

**GENDER, TYRANNY AND REPUBLICANISM  
IN ENGLAND, 1603-1660**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how classical history and gendered conceptions of masculine governance and misgovernance shaped the political culture of seventeenth-century England, the distinctive character of English republican thought, and the cultural and intellectual origins of the English Revolution. By attending to a series of classical stories about lustful and incestuous tyrants, republican revolution, matricide, and Christian persecution, which were appropriated through imaginative literature and discourse, this dissertation argues that Englishmen developed a significant ethical and political vocabulary of tyranny that imagined and condemned misgovernance in highly gendered terms, characterizing the tyrant as effeminate, uxorious, idolatrous, violent, and enslaved. The following chapters maintain that this classical and gendered understanding of tyranny greatly affected English perceptions and public criticisms of King James and King Charles. Through an examination especially of John Milton's writings, it further maintains that this discourse shaped the burgeoning republican vocabulary of seventeenth-century England, for conceptions of gender played a central and primary role in republican discourses of virtue, liberty, citizenship, and good governance, and marriage was envisioned as a significant republican institution. The study concludes by demonstrating the importance of classical and gendered conceptions of governance during the Interregnum, arguing that the grammar of tyranny developed in the Stuart period became a central criterion whereby republican writers understood, defended and criticized Oliver Cromwell and his government.

Readers: John W. Marshall (advisor), Gabrielle Spiegel, J. G. A. Pocock, Mary E. Fissell, Sharon Achinstein

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## Introduction

“IMP. IACOBVS MAX.  
CÆSAR AVG. P. P.  
PACE POPVULO BRITANNICO  
TERRA MARIQVE PARTA  
IANVM CLVSIT. S. C.”<sup>1</sup>

In his magnificent entrance to London on the Ides of March 1603/4, King James was hailed and celebrated as a new Caesar Augustus, ushering in “those golden times...returned again,” as Ben Jonson described through the words of Virgil, “wherein *Peace* was with vs so aduanced, *Rest* receaued, *Libertie* restored, *Safetie* assured, and all *Blessednesse* appearing in euery of these vertues her perticular Triumphe ouer her opposite euill.”<sup>2</sup> Amongst the classical arches and scenes erected for the King’s entertainment and celebration, processors dramatically enacted the Virgilian prophecy of a peaceful empire by closing the gate of a reconstructed Temple of Janus upon which the words were inscribed: “James the greatest emperor, Caesar Augustus the Father of his Country, as peace has been brought forth for the British people on land and sea, a decree of the Senate has closed the gate.” By resurrecting “these dead rites” on British soil, Jonson fashioned James’s great procession as a triumphal entry of peace rather than war and his new King as possessing “strong and potent vertues” beyond those of Mars.<sup>3</sup> These intricate devices, comprised of speeches, interludes, costumes, pageantry, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson, *His Part of King James his Royall and Magnificent Entertainment through his Honorable Cittie of London, Thursday the 15. of March 1603* (London: 1604), sig. D1v. Jonson designed the first and last devices of the entertainment.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C2v.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. Dv-D2r. See Stephen Orgel, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983), 28-54; Lawrence Manley, “Scripts for the Pageant: the Ceremonies of London,” in *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge and NY: Cambridge UP, 1995), 212-93; David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558-1642*, rev. ed. (Tempe, Ariz: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003).

architectural staging, served as much more than amusement, festivity or flattery. They publicly legitimized a new sovereign upon his accession, establishing his nobility, virtue, power, and authority. Simultaneously, these devices, crafted through historical and mythical exempla, presented idealized political expectations for the King and Stuart family, qualities that the sovereign should possess and practice publicly and privately.

Historical models of kingship such as these significantly shaped how Englishmen understood good governance and tyranny; by closely examining the vocabularies and ideas statesmen drew from the classical past, this dissertation will show the centrality of both historical and gendered conceptions of politics for Englishmen criticizing and challenging their monarch in the seventeenth century. As we will see, through classical stories of lustful tyrants, republican revolution, incestuous royalty, and persecution, Englishmen adopted a significant political and ethical vocabulary of monarchy and tyranny which condemned misgovernance in highly personal and gendered terms, casting the tyrant as effeminate, uxorious, idolatrous, and enslaved by vicious passions, mistresses, and false religion. The following study maintains that this conception of tyranny, which was developed principally through imaginative literature, significantly shaped the political and intellectual culture of England before, during and after the English Revolution and likewise shaped the character of English republican thought. Classical history and gendered conceptions of masculine governance and misgovernance, therefore, should be counted as part of the cultural and intellectual origins of the English Revolution and a significant contributor to its character.

Early modern Englishmen made grand claims concerning the craft of history and its role in producing political knowledge. In the first English translation of Tacitus's

*Annals* (1598), Richard Greneway characterized history as “the treasure of times past, and as well a guide, as image of mans present estate, a true and liuely pattern of things to come, and as some terme it, the work-mistresse of experience, which is the mother of prudence.”<sup>4</sup> Greneway’s introductory remarks clearly summarized what early modern Englishmen understood as the two principal benefits of studying history. Due to its cyclical pattern, history was understood to reveal lessons applicable to the past, present and future. The early modern scholar or statesmen who carefully studied history believed he could acquire invaluable political information and experiential knowledge, a guide to contemporary political action, and a key to predict future occurrences. Through its exempla, or its depictions of a specific action, event, or person which represented a state of affairs, virtue, vice, or character, early modern writers further believed that history aided the acquisition of prudence, whereby one could learn to distinguish good and virtuous activity from shameful and vicious. By presenting the experiences of others, history was “philosophy teaching by examples.”<sup>5</sup>

Englishmen had drawn these ideas about the function of history from classical authors such as Polybius and Livy and from humanist Italian thinkers who had developed the theory over the preceding two centuries.<sup>6</sup> In *Discourses on Livy* (1517), for example,

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<sup>4</sup> *The Annales of Corenlivs Tacitvs. The Description of Germanie*, trans. Richard Greneway (London: 1598), dedicatory epistle to Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex.

<sup>5</sup> George H. Nadel, “Philosophy of History before Historicism,” *History and Theory* 3.3 (1964): 291-315, esp. 295-98. For a discussion of the shift in the use of *exempla* over the seventeenth century, see Daniel Woolf, “From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500-1700,” in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2006), 31-68.

<sup>6</sup> “For that there is no way more easie to reforme and better Men, then the Knowledge of things past...Knowledge of Histories is a true Discipline and Exercise for the Conduct and managing of the Affaires of a Common-wealth, and...she onely is the Mistris, and meanes to beare the Variety and inconstancy of Fortune patiently, by reason of the example of another mans aduersities...” Polybius, *The History of Polybivs the Megalopolitan. The five first bookes entire*, trans. Edward Grimeston (London: 1633), 1. Nadel, “Philosophy of History before Historicism,” 295 and 305; Livy’s introduction in *The*



Niccolò Machiavelli adopted Polybius's explanation of constitutional change as a historically repeating pattern: monarchy and tyranny to aristocracy and oligarchy to democracy and ochlocracy and back again.<sup>7</sup> Francesco Guicciardini's Bernardo summarized the lessons of reading history in the *Dialogue on the Government of Florence* (c. 1521-25):

For having read so many histories of various nations in ancient and modern times...it won't be difficult for you to judge what the future will be. For the world is so constituted that everything which exists at present has existed before, under different names, in different times and different places.... [S]omeone with a sharp eye, who knows how to compare and contrast one event with another...knows how to calculate and measure quite a lot of the future.<sup>8</sup>

History thereby bolstered the Renaissance pursuit of civic humanism, and especially its revival of the classical arts of politics and language in service of the *vita activa*. Early modern statesmen argued that real political wisdom would be gained from studying the words, deeds and character of past men, the rise and fall of empires, and the causes and effects of their activities. And Rome especially—whether its ancient heroes, Caesars, or empire's dramatic rise and fall—held a central and significant place in the English

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*Romane historie* written by T. Livius of Padua. Also, the *Breviaries of L. Florus: with a chronologie to the whole historie: and the Topographie of Rome in old time*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: 1600), 2. History was one of the principal pursuits of the *studia humanitatis*, along with grammar, rhetoric, moral philosophy and poetry. See Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. C. B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 111-38, esp. 113-14; Donald R. Kelley, "Philosophy and humanistic disciplines: The theory of history," in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 746-62, esp. 749-50 and 753. For the reach of humanism in England, see Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1995); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, volume 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 193-212.

<sup>7</sup> See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton and London: Princeton UP, 1975), 77-80; Kelley, "The theory of history," 753.

<sup>8</sup> Francesco Guicciardini, *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*, ed. Alison Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 16.

schoolroom, library, stage, court, palace, and parish.<sup>9</sup> Kings publicly represented themselves as Roman in print, portraits, performances, and public processions, while the universal teaching of Roman authors in grammar school curriculum, which at a minimum included Cicero, Caesar, and Sallust, ensured complete familiarity with Roman history for all educated Englishmen. By 1640, at least fifty-seven Roman history plays had been produced in England, of which forty survive, and printed English translations of classical accounts of Rome flourished, including Livy, Sallust, Suetonius, Tacitus, Lucan, Plutarch, Polybius, Seneca, Horace, and Cicero.<sup>10</sup> The cultural infiltration of Roman history ensured that English statesmen imagined themselves as engaged in the *vita activa* of civic duty to the common good and sought to understand seventeenth-century political life through a Roman lens. History and historical exempla thereby became a significant and primary way that English subjects complimented, counseled, and criticized their monarch: as we will see, years after poets hailed King James as a new Augustus or Julius Caesar, anonymous writers criticized him by deeming him a Nero.<sup>11</sup>

While this dissertation contends that the historical imagination was a central vehicle through which Englishmen thought and acted politically, the following chapters simultaneously seek to establish Joan Wallach Scott's foundational argument that gender is a "useful category of historical analysis," including how gender "has been employed

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<sup>9</sup> Freyja Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic in Early Modern England* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), chapter 1. Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*; David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1999), esp. introduction and chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> Other classical authors included Caesar, Florus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Herodian, Josephus, Justinus, Appian, Dio, etc. See Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, chapter 2; Daniel Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the 'Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), 172.

<sup>11</sup> For Augustus and Caesar, see Paulina Kewes, "Julius Caesar in Jacobean England," *The Seventeenth Century* 17 (2002): 155-86; Malcolm Smuts, "Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians, c.1590-1630," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993), 21-44, esp. 38-40. For Nero, see chapters 2-3 below.

literally or analogically in political theory to justify or criticize the reign of monarchs and to express the relationship between ruler and ruled.”<sup>12</sup> As we will see, English histories of the classical past repeatedly represented tyranny as the violation of norms of rational masculinity. The significance of gender in seventeenth-century political thought and practice has, however, very often been neglected by intellectual and political historians, as well as by those who have studied the significance of history in early modern England.<sup>13</sup> The following investigation explores how the lessons and stories of classical history were steeped in highly gendered language, which readily mapped on to early modern constructions of gender, the body, and relationships between men and women. Gender historians have shown that early modern Englishmen understood all relationships of power and subjection, whether those of monarch and subject, master and apprentice, priest and parishioners, Christ and the church, as analogous to the marriage relationship, and particularly to the subjection of wife to husband. A husband was obligated to govern and discipline his wife and household, and he acted through the distinct roles of husband, father, and master; a man who failed in these familial obligations was considered incapable of governing any other person or group effectively. Early modern families and society were ordered according to what was understood to be a natural and God-ordained hierarchy established by gender, age, marital status, and rank, which dictated behaviors of

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<sup>12</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, revised edition (NY: Columbia UP, 1999), 46.

<sup>13</sup> Much more historical scholarship has been completed for eighteenth-century France and the modern inheritance of republicanism. Scholars who have begun the important work of studying republicanism and gender include Sharon Achinstein, “Saints or Citizens? Ideas of Marriage in Seventeenth-Century English Republicanism,” *The Seventeenth Century* 25:2 (2010); Hanna Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender & Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Judith A. Vega, “Feminist Republicanism and the Political Perception of Gender,” in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, volume 2: The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 157-75; Christine Fauré, “Rights or Virtues: Women and the Republic,” in *Republicanism*, vol. 2, 125-38; Catherine Larrère, “Women, Republicanism, and the Growth of Commerce,” in *Republicanism*, vol. 2, 139-56.

governance, submission, and obedience.<sup>14</sup> Overlooking these central gendered conceptions of power and hierarchy distorts our understanding of English political and republican thought.

Although gender historians have demonstrated the significant ways that these theorized relationships were in fact complex, ambiguous and often negotiated and challenged in practice, it is vital to emphasize that the Stuart kings regularly adopted idealized familial language to justify their power and authority.<sup>15</sup> Seventeenth-century royalist political writers extended the family analogy to locate political authority in the actual history of patriarchy and its origins in Adam.<sup>16</sup> King James was fond of reminding his subjects that the “Father of a familie...had of olde vnder the Law of Nature *Patriam*

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<sup>14</sup> As William Gouge explained, “God hath so disposed euery ones seuerall place, as there is not any one, but in some respect is vnder another. The wife, though a mother of children, is vnder her husband. The husband, though head of a family, is vnder publike Magistrates. Publike Magistrates one vnder another, and all vnder the King. The King himself vnder God...” *Of Domesticall Duties* (London: 1622), 5. For gender, power, and subjection, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex & Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London and NY: Arnold, 1995), esp. 79-105; Michael Braddick and John Walter, “Introduction. Grids of power: order, hierarchy and subordination in early modern society,” in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2001), 1-42; Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> For the complexity of gendered relationships, practice and enforcement, see Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); Martin Ingram, “Scolding women Cucked or Washed,” in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, eds. Jennifer Kermode and Garthine Walker (London: UCL Press, 1994), 47-80; David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 116-36; Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003).

For justifications of political power through familial language, see Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England 1680-1714* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999); Anne Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (NY: Routledge, 2012); John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006); Diane Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010); Carole Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> J. P. Sommerville, “Absolutism and royalism,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (NY and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 347-73, esp. 355, 358-59; Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 54-60; Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: the authoritarian family and political speculation and attitudes especially in seventeenth-century England* (NY: Basic Books, 1975).

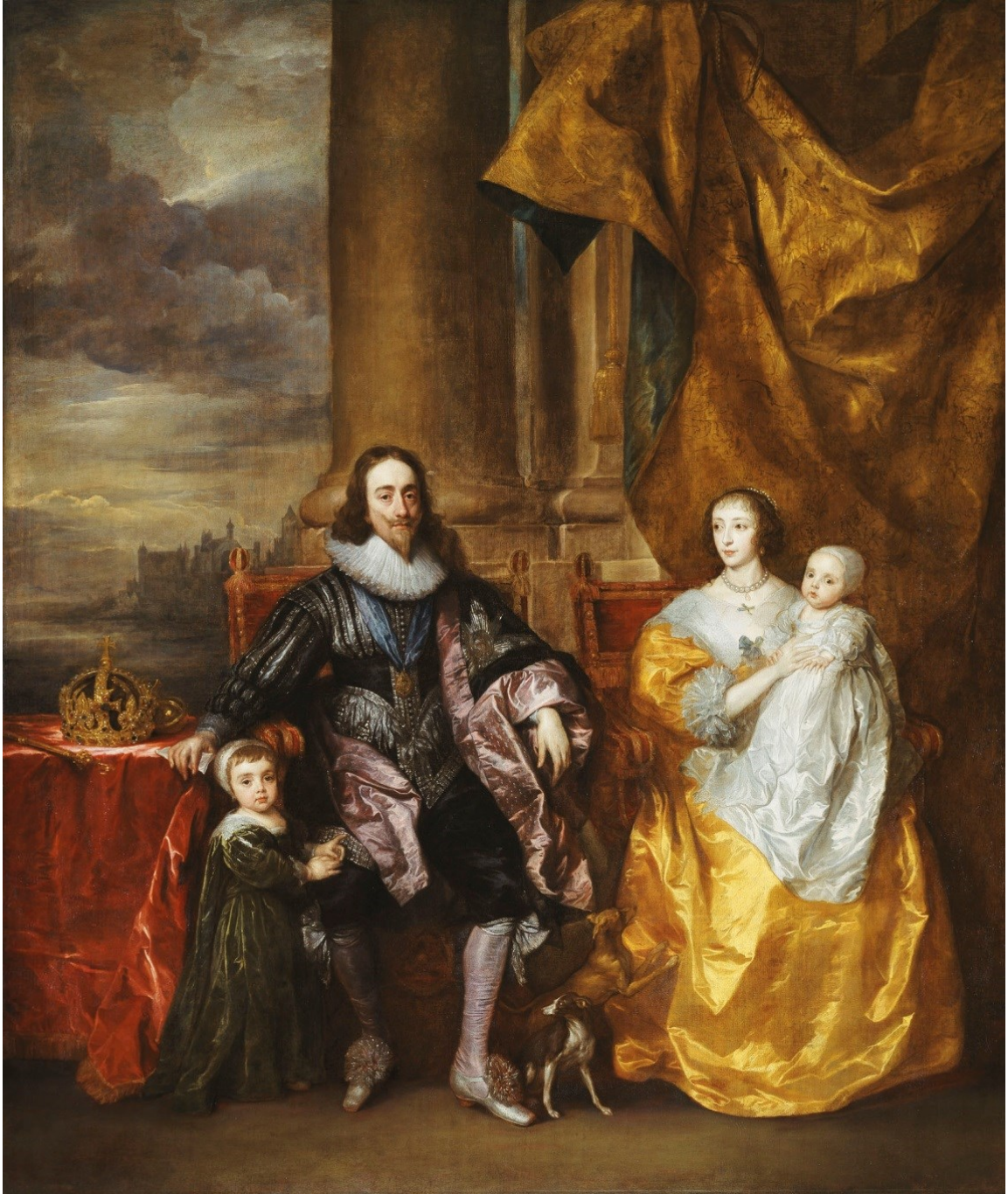
*potestatem*, which was “*Potestatem vitae & necis*,” the power of life and death “ouer their children or familie....So may the King deale with his Subiects.”<sup>17</sup> King Charles patronized those who portrayed these ideas theatrically and visually in his masques and portraiture. Anthony van Dyck’s family portrait of *Charles I and Henrietta Maria with their Two Eldest Children* (1632), which Charles placed at the end of the Long Gallery in Whitehall Palace, emphasized the domesticity and harmony of the King’s household, with the King depicted as an attentive father and husband as his loyal wife gazes lovingly and obediently at him; the portrait established the King’s political authority simultaneously through this familial relationship and through the crown, orb, and scepter, Charles’s direct gaze at the viewer, symbols of masculinity including the George Medal and Star of the Garter on his sleeve, and other rich trappings of power including costly cloths and drapes, ceremonial chairs of state, the classical pillar, and Westminster in the background.<sup>18</sup> In its fusion of authority, tradition, the classical past, patriarchy, family, and masculinity, this portrait summarized the central elements of royalist depictions of kingship in seventeenth-century England.

By attending to gendered discourse, this dissertation will uncover how the espousal of idealized standards of normative masculinity by the Stuart kings and their supporters laid the monarchy open to very significant scrutiny, criticism, and even to charges of tyranny. Manhood and patriarchy in general were shaky foundations to adopt in seventeenth-century England, as the scholarship of Alexandra Shepard, Elizabeth

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<sup>17</sup> King James’s speech to Parliament, 21 March 1610, in *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 182.

<sup>18</sup> See Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton’s Eve* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 23-25.



Anthony van Dyck, *Charles I and Henrietta Maria with their two eldest children, Prince Charles and Princess Mary*, Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2014. Used with permission.

Foyster and Mark Breitenburg has demonstrated.<sup>19</sup> Manhood itself was always insecure; its practice was enormously diverse and complex across English society, and normative masculinity was more often denied than realized due to the complex ways that hierarchies of age, social status, and marital status interacted with those of gender to produce a multidimensional distribution of power. As we will see, Stuart writers criticizing their monarch as tyrannical articulated demands that he should fulfill a normative ideal of patriarchal manhood, exhibiting piety, moderation, reason, self-control, self-sufficiency, as well as a strong, self-contained, and able body, and utilizing these characteristics to order his household and commonwealth harmoniously. We will also see that they condemned the monarch's failures in these terms in a myriad of ways, characterizing the tyrant as effeminate or enslaved, his body as emasculated, unreliable, or porous, his appetites as puerile or adolescent, or they portrayed the tyrant as hypermasculine and thereby excessively violent, angry, and dangerous.

English conceptions of masculinity and the gendered order of society thus combined readily with classical discourses of tyranny, which focused on the vicious or deficient character of male rulers.<sup>20</sup> Many English accounts adopted Plato's conception of the tripartite soul as rational, spirited, and appetitive, and applied this doctrine to what they deemed to be a corresponding relationship between the soul of the ruler and the

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<sup>19</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003); Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London and NY: Longman, 1999); Mark Breitenburg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> This is to argue contrary to Waller R. Newell's recent account that Machiavelli's writings marked a turning point between what he describes as classical understandings of tyranny, which emphasized the virtuous character of rulers and their need for civic education, and modern understandings of tyranny, which have relied upon impersonal institutions and cold-blooded political method. See *Tyranny: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2013).

condition of the commonwealth.<sup>21</sup> Their portrayals of tyranny echoed Socrates's famous description of the tyrannical man in the *Republic*. In Book IX, Socrates explained that the tyrannical man, like the drunken, lustful, or insane man, is ruled utterly by the appetitive or lowest order of the soul, causing his "bestly and savage part," to not "hold back from any terrible murder or from any kind of food or act. But, rather, erotic love lives like a tyrant within him, in complete anarchy and lawlessness as his sole ruler, and drives him, as if he were a city, to dare anything that will provide sustenance for itself and the unruly mob around it."<sup>22</sup> This existence bars the tyrant from freedom as well as true friendship, as he lives internally enslaved by fears and erotic desires of all kinds which he cannot satisfy, and externally is "always a master to one man or a slave to another" in pursuit of these passions. Socrates further maintained that, already "envious, untrustworthy, unjust, friendless, impious, host and nurse to every kind of vice" as a private man, the tyrant's "ruling makes him even more so" and makes the polity most wretched.<sup>23</sup> As we will see, early modern Englishmen adopted and transformed this portrait of tyranny within their writings, while further emphasizing that the tyrant embodied vices associated with failed masculinity. This fusion of classical and gendered ideas about rule powerfully shaped English conceptions of tyranny as well as republicanism.

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What this dissertation first seeks to establish, then, is the significance of conceptions of gender and classical history in shaping the political ideas and culture of England. In

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<sup>21</sup> *Republic*, trans. by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1997): II.369a, p. 1008 and IV.435a, p. 1066.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Republic*, IX.571d-575a, p. 1180-83.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 576a, 579a-580a, p. 1184 and 1187-88.



doing so, it brings together two subjects rarely combined in historical scholarship. The project's sources, which include plays, poems, satires, libels, and treatises, have been neglected by most political and intellectual historians of the period. By beginning to fill these lacunae in scholarship, this dissertation hopes to make an important contribution to our understanding of the political culture of seventeenth-century England, of gendered constructions of power and masculinity, of republicanism, and of the intellectual and cultural origins of the English Revolution.

The most important and influential historian to contend for the centrality of historical thought in early modern European political thought has been J. G. A. Pocock, whose work established how conceptual vocabularies about republicanism, politics, and political institutions found expression and value through debates about history and historical self-understanding.<sup>24</sup> *The Machiavellian Moment* in particular delineated a political and ethical vocabulary, drawn principally from Aristotle and Polybius and developed by Machiavelli and his contemporaries, which led to a very important paradigmatic legacy of classical republicanism in Italy, England and America.<sup>25</sup> Within England, Pocock located the "Machiavellian Moment" in the writings of James Harrington, for although elements of a Machiavellian account of the English polity did exist in Jacobean England, Pocock maintained that republican thought in England required the breakdown of monarchy and the subsequent collapse of older modes of

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<sup>24</sup> See Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957 and 1987); *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), especially Part II.

<sup>25</sup> For understanding paradigms and their multivalent functions for political thought and speech, see Pocock, "Languages and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought," in *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3-41.

consciousness.<sup>26</sup> Autonomous civic activism – *vivere civile e popolare* – of the sort required by republicanism was incompatible with the dominant paradigm of monarchy in Tudor and Stuart England, Pocock argued; apocalyptic expectations, the ancient constitution, and the tradition of natural jurisprudence paved the way for English Machiavellianism but did not accomplish it.<sup>27</sup>

Pocock's achievement opened a floodgate of disputes and challenges concerning the precise definition of republicanism, its sources, dating, and contours.<sup>28</sup> Recently Quentin Skinner has argued that essential to English republican thought was a neo-Roman vision of fundamental liberties, drawn from the *Codex* of Justinian, as well as Cicero, Sallust, Livy and Tacitus, which emphasized that only within a free commonwealth governed by laws enacted with the consent of all were citizens truly free.<sup>29</sup> Skinner's work has been very important both for establishing the centrality of Roman thought for English republicanism and for explaining the significant contribution of English theorists other than Harrington, including John Milton, Marchamont Nedham, Henry Neville, and Algernon Sidney. Other scholars such as Jonathan Scott and Eric Nelson have added to our understanding of the distinctive character of English republicanism and posited the significance of religious thought and classical sources, including Plato and Aristotle, in shaping the English republican tradition.<sup>30</sup> These

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<sup>26</sup> Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 355-57.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 371-82.

<sup>28</sup> Questions include whether republicanism was a language, program, way of life, or particular form of government? Did it require mixed government or a kingless state? Was its sources primarily Greek or Roman? And did it exist in England before the regicide?

<sup>29</sup> Quentin Skinner, "John Milton and the politics of slavery" and "Liberty and the English civil war," in *Visions of Politics*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2002): 286-343; *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge

scholars of republicanism have thereby affirmed the significance of classical thought and history in shaping the particular character of English republican thought, but their analyses of republicanism have been limited by their failure to recognize or examine the centrality of gender in early modern conceptualizations of republicanism, virtue, liberty, and good governance. Further, while their work has persuasively demonstrated the influence of classical history on English republicanism, this dissertation examines the wider importance of historical thinking for early seventeenth-century culture, thought, and politics, and especially for writers criticizing or opposing the Stuart monarchy.

This dissertation further addresses the work of “revisionist” historical scholarship by Conrad Russell, John Morrill, Kevin Sharpe, and others who have contested liberal and Marxist accounts of the English Revolution of 1649 as the result of dynamic and long-standing legal, constitutional, and social conflicts.<sup>31</sup> “Revisionists” instead emphasized the intellectual and social conservatism of Stuart England, arguing for wide-scale consensus and a predominantly shared world-view of king, court, and subjects.<sup>32</sup> The cultural and intellectual analyses that have been applied to explain the genesis of the French Revolution have been largely discouraged by revisionist assumptions that the

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UP, 2004). For an excellent analysis of the considerable array of classical republican sources, see especially Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 19-40.

<sup>31</sup> Conrad Russell, ed. *The Origins of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973); Conrad, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621-1629* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976); Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (London and New Haven: Yale UP, 1992). Before revisionism, the English Revolution was understood as “one of the decisive political episodes of modern times,” and historians engaged in bitter debates over its religious, political, social and economic causes. Marxists understood the revolution as bourgeois, helping to facilitate an emerging capitalist system, while “Whigs” focused primarily on the constitutional principles of Parliament, especially the House of Commons as well as Puritans. For an overview of the historiographical landscape, see Richard Cust and Anne Hughes, eds., “Introduction,” *The English Civil War* (NY and London: Arnold, 1997), 1-30.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Kevin Sharpe, “A commonwealth of meanings: languages, analogues, ideas and politics,” in *Politics & Ideas in Early Stuart England* (London and NY: Pinter, 1989), 3-71, esp. 64-71. The real task, in Sharpe’s view, was to explain how the civil war could have possibly erupted in Stuart England with its basis of political consensus and lack of fundamental ideological disagreements between king and parliament.

1640s and 1650s were indeed an aberration in English politics lacking long-term significance for English or British political culture. Within this revisionist story, English republican thought only makes sense as a response to civil war and regicide rather than as a cause, making the date of the origins of republicanism fall after 1649, or at earliest after 1642. “Regicide was not the fruit of republican theory,” Blair Worden maintained; “Most of its organisers were concerned to remove a particular king, not kingship. They cut off King Charles’ head and wondered what to do next.”<sup>33</sup> Worden’s excellent evaluations of republican thought and culture in England have thereby, like Skinner, focused primarily on post-1649 writers: Nedham, Milton, Neville, Harrington.<sup>34</sup>

The following study in many ways substantiates the revisionist claim that critics of the Stuart monarchy opposed a particular king, Charles, rather than the idea of kingship itself; however, this dissertation simultaneously explores a number of ruptures within the political culture of early Stuart England and the emergence of significant opposition to King James, which suggests that specific criticisms against monarchy could easily translate into arguments against hereditary monarchy in general and that these need to be understood as part of the cultural and political origins of the English Revolution. In these ways, the project bolsters “post-revisionist” accounts of Stuart England.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Blair Worden, “Milton’s republicanism and the tyranny of heaven,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, eds. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 225-46, esp. 226. In a similar vein, Pocock contended that republican doctrine in England developed as “men came to face the fact that the historic constitution had collapsed.” English republicanism “was a language, not a programme.” Pocock, “Introduction” to *Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977), 15.

<sup>34</sup> See Worden’s four essays that form Part I of *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994), 45-193, and *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> “Post-revisionists” have underscored the shortcomings of the revisionist position and challenged its interpretive structures, especially its tendency to neglect evidence of popular opinion and participation, political language, conflict, political scandal, and the connection of religion and politics through significant ideologies. See L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (NY and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989); Anne Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Thomas Cogswell,

Attributing intellectual and cultural origins to the English Revolution is not the same as establishing causes, nor does it require one to understand revolution as an absolute necessity. Drawing upon the excellent scholarship on the origins of the French Revolution, including work by Roger Chartier, Sarah Maza, and Robert Darnton, this dissertation seeks to identify some of the conditions which made English republicanism and the English Revolution possible because it was culturally and politically conceivable.<sup>36</sup> Like Chartier, it pays attention to the *mauvais discours* against the king, which in England entailed comparing James and Charles to the infamous tyrants of history.<sup>37</sup> To establish what was culturally relevant in English politics and political thought, as scholars have for France, English historians must continue to move beyond political treatises, parliamentary debates, and political speeches to consider the poetry, performances, drama, and images that shaped England's wider cultural and political imagination.<sup>38</sup> These types of sources were available to the English public through cheap print, the theatre, manuscript and oral culture, and public performance. Their writers regularly employed imaginative language to appeal to a wider audience and to protect themselves, their printers, and their readers from the threat of censorship, for the English government suppressed free enquiry through imprisonment, interrogation, fines, public

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*The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989); Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution*; Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2004); Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, eds. Richard Cust and Anne Hughes (NY: Longman 1989), 72-106; Lake with Michael Questier, *Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> See Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham: Duke UP, 1991), 2 and 169-70; Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Cause Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (University of California Press, 1993); Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1982).

<sup>37</sup> Chartier, "A Desacralized King," in *Cultural Origins*, 111-35.

<sup>38</sup> Historians Peter Lake, Alastair Bellany, Thomas Cogswell, alongside literary scholars such as David Norbrook and Andrew Hadfield, have begun this important work, although much remains to be done.

shaming, and mutilation. Although scholars have questioned how extensive or comprehensive the machinery of censorship was in Stuart England, literary historians have found that the *fear* of censorship significantly shaped the writing practices of English authors. Writers often adopted poetic as well as historical writing due to the standard principle in English defamation law called “*mitior sensus*,” or literally, the “milder sense,” which stated that if someone said or wrote a phrase that had two common meanings, one more offensive and one less offensive, the court would accept the less offensive. By situating offensive speech within a story of a distant place and time, or using indirection when criticizing contemporaries, writers could avoid arrest, imprisonment, trial, and punishment.<sup>39</sup> Historical stories and imaginative literature thereby became a primary vehicle of British culture and expression in the seventeenth century, especially for criticizing the monarch or discussing sensitive political and religious issues. For this reason, the following chapters focus extensively on poetic and dramatic texts and provide close readings of how these texts operated in persuading the public to question the actions and character of their king. As we will see, attending to the imaginative literature of Stuart England uncovers a political culture more oppositional and dissenting to the Stuart government than that portrayed by revisionist scholarship.

Finally, alongside its consideration of the cultural and intellectual origins of the English Revolution, this study seeks to uncover some important aspects of the development of republican thought in England and its specific character. It thereby

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<sup>39</sup> See Debora Shuger, *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 183. See also Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State*; Antony Milton, “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England,” *Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 625-51. For reader reception of print and authority during the English Revolution, see Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2013), 116-22. For the revisionist argument against perceptions of a “single abusive authoritarian system” of censorship, see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (NY: Cambridge, 2001).

affirms previous scholarship which has sought to establish the significance of republican and quasi-republican thought before the English civil wars, such as Markku Peltonen's work which has importantly demonstrated how "a theory of citizenship, public virtue, and true nobility based essentially on the classical humanist and republican traditions, was taken up, studied and fully endorsed throughout the period."<sup>40</sup> To argue for the presence of republican thought decades before civil war, Andrew Hadfield has emphasized that republicanism "consisted of a number of inter-related themes, ideas and affiliations"; drawing upon Patrick Collinson's work, Hadfield argued that "English republicanism might be described as a faith in the power of institutions to circumscribe the authority of the monarch, allied to a belief that such institutions—Parliament, the law courts, local and national government—had the means to make individuals more virtuous and so better able to govern."<sup>41</sup> And David Norbrook's work has most effectively rescued pre-civil war republican figures from the shadows and demonstrated the energetic republican culture that thrived through literary writings, and especially poetry, derived from Lucan and other classical authors.<sup>42</sup> Identifying republicanism as a language corresponding to themes, ideas, and affiliations runs the risk of creating an over-inclusive understanding, which may, for example, classify any discussion of "virtue" as republicanism.<sup>43</sup> As this dissertation hopes to demonstrate, however, adopting too narrow a definition of republicanism risks neglecting a very significant strand of political thought in

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<sup>40</sup> Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 12.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Hadfield, "Republicanism in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Britain," in *British Political Thought in History, Literature, and Theory, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006): 111-28; Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethans* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), chs. 1-2. See also Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*.

<sup>43</sup> Blair Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience," in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, volume 1: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 307-27.

seventeenth-century England; it further risks simplifying or overlooking the highly gendered language of republicanism and the many imaginative ways that English statesmen engaged in political thinking; and it problematically severs the relationship between republican ideas before and after the regicide.

Although scholars of republicanism can vary widely on its specific definition, most can affirm that republicans identified the end of politics as virtue and liberty, with the two being mutually dependent. As John Milton summarized in *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda* (1654):

For, my fellow countrymen, your own character is a mighty factor in the acquisition or retention of liberty. Unless your liberty is such as can neither be won nor lost by arms, but is of that kind alone which, sprung from piety, justice, temperance, in short, true virtue, has put down the deepest and most far-reaching roots in your souls, there will not be lacking one who will shortly wrench from you, even without weapons, that liberty which you boast of having sought by force of arms.<sup>44</sup>

It was understood that virtue and liberty would provide citizens and the commonwealth as a whole with harmony, stability, and happiness. The republic fostered these ends through the active participation of male citizens in public life for the common good, and republican authors regularly argued the necessity of two political institutions, law and religion, for inculcating and supporting citizen virtue. The republican tradition thereby emphasized that citizens must show rational, “masculine” control over themselves, subordinating private interests to the public good in order to prevent political corruption and slavery, private and public. The following study affirms this definition, while arguing that historians of republicanism have generally neglected three significant aspects of English republican thought: first, that conceptions of gender played a central and

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<sup>44</sup> *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 10 volumes, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-1982), IV.1, 680. Hereafter *CPW*.



primary role in shaping republican discourses of virtue, liberty, citizenship, and good governance; second, that marriage was viewed as a significant (third) political institution for fostering virtue; and third, that the burgeoning republican vocabulary of seventeenth-century England was very often expressed negatively through criticisms of the monarch's failures. This dissertation will show how writers often focused on defining tyranny through the gendered language of emasculation, enslavement and the corruption of virtue; within these discussions, they articulated the fundamental importance of marriage, law, and religion in securing a virtuous commonwealth, the necessity of virtuous governance for liberty, and the centrality of male political participation through parliament, court, and public speech.

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By weaving together classical history, gender, political thought, literature, and republicanism, this dissertation breaks new ground methodologically while uncovering at least one strand of the intellectual and cultural origins of the English Revolution. The first three chapters build a portrait of how tyranny was conceptualized and condemned in Stuart England, demonstrating that a highly gendered vocabulary of tyranny developed from particular stories of the Roman past and that these stories advanced timely, personal criticisms against King James and King Charles. The fourth chapter situates the writings of John Milton within this cultural and intellectual milieu, illustrating the reach of this gendered vocabulary of tyranny and the vocabulary's significant influence in shaping republican thought and criticism during the regicide. The final chapter will demonstrate the centrality of these ideas of gender, tyranny, and history within arguments concerning

Oliver Cromwell and the Protectorate and how these discourses shaped English republicanism in the 1650s.

