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## Cromwell and Augustus: Non-Partisan Historical Comparisons in andrew Marvell's "An Horatian Ode"

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CROMWELL AND AUGUSTUS  
Non-partisan Historical Comparisons  
in Andrew Marvell's "An Horatian Ode"

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of English  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by  
Steven E. Vanderplas

1988

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

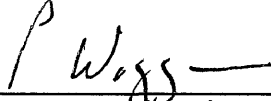
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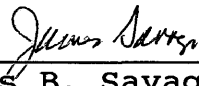
Author

Approved, March, 1988



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Professor Peter D. Wiggins for his guidance, to Harold Brooks for obtaining material from the library at the University of Illinois, and most of all to my wife for her patience, encouragement and devotion.

## ABSTRACT

Despite the uncertainties concerning the composition of Andrew Marvell's "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," most interpretations either depend on or supply a theory of Marvell's political feelings at the time he wrote it. This thesis studies the poem in a less political context, that defined by Ruth Nevo as the contemporary preoccupation with the problem of history and the hero.

This historical context allows for an investigation of three unsettled areas of Marvell scholarship--the relationship between the "Horatian Ode" and "Tom May's Death," the significance of the echoes from May's translation and continuation of Lucan's Pharsalia, and the extended comparison between Cromwell and Augustus suggested by the poem's title--and offers a means of understanding Marvell's praise of Cromwell as non-ironic and non-partisan without speculating on his personal feelings towards Cromwell.

CROMWELL AND AUGUSTUS

Non-partisan Historical Comparisons  
in Andrew Marvell's "An Horatian Ode"

Pressed closely, most critics will answer the question, "What were Andrew Marvell's precise sentiments when he composed 'An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland'?"<sup>1</sup> as Cleanth Brooks did in "Criticism and Literary History": "I do not know" (220). Unfortunately, neither Brooks nor his adversary Douglas Bush nor their successors in the theoretical battle between critics who cite the uncertainties surrounding the ode's composition as justification for text-centered criticism and those who think that those uncertainties demonstrate the extent to which all critics depend upon corrective historical data have allowed this uncertainty to influence their writings. Critical discussion of the ode has been reduced, with only occasional exceptions, to an argument over whether Andrew Marvell thought Oliver Cromwell was a good guy or a bad guy when he wrote it. Nearly every article argues to or from an opinion about Marvell's personal attitude towards Cromwell. Hardly a line in the poem has not been used to support both sides of the question at one time or another.<sup>2</sup> A survey of the discourse establishes this sad circumstance.

Disagreement first arose over the force of individual adjectives. Cleanth Brooks thinks that "forward Youth" (1), "restless Cromwell" (9), "active Star" (13) and other

phrases connote an unseemly ambition. Douglas Bush accuses him of "grasp[ing] at a pejorative possibility" (365) whenever one presents itself, whereas Joseph Anthony Mazzeo believes the adjectives are downright complimentary affirmations of Cromwell's heroic virtù.

The interpretation of more substantial grammatical units has proven no less divisive. Lines 29-32, for example, have been urged as proof both that Marvell admired Cromwell and that he detested him:

Who, from his private Gardens, where  
He liv'd reserved and austere,  
As if his highest plot  
To plant the Bergamot.

For Mazzeo, these lines favorably allude to Cincinnatus, the hero who traded his plowshare for a sword when Rome needed him to defeat the Aequians and who returned to his farm as soon as the Republic was secured:

Marvell here uses an historical parallel in the standard Machiavellian way, for a particular act. Cromwell's emergence into public life, like that of Cincinnatus, is a spectacular manifestation of a virtù which displays itself at the right time.

(9-10)

For others, such as William R. Orwen, the lines lay bare Cromwell's pretense of innocence. Because the bergamot was often called "the pear of kings" Cromwell obviously aspired to be worthy of his fruit (10-11). Others note that the words "as if" imply that the Bergamot was not in fact Cromwell's highest plot; they find a mockingly ironic tone.



The impact of Marvell's description of Cromwell's rise to power has also supported antipodal interpretations:

To ruin the great Work of Time,  
And cast the Kingdome old  
Into another mold. (34-36)

Many critics point to these lines to emphasize the undeniably destructive consequences of Cromwell's ascent, but Andor Gomme prefers to emphasize a different aspect. He points out that lines 35-36 qualify the damage in such a way as to "suggest a constructive act, even perhaps an artistic creation" (52).

The lines that follow demonstrate the same trend:

Though justice against Fate complain,  
And plead the antient Rights in vain:  
But those do hold or break  
As men are strong or weak.  
Nature that hateth emptiness,  
Allows of penetration less:  
And therefore must make room  
Where greater Spirits come. (37-44)

John M. Wallace admits what many point out in their endeavor to prove Marvell's dislike for Cromwell. These lines certainly do create the appearance that Cromwell's justice is impeachable; but this appearance, Wallace says, lasts only a moment:

Marvell here confutes Cromwell's detractors by an appeal to a higher justice, embodied not in a written constitution, but in natural law. . . . Cromwell's usurpation is thus justified not only by natural law [which governs the motion of bodies], but by Scripture, for had not Christ declared more than once that lesser spirits give way to greater? (36)

Wallace's comment changed few minds. Many critics continue to insist that this stanza cannot be reconciled to a pro-Cromwell interpretation of the poem.

