georg III had immediately started government reforms, spent a great amount of tax revenue on the military and by 1682 had organized Saxony's first standing army, a force of 10,000 men (Naumann 137). Weise's students could learn from Conring what role the military would play in the Saxony of Johann Georg III:

> Nach Conrings Auffassung bedurfte jede Despotie und Tyrannis fremder oder landeseigener Söldner, die Kriegführung mit Söldnerheeren bedurfte wiederum großer Steuerleistungen der Untertanen: Die absolute Monarchie wird von Beginn als Erorberungs-, Militär- und Finanzstaat gesehen. (Dreitzel, *Absolutismus* 64-65)

The fool also explains these military functions in the by far longest monologue of the play. The fool is mocking the fortification of power with the help of armies. He creates his own army, an army of fools. His foolish soldiers then terrorize him, want to be fed and are rather insatiable. The fool gives three reasons for building his own army. First, everybody seeks to protect himself with armies. Second, he needs subordinates in order to exert power. He cannot establish a hierarchy being by himself, "denn wo ich einen Soldaten hencken lasse / so muß ich selber dran / und damit ist das Regiment ruiniret" (Werke 1: 208). Last but not least, he intends to partake in crime: "Nun wil ich helffen rauben / brennen / todschlagen / und was sonst vor sieben freie Künste in der Welt mehr sind. Aber einen Mangel hab ich noch . . . ." — an army (Werke 1: 207). Weise's critique of the militaristic means employed to establish absolutist control could hardly be clearer to those acquainted with his political philosophy.

Summarizing the analysis of Masaniello, one finds that Weise characterized the Neapolitan administration according to Conring's definition of absolutist rule. A selfish ruling elite disregards the welfare of the state and its inhabitants. In doing so, the administration endangers the state and even violates constitutional law. In order to maintain its power, it has to rely on the clergy and use military force. Considering that absolutist ambitions were the political motives propelling the Thirty Years' War, *Masaniello* responds to this historical legacy by proposing *ex negativo* a political design, which can secure social and political peace. The very issue proposed in *Masaniello* refers us to the Thirty Years' War: taxation had been the bone of contention which led to the outbreak of the war, since the Emperor sought to expand his power through fiscal means at the cost of the Bohemian estates. Both the tax privilege that the people of Naples wanted to reinstall and the Peace of Westphalia were constitutional laws which curtailed the power of the monarch and the ruling elite, and thus provided for the common welfare.

Weise's *Masaniello* provided his students with an effective model to test his teachings. The play does not offer a simplistic affirmation of the learning material. Instead, it provides only negative examples and is essentially open-ended. With the revolutionary effort coming to naught and the administration determined to continue its business as usual, the initial conflict is unresolved.

The play was performed February 11, 1682, and may have been intended as an homage to Conring, who had died the previous year. Thus, "[die] vielen nachdencklichen Lehren / welche aus dieser Historie hervor strahlen" (*Werke* 1: 372) that his students and his audience were supposed to learn from the play, may intentionally be the most pronounced and most complex representation of Conring's political legacy in Weise's plays. While autonomous and autocratic rulers and their administrators tend to serve themselves more readily than the commonwealth, constitutional laws support the common good and ensure that one element of the social body cannot gain the upper hand. It is not a political or social party against which Conring and Weise take a stance. Instead, they criticize the breach of constitutional law for the sole advantage of the *majestas privata.* They argue against unconstitutional government.

Hence we see the Neapolitan revolution fail at the moment when its leader Masaniello becomes self-indulgent and thus turns into an absolutist ruler himself. Weise's students would have noticed that not only Masaniello's lack of political prudence caused the downfall of the revolt. At the same time, his lack of political prudence could only be so disastrous because he represented an enormous concentration of power in the first place. Staging Conring's political ideas, Weise's "nachdenckliche[ ] Lehren" (*Politische Fragen* 372) call for a universally extended application of the Peace of Westphalia concept of a disempowered power. A concentration of power as seen in the hands of the evil-spirited viceroy as well as in the hands of the well-meaning Masaniello is always prone to misuse if not kept in check by representative political bodies. The play was written at a time in which political events seemed to unsettle the political landscape of Upper Lusatia for reasons similar to the causes of the Thirty Years' War. Weise's *Masaniello* can be read as an attempt to rewrite the Peace of Westphalia because genuine and dependable order and stability could, according to Weise, only be gained if all parts of society were included in the design of the peace.