Chapter One explores how English dramatic and satirical appropriations of the Roman story of Appius Claudius and Virginia provided a significant portrayal of tyranny and judicial corruption in Jacobean England. As recounted by Livy and Dionysius, Appius was a Roman decemvir whose unlawful pursuit of a chaste maiden, Virginia, eventually led to his government's overthrow through a republican revolution led by Virginia's father, Virginius. Through this story of lust, corruption, sacrifice, and revolution, the chapter paints an initial image of how Englishmen conceptualized tyranny as the perversion of a ruler's soul. Early modern re-creations of Appius's story emphasized that the ruler became wholly corrupted by lust, which emasculated him by making him enslaved to his lowest passions and simultaneously compromised his ability to rule and order society according to gendered norms and virtue. In each account, Appius's vice was importantly contrasted with the virtues of Virginia and Virginius through idealized portrayals of their family. Virginia exhibited the "feminine virtues" of chastity, obedience, and patriarchal submission, while Virginius exhibited "masculine virtues," including courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom, and proved himself a commendable ruler of household and military camp. This story thus articulated a significant vision of tyranny and good governance through a patriarchal model, while proposing the provocative claim that a citizen may be more virtuous and exemplary than his ruler. Finally, the chapter considers how this Roman story offered a powerful portrait of the "judicial tyrant," a ruler so corrupted and emasculated by inordinate lust and passion that he would manipulate the common law and commit legal injustices to gratify

his own vicious cravings. The chapter argues that this particular criticism of tyranny was a timely one in Jacobean England, as scandals over the Chancery Court and the Overbury Affair brought King James's arguments for the royal prerogative and the monarch's position over the law into public question.

Chapters Two and Three build upon and expand this portrait of tyranny by studying a series of plays, libels, poems, treatises, and speeches concerning the infamous Emperor Nero. Chapter Two first argues the significance of Nero's history in the mid-1620s as a battleground for debates concerning monarchical absolutism and as a vehicle whereby James's pacific policies could be publicly defended and challenged. The particular stories of Nero which early modern writers adapted in the 1620s, however, further underscore the centrality of issues of gender and family for conceptions of tyranny, for writers focused especially on Nero's family relationships: his failure as a husband, how he was formed within his mother's womb, his incestuous sexual relationships, and his eventual murder of brother and mother. Much like portrayals of Appius, these writers characterized tyranny as the perversion of the ruler's soul through bestial passions, but stories of Neronian vice further emphasized the emasculation of male tyrants and the masculinization of female tyrants, and how a tyrant's vicious activities undermined law, military valor, religion, family, order, and virtue in society. Oppositional writers especially championed Nero's history to cast King James's refusal to commit troops to the Bohemian Crisis as unmanly, cowardly and irreligious. Importantly, the chapter further demonstrates how Edmund Bolton's history of Nero, which was crafted to defend King James and monarchical absolutism, likewise adopted a gendered discourse of tyranny to characterize Nero's failures and to blame his most

heinous crimes upon his mother, Julia Agrippina, who was portrayed as vicious and unruly. The chapter argues that Bolton's history ultimately failed to defend monarchy, for it unintentionally exposed the danger of hereditary monarchy as bred through the womb of a tyrannical mother and thereby cast tyranny as a private vice with ruinous public consequences.

Extending these personal and gendered portrayals of tyranny, Chapter Three considers how Nero's exemplum was effectively appropriated in the late 1620s and 1630s by critics of King Charles's regime to protest his political and religious policies. It first explores how Thomas May adopted and deepened the portrayal of tyranny developed in previous decades by casting the royal household as a location of wickedness and vice, by emphasizing how tyranny perverted the gender of an individual—grotesquely turning men feminine and women masculine—and by characterizing tyranny as the enslaving pursuit of brutish appetites. George Chapman's satirical treatment of Nero in the late 1620s further illustrates how writers imagined the tyrant as so deeply enslaved by sordid private pleasures that his political authority and moral leadership degenerate into a dangerous mockery of princely rule. While the chapter illustrates how these writers advanced the portrait of tyranny established throughout the Jacobean regime, it further demonstrates how Puritans suffering under the Laudian reforms of the 1630s appropriated the language of tyranny and stories of Nero not only to condemn the King as emasculated by lower desires, but to challenge Charles's sacred image and cast his government as wicked and persecuting. William Prynne first suffered punishment after vehemently attacking his King and Queen's private activities as publicly corrupting the moral foundation of society by blurring the distinction between male and female, virtue

and vice, true religion and idolatry. Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton—who were publicly mutilated in 1637 by a government they deemed popish and idolatrous—declared themselves Christian martyrs under Nero.

These chapters combined illustrate the highly imaginative and effective portrait of tyranny which Englishmen adopted to characterize their monarch's failures and to elicit reform. Within each play, poem, and treatise, tyranny was initially imagined as a disordered and corrupted soul led by an insatiable longing for sordid desires. The enslavement of the tyrant to these passions was envisioned as the perversion of gender and the ruination of family. The male tyrant failed to rule his household as patriarch, being cuckolded by his wife, dominated by his mother and mistress, and violent towards those he should protect; conversely, the female tyrant commanded her male betters and deviously advanced her lust for power and sex through seductive activity. Writers characterized the gendered perversion of the individual tyrant as having disastrous public consequences, which included undermining the natural order of society, violating innocent subjects, corrupting the royal household and court, and contaminating or persecuting "true" Christians.

Having established this vocabulary of tyranny within the political and cultural landscape of Stuart England, Chapter Four illustrates, first, how John Milton adopted these gendered conceptions of governance in his early writings, and second, how they came to shape his early republican thought and his particular criticisms of King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria before and after the regicide. Twenty-five years before Milton argued that it was "within his own household that [Charles] began to be a bad

king,”<sup>45</sup> Milton affirmed that true masculine virtue consisted in a soul ordered by rationality, temperance and harmony, and he contrasted this virtuous man with the tyrannical and vicious man enslaved to sordid passions, popish in his religion, uxorious in his marriage, and potentially violent to the innocent. The centrality of gender and the household in Milton’s conception of virtue and liberty is demonstrated through his writings which uncompromisingly defended “domestic liberty” after England erupted into civil war. The chapter considers particularly Milton’s defense of the freedom of divorce, through which he articulated the significance of good marriage for inculcating masculine virtue and bringing the commonwealth to a state of liberty and participatory government; within these divorce tracts, we witness how gendered conceptions of tyranny shaped republican thought in England. Finally, the chapter concludes by demonstrating how Milton explicitly wielded these gendered portrayals of tyranny to defend the regicide of his king. Milton lampooned Charles as uxoriously enslaved by his popish wife, and thereby characterized his late monarch as having perverted the fabric of family, virtue, liberty, and religion in English society.

Chapter Five demonstrates the impact of gendered conceptions of tyranny on republicanism and the language of dissent during the Interregnum by analyzing how Oliver Cromwell was understood, justified, and judged. While opponents of Cromwell, including several republicans, employed the same language of tyranny described in previous chapters to condemn Cromwell, supporters of the Protector turned back to Roman history to justify their new leader and defend his activities as truly virtuous, just, and liberating. The chapter illustrates how Cromwell’s activities and character were judged according to masculine standards; contemporaries contested whether his conduct

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<sup>45</sup> John Milton, *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (1651), *CPW*, IV.2.52-21.

reflected that of Nero or Caesar Augustus or Catiline or Junius Brutus, yet within these historical debates, the centrality of a man's rational control over himself and his household was affirmed. Departing from many scholarly discussions of republicanism as anti-Cromwellian, this chapter argues that defenses of Cromwell drew upon stories of the Roman republic to emphasize his masculinity, self-control, right religion, and well-ordered marriage and family, and thereby framed him as the republican solution to monarchical tyranny. As a father, military leader, and religious man, Cromwell appeared to fulfill idealized standards of manhood in a myriad of ways; however, he ultimately disappointed republicans who hoped that his rule would bring the restoration of a free and virtuous commonwealth.

By attending to how the cultural and political discourse of Stuart England was infused with classical and gendered ideas and crafted through imaginative writing, this dissertation offers a new perspective on English republicanism, masculinity, and the origins and character of the English Revolution. It reveals that conceptions of family, patriarchy, and masculine virtue lay at the heart of Stuart criticisms of kingship and significantly shaped the English republican imagination. Cromwell and the Protectorate government failed to fulfill republican expectations; however, gendered and classical expectations of good governance, which had simmered since the Jacobean period and bubbled over by 1649, indelibly shaped political and republican thought in England and beyond.

## Chapter 1

### A Chaste Virginia: Tyranny and the Corruption of Law in Jacobean England

Behold before thee where *Virginia's* plac't,  
Her white breast with a grievly wound defac't.  
The bloudie knife doth wisse the sad stroke,  
Which freed her body from lusts servile yoke:  
Whose modest innocence so farre extends,  
Her fathers act she in her death commends.

-Thomas Heywood, *A Curtaine Lecture* (1637)<sup>1</sup>

In the third chapter of his *Curtaine Lecture* (1637), intended as “Encouragement to young Virgins and Damosells to behave themselves well in their single estate, that they may become eminent Wives and Matrons,” Thomas Heywood praised “that brave Roman knight” and great “Arch-champion of virginitie,” Virginius, for killing his chaste daughter Virginia rather than allowing her body to be “vitiating and dishonoured” at the hands of the corrupt and lustful judge, Appius Claudius.<sup>2</sup> As a *Curtaine Lecture*, which was a tragicomic genre intended to satirize how wives “carp” at their husbands in bed, Heywood presented the state of marriage as honorable and to be desired as long as unruly wives could be tamed.<sup>3</sup> To exhort women to such good behavior, Heywood employed historical exempla, “calling to remembrance the famous and notable acts of illustrious persons,” that women may through “observation and imitation” become “inflamed” to

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Heywood, *A Curtaine Lecture* (London: printed by Robert Young for John Aston, 1637), 71-72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>3</sup> LaRue Love Sloan, “‘I’ll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience’: The Curtain Lecture and Shakespeare’s *Othello*,” in *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 85-100, esp. 87-91; Frances E. Dolan, “Texts and Contexts,” in *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare, ed. Dolan (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 325; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 119-20.



“aspire unto that celsitude honour and renowne to which they arrived before us.”<sup>4</sup> In this context, Virginia, a chaste woman who through “modest innocence” subjected herself to death rather than defilement, became a central exemplum of virginity, obedience, and patriarchal submission. What is more, her story provided a remarkable opportunity for the Stuart public to explore imaginatively the ruthlessness of judicial tyranny and to debate personal, political, and even revolutionary solutions.

To understand the various meanings and applications of Virginia’s exemplum, it is helpful to rehearse briefly her story as provided by the classical sources available to early modern readers, including Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and to a lesser extent Valerius and Silius Ithacus, as well as the medieval sources in the *Roman de la Rose*, John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, and Geoffrey’s Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. The classical histories recounted that in the fifth century BC, the Romans abolished government by tribunes and consuls and established a legal council of ten men called the Decemvirate, whom they tasked with creating the Twelve Tables. While the Decemvirate was designed to be an elective body serving one-year terms, a corrupted Decemvir named Appius Claudius successfully manipulated the election of the second Decemvirate and packed the council with his own faction, thereby crafting an absolute power without elective limits and placing himself as chief Decemvir. Alongside his lustful appetite for power, Appius became enamored with the chaste maiden Virginia, and when she refused his impious advances, he ordered one of his clients, Marcus Claudius, to seize her in the marketplace and to swear that she was not a free citizen, but the daughter of his slave and thereby his possession. Amidst public outcry for justice over Virginia’s capture, Claudius dragged her before the tribunal on a day that Appius alone

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<sup>4</sup> Heywood, *A Curtaine Lecture*, 14.

sat administering the law. Through two legal episodes, Appius, “intoxicated” with his “unbridled lust,” denied Virginia her freedom and claimed her as his household’s property. Her desperate father Virginius, a virtuous military commander, pleaded that he might at least bid farewell to his only daughter, and as he brought her aside, he spied a butcher’s shop from which he grabbed a knife and proclaimed, “My sweete daughter, no other meanes have I but this onely to set thee free.” Virginius then stabbed her in the heart, and exclaimed that he had sent her forth “free and virtuous,” for if she had lived, she “could not have enjoyed these two blessings because of the tyrant.”<sup>5</sup> Virginia’s trial and death led to the abolition of the Decemvirate government by military revolution, as the incensed Roman people realized that they too had become bondservants to Appius; as Virginius declared, “once the law which secured their liberty was violated, there was nothing to prevent their own wives and daughters also from suffering the same treatment.”<sup>6</sup> Livy and Dionysius’s historical accounts of this story focused primarily on the political ramifications of tyrannical government by the Decemvirate; Machiavelli adopted these concerns in his *Discourses on Livy* (1519) by emphasizing the absolute authority of the Decemvirate and its corruption through Appius’s ambition and cunning.<sup>7</sup> Medieval sources more often emphasized Virginia’s virtuous conduct and death, creating a moralizing tale that promoted virtue and chastity for young women and rulers alike. In

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<sup>5</sup> *The Romane Historie Written by T. Livivs of Padva. Also, the Breviaries of L. Florus: with a Chronologie to the whole Histories: and the Topographie of Rome in old time. Translated out of Latine into English, by Philemon Holland, Doctor in Physicke* (London: printed by Adam Islip, 1600), 120; *The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, trans. by Earnest Cary, vol. 7 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1943), XI.37, 123.

<sup>6</sup> Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities*, XI.35, 117.

<sup>7</sup> See *Machiavels Discovrses. upon the first Decade of T. Livivs*, trans. E[dward]. D[acres]. (London: 1636), Bks. I.XXXV and XL, 146-48 and 165-75. Although this was the first published English edition of Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, the work circulated widely in Italian in Elizabethan and Jacobean England and also in various manuscript translations, three of which survive. See Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 52-53.

the particular case of the *Roman de la Rose*, the tale's main purpose was to illustrate that injustice can exist in the courts of justice.<sup>8</sup> As we will see, all of these views influenced the early modern treatment of this multi-faceted story.

Virginia's story provided early modern writers with a moral and political lesson for maiden and statesman, subject and governor alike, for while Virginia personally represented virginity and obedience, her martyrdom served as the dramatic climax of a story with great political significance. English accounts of Virginia's story differed depending on their use of source texts and their foci, yet all shared an important and potentially revolutionary analysis of tyranny and governmental corruption, in which Virginius was shown to rule his household better and more virtuously than Appius ruled Rome. For Englishmen, this story powerfully depicted how an absolute ruler, the very *Pater patriae*, could become tyrannical and violent towards his subjects or "children." It imagined tyranny as the perversion of the ruler's soul and passions, which would lead him to trespass and manipulate the laws and institutions of the commonwealth. The implications of this story were highly significant in Jacobean England, for the patriarchal relationship of the King to his people, and the King's status as a judge above and not subject to the law, were central concepts in King James's efforts to justify and to sacralize absolute monarchy.<sup>9</sup> Even when English writers did not include the

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<sup>8</sup> Lee C. Ramsay, "The Sentence of It Sooth: Chaucer's 'Physician's Tale,'" *The Chaucer Review* 6.3 (Winter 1972): 185-197, esp. 190-93.

<sup>9</sup> I define "absolutism" following the "common usage" definition Glenn Burgess provided, which defines the king as possessing "*general* freedom—as opposed to specific and limited freedoms—from human law." Alongside this view, an absolutist would claim subjects have the duty of unlimited obedience. Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1996), 211. For an example of King James's discussions of absolute and sacred power, see *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* in *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 62-84, in which James argued that subjects must obey their monarch in all his commands and never resist, even when a monarch becomes tyrannical (78-84). A "good king will frame all his actions to be according

revolutionary ending of Virginia's story, an early modern audience who had read its Livy in university and grammar school would have known the full historical account: that the disordering of Rome's commonwealth and the corruption of Rome's laws by Appius not only caused Virginia's personal tragedy but became the impetus for successful republican revolution.

This chapter will explore the significance of Appius and Virginia's story especially in Jacobean England, considering in detail the political message conveyed to the public through its performance and printed retelling. After first examining the themes of virtue and household order central to an Elizabethan performance of Appius and Virginia, the chapter will consider the significance of two Jacobean tellings, arguing that these works offered powerful, gendered portraits of judicial tyranny which cautioned Englishmen that rule by an absolute judge could lead to the disordering of society, the corruption of law, and the abolition of subjects' liberties. Moreover, these accounts significantly contrasted the highly personal and gendered criticism of Appius's tyranny with idealized portraits of the virtues and family relationships of Virginius and Virginia, articulating a vision of good rule through a patriarchal model and suggesting that a ruler's subjects may be more virtuous than their ruler. Although scholars have almost completely neglected the importance of the story of Appius and Virginia in early modern England, this story demonstrates how the circulation of historical exempla and a gendered vocabulary of tyranny publicly challenged the claims of divine kingship advanced by James and others in this period, and, in time, had a corrosive effect on the image of monarchy in England. As we will see, the language of tyranny and law which

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to the Law," James further argued, "yet is hee not bound thereto but of his good will, and for good example-giuing to his subiects" (75).

developed through this story would shape the character of English republican thought in later decades and combine productively with portraits of other Roman tyrants.

In the unfolding of Rome's lengthy history described by Livy and other classical writers, Appius and Virginia's story was very often compared to the better-known tale of the rape of Lucrece, in which the rape and subsequent suicide of the chaste maiden, Lucrece, by the ruling king's son, Tarquin, resulted in Junius Brutus's abolition of the Roman kingship and the institution of republican government by consuls.<sup>10</sup> Virginia was regarded as a second Lucrece, and Appius as a second Tarquin, for both stories included a virtuous woman who suffered sexual violence by a lustful tyrant, resulting in revolution and the establishment of republican government. These plots demonstrated how Rome's constitution passed from a form of absolute power through monarchy or oligarchy, to its degenerate form as a tyranny, and finally into a republic, and they both elaborately portrayed tyranny as male sexual violence against a female citizen. Livy introduced Virginia's story by highlighting these very similarities, claiming that the "heinous deede" against Virginia "began of wanton lust, and had as foule and shamefull an end, as that, which upon the carnall abusing and bloudie death of *Lucretia*, cast the Tarquines out of the cittie, and deprived them of their regall dignitie."<sup>11</sup> Early modern writers very frequently cited these considerable similarities, but they also treated Lucrece and Virginia's stories as distinct due to perceived differences in virtue between these women and due to the specific aspect of tyranny diagnosed. The question of Lucrece's virtue had a significant bearing on the republican implications of her wider revolutionary story,

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<sup>10</sup> Early modern audiences were very familiar with Lucrece's story through reading Livy and other classical authors and through popular appropriations such as William Shakespeare's *Lucrece* (1594), Thomas Middleton's *Ghost of Lucrece* (1600), and Thomas Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece a True Roman Tragedie* (1608).

<sup>11</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 116-17.

and early modern writers, following Augustine and others, actively debated if Lucrece's suicide implicated her as guilty of lust and even seduction.<sup>12</sup> According to the early modern view, if Lucrece was not chaste, then not only her suicide, but also Brutus's abolition of kingship and establishment of a republican government in Rome could be challenged and condemned. For Virginia's story, however, early modern writers emphasized and even celebrated that Virginia's body remained sexually unbroken—and thus sexually pure—due to her death at her father's hands.

While Virginia's exemplum thereby escaped the horrifying scrutiny of Lucrece's sexual purity, the early modern admiration for Virginia is no less disturbing by modern standards, and analyzing the logic of this distinction between Lucrece and Virginia provides us with further evidence as to how early modern writers perceived and promoted women's virtues. As we will see, writers discussing Virginia's exemplum advocated that truly virtuous women should possess not only physical and mental virginity and chastity, but they likewise commemorated Virginia's possession of other virtues, especially obedience to patriarchal authority, submissiveness, silence, and restraint.<sup>13</sup> To them, Virginia's death not only physically ensured the preservation of her virginity, but it further demonstrated her full submission to the authority of her father. Thus, while both Lucrece and Virginia's stories concluded with the political spectacle of the broken female

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<sup>12</sup> In *The City of God* (Book I.19), Augustine questioned why Lucrece committed suicide if she indeed were innocent of fault. For a consideration of the early modern dilemma of Lucrece's corruption by Tarquin, see Laura G. Bromley, "Lucrece's Re-Creation," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34.2 (Summer 1983): 200-11; Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2011); Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Chastity and virginity have been listed as separate virtues due to an important distinction in their definitions. Virginity refers to "abstinence from, or avoidance of all sexual relations," while chastity can refer to "purity from *unlawful* sexual intercourse" (OED, my emphasis). An unmarried woman, therefore, could possess the virtues of virginity and chastity, while a married woman could only possess chastity. Heywood in the *Curtaine Lecture* and R. B. in *A New Tragical Comedie of Apius and Virginia* both employ this distinction, as they encourage chastity for married women and virginity for unmarried maids.

body, Virginia's wound received in the preservation of virginity was thought to confirm her purity and the justice of her cause, while simultaneously promoting a patriarchal ordering of society in which daughters submit to their fathers, and by extension, wives submit to the male authority of their husbands.

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This understanding of Virginia's story was on display in the Elizabethan period, when writers employed Virginia's exemplum primarily as a moralizing tale to promote the female virtues of obedience, submission, virginity and chastity and to warn rulers against the vice of lust.<sup>14</sup> The most thorough and vivid portrayal of this in sixteenth-century England was a court play by R. B. entitled, *A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia, Wherein is liuely expressed a rare example of the vertue of Chastitie, by Virginias constancy, in wishing rather to be slayne in her own fathers handes, then to be deflowred of the wicked Iudge Apius* (1575). The play may have been written by Richard Bower, master of the choristers of the Chapel Royal, and performed at Queen Elizabeth's court as early as 1563.<sup>15</sup> As the title explains, the author understood Virginia as a "rare

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<sup>14</sup> See William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure beautified, adorned, and well furnished, with pleasaunt histories and excellent nouvelles, selected out of diuers good and commendable authors* (London: by Henry Denham, for Richard Tottell and William Iones, 1566), fol. 13a-19b; Matteo Bandello, *Certaine tragicall discourses written out of Frenche and Latin, by Geffraie Fenton*... (London: by Thomas Marshe, 1567), epistle dedicatory and fol. 25b; Alexander Siluayn, *The orator handling a hundred seuerall discourses, in forme of declamations...Englished by L. P.* (London: by Adam Islip, 1596), 254-56; Lodowick Lloyd, however, discussed Appius and Virginia as another example of Rome changing from a monarchy to a republic. See *The Consent of time disciphering the errors of the Grecians in their Olympiads....and of the vanities of the Gentiles in fables of antiquities....Wherein is also set downe the beginning, continuance, succession and ouerthrowes of kings, kingdomes, states, and governments* (London: by George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1590), 500; and *The pilgrimage of princes* (London: by John Charlewood and John Kingston? for William Jones, 1573?), fol. 79b.

<sup>15</sup> R.B., *A new Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia, Wherein is liuely expressed a rare example of the vertue of Chastitie, by Virginias constancy, in wishing rather to be slayne in her own fathers handes, then to be deflowred of the wicked Iudge Apius* (London: by William How for Richard Iones, 1575). For authorship see Frank Humphrey Ristine, *English Tragicomedie: Its Origin and History* (NY: Columbia UP, 1910), 62-63; for dating see Robert Dodsley and John Payne Collier, *A Select Collection of Old Plays in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 12 (London: Septimus Prowett, 1827), 339.

example of...Chastitie” because she submitted herself to her father’s will rather than Appius’s sexual violence, and, like Heywood in the *Curtaine Lecture*, he employed Virginia’s exemplum in order to beckon his female readers to “imitate the life you see, whose fame will perish never.”<sup>16</sup> *A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia* reflected prescriptive literature, sermons, and popular pamphlets that understood the family as the basis for social and political order and advocated particular roles in marriage, the household, and sexual morality through gendered and patriarchal terms.<sup>17</sup> The genre of the work further promoted the virtuous imitation of Virginia by borrowing from the late medieval morality play tradition in two ways: it included a set of allegorical *dramatis personae* such as Haphazard, Conscience, Justice, Reward, and Rumour, and it presented Virginia’s “tragicall” death as resulting in the wicked finding punishment and the righteous attaining eternal reward.<sup>18</sup> This play, thereby, provided a highly imaginative and moralizing drama of female virtue within the context of family and politics.

*A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia* presented Virginia as a fully virtuous woman, “a virgin pure, an imp of heavenly race, / Both sober, meek, and modest

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<sup>16</sup> *An Edition of R. B.’s Appius and Virginia*, ed. Judith Hedley (NY & London: Garland, 1988), 3. Citations hereafter will be from this edition.

<sup>17</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 1-2, 34-66; Kathleen M. Davies, “Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage,” in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outwaite (London: Europa, 1981), 58-78; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 1-8, 24-29, 79-110; Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Harper & Row, 1977), esp. 151-218. For excellent studies related to the European Continent, see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 56-88; Natalie Zemon Davis, “Women on Top,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: eight essays* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1975), 124-51.

<sup>18</sup> Ristine, *English Tragicomedy*, 63. W. Roy MacKenzie instead classified it as a historical play with Morality features. See *The English Moralities from the Point of View of Allegory* (NYC: Haskell, 1970), 10-11.



too, and virtuous in like case.”<sup>19</sup> Importantly, the dramatist presented these qualities as an outcome and a necessary component of an ordered, godly household, in which Virginia’s obedience to parental authority, and her mother’s submission to her father Virginius, produced love, kindness, and cooperation.<sup>20</sup> In order to represent Virginia’s household in this manner, R. B. intentionally departed from his classical sources by including Virginia’s “Mater” as a character, even though Virginia’s mother was said to have died while her daughter was yet an infant.<sup>21</sup> The opening scene entails a lengthy celebration of the ordered household, in which Virginius, Mater, and Virginia express their “happy state” in fulfilling their particular roles. Virginius, the “king” and “kaiser,” is described by his wife as “so loving, / Granting and giving to all thing behoving, / Joying in me and in the fruit of my womb,” while Virginia extols her mother for attending upon husband and child as a faithful “nurse” and “comfort,” and thereby being a “gem” and “jewel” to her husband.<sup>22</sup> In her first speech onstage Virginia demonstrates her obedience to this parental structure by listening to her mother’s advice and vowing that, although she dearly cherishes “Diana’s gift” of virginity, she will not be “obstinate” but will willingly yield to wedlock “[w]hen you command, and not before.”<sup>23</sup> These sentiments culminate in a song of celebration by all three family members, the chorus of which proclaims:

The trustiest treasure in earth as we see,  
Is man, wife and children in one to agree;  
Then friendly, and kindly, let measure be mixed  
With reason, in season, where friendship is fixed.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> R. B., *Apus and Virginia*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> See above, fn 14.

<sup>21</sup> Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities*, IX.30, 101.

<sup>22</sup> R. B., *Apus and Virginia*, 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

This embellished scene depicting familial bliss echoed sixteenth-century prescriptive literature and sermons which commanded “euery one abyde in the callyng wherin he is called” by fulfilling their duties and responsibilities in the ordered household, resulting in a peaceable and loving family, and further, a peaceable realm,<sup>25</sup> and indeed, each verse of the song promotes this relationship between godly household and commonwealth through several historical exempla, such as King Nisus whose “realm was overrun” because he “would not let his daughter to be taught / Of any one correcting hand to nurture to be brought.”<sup>26</sup> Throughout this opening scene, thereby, the dramatist framed Virginia’s virtues in the context of the godly household, and he identified such virtue as the foundation of a peaceable commonwealth. Virginia’s chastity was understood as the natural outcome of a harmonious family, in which the love of husband, wife, and child, and their enacting of duties, responsibilities, and obedience to each other, provided the foundation for individual and corporate morality. This exultation of virginity and good governance would have had further resonance when performed in Elizabeth’s court.<sup>27</sup>

Through the allegorical character of “Haphazard the Vice,” who by chance or accident sometimes advances and sometimes destroys those who trust in his devices,

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<sup>25</sup> [Compiled from William Tyndale, Heinrich Bullinger, Miles Coverdale, and John Bale], *The Christen rule or state of all the worlde from the hyghest to the lowest: and how euery man shulde lyue to please God in hys callynge. Item, the Christian state of matrimony and how man and wife shuld kepe house together with loue. Item, the maner oe [sic] saynge grace after the holy scrypture* (London?: T. Raynalde and William Hill, 1548?), 2a-b, 5a-23b.

<sup>26</sup> R. B., *Apius and Virginia*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> For discussions of the significance of virginity to Queen Elizabeth’s reign, see Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King’: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Sarah L. Duncan, “The Two Virgin Queens,” in *Elizabeth I and the ‘Sovereign Arts’: Essays in Literature, History and Culture*, ed. Donald Stump, Shenk, and Levin (Tempe, AR: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011); Frances Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); Elkin Calhoun Wilson, *England’s Eliza* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1939); Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser’s Faerie Queen and the Cult of Elizabeth* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1983); Roy Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Wallop, Hampshire: Thames and Hudson, 1977).

*Apius and Virginia* also provided a contrasting portrait of the disordered household and realm governed by lust, fortune, and personal gain. In this alternative view expressed in a second song, happiness is depicted as the outcome of mere happenstance, and characters aligning themselves with Haphazard, such as the married yet unruly servants Mansipulus and Mansipula, disobey and “prank” their masters with the mantra that, at best, their mischief will result in merriness, and at worst, they will receive a physical beating.<sup>28</sup> R. B. emphasizes the discord of this disorderly couple by having them brawl and rail against each other onstage, each accusing the other of being a “knave” or prattling “vixen.”<sup>29</sup> While the play stresses the immoral activity of these characters by casting them as low ranking members of the social hierarchy, Haphazard insists that *any* man may happen to follow him and act so ignobly, whether he be gentleman, courtier, captain, ploughman, merchant, or beggar.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, according to Haphazard, any family ruled by chance would disrupt the political, social, and gender hierarchy by creating a world turned upside down, where “wives wear the codpiece, and maidens coy strange. / ...So maids would be masters, by the guise of this country.”<sup>31</sup> This model of the disordered household and commonwealth, whose members follow chance and mischief rather than virtue, is thus characterized by dissonance, violence, the deterioration of gendered roles and emasculation of husbands, and finally, disharmony in the political realm.

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<sup>28</sup> R. B., *Apius and Virginia*, 17. It is unclear if “Mansipulus” and “Mansipula” are intended to pun on the Latin noun, “Manipulus,” which means “a handful, bundle.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> For the association of class with moral worth, see Amussen, *Ordered Society*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> R. B., *Apius and Virginia*, 19. See Zemon Davis, “Women on Top,” 124-51; Christopher Hill, “The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking,” in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation, Essays in Honour of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. C. H. Carter (NY: Random House, 1966), 296-324.

Appius enters the stage directly after these idealized portraits of the ordered and disordered family, and his opening speech reveals that, despite his kingly position,<sup>32</sup> he has become ruled by passion instead of virtue like Mansipulus and Mansipula. Appius explicitly laments his desperate sexual desire to possess Virginia—to have “her tender skin to bathe where I do wash” and “her soft sweet lips to touch my naked flesh”—but due to the gods’ refusal to grant him this request, his soul and his realm have become subject to lust and to fortune:

The furrowed face of Fortune’s force my pinching pain doth move:  
I, settled ruler of my realm, enforcèd am to love.  
Judge Appius I, the princeliest judge that reigneth under sun,  
And have been so esteemèd long, but now my force is done:  
I rule no more, but rulèd am; I do not judge but am judged;  
By beauty of Virginia my wisdom all is truded.<sup>33</sup>

Due to this all-encompassing desire which has already taken possession of Appius, he agrees to “be ruled” by Haphazard for the chance to “deflower” Virginia with violence. He embraces this malevolent role, announcing that he will become like “Tarquin” who “Lucrece fair by force did once oppress!”<sup>34</sup> While the author of *Appius and Virginia* never explicitly labeled Appius a tyrant, this comparison to Tarquin would have strongly suggested the label to an early modern audience, and the playwright’s description of Appius as wholly enslaved to lust and to fortune echoed the most well-known classical definition of tyranny in early modern England, Plato’s *Republic*.<sup>35</sup> A man becomes tyrannical, according to Socrates, “when his nature or his way of life or both of them

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<sup>32</sup> The author conflates Appius’s position as a judge and monarch, which made this play more applicable to the English case and which further emphasized Appius’s absolute power in Rome.

<sup>33</sup> R. B., *Appius and Virginia*, 19-20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> See “Introduction” above, pg. 10-11.

together make him drunk, filled with erotic desire, and mad.”<sup>36</sup> Similar to Appius’s description of being “ruled” and “judged” due to his insatiable passion for Virginia, Socrates explained that a tyrannical soul is “least likely to do what it wants, and, forcibly driven by the stings of a dronish gadfly, will be full of disorder and regret”; indeed, “a real tyrant is really a slave,” Socrates maintained, due to his maddening, insatiable desires, and especially the desires of erotic love. Socrates further warned that the evil the tyrannical man heaps upon himself greatly multiplies as he “tries to rule others when he can’t even control himself.” If in a position of power, such as Appius, the tyrannical man is “so far from satisfying his desires in any way that it is clear,” Socrates continued, “that he’s in the greatest need of most things and truly poor. And, if indeed his state is like that of the city he rules, then he’s full of fear, convulsions, and pains throughout his life.”<sup>37</sup> As such a disordered ruler, Appius fulfills Haphazard’s prediction that trusting in fortune, rather than reforming his soul, would turn the world upside down and create further discord in the commonwealth. After expelling the characters Justice and Conscience from his presence, he forcibly enacts a subversion of the social hierarchy by judging the high-born Virginia to be a slave and thus fit for his possession.

The dramatic content of *Appius and Virginia* was thus governed by a moralized presentation of the ordered and disordered individual, household, and commonwealth, with these realms being both parallel and intertwined. Appius’s attempted defilement of Virginia not only represented a struggle between the virtuous and unvirtuous individual or family, but also a political struggle between the well-governed and tyrannical commonwealth. Following the unjust judicial suit against Virginia, the grieving and

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<sup>36</sup> *Republic*, trans. by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1997), IX.573c, pg. 1182.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, IX.577d-e, p. 1185 and IX.579c-e, pg. 1187.

distraught Virginius informs his daughter that Appius, “pricked forth with filthy desire” for her, has decreed that he must hand her over or perish. Virginius desires his own death “Rather than see my daughter deflowered / Or else in ill sort so vilely devoured,” but Virginia argues that it is she who must die:

Thou knowest, oh my father, if I be once spotted,  
My name and my kindred then forth will be blotted,  
And if thou, my father, should die for my cause,  
The world would account me as guilty in cause.<sup>38</sup>

The disturbing logic of this plea highlights the severity of this drama’s moral claims about female virginity and submission. Despite being the victim of Appius’s power and violence, Virginia places the burden of martyrdom upon herself and presents the argument that a woman must be willing to preserve her chastity even through death or else be held accountable for her family’s dishonor. Virginius affirms his daughter’s reasoning, claiming that even if he died Virginia would still be seized by Appius, causing her family shame: “And better it is to die with good fame, / Then longer to live to reap us but shame.”<sup>39</sup> According to the stage directions, Virginia then willingly kneels for her execution, and between cries of consent by her and woeful apologies by Virginius, he “proffer[s] a blow,” blindfolds her with a handkerchief and, as Virginia exclaims her final line, “Now, father, work thy will on me, that life I may enjoy,” he “strike[s] off her head.”<sup>40</sup>

In these ways, R. B.’s account portrayed Virginia’s life as a willful virgin, and her death in preservation of virginity as voluntary martyrdom, and he was able to do so by following the medieval sources of Virginia’s story which depicted Virginia’s death as

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<sup>38</sup> R. B., *Apus and Virginia*, 39-40.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

consensual.<sup>41</sup> In the classical story, Virginius seizes a knife from a butcher's stall and stabs Virginia in the heart without ever seeking her consent, but here, it is Virginia who justifies her death and begs her father to kill her, thereby actively submitting herself to the preservation of virginity at all costs. As Desiderius Erasmus explained:

A true virgyn doth differre very lyttell from a martyr. A martir suffreth the executioner to mangle his fleshe: a virgin dayly dothe with good wyll mortifie her fleshe....And therefore whan a virgin is delyvred to the executioner, she dothe not begynne her martyrdom, but makethe an ende of that that she beganne longe before.<sup>42</sup>

Virginia's decision to be executed is presented as an extension of her virtuous life, but unlike the tradition of Christian martyrdom in which the virgin bride eagerly awaits eternal life with Christ, her heavenly spouse, Virginia's is a classicized martyrdom with a reward of earthly renown, for which Dame Fame sounds her trumpet and Memory ensures "her death shall ever reign / Within the mouth and mind of man, from age to age again."<sup>43</sup> In his earlier prologue, R. B. had likewise beckoned his Elizabethan female readers to "lead the life apparent here, to win immortal fame," noting Virginia's "joys at death" and describing Virginia "with latest breath" calling, "'Come, virgins pure, to grave with me.'"<sup>44</sup> This "tragicall comedie," thereby, proposed to its audience a clear and demanding moral for women: virginity was deemed necessary for personal honor in this life and glory in the afterlife; however, it was further understood as essential for the

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<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the medieval tradition, see Ramsay, "Chaucer's Physician's Tale," 192; Judith Hedly, "Literary Introduction," *R. B.'s Appius and Virginia*, 50-51.