Critics do agree that the artistic rendition of Charles's last scene sympathetically ascribes to him a distinct nobility. Unfortunately, this unanimity does not extend to an agreement as to how that sympathy relates to Marvell's opinion of Cromwell. Walter Chernaik regards the execution stanza as central, both thematically and spatially, and calls it a "tribute to the doomed civilization, whose values find their clearest expression in defeat" (30). Those values--"taste, beauty, good breeding, a strong sense of propriety and restraint, a dignified acceptance of one's fate"--Cromwell cannot share. Andor Gomme, on the other hand, does not believe Marvell praised Charles at the expense of Cromwell; rather, "the effect of the beautiful lines in praise of Charles" depends upon a serious, non-ironic, vision of Cromwell:

If Charles's dignity and courage on the scaffold have as their context in this poem the denigration of his enemy, we surely must rate Marvell's lines about him lower; but on the contrary, these lines are so moving, because Marvell's greatness and magnanimity of mind enable him to see the best of Charles, while he is celebrating Cromwell. (54)

Lest there be complete agreement on anything, Thomas Corns uses these lines to illustrate the potential to draw ambiguous connotations from any line in any poem by relating them to Milton's Eikonoklastes and asking whether even the

limited critical agreement on Marvell's portrait of Charles is justified:

Seen in the Puritan perspective the Royal Actor is a deceiving sham, whereas in the Royalist perspective he is a sympathetic figure of heroic proportion. (12)

Critics have also attributed a wide array of meanings to "Still keep thy Sword erect" (116). David Cornelius sees lines 116ff "as a culmination of the pattern of ambiguous and 'sinister' suggestions that Brooks traces in earlier passages of the poem" (19). Chernaik, who believes that the poem conveys the point that "Cromwell's right to power lies only in his possession of it" (33) and that "power and right cannot be entirely resolved" (32), sees the closing lines as a less than friendly "warning to him to realize how tenuous his hold on power, or any man's, in fact is" (33). A. J. N. Wilson also reads a warning, but a more kindly intended one:

Fortune may destroy her son, in his hour of triumph, if he relaxes his efforts and vigilance; the Fortunae filius may be in most danger just when danger seems past, and must remember that only his virtus and consilium [the arts by which he gained] can hold what he has gained. (339)

Also on the pro-Cromwell side, Ruth Wallerstein thinks the sword represents "Protestant Christian power on the continent" (268); but E. E. Duncan-Jones in Études Anglaises, seconded by Pierre Legouis in his revision of Margoliouth, rejects its deployment as a Christian symbol because of the ode's non-Christian setting and because representations of the cross offended puritans.

Nevertheless, they find the sword consistent with a complimentary attitude toward Cromwell because of the pagan belief revealed in Odyssey, xi.48 and Aeneid, vi.260 that spirits, in this case the spirits of royalists and/or the builders of the "great Work" which Cromwell ruined, are afraid of swords.

To these half-dozen passages could be added an equally long list of other elements within the poem that have been cited to support mutually exclusive arguments. Even the very form of the poem has been called on to testify to Marvell's moral evaluation of Cromwell. Noticing that the poem follows the classical form for deliberative orations, John M. Wallace finds carefully considered praise; James Siemon observes the same form, but thinks that the very act of deliberation reflects Marvell's ambiguity. Annabel Patterson places the ode within the context of epideictic tradition and believes that the poem teaches in lines 79-80 ("How good he is, how just,/And fit for highest Trust") that "Cromwell's fitness to govern [is tied] to a humility not yet finally demonstrated" ("Against Polarization," 256). Those who think Marvell approved of Cromwell, were they to respond to Patterson, might agree that fitness to govern depends on humility, but argue that the epideictic form, which by definition demonstrates either praise or blame, is an improbable resource for one whose purpose is to suspend

judgment and that the succeeding ten lines sufficiently demonstrate Cromwell's humility.

These examples show how far the critical discourse has deviated from a constructive course. Despite almost universal critical agreement that Marvell took pains to remain dispassionately distant from his subject and that the poem has, if not an amoral, at least a pre-Christian setting,<sup>3</sup> the burning critical question remains Marvell's moral verdict of Cromwell. It has become nearly impossible to write about the ode without entering the unproductive marshes of Marvell's personal feelings. My purpose is to avoid those bogs by considering an aspect of what Ruth Nevo says is the poem's "proper context--that of contemporary panegyric and the contemporary preoccupation with the problem of history and the hero" (98). This is consistent with Mazzeo's statement that

the tension in the poem has far less to do with conflict of feeling in the poet (something difficult if not impossible to determine) than with the poet's deliberately maintained intellectual attitude to historical and political events which transcends questions of personal commitment and reveals his full awareness of the ethically irrational and problematic character of human experience. (2)

Realizing that the good guy/bad guy debate has become unfruitful and that there is another established approach to the ode, an inquiry into Marvell's use of historical comparisons, particularly his perceived parallels between the Roman and English civil wars and more particularly

Cromwell's relative stature among his Roman counterparts, provides a context in which we can share a detached, indeed an Horatian, perception of Marvell's Oliver Cromwell without needing to agree on his political orientation.