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Notes

[1]Conring is most noted today as the founder of German legal history on account of his *De origine juris Germanici* (Herberger and Stolleis 46). Yet in his own time, Conring was a scholar of international reputation and influence. From 1650 to 1660 he was the personal physician of and political counselor to Queen Christina of Sweden, advising her also during the time of her abdication. He also received a scholarship from King Louis XIV of France, who sought to influence political scholars to render a positive judgment of his government by such financial advances (Dreitzel, *Absolutismus* 59). But Conring showed himself unimpressed by such favors and instead criticized French Absolutism: "Der französische Staat ist eine Despotie, die vorrangig nach den Interessen des Herrschers regiert wird. . . .Es heißt, daß das Volk zur Armut verurteilt ist, und . . . daß die Privilegien in Frankreich nicht beachtet werden" (63-4).

[2]For detailed information concerning the student body of the Zittau secondary school during Weise's rectorship, see Horn 163-68. As Kaiser points out, the statistics which Horn provides, may not be representative (165).

[3]For Weise's connections in the scholarly community, see Arnhardt 175 and Wollgast 103-24.

[4]See Martini 169-96, Szarota 173-81, and Reichelt 138-59.

[5]Compare Zeller, *Pädagokik und Drama.*

[6]See Kaiser 123-45.

[7]See Burger 75-93, Martini 169-96, Szarota 173-81, and Reichelt 138-59.

[8]See Reichelt 138-59.

[9]See Kaiser 123-45.

[10]SeeReichelt 138-59.

[11]See Burger 75-93, Martini 169-96, and Szarota 173-81.

[12]The city magistrate had in fact ordered the annual performance of school dramas in 1594. In 1602, the humanistically oriented rector Melchior Gerlach made this instruction part of the regular *Schulordnung.* See Arnhardt 174.

[13]Regarding the epilogue of *Masaniello*, Szarota remarks: "Im Laufe des Epilogs nimmt Weise fast alles zurück, was er in seinem Stück so lebendig vergegenwärtigt hatte. Da schmeichelt er dem Adel und findet Worte höchster Anerkennung für diejenigen, die er zuvor scharf kritisiert hatte" (212). Kaiser arrives at a similar interpretation of the plot summary and the epilogue, but concludes that these misrepresentations were a lesson in simulation and dissimulation for Weise's students (142-43). Emrich attempts to explain this contradiction as Weise's self-censorship. He speculates, "daß Christian Weise dieses Trauerspiel vom Rebellen Masaniello nicht ohne Angst und Sorge aufführte, man könne seine Absichten mißverstehen und in dem Stück eine geheime Aufforderung zum Sturz der Herrschenden und zur Befreiung der 'niedrigen Menschen' wittern. Um dem vorzubeugen, ließ er der Aufführung eine Nachrede folgen" (214).

[14]See Burger 75-93 and Reichelt 138-59.

[15]These parallels constitute a significant element in Kaiser's argumentation, because they show that Weise did indeed critically respond to the political situation of his time. Despite a considerable number of disapproving reviews of Kaiser's argumentation, subsequent scholarship has largely failed to address Weise's reference to these political events. This reference is contradictory to Reichelt's contention that Weise was in support of the landed gentry, since his choice of material heavily implicates the landed gentry in the absolutist abuse of power, as Reichelt indirectly argues himself (139-44).

[16]Through the viceroy's daughter Celinde, we learn "daß mein Vater Befehl gab / den Fischerknecht mit den köstlichsten Weine zu REGALIren" (Werke 1: 332). The verb "REGALIren" is derived from *Regalien*, a notion very important to Weise in his *Politische Fragen* (9-11). *Regalien* are the rights and symbols of official statesmanship and power. Since the word is derived from the Latin *rex*, it has maintained the meaning of "pertaining to the king" as well as "royal prerogative." Thus by accepting and consuming the wine, Masaniello takes on royal rights—an act that violates the charter which the people of Naples gave him.

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