<sup>42</sup> Qtd in Karen Bamford, *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>43</sup> R. B., *Appius and Virginia*, 51. For a discussion of Christian martyrdom and the Reformation, see Bamford, "The Legend of the Saints," in *Sexual Violence*, 25-32.

<sup>44</sup> R. B., *Appius and Virginia*, 3-4.

preservation of family credit and the protection of a well-ordered society in which women must fulfill their submissive role.<sup>45</sup>

With Virginia thus “rewarded” for her virtue through death, Appius, his accomplice Claudius, and Haphazard receive censure for their “fleshly lust.” After Virginius defiantly presents Virginia’s head to Appius, announcing that “Venus’ damsels, void of shame,” such as his daughter, would “rather wish the naked knife / Than virgin’s life attained,” Appius, in horrified disdain not only at Virginia’s death but also her father’s part in it, sentences Virginius to death for his unnatural crime of infanticide and calls upon Justice and Reward to aid him in fulfilling his verdict.<sup>46</sup> Appius’s judgment here might seem justified, but the characters Justice and Reward instead condemn the judge for his own behavior: “O gorgon judge, what lawless life hast thou, most wicked, led? / Thy soaking sin hath sunk thy soul, thy virtues all are fled.”<sup>47</sup> The contrast between Virginius’s household and Appius is here brought to the fore. Virginius triumphantly holds the remains of his virtuous daughter onstage while Appius is stripped of his power and authority and sentenced to “deadly death” for his wicked and vicious life. Following Chaucer and other medieval authors, this version of Appius and Virginia omitted Virginius’s military revolution as its conclusion, but it did not omit this significant display of inversion. Appius, a high but wicked ruler, has disordered his commonwealth, while Virginius, a low but virtuous householder, has rightly ordered his family. In this play, it is not Virginius but Justice herself who rebalances the scales by

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<sup>45</sup> In the prologue, R. B. extended these claims of virginity to married women by exhorting them to chastity and to submission to their husbands, as we see modeled in the character Mater.

<sup>46</sup> R. B., *Appius and Virginia*, 45.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. Here “gorgon” is thought to mean “petrifying, terrible.” See OED, “gorgon, n. (and adj.).”



casting down the vicious tyrant. The moralized tale thus drawn to a close, R. B.'s epilogue summarized his exemplum as follows:

And by this poet's feigning here example do you take  
Of Virginia's life of chastity, of duty to thy make;  
Of love to wife, of love to spouse, of love to husband dear,  
Of bringing up of tender youth; all these are noted here.<sup>48</sup>

Chastity, submission, and order: this was the message that Virginia's exemplum advanced to its sixteenth-century audience. In its focus on personal, familial, social, and political duty, however, *A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia* not only promoted the patriarchal ordering of society; it raised the provocative claim that a ruler would be cast down if he failed to uphold this order by ruling with virtue and justice.

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In 1616, King James VI and I publicly articulated and defended his kingly authority through a 570 page folio volume of his collected *Works*, including previously published treatises such as *Basilicon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, meditations on the Scriptures, and speeches made before Parliament, Whitehall, and the Star Chamber. As Kevin Sharpe has persuasively argued, *The Works of the Most High and Mighty Prince James*, with its size, privilege, royal arms and elaborately engraved title page, "immediately proclaim[ed] authority – both literary and political," and James understood these writings as essential to representing his majesty and proclaiming his divine right as a monarch.<sup>49</sup> Throughout the *Works* and through his public acts, including the publication of the *King James Bible*, James crafted a sacralized image of his authority, declaring that kings themselves are called Gods, and in imitation of God, they sit as

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<sup>48</sup> R. B., *Apius and Virginia*, 52.

<sup>49</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2010), esp. 29-33.

judges of the law, fathers of their subjects, and the head of the body politic and ecclesiastic.<sup>50</sup> It was during this period, when the grandest claims on behalf of divine monarchy were being pronounced by the English king, that several writers and playwrights returned to the history of Appius and Virginia. Although still a historical exemplum of virginity and submission, the wider drama of judicial corruption, tyranny, and republican revolution in the story became the focus of these writers, and, as we will see, they employed this history to demonstrate how the absolute rule of a tyrant might threaten law, justice, order, and the liberties of subjects.

The two fullest accounts of Appius and Virginia in the Jacobean period included an anonymous extended poem and satire entitled, *That Which Seemes Best is Worst. Exprest in a Paraphrastical Transcript of Ivvivals tenth Satyre. Together with the tragicall narration of Virginias death interserted* (1617),<sup>51</sup> and a play by John Webster and probably Thomas Heywood entitled, *Appius and Virginia. A Tragedy* (1654). While most scholars seem to agree that Webster and Heywood coauthored this play, its dating and performance have continued to raise substantial controversy over the past century. Most contemporary scholars place the work as written sometime between 1608 and 1626, with some preferring a date from the 1620s due to perceived allusions to the Duke of Buckingham in the play, while others subscribe to an earlier date based on Robert Anton's *Philosophers Satyrs* (1616) which mentioned "Virgineae's rape" as performed onstage. Those who argue for an earlier date also cite similarities between this play and other early Jacobean plays such as Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece a true Roman*

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 155, 195, 204

<sup>51</sup> I have only discovered one surviving copy worldwide: British Library [C.39.a.4], although another copy may be located at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Bavarian State Library), in Munich, Germany.

*Tragedie* (1608).<sup>52</sup> My aim in this chapter is not to resolve this long-held debate, but to focus on the significant arguments that both *Appius and Virginia* and *That Which Seemes Best is Worst* provided for their Jacobean audiences. Although, as we will see, important differences exist between these works, both presented scorching critiques of royal corruption, supplied timely definitions of tyranny as injustice, and suggested how statesmen and subjects could respond to corruption and protect those laws which uphold their liberties. The display of these arguments through a compelling historical story raised significant challenges to the claims of divine absolutism posed by James and later by Charles I.

Throughout James's reign, the jurisdiction, interpretation and authority of the common law was a particularly salient issue of political discussion through which statesmen debated the source of their lawful rights and liberties and the law's ability to define and limit the king's prerogatives. From the disputes concerning the union of England and Scotland in 1604 and 1607, to the debate over impositions in 1610, the 1616 legal strife between Edward Coke and Lord Ellesmere over the Court of Chancery, and the impasse in 1621 over the Commons' freedom of speech in foreign policy, the Jacobean period witnessed lawyers and the king drawing upon the common law tradition to defend rival versions of the ancient constitution; of whether England was a "constitutional monarchy governed by the common law," a law that stood above kings and parliaments distributing monarchical prerogatives and the liberties of subjects, or

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Culhane, "The Date of Heywood and Webster's *Appius and Virginia*," *Notes & Queries* 51.3 (September 2004): 300-1; D. Gunby, et al. (eds), *Works of John Webster* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), II, 443-46; Gunby and H. Lees-Jeffries, "George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham and the Dating of Webster and Heywood's *Appius and Virginia*," *Notes & Queries* 49.3 (2002): 324-27; Michael Payne Steppat, "John Webster's *Appius and Virginia*," *American Notes and Queries* 20, issue 7/8 (1982): 101; Rupert Brooke, "The Authorship of the later *Appius and Virginia*," *Modern Language Review* 8.4 (1913): 433-53, and greatly expanded in Brooke, *John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama* (NY: John Lane, 1916), 165-210.

whether it was a “constitutional monarchy created by kings’ in which monarchs limited their own powers by creating laws and the institutions of governance.”<sup>53</sup> One important issue within these competing visions was whether the *Rex est Judex*, the *Lex loquens* and the supplier of law. Beyond formal parliamentary and legal debates, the common law had immense cultural and intellectual authority, and in order to legitimate its sovereignty, signs and symbols of the ancient constitution were consciously developed from classical and continental sources, especially in the Inns of Court.<sup>54</sup> Within this locus of legal culture, thought, and politics, the story of Appius and Virginia provided a significant portrayal of how the liberties of subjects might be challenged and abolished through the jurisdiction of an absolute judge who sat above the law. Although Appius derived his power as a Decemvir, which was a form of government foreign to seventeenth-century England, *That Which Seemes Best is Worst* and *Appius and Virginia* represented Appius as a monarchical figure or as a judge, thereby crafting this Roman story as an applicable case for English legal debate.

In the year following the publication of *The Works of the Most High and Mighty Prince James*, the newly printed *That Which Seemes Best is Worst* provided a loose translation of Juvenal’s “Tenth Satire” through rhyming couplets. This poem was the first printed edition of Juvenal in the English language, and its author, “W.B.,” remains a

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Christianson, “Royal and Parliamentary Voices on the Ancient Constitution, c. 1604-1621,” in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 71-95, esp. 72; Corinne C. Weston, “England: Ancient Constitution and Common Law,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 374-411, esp. 374-76; J. G. A. Pocock, “The Common-law Mind: Custom and the Immemorial,” in *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 30-55.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Raffield, *Images and Cultures of Law in Early Modern England: Justice and Political Power, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 1-3. Lawyers and the Inns of Court community exercised great influence in both the political and cultural realm of law, serving in high offices and Parliament, drafting legal statutes, and developing these symbols of law. See J. P. Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640* (London and NY: Longman, 1986), 86-87.

mystery, although several nineteenth-century scholars suggested the poet William Basse or the actor William Barkstead.<sup>55</sup> Since the nineteenth century, no scholar has seriously studied this work.<sup>56</sup> The poem is 49 pages long (1348 lines), 30 pages of which follow Juvenal's satire quite closely, and 19 pages of which depart from Juvenal in order to narrate the tragedy of Appius and Virginia in great detail. Although a seemingly odd placement for this story, Juvenal's original Latin "Tenth Satire" provided an interesting commentary on Appius's story, for it argued that the folly of humans is praying for what, if granted, would only result in their own harm and ruin. After considering wealth, political power, military glory, long life, and beauty as the objects of human prayer, Juvenal finished his satire by arguing that humans should rightly pray for a "healthy mind in a healthy body" (*mens sana in corpore sano*), a "valiant heart which has banished the fear of death," and endurance for every kind of hardship.<sup>57</sup> He concluded that such a virtuous life would lead to tranquility. For an early modern audience, Juvenal's "Tenth Satire" offered a reflection upon the ruinous consequences of ambition, pride, and immoral living.

Whereas R. B.'s *Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia* had appropriated the Appius and Virginia narrative through a morality play, Juvenal's satiric voice was that of the *vir iratus*, the angry or indignant man whose inflammatory denunciations betrayed resentment and a sense of personal injustice. Those Renaissance writers who were favorable to Juvenal emphasized his "moral sublimity which was thought to justify his

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<sup>55</sup> See Edward F. Rimbault, "William Basse and his Poems," *Notes & Queries* 17 (Feb. 23, 1850): 265-66; William Thomas Lowndes and Henry G. Bohn, *The bibliographer's manual of English literature*, vol. II (London: Bell & Dandy, 1871), 1249; A. B. G., "Barksted, William (fl. 1611)," in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. III, ed. Sir Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder, 1885), 217-18.

<sup>56</sup> The only contemporary reference I have found is by Andrew McRae, who mentions the poem's discussion of Sejanus. See *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 123.

<sup>57</sup> Juvenal, *The Satires*, trans. Niall Rudd (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 98.

acerbity.” Although the subject of the “Tenth Satire” was potentially tragic, with Juvenal dismissing every human aspiration as futile, he instead adopted the detached and bitterly comic view of a Democritus, or laughing philosopher, and his ethical philosophy more closely adhered to a Stoic rather than relativistic stance.<sup>58</sup> While seventeenth-century critics, following Isaac Causabon, began regarding Horace as the true model of satire, the verse satire of the Jacobean period still fused Elizabethan models of the Complaint genre, a primarily moral and corrective homily, with cynical Juvenalian invective.<sup>59</sup> The result was a satire cutting in its bitter condemnation of societal vices while moralizing and Christianized in its message. Within this model, *That Which Seemes Best* could still present Appius and Virginia as a moralized tale, but one which offered a probing and sharp critique of political and social corruption.

As Andrew McRae has demonstrated, satire also provided a significant form of political speech and culture in Jacobean England, even shaping the very contours of political debate in an age of censorship and the suppression of radical political discussion.<sup>60</sup> Whereas McRae’s work has highlighted the significance of such political speech in the wider public sphere of Stuart England, Juvenal’s “Tenth Satire” influenced even the formal debates of Parliament. In 1614, Sir Edwin Sandys employed Juvenal’s “Tenth Satire” in an important speech arguing that all kings, elective or successive,

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<sup>58</sup> Raman Selden, *English Verse Satire 1590-1765* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), 29, 30-34, 42.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-50, 72. Selden and McRae cite the Bishops’ Ban of 1599 as bringing an abrupt end to late Elizabethan developments in vigorous formal satire. See Selden, *English Verse Satire*, 51 and 72; McRae, *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State*, 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> McRae, “Introduction,” *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*, 1-19. McRae followed a more fluid definition of satire for this period than Selden and other literary critics, adopting Edward Rosenheim, Jr.’s definition of satire as an “attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historical particulars” (8-9). As *That Which Seemes Best is Worst* provided a translation of a Juvenalian satire, a more formal definition of satire has proved helpful for my analysis, but I do not object to analyzing other less formal libels and pamphlets as also properly “satiric” in this period as McRae has done.

“settle their states by consent of their people” and could be legitimately removed. He concluded his speech with Juvenal’s incendiary remark:

Ad generum Cereris sine caede et vulnere pauci  
Descenderunt reges, et sicca morte tyranni.

[Few kings go down to Ceres’ son-in-law (Pluto) without slaughter and carnage, few tyrants avoid a bloodless death.]<sup>61</sup>

Describing the close of the so-called Addled Parliament, Sir John Holles reported that, due to his speech “on elective and successive kings, and his rehearsing two verses in Juvenal *Ad generum Cereris sine caede*,” Sandys was summoned before the Privy Council and his speech “questioned” for seditious implications.<sup>62</sup> In theory, genre and practice, Juvenal’s “Tenth Satire” thus afforded Jacobean statesmen a potentially caustic, moralizing, and politically subversive vehicle for public discourse.

Juvenal’s satire, as a whole, considered how all aspirations, other than that of virtue, lead to ruin, but the particular and lengthy exploration of Appius and Virginia’s story in *That Which Seemes Best* emphasized how a commonwealth and its subjects are ruined by corrupted governors who seek the fulfillment of their lustful, violent and unjust appetites. Significantly, the early modern satire focused considerably on the character of Appius instead of on Virginia’s virtues. As the poem remarked, “Graue Appius,” was the “chiefe of the *Decemui*ri,” living “in glitter and authoritie” and holding the judicial power in Rome so that “He punisheth and pardons as him list.” Due to Appius’s age and authority, the satire claimed he should have been a man “wise and stay’d,” but instead

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<sup>61</sup> *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and trans. Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Ann Arbor: Edwards, 2004), 375. Maija Jansson, ed., *Proceedings in Parliament, 1614 (House of Commons)* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 316; N. E. McClure, ed., *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1939): 1.533. Chamberlain substituted “sanguine” for “vulnere.”

<sup>62</sup> Sir John Holles, *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1888): 9:138.

“many a fault in silence yet is hisht: To feare and flatter he doth encline, / Which is the ruine of all discipline”; for Virginia, he had become enflamed with savage lust.<sup>63</sup> The poem’s portrait of Appius as a corrupt judge emphasized how his appetites made him effeminate and ineffective. His inability to have Virginia “so kils his heart,” the poem explained, that Appius walks alone “with delected eyne” as he “growes flag and waxeth leane,” wasting his days in “wanton courting,” “meditating,” “plotting,” “sighing,” “looking wild” and even “weeping” about how he might have her.<sup>64</sup> The early modern satirist adopted the mocking tone of Juvenal while characterizing Appius as weak and unmanly:

A silent tongue he hath, but speaking eyes,  
 Yet who saies *Appius* loues *Virginia*, lies  
 Fie *Appius*! fie for shame! ne’re be so weake,  
 What! be fraid vnto a girle to speake?....  
 Then *Appius* speake thy mind, and be a man;<sup>65</sup>

In this portrait of Appius, *That Which Seemes Best* echoed *A New Tragical Comedie of Apius and Virginia* by emphasizing the direct connection between Appius’s faults and the commonwealth’s disorder. Noting that his behavior brought “disorder, pride, and luxurie, / Discord, and in the end anarchy,” the poem argued that Appius’s example caused the Roman youth to themselves become “effeminate,” “dissolute,” and rebellious through “scorn[ing] the magistrate,” for

If *Appius* loue how can the younger fry  
 But liue and wallow in foule luxurie?  
 Why? doth not *Appius* thus (say they) and thus,  
 And shall it not be lawfull then for vs?  
 If *Appius* his *Virginia* must haue,

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<sup>63</sup> W.B., *That Which Seemes Best is Worst. Exprest in a Paraphrasticall Trascript of Iuvenals tenth Satyre. Together with the Tragical Narration of Virginias death inserted* (London: 1617), 21, 23-24 (my pagination, to be continued hereafter).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



Some liberty, as well as he wee'le craue.<sup>66</sup>

This warning concluded with the moral that people would follow the faults of their superiors, which makes their “ill example hurt a great deale more” than others. Disorder extended from Appius through Rome’s citizens and even beyond her walls, according to the satirist, allowing Rome’s enemies, the Sabines, to make military incursions on Rome’s borders.<sup>67</sup> This portrait of Appius thereby emphasized his uncontrolled and effeminate passions, which caused him and his commonwealth to become emasculated through corruption and disordered through rebellious living.

Importantly, *That Which Seemes Best* detailed Appius’s tyrannical activity as that of a judge distorting and trespassing upon the public laws of Rome – laws which Appius himself had crafted in the Twelve Tables. As Dionysius established, Appius’s desire to have Virginia was itself illegal on many counts, for Virginia was betrothed to Icilius, Appius was already lawfully wedded, and under the Twelve Tables, his patrician status meant that he could not take a wife from a plebeian family.<sup>68</sup> According to the poem, despite these obstacles Appius’s “loue” for Virginia hatched “fearelesse lust” and eventually became “fury,” which led him to attempt a plot which further violated Roman law.<sup>69</sup> After sending Virginia’s father away to war, Appius laid a secret trap to have his client, Claudius, challenge Virginia’s legal status as a free citizen, although he knew Virginia had been born free. Arranging for Claudius to drag Virginia to court when he alone sat in judgment, Appius violated the Twelve Tables in the first session by ruling

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities*, IX.28, 95. The author of *That Which Seemes Best* seems to have relied heavily upon Dionysius’s account as well as Livy’s, especially for the speeches and dramatic action around the court, but the material concerning Appius and Virginia’s behavior more likely stemmed from the medieval tradition or R. B.’s *A New Tragical Comedie*.

<sup>69</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 26-27.

that Virginia would be housed with Claudius until her father returned for the trial; according to the law, Virginia should have retained her status of freedom and been allowed to remain at large until found guilty by trial.<sup>70</sup> As the poem relayed, Appius eventually reversed this ruling out of fear that Virginia's impassioned fiancé Icilius would successfully stir the crowd to sedition, but even then, through hidden treachery, Appius sought to prevent a just trial by ordering his military commanders to deny Virginius leave from his military camp and hence keep him from appearing at the trial and standing witness.<sup>71</sup> Appius's letter arrived too late, however, and just after he took his "seate of Iustice" the next day, Virginius entered the forum with his daughter.<sup>72</sup> The poem stressed that throughout this trial the mournful and just pleas rendered by Virginius, Icilius, and the crowd did nothing but enrage Appius, and it portrayed Appius as unable to rule with impartiality. The incensed judge, described as "cruell" and "wicked," "moue'd with no remorse" due to "lusts rage," and "swolne with lust and wroth," eventually decreed the woman to be Claudius's slave, and thus a slave of his own household.<sup>73</sup>

This scene in *That Which Seemes Best* persuasively demonstrated the frailty of law in protecting citizens from tyranny, as it provided a dramatic and moving portrait of a tyrannical judge as one who, through lust, corruption, and eventually fury, commits unlawful violence against his subjects and forcefully disrupts the rightful social order. It powerfully illustrated that absolute legal power would enable such a tyrant to distort public law with partiality and enslave even citizens. The satirical poem further

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<sup>70</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 29; Livy, *Romane Historie*, 117; Dionysius, XI.30, pg. 101-3.

<sup>71</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 29-31.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

elaborated the violence of this injustice by depicting judicial tyranny as sexual violence against the innocent, with Virginia represented as a martyr who, in Christological terms, stood silently through her unjust trial as a “lambe” brought “to the butchering.”<sup>74</sup>

Virginius repeatedly described his blameless child as one made a “slaue” through “lust” and “violence,” although she had been raised to “be a wife,” and not “a whore.”<sup>75</sup> The poem articulated how such a violation of one innocent subject would result in violence against all subjects, destroying the distinctions, protections, and proper relationships of an ordered and civilized society. As Virginius argued:

What? shall we liue like beasts promiscuously,  
Without distinction in foule luxurie?  
O age and sexe shall no regard be had?  
Shall each man by his beastly lust be lad?  
If these (the people here) shall this permit,  
Others I know which will not suffer it.<sup>76</sup>

The connection between the violated female body and the violated city or body politic brought to ruin was one previously central to Shakespeare’s “Lucrece,” when Lucrece had compared her plight to the fall of Troy: “As Priam [Sinon] did cherish, / So did I Tarquin, so my Troy did perish.”<sup>77</sup> According to *That Which Seemes Best*, after Virginia’s death her body became an image of injustice, being “laid...out to all the people’s sight” as a spectacle to demonstrate the violent result of “rape and lust.”<sup>78</sup> Her body the image of a pillaged city, Virginia’s memorial became the symbol of a disordered and enslaved society. The poem emphasized this image of judicial tyranny yet again when returning to Juvenal’s satire after completing the narration of Virginia’s

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 33-35.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>77</sup> Shakespeare, “Lucrece,” lines 1545-46; Mercedes Maroto Camino, *The Stage Am I? Raping Lucrece in Early Modern England* (NY: E. Mellen, 1995), 40.

<sup>78</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 39.

story. In the immediately succeeding section of the poem, the author turned to the story of Nero castrating the boy Sporus in order to take him as a bride, raising the broad warning: “Neuer was tyrant yet, that ere would geld, / That boy in whom he beauties want beheld.”<sup>79</sup>

Through this vivid depiction of injustice, *That Which Seemes Best* explored a particular definition of tyranny. On one level, the satirist, similar to the author of *A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia*, depicted Appius as the tyrannical man of Socrates’ *Republic*, who, like the drunken, the lustful, or the insane man, even in broad daylight “won’t hold back from any terrible murder or from any kind of food or act,” for “erotic love lives like a tyrant within him, in complete anarchy and lawlessness as his sole ruler, and drives him, as if he were a city, to dare anything that will provide sustenance for itself and the unruly mob around it.”<sup>80</sup> Appius abided by no moral law in his conduct, nor did he heed the physical laws of Rome in restraining his lustful tyrannical appetite. Unlike its Elizabethan predecessor, however, *That Which Seemes Best* more carefully highlighted Appius’s position as a judge, allowing the satire in its 1617 printing to participate in contemporary political discourse about justice and law and to provide a scathing critique of government in the wake of James’s handling of two important legal disputes: the Overbury Murder Scandal and debate between Coke and Ellesmere over the Court of the Chancery.

As Alastair Bellany has documented well, the Overbury Murder Trials of 1615-1616 was an exceptional scandal that brought significant questions of court morality, corruption, and justice before the Jacobean public. The trials emerged after Robert Carr,

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>80</sup> *Republic*, IX.574e-575a, pg. 1183.

the earl of Somerset and James's beloved favorite, the countess of Somerset, and a motley band of accomplices were arrested for allegedly murdering the courtier Thomas Overbury by means of a poisonous enema while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. During these trials the public was bombarded with portrayals of the king as a wise, impartial and righteous judge and the agent of God's justice, while the sins of the Overbury murderers were diagnosed as the product of a royal court in moral disarray. By painting James as the judicial avenger of injustice or as a victim, contemporary representations of the scandal initially dissociated the king from the Overbury murderers. However, when James failed to fulfill these portrayals by refusing to convict and execute his favorite, the earl of Somerset, and the countess of Somerset for their part in the murder, many felt "true justice" had not been served.<sup>81</sup>

Simultaneously in 1616, the chief justice of the King's Bench, Sir Edward Coke, who had angered James through his heavy involvement investigating the Overbury Scandal,<sup>82</sup> attempted on the bench to rescue the common law from what he understood to be unlawful prerogative rule: the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Egerton Ellesmere, was employing injunctions in the Court of Chancery to set aside judgments made by common-law courts. The Court of Chancery had jurisdiction over matters of equity and was tasked to dispense an "extraordinary justice remedying the defects of the common law on the grounds of conscience and natural justice," thus serving as the "Keeper of the King's Conscience."<sup>83</sup> Chief Justice Coke understood the Court of Chancery as the

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<sup>81</sup> Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 179, 214, 243-45.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 209-10.

<sup>83</sup> Philip H. Pettit, *Equity and the Law of Trusts*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 4-5; Sir Duncan Mackenzie Kerly, *An Historical Sketch of the Equitable Jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1890), 89.

supreme “prerogative court.” He argued that it should not interfere with the common law, but that its activity should only entail watching over other courts to ensure they did not exceed their powers of law.<sup>84</sup> Coke had previously argued through his *Reports* (1600-15) that “the King hath no prerogative but that which the law of the land allows him,” and he had actively opposed what he understood as James’s increasing usurpation of judicial independence, of the legislative powers of Parliament, and of the common law through proclamations and other means. As Coke noted in his *Reports*: “On Nov. 2, 1608, the King had said that he was the supreme judge, ‘inferior judges his shadows and ministers...and the King may, if he please, sit and judge in Westminster Hall in any Court there, and call their Judgments in question. The King beinge the author of the Lawe is the interpreter of the Law.’” Coke rebutted James’s claim of being supreme judge by arguing that “true it was that God had endowed his Majesty with excellent science and great endowments of nature, but his Majesty was not learned in the laws of his realm of England...*quod Rex non debet esse sub homine sed sub Deo et lege, quia lex facit regem* [that the king should not be under men but under God and the law, for the law makes the king].”<sup>85</sup>

Just as the king, in Coke’s view, was subordinate to the common law, so too were the church courts, Chancery, and Civil (or Roman) Law courts. In 1616, Coke challenged the Chancellor by encouraging two con artists named Glanville and Allen, who had been acquitted in common law courts and then found guilty in the Court of Chancery, to bring charges of *praemunire* against the Chancery. That same year, when Ellesmere fell ill, Coke overruled Ellesmere’s judgment in the *Earl of Oxford’s Case*, for

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<sup>84</sup> John Hamilton Baker, “The Common Lawyers and the Chancery: 1616,” in *The Legal Profession and the Common Law: Historical Essays* (London: Hambledon, 1986), esp. 206-8.

<sup>85</sup> See Raffield, *Images and Cultures of Law*, 72-73.

which he had contradicted the common law by ruling through the “Law of God.”

Ellesmere appealed to the King for both cases, who charged his Attorney General Francis

Bacon to settle the matter. When Bacon ruled in Ellesmere’s favor, James decreed:

Now, foreasmuch as mercy and justice be the true supports of our Royal Throne; and it properly belongeth to our princely office to take care and provide that our subjects have equal and indifferent justice ministered to them; and that when their case deserveth to be relieved in course of equity by suit in our Court of Chancery, they should not be abandoned and exposed to perish under the rigor and extremity of our laws.<sup>86</sup>

James’s decree established that “mercy and justice” flowed from the throne, and that it was the king’s duty to ensure the administration of “equal and indifferent justice.” In his “Speech in the Starre-Chamber” on June 20, 1616, James had articulated that “Kings are properly Iudges, and Iudgement properly belongs to them from God”; thus they retained their judicial power, and had the authority to “keepe euery Court within his owne bounds,” even in settled monarchies where kings employed subordinate magistrates as their legal deputies.<sup>87</sup> Although this speech was perceived as more moderate than the judges had expected, Timothy Tourneur, a barrister at Gray’s Inn, recorded an outraged reaction to the affair, arguing that the Chancellors

insinuate with the King that his prerogative is transcendant to the common law. And thus in a short time they will enthral the common law (which yields all due prerogative), and by consequence the liberty of the subjects of England will be taken away, and no law practised on them but prerogative, which will be such that no one will know the extent thereof. And thus the government in a little time will lie in the hands of a small number of favourites who will flatter the King to obtain their private ends, and notwithstanding the King shall be ever indigent. And if these breeding mischiefs are not redressed by Parliament the body will in short

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<sup>86</sup> King’s decree 14 July 1616; Kerly, *Historical Sketch*, 112-15.

<sup>87</sup> *James VI and I: Political Writings*, 205 and 213. In referring specifically to the Chancery dispute, James further declared, “I meane not, the Chancerie should exceed his limite; but on the other part, the King onely is to correct it, and none else” (215).

die in all the parts. But some say that no Parliament will be held again in England, *et tunc valeat antiqua libertas Anglie*.<sup>88</sup>

By November 1616, Coke was dismissed from his position as chief justice, and in 1617, Sir Francis Bacon ascended to the Chancery upon Ellesmere's death. From the perspective of legal history, Bacon was able to settle the judicial terms of this conflict peaceably; however, as Tourneur demonstrates, contemporaries understood this debate and James's decree as having great and lasting political significance, in which the rights of Englishmen would be overthrown by prerogative rule over the common law.

Coke's legal disputes ignited political discourse concerning the king's relationship to the law, and the Overbury Scandal, in response to which James disappointed the Jacobean public by failing to act as the divine avenger of injustice, likewise fueled public debate over the relationship between impartial and righteous justice and the divine legitimacy of the crown. As James himself explained in his 1616 speech, "Good ruiers cannot flow but from good springs; if the fountaine be impure, so must the riuers be."<sup>89</sup> A number of poems, libels and pamphlets between 1615 and 1616 explored this relationship between the king's justice and his legitimacy, such as Thomas Scot's poem, "Regalis Iustitia Iacobi," which had the king deliver this speech:

The crowne for Iustice sake,  
Heav'n plac'd vpon our head; which none can shake  
Or touch, till with vniustice we make way,  
And (for respect) that strict rule disobay.  
God is our guard of prooffe, that we may be  
A guard to you vnpartial, iust, and free.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> BL M.S. Add. 35957, f. 55v, translated by Baker, *Legal Profession and Common Law*, 222.

<sup>89</sup> *James VI and I: Political Writings*, 205 and 208.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Scot, *Philomythie or Philomythologie, wherein Outlandish Birds, Beasts, and Fishes are taught to Speake true English plainely* (London: 1616), sig. K4r. See Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 235.



A legitimate and divine king must be a just and impartial judge; he cannot be overthrown unless he rules with injustice.

In this context, *That Which Seemes Best* offered a poignant portrait of a system in which justice *had* been poisoned by an absolute judge, who through lust, immorality and partiality had consciously violated the freedom of subjects and destroyed the just and lawful order of his commonwealth. Because Appius stood above Roman law, he successfully manipulated it to enforce his unjust passions upon the Roman people. By providing this dramatic and scathing portrait, *That Which Seemes Best* thereby challenged James's claim that kings as divine judges, who were not bound by the common law, would preserve justice and the liberties of subjects.

This Juvenalian satire thereby offered a startling condemnation of judicial tyranny, but we might still ask what the implications of this satire were for the Jacobean audience. If we look beyond the ending of Virginia's narrative in *That Which Seemes Best*, considering its placement in Juvenal's "Tenth Satire" as well as the significant silences in this work, we are left with at least one interpretation of what course of action the poem suggested to its readers. After demonstrating that the pursuit of wealth, political power, military glory, long life and beauty would result in ruin and misery, Juvenal's "Tenth Satire" concluded that humans should seek either death or the virtuous and quiet life of withdrawal for their happiness in a world of corruption. As translated by the author of *That Which Seemes Best*, the work concluded:

Pray that within thy body sound and whole,  
There may be lodged a sound and wholesome soule;  
Pray for a mind that's braue and valiant,  
Whom feare of death as yet could neuer daunt,  
Who mongst rich natures greatest benefits,  
Accounts that time when life and world he quits;

Knowing that while he liues he still doth die,  
But when he dies he liues immortally.  
Who in meane time, come whatsoeuer will,  
Or toile or labour, he endures it still...  
But let me shew what thou thy selfe maist giue,  
One way there is no more, in peace to liue,  
Wherein thou mai'st liue most contentedly,  
And that is, if thou shalt liue vertuously.<sup>91</sup>

In this conclusion, the satire argued for what Richard Tuck, J. H. M. Salmon, and others have identified as a major thread of argument under the Jacobean court, called Senecan or Tacitean stoicism, “new humanism,” or neostoicism, which promoted the quiet life of detachment from the passions, for which the virtuous statesmen would withdraw from corrupt government and seek contemplation and prudence.<sup>92</sup> *That Which Seemes Best* represented the woman Virginia as one fully emulating these ideals, for she valiantly endured suffering and death rather than living unchastely and in bondage. In a significant departure from Livy and Dionysius, the author of *That Which Seemes Best* depicted Virginia as actively consenting to death at the hands of her father, for after Virginius implores her if she would rather be a slave or be “set free” by death, she clings to her father’s “bosome..., / As if, she said, good father, let me die, / Rather then liue with *Claudius* as his slaue.”<sup>93</sup> Through the combination of this scene and the satire’s conclusion, *That Which Seemes Best* seems to argue most clearly that virtuous citizens, in the face of tyranny and judicial injustice, should choose death to preserve virtue or should endure the yoke of suffering and withdraw to the quiet life rather than serve a corrupt court that enslaves its subjects.

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<sup>91</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 48-49.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 6-7, 51-52, 55, 93; J. H. M. Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt: Essays in the Intellectual and Social History of Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 27, 45, 65.

<sup>93</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 37.

However, while this is probably the best interpretation of the satire's message, the author of *That Which Seemes Best* simultaneously rendered Virginius's decision to take his daughter's life as tragic and even problematic, leaving us at least to question if this conclusion was the only one. Through 85 lines of poetry, Virginius and Virginia weep into each other's bosoms, kiss each other, and gaze into each other's eyes, as Virginius weighs with grief whether he can withstand seeing his only child enslaved and defiled by "these lustfull beasts [that] shall spill her," or whether he himself can spill her blood and thus set her free.<sup>94</sup> With his final cry, "You shamelesse letchers, shall she sate your lust? / I'll kill her first; O doe not! But I must," Virginius stabs his daughter then turns "to the iudgement seate" proclaiming:

Thus, *Appius!* for thy sake *Virginia* dies:  
Vpon thy head her blood I consecrate,  
She shall not be a slaue thy lust to sate:  
Before she should be prostitute to thee,  
This haue I done, thus haue I set her free.<sup>95</sup>

Emphasizing the guilt of the wicked Appius, *That Which Seemes Best* may have been intended to leave its readers questioning if Virginia's death is enough—the lust of Appius has not been sated, but has justice been satisfied? Indeed, the poem posed this question by reporting that the Roman citizens, upon seeing this display, debated whether to commend or to blame Virginius for his action, although they all agreed that the "rape and lust" of Appius and his favorite Claudius was ultimately to blame. Concluding Virginia's story by dwelling upon the tragedy of her death and debating Virginius's response to judicial injustice, it is possible that the author intended his audience to recall the ending to the story provided by Livy and Dionysius, in which Virginia's death led to revolution

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<sup>94</sup> *That Which Seemes Best*, 36-38.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

and the overthrow of the Decemvirate. According to both sources, as Virginia's broken body was paraded through the streets of Rome, Virginius and Icilius urged the Roman multitude to recover their liberty. The soldiers and commons took up the charge vigorously in recognition that they, like Virginia, had become enslaved to tyrannical government and must reclaim their ancient rights.<sup>96</sup> Through insurrection by soldiers, plebeians, and patricians, the corrupted Decemvirs "resigned up all their power and authoritie," and government by consuls and tribunes was restored for the Roman people. The absence of this successful revolution is a significant silence in *That Which Seemes Best*, and it surely would have been recognized as an absence by a Jacobean audience, many of whom had been immersed in Livy through basic grammar school and university education.

In these ways, *That Which Seemes Best* presented an argument for virtuous death and withdrawal as the best response to tyranny, while, perhaps simultaneously questioning if this solution might be problematic or unsatisfactory. Virginia's full story of revolution would have offered the alternative solution that subjects could actively reclaim their liberty by not allowing tyrannical government to rule through legal fictions, and, as we will see, it was this alternative solution that Webster and Heywood's *Appius and Virginia* fully explored. What the satirist of *That Which Seemes Best* clearly provided for his Jacobean audience, however, was a highly provocative and scathing condemnation of legal tyranny, and through the portrait of a corrupted judge, he rendered the absolute control of the legal system as potentially tyrannical in the exact period when James actively defended his claim as sacred monarch positioned above the law of England.

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<sup>96</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 122.