Two separate but related critical problems--the precise connection between "An Horatian Ode" and "Tom May's Death," and the significance of the ode's echoes from May's translation and continuation of Lucan's Pharsalia--serve to demonstrate the consequences of the misdirected scholarly attention of which I complain and to explain Marvell's use of historical comparisons. Because investigators have insisted upon seeing the royalism in "Tom May's Death" and the ode's obvious echoes of May's Pharsalia only as keys for unlocking Marvell's secret feelings, they have overlooked a straightforward explanation of the relationship between these works. Although Nevo and Mazzeo asked the right questions, critics have answered the wrong one.

Taking up "Tom May's Death" first, Pierre Legouis explains in Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot the commonly perceived problem while holding part of its solution ungrasped within his hand:

[Thomas May's] sudden death [on 13 November 1650] in his sleep, a drunken sleep the Royalists specified, was of course looked upon as a visitation of Heaven on a mercenary renegade. What surprises us is that Marvell should have adopted this view unreservedly. Moreover, in a

satire entitled "Tom May's Death", he included in his denunciation all the Parliamentarians collectively, under the then highly discreditable name of "Spartacus". And he even went out of his way to call Brutus and Cassius "the Peoples cheats", using, it is true, Ben Jonson as his mouthpiece and also imitating Dante, two determined monarchists, but no doubt expressing his own Royalist fervor. How can we reconcile this with the "Horatian Ode", written five months before? (91)

The common reconciliation assumes that "Tom May's Death" reliably indicates Marvell's political beliefs through November 1650 (characterizing the five months that elapsed after the composition of "An Horatian Ode," if acknowledging their existence at all, as few and short) and interprets the earlier poem through those beliefs. John Dixon Hunt is typical:

The puzzle cannot really be solved. The very fact of "Tom May's Death" lends strong support to those who read the "Ode" as implying strong reservations about Cromwell's rise to power. (130)

Lawrence W. Hyman's *Twynne's English Authors* book shows how nearly this reasoning approaches begging the question by introducing "Tom May's Death" as a royalist credential before explicating the "Horatian Ode." The organization of his chapter obscures this peculiarity by discussing "Tom May's Death" at the end of a section called "Occasional Verse"; but his interpretation of the "Horatian Ode" follows immediately and depends partly upon the premise that the author harbors monarchical sentiments (73-82).<sup>4</sup>

A greater difficulty with this reconciliation of "Tom May's Death" to "An Horatian Ode" is the hastily embraced

assumption that "Tom May's Death" is a genuine expression of Marvell's Royalism. A. J. N. Wilson doubts it, not only because of questions concerning the date and identity of its author, but because "its Royalism is put in the mouth of that great loyalist, Ben Jonson" (326, n. 3). This circumstance, noted but not seriously considered by Legouis (supra), is more than a coincidence because the central theme of this mean-spirited little poem, as Hyman does observe (75-6), is Thomas May's general unworthiness as a writer. Marvell invokes Jonson's ghost and borrows his tremendous erudition to settle what is essentially a literary dispute. Jonson, who has such "supream command" over the "Chorus of old Poets" that even Vergil and Horace dread his Laurel wand, is Marvell's literary advocate; the royalism is an authentic historical touch. When Thomas May presses for admission to the "Learned throng" Jonson whacks him over the head with the wand to show the literary nature of his complaint and begins a critical review of May's work:

Far from these blessed shades tread back agen  
Most servil' wit and Mercenary Pen.  
Polydore, Lucan, Allan, Vandale, Goth,  
Malignant Poet and Historian both.  
Go seek the novice Statesmen, and obtrude  
On them some Romane cast similitude. (39-44)

Marvell's point ought to be unmistakable: the supreme literary critic of the underworld calls May an incompetent poet and historian and consigns him to the company of other mediocre spirits. The literary criticism continues by



developing the point about May's generalized comparisons between Roman and British history:

Foul Architect that hadst not Eye to see  
 How ill the measures of these states agree.  
 And who by Romes example England lay,  
 Those but to Lucan do continue May. (51-54)

Certainly neither Jonson nor Marvell is in a position to criticize the attempt to draw historical comparisons; but to draw them poorly draws their full ire. Jonson follows these taunts with an extraordinarily gross comparison of the entire Parliamentary faction to Spartacus that makes sense only as a spoof of May, a spoof that adds to the literary critique:

When the Sword glitters ore the Judges head,  
 And fear has coward Churchmen silenced,  
 Then is the Poets time, 'tis then he drawes,  
 And single fights forsaken Vertues cause.  
 He, when the wheel of Empire, whirleth back,  
 And though the World's disjointed Axel crack,  
 Sings still of ancient rights and better Times,  
 Seeks wretched good, arraigns successful Crimes.  
 But thou base man first prostituted hast  
 Our spotless knowledge and the studies chast.  
 Apostatizing from our Arts and us,  
 To turn the Chronicler to Spartacus.  
 Yet wast thou taken hence with equal fate,  
 Before thou couldst great Charles his death relate.  
 (63-76)

This passage imitates May's inept historical analogies, denounces May's defection--unfaithfulness of any variety could hardly be overlooked by the vindictive poet who remembers May's speech impediment (27)--and continues what is essentially a literary judgment. Lines 63-70, for example, seem political, but they apply particularly to poets, of whom Jonson expects more courage than judges (63)

or churchmen (64). When the "Poets time" (65) arrived May was found unworthy. The reference to the death of "great Charles" (76) is another example: far from revealing Marvell's political positions, it compares the silence of Charles's poignant death in the "Horatian Ode" to the speech "which destroys the dignity" (Margoliouth, 296) of Pompey's death in Pharsalia. May's death, Jonson implies, was decreed to prevent the continuer of Lucan from similarly abusing the memory of Charles, as he undoubtedly would have had he lived longer as "Chronicler to Spartacus."

Having scored such literary points as the political scene allowed, Jonson pursues again his first purpose:

Poor Poet thou, and grateful Senate they,  
Who thy last Reckoning did so largely pay.

(81-82)

He concludes his speech with unflattering comparisons to Spenser and Chaucer, pronounces sentence for literary crimes, and yields the floor so the narrator may close the poem with an assurance of May's historical insignificance (98).

Four things must temper our understanding of the royalist segments: they imitate the academic crimes for which May was arraigned in the underworld, they represent the views Jonson would have held, they augment the central theme of literary criticism, and they are consistent with the vitriolic atmosphere in which every conceivable flaw is trumpeted. Although Marvell's unpleasantly personal attack,

written as it was under the patronage system, on a rival poet was probably influenced by some sort of parochial political consideration, we cannot reduce his motivation to bi-partisan political allegiance. To label "Tom May's Death" royalist is to err; to explain "An Horatian Ode" in light of this supposed royalism compounds the error.

More has been made also of the ode's reverberations from the various translations and extensions of the Pharsalia than prudence dictates. Franklin G. Burroughs and James E. Siemon demonstrate both the usual use made of the echoes and the problem that precludes their approach from being useful. Burroughs hears echoes from May's Continuation, combines Marvell's presumed attitudes toward May and Caesar, and concludes:

Suspended in the Cromwell of the 'Ode' are both the republican and the royalist conceptions of Caesar; Marvell does not predict who will win.  
(122)

Siemon, who discusses the Lucan material within a larger argument, is troubled to observe that,

Marvell seems indiscriminately to have applied to Cromwell details drawn both from Lucan's portrait of the criminal Caesar and of the patriot Pompey.  
(826)

Each of these scholars, who otherwise develop their arguments carefully, sees Lucan's characters only as representatives of partisan strife. Even though they demonstrate elsewhere their understanding of Marvell's complex character sketches, they do not seem to recognize

that Marvell's incorporation of aspects of characters with opposite moral values must indicate a level of comparison apart from their respective sides in the civil war.

Critics are too keenly interested in discovering Marvell's personal judgment of Cromwell to heed John Carey's comment about "source-hunters and echo-hearers":

Credulity is their strong point. . . . Echo-hearers rarely ask themselves what bearing their conjectures have upon the value or meaning of any poem. An exception is R. H. Syfret. She reviews the phrases from May's translation of Lucan imbedded in "An Horatian Ode" and assumes that they are meant to direct the reader's sympathies the same way as they did in their original setting. (90-91)

Carey's next sentence mentions that another critic "also uses echoes to emend Marvell's meaning." Perhaps he means that less exceptional criticism is warranted.<sup>5</sup>

Besides tending towards a critical method that ignores syntax,<sup>6</sup> the search among the echoes for a key to the "Ode" diminishes Marvell's stature as a writer because it does not credit him with the ability to discriminate among his sources. Ruth Wallerstein remembers a crucial component of the poetic mind that the reckless use of echoes overshadows:

Yet it was for a dramatic and not an ethical pattern of character that Marvell turned to Lucan. Pompey's indecisiveness, Caesar's energy, boldness, ruthless skill as Lucan portrays them, touched his imagination to see of what sort these men were who were determining the circumstances of history. (280)

Poets ought to be allowed to retain their imagination and to use source materials as springboards for other thoughts and

associations. Wallace's suggestion that Marvell might have meant the comparisons to Pharsalia to acknowledge and quell fears that Cromwell would set himself as a dictator is one possibility (34). Another is Joseph Mazzeo's suggestion that Marvell combined aspects of complex personalities to understand Cromwell's complex composition (7). Echoes in poems should not limit but increase (so far as the later text allows) the depth of interpretation.

We see that the Royalist sentiments in "Tom May's Death" grant no insight into Marvell's political beliefs when he wrote "An Horatian Ode." They show the imprudence of recklessly attributing a character's attitude to his author. Neither do the echoes from Pharsalia decide the political question; they advise historians and critics to restrain themselves from simplistic characterizations, from

Transferring old Rome hither in your talk,  
As Bethlem's House did to Loretto walk.  
("Tom May's Death", 49-50)

The attributes that make a man or his times remarkable will almost certainly not be combined in the same proportions in other men or times. The historian must carefully weigh the portions of the distinguishing attributes possessed by particular great men and skillfully judge their presence in the great men he sees in his own age, and he must do it without excessively regarding political differences. "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" shows Andrew Marvell's adherence to these principles: he presents

an Oliver Cromwell who resembles particular aspects of Julius Caesar, Pompey, Cincinnatus, and as I shall demonstrate, Caesar Augustus.