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John Webster and Thomas Heywood's important tragedy, *Appius and Virginia*, provided the most classicized portrayal of this exemplum in early modern England, and while its exact dating remains a point of contention to scholars, it is clear that the play's message would have been politically salient and widely subversive in Stuart England.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, in 1628, when the House of Commons actively voiced its concerns about King Charles's exercise of prerogative powers over the common law and liberties of English subjects, House representatives cited the exemplum of Appius to express and legitimate their grievances against the King. In the spring of 1628, the House debated how Charles's levying of taxes through the Forced Loan and his imprisonment by "special command" of those who refused to pay violated the rights of English subjects under the common law. According to one of the central House opposition leaders, Sir Robert Phelips, the commissioner lieutenants who exercised the King's power in the counties "do deprive us of all liberty." "There's now a decemvir in every county," he declared, "and amongst that Decemvir there's some Claudius Appius that seek their own revenges."<sup>98</sup> Sir Thomas Wentworth likewise identified the king's enacting of the Forced Loan, his imprisonment of subjects, and his compulsory billeting of soldiers as an act of Roman tyranny, arguing that lieutenants who enforced this law "are *decemviri*, or Marcus Claudians, which for their own ends and lusts will draw the country into any inconvenience."<sup>99</sup> By June of 1628, the House of Commons had become so concerned about the crown's exercise of prerogative powers that they presented the Petition of Right

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<sup>97</sup> For issues of dating, see above pg. 45-46.

<sup>98</sup> Robert C. Johnson and Maija Jansson Cole, eds. *Commons Debates 1628: Volume II: 17 March – 19 April 1628* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1977), 62.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

as a formal grievance against Charles. The Petition upheld four fundamental English liberties—freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, from arbitrary or non-parliamentary taxation, from the billeting of troops, and from the imposition of martial law—stating that the subjects “have inherited this freedom” from the “good laws and statutes of this realm.”<sup>100</sup>

In the years preceding these famous legal disputes, historical exempla such as Appius and Virginia had already fueled English political thought and public debate about the relationship of the king to the common law, and the corrosive effects of these stories on monarchical authority deserve our study. Webster and Heywood’s *Appius and Virginia* is a clear example of this, for as several scholars have pointed out, it is driven by themes, ideas and “moral seriousness,” which, due to its lack of complex plot or rich characterization, make it a tragedy perhaps disappointing to literary scholars but highly intriguing for historians of political thought. Accordingly, this chapter’s analysis of *Appius and Virginia* will attend to its substantial political message.

*Appius and Virginia* has an “almost classical simplicity of construction,” with its five acts betraying an unbending focus on the conflict between Appius and Virginius in the private and public spheres of Rome.<sup>101</sup> The tragedy directly examined tyranny and good governance by contrasting Appius’s public rule with Virginius’s private rule of his household and military camp, establishing the same dichotomy of public disorder and private order as that found in *A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia*. It is as if Webster and Heywood placed before their audience the weighing scales of justice,

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<sup>100</sup> Conrad Russell, *Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509-1660* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971), 306-7; Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1996), 110-12.

<sup>101</sup> F. L. Lucas, *The Complete Works of John Webster*, vol. III (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), 146.

entreating them to compare and judge the virtues and political capacity of each patriarch. In this way, *Appius and Virginia* presented a robust study of tyranny and its revolutionary consequences by demonstrating how absolute rule by an unjust judge could corrode the patriarchal ordering of society; it seems, thereby, to have fulfilled what Sir Philip Sidney had argued about the genre of tragedy in *The Defence of Poesy* (1595), that it “maketh Kings feare to be Tyrants.”<sup>102</sup> While Sidney admitted that kings, even after being moved by an excellent tragedy, may still in future “make matters for tragedies,” he claimed that these dramas served the public purpose of exposing tyranny, for they “openeth the greatest woundes, and sheweth forth the ulcers that are covered with Tissue.”<sup>103</sup> What is especially significant about the tragedy in this context is its positive representation, and even justification, of Virginius’s political revolution. Whereas the Elizabethan *Appius and Virginia* relied upon Justice and Reward to restore the world turned upside down, and *That Which Seemes Best* caustically diagnosed tyranny without advancing a clear revolutionary solution, Webster and Heywood’s *Appius and Virginia* powerfully depicted how a virtuous householder and military commander, Virginius, set Rome free from violent bondage and misrule.

Literary scholars have largely overlooked how anti-monarchical this play was, not only in its representation of a successful political revolution but also in its employment of monarchical symbolism. Arguments have been made concerning the drama’s possible references to Buckingham or to specific political crises in the early 1620s, but *Appius and Virginia* presented a harsh critique of a corrupted ruler, which would have been recognized both in the Jacobean period and perhaps even more in this play’s eventual

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<sup>102</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: 1595), sig. E4v-F1r.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

publication in 1654, 1655, and 1659.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the very fact that this drama was not printed until after the beheading of Charles I is itself highly suggestive and important. Although the play begins with Appius being elected to government, its language quickly shifts to represent Appius as a hereditary monarch. Within the play, Appius adopts the language of monarchy immediately after assuming his position, employing the “royal we,” describing himself as possessing “princely” virtues, and being flattered by Clodius as creating “divine policy.”<sup>105</sup> In his final scene, Appius’s remark that “judges are term’d / the Gods on earth,” conspicuously echoed King James’s much repeated claim, “The State of MONARCHIE is the supremest thing vpon earth: For Kings are not onely GODS Lieutenants vpon earth, and sit vpon GODS throne, but euen by GOD himselfe they are called GODS.”<sup>106</sup> Appius’s position as a judge would not have made his statement less effective, for James in his 1616 speech had explained that, because Kings “themselves are called Gods” and “sit in the Throne of God,” they are also “properly Iudges.”<sup>107</sup>

The most striking association of Appius with monarchy is Webster and Heywood’s comparison of Appius to an oak tree, a metaphor which in 1654 would have clearly identified Appius’s reign with the royalist cause and his fall with that felled tree, Charles I.<sup>108</sup> Robert Herrick, for example, in his poem “All Things Decay and Die” (1648) clearly associated the corrupted oak tree with monarchy and its fall:

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<sup>104</sup> Macdonald P. Jackson, “Textual Introduction,” *Works of John Webster*, 494.

<sup>105</sup> See John Webster [and Thomas Heywood], *Appius and Virginia. A Tragedy* (London: 1654), 7, 8, 22, and 37. Here I am following the spelling of “Claudius” found in the 1654 printed edition.

<sup>106</sup> “A Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at White-Hall, on Wednesday the XXI. of March. Anno 1609,” in *James VI and I: Political Writings*, 181. James made this same declaration in *Basilicon Doron*, his 1605 speech to Parliament, the *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, his 1616 speech in the Star Chamber, and his declaration about the proceedings of Parliament in 1622 (1, 24, 45, 64, 147, 204-5, 250).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-5.

<sup>108</sup> Charles II later hid in an oak tree to survive capture from a Roundhead army following the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Charles Larson, “Fairfax’s Wood: Marvell and Seventeenth-Century Trees,” *Durham*



That Timber tall, which three-score *lusters* stood  
The proud *Dictator* of the State-like wood:  
I meane (the Sovereigne of all Plants) the Oke  
Droops, dies, and falls without the cleavers stroke.<sup>109</sup>

As Herrick and other poets such as Andrew Marvell described, the oak tree could topple from its own internal corruption.<sup>110</sup> The play portrayed Appius in these very terms. In the first act, Appius claims that he possesses the fortitude of a grown tree, despite how unsettled he is due to his unfulfilled lust for Virginia: “I am not a twig / that every gust can shake, but ‘tis a tempest / that must be able to use violence / on my grown branches.”<sup>111</sup> Throughout the tragedy, however, Appius’s gnawing lust corrupts him and leads him to vicious plots, which eventually cause his own fall. Icilius, after witnessing Appius and Clodius brilliantly maneuver the courtroom to charge Virginia as a slave, forcefully predicts Appius’s fall from power in this way:

Must we be slaves both to a tyrants will,  
and confounding ignorance at once?  
Where are we, in a mist, or is this hell?  
I have seen as great as the proud Judge have fell:  
the bending Willow yielding to each wind,  
shall keep his rooting firme, when the proud Oak  
braving the storme, presuming on his root,  
shall have his body rent from head to foote;<sup>112</sup>

In the final act, as Icilius and Virginius lead their revolutionary troops into Rome to overthrow Appius, Icilius exclaims, “March on, and let proud *Appius* in our view / like a

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*University Journal* 80 (1987): 27-35; Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010), 58; Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1994), 8; Smith, ed. *The Poems of Andrew Marvell* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), n. 233; John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996), 57-60.

<sup>109</sup> *Hesperides, or, The works both humane & divine of Robert Herrick, Esq.* (London: 1648), 22. Other significant writers who employed this metaphor include Marchamont Nedham, James Howell, Abraham Cowley, and Richard Lovelace.

<sup>110</sup> In *Upon Appleton House*, Marvell, in what is considered by scholars to be an oblique reference to the regicide, described how the “hewel,” or woodpecker, felled the mighty oak because the tree had already been internally corroded by a worm. See stanzas LXVIII-LXX.

<sup>111</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 6.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

tree rotted, fall that way he grew.”<sup>113</sup> Appius’s fall was presented as a result of his own corruption and not the forced machinations of soldiers. It is significant, however, that the revolution on display at the end of *Appius and Virginia* was an orderly, military revolution, led by a virtuous captain who would assume power as a consul after Appius’s defeat. Such a portrayal would have surely resonated with republicans in 1654, who had witnessed their own monarch fall at the hands of Oliver Cromwell and his New Model Army. These monarchical images throughout *Appius and Virginia* suggest that this play may have been altered from its original Jacobean version to fit an Interregnum audience.

*Appius and Virginia* explored Roman republican thought and the problem of tyranny through many themes, including liberty, virtue and patriarchal order, but its most extensive focus was on the concept of justice and the tyrant’s corruption of law. With the words “justice,” “just,” “judge,” and “judgment” appearing 67 times throughout the play,<sup>114</sup> and the play’s concluding tribute to those “Two fair, but Ladies most infortunate, / ...*Lucretia* and *Virginia*, both renown’d / for chastity,” who “have in their ruins rais’d declining *Rome*,” *Appius and Virginia* fused together a portrait of Virginia’s exemplary chastity, Appius’s judicial tyranny, and the restoration of justice through republican revolution.

In its opening, *Appius and Virginia* provided a definition of justice while representing Appius as a dissembler, falling far short of this criterion. The definition arises when Appius, who has been offered a position as Decemvir, cunningly feigns his acceptance as an act of virtuous duty. Appius proclaims of himself:

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>114</sup> With the play being 61 pages in print, this means that on average one of these words appears at least once per page. The actors performing this play in the Restoration likewise recognized this emphasis, renaming the play *The Roman Virgin or Unjust Judge*, as later printed in 1679.

henceforth Ile know you  
 but only by your vertue: brother or father  
 in dishonest suite shall be to me  
 as is the branded slave. Justice should have  
 no kindred, friends, nor foes, nor hate, nor love,  
 as free from passion as the gods above.  
 I was your friend and kinsman, now your Judge,  
 and whilst I hold the scales, a downy feather  
 shall as soone turne them as a masse of Pearle  
 or Diamonds.<sup>115</sup>

Although related in a speech of deviance, Appius's definition of justice is labeled "excellent" by his interlocutors and would have resonated with Jacobean images of kingly justice. As James advised in *Basilicon Doron* (1598), the prince should not fear "vproares for doing of iustice...prouiding alwaies, that ye doe it onely for loue to Iustice, and not for satisfying any particular passions of yours, vnder colour therof," for an unjust judge is guilty before God.<sup>116</sup> In his later "Speach in the Starre-Chamber" (1616), James emphasized how "vnpartiall" he himself had been "in declaring of Law," only tempering acts of justice with "clemencie: for no Iustice can be without mercie."<sup>117</sup> The contemporary emblem book *The Mirrour of Maiestie* (1618) likewise represented the judging king as a lion crowned with the rod of divine wisdom who balances the scales of justice to provide punishment and prosperity. Standing poised above the "thronging clamours" of his people, the king as judge is "adrest to giue a constant weight / To formall shewes, of *Vertue*, or *Deceit*: / Thus arm'd with *Pow'r* to punnish or protect, / When I haue weigh'd each scruple and defect."<sup>118</sup> The emblem emphasized that the king through impartial arbitration weighed his suitors according to their "Merit," which

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<sup>115</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 4.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>118</sup> H. G., *The Mirrour of Maiestie: or, the Badges of Honour Conceitedly Emblazoned: with Emblems Annexed, Poetically Unfolded* (London: W. Jones, 1618): 3. The latin motto surrounding the image, "Nvllvm Bonvm Inremvneratvm," translates to "No good merit unrewarded."

allowed him to give “to whom ‘tis due.” While diverse, these portrayals consistently reflected early modern characterizations of justice as one of the four cardinal virtues, in which justice, as a character trait or disposition, allowed its possessor to perform just actions with integrity, rectitude, and impartiality.<sup>119</sup> According to Aristotle, justice (δικαιοσύνη) was the highest of all the virtues and the “complete virtue or excellence,” for he who possessed it practiced virtue not only toward himself, but also in his relations with his fellow men.<sup>120</sup>

The third scene of *Appius and Virginia* forcefully demonstrated that Appius lacked this virtue of justice and that he judged with partiality for the sake of his own vicious passions. The scene commences in a private setting, with Appius entering the stage in a “melancholly” manner due to his unfulfilled and growing desire for Virginia. He adopts the metaphor of civil war to describe how his melancholy has been produced, for his unrequited passion viciously battles against his other faculties leaving his soul in disarray: “there’s discord in my blood, / my powers are all in combat, I have nothing / left but sedition in me.”<sup>121</sup> Echoing Plato’s *Republic*, Appius appears to be on the brink of becoming the fully tyrannical man, whose appetitive cravings overcome his reasoning and win this inward civil war until he acts with utter lawlessness,<sup>122</sup> and indeed, by the end of this scene, Webster and Heywood portrayed Appius as acting with such a singular, tyrannical purpose. What settles Appius’s interior conflict is a plot advanced by his favorite, Clodius, in which Appius would ensure his possession of Virginia by impoverishing her family and thereby making her susceptible to his expensive gifts and

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<sup>119</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V.1129a.7-9, p. 111; *OED*, “justice, n.,” def. I.1.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, V.1129b.25-35, p. 114; δικαιοσύνη (*dikaïosynē*) also means righteousness; see also V.1129b.17-26, p. 113.

<sup>121</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 6.

<sup>122</sup> *Republic*, IX.571-573b, pg. 1180-81.

advances. Appius would do so by withholding financial support from Virginius and his Roman army. From this private setting in which Appius's disordered soul and wicked motivations are poignantly revealed, *Appius and Virginia* then moves to a dramatic public display in the courtroom where Virginius requests financial support for the Roman armies, and Appius unjustly refuses him. This plot was an invention on Webster and Heywood's part, and by thus departing from the classical and medieval accounts of this story they could portray Appius as repeatedly abusing his power and authority in pursuit of vicious lust. As we will see, this invention likewise, and importantly, provided a poignant criticism of King James and later King Charles for their handling of court and military expenditures.

This first courtroom scene was highly significant, for not only did it effectively demonstrate why Appius ruled unjustly, but it further depicted how Appius employed and manipulated the language and prerogatives of monarchy to do so. Before even entering the courtroom, Appius adopts the trappings of kingship by using the "royal we" in his speech.<sup>123</sup> Once assuming the bench, he rebukes Virginius for daring to counsel him and for attempting to impose limits on his power, and after claiming complete authority over the military camp, he characterizes any support to the soldiers as a gift rather than political obligation:

*Virginius*, we would have you thus possess'd,  
we sit not here to be prescrib'd [*sic*] and taught,  
nor to have any suter give us limit,  
whose power admits no curb. Next know, *Virginius*,

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<sup>123</sup> Throughout this scene, Appius may at times be using "we" to refer to the other leaders present on the bench; however, he also clearly slips into this language while speaking only of himself, such as his reply when summoned to the bench, "We will attend" and his insistence, "Ours is a willing presence to the trouble / of all State cares." He also adopts the "royal we" when privately chastising Icilius, "As for the Maid *Virginia*, wee are far / even in least thought from her." *Appius and Virginia*, 7 and 22. For further arguments regarding how Appius adopts the "royal we," see Gunby and Lees-Jeffries, "George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham," 235.

the Camp's our servant, and must be dispos'd,  
controul'd and us'd by us, that have the strength  
to knit it or dissolve it. When we please  
out of our Princely grace and clemency  
to look upon your wants, it may be then  
we shall redress them....<sup>124</sup>

Appius here claims to rule from his own pleasure and prerogative, and he cunningly justifies this response by invoking the ideas of "Princely grace and clemency." In the Senecan model of kingship, made famous by sixteenth-century humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus and George Buchanan, it was argued that good kings should be self-governed by virtue and reason and should be known particularly for their clemency.<sup>125</sup> James, who had been taught a strict model of Senecan kingship from his tutor Buchanan, retained the view that clemency was a particular princely virtue, advising his son in *Basilicon Doron* that a good king must "mixe Iustice with Mercie." In his defense of the Chancery Court in 1616 and his position that "Kings are properly Iudges," James declared that kingly justice "may bee moderated in point of clemencie: for no Iustice can be without mercie," and he connected this view to the Chancery conflict by claiming that the Chancery Court exceeded other courts because it dispensed the "Kings Conscience" by "mixing Mercie with Iustice."<sup>126</sup> A king's ability to exercise clemency was thereby understood as a supra-legal right of the monarch intended to temper the rigidity, and possible cruelty, of the impartial rule of law. In Webster and Heywood's play, however, Appius publicly fashions himself as a Senecan prince acting through mercy and justice

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<sup>124</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 8.

<sup>125</sup> Seneca, *De Clementia*, I.13.4, I.14.1, II.2.3; Desiderius Erasmus, *Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 13, 63, 135; Aysha Pollnitz, "Education and Royal Resistance: George Buchanan and James VI and I," in *Princely Education in Sixteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, forthcoming); Peter Stacey has elegantly outlined the significance of clemency in Seneca's model of kingship, although his pro-absolutist interpretation of Seneca's philosophy in early modern England departs significantly from other scholars. See *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 30-41.

<sup>126</sup> *James VI and I: Political Writings*, 22-23, 43, 204-5, 209, 214.

for the protection of his subjects, but in reality, he manipulates this supra-legal privilege in order to fulfill personal, violent and unjust desires. Appius's continual manipulation of law and prerogative throughout *Appius and Virginia* fulfilled Tourneur's worries after the Chancery conflict in 1616: that rule by prerogative, rather than law, would produce monarchical power without limit and the abolition of the liberty of subjects.<sup>127</sup>

Whereas Appius was portrayed as manipulating monarchical authority to implement unjust acts, Webster and Heywood represented Virginius as truly embodying the qualities of a good republican and a virtuous king. When speaking passionately in the courtroom on behalf of the Roman military camps plagued by famine and bereft of supplies, Virginius demonstrated that, unlike Appius, his entire concern is for the public good of his commonwealth. He warns that failing to pay the soldiers would result in enslavement, as the "forrain fires" of Rome's enemies would "climb o're these buildings," and "sword and slaughter / chase the gown'd Senate through the streets of Rome."<sup>128</sup> When refused support, Virginius declares in an aside that these unmanly and luxurious governors would be unable to protect Roman liberty from such catastrophe, for "They lay their heads / on their soft pillowes, pore upon their bags, / grow fat with laziness and resty ease," while not sparing a drachma for the soldiers who "stand betwixt them and disaster."<sup>129</sup> Virginius's speeches reflected a theme central to classical republican thought: that good laws and good arms were essential for the republic to remain free and to flourish.<sup>130</sup> Livy's history powerfully depicted how the Roman people became a "free state" without the bondage of kings, making the "authoritie and rule of

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<sup>127</sup> See above, pg. 58-59.

<sup>128</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 8-9.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>130</sup> Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 41.

law, more powerfull and mightie than that of men.”<sup>131</sup> Livy demonstrated that, after banishing the Tarquins, the Romans retained or recovered their freedom and expanded their glory by military conquest. Likewise Sallust, who was arguably the most popular classical historian in early modern Europe, had equated republican liberty and greatness, arguing that a commonwealth not repressed by kings could use its talents to attain glory.<sup>132</sup> Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century, English writers of military treatises often remarked, as Thomas Procter did, that “Never was there a great & famous estate, wherearein armes and lawes, civill government, and martiall prowesse flourished not together.”<sup>133</sup> English statesmen had available Machiavelli’s *Arte of Warre* in English beginning in 1560, and by the 1650s, as David Armitage has demonstrated, English republicans actively drew upon Sallust and Machiavelli to understand the military successes of the Rump Parliament as products of republican government.<sup>134</sup> Marchamont Nedham, for example, touted in 1652 that these martial victories demonstrated how a liberated people would become peculiarly courageous. “When Rome lived in the fullness of liberty,” Algernon Sidney later maintained, “the scope of the law was to preserve every particular man in the enjoyment of his liberty and property....The Roman virtue

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<sup>131</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 44.

<sup>132</sup> Sallust, trans. John Carew Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1931): VII.2-3, 12-14; See Freyja Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic in Early Modern England* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2012), 26-29, 60-66, 77-82. P. Burke, “A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700” *History and Theory* 2 (1966): 135-52; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 61-5; David Armitage, “Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma,” in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, volume 2: The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Martin van Gelderen and Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 29-46, esp. 30.

<sup>133</sup> Qtd in Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 41.

<sup>134</sup> Sydney Anglo, “Machiavelli as a Military Authority. Some Early Sources,” in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Peter Denley and Caroline Elam (London: Committee for Medieval Studies, 1988): 321-34, esp. 325-26; David Armitage, “John Milton: Poet Against Empire,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. Armitage, Armand Himy, Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 206-25, esp. 209.



was the effect of their good laws and discipline.”<sup>135</sup> In *Appius and Virginia*, Virginius through his public role as military captain sought to ensure Rome’s freedom in a way consistent with his republican heritage, while Appius, as a luxurious ruler, threatened this very liberty and the martial valor of his realm.

Virginius, however, was represented by Webster and Heywood not only as a good republican soldier, but also as one endowed with the qualities of a virtuous monarch, including liberality and clemency. The dramatists displayed his liberality immediately after Appius refuses to support the soldiers, for Virginius vows that he will sell all his possessions, “even to my skin,” to fund them himself; yet, fearful that his troops will become mutinous against Rome and threaten her safety if they know of Appius’s injustice, Virginius conceals his personal generosity and claims that Appius himself has sent the provisions.<sup>136</sup> We can assume that Webster and Heywood very intentionally portrayed Virginius in this fashion, for these initial scenes in the courtroom and camp departed entirely from classical and medieval sources of this history. Liberality, like clemency, was understood as another significant virtue of princes according to the Senecan model, with Erasmus notably arguing that “kindliness and generosity are the special glory of princes,” and that the “skillful and vigilant” prince would endeavor to help everyone through liberality.<sup>137</sup> According to the hierarchy of benefits that Seneca established, Virginius’s liberality would have been considered of the highest order

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<sup>135</sup> Marchamont Nedham, *The Case of the Common-Wealth of England, Stated: or The Equity, Utility, and Necessity, of a Submission to the present GOVERNMENT...*, (London: 1650), 92-93; Algernon Sidney, *Court Maxims*, ed. Hans W. Blom, Eco Haitsma Mulier, and Ronald Janse (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 136-37. See Armitage, “Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma,” 37-38. As Armitage points out, John Milton likewise understood the Rump’s successes as “evidence that the Commonwealth has been infused with the ancient spirit of republican liberty”; however, Milton believed the rule of Cromwell (an English Sulla) forestalled this liberty and the creation of “another *Rome* in the west.”

<sup>136</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 18.

<sup>137</sup> Erasmus, *Education of a Christian Prince*, 77.

because he gave a “necessarie” benefit “without which wee cannot liue”; “necessarie” benefits included such acts as delivering people “out of the enemies handes,” or saving them from “a tyrants wrath and proscription.”<sup>138</sup> Virginius, by feeding his starving troops, protected not only their lives, but the lives of all Roman subjects defended by the army. Webster and Heywood further elaborated Virginius’s kingly qualities by depicting him as possessing the virtue of clemency as well. Finding his men on the brink of mutiny due to their suffering, Virginius firmly rebukes his soldiers in a display of “just anger,” causing the soldiers, who hold great respect for their captain, to repent and beg for mercy. When his soldiers exclaim “wee’l starve first, / wee’le hange first, by the gods, doe any thing / ere wee’le forsake you,” Virginius mixes mercy with justice, and pardons his troops.<sup>139</sup> These depictions of Virginius as a virtuous ruler would not have been lost on the Jacobean audience, for Webster and Heywood made explicit Virginius’s kingly resemblance by having the Roman general, Minutius, draw a comparison between kings and captains after witnessing Virginius’s clemency: “every Captain,” he explains, “beares in his private government that forme, / which Kings should ore their Subjects, and to them / should be the like obedient.”<sup>140</sup>

Virginius was thus presented as a foil to Appius in his republican fortitude, virtuous concern for the public welfare, and princely conduct, but Webster and Heywood made a further distinction between the military captain and the judge through scenes displaying their private lives. Whereas Appius’s first private scene revealed him as disordered in his soul and seeking the advice of the deviant Clodius, Virginius’s household was represented as orderly and virtuous. Webster and Heywood’s *Appius and*

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<sup>138</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 7-8, 11.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

*Virginia* lacked the song of patriarchal order found in R. B.'s *Appius and Virginia*, but the dramatists nevertheless represented Virginia as showing due subservience to her father's authority. In the play, she "most humbly / prostrates her filial Duty" upon his arrival and declares her submission to his charge to marry Icilius by vowing, "I am my fathers daughter, and by him / I must be swaid in all things."<sup>141</sup> Unlike R. B.'s *Appius and Virginia* and *That Which Seemes Best*, however, throughout this tragedy Virginia's role is circumscribed and her emotional presence limited, which allowed Webster and Heywood to emphasize Virginius's qualities as a patriarch instead. The playwrights concluded this scene by depicting Virginius's activities in ordering his obedient household as a mirror to his just commanding of the military camp: he arranges the marriage contract between Icilius and Virginia, then immediately rides off to tend to that "universal businesse.../ that toucheth a whole people," the ordering of his troops.<sup>142</sup>

*Appius and Virginia* thereby offered two important and contrasting portraits: a virtuous military commander, who seeks to protect and maintain the common good, law, and rightly ordered household, and a luxurious ruler overrun by lust, who forfeits the preservation of his commonwealth for private passion. This critical comparison would have had significant political purchase throughout the Stuart period, as both James and Charles were sharply criticized for their seeming lack of military prowess and poor household management. Throughout his reign James received censure for his ostentatious expenditures, clothing, and playful pursuits at court.<sup>143</sup> It was widely known that James delighted in well-dressed, handsome favorites at his court, leading courtiers to advise those seeking advancement to be "well trimmed" in a "flowing garment..."

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>143</sup> See below, p. 107.

diversely colourd,” for the “King is nicely heedfull of such points, and dwelleth on good looks and handsome accoutrements.”<sup>144</sup> In this, the King was understood to be “carried away by his passion” in choosing favorites based on their beautiful faces rather than any reasons of state, as the French ambassador Tillières explained.<sup>145</sup> As the next chapter will consider, rather than fulfill the image of a courageous warrior king James pursued a policy of pacifism, and even when faced with the Bohemian Crisis near the end of his reign, he relied upon diplomacy and a marriage contract between Charles and the Spanish Infanta rather than committing troops to support his Protestant son-in-law, Frederick V.<sup>146</sup> These actions, coupled with pervasive images of James as surrounded by a corrupt and luxurious court and favorites, led to public criticism of his rule and to charges of weakness, cowardice, and unmanliness. As the anonymous pamphlet *Tom Tell Troath* (c. 1622) argued, English subjects had “too much cause to complaine of your Maiesties unlimited peace,” which “make us suspect that your peaceable disposition all this while hath not proceeded out of Christian piety and love of Iustice as out of meere Impotency and desire of ease.”<sup>147</sup> This pamphlet was one of many that raised the question of James’s masculinity in order to exhort him into war.<sup>148</sup>

As *Appius and Virginia* was printed three times during the Protectorate, with its initial date of 1654 corresponding with the recent rise of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector, the portrait of a successful, virtuous, and revolutionary military commander defeating a cowardly and corrupt ruler offered a compelling parallel for Cromwell’s

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<sup>144</sup> Qtd in Michael B. Young, *James VI and I and the History of Homosexuality* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 73-74. For more on James’s expenditure, see chapter 2 below, pg. 107.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> See chapter 2 below, pg. 95-101.

<sup>147</sup> Anon., *Tom Tell Troath or A free discourse touching the manners of the tyme. Directed to his Majestie by way of humble advertisement* (Holland?: 1630): 7-8.

<sup>148</sup> See Young, *James VI and I*, 90-96.

supporters.<sup>149</sup> In the early years of Charles's reign, the magistrates issued to collect the Forced Loan in 1627 were castigated as "decemvirs," and Charles, like his father, was criticized for his failure to support the cause of Protestants fighting on the Continent.<sup>150</sup> By the 1630s and early 1640s, Charles was criticized by Puritans, Parliamentarians, and other detractors as so driven by the love of his Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria, and understood as so compromised by the corrupting influence of Papists and luxurious pleasure at court, that he was viewed as ruling England unjustly and tyrannically, even corrupting the law to persecute true Christians through his prerogative court, Star Chamber.<sup>151</sup> Whereas critics identified King Charles as effeminate due to his seeming wasteful extravagance, cowardice, popish religion, excessive and disordered passions, Cromwell appeared to embody masculinity due to his seeming simplicity, courage, true religion, temperance and modesty—a Virginius by any other name.

Throughout the tragedy, Webster and Heywood repeatedly stressed that the source of Appius's judicial tyranny lay in his private lust, a symptom of his perverse soul, and that his unjust use of prerogative powers threatened the very liberty of Rome and its citizens. Like R. B.'s *Appius and Virginia* and *That Which Seemes Best*, the dramatists clearly connected Appius's disordered passions with the disordering of Roman society; however, they adopted a portrayal of social disorder that better reflected Roman law and the classical, republican accounts of Livy and Dionysius. The law of Rome expressed through the *Codex* of Justinian admitted a "fundamental division within the law of persons" wherein "all men and women are either free or are slaves," with slavery being "an institution of the *ius gentium* by which someone is, contrary to nature, subject to the

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<sup>149</sup> See chapter 5 below.

<sup>150</sup> See chapter 3 below.

<sup>151</sup> See chapters 3 and 4 below.

dominion of someone else,” and freedom meaning one is “*sui iuris*,” or not under another’s dominion and thereby free to act in their own power.<sup>152</sup> The dramatic conflict presented in *Appius and Virginia* focused less on the threat to Virginia’s chastity as on the threat to her status, and the status of all Roman citizens, as *sui iuris*. In the tragedy, Appius’s first plot endangered the status of Rome as a free state by impoverishing the military, thereby placing Rome at risk for being conquered and enslaved by its enemies; his second plot, which closely followed Livy and Dionysius’s accounts, threatened the particular enslavement of Virginia, and, according to Virginius, the status of all free people in Rome:

Thou hast a daughter, thou hast a wife too,  
so most of you have Souldiers. Why might not this  
have hapned you? Which of you all, deer friends,  
but now, even now, may have your wives deflowred,  
your daughters slav’d, and made a Lictors prey?  
Think them not safe in *Rome*, for mine lived there.<sup>153</sup>

Virginia’s trial exhibited how Appius’s power to rule according to his will and pleasure placed every Roman citizen at risk of enslavement. For the early modern audience, Webster and Heywood placed onstage the precise ways that Appius and Clodius manipulated the Roman legal system to obtain this result: they falsely charged Virginia as a bondservant and Virginius with treason, broke Roman law by trying to detain Virginia before her trial, hired a “Quick-silver” tongued orator, produced forged documents and false witnesses for evidence, and rashly dismissed Virginius’s witness before hearing her testimony, all the while feigning impartiality and a concern for justice.

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<sup>152</sup> Qtd in Skinner, “John Milton and the Politics of Slavery,” in *Visions of Politics*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2002), 289.

<sup>153</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 51.

While Webster and Heywood produced a more classicized production of this history, they also implicated Appius as a wicked *pater patriae*, who employed the language of fatherhood while seeking to strip a rightful father of his child. When Numitorius, Virginia's uncle, begs for Appius to stay the trial until Virginius could return from the camp, Appius argues that the father's presence is not necessary, for "Who stands for father of the Innocent, / if not the Judg?" And just as Appius feigns the virtues of a prince while unjustly denying aid to the troops, he adopts the language of a virtuous householder when trying to argue, against Roman law, that Virginia should remain in his custody before the trial: "I'll take the honoured Lady / into my guardianship, and by my life, / I'll use her in all kindness as my wife."<sup>154</sup> At the same time, Webster and Heywood importantly portrayed much of Appius and Clodius's case as resting upon a suspicion of female virtue, especially of the female members of Virginius's household. The hired orator claims that Virginia's mother was "deceitful," and tricked her husband by "fain[ing] the passions / of a great bellyed woman."<sup>155</sup> As the audience knows, this depiction of Virginia's mother is entirely false, but when Virginia's nurse protests and seeks to bear witness to the birthing—a testimony which, according to early modern standards, only she and a handful of other women could produce—Appius casts her out as a liar. Within the tragedy, thereby, Virginia's chastity and obedience, as well as her household being rightly ordered by Virginius, became the essential safeguards of social order and liberty against Appius's tyranny.

The play further emphasized the great political significance of female virtue through Virginia's death. Like other early modern writers, Webster and Heywood

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 42.

departed from Livy and Dionysius by having Virginia request her own death, but their portrayal characterized her sacrifice as motivated by a desire to preserve civil liberty.

Before the trial commences, she tells Virginius:

O my dear Lord and father, once you gave me  
a noble freedom, do not see it lost  
without a forfeit; take the life you gave me  
and sacrifice it rather to the gods  
than to a villain's Lust. Happy the Wretch  
who born in bondage lives and dies a slave,  
and sees no lustful projects bent upon her,  
and neither knows the life nor death of honor.<sup>156</sup>

Virginia's virtue is predicated upon her chastity, but her liberty rests upon her birth as the lawful daughter of a free citizen; thereby, Appius's "lustful project" threatens not only her chaste status but also, and perhaps more importantly, her legal freedom. The tragedy's emphasis upon liberty is indeed significant, and moves beyond the martyrdom account of the Elizabethan *Appius and Virginia*; however, even in Webster and Heywood's play, Virginia's liberty remains prescribed within the narrow confines of society ordered by gender, rank, status and age. Within the play, it is clear that rule by consuls would not overturn but restore and even strengthen the patriarchal order. Exultation of Virginia's liberty thereby went hand-in-hand with the exultation of her prescribed role as chaste, obedient, and submissive daughter and spouse. The flattening of Virginia's character throughout the tragedy further offered her as an idealized exemplum of Roman freedom, whose freedom is preserved not through active political participation, but through submission and sacrifice.

Webster and Heywood's *Appius and Virginia* provided the only full portrayal of Virginius's republican revolution in Tudor and Stuart literature. Significantly, it is not

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 40.



the revolution of the headless mob, but of an ordered military that brings justice to Rome and thereby restores Rome's freedom.<sup>157</sup> As Icilius declares in the final scene: "*Rome* thou at length art free, / restored unto thine ancient liberty."<sup>158</sup> Virginia's death in this tragedy, thereby, is swift and silent, lacking the emotional appeal of R. B.'s *Appius and Virginia* and *That Which Seemes Best*, for Webster and Heywood portrayed her death not as a private martyrdom for the cause of chastity, but as a public sacrifice made for the "common cause" of Rome. Afterward Virginius does initially lament how he "plaid the Parricide," describing how his "rude hands ript her, and her innocent blood / flow'd above my elbowes," yet, as Icilius succinctly charges, Virginius through this act has proven himself "a noble *Roman*, / but an unnatural Father," deciding that his daughter should rather "die with honour, then to live / in servitude."<sup>159</sup> Thus, as he leads the military into Rome to overthrow the Decemvirate, Virginius sets aside his anguish and declares, "Be't my pride / that I have bred a daughter whose chast blood / was spilt for you, and for *Romes* lasting good."<sup>160</sup> Due to Virginia's public sacrifice, Virginius, Icilius, and their armies unite and bring Appius and Clodius to justice. With the Decemvirate thus abolished, the Roman people name Virginius and Icilius as consuls, restoring that form of government "which bold *Iunius Brutus* first / begun in *Tarquins* fall."<sup>161</sup>

*Appius and Virginia* thereby offered a significant, if limited, declaration of Roman liberty as the solution to monarchical tyranny, and this idea greatly challenged Stuart proclamations concerning the divine right and prerogative powers of kings. The

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<sup>157</sup> Gunby, "Critical Introduction," 465.

<sup>158</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 61.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 50 and 55.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 51. See Gunby, "Critical Introduction," 456-7.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

tragedy argued that statesmen such as military captains could prove themselves better judges and rulers than kings. Quentin Skinner, amongst others, has already demonstrated how arguments supporting Roman liberty were essential to early critics of the Stuart monarchy and to defenders of the English Revolution,<sup>162</sup> and Appius and Virginia's story further establishes how historical exempla shaped the climate of opinion about common law and monarchical prerogative well before the Petition of Right. What is more, the circulation of this story through plays and satire suggests that these ideas enjoyed a wider public than Parliamentary debates and political treatises, and even shaped these debates on which intellectual historians have tended to focus. While this chapter has revealed substantial differences between Elizabethan and Jacobean productions of the Appius and Virginia story, all of these authors identified tyranny as the corruption of a ruler's soul, expressed through vicious passions and the compromising of his masculinity. To pursue his insatiable passions, a tyrant such as Appius corrupts the public law or institutions for personal, brutish gain. Simultaneously, each of these works represented political freedom and good governance as protected through an ordered, patriarchal society. According to these early modern portrayals, the world would be turned right-side up when male virtue lawfully ruled in protection of liberty and female chastity.