Although it has long been acknowledged that the reference to Horace in Marvell's title suggests a comparison between Cromwell and Augustus, the comparison has not been adequately developed. Graham Parry's recent book serves as an example of how easily the preoccupation with Marvell's politics besets Marvell scholars:

Horace had been on the losing side in those [Roman civil] wars, yet had managed to appreciate the qualities of the victor, Augustus. Augustus himself had transformed the Roman republic into an Empire, the opposite process to that which occurred in England, where the monarchy was replaced by a republic. Yet Augustus's career may prefigure Cromwell's, for he began 'in the Republic's Hand', where Cromwell then was in 1650, but he went on to take absolute power for himself, as Cromwell might well do. The comparison with Augustus implied in the title concedes this possibility. (229)

Parry's assessment incorporates two crucial errors. First, because "[r]ecent studies of Marvell's politics and allegiance suggest that his sympathies were monarchical rather than republican" (229), he complacently assumes that the "Horatian Ode" is a voice from the "losing side." Recent suggestions notwithstanding, Cleanth Brooks's account of the difficulties of plotting Marvell's sympathies ("Criticism and Literary History," 200-202) and Wilson's objection to the popular assumption that Marvell's other

works express distinct Royalist sentiments (326, n. 3) ought to recommend more caution to those who would characterize Marvell as a vanquished but admiring royalist. Because Marvell's political allegiance on whatever date he composed the ode is not known, it begs the question to use speculations about it as a basis for interpreting the poem.

Second, because he accepts the idea that the "Horatian Ode" conveys uncertainty about Cromwell's future conduct,<sup>7</sup> Parry begins his comparison in line 82 by equating the beginning of Augustus's public career to Cromwell's position nestled in "the Republic's hand." This is about 81 lines too late. The "Horatian Ode" measures the similarities between what the men had done, not what they might later do. When Marvell does address the future in the "Horatian Ode," he shows no uncertainty.

One critic who mentions the comparison without unduly stressing Marvell's politics is C. K. Stead. Offering penance for teaching an exclusive emphasis on the qualifications and ambiguities in the poem's praise, he cautions himself against reading too much royalism into the poem:

It is clear that Marvell regretted the execution and pitied Charles. But he nowhere reveals that mystical faith in kingship that belongs to the true Royalist. . . . I am suggesting that Marvell's Royalist sympathies were literary rather than political. (146)

Stead follows with the proposal that Marvell wrote the "Horatian Ode" about Cromwell while pretending to be Horace

celebrating Augustus (147). Unfortunately, what has often been the case proves true in Stead's article also. Most discussions of the parallels between Cromwell and Augustus appear on the periphery of more broadly or differently intended studies.<sup>8</sup> Stead pursues a discussion of how the poem's description of Charles augments our understanding of Cromwell and never returns to Augustus.

John Coolidge suggests another possible connection between Cromwell and Augustus in a comment in "Marvell and Horace" on the varied plausible connotations for Caesar:

This [Charles] is the legitimate 'Caesar' in Marvell's poem whose head the 'three-fork'd Lightning'--Cromwell--'did through his Laurels blast'; 'restless Cromwell,' on the other hand, is clearly likened to Julius Caesar, the usurper, as Lucan portrays him: 'nescia virtus stare loco' (I, 144-45). However, when Marvell says that Cromwell 'has his Sword and Spoils ungirt,/ To lay them at the Publick's skirt,' it is the memory of Augustus Caesar that he is invoking, and Cromwell is again like the beneficent 'Caesar' of Horace. (115)

Coolidge argues for a tentative justification of Cromwell on grounds that the trampler of "antient rights" once acted as his times required and could therefore be expected to restore a peaceful Augustan order because the times now require domestic tranquillity. Marvell, according to Coolidge, senses that Cromwell shared Augustus's vision of the "changeless, fitting relationships" between "force and right," and "war and peace":

[Marvell] sees in Cromwell, then, not only the unaccountable power that emerges in a time of civil war, but also a civilized man whose warlike



virtue began and will end in the arts of peace.  
(118)

Wilson rejects Coolidge's reading partly because of his "dubious reconstruction of the development" of Marvell and Horace and partly because of the crucial difference between Augustus's demonstration of humility to the Senate in 28/7 BC and Cromwell's submission to Parliament in 1650. Cromwell did diminish, at least for the moment, his personal power in order to establish a republic; Augustus relinquished some particular titles, but retained absolute authority.<sup>9</sup> Few people, as Tacitus and others testify, even in antiquity, believed Augustus's public gesture; but the "Horatian Ode" demonstrates that Marvell accepted Cromwell's (341). Wilson believes that this difference between the two men is substantial enough to preclude any meaningful comparison between them.

Nevertheless, there is merit in Coolidge's recognition of what Mazzeo variously calls Marvell's Machiavellian or characteristically renaissance use of examples to pinpoint individual characteristics without "any attempt at total integration of those exemplars" (16). For this reason, even though Wilson's conclusion that Horace's Odes do not sustain a comparison between Augustus and Cromwell in Marvell's "Horatian Ode" is undoubtedly sound, his dismissal of other classical descriptions of Augustus is unwarranted. There certainly is, as Wilson insists, an essential difference in

the humility of the two leaders; however, rather than preclude a comparison, the difference lends vitality to it.

The comparison is suggested by the title and begins in the first line:

The forward Youth that would appear  
Must now forsake his Muses dear,  
Nor in the Shadows sing  
His numbers languishing.