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<sup>162</sup> See "John Milton and the politics of slavery," and "Classical liberty, Renaissance translation and the English civil war," in *Visions of Politics* II, 286-307 and 308-43; Armitage, "Empire and Liberty."

## Chapter 2

### **“And thus did the wicked sonne murder his wicked mother”<sup>1</sup>: Nero and the Tyranny of Household and Gender in Late Jacobean England**

“Domitius *Nero*, one of the ancient Roman Emperours, who killed his mother *Agrippina*, his wife *Octavia*, the Poet *Lucan*, and *Seneca* his master.”<sup>2</sup>

In May of 1626, Sir John Eliot notoriously summarized the charges of the House of Commons against the royal favorite George Villiers, the duke of Buckingham, by providing a lengthy and detailed comparison between Buckingham and Tacitus’s Sejanus.<sup>3</sup> According to the classical historian Tacitus, Lucius Aelius Sejanus was an ambitious soldier who held a corrupting influence over the Emperor Tiberius, leading a benign and even good ruler to degenerate into a savage, lewd and cruel tyrant. Drawing upon this popular history, Eliot declared that Sejanus and the early modern Sejanus, Buckingham, were men of boldness, flattery, slander, corrupt preferment, and pride, thoroughly unworthy of honor.<sup>4</sup> The charge of favoritism through the historical

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I appreciate the helpful comments and suggestions provided by the Johns Hopkins University Gender Seminar on an earlier version of this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Pedro Mexía, *The imperiall historie: or The liues of the emperours, from Iulius Caesar, the first founder of the Roman monarchy, vnto this present yeere containing their liues and actions, with the rising and declining of that empire; the originall, and successe, of all those barbarous nations that haue inuaded it, and ruined it by peece-meele...translated into English by W.T.: and now corrected, amplified and continued to these times by Edvvard Grimeston Sergeant at Armes* (London: 1623), 66.

<sup>2</sup> Definition of Nero in Edward Phillips, *The new world of English words, or, A general dictionary containing the interpretations of such hard words as are derived from other languages* (London: 1658), sig. Dd3r.

<sup>3</sup> See Curtis Perry, *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 229-75, 229.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, he was accused of holding too many offices; of aiding French Catholics by delivering English ships to the French for use against the Huguenots; of selling honors and offices for personal profit; of procuring titles and favors for kinsmen; and of poisoning James I. See Roger Lockyer, “Villiers, George, first duke of Buckingham (1592–1628),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, May 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28293>.

exemplum of Sejanus carried the further accusation of sexual immorality. According to Tacitus, before Sejanus had “won the heart of Tiberius,” he “had sold his person to Apicius, a rich debauchee”; the historian Suetonius likewise described Tiberius’s debauchery in great detail.<sup>5</sup> Eliot did not explicitly extend his historical parallel to include Caesar Tiberius and the English king, Charles I, but the implied comparison between Tiberius and Charles was not lost on contemporaries, nor on Charles himself, who was said to have remarked: “If the Duke is Sejanus, I must be Tiberius.”<sup>6</sup> Furious that Parliament would condemn his favorite, and understanding these charges as an attack also upon himself, his monarchical rights and privileges, Charles dissolved Parliament before the lords could finish their impeachment proceedings and ordered that Sir Dudley Diggs and Sir John Elliot, who had delivered the prologue and epilogue of the impeachment, be committed to the Tower.

Although dramatic, this episode in political history should not be considered an anomaly, but rather as one indication of the power and prevalence of historical exempla, especially of the Roman Principate, in shaping the language and understanding of politics in Stuart England. The first chapter concentrated on the importance of the history of the Roman republic in defining and shaping conceptions of tyranny, virtue, and good

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<sup>5</sup> Tacitus’s history of Tiberius is found in Books I-VI of *The Annals*, although significant portions of Book V have been lost. Moses Hadas, ed. *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (NY: Modern Library, 1942), 144-227, esp. 144-5, 168-9, 178, 183, 189-90; Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (Aylesbury: Penguin, 1979), 135-36; Michael B. Young, *James VI and I and the History of Homosexuality* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 58-60.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642*, 10 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1884), VI: 107-8. An anonymous paper delivered to the King further argued that “the Opposers of the Duke, through his sides design against the King himself,” and “since H.6. such Parliamentary Discourses have been the Symptoms of subsequent Rebellion.” In his speech concerning the Duke on May 11, Charles himself maintained that anyone that “toucheth any of [the King’s Honours,” toucheth him.” John Rushworth, *Historical Collections Of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings in Five Parliaments: Beginning The Sixteenth Year of King James, Anno 1618. And Ending the Fifth Year of King Charles, Anno 1629. Digested in Order of Time* (London: Browne, 1721), I.231-33.

governance in England; however, as we move into the 1620s, a period characterized by royalist, parliamentary and constitutional debates over the prerogatives of kingship, the history of the Roman Principate became especially significant. Drawing upon popular classical authors including Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, Pliny the Elder, Seneca, and Lucan, writers in the 1620s and 1630s often discussed the examples of Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, but it was the Emperor Nero who earned the title “worst tyrant in history.”<sup>7</sup> Between 1615 and 1640, writers cited Nero as an example of tyranny at least 2,900 times in over 510 printed works, with the tyrant receiving sustained treatment in a plethora of plays, treatises, histories, pamphlets, poetical and political works, especially in the 1620s.<sup>8</sup> From sermons, libels, ballads, and commonplace books, it appears that Nero’s story was very commonly referenced and would have been recognized by individuals at all levels of society. In particular, writers detailed Nero’s heinous violent and sexual crimes, such as torturing Christians, burning Rome, murdering family members, and committing acts of rape, sodomy, incest, and bestiality, in order to demonstrate the atrocity of tyranny and to debate whether limits existed for obeying monarchical power.

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<sup>7</sup> As Marchamont Nedham would later declare, “And who was *Emporour* at that time but *Nero*? no ordinary Tyrant, but the most notorious cruell Tyrant in the world: so that in all times since his name hath been made use of, by all Nations, as an ordinary Appellation for the worst of *Tyrants*.” *The Case of the Common-Wealth of England, Stated: or, the Equity, Vtility, and Necessity, of a Submission to the present GOVERNMENT* (London: 1650), 107.

<sup>8</sup> Estimate based on an *Early English Books Online* keyword search, June 2014; Specific examples include Anon., *The Tragedy of Nero* (London: 1624); Thomas May, *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* (acted 1628); Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved* (London: 1624); George Chapman, *A iustification of a strange action of Nero* (London: 1629); Tacitus, *Annales* (London: 1622); Thomas Lodge, *The workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* (London: 1620); L. & M. *Annaei Senecae tragoediae: post omnes omnium editiones recensionesque editae denuò & notis Tho. Farnabii illustratae* (London: 1624); Mexía, *Imperiall Historie*; Sir Richard Barckley, *The felicitie of man, or, his summum bonum* (London: 1631); Samuel Garey, *Great Brittaines little calendar: or, Triple diarie, in remembrances of three daies Diuided into three treatises...* (London: 1618); John Higgins, *The Falles of vnfortunate princes being a true chronicle historie of the vntimely death of such vnfortunate princes...* (London: 1619); Thomas Nash, *Quaternio or A fourefold vvay to a happie life set forth in a dialogue between a countryman and a citizen, a diuine and a lawyer* (London: 1633); John Taylor, *All the vvorkes of Iohn Taylor the water-poet Beeing sixty and three in number* (London: 1630); Timothy Rogers, *The Roman-Catharist: or the Papist is a Puritane* (1621).

The history of Nero lay at the heart of discussions concerning tyranny and obedience in early modern England because of the thirteenth chapter of Romans, which seemed to justify unlimited obedience even to the worst of tyrants:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.<sup>9</sup>

By deeming the ruler a rightful minister of God upon the earth, the Apostle Paul equated resistance to a monarch with resistance to God's laws and thus extended the punishment for rebellion beyond the present life to damnation in the afterlife. The connection between this Biblical passage and Nero was regularly emphasized by early modern writers, for Paul composed this exhortation while living as a subject under Nero, and the Apostle willingly accepted persecution and martyrdom under Nero for the cause of Christ. For those defending absolutism in Jacobean England, and thereby understanding the king as possessing "*general* freedom—as opposed to specific and limited freedoms—from human law" and subjects as owing unlimited obedience, Paul's exhortation to obedience in Romans 13 very significantly represented divine as well as political law.<sup>10</sup> As Anglican clergymen Richard Bernard and Richard Alleine explained in 1616, those who resist God's anointed king and ministers "are truly Θεομάχοι, fighters against God

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 13:1-5, King James Version.

<sup>10</sup> I define "absolutism" following the "common usage" definition in Glenn Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1996), 211. See fn 9, chapter 1 above.

himself.” Christians are called to “be subiect therefore to the power ordained of God, and not to resist the same, Rom. 13. 1. 2.”<sup>11</sup>

Due to Romans 13, Nero’s history provided a powerful argument for unlimited obedience to monarchy. On May 5, 1639, for example, following the Scottish Rebellion and Covenant, the bishop of Durham Thomas Morton preached a sermon on Romans 13:1 before King Charles. His sermon declared that God required subjection even to the cruelest tyrants and persecutors of faith, including the “Emperour *Nero*, who was the *highest Power* in the world at this time”:

He, after the fift yeare of his Empire, became so bloody a *Tyrant*, even to his owne heathenish people, that they branded him with the blacke marke of a *Monster*. And he was so vile and violent an Opposer of Christian Religion, that his Raigne hath beene registred ever since by Christians to have beene their *First fierie persecution*....All this notwithstanding, *S. Paul* requireth *Subjection* to this, and to all Other never so Tyrannous Governours.<sup>12</sup>

These arguments defended the rights of monarchy even if a king became as vicious or more vicious than Nero, for as Morton claimed, tyranny was “permitted” by God and therefore required obedience.<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, though, if Charles and his father James qualified as rulers “never so Tyrannous” as Nero—and surely they did, supporters argued—then who could claim that resistance against the English king was *ever* justified? In this way, royalists believed the very comparison between Nero and an English ruler might serve to deflate criticisms of contemporary monarchy. Morton’s sermon in 1639

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<sup>11</sup> R[ichard] B[ernard] and R. A.,  *Davids Mvsick: Or Psalmes of that Royall Prophet, once the sweete Singer of that Israel: Vunfolding Logically...* (London: 1616), 58-59.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Morton, *A sermon preached before the Kings most excellent Majestie, in the cathedrall church of Durham Upon Sunday, being the fifth day of May. 1639. By the Right Reverend Father in God, Thomas Lord Bishop of Duresme. Published by his Majesties speciall command* (London: 1639), 19-20. By the mid-1630s, Charles himself was being deemed a Nero for persecuting “true” believers. See chapter 3 below, esp. 188-206.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

followed a long tradition of anti-resistance arguments employing Romans 13 and the history of Nero. King James himself had made the connection explicitly in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), citing Biblical accounts of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babel, and Nero as scriptural proofs that subjects should respond to a wicked king not through rebellion but through “patience, earnest prayers to God, and amendment of their liues”:

And vnder the Euangel, that king, whom *Paul* bids the *Romanes obey* and serue *for conscience sake*, was *Nero* that bloody tyrant, an infamie to his aage, and a monster to the world, being also an idolatrous persecutor, as the King of *Babel* was. If then Idolatrie and defection from God, tyranny ouer their people, and persecution of the Saints, for their profession sake, giuing to *Cæsar* that which was *Cæsars*, and to God that which was Gods, as Christ saith; and that this practise throughout the booke of God agreeth with this lawe, which he made in the erection of that Monarchie...what shameless presumption is it to any Christian people now adayes to claime to that vnlawfull libertie, which God refused to his owne peculiar and chosen people?<sup>14</sup>

Responding to Huguenot resistance theory and George Buchanan’s writings justifying resistance, James argued that monarchs were subject to no earthly coercive jurisdiction, only God’s; arguments for resistance were thereby “presumptuous” as well as sinful.

Scholars have previously examined how questions of resistance connected to the history of the Roman Principate in seventeenth-century England; what have been largely overlooked, however, are the significant ways that Nero’s story was appropriated in the 1620s to debate ideas of patriarchalism as well as obedience and to define tyranny through gendered language as the failure to govern household as well as

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<sup>14</sup> King James VI and I, *Trew Law of Free Monarchies* in *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 71.



commonwealth.<sup>15</sup> Despite Nero's myriad of transgressions, writers very often detailed the tyrant's most heinous crimes as murdering mother, brother, and wife, and thereby trespassing his natural duty and obligation as family member and head of household.<sup>16</sup> As we will see in this chapter and the next, the seemingly perverse and perhaps incestuous relationship between Nero and his mother, Julia Agrippina, fascinated early modern writers, in part because it suggested that monarchical vice could be bred through the royal family line. Nero's transgressions against family mapped onto ideas of patriarchalism in early modern England, which understood the king as the father of his people and thus as owing paternal care and necessary discipline to his children the subjects, and the subjects as owing reverence and obedience in return. As scholars have documented, seventeenth-century political writers went beyond the metaphor of family to locate political authority in a history of patriarchy, tracing the origins of political government to the authority of Adam. Political obligation, then, was said to have developed out of the natural human relationships of familial obligation and paternal authority.<sup>17</sup>

King James regularly touted his patriarchal authority, for through it he could delineate and justify a broad range of kingly duties and activities and also condemn any justification of resistance by the people. He evoked the idea of the father-king in his two most important political treatises: *Basilicon Doron* (1598, revised 1603) and *The Trew*

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<sup>15</sup> Historical accounts of early modern Neronian histories have instead focused almost solely on the resistance of Boudiciae and Julius Vindex, the lives of Seneca and Lucan, and the persecution of Christians within Nero's reign. See Alan T. Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46.2 (Spring 1983): 127-55; Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy*, 61-62; Daniel Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 193-97.

<sup>16</sup> See Edward Phillips's definition of Nero above, p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> See above, pg. 7-8. J. P. Sommerville, "Absolutism and royalism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (NY and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 347-73, esp. 355, 358-59; Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (NY: Basic Books, 1975), 55.

*Law of Free Monarchies*. In *Basilicon Doron*, James promoted the notion of the king as father on two levels: literally, as a “naturall Father” of a family, he crafted the book as practical advice for his son and heir, Henry; politically, as a “*communis parens*,” or common father to his people, James outlined the duties and attributes of a good king, charging Henry to continue in the practices of “naturall father and kindly Master” toward his subjects just as his father and father’s father had.<sup>18</sup> While *Basilicon Doron* offered practical advice on the duties of kings, *The Trew Law* offered a political justification of James’s divine right principles and an extensive explanation of the king as father. As a father is bound “to care for the nourishing, education, and vertuous gouernment of his children,” to bestow “toile and paine” for their “profite and weale,” to protect them from dangers, to correct them with “father chastisement seasoned with pitie,” and to take his “chiefe ioy” in his children’s welfare, so should the king become “a naturall Father to all his Lieges.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover James stressed his authority and power as a father in his 1610 speech to Parliament, summarizing the *Patriam potestatem* as “*Potestatem vitae & necis*,” the power of life and death “ouer their children or familie.”<sup>20</sup> Beyond the king’s obligation to his people, this father-child relationship entailed unlimited obedience from the subjects, according to James: “consider, I pray you, what duetie his children owe to him, & whether vpon any pretext whatsoever, it wil not be thought monstrous and vnnaturall to his sons, to rise vp against him, to control him at their appetite, and when they thinke good to sley him, or cut him off...?”<sup>21</sup> The relationship between kings and subjects, fathers and children, then, was one of mutual obligation, but not of contract. A

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<sup>18</sup> *James VI and I: Political Writings*, 2, 36, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, *True Law*, 77.

king failing in his duties must still be honored, respected and obeyed by his subjects, according to James, for rebelling subjects committed political patricide.

As we will see in this chapter and the next, writers discussing Nero simultaneously focused on Nero's failure as political governor and as family man, including his duties as son, husband, and father. Attending to these discussions, which scholars have overwhelmingly neglected, this chapter explores how King James in the final years of his reign was explicitly associated with the Emperor Nero, and how gendered portrayals of Nero were used to challenge and to defend James's political policies, kingly authority, and masculinity. The chapter will argue that Nero's history, much like Appius's, provided an imaginative and gendered definition of tyranny as disorder and inversion: the disorder of the monarch's person, his household and country, and in relation, the inversion of his prescribed gender and gendered roles. This representation of tyranny necessarily employed gendered language, for the question of the tyrant's ability to follow the laws of nature, rule himself, and govern his household and country was a question of the tyrant's "manhood" and his possession of what were then held to be the "manly" virtues of reason, constancy, courage, and justice. The opening sections of the chapter will explore criticisms of James during the Bohemian Revolt and Spanish Match crisis, specifically focusing on the anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* (1624) and an anonymous libel. These incendiary writings characterized the King as emasculated, cowardly, Catholic, corrupt, and sodomized, thereby unfit to rule England and protect the true religion in the face of European war. They argued that the King's personal failings and corrupted passions, which were imagined as emasculation and uxoriousness or sodomy, would directly undermine the religion, liberty, and lawful

order of English society. Conversely, the final section will consider how Edmund Bolton's *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraued* (1624), adopted a highly gendered portrayal of tyranny in order to defend monarchical absolutism by placing the blame for Nero's crimes on vicious female transgressors. Despite his efforts to the contrary, however, the chapter argues that Bolton's history unintentionally undermined royalist non-resistance arguments by exposing the heinousness of tyranny and the dangers of hereditary monarchy, for a vicious tyrant may be the product of a wicked woman's womb. Although controversial and representing two sides of a debate, these texts when considered together betray the significance and impact of historical and gendered conceptions of tyranny on early Stuart culture and thought, and they demonstrate how the characterization of tyranny we witnessed through Appius's story continued to influence later Stuart politics.

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In 1618, James the *rex pacificus* witnessed the eruption of the Bohemian Revolt and what would become the Thirty Years' War in Europe, as Bohemian Protestants successfully overthrew Ferdinand II, the appointed Catholic king of Bohemia, and elected the Protestant Frederick V of the Rhineland Palatinate, who was married to James's daughter, Elizabeth. Frederick's acceptance of the kingship defied the Holy Roman Emperor, and war ensued when Ferdinand and the Spaniards gathered forces to reclaim the estate and title. In 1620, Ferdinand smashed Frederick's troops at the Battle of White Mountain, and by 1622 the Habsburgs controlled Bohemia and much of the Palatinate.

Unsurprisingly, James's initial response to the crisis was diplomatic, for not only did he have a history of successfully negotiating peace with opposing religious forces on the

Continent, but he further doubted the authority of a monarch erected by election, rather than inheritance, and thereby could only uneasily support the claim of his son-in-law.<sup>22</sup> James set his sights on negotiations with Spain by sending ambassadors, making the English presence felt through a series of small naval maneuvers, and attempting to contract a marriage alliance between the Spanish Infanta and his son Charles<sup>23</sup>; however, this international policy of balancing confessionals for pacific ends was found wanting by Protestants who believed God was calling the English to protect the true Church through war. Although calling for a Parliament in 1621 to provide him financial means for military defense, James by 1624 had still not taken military action, although in the aftermath of the Spanish Match debacle his son and beloved favorite Buckingham were likewise calling for a military campaign.

James's desired *rapprochement* with the powerful Catholic Habsburgs confused and even angered many English supporters of the Protestant cause.<sup>24</sup> "Hotter" Protestants understood the continental struggle as part of Protestant apocalyptic history in which the true Church opposed the forces of Anti-Christ. In the London alehouses, some accused the king of being a "cruell father" who abandoned his children and the honor of their country, while others claimed, "As for the glorious Title Defender of the Faith...they say flantly that your faithful subjects have more cause to question that then the Papists."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> W. B. Patterson, "Outbreak of the Thirty Years' War," in *James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 291-338; Rei Kanemura, *The idea of sovereignty in English historical writing, 1599-1627* (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2012); Robert Zaller, "'Interest of State': James I and the Palatinate," *Albion* 6, No. 2 (Summer, 1974): 144-75, esp. 144-46.

<sup>23</sup> Zaller, "'Interest of State,'" 147-48.

<sup>24</sup> For general parliamentary confusion at James's war strategy, see Thomas Cogswell, "Phaeton's Chariot: The Parliament-men and the Continental Crisis of 1621," in J. F. Merritt, ed., *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, 1621-1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 24-46, esp. 41-42.

<sup>25</sup> Anon., *Tom Tell Troath or A free discourse touching the manners of the tyme. Directed to his Majestie by way of humble advertisement* (Holland? 1630?), 2; Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, 24-25; Simon Adams,

Through pamphlets, sermons, and corantos, or weekly “news” books, in what has been deemed a very significant and tumultuous episode in the development of the public sphere, Protestant supporters voiced their discontent with the royal pacific policy and urged a militant, interventionist alternative.<sup>26</sup> Published in Utrecht and anonymized, the *Votivae Angliae* (1624), for one, sought “to perswade his Majestie to drawe his Royall Sword, for the restoring of the Pallatynat, and Electorat,” to the “Glorie of God, and the defence and protection of his afflicted Spouse the Church.” The pamphlet argued that war was “as necessarie as just,” and urged the king that “it must bee your Sword, not your Tongue, not your Treaties, not your Letters, not your Ambassadors....For all other meanes are fledd..., and this of Warre is onlie left you to effect it, which will not fayle, nor cannot deceive you in the performance therof.”<sup>27</sup> These pamphlets often sought to rouse suspicion and hostility towards Spain and the Catholic religion for the sake of war, such as the second part of the *Vox Populi* (1624) which represented the Spaniards, especially the “Machiavellian” Spanish Ambassador Gondomar, as plotting to overthrow the Protestant religion in England. According to the pamphlet, the Spanish desired peace with England, the “sleepie Lyon,” for fear of certain defeat by her military should she

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“Foreign policy and the parliaments of 1621 and 1624,” in *Faction and Parliament: Essays on Early Stuart History*, ed. Kevin Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 139-71, esp. 140-41.

<sup>26</sup> Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 162 and 229. For the development of the post-Reformation public sphere, see Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England,” *The Journal of British Studies* 45.2 (April 2006): 270-92; Lake & Pincus, *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> [John Reynolds], *VOTIVAE ANGLIAE: OR THE DESIRES AND VVISHES OF ENGLAND. Contayned in a Patheticall Discourse, presented to the KING on New-yeares Day last. Wherein are vnfolded and represented, manie strong Reasons, and true and solide Motives, to perswade his Majestie to drawe his Royall Sword, for the restoring of the Pallatynat, and Electorat, to his Sonne in Lawe Prince FREDERICKE, to his onlie Daughter the Ladie ELIZABETH, and theyr Princelie Issue. AGAINST THE TREACHEROVVS VSVRPATION, and formidable Ambition and Power of the Emperour, the King of Spayne, and the Duke of Bavaria, whoe unjustlie Possesse and detayne the same. Together with some Aphorismes returned (with a Large interest) to the Pope in Answer of his.sig.* (Utrecht: 1624), sig. c1r-v.

awake.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, pamphlets such as the first part of the *Vox Populi* (1624) criticized the intended Spanish Match, blaming the “begging and beggarly Courtyers” and “Romish Catholiques” for desiring the match, the former that “they might haue to furnish their wants” and the latter “who hoped hereby at least for a moderation of fynes and lawes, perhaps a tolleraaion [sic], and perhaps a total restauration of their religion in England.”<sup>29</sup>

Proponents of Spanish peace, however, understood the House of Habsburg as representing monarchical legitimacy, stability, and social order in the face of anti-monarchical fervor, rebellion, and extreme religion. This faction, mainly comprised of the powerful and largely Catholic Howard family, opposed the persecution of Catholics and supported an Anglo-Spanish alliance, rather than an Anglo-French alliance or bellicose intervention.<sup>30</sup> To this group, James’s early actions did not disappoint. As England had fostered a close relationship with Spain in the years preceding the crisis, discussing and negotiating the revolt with the Spanish and their allies seemed natural and potentially productive to the king.<sup>31</sup> He fashioned himself in the midst of ensuing continental war as the mediator of peace, offering his services to resolve the conflict diplomatically rather than militarily. Even after a Spanish army invaded the Lower Palatinate in the autumn of 1620, James and the pro-Spanish party could maintain that the “emperor was perfectly justified in what he had done,” for Frederick had risen in

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<sup>28</sup> T. S. [Thomas Scott], *The second part of Vox populi, or Gondomar appearing in the likenes of Matchiauell in a Spanish parliament wherein are discouered his treacherous & subtile practises to the ruine as well of England, as the Netherlandes faithfully transtated [sic] out of the Spanish coppie by a well-willer to England and Holland* (Goricum: 1624), 41-42, 50.

<sup>29</sup> Anon. [Thomas Scott], *Vox Populi, or Newes from Spayne, translated according to the Spanish coppie. Which may serve to forwarn both England and the Vnited Provinces how farre to trust to Spanish pretences* ([London]: 1620), sig. B2r.

<sup>30</sup> C. H. Carter, “Gondomar: Ambassador to James I,” *The Historical Journal* 7.2 (1964): 189-208, esp. 193-94; Adams, “Foreign policy,” 141. See also Adams, “Spain or the Netherlands? The dilemmas of early Stuart foreign policy,” in Howard Tomlinson, ed., *Before the Civil War: Essays on Early Stuart Politics and Government* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 79-101.

<sup>31</sup> Patterson, *King James VI and I*, 297-98; Carter “Gondomar: Ambassador to James I,” 205-8.

rebellion. Indeed, James was so motivated to avoid the entanglements of war, and he fostered such good rapport with the Spanish Ambassador Gondomar, that he purposely sabotaged the belligerent Parliament of 1621 in order to avoid military intervention.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1619 and 1625, James's image as a pacific, wise, and authoritative prince in the midst of political crisis was fashioned through a series of courtly entertainments for the royal court and visiting Spanish ambassadors. These productions sought to instill obedience and respect for James's non-interventionist policies, casting zealots, warmongers and newsmongers as the anti-masquers whose defeat or reform was necessary to achieve order, harmony, and godly control in the realm.<sup>33</sup> In the 1621 portrait of James by Daniel Mytens, the King was portrayed as sitting prominently on a throne wearing a sheathed sword and the full robes of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. While these conspicuous symbols of chivalry, military prowess, monarchical authority, and masculinity lay in the fore, a tapestry drapes behind the throne displaying the Tudor Rose with the motto *BEATI PACIFICI*, "Blessed are the Peace-makers."

Scholars have shown how the debate between pro- and anti-Spanish factions in the 1620s ensued through speeches, sermons, pamphlets, corantos, and libels, but what has been neglected is how contemporaries enmeshed in this conflict understood historical exempla, especially concerning Nero, as a significant source for understanding monarchical authority, its responsibilities and limitations. As we will see, Edmund Bolton, who supported the pro-Spanish faction, crafted his history, *Nero Caesar, or*

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<sup>32</sup> Brennan C. Pursell, "James I, Gondomar, and the Dissolution of the Parliament of 1621," *History* 85.279 (Jul 2000): 428-45.

<sup>33</sup> See Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 239-75; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 1975), 70-77.



*Monarchie Deprauee*, as a justification of strong monarchical government. For the ultra-



Daniel Mytens, *King James I of England and VI of Scotland*, © National Portrait Gallery, London. Used with permission.

Protestant position, in contrast, anonymous writers turned to Nero's history to question and to censure the moral character and authority of the monarch and his policies. By choosing creative and anonymous discourses relying upon these stories writers could level highly critical and effective charges against the king which would resonate with the British public, even while under the threat of state censorship and discipline. Indeed, in December of 1620 and again in 1621, James strongly protested against such politically censorious speech:

forasmuch as it comes to Our eares, by common report, That there is at this time a more licentious passage of lavish discourse, and bold Censure in matters of State, then hath been heretofore, or is fit to be suffered, Wee have thought it necessary, by the advice of Our Privie Councell, to give forewarning unto Our loving Subjects, of this excesse and presumption; And straitly to command them and evry of them, from the highest to the lowest, to take heede, how they intemeddle by Penne, or Speech, with causes of State, and secrets of Empire, either at home, or abroad, but containe themselves within that modest and reverent regard, of matters, above their reach and calling, that to good and dutifull Subjects appertaineth.<sup>34</sup>

Like the other "lavish discourse" which provided a "bold Censure in matters of State," the anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* (1624) defied this proclamation by providing a timely criticism of James's pacific policies while dramatically emphasizing the wider devastation wrought by unconstrained tyranny and court corruption.

On May 15, 1624, *The Tragedy of Nero* was allowed to be printed, but little other information survives about its production or performance.<sup>35</sup> The stark title page labeled the work "Newly Written," perhaps to emphasize its relevance to contemporary politics

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<sup>34</sup> James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations, vol I: Royal Proclamations of James I, 1603-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 495-96 and 519-20.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Quincy Adams, ed. *The dramatic records of Sir Henry Herbert: master of the Revels, 1623-1673* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1917), 28.

or perhaps to distinguish it from the earlier *Tragedy of Claudius Tiberius Nero* (1607).<sup>36</sup> It is unclear if the play was acted in the 1620s, although a surviving manuscript copy and an allusion to *The Tragedy of Nero* identified in John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *Little French Lawyer* (written c. 1619-23, printed 1647) suggest that it was familiar enough to have been acted or at least widely circulated, whether in the public playhouse or the semi-private estates and spaces of noble and highly educated men. It was also popular enough to be cited in Samuel Butler's commonplace book, reprinted in 1633, and was later acted with minor adjustments in 1676.<sup>37</sup> Although anonymous, the title page does offer the names of the printers John Norton and Augustine Mathewes. Mathewes (with Michael Sparkes) was later brought before the Star Chamber for producing William Prynne's *The Chvrch of England's Old Antithesis to New Arminianisme* (1629), which was considered "offensive" and printed without "license or warrant."<sup>38</sup> In his defense for producing this book and others, Sparkes made an extraordinary speech objecting to the binding authority of the Star Chamber decree for regulating printing as directly violating the liberty of subjects, including their persons and goods, as outlined in the Magna Carta, Petition of Right, and other statutes, and he defended Prynne's book as a just and necessary defense of the Church of England against the Arminians.<sup>39</sup> Although Mathewes printed a large number of works throughout his career, it seems significant that

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<sup>36</sup> A. H. Bullen, ed. "Introduction to the *Tragedy of Nero*," in *A Collection of Old English Plays*, vol. 1 (London: Wyman & Sons, 1882), 3-10, esp. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Gerald Eades Bentley, "*The Tragedy of Nero (Piso's Conspiracy) (>1623?)*," in *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Plays and Playwrights*, vol. V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 1379-82. The manuscript is British Library MS Egerton 1994, and includes a number of plays including at least two in Thomas Heywood's own hand.

<sup>38</sup> W. H. Hart, *Index expurgatorius Anglicanus: or, a Descriptive Catalogue of the Principal Books Printed or Published in England, which have been suppressed, or burnt by the Common Hangman, or Censured, or for which the Authors, Printers, or Publishers have been Prosecuted* (London: John Russell Smith, 1872), 72.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 72-73.

in the 1630s he offended the Star Chamber again by printing Milton's *Comus, a Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* in defiance of the *Decree of Starre-Chamber, Concerning Printing* of 1637, which allowed only approved presses to remain in operation.<sup>40</sup> In the 1620s, Augustine Mathewes also served as Thomas May's printer, most significantly printing the 1627 English edition of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which was dedicated to a network of statesmen who had refused to pay the forced loan.<sup>41</sup> Due to this connection between Mathewes and May, it has been suggested that the *Tragedy of Nero* was written by the young May, whose *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* we will consider in detail in the third chapter; what is certain from its publication history, and especially from its content, however, is that the tragedy was produced by someone highly sympathetic to the Protestant cause and critical of the policies undertaken in James's reign.<sup>42</sup>

The tragedy, which is set in Rome during the late years of Nero's reign, opens with a strident critique of cowardly foreign policy, court immorality and ineffective governance. Nero, absent from his court in the first scene, appears onstage in the second scene following reports that he has completed a triumphal procession through the streets of Rome, not for a military "conquest," as was traditional of victorious Roman generals and Caesars, but for "hauing Greece in her owne arts ouerthrowne; / In Singing, Dauncing, Horse-rase, Stage-playing."<sup>43</sup> Nero boasts in this bloodless "victory" over Greece, claiming he has conquered by his "cunning, not his force," and thereby obtained

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<sup>40</sup> Ian Gadd, "Stationers," in *The Milton Encyclopedia*, ed. Thomas M. Corns (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012), 348-52, 349.

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 3 below, pg. 159-60. Augustine Mathewes also printed Thomas May's *The Heire. A Comedie* (London: 1633) and *Virgil's Georgicks Englished* (London: 1628).

<sup>42</sup> "The fact that *Nero*, T., 1624, was transferred with May's *Heir* and his *Lucan* translation, S. R. 1633, Oct 24, by T. Jones to Matthews makes me suspect that it also was by May. These two plays alone out of six mentioned in this entry had been originally licensed independently of the Stationers by the Master of the Revels." F. G. Fleay, *Biographical Chronicle of English Drama, 1559-1642* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1891), II.83-84.

<sup>43</sup> Anon., *The Tragedy of Nero* (London: 1624), sig. A4v.

“Not spoyles with blood bedew’d, / Or the vnhappie obsequies of Death.”<sup>44</sup> As reported by common Roman citizens, this triumph is of comic proportions. Nero has won “Eighteene hundred and eight Crownes” through his “singing” and “stage-playing,” and he adorns himself as an Apollo or Hercules, presumably for completing such extraordinary labors.

Within this early scene, the playwright invited his audience to draw connections between Nero and their own King James. Jonathan Goldberg has argued that Apollo was James’s favored mythological persona, as can be seen in James’s insistent self-identification with the god of poetry and prophecy in his early poetic writings. When James first processed through London as King of England in March 1604, he was hailed repeatedly as *roi soleil*.<sup>45</sup> Within the *Tragedy of Nero*, the citizens enraptured by Nero’s triumphs also name him “the true *Augustus*,” with one citizen claiming that Augustus’s triumph “was not like to this” in glory. In early modern England, Augustus was *the* exemplum of the prince of peace or *rex pacificus*, a ruler who ushered in prosperity and letters to Rome, whose power was proclaimed not by war but by learned “words and deeds,” and whose “sober and mindful” reflections allowed him to reign by reason not passion.<sup>46</sup> Written encomium and processions honoring James very commonly praised

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., sig. B1r.

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), 25-27. Examples include his *Amatoria* and his poetical “tragedie,” the *Phoenix* (1584), which the young James had composed to commemorate and mourn the death of his first favorite Esmé Stuart. See Curtis Perry, “Royal Authorship and Problems of Manuscript Attribution in the Poems of King James VI & I,” *Notes & Queries* 46.2 (1999): 243-46; Sarah M. Dunnigan, “Discovering Desire in the *Amatoria*,” in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2002), 149-181; David M. Bergeron, *King James and Letters of Homoerotic Desire* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), 54, 61-63.

<sup>46</sup> Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, 47 and 50; Todd Wayne Butler, *Imagination and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 51. For an example of an extended list of Caesar Augustus’s qualities, see Pedro Mexía, *Imperiall Historie* (London: 1623 edition), 37.

him as an Augustus due to his scholarly pursuits, his peaceful succession to the throne and his international pacific policies, and indeed by late in his reign, James showed his preference for Augustus as his kingly parallel in the *Meditation* (1619).<sup>47</sup> James's coronation medallion named him "IAC : I : BRIT : CAE : AVG : HAE CAESARVM CAE. D. D." (James I, Caesar Augustus of Britain, Caesar the heir of the Caesars); his coronation banners proclaimed him "Augustus Novus."<sup>48</sup> Through these parallels, the *Tragedy of Nero* identified the parading tyrant with James, whilst simultaneously mocking James's identification as peacemaker. The avoidance of war, coupled with lavish entertainments and spending, merely mimicked the triumphs of peace wrought by military victory.

Through this association of James and Nero, the *Tragedy* deemed the King's refusal to enter war for the Protestant Cause as effeminate and cowardly. Tacitus and Dio Cassius in their histories had characterized Nero's activities to win fame and to court the common masses by singing and acting as disgraceful, humiliating, and unbecoming to his station, but *The Tragedy of Nero*, while acknowledging this censure, more specifically attacked Nero's dalliances as a sign of his deficient military valor, courage, and manliness. Queen Poppaea, for one, powerfully presents this criticism in a sarcastic speech to Nero praising his "witt...that choose such safe / Honors, safe spoyles, wonn

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<sup>47</sup> Paulina Kewes, "Julius Caesar in Jacobean England," *The Seventeenth Century* 17 (2002): 155-86, esp. 179; Goldberg, *James I and Politics of Literature*, 27; James, *A MEDITATION Vpon the 27. 28. 29. Verses of the XXVII. Chapter of Saint Matthew. or A PATERNE FOR A KINGS INAVGVRATION*, in *James VI and I: Political Writings*, 235. For an early comparison with Augustus, see the second dedicatory sonnet in *The Essayes of a Prentise, in the Divine Art of Poesie* (Edinburgh ("Cvm Privilegio Regali"): 1584).