These lines aptly describe Octavius's situation in 44 BC when Julius Caesar was assassinated. He was in Apollonia studying both the art of war (Appian, III.ii.9) and the arts of peace (Dio, xlv.2). He quickly proceeded to Rome and, ignoring the cautious counsel of his mother and stepfather, decided to claim his inheritance. He called upon the consul Marc Antony to assure him of his respect for the Senate and to announce his intention to avenge his adoptive father's murder (Appian, III.ii.10-13). Antony, who cared to share neither his new authority nor Caesar's appropriated estate, received the forward youth rudely and advanced many legal claims against Caesar's estate to diminish the new Caesar's inheritance and influence (Plutarch, 1113; Dio, xlv.5).

Octavius needed to initiate prompt action or his inheritance and political future would disappear together.

So restless Cromwell could not cease  
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,  
But through adventurous War  
Urged his active Star. (9-12)

The "Arts of Peace," those through which Antony insulted Caesar's memory and fortune, truly were inglorious to the

young man whose honor depended on avenging Caesar. Octavius publicly claimed his inheritance and accepted Caesar's name, quite literally hitching his wagon to Caesar's star. Cassius Dio mentions that an active star appeared in the heavens at this time. By setting up a bronze statue of Caesar adorned with a star in the temple of Venus (xlv.7), Octavius encouraged the belief that this was not a comet, but the deified Julius. Antony realized that the new Caesar presented a serious threat to his power; their enmity soon found expression on the battlefield.

The following lines recall the dozens of portentous lightning bolts that find their way into Augustan biographies:

And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first  
 Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,  
 Did thorough his own Side  
 His fiery way divide.  
 For 'tis all one to Courage high  
 The Emulous or Enemy:  
 And with such to inclose  
 Is more than to oppose. (13-20)

Augustus's career was not only presaged by lightning, it resembled the lightning that destroys both its source of power and its nominal target. Cicero and Lepidus play nursing clouds to the lightning-like Caesar who accepted their assistance against Antony but never relinquished the power they lent him. When he arrived in Rome and applied for his patrimony, the man who later became Augustus had no official power and was not expected to figure prominently in the struggle to fill the vacuum created by Julius Caesar's

death. The Senate, led by Cicero and Lepidus, intended to use him (or more particularly, his adopted name) to manage Antony but to discard him as soon as he had served their purpose. Their plan seemed successful at first, but it went awry in a flash when Augustus declined to turn over his troops to Decimus Brutus and instead marched on Rome to force his election to a Consulship (Dio, xlv.12-47-xlvi.29-49). In this way Augustus proved his "courage high" to the "emulous" before revealing himself to be equally irresistible to the "enemy," the conspirators against Julius Caesar, and Antony and Cleopatra.

Another set of clouds also seems possible. The two consuls who accompanied Octavius on his campaign against Brutus found him a very dangerous ally. Pansa died of a wound received in battle--his physician was suspected of poisoning it--and Hirtius was killed by Octavius himself "in the very confused medley of battle." Philemon Holland's popular 1608 translation of Suetonius tells how little their general may have regretted their passing:

During this war, when Hirtius had lost his life in the conflict, and Pansa soon after of his wound, it was bruited rifely about that both of them were by his means slain; to the end that having defeated Antony, and the commonwealth being bereft of both consuls, he alone might seize upon the victorious armies. (74)

Antony's escape and subsequent protection by Lepidus only delayed Augustus's assumption of absolute authority.

Lines 23-24 may also recall Augustus's rush to power:

And Caesars head at last  
 Did through his Laurels blast.

"Blast" is usually understood to have the same subject as "went" and "rent" in lines 21 and 22. It is possible, however, to read "blast" as an intransitive verb whose subject is "Caesars head." This reading, which may be paraphrased, "Caesar's head blasted through his own laurels" and which has the (admittedly slight) advantage of a subject two lines nearer its verb than the usual reading, describes the suddenness and magnitude of Augustus's ascent. While attempts on thrones are usually described in terms of desperate men straining for a crown lying at or just beyond the furthest extent of their reach, Augustus blasts upward so forcefully that it is "Madness to resist or blame" him as he catches the wreath on his head and grabs, consolidates, and expands civil, military, and religious authority. His upward blast magnifies the office as it enables him to attain it.

Other descriptions of Cromwell in the "Horatian Ode" also fit Augustus, a man who also did "both act and know," who filled a leadership vacuum which was created partly by his role in the destruction of a "great Work of time," and who cast his state "into another Mold"; but the parallel fades as Marvell describes particular details of Cromwell's career for which exact correspondences in Roman history may be forced but not truly observed. Marvell's attitude

towards ill-measured comparisons does not make this discontinuity unexpected.

Nor is it surprising that the comparison collapses altogether when Marvell introduces the falcon imagery at the beginning of the last third of the poem. The falcon, "that prince of trained birds who does not wantonly kill, but only at the bidding of the falconer, the bird who does the will of another" (Mazzeo, 15), is a singularly inappropriate symbol for Augustus, who kept his prey for himself. The falcon also upsets the reader who continues to look for Augustan traces because Augustus is so often associated in art and literature with a very different bird of prey, the eagle. Dio (xlv.2) and Suetonius (Augustus, xciv) record the superstitious tradition that an eagle snatched a piece of bread from Octavius when he was a boy, but later returned it to his hand. Holland's Suetonius tells how Augustus "supported the eagle on his own shoulders" when his standard bearer was hurt (74) and mentions two other incidents involving eagles. In one, two ravens attacked an eagle perched over his tent but were killed when the eagle turned on them; this was considered an omen of Augustus's later disputes with his triumvirs (143). The second eagle foretold Augustus's deification one hundred days before his death by circling over him in Mars' field when a flash of lightning obliterated the first letter in "Caesar" on a nearby statue, leaving the Etruscan word for "god" (143-44).

Three works of art, well known in the seventeenth century, also depict Augustus with eagles. The Gemma Augustea shows Augustus seated beside the goddess Roma with an eagle at his feet. Another sardonyx cameo shows Augustus holding an eagle standard close to his face. Since both of these pieces were in the jewel room in Vienna when Marvell wrote "An Horatian Ode," Marvell may have known about them from catalogues. Marvell may also have seen the relief of an eagle at Augustus's feet on the altar to Lares in Rome.

The similarity between the early careers of Cromwell and Augustus intensifies the contrast between their later lives. The author of the "Horatian Ode" (whether he is a monarchist or a republican matters not) sees in Cromwell a man whose violent and unexpected rise to power resembles that of Augustus, but whose disposal of newly consolidated authority appears unprecedented.<sup>10</sup> Marvell's comparison of Cromwell to the Augustus seen in Cassius Dio, Suetonius, Appian, and Plutarch<sup>11</sup> offers a non-Machiavellian context for understanding the transformation Mazzeo describes:

Cromwell begins in the 'Horatian Ode' as the Prince of Machiavelli's Prince and ends at the Prince of Machiavelli's Discorsi. . . . [He becomes] the good prince who could have been a tyrant but refrains from acting as one. (14)

The indeterminable political viewpoint from which Marvell wrote "An Horatian Ode" has been cited ipso facto as evidence of its tension and ambiguity. This is wrong. The seemingly contradictory political suggestions indicate

instead that the essential questions to ask of the "Ode" are not political but historical. The historical questions provide a framework for understanding both the poem's praise of Cromwell and its relationship to "Tom May's Death" and the Pharsalian echoes. "An Horatian Ode" offers non-ironic but non-partisan<sup>12</sup> praise to Cromwell for acquiring power as other dictators had done but disposing of his new authority in what then appeared to be an unprecedented manner. By employing Pharsalia's dramatic setting but rejecting Lucan's and May's moral typecasting, "An Horatian Ode" adheres to Marvell's historical tenets and subtly criticizes the simplistic comparisons openly derided in "Tom May's Death."



## NOTES

1. The third edition of H. M. Margoliouth's The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, revised by Pierre Legouis with E. E. Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), supplies all of Marvell's texts used in this paper.

2. It is not reductive to describe the debate as having only two sides. The middle ground, staked off by Brooks's conclusion that the "Horatian Ode" offers "an insight into Cromwell which is as heavily freighted with admiration as it is with a great condemnation" (220), is completely untenable. He and his successors who adopt this position apparently do so to compensate for the few kind words their readings otherwise hold for Cromwell and to create a balanced tension worthy of New Critical attention. Although the ode's praise for Cromwell is qualified, it can only be considered balanced by selecting the darkest implications of Cromwell's description and the kindest interpretation of Charles. The quotation from the Earl of Clarendon that Brooks uses to demonstrate that simultaneous admiration and condemnation of a single object is not "monstrously inhuman in its complexity" shows the inadequacy of this effort. Clarendon's attitude is not at all complex: he hates Cromwell. Clarendon grudgingly acknowledges only those praiseworthy qualities that he cannot deny; as he does so he marvels that they exist in such a villain, minimizes their importance, impugns the motives behind Cromwell's worthy deeds, sets his virtues against worse vices, and assures the reader of Cromwell's damnation. Since Brooks believes that Clarendon's opinion is "very like" Marvell's, his statement that the condemnation and praise reinforce and define each other may be dismissed as a lame apology for an unjustifiably hostile interpretation.

3. The nearly unanimous opinion that the "three-fork'd lightning" is a morally neutral, pre-Christian, elemental, natural force demonstrates the critical reluctance to give Cromwell the benefit of any doubt. A few critics have dissented. Alistair Fowler is so certain that Mazzeo is "surely wrong to deny religious meaning" (79, n. 5) that he doesn't explain why. Douglas Bush is more helpful in explaining why Brooks errs in viewing the lightning neutrally (the only issue on which Mazzeo and Brooks agree):

I do not know what to make of such a statement as [Brooks's] "There is no suggestion that Cromwell is a thunderbolt hurled by an angry Jehovah--or even by an angry Jove," since that is what Marvell unmistakably says. In keeping with the pagan tone

[notes to pages 8-15]

of a Horatian ode, of course, he [Brooks] nowhere permits a Christian allusion, but the poem is not a period piece of artificial classicism and the reader makes an obvious transfer from pagan Rome to Christian England. (366-67)

Christian or pagan settings matter not; lightning often has distinct moral consequences. Dio Cassius, xlv.17 and Suetonius, Augustus, xcvi provide two of the dozens of instances of morally charged lightning bolts in pagan writings. Britomart's sword, likened to lightning when it opens Busirane's fiery front door, serves as an example of undeniably moral lightning in a Christian context. That description, coincidentally, resembles Marvell's very closely:

as a thunder bolt  
Perceth the yielding ayre, and doth displace  
The soring clouds into sad showres ymolt;  
So to her yold the flames, and did their force revolt.  
(Faerie Queene, III.xi.25)

I do not care to transfer the context of the Faerie Queene to the "Horatian Ode," but to demonstrate that lightning is not automatically a neutral force.