<sup>48</sup> I am grateful to Mary (Molly) Gerwig for notifying me of this medallion. See Barbara Parker, *Plato's Republic and Shakespeare's Rome: A Political Study of the Roman Works* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont, 2004), 105; Walter S. H. Lim, *The Arts of Empire: The Poetics of Colonialism from Raleigh to Milton* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 220-21.

without dust or blood.” When Nero asks, “What mocke ye me *Poppea*?” she replies cunningly:

Nay, in good Faith my Lord, I speake in earnest,  
I hate that headie, and aduenturous crew,  
That goe to loose their owne, to purchase, but  
The breath of others, and the common voyce,  
Them that will loose there hearing for a sound;  
That by death onely, seeke to get a liuing,  
Make skarrs their beautie, and count losse of Limmes  
The commendation of a proper man,  
And so, goe halting to immortalitie:  
Such fooles I loue worse then they doe their liues.<sup>49</sup>

By the end of the scene, Nero seems to interpret Poppaea’s speech as condemning the courage of soldiers and their hard won immortal fame; an early modern audience, however, would recognize the acclaimed virtues of courage and constancy that were thought to constitute manhood. Later in the tragedy, Lucan and the other grave men of Piso’s conspiracy scoff at Nero’s men “arm’d / With Luts [*sic*], and Harpes, and Pipes, and Fiddle-cases: / Souldyers to th’ shadow traynd, and not the field.”<sup>50</sup> Whereas the conspirators liken themselves to Cassius and Brutus in their valor, and indeed appear to be manly, grave and courageous soldiers acquainted with true battle and death, Nero’s triumphal procession only exemplifies his cowardice and vanity, which the character Lucan summarizes in the play as “the shame, and Womanhood of *Nero*.”<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, *The Tragedy of Nero* portrayed the tyrant’s court as a bed of immorality, deviance, and disorder, and thereby echoed charges of court corruption often leveled against King James’s costly consumption, perceived decadence, and love of the theater. As Anthony Weldon explained in 1650, King James “was very liberal, of what

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<sup>49</sup> *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. B1v-2r.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B3r.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. C4r-v. By the end of the *Tragedy of Nero*, however, we see several conspirators act cowardly after the discovery of their plot.

he had not in his own gripe....[H]e had rather spend 100,000£ on Embassies, to keep or procure peace with dishonour, then 10,000£ on an Army that would have forced peace with honour.”<sup>52</sup> Although Elizabeth had left England in good financial health, and James did not spend on wars, he accrued significant debts even early in his reign by bestowing gifts and favors, hosting lavish festivities, increasing his entourage of attendants such as ushers, grooms, gentlemen of the privy chamber, and adorning himself in expensive attire.<sup>53</sup> Whereas wardrobe costs for Elizabeth in her final four years averaged £9500, James’s expenditure in the first five years averaged £36,000 per annum. Elizabeth’s ordinary expenditure had rested at £300,000 per annum; James was very soon spending half a million pounds annually. According to Exchequer accounts, his spending alone on “fees and annuities” paid to courtiers reached £47,783 in 1605; “diverse causes and rewards” amounted to £35,239 in the same year. Throughout his reign, the King’s festivities were numerous and opulent, characterized as “persistent prodigality” by Maruice Lee, Jr., “gambling and feasting and lavish weddings became the commonplaces of court life.”<sup>54</sup> Contemporary critics regularly associated the expenses of Stuart court extravagance with debauchery and sexual impropriety. As one libel declared upon the death of James’s Lord Treasurer Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Dorset in 1608:

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<sup>52</sup> Sir Anthony Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James* (London: 1650), 57.

<sup>53</sup> For the highly demanding and ritualized system of court patronage in Stuart England, see Linda Levy Peck, “For a King not to be bountiful were a fault’: Perspectives on Court Patronage in Early Stuart England,” *Journal of British Studies* 25.1 (1986): 31-61.

<sup>54</sup> One significant reason for the jump in cost between Elizabeth and James was his large family, which required wardrobe and separate households; however, James clearly exacerbated these costs. For example, he increased the Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber for his own use from 18 to 42 between 1603 and 1624, while adding 200 gentlemen extraordinary to the Court. S. J. Houston, *James I*, 2nd ed. (London and NY: Longman, 1995), 14-21; Maurice Lee, Jr., *Great Britain’s Solomon: James VI and I and His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1990), 148-149; Roger Lockyer, *James VI and I* (London and NY: Longman, 1998), 85, 96-97.



Heere lye's a Lord that Wenching thought no sinne  
and bought his flesh by selling of our skinne  
His name was Sackvile & so Void of Pitty  
as hee did rob the Country with the Citty.<sup>55</sup>

Perpetuators of cheap print and oral culture in Jacobean England regularly transformed what were intended to be legitimate expressions of the dignity of courtiers and the King through fashion, finery, and festival into sartorial transgressions; they characterized the King and court's luxury as extravagant, and associated their practices with illicit sexuality, popery, effeminacy, and disorder.<sup>56</sup>

Significantly, *The Tragedy of Nero* opens at the royal court, while Nero is still absent due to his "triumphal parade." Nero's wife Poppaea struts "royally attended...ouer the Stage, in State," as a group of courtiers comment upon her proud majesty and debate whether they, like so many others, should bed Poppaea or seek a common "wench" instead. When the courtier Antonius notes that although Poppaea is a "Great Queene" she has not "chastitie," the scornful courtier Petronius replies:

Chastitie, foole! a word not knowne in Courts:  
Well may it lodge in meane and countrey homes,  
Where pouertie, and labour keeps them downe,  
Short sleepes, and hands made hard with *Thuscans* Woll.  
But neuer comes to great mens Pallaces,  
Where ease, and riches, stirring thoughts beget,  
Prouoking meates, and surfet wines Inflame:  
Where all there setting forth's but to be wooed,  
And wooed they would not be, but to be wonne.  
Will one man serue *Poppaea*? Nay, thou shalt  
Make her, as soone, contented with an eye.<sup>57</sup>

While chastity thrives in the meager country home of the simple shepherd, throughout the play the audience finds the sins and moral failings of this court to be pervasive – indeed,

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<sup>55</sup> British Library MS Harley 3991, fo.126v.

<sup>56</sup> Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2002), 153-62.

<sup>57</sup> *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. A3v.

“Night sports” are “done in open day.”<sup>58</sup> The tragedy demonstrates how these “sports” have wrecked the stability and order of the royal household and government, especially as Nero is frequently cuckolded due to his queen’s insatiable desire for sex. In ballads as well as public shaming rituals in early modern England, cuckolds were abused in their communities for failing to control their households, satisfy their wives, and serve their patriarchal duty, for a wife’s adulterous exploits were believed to stem not only from promiscuity but also from rebellion.<sup>59</sup> This view is illustrated in a number of ballads and cheap print, such as the later ballad, *Cuckold’s Haven, Or, The marry’d man’s miserie* (1638): “My wife hath learn’d to kisse, / and thinkes ‘tis not amisse: / Shee oftentimes doth me deride, / And tels me I am hornify’d. / What euer I doe say, / shee will haue her owne way; / Shee scorneth to obey.”<sup>60</sup> Cuckoldry, irreligion and political rebellion were intertwining and very often associated in the Jacobean period, with household disorder tied to political tyranny or anarchy. During Charles’s courtship with the Spanish Infanta Maria in 1623, a riotous song described sexual rebellion and cuckoldry as one of the many dangerous consequences of the English being bought off by a Spanish dowry. After the “Potents of Spaine” will load Charles’s wagon with Spanish gold, the song exclaimed, the women of the City “shall swive / Exchange time in the morne,” while “each Cuckold shall blowe / And Guilt the tippe of his horne.”<sup>61</sup> In the *Tragedy of Nero*,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., sig. B4v.

<sup>59</sup> See David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 116-36, esp. 127; Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 152-56; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 95-96.

<sup>60</sup> Qtd in Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, 153.

<sup>61</sup> Beinecke MS Osborn b.197, pp. 110-11. See “Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources,” eds. Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, *Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series I* (2005), [<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts/libels/>].

Poppaea's explicit affair with Nymphidius signals her rebellion as well as her lover's rebellion. In a soliloquy Nymphidius explains that he has an "aspiring thirst / to *Neroes* Crowne" and envisions Poppaea's bed as "a step vnto his Throne."<sup>62</sup> The *Tragedy of Nero* thereby intertwined Nero's ineptitude in foreign policy with his failure as a patriarch, indicating that Nero's tyranny stemmed from his failure to govern household, court morality, and kingdom, not just from his more infamous vicious and cruel activities.

By the climax of the play, Nero has grown incensed by a handful of courtiers who dared frown, laugh, sleep, look "sourely on," or failed to applaud Nero's performance of *Orestes*.<sup>63</sup> Characters within the *Tragedy* emphasize that Nero performs Orestes's murder of his mother Clytemnestra from experience, for Nero had already defiled his own household by committing matricide against Julia Agrippina.<sup>64</sup> Due to the perceived offenses of these individuals in his audience, Nero boldly declares that he will not take revenge by "singling out them, one by one to death," but instead "Behold the world enwrapt in funerall flame," for a "Princes anger must lay desolate / Citties, Kingdomes consume, Roote vp mankind."<sup>65</sup> By the next scene, frenzied Roman citizens run center stage crying, "Fire, fire, helpe, we burne," and Antonius describes the ever-increasing flames as overtaking fields and husbandmen, neighborhoods and households, and even "litle sonnes with trembling hands."<sup>66</sup> In the midst of this devastation, the anonymous author of the tragedy calls for "Soft Musique" to play as Nero enters "aboue alone with a Timbrell." Singing of Troy in her flames, he bathes in the visual carnage of his destroyed

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<sup>62</sup> *Tragedy of Nero*, sigs. A3r, A4r and B2r.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D4v.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Poppaea remarks, "Did he not wish againe his mother liuing? / Her death would adde great life vnto his part." *Ibid.*, sig. D3v.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. D4v.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. E2r.

city, delighting especially in the “sceane” of a mother cradling her burnt child and a young man caressing the body of his burnt father. As Philip Robinson has demonstrated, London was popularly understood and very regularly deemed a “New Troy” in the seventeenth century, especially in the annual mayoral shows. Retellings of the myth were complex, and often highlighted anxieties that London as a Troia Nova might herself face annihilation due to her host of sins, although her glory may also outshine that of Rome, the other city descendant of Troy.<sup>67</sup> *The Tragedy of Nero* offered the horrific image of a “New Troy,” Rome, destroyed at the hands of a sinful ruler, and the city rudely memorialized by the very man responsible for its ruin.

Simultaneously, the author of the *Tragedy of Nero* seems to have drawn upon the “black legend” of Spanish cruelty and tyranny, with this gruesome scene reflecting the Dutch propaganda that, since the sixteenth century, had portrayed the Spanish Inquisition as enacting horrific violence and burnings of Protestant families, including babies and the aged. For example, a detailed image of the “Council of Blood” from *Warachtige Beschrijvinghe...vande meer dan onmenschelijke end Barbarische Tyrannije* (1621) luridly depicted an overwhelming scene of torture and destruction of Protestants by burning at the stake, the gallows, the rack, the wheel, and water torture.<sup>68</sup> *The Tragedy of Nero* portrayed the tyrant, while surrounded by a likewise astonishing site of destruction, as reveling in his grotesque entertainment, beckoning the mother and young man to “play on.../With cries, and pitie; with your blood.” The scene concludes, however, with a

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<sup>67</sup> This is partially due to the founding myth of King Brutus. Philip Robinson, “Multiple Meanings of Troy in Early Modern London’s Mayoral Show,” *Seventeenth Century* 26.2 (Oct. 2011): 221-39, esp. 228-9.

<sup>68</sup> John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and ‘Early Enlightenment’ Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 62-63; Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 1988), 82-93. For portrayals of the Inquisition in England, see Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 1989), 150-54.

foreshadowing of Nero's own destruction, as the man and woman plead heaven that he "that all this blood hath shed" may die friendless and unburied at "the wish, and hate of all."<sup>69</sup> The tragedy's climax thus emphatically argued that siding with (Spanish and Catholic) tyranny was siding with the brutal murder of innocents, an act which God would justly punish.

This climatic scene brilliantly illustrates the pathos of the *Tragedy of Nero*, and the particular ability of drama to evoke a passionate criticism of monarchy that pamphlets, libels, and histories could not. Even if read and not performed, the tragedy allowed its audience to experience the brutality of tyranny, for as Sir Philip Sidney argued in *The Defence of Poesy* (1595), tragedy "openeth the greatest woundes, and sheweth forth the ulcers that are covered with Tissue."<sup>70</sup> By puncturing the scars of infected government, tragedy could illustrate the hidden corruption of tyrannical courts, and it could move its viewers to fear, sorrow, and even to virtuous action. While the audience feels moved by the suffering of Roman citizens, Nero's death in the final scene in contrast was meant to inspire little pity or fear. Learning he has been sentenced to a tortuous death by the Senate, Nero begs two Roman citizens, "Will you by dying, teach me to beare death / With courage?"<sup>71</sup> These citizens, who have voluntarily committed to aid Nero in dying a less painful death than that decreed, are disgusted by their emperor's cowardice, and after Nero bids farewell to his theaters and popular applause, he ineloquently "*fals on his sword*" out of his fear of a more painful and frightening end.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. E3v.

<sup>70</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: 1595), sig. E4v.

<sup>71</sup> *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. I2v.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. I2v-3r.

His country and himself thrown into rebellion and chaos, Nero dies pathetically onstage while seeking the courage of lower men.

In these ways, the *Tragedy of Nero* provided a virulent attack on James and his pacific and seemingly pro-Catholic policies. James's determination to conquer by diplomacy was likened to Nero's conquest by minstrelsy; his alliance with Spanish and Catholic powers likened to the burning of innocents. Significantly, the tragedy displayed Nero's tyranny through his disordered household, especially his inability to control and to satisfy his own desires and the desires of Poppaea. Beginning in the royal household in which Nero is importantly absent, each act of the play uncovers the effect of household mismanagement and a disordered soul upon the management of commonwealth; Nero watches from his private apartments as his city burns before him.

While thus censuring monarchy, however, the *Tragedy* did not support active resistance or regime change. Piso's conspirators voice the ideals of an active, courageous and virtuous citizenry, but as Lucan explains, they seek not "libertie":

We are contented with the galling yoke,  
If they will only leaue vs necks to beare it;  
We seeke no longer freedome, we seeke life  
At least, not to be muredred, let vs die  
On Enemies swords....<sup>73</sup>

Contented with the institution of monarchy, the conspirators seek an emperor who will protect his subjects and fulfill his duties, who will raise armies of swords and not lutes. In the end, the *Tragedy* does follow historical accounts of Nero which claimed that the Senate sentenced Nero to death for his crimes against Rome; lest the audience mistake whose authority ultimately decreed Nero's demise, however, the *Tragedy* concluded with a Roman subject declaring: "Thus great bad men about them finde a rod: / People depart,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., sig. C4v.

and say there is a God.” *The Tragedy of Nero* did not question the *institution* of monarchy, but it importantly presented the portrait of a tyrant as emasculated cuckold, coward, and persecutor, whose deficient character and household mismanagement resulted in his country’s destruction and his own downfall. Moreover, the playwright’s strident critique of James and his policies suggests that he may have believed his own king, without reformation, would suffer a similar fate.

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*The Tragedy of Nero* was not the only piece of literature which challenged James and his government through the exemplum of Nero in the early 1620s, nor the only one which located tyranny in the royal household. In the same moment, a significant libel circulated which explicitly compared James to Nero and warned that the English king could even surpass the Roman emperor in tyrannical infamy.<sup>74</sup> In 1651, an anonymous pamphlet entitled *The None-Such Charles His Character: Extracted Out of divers Originall Transactions, Dispatches and the Notes of severall Publick Ministers, and Councillours of State as wel at home as abroad* (1651) printed this libel as part of a salacious attack upon the late King Charles. The pamphlet, which was probably crafted by the one-time cultural and political agent of Buckingham, Sir Balthazar Gerbier, emphasized that Charles’s downfall had chiefly been a family affair.<sup>75</sup> It celebrated that God had enacted his just wrath upon the “crying sinnes” of “King *James*’s Family,” and advised “all men

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<sup>74</sup> For the culture of libels, and their presentation of radical skepticism about discourses of authority, see Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

<sup>75</sup> [Sir Balthazar Gerbier], *The None-Such Charles his Character: Extracted, Out of divers Originall Transactions, Dispatches and the Notes of severall Publick Ministers, and Councillours of State as wel at home as abroad* (London: 1650), 2-3; Maria Keblusek, “Introduction: Double Agents in Early Modern Europe,” in *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011), 1-3; Jeremy Wood, “Gerbier, Sir Balthazar (1592–1663/1667),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10562>].

to take heed how they side with that bloody House, least they be found to be the opposers of Gods purposes.”<sup>76</sup> In its section concerning the sins of James, the pamphlet charged the late king with “hipocrisie and impiety,” claiming that he had refused to reform the ecclesiastical government of Bishops and deceived his subjects by acting as a “Juggler.” His civil crimes and religious sins were so acute, according to the pamphlet, that the following libel was left on James’s cupboard for him to discover:

Aula profana, religione vana,  
 Spreta uxore Ganyraedis amore,  
 Lege sublata, prerogativa inflata,  
 Tolle libertatem, incede civitatem,  
 Ducas spadonem et Superasti Neronem

[The palace has been desecrated, religion is vain,  
 (Your) wife has been spurned for the love of Ganymede,  
 Law has been destroyed, and prerogative expanded,  
 Abolish liberty, march on the commonwealth,  
 Marry a eunuch and you have trumped Nero]<sup>77</sup>

Just as the *Tragedy of Nero* associated Nero’s depraved household with his ungodly, vicious, and persecuting rule, the libel connected James’s perverse love of Ganymede over the pious love of wife with the desecration of court, religion, law, and the unlawful practice of political authority. Found tucked away within a cupboard in James’s household, the libel described the political intimacy and sexual corruption of royal

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<sup>76</sup> [Gerbier], *None-Such Charles*, 2-3.

<sup>77</sup> *Riders dictionarie* (1626) defines “*prærogativa, -ae*” as “a preheminance, authoritie, and rule aboue other.” See sig. zzz3r.

At least one printed and three manuscript copies of this libel survive: Balthazar Gerbier, *The None-such Charles his Character* (London: 1651), 17; British Library MS Add. 78423, fo. 60v; University of Minnesota Library MS 690235 f, 181; Bodleian MS don b. 8, p. 183. C. R. Harris claimed that this libel was written in the hand of Sir John Peyton. As Harris provided no evidence for this claim, I am unclear how Peyton, who served as lieutenant of the Tower of London or the governor of Jersey for most of his life, would have had such access to James’s lodgings. His son’s access is likewise questionable. See Harris, “The Court and Character of James I,” *Notes & Queries*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. V, (January-June 1864): 451-3, 53.



favoritism, and thereby highlighted the fear that James was personally compromised and that his favorite wielded a powerful and dangerous influence.<sup>78</sup>

Ganymede, a widespread term for “catamite” or “sodomy” in early modern England, was the beautiful Trojan boy in classical mythology with whom Jupiter fell passionately in love and stole away to Mount Olympus, where he made the boy his lover and the cup-bearer of the gods.<sup>79</sup> Within this story, Ganymede played the sexual role of the younger, passive partner who submitted to an older and more powerful male.<sup>80</sup> As several historians have persuasively demonstrated, not only do innumerable examples of this motif exist in English literature of the period, but several poems and libels explicitly refer to James’s favorite, Buckingham, as Ganymede.<sup>81</sup> Buckingham first served James as his cup-bearer, and their intimate relationship echoed the age and social disparity of Ganymede and Jupiter. Since early modern English conventions of male friendship required friends to have comparable social status and to be bound for non-mercenary reasons, James and Buckingham’s great social disparity, and James’s lavish showering of gifts, favors and titles upon the Duke, provoked great suspicion and censure.<sup>82</sup>

As Curtis Perry, Alastair Bellany, and Andrew McRae have convincingly illustrated, by envisioning the problem of royal favorites in erotic terms, libels and other

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<sup>78</sup> See Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 131-37.

<sup>79</sup> Gordon Williams, ed. “Ganymede,” in *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, vol. II (London: Athlone, 1994), 577-79; Young, *James VI and I*, 53-54; Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982), 13 and 65; James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986), 1-3; Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1991).

<sup>80</sup> Young, *James VI and I*, 53.

<sup>81</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 254-61; Young, *James VI and I*, 54; Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 202-3; Curtis Perry, “The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53.4 (2000): 1075-77.

<sup>82</sup> Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” *History Workshop* 29 (Spring 1990): 1-19, esp. 11-12. Buckingham wrote to James in response to his generosity, “you have filled a consuming purse, given me fair houses [and] more land than I am worthy of...filled my coffers so full with patents of honour, that my shoulders cannot bear more.” Qtd. in Young, *James VI and I*, 32.

imaginative literature in early modern England made it possible to criticize not only royal favorites but the monarch himself. This is because charges of erotic favoritism underscored that it was the king's depraved and unregulated passions which made him susceptible to being controlled by his corrupted associates.<sup>83</sup> The author of the *None-such Charles* emphasized as much throughout his pamphlet, arguing that although the royal court had included "a number of Courtly silk-wormes," the royal family's "crying sinnes" required "a more serious inspection" than the mere "various vicissitudes of men"; the King's own decisions and policies, driven by his desires, compromised right religion and good governance.<sup>84</sup> The libel thereby associated the King's corrupted passions, expressed through sodomy, with the desecration of true religion, the unlawful extension of royal authority, and the compromise of the native liberties of subjects, for a King unruly in his desires would not refrain from trespassing the laws of nature and of God or of making an idol of worldly passions. Of these connections, homosexuality and "*religione vana*," or Catholicism, were most often associated in seventeenth-century English culture, with sodomy understood as a typically popish sin due not only to familiar charges of buggery within monasteries but also because it "involved the abuse of natural faculties and impulses for unnatural ends," and thereby symbolized "idolatrous" Catholic practices.<sup>85</sup> A king debased in his passions and religion posed the greatest threat to society, for his seemingly unrestrained and perverted desires might lead him to compromise the law—that safeguard of subjects' liberties—and liberty itself.

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<sup>83</sup> Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 135-36; Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 255-61; McRae, *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State*, 80.

<sup>84</sup> [Gerbier], *None-such Charles*, 2-3.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice," in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, eds. Richard Cust and Anne Hughes (NY: Longman 1989), 72-106, esp. 75; Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 257-58.

These particular accusations against James help us date the origins of this otherwise anonymous libel. Bellany has shown that libels explicitly charging the king and favorite with sodomitical activity tended to cluster chronologically around the Bohemian Crisis and Spanish Match from 1618-23, which places its original production in the same years as the *Tragedy of Nero*.<sup>86</sup> The libel's accusation of *religione vana* likewise suggests this period in James's reign due to his concessions to recusants and desire to negotiate peace with Catholic powers through diplomacy and the Spanish Match. Three manuscript copies of this libel survive, one of which confirms this dating through the added title, written lengthwise, "*Deprædator Belgicus*," or the "Dutch Pillager."<sup>87</sup> The title referenced hostile criticisms of James for refusing to commit troops for the Protestant Cause, and thereby allowing his Christian brethren to lose life and goods to Catholic forces. This copy of the libel likewise included the charge of homosexual immorality and the related destruction of palace, law, and liberty, but very significantly replaced "*Prerogativa*" with "*Tyrannide*" and implicated the nobility and clergy in the commonwealth's demise:

Aulâ profanâ  
 Religione simulata  
 Nobilitate spurâ  
 Clericatu Apostata  
 Spreta Uxore  
 Ganimedis amore  
 Lege decollata  
 Tyrannide inflata  
 Abduxisti libertatem  
 Incendisti nationem  
       Ducas Spadonem  
 et superasti Neronem

[The palace has been desecrated

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<sup>86</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 255.

<sup>87</sup> University of Minnesota Library, MS 690235 f, 181 .

Religion pretended  
 Nobility dirtied  
 Apostate for clergy  
 (Your) wife has been spurned  
 for the love of Ganymede  
 Law has been beheaded  
 Tyranny inflated  
 You have removed liberty  
 You have set fire to the nation  
     Marry a eunuch  
 and you have trumped Nero]<sup>88</sup>

Here the sins, tyranny and lawlessness of nobility, religion, royal family, and king is tied directly to the destruction of liberty and nation, and this destruction extended beyond the shores of England to the Christian allies abroad plundered at the hands of Catholic oppressors.

Other versions of the libel, however, more narrowly located political injustice in the royal family and household, characterizing tyranny as a family made violent and disordered. In the 1650s, while in exile in France, the royalist Sir Samuel Tuke recorded a significant version of the libel in his miscellany alongside extensive notes on Roman history, Donne's poems, Montagne's essays, Descartes' *Meditations* and *Principes de la Philosophie*, and Hobbes' *Leviathan*:

Matris Capite truncato  
 Nato venenato  
 Spreta uxore, Ganimedis amore  
 Ducas spadonem,  
 Superasti Neronem  
  
 [The mother beheaded  
 The son poisoned  
 The wife spurned, for the love of Ganymede  
 Marry a eunuch,  
 You have trumped Nero]<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> British Library MS Add. 78423, fo. 60v.

From his earlier notes on Roman history in the miscellany, it is clear that Tuke knew Nero's story very well. He recorded how Nero poisoned his older brother, Britannicus, who was the rightful heir to the Roman throne, and how Nero also commanded Anicetus to kill his mother, Julia Agrippina, a woman considered ambitious and depraved who had "prostituted her body to her son."<sup>90</sup> The libel mapped this history directly onto the Stuart royal family, comparing the untimely death of James's son, Henry, with the murder of Britannicus, and James's Catholic mother, Mary Queen of Scots, with Julia Agrippina. Tuke's copy of the libel, thereby, identified James's sodomitical activity as part of a family portrait of infamy, much as his historical notes had described Nero's family.

Such a comparison between Prince Henry and Britannicus offered a staunchly Protestant critique of the royal family. Prince Henry, by the time of his premature death in 1612, had been the darling of the militantly anti-Catholic faction at court. His personal practice of religion, fervent commitment to rooting out Catholic recusants, and generous patronage to the godly captivated a reformed war party frustrated by James's pacific policies.<sup>91</sup> As one popular song expressed:

Henry the 8. pulld down abbeys and cells  
But Henry the 9. shall pull down Bishops and bells.<sup>92</sup>

His sudden death in 1612 crushed these expectations, resulting in widespread speculation that he had been poisoned through a popish plot. By comparing James to Nero, who had poisoned his older brother Britannicus, the libel implicitly charged James and James's

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., fos. 407-9, 420, 423. Britannicus and Nero could only succeed to the helm of the Roman Empire because their mother married her uncle, Emperor Claudius, and had his former mistress beheaded.

<sup>91</sup> James M. Sutton, "Henry Frederick, prince of Wales (1594–1612)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12961>]; Roy C. Strong, *Henry, prince of Wales, and England's lost Renaissance* (NY: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

<sup>92</sup> C. A. Patrides, "'The greatest of the kingly race': the Death of Henry Stuart," *The Historian* 47 (1985): 402–8, esp. 404.

family with the death of Henry, or at least associated the king's household with suspected Catholic perpetrators. Another version of the libel, recorded by the antiquary and courtier Sir William Haward, so closely associated Nero's family history with James's that it accused the King himself of perpetrating the murder of his mother, Mary Stuart.<sup>93</sup>

The analogy that Tuke's copy of the libel presented between James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, and Nero's mother, Julia Agrippina, further incriminated and compromised the King. Mary Queen of Scots had been deemed sexually depraved, rebellious, and dangerous by reformed Scotsmen and godly Englishmen due to her Catholic religion and personal conduct. James's paternity was questioned after Queen Mary's estranged husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, refused to attend James's Catholic baptism in December 1566, and the Queen's marriage in 1567 to James Hepburn, earl of Bothwell, the suspected murderer of her husband Darnley, led to her overthrow by a confederacy of lords rebelling in the name of James VI.<sup>94</sup> After living under house arrest for twenty years, Mary was tried and beheaded for plotting the assassination of Queen Elizabeth. Alongside questions of her treason, the perceived ability of women even to occupy such positions of power in early modern society was complex and often problematic. Women were characterized as naturally inferior to men, being weak, irrational, limited in intelligence, fickle, emotional, and prone to lust.<sup>95</sup> As the *Second Tome of the Homilies* (1563) summarized, "For the woman is a weake creature, not endued with like strength and constancie of mynde, therefore they be the sooner disquieted, and they be the more prone to all weake affections and dispositions of

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<sup>93</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Don b. 8, p. 183.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Lynch, "Queen Mary's triumph: The Baptismal celebrations at Stirling in December 1566," *Scottish Historical Review* 69 (1990): 1-12.

<sup>95</sup> Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex & Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society* (London: Arnold, 1995): 8-16.

mynde, more then men be, and lyghter they be, and more vayne in theyr fantasies and opinions.”<sup>96</sup> A threat to social order and stability, women were expected to “perfourme subiection,” as the *Homily* put it, to be modest, submissive to the authority of fathers and husbands, and sexually chaste. The connection between women’s transgressions and their perceived rebellion to the patriarchal society is evinced in the fact that women who killed their husbands were charged with the crime of petty treason rather than murder.<sup>97</sup> Queen Elizabeth had sought to legitimize her rule through multi-faceted representations, fashioning her rule as ordained by God and herself as exceptionally virtuous, chaste, and equipped with the superior qualities of kings.<sup>98</sup> Perceived as compromised in her sexual purity and religion, Mary Queen of Scots could not legitimize her political activity.

Even though a Scottish confederacy had separated Mary Queen of Scots from her son James in his infancy, writers criticizing James and the Stuart household still questioned if Mary had indelibly corrupted her son through her very womb. It was widely believed in seventeenth-century England that pregnant women could, intentionally and unintentionally, alter, shape, and mark the disposition and physical attributes of their fetuses in the womb, giving vicious women an enormous power over the character of

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<sup>96</sup> “An Homilie of the State of Matrimonie,” in *The Seconde Tome of Homilies, of such matters as were promysed and intituled in the former part of homilies, set out by the authoritie of the Queenes Maiestie. And to be read in euery paryshe Church agreablye* (London, 1563), 255r. Alexandra Shepard has argued, however, that prescriptions of female weakness might have been somewhat exaggerated in early modern literature which stressed the need of women to be subordinate to their husband’s authority. See *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 72.

<sup>97</sup> It was treason because “there is subiection due from the wife to the husband, but not *e converso*.” See Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 138.

<sup>98</sup> Sommerville, *Sex & Subjection*, 51-60; See also Carole Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); A. N. McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558-1585* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

their children.<sup>99</sup> In a significant note just following the libel, Tuke recorded in his miscellany that Queen Mary's turpitude had indeed become imprinted onto James's character while he grew within her womb. He recorded how she, "beeing greate with childe of Kg James was present when her fauorite dauid reizo a musitien, an Italian was murdred by the erles of her husband." According to Tuke's notes, the "naked sword, was soe neere her bellie," and she "shewing much frighted," that James in his *adult* life "wuld not indure a naked sword."<sup>100</sup> This account, which Tuke drew from Sir Kenelm Digby,<sup>101</sup> supported the suspicion that James had been tainted by his depraved, Catholic mother, much as the wicked Nero had been molded by the sexually and rebelliously corrupt Julia Agrippina. Such a charge especially implicated James's masculinity. Because James "wuld not indure a naked sword" out of fright, he was incapable of performing the violence necessary to enforce patriarchal imperatives, to wage war, and to judge and honor those men who proved themselves meritorious in battle.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, critics of James lampooned his excessive and indiscriminate meriting of knighthoods to men who had never proven their valor, such as the well over nine hundred knights he created in 1603.<sup>103</sup> Tuke highlighted this deficiency in his notes by recounting that when James knighted Sir Kenelm Digby "hee had like to haue putt the sword in [the knight's]

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<sup>99</sup> Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 65-66; Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993), 16-27, 33-34; Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (NY: Zone Books, 2006), 144-45; Lorraine Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750* (NY: Zone Books, 2001), 189.

<sup>100</sup> British Library MS Add. 78423, fo. 60v.

<sup>101</sup> See Sir Kenelm Digby, *A Late Discourse Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpellier in France, Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy, with Instructions how to make the said Powder; whereby many other Secrets of Nature are unfolded*, trans. from French into English by R. White, Gent. (London: 1658), 104-5.

<sup>102</sup> Shepard, "The Violence of Manhood," in *Meanings of Manhood*, 127-51.

<sup>103</sup> Lockyer, *James VI and I*, 203. David Hume estimated that the King had bestowed knighthoods on no less than 237 persons within the first six weeks of his reign as King of England. *The History of Great Britain, Under the House of Stuart* (London: Millar, 1759), 3.



eyes” due to his fear of the weapon.<sup>104</sup> Combined with the libel’s description of James’s emasculating betrayal of marital love for the love of Ganymede, Tuke’s notations constructed James as too effeminate and cowardly to set an example of patriarchal authority, command the respect of his nobles and soldiers, and lead English troops in defense of the Protestant Cause.<sup>105</sup>

Descriptions of Mary Stuart’s enduring influence upon James carried a further significance in the context of the Bohemian Crisis, for Frederick’s rise to the throne through election prompted a heated debate in England and the Continent about the legitimacy and relative merit of elected monarchy. In the *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, James had staunchly opposed elective kingship and, within Biblical precedent, characterized Saul’s kingship as “founded by God himselfe,” not the people’s election.<sup>106</sup> After 1618, the anti-Spanish faction in England interpreted Frederick’s election positively as the work of God. As Archbishop George Abbot argued:

That God had set up this Prince, his Majesty’s Son-in-law, as a Mark of Honour throughout all Christendom, to propagate the Gospel, and to protect the oppressed. That for his own part, he dares not but give advice to follow, where God leads...That by peace and peace, the Kings of the Earth, that gave their power to the Beast, shall leave the Whore, and make her desolate. That he was satisfied in Conscience, that the *Bohemians* had just cause to reject that proud and bloody Man, who had taken a course to make that Kingdom not elective, in taking it by the Donation of another.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> British Library MS Add. 78423, fo. 60v.

<sup>105</sup> For a similar portrayal of James’s effeminacy and cowardice by George Chapman, see below, pg. 175-78.

<sup>106</sup> *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 67 and 70. Peter Lake, “The King (the Queen) and the Jesuit: James Stuart’s *True Law of Free Monarchies* in context/s,” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 243-61, esp. 257.

<sup>107</sup> John Rushworth, *Historical Collections Of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings in Five Parliaments: Beginning The Sixteenth Year of King James, Anno 1618. And Ending the Fifth Year of King Charles, Anno 1629. Digested in Order of Time* (London: Browne, 1721), I.12.

Abbot defended Frederick's election as an act of God against the forces of Catholicism and anti-Christ, which had swept the Continent through Habsburg strength. His argument further justified election as the constitutional precedent of Bohemia, thereby casting Ferdinand's taking of the Kingdom by "Donation" as the true usurpation. King James, however, in an interpretation of events greatly at odds with Abbot, "was not pleased that his Son should snatch a Crown out of the fire." He sought to defend monarchy by inheritance, for in his experience, arguments for elective kingship went hand-in-hand with legitimizations of resistance and even the deposition of lawful, hereditary monarchs. James justified his refusal to enter war immediately on Frederick's behalf by arguing that Frederick's acceptance of the Bohemian crown "had no reference to the Cause of Religion but only by reason of his right of Election (as he called it.). And we should be sorry that that aspersion should come upon our Religion, as to make it a good pretext for dethroning of Kings, and usurping their Crowns; And we would be loath that our People here should be taught that strange Doctrine."<sup>108</sup> These debates highlight the timeliness and further significance of a libel comparing James with Nero. By characterizing tyranny as bred and nurtured within the royal family, the libel exposed hereditary monarchy as potentially more vicious, dangerous, and anarchic than elective monarchy. Whereas God might raise up a virtuous prince through election to free his people, hereditary monarchs appeared to be in the grip of vicious and perverting passions, which caused the desecration of true religion, the emasculation of patriarchy, and the continual breeding of debauched desires which undermined the bonds of nature and just society.

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<sup>108</sup> Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, I.49.