4. His thesis, also presented in PMLA (Dec. 1958), is that the "Horatian Ode" is the skillful, although not fully successful, attempt of a Royalist to justify Cromwell (without taking a political stand) on the basis that necessary conduct may take precedence over right conduct.

5. Syfret deserves neither singling out nor abrupt dismissal. She exercises some caution, asking how far the similar words extend to attitudes (164), acknowledging that Cromwell echoes both Caesar and Pompey (167), and expressing her conclusion tentatively (170). She does, however, force the evidence to fit her assumption that the moral condemnation of Caesar pervades Marvell's Cromwell when she decides that Lucan accepted Pompey only for lack of a better alternative (168).

6. A. J. N. Wilson reminds critics that the present context of a word must be regarded as earnestly as its earlier ones:

But the condemnation of Caesar by Lucan has  
nothing correspondent in Marvell's stanzas,

[notes to pages 15-18]

whether one considers tone or particular phrasing; the verbal debt is less important than this essential difference. (329-30)

7. No satisfactory defense of this position has yet been advanced. This has not prevented it from gaining widespread critical acceptance. Warren Chernaik who says, "Marvell was too much of a realist to present the future as anything but uncertain" (32), and Annabel Patterson who writes that the "Horatian Ode" is "about a figure whose character as so far known resists classification in either positive or negative terms, and whose future actions cannot be predicted" (Civic Crown, 60), represent those who seem to believe that the intrinsic uncertainty of the future is reason enough to offer uncertainty as a central theme of the "Horatian Ode." Cleanth Brooks is one of very few commentators who even attempt to explain why this constant aspect of the human condition is so particularly relevant to Marvell's poem. He cites lines 81-82:

Nor yet grown stiffer with Command  
But still in the Republick's hand:

in "Criticism and Literary Theory," the article that begins his famous exchange with Douglas Bush, and innocently asks whether "still" means "that the speaker is surprised that Cromwell has continued to pay homage to the republic" (214). Douglas Bush assures otherwise, reminding him that "still" "has its normal seventeenth-century meaning, "always," and that Marvell's words afford no ground for an ominous hint of a possible change of heart in Cromwell" (374-5). Brooks protests his innocence in "Notes on the Limits of 'History' and the Limits of 'Criticism'":

Mr. Bush may be right: "still" may mean nothing more than "always," and I was careful to put the possibility only as a question. (129)

Of course Bush is right; "still" does mean nothing more than "always," and Brooks is often careful to frame his least plausible contentions within questions, as he does when he offered his next reason for reading suspicion of Cromwell into the "Horatian Ode":

But what, by the way, would Mr. Bush do with the line immediately preceding: "Nor yet grown stiffer with command"? Surely this line implies the possibility that men in whom so much power is vested may grow stiffer. (129)

[notes to pages 18-26]

Surely not. I suspect Mr. Bush would do with "yet" about the same as he did with "still" and question the motive for reading a conjunction as a sinisterly temporal adverb. But of course, Brooks never actually says that "yet" serves as an adverb; he only asks. Brooks also puts his third and final reason as a question:

I find it amusing that in this same passage of Mr. Bush's essay he points out that a few years later Milton was to rebuke Cromwell for turning a republic into a dictatorship. Is it out of the question that Marvell might have envisaged as a possibility what other men of like training and background were indeed soon to see come to pass?  
(130)

Yes, it is out of the question to assert that Marvell envisaged what Milton eventually witnessed. Did Milton foresee it? If not, the like training and background, if they indicate anything at all, would indicate that Marvell did not foresee it either. It is still further out of the question to defend his connotation of "yet" by installing Marvell in a prophet's chamber when his only prophetic utterance appears to be the dubious connotation itself.

Cromwell's ambition was widely suspected in England, but it is not reasonable to read that general suspicion into a poem that proclaims Cromwell's subordination to parliament and characterizes parliament's subsequent mastery over him as "sure" (96).

8. Howard Erskine-Hill's The Augustan Idea in English Literature is another example of this tendency. Although he recognizes that "Cromwell appears as a potential Augustus" (297), his purpose is not to pursue a detailed analysis of the comparison within the "Horatian Ode."

9. Wilson does not specifically address another problem with Coolidge's argument. It seems difficult to reconcile "Still keep thy Sword erect" with the belief that Cromwell's "warlike virtue began and will end in the arts of peace." Perhaps this is why Wilson says that "literary comparison goes by the board" in Coolidge's approach (341, n. 35).

10. The "Horatian Ode" views history only through June, 1650. The facts that Cromwell did not long remain worthy of its praise and that Marvell became increasingly mesmerized by him in spite of his dictatorial behavior do not diminish its impact.

[notes to pages 26-27]

11. This use of sources is quite different from the abuses of echoes I criticized earlier because it does not transfer classical attitudes to the "Horatian Ode." It merely demonstrates that much of what Marvell says about Cromwell could be applied to Augustus without violence to his classical biographers.

12. I say "non-partisan" instead of "apolitical" for the same reason that I qualified my summary of "Tom May's Death": Marvell did not write in a political vacuum. Michael Wilding's chapter on "An Horatian Ode" in Dragon's Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution, although it emphasizes the events of 1647-48 too heavily in its analysis of a poem written in 1650, suggests political issues within the Parliamentary party that may have influenced Marvell.

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