Edmund Bolton's *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraued* (1624) was the longest history of Nero in seventeenth-century England, and Bolton sought to provide a well-researched examination of the emperor by drawing together the "choyest pieces which lay dispersed throughout in best antiquities, among Historians, Philosophers, Orators, Poets, Coigns, Incriptions, and all sorts of such monuments."<sup>109</sup> Throughout the history, it is evident that Bolton principally drew his information from Tacitus, Dio Cassius, Suetonius, Josephus, and Seneca.<sup>110</sup> Bolton took his historical craft seriously. The first English translator of the Roman historian, Florus, and the author of the essay, *Hypercritica, or, A Rule of Judgement, for Writing or Reading our Histories* (written c. 1618-21), Bolton argued that history was "an act of high wisdom, and not of eloquence only," and hence the "Art, & Style" of histories without "truthe....come into the nature of crimes by imposture."<sup>111</sup> Due to these commitments, Bolton, with the support of Buckingham, sought to establish an "Academ Roial" or "College of Honor," which would hold "lectures & exercises of heroick matter & of the antiquities of Great Britain" outside of the university, for the gentry and nobility.<sup>112</sup> Bolton was well acquainted with the famed historians of his time, such as William Camden, John Selden, Sir Robert Cotton, Henry Howard, earl of Northampton, and the London historian John Speed, and in his early

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<sup>109</sup> Edmund Bolton, *NERO CÆSAR, or Monarchie depraued. An Historical worke. Dedicated, with leaue, to the DVKE of BVCKINGHAM, Lord Admirall, by the translator of Lvcivs Florvs* (London, 1627), sig. A3r-v.

<sup>110</sup> See Tacitus, *The Annals*, bks. XI-XVI; Suetonius, "Nero Claudius Cæsar," in *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*; Dio Cassius, *Epitome of Roman History*, bks. XLI-XLIII; Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, bk. II; Seneca, *Tragedy of Octavia*.

<sup>111</sup> *Hypercritica; or A Rvle of Ivdgment, For writing, or reading our Histories*, copied by Anthony Hall, Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Wood F.9, fo. 1.

<sup>112</sup> "Bolton to Buckingham," Harleian MS 6103 (1619), qtd in Ethel M. Portal, "The Academ Roial of King James I," *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1915-16): 189-208, 192. Bolton listed eighty-four elite individuals, including well-known poets, scholars, and many of his Catholic friends, to fill the tripartite structure of the academy. Although Buckingham greatly supported this cause, the society never came to fruition due to James's death in 1625. See *State Papers* 16/12 f. 152, Dec. 30 1625; Porter, "Academ Roial," 197.

career he published two poems in defense of Ben Jonson's classicism.<sup>113</sup> Bolton spent his career (sometimes successfully) seeking the patronage of great courtly men, including Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, Sir Julius Caesar, the earl of Northampton, and the duke of Buckingham.<sup>114</sup> While much of his work was an attempt to attract patrons, his writing still betrayed a thorough involvement in the historiographical debates of his period and a deep held interest in the way non-literary evidence, such as monuments and coins, could be useful sources for reconstructing "true" history. Methodologically, Bolton admirably committed himself to writing a critical and well-researched history in *Nero Caesar*, investigating Neronian legends and dismissing those stories which lacked proper evidence.<sup>115</sup> However, his historical method and commitment to writing factually did not prevent him from writing politically, especially as he wished to support strong monarchy and the pro-Spanish faction in the midst of the Bohemian Crisis.

Bolton was a practicing Catholic in a country hostile to religious difference generally and Roman Catholicism particularly. Raised in a Catholic household and taking the middle name of Mary, Bolton presumably masked his religious affiliation in order to attend university at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1589. After Cambridge, Bolton moved to the Inner Temple, and in about 1606 married the Catholic Margaret Porter, the sister of Endymion Porter, a courtier and future servant to the royal favorite, Buckingham, and to King Charles. It was through Cambridge, the Inner Temple, and his

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<sup>113</sup> Thomas Blackburn, "Edmund Bolton, Critic, Antiquary, and Historian: A Biographical and Critical Study with an Edition of *Hypercritica*" (Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University, 1963), 24.

<sup>114</sup> British Library, MS Add. 12497, fo. 235r – 236r; *State Papers* 16/12 f. 148; *State Papers* 16/524; British Library, MS Lansdowne Vol/90, fo.180; D. R. Woolf, "Bolton, Edmund Mary (b. 1574/5, d. in or after 1634)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004) online edn. Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2800>]

<sup>115</sup> For instance, Bolton relayed the "manie doubts" he had about the story of Agrippina successfully swimming to shore after Nero attempted to murder her by drowning, and he relied upon his common sense to fill the story's gaps. See Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved* (London: 1624), 36-37.

brother-in-law Porter that Bolton built an influential, if at times limited, network in Stuart England.<sup>116</sup> Bolton enjoyed the peaceful practice of his religion during James's reign, but after James's death, Charles pursued a more vigorous policy of religious persecution. In 1628, Bolton was deemed a recusant, and, unable to pay his fines, he was imprisoned at Fleet Prison and then Marshalsea, probably until his death sometime after 1634.<sup>117</sup>

Bolton's most significant patron was Buckingham.<sup>118</sup> He dedicated his translation of Florus's *Epitome* to Buckingham in 1618, and through this relationship, Bolton spent time with the King himself, "[giving] entertainment to his Majestie" on Buckingham's behalf in 1624.<sup>119</sup> Bolton was well suited for the company of Buckingham and James, for he was an avid defender of monarchy present and past. In the early 1620s he composed his *Nero Caesar* as a pro-monarchical history, and by a decade later had completed another piece entitled, *AVERRVNCI or The Skowrers [Scours]. Ponderous and new considerations vpon the first six books of the Annals of CORNELIVS TACITVS concerning TIBERIVS CAESAR* (c. 1629-34). Claiming to cleanse or "skowrer" the reputation of the Emperor Tiberius, often considered a tyrant in early modern England, Bolton intended to bring to light "those truths in poinct of iudgement vpon persons, facts, and circumstances, which [Tacitus] hath darkned, and wronged by his ouer earlie sowing seeds of terrible aversion against that Emperour."<sup>120</sup> Bolton sought to defend Tiberius by marshaling evidence from other historians and by analyzing critically Tacitus's

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<sup>116</sup> Woolf, "Bolton, Edmund."

<sup>117</sup> Woolf, *Idea of History*, 191.

<sup>118</sup> Bolton most likely made his connection to Buckingham through his brother-in-law, Endymion Porter, who may not have appreciated Bolton's constant badgering for patronage. This seems clear from a letter Bolton wrote to Porter in 1630, in which he noted that his brother-in-law had "[torn] into pieces the enclosed scroll" he had sent. National Archives *State Papers* 16/170 f. 23, July 2, 1630.

<sup>119</sup> Porter, "Academ Roial," 194.

<sup>120</sup> Qtd. Patricia J. Osmond, "Edmund Bolton's Vindication of Tiberius Caesar: A 'Lost' Manuscript Comes to Light," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11.3 (Winter 2005): 329-43, 331.

history. He argued that Tiberius's first sixteen years were marked by respect for the Senate and an able administration of the provinces, and, even after the Sejanus affair, Tiberius sought the restoration of law and order.<sup>121</sup> With Buckingham accused of being a Sejanus in the impeachment trial of 1626, it was no accident that Bolton chose this historical story. As Patricia Osmond summarized, "If Bolton could not refute the widespread notion of *similitudo temporum* and the habit of analogical thinking...., if he could not persuade his readers that Stuart England was very different from the Rome of Tiberius, he would have to convince them that Tiberius was not the deceitful and bloody tyrant depicted in Tacitus's *Annals*."<sup>122</sup>

*Nero Caesar*, which Bolton wrote at the end of James's reign, should be understood as a thoroughly royalist piece. Within the opening pages of the 1627 edition, Bolton included a series of epistles dedicated to James and Buckingham in order to situate his history as a work receiving the King's approbation and even his editorial comment. He claimed in the first two epistles that he had presented a manuscript copy of his history to the King in 1622 with the hope of receiving James's authorization. As Bolton explained, "I durst not in duty suffer a line to passe out of my hands, which had not first passed your Maiesties most authorizing doome."<sup>123</sup> Bolton then announced the success of his endeavor in the third epistle, declaring to Buckingham, "Royal approbation of the [history] (with the greatest improbation of Nero) hath made it so honorable capable of best acceptance, as it may well be called his Maiesties."<sup>124</sup> Bolton could not have leveled such a claim about the King's involvement had it been untrue, and,

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>123</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, sig. A3r.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., sig. A4r.

according to the timeline provided by the epistles, we can assume that James personally edited the history between the manuscript's presentation in 1622 and its publication in 1624, significantly during the height of the Spanish Match Crisis. Indeed, Bolton's brother-in-law, Porter, served as Buckingham's Master of the Horse and accompanied Buckingham and Prince Charles on their fateful mission to Madrid in 1623 to woo the Spanish Infanta into a match. Bolton himself supported Spanish peace, and like his later history of Tiberius, he conceived of *Nero Caesar* as providing timely historical information for contemporary politics, especially in support of monarchical power and legitimacy against the resistance arguments of anti-monarchical writers.<sup>125</sup>

Bolton further represented the content of his work as supporting the position of Stuart absolutism articulated by King James. In justifying his decision to present his history of Nero to the King, Bolton argued that the exemplum of Nero was particularly suited to teach a "pretious secret" about monarchy:

Nor was there cause to trouble your sacred Maiestie with any but only *Nero*. For he is the man whom your most Princely detestation of his manners noted out vnto mee, with the proper word of his merits, *Villaine*. Yet hee notwithstanding (for the great aduantage of truth) will teach this pretious secret; *No Prince is so bad as not to make monarckie seeme the best forme of gouernment*.<sup>126</sup>

Here, and throughout *Nero Caesar*, Bolton presented his argument in favor of monarchical government as resting upon a depiction of Nero as the most unfavorable, detestable tyrant, for Bolton desired to demonstrate how government even by the most despicable ruler was better than non-monarchical government. This argument would require Bolton to perform a precarious juggling act, condemning Nero on the one hand

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<sup>125</sup> Rei Kanemura, "Roman Imperialism and Ancient British Liberty in the 1620s," in *The idea of sovereignty in English historical writing, 1599-1627* (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. A3v.

while lauding monarchical government on the other, and distancing his own King James from the abominable character of Nero while at the same time upholding James's political views about monarchical absolutism. Bolton's history clearly reflected James's position in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, in which the King had argued that the "looseness" of rebellion would result in greater peril and disorder than tyranny, for "it is certaine that a king can neuer be so monstrously vicious, but hee will generally fauour iustice, and maintaine some order, except in the particulars, wherein his inordinate lustes and passions cary him away."<sup>127</sup> Very significantly, to enact such a statement in his historical writing Bolton described his methodology as consciously separating the private life of Nero from the public life of Nero's realm, and his purpose was to portray Rome as orderly even when ruled by a disorderly tyrant—a view which fundamentally rejected the Platonic (and, I would argue, republican) concept that the soul of the ruler mirrored that of the city. Unlike the Tacitean historians, or "popular Authors" as Bolton called them, who "so busied themselues to lay open the priuate liues of Princes in their vitious, or scandalous qualities (which often times doe not concerne the people in any point so much as not to haue them laid open)" with the result that "the nationall and publick Historie is almost thereby vtterly lost," Bolton claimed to fashion an "Imperiall Historie," gleaned from the "choycest pieces" of historical evidence and providing a "summe" of "facts."<sup>128</sup> Bolton believed his Imperial history would prove James's arguments concerning monarchy. He summarized as much in *Nero Caesar* in his conclusion about Nero's first five years: "That sacred monarckie could preserue the people of ROME from finall ruine, notvwithstanding all the prophanations, blasphemies, & scandals of tyranous excesses,

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<sup>127</sup>*Trew Law of Free Monarchies* in *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, 79.

<sup>128</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, sig. A3r. For Bolton's place in the anti-Tacitean reaction, see Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," 127-55.



vvwherevvith NERO defiled & defamed it, is the vvonder vvwhich no other forme of gouvernement could performe.”<sup>129</sup>

In theory and motivation, Bolton undoubtedly desired to provide his historical account as an Imperial history that bolstered James’s political activities and writings, avoided the dangers of Tacitean histories, and promoted obedience to monarchy, that “sacred” form of government, and he claimed he would do so even through the detestable Nero. In practice, however, Bolton’s *Nero Caesar* did not fully or easily follow this methodology, although his aim continued to be the defense of monarchy and unlimited obedience. Bolton did seek to separate Nero’s private scandals from the public governance of Rome, but especially in the seventy pages discussing Nero’s first five years, Bolton focused almost exclusively on the personal life of Nero rather than the Imperial or public history of Rome.

This section will argue that, although Bolton deemed Nero a detestable “Villaine” in his dedication, he sought to defend and ameliorate Nero’s vices by adopting a particular gendered representation of Nero, Julia Agrippina, and their relationship. Through this gendered portrayal of Nero’s early life, Bolton’s history unintentionally bolstered the charges of household tyranny provided by the *Tragedy of Nero* and the Neronian libel. Although seeking to limit Nero’s culpability for tyrannical injustice by denouncing female transgression and influence, especially through Nero’s mother and mistress, Bolton in fact highlighted the dangers of hereditary monarchy and a corrupted royal household.<sup>130</sup> As we shall see, Bolton further failed to distance his own king from a

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<sup>129</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 69.

<sup>130</sup> Several scholars have noted how Bolton sought to limit Nero’s culpability in later sections of *Nero Caesar*. See Woolf, *Idea of History*, 194; Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism,” 142; Glenn Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1996): 61-2.

comparison with Nero by emphasizing the degeneracy of Nero's family and ancestry in radical terms. Scholars writing about *Nero Caesar* have focused almost exclusively on Bolton's portrayal of the revolts against Nero, and their debates have centered on the nature of Bolton's absolutist doctrine, his view of unlimited obedience, and his historical method.<sup>131</sup> No scholarly account to date has studied Bolton's important representation of Nero's family, the murder of Julia Agrippina, or the explicitly gendered language he employed in his history.

Bolton provided a vitriolic and unforgiving portrait of Nero's mother, Julia Agrippina, in *Nero Caesar*, representing her transgressions as naturally reviling and politically rebellious. Reflecting the anxiety expressed by his contemporaries toward female power and treasonous speech, Bolton deemed Agrippina violent, ambitious, sexually lewd, murderous, and at fault for bringing Nero to the throne by usurping the rightful succession of Nero's stepbrother, Britannicus: "The principall agent in that iniurie of disenherison, was violent AGRIPPINA, her incentiue ambition, her instrument that lordly freedman PALLAS; the meanes, incest, adulterie, paricidial poison, and murther."<sup>132</sup> By charging Agrippina with disrupting the royal succession, Bolton immediately disqualified her, despite her royal pedigree, from rightfully assuming royal authority, and the particular crimes Bolton listed as Agrippina's undoubtedly labeled her as an extreme form of rebellious and dangerous woman. In early modern English society, incest and adultery offended sexual and patriarchal laws by undermining what was understood as the natural order of family and household, and the perceived motives for

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<sup>131</sup> See Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy*, 61-62; Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism"; Woolf, *Idea of History*, 190-99.

<sup>132</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 2.

adulterous escapades were lasciviousness as well as rebellion.<sup>133</sup> Widows were deemed to be lustier and more unruly than maidens or married women, which made them targets for accusations of “witchcraft.”<sup>134</sup> Bolton explicitly charged Agrippina, a dangerous widow, as committing sexual crimes with a rebellious motivation, arguing that she “meerely for prowd ends did most alluringly offer her body to the lustfull embraces of him [Nero] who scarcely twenty yeares before was bred therein.”<sup>135</sup> Bolton further described Agrippina’s means of murder as poison, a form of “treason” associated with the “utter subversion and dissolution of human society,” and especially associated with rebellious women whose cowardice and weakness required them to murder in secret.<sup>136</sup> Thus, on Bolton’s account, Agrippina’s unruliness and “contemn[ation of] all the lawes of god, & man” was a result of her “desire” for “Domination,”<sup>137</sup> and, as such a woman, Agrippina stood as a threat to the royal household and the royal governance of Rome.

Bolton further characterized Agrippina as a bad mother, deeming her more like an “infernal furie than a matron, who with such waste of all conscience, and of all common honestie, affected supreme command.”<sup>138</sup> Early in his history, Bolton tied Nero’s tyranny to his very birth from the womb of Agrippina. He explained that Nero “came into the world an agrippa, or borne with his feete forward...and turnd the world vpside downe before he went out of it.” Bolton’s interpretation of this event claimed its authority from Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*: “But that præposterous natiuitie foreboded nothing, in

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<sup>133</sup> Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, 104.

<sup>134</sup> Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 160-78.

<sup>135</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 23.

<sup>136</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 144-45.

<sup>137</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 5.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Plinies conceipt (who notes that all agrippæ were vnfortunate) but the parties disaster.”<sup>139</sup> Pliny, when detailing the extent to which agrippæ were unfortunate, had described Nero as “pernicious to the whole earth” and the “very enemy to all mankind.” Pliny followed his discussion of agrippæ by a brief chapter on “Births cut out of the wombe,” in which he claimed that “more fortunate are they a great deale whose birth costeth their mothers life, parting from them by means of incision,” including Scipio Africanus, Julius Caesar, and Manlius.<sup>140</sup> Nero, through his inverted birth from the living (and non-sacrificial) body of Agrippina, marked his and his family’s disastrous misfortune and the end of the Julio-Claudian ancestral line, while Caesar’s caesarian birth had established this line of emperors.

In Bolton’s telling, this “omen” of disaster came true principally through the activity of Agrippina. As he explained, the Chaldeans prophesied that the newly born Nero would seal the eventual death of Agrippina: “When the Chaldæans pronounced, according to their art, that hee should reigne, but murder his mother; shee submitted herselfe to that destinie, and in the furie of her pride fatallie said aloud, and let him kill me so as that proues true.”<sup>141</sup> Deeming Agrippina’s “Acceptance” of this prophecy as “dangerous,” Bolton characterized Agrippina’s consent to death not as sacrificial, selfless, and maternal, but as frenzied and proud. As we will see later on, in the moment of assassination Bolton portrayed Agrippina as consenting to death by offering her womb to be stabbed, thus bringing the Chaldean prophecy to brutal fulfillment.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 2-3. Bolton seems to be almost punning the word “præposterous,” which could mean “inverted in position or order” or “monstrous; foolish, perverse.” See OED, “preposterous, adj.” Pliny the Elder, *The historie of the vworld Commonly called, the naturall historie of C. Plinius Secundus. Translated into English by Philemon Holland Doctor of Physicke. The first tome* (London: 1601), VII.8, “Of Agrippæ.”

<sup>140</sup> *Historie of the vworld*, VII.9, “Births cut out of the wombe.”

<sup>141</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 3.

Bolton's emphasis on Agrippina as the root cause of Nero's tyranny and crime of matricide is even evinced in Bolton's inclusion of a chapter on "Nero's behaviour, and words in priuate, vpon the view of Agrippina's corse." This chapter detailed how Nero fawned with morbid fascination over his mother's corpse, "praising this part, and dispraying that," viewing her body and handling her limbs and wounds. "There goes a rumour also," Bolton related, "that he saw her body opened, to behold the place of his conception," and after examining her, "impenitently said, that *Hee did not suppose hee had had so faire a mother.*"<sup>142</sup> Nero's infatuation with Agrippina disclosed not only an incestuous sexual desire for her, but a desire to understand his own formation by viewing "the place of his conception," where Agrippina had imprinted her nature upon him.<sup>143</sup> Bolton remarked in *Nero Caesar* that Agrippina indeed was "the roote of such an offspring" as Nero, due to "her nature being bloody, fierie, and busie."<sup>144</sup> Within her womb lay the original source of Nero's tyranny.<sup>145</sup>

Bolton further emphasized Nero's viciousness as bred and birthed through his mother by neglecting to include the details of Nero's paternal inheritance. *Nero Caesar* noted only briefly a second birthing prophecy recorded by Cassius Dio or Suetonius, in which Nero's father Domitius Ænobarbus "vnpremeditatedly answerd his congratulating friends, that nothing could possiblie come of Agrippina, and him, but cursed stuffe,

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 43-44. Bolton at first sounds skeptical that Nero beheld Agrippina's womb, claiming that "there is no authenticke testimony that I can find; nor other ground of coniecture (if that may be a ground) then a meere supposition, that shee was embowell'd before her burning." However, as the chapter continues, he concedes that "authors do not probably wrong him in these most infamous reports concerning his behaviour ouer his murderd mother," and argues that the character of Nero as a murderer was such that it should not be doubted. See *Nero Caesar*, 43-46.

<sup>143</sup> See above, p. 122-23, for a discussion of this.

<sup>144</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 55.

<sup>145</sup> For a fascinating discussion of Nero's dissection of Agrippina, see Park, *Secrets of Women*, 150-58, 234-49.

ordained to vndo the world, or words to such effect.”<sup>146</sup> Suetonius’s history, however, had emphasized that Nero’s great-great-great-grandfather, and every successive male householder, exhibited vicious inclinations, including the desire for fame and propensity to anger, cowardice, lust, hypocrisy, arrogance, extravagance, cruelty, violence, dishonesty, treason, adultery and incest.<sup>147</sup> For Suetonius, it was relevant “to say something about a number of members of the family, since this will suggest that Nero’s vices were inherited from each of them, while at the same time degenerating from their virtues.”<sup>148</sup> *Nero Caesar* does not discuss this paternal inheritance and also neglects discussing Nero’s adoptive father, the Emperor Claudius, an uxorious cuckold, according to Tacitus, who was enslaved by his passion for women and pushed into the “most heinous crimes” of tyranny by their wives.<sup>149</sup> As Bolton relied extensively upon Tacitus and Suetonius in writing *Nero Caesar*, these omissions appear intentional and suggest that Bolton sought to exonerate the male, patriarchal line of monarchical succession from the taint of tyrannical corruption. For Bolton, it seems to have been the imperial mother, the unstable, rebellious woman of the household, who noxiously contaminated the imperial seed.

In Bolton’s account, Agrippina not only bred Nero’s disaster through her womb, but she also failed in nurturing him as a child. She “auerted his affections from the studie of all philosophie” and instead allowed him to pursue those vain excitements he naturally desired, including “that which might enable him to winn crownes of leaues, or garlands,

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<sup>146</sup> Cassius Dio, *Epitome*, LXI.2; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 216. Bolton, *Nero Caesar* 3.

<sup>147</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 213-15.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>149</sup> *Complete Works of Tacitus*, 227, 242-49.

for singing, fiddling, piping, acting on stages, and the like ignobler trials.”<sup>150</sup> Agrippina, herself a “gracelesse woman,” lacked a knowledge of philosophy, Bolton argued, and hence she failed to understand “how much more glorious it is, to affect honest things rather than great, or to compass great things honestly.”<sup>151</sup> According to Bolton, Seneca was also “part in the blame” for Nero’s deficient education, and between Agrippina and Seneca’s failings, Nero was left with a “nature most vnboundedly affecting immortality of fame.”<sup>152</sup>

Bolton thus crafted a vivid portrait of Agrippina as an aggressive, rebellious woman and unfit mother, driven to seductive and treasonous behavior for the sake of domination and corrupting Nero through her maternal body and activity; his representation of Nero, however, drew a stark contrast. According to Bolton, Agrippina deliberately and cruelly plotted for her own domination and power, while Nero lived an extended adolescence, dallying in vain and vulgar pursuits to please his curiosity and his growing appetite for popularity and bodily pleasure. Bolton characterized some of Nero’s pursuits, such as fiddling and seeking fame, as “not dishonest” although “vtterly vnseemely in a prince”; he argued, though, that Nero also took pleasure in pursuits “not honest in any man,” including “wilde maskings, and riotous wanton women.”<sup>153</sup> Although already a married man and a prince, Nero chased women as if he were single and lowborn, Bolton explained: “No pleasures are more agreeable to health in youth, and heighth in fortune, then femall society, though many bee more warrantable: but that fond

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<sup>150</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 4.

<sup>151</sup> Bolton argued that Seneca “kept [Nero] from solid eloquence proper to the antient orators, to hold him the longer in admiration of himselfe, Who taught him how to answear readely, who much more profitably might haue taught him how to thinck deeply,” Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 4-5.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

prince who sayls by such vncertaine starres, hazards his estate, and doth more then hazard his glory.”<sup>154</sup> Bolton here, and throughout his history, thereby deemed Nero a man pursuing adolescent pleasures.

Writers in seventeenth-century England commonly drew distinctions between men in their “youth” and in their “manhood,” with the age of youth understood as a period of instability and extremes, marked by spiritedness and a seemingly unlimited capacity for vice. *The Office of Christian Parents* (1616), for example, argued that young men between the ages of 14 and 28 would be “easily drawne to libertie, pleasure, and licentiousnes...which if they take deepe rooting in this age, they will hardly or never be removed...and the poore young man laid open to the snares of the devill, to be holden at his pleasure with the tight chaine of his raging concupiscence.”<sup>155</sup> For Bolton, Nero seemed to be such a youth who lacked the constant vigilance of parental supervision necessary to tame his “inordinate affections,” and thus he became rooted in lascivious behavior. Bolton explained that even the “honest and safe delight of marriage,” which should have ushered Nero into his years of civilized manhood, became corrupted as Nero pursued mistresses such as the bondwoman, Acte, and the beautiful noblewoman, Poppaea.<sup>156</sup> Bolton depicted Nero as growing in sexual depravity, being at one time “on the point of yeilding to his mothers prophane allurements, had not SENECA found meanes to terrifie him from it,” and describing a rumor that Nero “saw [his mother’s] body opened, to behold the place of his conception” after murdering her,<sup>157</sup> but Bolton more often defended Nero’s sexual depravity as that of the extremes of an unformed

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>155</sup> Qtd in Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 23-24.

<sup>156</sup> Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 74; Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 21.

<sup>157</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 43-44.



young man. Departing from the libels which accused James of taking a Ganymede, Bolton denied Suetonius and Tacitus's claims that Nero took a male concubine, Sporus, or "suffered by his titularie husband," Pythagoras,<sup>158</sup> instead siding with Josephus who labeled these stories "impudent vntruthes or (to vse his own rough roundnesse) lyes."<sup>159</sup> Nero, then, on Bolton's account, fit the trope of an adolescent man conquered by unbridled passions.

The first picture Bolton provided of Agrippina and Nero, then, was one that stressed Agrippina as a bad mother and unruly woman, driven by rebelliousness and lust for domination, while Nero was the youth clearly born of Agrippina's vices and engaged in improper dalliances and lusting for women. In his portrayal of Nero as an unbridled youth, Bolton could shift the blame for Nero's vice to his supervisors, especially his mother but also his counselors. Bolton likewise emphasized that Nero was *privately* vicious, lustful of women not of power, and through this claim sought to deny that Nero held any desire to usurp the laws or constitution of Rome. This argument allowed Bolton to uphold James's view that the commonwealth, even when ruled by the worst tyrant, would remain generally ordered and just.

Bolton carefully employed these images of adolescence to exonerate Nero of even his most heinous crimes, including the parricidal murders of his stepbrother, mother, and wife. In the tenth chapter of *Nero Caesar*, "The Poisning of Britannicus," Bolton strategically blamed Agrippina as the "impulse" behind Nero's parricide, even though it

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<sup>158</sup> Suetonius calls him Doryphorus.

<sup>159</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 69. Bolton does later concede that Nero, while grieving Poppaea's death, "sought to conuert pretie SPORVS, a delicate youth, into a girle, because he nearly resembled [Poppaea]," but even in this passage he does not claim Nero took Sporus sexually. See *Ibid.*, 250.

was undoubtedly Nero who enacted the poisoning.<sup>160</sup> Britannicus was the first son of Emperor Claudius and the rightful heir to the Roman throne, and although the Senate, through the persuasion of Seneca, had supported Nero over his older stepbrother, the accession remained insecure as long as Britannicus lived. Nero's murder of Britannicus could easily have been deemed an act motivated by ambition and the desire to destroy a rival, as Dio described it; Suetonius had argued that Nero poisoned Britannicus because he feared "that [Britannicus] might sometime win a higher place than himself in the people's regard because of the memory of his father."<sup>161</sup> Bolton, however, stressed that Nero murdered Britannicus because Agrippina, "being crost by SENECA, and BVRRHVVS, she durst threaten to set vp [Britannicus] as the righter heir, and thereby dubbed him the obiect of feare, and danger."<sup>162</sup> In this rendering, Nero did not murder his brother as part of a careful plot to ensure domination; rather, he committed crimes such as poisoning Britannicus because he was directly threatened by his mother. To further emphasize that Nero's murder lacked a motivation for power, Bolton described how the poisoning delighted Nero's curiosity, as he "curiously beheld the poison confected, & boild to a speeding height."<sup>163</sup> Through this portrayal, Bolton could continue to identify Agrippina as the "principall agent of that iniurie of disenherison" and

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<sup>160</sup> In this chapter, Bolton is almost reluctant to admit that Nero committed the crime: "Within the first tweluemoneth of his gouernment he spotted, and defloured the maiden candor of his fortunes by poisoning BRITANNICVS....This fact, considered in it selfe, though it directly violated the maine foundations of the world laid deepe by god in naturall pietie, yet some other appellation would have bene inuened for auoiding the proper of paricide (as I haue said before) had not the carriage of his part in it, and the horroure of the circumstances made it wholly his own." *Nero Caesar*, 12-13. However, in chapter VIII, he uses the example of Nero poisoning Britannicus to try to persuade his audience that Nero was capable of treating his mother so unjustly. Even in this chapter, though, the poisoning is still not described as a crime motivated by politics or ambition. See *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>161</sup> See Dio Cassius, *Epitome of Roman History*, Bk. LXI; Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars*, 231.

<sup>162</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 13.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

guilty of the crime of poison, as he had argued in the first chapter, while de-emphasizing Nero's role in the usurpation.

Bolton likewise depicted Nero's matricide as not principally motivated by designs for power:

The chief impulsives wherefore which moued the sonne to hate and persecute to death the author of his life, and empire (concupinarie loue growne farre more potent in him than filiall pietie) were securely to bring about his marriage with POPPÆA SABINA....and then (as the lesser care) to assure to himselfe the ROMAN scepter, which he feared left AGRIPPINA in her furie and offense would seeke to wrest away. A Lady, not vnlikely to effect it, considering her spirit, friends, and blood.<sup>164</sup>

As this passage suggests, Poppaea received harsh treatment in Bolton's history as well, even bearing part of the blame for Nero's matricide. Bolton colorfully depicted Nero's mistress and later wife as "noble by birth, but by beauty more," whose incomparable beauty and "art" created a snare to "bewitch" Nero.<sup>165</sup> Beholden to vain pursuits, Poppaea engaged in "polishing mysteries," according to Bolton, bathing herself in the milk of "five hundred asses" for the care of her skin. Bolton believed the mistress proved "what a painted dunghill dishonest beauty is," as she seduced Nero through "amorous enchantments," driving "all regard to naturall duties quite away."<sup>166</sup> Such a depiction of a vain, "painted" woman as a deceitful dissimulator fit well into the series of treatises produced during the Overbury Murder Scandal (1615-1616).<sup>167</sup> As Thomas Tuke declared in his treatise, *A discourse against painting and tincturing of women Wherein the abominable sinnes of murther and poysoning, pride and ambition, adultery and witchcraft are set forth and discovered* (1616), "[T]he condition of the mind is

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 247, 25.

<sup>167</sup> Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal*, 176.

discerned in the state and behavior of the body. Without doubt then a deceitfull and effeminate face, is the ensigne of a deceitfull and effeminate heart.”<sup>168</sup> That Nero could be prone to the enchantments of Poppaea is unsurprising in Bolton’s account, for Bolton deemed Nero so taken by lust and adolescent cowardice that when Poppaea “plide him vpon the weake side with terrifying suggestions,” he could not help but comply.<sup>169</sup> Bolton, then, held Poppaea partially responsible for Nero’s matricide, and continued his hostile portrayal of women connected to royal power.

As Agrippina threatened Nero’s authority, opposed his marriage to Poppaea, and set a vicious example for Nero in her mothering and her failure to educate and nurture him in virtue, Bolton even depicted Agrippina’s murder as deserved and as necessary for Nero to free himself from unwarranted domination. As Bolton argued, Agrippina “was a mother...whom it was no shame for a sonne to kill, that sonne being NERO; and she her selfe affirmed at her death no lesse.”<sup>170</sup> “An infernall furie,” one with “such waste of all conscience, and of all common honestie,” who “affected supreme command,” Agrippina’s behavior required just retribution, Bolton argued, and thus he maintained that “If one wickedness therefore might authorise another, none could condemne [Nero] as impious, for killing that woman.”<sup>171</sup> Bolton further argued that Agrippina’s murder served as an “example of celestially iustice, which euened all scores with wickednesse, and left no tally vnstrucken.”<sup>172</sup> James had contended in his *Trew Law of Free Monarchies* that a wicked king “is sent by God for a curse to his people, and a plague for

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<sup>168</sup> Here Tuke claims to be quoting Saint Ambrose. Thomas Tuke, *A Discourse against painting and tincturing of women* (London: 1616), 17

<sup>169</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 25.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

their sins,” and that God would work justice through the acts even of “the king of *Babel*” or “Nero” until God saw fit to punish the tyrant himself.<sup>173</sup> Following this reasoning, Bolton labeled Nero’s parricidal murders as serving God’s justice. He made this claim explicitly not only about Agrippina’s death but also the later murder of the then pregnant and sickly Poppaea, who having incensed Nero by “pertly prating,” “reproaching” and “taunting” him for being away too long, received from him “a kicke of his heele on her belly,” from which “abortion followed, and shee her selfe died of the cruell blow.”<sup>174</sup> Although a horrific scene, Bolton depicted it as an act of divine justice previously forewarned: “The vengeance therefore forewarned to her, and euer to be expected of her likes, was thus paid throughly home. My heart in the meane time is at good peace within it selfe to behold the honour of heauenly iustice thus fully clear’d and settled.”<sup>175</sup>

Bolton believed that Agrippina’s “vnwomanly vices merited shee should perish” in a “tormented” and “exemplary” fashion,<sup>176</sup> and he portrayed her death accordingly. As a woman charged with enacting sexually depraved and incestuous acts to pursue an unnatural ambition for domination, and a woman who birthed, formed and nurtured the unfortunate Nero, Agrippina’s murder, in Bolton’s account, was represented as a highly sexualized act in which the previously dominating Agrippina herself became sexually and violently defeated. Nero, enraged by a series of failed attempts to murder Agrippina, sent to his mother’s palace three assassins, Anicetus, Herculeus, and Oloaritus. As Bolton described it, “[f]inding the gates of the palace shut,” Anicetus and his men broke down the doors and forcibly entered, refusing to stop until “rush[ing] vp to the very doores of

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<sup>173</sup> *Trew Law of Free Monarchies in King James VI and I: Political Writings*, 79 and 83.

<sup>174</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 248.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. This statement comes in the context of Bolton explaining why Agrippina did not die from the earlier assassination attempt of the trick galley.

[Agrippina's] private lodgings, which the ROMANS (for the maiestie of such a person) reputed sacred, and inuiolable."<sup>177</sup> Having penetrated her geographical space, the assassins covertly entered Agrippina's dim room, lit by only one small candle, and proceeded to surround her in a "gastly dumbe show" of silence.<sup>178</sup> Bolton claimed they next "cast themselues about her" as she lay on her bed, and, as he conceived it, Hercules with a short club marshaled himself at the bed's head, and the other two at the sides. As Oloaritus unsheathed his sword, Agrippina "laide her bare belly open, and challenged him to strike that, as deseruing it, for hauing brought forth monster Nero."<sup>179</sup> The men hesitated, "troubled with the horror of such a voyce, and action," Bolton claimed, but when Agrippina began to raise herself up, Hercules clubbed her over the head, and the others stabbed her many times, her "deaths wound" being "in her brest."<sup>180</sup>

Bolton compiled this account of Agrippina's murder principally from Tacitus, as well as Seneca, Dio, and Suetonius, but he added several details in order to represent the scene as sexual violence, such as the exact positions of the murderers around Agrippina's bed. He also deliberately chose which classical sources to trust and which to overlook. While every author had declared that Agrippina commanded her murderers to strike her womb, only Seneca in his *Tragedy of Octavia* depicted the mortal wound as being in her breast, and Bolton significantly departed from Tacitus and his other favored sources in order to include this important detail.<sup>181</sup> The breast had two principal meanings in early modern England, both of which aptly described what Bolton considered to be Agrippina's primary faults and those deserving of retributive justice. On the one hand,

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> For a discussion of Julia Agrippina's command to strike her womb, see chapter 3 below, 171-72.

the breast, as the organ of feeding and nurturing babies and young children, referred particularly to motherhood. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century medical treatises understood the womb as intimately connected with other major organs in the body, including the breasts; they identified breast milk as whitened blood, the same blood released in menstruation and used to feed the fetus in the womb after it converted into female seed.<sup>182</sup> Good mothers fed and nurtured their children through their breasts, and thus were likened to pelicans that sacrificially pecked the blood from their own breasts to feed their young ones.<sup>183</sup> In *Nero Caesar*, however, Bolton identified Agrippina as a bad mother who formed and shaped Nero's tyrannical passions inside and outside of the womb.

The second meaning of the breast, although more general, still provided a particular indictment against Agrippina. As related by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the breast figuratively meant the "seat of the affections and emotions; the repository of consciousness, designs, and secrets; the heart; hence, the affections, private thoughts and feelings" of an individual. As Robert Burton, like so many of his contemporaries, claimed, the heart was "the seat and fountaine of life, of heat, of spirits, of pulse and respiration, the Sunne of our Body, the King and sole commander of it: The seat and Organe of all passions and affections."<sup>184</sup> Agrippina's heart was the physical location of her lust, incest, deceit, and inordinate hunger for power. These passions, in Bolton's

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<sup>182</sup> Marylynn Salmon, "The Cultural Significance of Breastfeeding and Infant Care in Early Modern England and America," *Journal of Social History* 28.2 (Winter, 1994): 247-69, 251; Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 22.

<sup>183</sup> Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 83-84.

<sup>184</sup> Quid in Michael Carl Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 24.

account, corrupted Agrippina as a woman and as a mother, and hence her breast became the symbol of her maternal and moral failure.

Bolton depicted Agrippina as disciplined through male, penetrative violence, graphically describing her murder through the language of rape: the assassins violate her “private lodgings,” surround her as she lay in a vulnerable, supine position upon her bed, and then penetrate her with their knives multiple times. Agrippina, as she already had in the Chaldean prophecy, submits to the sexual violence by laying bare her belly and calling for its penetration—an activity fitting with her sexual character as described by Bolton. Although Agrippina’s agency in this command is importantly denied, making the murder discipline for what were considered her devious desires, Agrippina is not a victim of this rape/murder. In Bolton’s account, she receives a deserved and fitting punishment.

In *Nero Caesar*, Agrippina’s death does not transform Nero’s vicious tyranny. Bolton explained that Nero still was he “in whom alone all the corruptions which had been engendred in ROME, from the birth of ROME till his owne dayes, seem’d drawne together into one apostem, or bile.”<sup>185</sup> However, through his matricide, Nero gained control of his household and country, for he successfully “got loose from all the modest ties of his breeding” and “turn’d absolute” as a ruler.<sup>186</sup> Nero continued to pursue his private lusts throughout the course of his reign, but Bolton argued that this had little public effect, nor did what Nero commit “vniust[ly] for his own satisfaction...vpon what grounds soeuer” much worry the senate and the people “so long as it went well with themselves.”<sup>187</sup> Indeed, Bolton argued that even with Nero as absolute ruler, the public “ioyns, and compactures of the empires fabricke” remained “so supple, and solid,” that

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<sup>185</sup> Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 70.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.



Rome itself could be preserved.<sup>188</sup> It seems Bolton believed that male tyranny could be contained within the privacy of the palace, while female tyranny undermined the very fabric of monarchy and society. Female tyranny required punishment and censure, whereas male tyranny could only be punished by God, and thereby required unlimited obedience: “And though wicked deeds should not bee done at all, yet when they were don by him whom they could not punnish, euen good men were glad to make the best of that which neither could be recalled nor holpen. A patriots, and a wisemans office.”<sup>189</sup>

In these ways, Bolton’s *Nero Caesar* offered a complex portrayal of monarchical tyranny intended to justify the absolutist doctrines of King James. His account proposed a strict, gendered ordering of society, which promoted the exemplary punishment of female transgressors while exonerating male aggression. By characterizing Nero’s failures through the trope of male adolescence, Bolton even sought to domesticate Nero’s most monstrous crimes. However, the historical account of *Nero Caesar* unintentionally undermined the very position Bolton sought to defend. By depicting the transgressions of Nero’s family in sordid detail, Bolton emphasized the potential heinousness of hereditary monarchy. By portraying tyranny as bred within the female womb, nurtured within the royal household, and encouraged through the enchantments of seducing women, Bolton invited his readers to reflect upon the breeding of their own king through the womb of Mary Stuart; his later edition of *Nero Caesar* in 1627 would have further invited reflection on the influence of the new Catholic Queen, Henrietta Maria, on King Charles. Whereas Bolton sought to separate private vice from public consequences, the *Tragedy of Nero* and the Nero libel demonstrate how the burgeoning vocabulary of tyranny and

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 57.

republican virtue in these years drew an explicit connection between the tyrant's corrupted soul and "private crimes" and the wider ruination of family, religion, liberty, and commonwealth. This vocabulary would continue to develop through Caroline appropriations of Nero's history, becoming a powerful tool of criticism before the English civil wars.

## Chapter 3

### The Neronian Charles

“Yf hee had possitively named his Maiestie in theis places, his meanyng would have been to playnne, therefore he names other princes, and leaves the application to the reader.”

- *Proceedings in the Star Chamber against William Prynne*, February 1634<sup>1</sup>

On October 23, 1634, John Bastwick, a member of the College of Physicians, stood before the ecclesiastical Court of High Commission. A traditional puritan, Bastwick was charged with an extensive list of transgressions, including his authorship and distribution of *Elenchus Religionis Papisticae (A Refutation of the Religion of the Papists (1624))*,<sup>2</sup> which argued chiefly against the Roman Catholic religion and the supremacy of the Pope, and further contended that Anglican bishops received their authority from governmental statute, rather than *jure divino*. The Court also charged that Bastwick denied the lawfulness of bowing at the name of Jesus and of kneeling when receiving the elements of communion, and that he had said he desired to kiss the wounds of Alexander Leighton, whose ear and nose had been mutilated and his face branded for writing the libel, *An Appeale to the Parliament, or, Sions Plea Against the Prelacy (1628)*.<sup>3</sup> Bastwick did not

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Rawson Gardiner, ed. *Documents relating to the proceedings against William Prynne, in 1634 and 1637* (London: Camden Society, 1877), 10.

<sup>2</sup> An expanded volume was issued in 1627 and another edition had appeared in 1634.

<sup>3</sup> The full list of charges are as follows: “Defendant was charged with affirming that a double-beneficed man could not be an honest man; also that he had termed the Bishops of the Church of England ‘Grolls,’ and that this word ‘Groll’ he commonly used to slight men withal; also that he had spoken against kneeling at the receiving of the holy communion, affirming that that point ought not to be pressed upon the people; also that lie had spoken against bowing at the name of Jesus; and had affirmed that the reverend bishops lived like beasts and drones, and that there was more profaneness in their houses than in any temporal lord’s; also that since the censure of Dr. Leighton for his book named Zion’s Plea, defendant has maintained

hide his contempt for the court. On October 9, he had refused to take the oath to answer the charges against him, and after paying a bond of £300, was committed to the Gatehouse. As he stood before the Court again two weeks later, his answers “were adjudged scandalous, and he was admonished to answer *plenè, planè, et direcè*, upon pain of 100£ fine, with intimation that if he stand out, the court will impose greater fines.” After refusing to enter bond for his reappearance, Bastwick balked at the Court by declaring that “he stood before them as Paul stood before Nero.”<sup>4</sup> On February 12, 1635, he received a severe sentence: public acknowledgement of his “erroneous opinions,” the burning of his books, excommunication, the suspension of his medical license, a fine of £1000, and lastly, because “neglecting his calling, he used to employ much of his time in speaking and writing scandalous matter against church and state,” he would be held in Gatehouse Prison, Westminster, until he gave bond.<sup>5</sup> In 1637, Bastwick suffered the chopping of his ears, perpetual imprisonment and banishment.

Bastwick invoked the exemplum of Nero to fashion himself publicly as a martyr against tyranny and irreligion, one suffering persecution for spreading the Gospel just as the Apostle Paul had. His speech echoed others in the period, who criticized the increasing isolation and persecution of the godly under Archbishop Laud’s reforms and Star Chamber prosecutions in the 1630s. As the previous chapter demonstrated, late in

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the contents of that book and the honesty of the man, and lamented his punishment, wishing he had been there to have kissed his wounds; also that he had maintained that the institution of bishops was not *de jure*, and that there is no difference between a bishop and a presbyter or ordinary minister, and that bishops are no lords; also that there ought to be a parity and no superiority in the church; and that every minister was a bishop or as good as a bishop in his own cure, and so ought to be; justification of which opinions Dr. Bastwick had written two books, one entitled “*Elenchus Papisticae Religionis*,” and the other to that annexed, entitled “*Flagellum Pontificis et Episcoporum Latialium*.” *Calendar of State Papers*, Feb 12, vol. ccxi, fo. 178. For his own account, see John Bastwick, M. D. *Praxeis ton episkopon sive apologeticus ad praesules Anglicanos criminum ecclesiasticorum in curia celsae commissionis. Accedunt ad calcem, ejusdem autoris duae epistolae, una de papisticae religionis futilitate, altera de Romanae Ecclesiae falsitate*. (Leiden? 1636), 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> *State Papers* 16/261 f.76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16/261 f.159.

James's reign Nero's exemplum had become a battleground for debates concerning unlimited obedience and the King's prerogatives. Anonymous writers had employed stories of Nero to craft a significant gendered language of criticism, portraying the King as enslaved to perverse passions, popish, and effeminate, and his household and court as debauched and thoroughly corrupt. Even royalist treatments of Nero, such as Edmund Bolton's *Nero Caesar*, which characterized the emperor's tyranny as resulting from the wicked influence of royal mother and mistress, ultimately failed to exonerate Nero, and by extension, James. These Neronian images succeeded James to his son Charles, and by the 1630s had developed in their political as well as religious importance, with the Neronian persecution of Christians referenced as frequently as Nero's disordered household and matricide. For these writers, the stories of Nero's crimes demonstrated the intimate relationship between a monarch's character and fulfillment of gendered roles, and the justice (or injustice) of his political deeds toward family, commonwealth, and religion.

In early modern England, the name of Nero was synonymous with tyranny, and his exemplum was the most frequently referenced of any tyrant's in history.<sup>6</sup> Under the reign of Charles, however, Nero's exemplum gained further cultural significance due to the King's personal identification with the historical Roman emperors and his public representation as such. Although Charles, in comparison with his father, was reluctant to justify and represent his authority through speeches and the written word, the King was a significant patron of the visual and dramatic arts, and as Kevin Sharpe described, "his

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<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 88.

aesthetic interests were always allied to his dynastic ambitions and beliefs.”<sup>7</sup> As early as 1627, Charles purchased the Gonzaga art collection from Mantua, including Titian’s *Twelve Caesars*, as well as Andrea Mantegna’s nine-painting series, *Triumphs of Caesar*, which depicted Julius Caesar in triumphal procession from the Gallic Wars. Charles seems to have resonated with these collections, as in late 1631 when Dorchester was said to have found the King calmly arranging his busts of the Roman emperors in chronological order while his court and council were abuzz with news of the German crisis.<sup>8</sup>

Charles not only admired the Roman emperors; he publicly fashioned himself as *imperator* through his portraiture. Anthony Van Dyck’s half-length portrait of the King in armor holding a baton modeled Titian’s portrait of the Emperor Otho from the *Twelve Caesars* royal collection, while the famous *Charles I on Horseback* (c. 1635-6) implicitly compared the King to Marcus Aurelius.<sup>9</sup> Placed at the end of the St James gallery, alongside Titian’s *Twelve Caesars* and Giulio Roman’s equestrian portraits of the emperors, *Charles I on Horseback* positioned the King as the successor of Roman imperial victory and the culmination of ancient majesty. Earlier in 1633, Van Dyck had painted *Charles with Monsieur de St Antoine*, a portrait which represented the King as gracefully guiding a white horse through a triumphal Roman arch beside a shield decorated with the arms of his empire. Simultaneously, Charles represented himself as Roman emperor in his royal masques. In *Albion’s Triumph* (performed 1631), he played

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<sup>7</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2010), 190; See also Richard Ollard, *The Image of the King: Charles I and Charles II* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 37-39.

<sup>8</sup> L. J. Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule* (NY and Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 178; *State Papers* 81/37 fos. 167r-168r.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Wood, “Van Dyck’s ‘Cabinet de Titien’: The Contents and Dispersal of His Collection,” *The Burlington Magazine* 132.1052 (Oct. 1990): 680-95, esp. 680; Roy Strong, *Van Dyck, Charles I on Horseback* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 45-57; Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, 198-203.

the part of Romano-British Emperor Albanactus and donned a costume, designed by Inigo Jones, reminiscent of the virtuous Trajan and godly Constantine.<sup>10</sup> Riding in a chariot from his “sumptuous Pallace” through a “*Romane Atrium*, with high Collombs of white Marble,” Charles’s triumph in the masque was declared “Mighty, as the Man deisgn’d / To weare those Bayes; Heroicke, as his mind; / Iust, as his actions; Glorious, as his Reigne.”<sup>11</sup> Although ruling a country at peace, Charles “dayly Conquers a world of Vices,” the masque proclaimed: “Ambition is a Lyon; Cruelty, a Beare; Avarice, a Wolfe. Yet He subdues them all. To be short, no Vyce is so small, to scape him: Nor so great, but he overcomes it: And in that fashion he Triumphes overall the Kings, and Queenes that went before him.”<sup>12</sup>

The comparison of Charles with Nero directly challenged this royal image. Rather than defeating the vices, Emperor Nero infamously wallowed in them; far from heroic or godly, Nero exuded cowardice, savagery, and impiety. Charles’s persistent public image as *imperator* has been established by a number of valuable studies,<sup>13</sup> but the important challenge to this royal portrayal provided by Nero’s exemplum has been largely overlooked. This chapter will explore several representations of Nero from Charles’s reign, highlighting how writers imagined tyranny as an insatiable and obsessive passion which disordered the soul of the ruler, and in consequence, severely altered the ruler’s gender, his family, his practice of the “true” religion, and the spiritual and political

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<sup>10</sup> John Peacock, “The image of Charles I as a Roman emperor,” in *The 1630s: Interdisciplinary essays on culture and politics in the Caroline era*, eds. Ian Atherton and Julie Sanders (Manchester and NY: Manchester UP, 2006), 50-73, esp. 59.

<sup>11</sup> Aurelian Townshend, *Albions Triumph, Personated in a maske at court. By the Kings Maiestie and his lords. The Sunday after Twelfe Night. 1631* (London: 1631), 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> See Sharpe, *Image Wars*, 190-229; Strong, “One Imperial Prince,” in *Van Dyck: Charles I on Horseback*; 45-58; Ollard, *Image of the King*, 27-36; Peacock, “Image of Charles I as a Roman Emperor”; Martin Butler, “The Caroline reformation,” in *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2008), 276-320.

order of his realm. Much like earlier depictions of tyranny through Appius or Nero, the image of tyranny promulgated in these works emphasized the personal and private transgressions of the ruler, often adopting gendered language to epitomize the monarch's failures. Thomas May's *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* (1628), for example, offered a portrait of how tyrannical vice perverted the gender of a male or female ruler and led to a wicked and blood-stained household, while George Chapman's *A Iustification of a Strange Action of Nero* (1629) imagined the tyrant's vice as so absurdly decadent and effeminate that it undermined the ruler's legitimacy, authority, and moral leadership. The chapter will conclude by considering William Prynne's *Histrio-mastix* (1634) and the significant trial of Prynne, Bastwick and Henry Burton, all of whom underscored how Neronian tyranny would lead to the persecution of "true" Christian martyrs. This analysis runs contrary to historical scholarship on the personal rule which has emphasized that very little dissent was voiced against the King or his government between 1629 and 1640.<sup>14</sup> By drawing attention to the (failed) masculinity, personal relationships, and religious practice of the monarch, and by ridiculing the King's presumptive sacrality through satire, these well-known figures adopted a language of tyranny which significantly challenged Charles's sacred image and policies.

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In the heated political climate of the Thirty Years' War, as king, court, and parliament disputed the forced loan, *Five Knights Case*, and Petition of Right, the young Thomas May and the old George Chapman produced extensive and imaginative portrayals of the tyrant Nero and his enthrallment to mother and mistress. Charles's relationship with

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<sup>14</sup> Kevin Sharpe, "A commonwealth of meanings: languages, analogues, ideas and politics," in *Politics & Ideas in Early Stuart England* (London and NY: Pinter, 1989), 3-71; Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).



Parliament from the beginning of his reign had been plagued with growing distrust and frustration, as the 1625 Parliament refused to vote him the lifetime collection of Tonnage and Poundage (a central source of government income) and the 1626 Parliament powerfully attacked the King's favorite, the duke of Buckingham, for what they understood to be his corrupting influence upon the monarch.<sup>15</sup> Charles interpreted both activities as an insult to his position and prerogative, and with a foreign crisis looming after the defeat of Christian of Denmark at the Battle of Lutter, the King's refusal to resummon Parliament created a stalemate which made arbitrary taxation virtually inevitable.<sup>16</sup> The King's adoption of the Forced Loan in 1626 led to one of the largest demonstrations of civil disobedience in England before the civil wars. First, the judges and several peers refused to uphold the loan's legality; then fifteen or sixteen peers and seventy-six persons, even when faced with imprisonment, resisted collecting the loan. The conflict came to a head in the *Five Knights Case* of 1627, in which the Court upheld the King's ability to imprison anyone by "special command." These events, combined with fears of the growing influence and power of Arminians over King and Church, led the House of Commons in 1628 to present formal grievances against the King in the Petition of Right. The Petition upheld four fundamental English liberties: freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, from arbitrary or non-parliamentary taxation, from the billeting of troops, and from the imposition of martial law.<sup>17</sup> In these years,

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<sup>15</sup> See above, p. 86-87.

<sup>16</sup> Reeve, *Charles I and the Road to Personal Rule*, 11-13; Conrad Russell, *Crisis of Parliaments: English History 1509-1660* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971), 300-306; Richard Cust, "Charles I, the Privy Council, and the Forced Loan," *Journal of British Studies* 24 (April 1985): 208-35, esp. 209-11.

<sup>17</sup> Russell, *Crisis of Parliaments*, 306-7; Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1996), 110-12.

parliamentary and godly men believed they fought for the preservation of English liberties in this life and salvation in the next.

Thomas May is not often characterized as a “republican” until late in his life, when his *Discourse Concerning the Success of Former Parliaments* (1642) argued that the very institution of monarchy threatened a commonwealth’s liberty. After training at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge and Gray’s Inn, the poet, dramatist, and historian sought patronage from King Charles in the 1630s and hoped to follow in Ben Jonson’s footsteps as poet laureate. With the outbreak of civil war, and Sir William Davenant’s rise to the post of poet laureate, May became a public propagandist and secretary for Parliament, completing his *History of the Parliament of England which Began November the Third, 1640* in 1647, eventually siding with the Independents and receiving a state funeral and memorial in Westminster Abbey upon his death in 1650.<sup>18</sup> Despite his activity within Charles’s court, scholars should not overlook or understate the importance of May’s early career, when he produced a number of classical translations and dramas that already criticized monarchical government and its corruption in the significant political climate of the late 1620s. In 1627, May significantly created an English translation of Lucan’s *Pharsalia, or De Bello Civili*, a Roman epic poem about the civil wars between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great in the final years of the Roman republic.

As a work that caustically illustrated the devastations wrought by imperial corruption and civil discord, Lucan’s *Pharsalia* was a central poem of the republican

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<sup>18</sup> David Norbrook, “May, Thomas (b. in or after 1596, d. 1650),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn. Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18423>].

imagination of early modern England.<sup>19</sup> In the dedicatory epistle to William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire, May emphasized that English statesmen should consider Lucan's poem carefully as a "true *History*" unadulterated by "*Poetical rapture*,"<sup>20</sup> for he interpreted the *Pharsalia* as revealing that moment in Roman history when Rome fell from her great height of republican virtue into the monarchical corruption of the Caesars:

The blood of [Rome's] valiant citizens, and the conquests, and triumphs of so many ages had raised her now to that unhappy height, in which shee could neither retaine her fredome without great troubles nor fall into a *Monarchy* but most heauy and distastfull. In one the greatnes of priuate citizens excluded moderation, in the other the vast strength and forces of the Prince gaue him too absolute and vndetermined a power. The vices of *Rome* did at this time (saith learned Heinsius) not only grow vp to their power but ouerthrow it. *Luxury & Pride* the wicked daughters of so noble a Mother as the *Roman Vertue*, began to consume that which brought them forth. These were the seeds of that faction, which rent the State, and brought in violently a change of government.<sup>21</sup>

When contrasted with royalist portrayals of imperial Rome in this period, such as Bolton's *Nero Caesar* which aimed to teach the "pretious secret" that "*No Prince is so bad as not to make monarckie seeme the best forme of gouernment*,"<sup>22</sup> May's dedicatory epistle seems strikingly anti-monarchical. May here described the Roman transition from republican to monarchical government as a transition from freedom to slavery, a slavery which took root in the corruption of Rome's virtue and blossomed into absolute

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<sup>19</sup> For an excellent treatment of the significance of Lucan's poetry for the republican imagination in England, see Norbrook, "Lucan and the poetry of civil war," in *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 23-62.

<sup>20</sup> "To...William, Earle of Deuonshiere, &c.," in *Lucan's Pharsalia: or The Civill Warres of Rome, between Pompey the great, and Ivlivs Cæsar. The whole ten Bookes Englished by Thomas May, Esquire* (London, 1627), sig. a2v.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. a3r-4r.

<sup>22</sup> Edmund Bolton, *NERO CÆSAR, or Monarchie depraued. An Historicall worke. Dedicated, with leaue, to the DVKE of BVCKINGHAM, Lord Admirall, by the translator of Lycivs Florvs* (London, 1627), sig. A3v.

monarchical power. Later in the seventeenth century, John Aubrey remarked that May's "translation of *Lucans* excellent Poeme made him in love with *the* Republique."<sup>23</sup>

As David Norbrook has argued, May's translation of Lucan articulated staunch republican values during the political crises of 1627, betraying his support for the Protestant cause on the Continent against Catholic forces believed to be the work of Antichrist and tyrannical monarchy, while promoting the parliamentary cause in England against a King enlarging his prerogative power through the Forced Loan.<sup>24</sup> Within his translation of Lucan, May showcased his support and encouraged their continued fight by dedicating each chapter to "patriots" who had fought for the Protestant cause abroad or defied King Charles at home by refusing to pay the Forced Loan, including the earl of Lincoln who was in political trouble for circulating a pamphlet which accused Charles of seeking to "suppresse Parliaments."<sup>25</sup> In the translation, May compared Lincoln to Pompey, the earl of Pembroke to Cato and Brutus, and he claimed that the earl of Warwick resembled Cato, whose "strength orecome what taske so ere / His cruell Mistresse Vertue could command" and thus won "more honour far / Then any Laurell'd Roman Conquerer...."<sup>26</sup> General Horace Vere was honored at the beginning of the seventh book for protecting "Belgia liberty" in the Thirty Years War.<sup>27</sup> And May commended the third earl of Essex for his military campaign in the Rhineland with the dedication of the fourth book of the *Pharsalia*, which recorded the "truth and faithfull loue. Showne.../ By valiant Souldiers to a valiant Chiefe," and the death of the "bold

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<sup>23</sup> Oxford Bodleian Library MS Aubrey 8, fo.. 27r; John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, vol II, ed. Andrew Clark (London: Oxford, 1898), 56.

<sup>24</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 43.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-45.

<sup>26</sup> *Lucan's Pharsalia*, sig. Q2r.

<sup>27</sup> George Chapman also valorized Vere's nobility while criticizing the King for military inaction in the poem, *Pro Vere*. See below, p. 175-78.

Vulteius,” “Scorning to yeeld to Cæsar’s enemies.”<sup>28</sup> These acclamations celebrated the unbending virtue and military valor of Roman heroes, and encouraged the English patriots to remain steadfast in their own courageous fight against tyranny. Most likely due to the highly political nature of these dedications, many of them were hastily cut out, even to the damage of pages containing Lucan’s verse, before being distributed in 1627.<sup>29</sup>

May wrote his *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* just one year after translating Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, but most historians and literary scholars have neglected this important drama and have also failed to recognize the vital connection between both works.<sup>30</sup> While Lucan’s extended poem focused on the civil wars of the late Roman republic, Lucan himself was the nephew of Seneca and had suffered under Nero, and his *Pharsalia*, a poem about imperial corruption, condemned and mocked Nero. May highlighted as much in the “Life of Lucan” which he included in the opening pages of his *Pharsalia* translation. The brief life explained that the young Lucan had grown “into great fauour” with Nero until the “iealous tyrant” suppressed his works.<sup>31</sup> In response, Lucan joined Piso’s Conspiracy against Nero, which eventually proved unsuccessful, and he ended his life committing suicide, as Seneca had done. May memorialized Lucan’s stoic suicide on the very frontispiece of his *Pharsalia* translation, presenting an idealized image of Lucan as his blood poured from his muscular body, under which he included two lines of Martial’s epigram to Lucan: “Heu Nero crudelis, nullaque inuisior umbra, / Debut hoc saltem non licuisse tibi” [O cruel Nero, never more loathed than now / Even you should

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., sig. F2r.

<sup>29</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 47-8.

<sup>30</sup> One exception is Curtis Perry, *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 258-65.

<sup>31</sup> May, “Life of Lucan,” *Lucan’s Pharsalia*, sig. b1r.

not have been allowed such a crime].<sup>32</sup> In a famous passage of the *Pharsalia*, Lucan mocked Nero as having so much divine *gravitas* that, after his apotheosis in heaven, he would have to sit in the center of the celestial sphere lest his massive weight bring the whole place crashing down.<sup>33</sup>

By writing a tragedy about Nero's tyrannical vices in 1628, May followed Lucan's example of exposing imperial corruption through a poetic treatment of Roman history. May's very choice of the *genre* of tragedy may further reflect this choice. Sir Philip Sidney had argued in *The Defence of Poesy* (1595) that tragedy "maketh Kings feare to be Tyrants" for it "openeth the greatest woundes, and sheweth forth the *Vlcers* that are couered with *Tissue*" and "teacheth the vncertaintie of this world, and vpon how weak foundations guilden roofes are builded."<sup>34</sup> May's tragedy, with its focus on the conflict between the young Nero and his mother, Julia Agrippina, provided a significant portrait of tyranny by revealing the unnatural and perverted consequences of despotic power. It imagined the tyrant as an individual made grotesque or monstrous in his gender and gendered relationships: Nero in the play is emasculated and dominated by his mother; his mother is masculinized through power and ambition.

In the opening of the *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, May presented Imperial Rome as a haven for vicious and cruel corruption, and the imperial palace as a location of demonic rather than divine purpose, as Megaera the fury ascends from below the stage and delivers a prologue and herself from hell:

Thus to the *Romane* Palace, as our home  
And proper mansion, is *Megæra* come  
No stranger to these walls: not more in Hell

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<sup>32</sup> Lucan's *Pharsalia*, title-page.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., sig. A2r-v; Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 26-27.

<sup>34</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London: 1595), sig. E4v-F1r.

Then here, doe mischiefs, and we Furies dwell  
Let the unenvy'd Gods henceforth possesse  
Poore Peasants hearts, and rule in Cottages;  
Let Vertue lurke among the rurall Swaines,  
Whilst Vice in *Romes* Imperiall Palace reignes,  
And rules those breasts, whom all the world obeys.<sup>35</sup>

Within this opening speech and throughout the first act, characters emphasized that “not the Senate, / But *Caesars* chamber did command the world, / And rule the fate of men,” so that the central location of authority in Roman government rested within this corrupted Imperial palace and family.<sup>36</sup> In order to “*preserve* that interest, and keep high / Our hold in this commanding family,” Megaera summons the “cruel ghost” Caligula, the former emperor of Rome and Nero’s uncle, to aid her cause in banishing “Piety,” “Justice,” “Conscience” and the sacred ties of “Nature” and “Religious Lawes” and in incensing the royal family to commit a series of parricides: Agrippina killing her husband, Claudius, and Nero killing both his stepbrother, Britannicus, and his mother, Agrippina.<sup>37</sup> Because May drew this opening from Seneca’s *Thyestes*, in which Megaera summons Caligula to consider the crimes of the Imperial family, his prologue well emphasized the long-standing pattern of repeated corruption found in royal households.<sup>38</sup> His tragedy illustrates the fulfillment of these crimes in Nero’s first five years of rule through a careful study of the tyranny of Nero and Agrippina. The first two acts portray Agrippina effectively orchestrating Nero’s rise to power. In the third act, Nero is made Caesar due to Agrippina’s success, but by the end of the fourth act he resents her power and

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas May, *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina, Empresse of Rome* (London, 1639), 5 (prologue 3-11). Pagination and signature in the original is unreliable, so I have adopted the pagination, as well as the act and line numbers parenthetically, from the following facsimile edition: May, *Julia Agrippina*, ed. F. Ernst Schmid (Louvain: Uystpruyst, 1914).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 (prologue 19-20)

<sup>37</sup> “...let the wife / With impious rage destray her husbands life, / The brother kill the brother, and the Sonne / Rip up his parents bowels...” *Ibid.*, 7 (prologue 65-68).

<sup>38</sup> Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 259.

influence, causing him to attempt to murder her through cowardly plots in the fifth act, until the final scene when his assassins stab her through the womb. The dramatic narrative juxtaposes the fall of Agrippina with the rise of Nero, and through this story of both female and male tyranny, May demonstrated how tyrannical power disrupted the natural, gendered inclinations of rulers and contaminated the order and proper relationship of family and patriarchy.

Because both writers relied upon many of the same classical texts for their sources, May's portrayal of Agrippina echoed Bolton's earlier *Nero Caesar* in several regards.<sup>39</sup> However, May characterized Agrippina as a specifically Machiavellian figure, enacting deceitful plots for power while describing herself as fighting fortune's wheel.

At the height of her power, Agrippina proclaims in a boasting speech:

This is a day that sets a glorious Crown  
On all my great designs this day declares  
My power, and makes the trembling world to know  
That Agrippina only can bestow  
The Roman Empire, and command the wheel  
Of suffering Fortune, holding in her hand  
The fate of nation.<sup>40</sup>

To achieve this, Agrippina modeled her behavior partly on the exempla of Julius Caesar and Lucius Sylla [Sulla], writing commentaries on Latin history while plotting to usurp Roman power. Three counselors, Seneca, Vitellius, and Pollio, fall to flattering her Latin commentary, agreeing her style is "full and Princely," "Stately and absolute, beyond what ere / These eyes have seene," and owing "Nothing at all to Fortune."<sup>41</sup> Even the

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<sup>39</sup> See chapter 2 above. According to F. Ernst Schmid, May's sources included Tacitus's *Annales*, Joannes Xiphilinus' epitome of Dio Cassius' *Roman History*, and scattered material from Suetonius, Petronius Arbiter, Sallust, Pliny, and Virgil. See Schmid, "Introduction," *Julia Agrippina*, 10-79; Gerald Eades Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Plays and Playwrights*, vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 837-38.

<sup>40</sup> May, *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, 54 (3.374-380).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19 (1.327-30 and 363-64).



renowned Seneca succumbs to flattering and fails to correct or counsel Agrippina, although in several asides he laments her shocking behavior:

Oh strange male spirit!  
Can there be found no other parallell  
But *Julius Caesar* to a womans minde?...  
The soules of *Sylla* and of *Caesar* both  
I thinke have enter'd her.<sup>42</sup>

In this opening and throughout, Agrippina shockingly seeks to adopt the role of an ambitious, masculine, glory-seeking prince, while the court around her, by contrast, is obsequiously effeminate, refusing to discipline the monstrous woman before them.<sup>43</sup> To fight fortune and pursue her aims, Agrippina employs “reason of state” politics, and is successful because of the corrupted state of Imperial Rome.

May’s depiction of Agrippina as a Machiavellian employing “reason of state” politics reflected a transition in political thinking in seventeenth-century England. The humanist conception of politics commonly articulated in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England had understood politics as the art of ruling a commonwealth with reason, justice, and virtue for the sake of the common good. Cicero’s *De Officiis* had served as the handbook for this tradition, and with its adoption as a fundamental text of grammar school and university education, English statesmen inherited a political tradition that lauded civic discipline and sought to constrain political governments and statesmen to virtuous, legal and ethical behavior. As Cicero himself stated in *De Officiis*, “The occasion cannot arise when it would be to the state’s interest to have the wise man do

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 19-20 (1.381-383).

<sup>43</sup> In my portrayal of this relationship between favorites and prince, I disagree with Perry that the favorites in *Julia Agrippina* dominate the play’s action and structure. Agrippina and Nero have a far greater presence in the play, with Agrippina dominating the first half and Nero the second. However, like Perry, the conclusions I draw from this play underscore May as challenging imperial absolutism. See Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 258-65.

anything immoral.”<sup>44</sup> As Maurizio Viroli and Richard Tuck have shown, however, this humanist understanding of politics became challenged in England in the 1590s by a political philosophy of “reason of state,” and by a “new humanism.”<sup>45</sup> Reason of state, which developed in Italy in the early sixteenth century, emphasized that the goal of politics was the preservation of power at any cost, and that a population had to be manipulated and disciplined for the sake of the state’s security; the new humanism, which turned from Ciceronian thought to skepticism and stoicism, identified political survival and self-preservation as the statesman’s goal in politics. To remain virtuous, the statesman must withdraw to the *vita contemplativa* rather than engage in the world of flattery, deceit, lies and vicious behavior characteristic of the politics of power preservation. English statesmen developed these views chiefly by reading the neo-Stoic writings of Justus Lipsius, Senecan philosophy, and Tacitean histories, and by the Stuart period a flutter of pamphlets and speeches expressed the worry that James and Charles’s courts had become lairs of scandal, corruption, evil counsel, flattery, and Machiavellian politics, from which the virtuous necessarily withdrew.

Within *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, May lamented this shift in English political thought through a dramatic portrayal of the banishment of Ciceronian virtue politics by the Machiavellian Agrippina, who boasts:

had I rul’d  
Rome and her Senate then, as now I doe,  
Not all th’ Orations that e’re *Cicero*  
Made in the Senate, should have sav’d one haire  
Of an offendour, or condemn’d a Mouse.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, bk. I.159.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> May, *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, 21 (1.438-42).

To Agrippina's brash announcement Seneca only comments limply, "I am amaz'd: but let her have her way," and after quietly begging the ghost of Cicero for pardon, he resigns himself that "'tis now / Too late to give [Agrippina] counsell."<sup>47</sup> Agrippina then enacts a series of cruel and calculating reason-of-state policies: having her rival Paulinae Lollia beheaded, assassinating the Emperor Claudius, stacking the Senate with bribed statesmen, and reordering the army for her cause. The viciousness of her policies is brought center stage as a tribune carries the severed head of Paulinae Lollia before her assassin, Agrippina, and the audience. Although at first mocking the bloody, dismembered body before her, Agrippina relays that her "nature could have pardon'd" Lollia, her rival, but "Reason of state forbade it, which then told mee / Great ruines have been wrought by foolish pity."<sup>48</sup>

As a female usurping power, Agrippina performs many of her initial heinous designs through seduction and sexual crimes, feeding upon the corruption and licentiousness of Emperor Claudius and his court.<sup>49</sup> Within the play, May presented Claudius as lustful, cowardly, and sexually depraved, and thereby easily enslaved by the seduction of flatterers and beautiful women. After beheading her rival, Agrippina is visited onstage by the uxorious Emperor who fawns over his new "sweet" wife and grants her control not only of himself, but of Roman policy. Agrippina informs her submissive husband that she has been "Weighing the troubles of a Princely state, / And all the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 21 and 23 (1.446-449 and 492-93).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 22-23 (1.489-90).

<sup>49</sup> In a significant departure from typical portrayals of Agrippina, however, May never portrayed Agrippina as committing incest, nor do the characters within the play ever hint at her doing so. Suetonius, Pliny the Elder, Tacitus and Seneca all accuse Agrippina of incestuous relationships beyond that of her relationship with Emperor Claudius. As Claudius was Agrippina's uncle, their relationship was defined as incestuous according to Roman law, but from early modern English standards, such a match would not be understood as incestuous, or especially less so than a sexual relationship between siblings or mother and son.

dangers that still threaten it”; although a woman who presumably has no experience in military affairs, she successfully recommends that Claudius replace the captains of his Praetorian Guard with Burrhus, a commander that the audience learns has sided with Agrippina’s designs.<sup>50</sup> Throughout her speeches, Agrippina plays upon the lustful and cowardly passions of Claudius. “Shee strikes upon the fittest string; / No passion reignes in him so much as feare,” Pallas remarks during the scene, and by the end of Agrippina’s speech Claudius agrees to the proposition since his “sweet Agrippina / ...wilt have it so.”<sup>51</sup>

These scenes emphasized Agrippina’s “unnatural” domination over Claudius, who was represented as excessively submissive, uxorious, and even cuckolded by his new wife after she takes Pallas as her lover. Early modern Englishmen understood uxoriousness as a failure of husbands to assert their natural and rightful control over their wives, and cuckoldry was characterized in a similar fashion, as ballads and public shaming rituals abused cuckolded husbands for failing to rule their households and serve their patriarchal duty. In each case, husbands were condemned for falling short of masculine expectations, and the related virtues of discretion, order, respectability, and control.<sup>52</sup> May’s tragedy brilliantly demonstrated the political consequences of a failed patriarch and ruler, as Claudius’s submission to Agrippina’s machinations directly resulted in the making of state and military policy. Following these scenes, Agrippina

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<sup>50</sup> May, *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, 24-25 (1.528-29).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25 (1.533-34 and 592-93).

<sup>52</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 25-26; David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 116-36, esp. 127; Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 152-56; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 95-96.

pursues her rebellious activity to what early modern audiences would have considered its logical end: she murders Claudius, and thus commits treason against husband and king.<sup>53</sup> Thus dangerously unruly until achieving dominance, Agrippina triumphantly declares that her new found widowhood has granted her more power than even her royal position: “There is no power, no state at all, but what / Is undependent, absolute and free./...I was an Emperesse but ne’re reign’d till now.”<sup>54</sup> Claudius’s tyranny made him effeminate, enslaved, and a failed patriarch; Agrippina’s tyranny made her cruel, politically cunning, sexually rebellious and independent. In these ways, May presented tyranny as the reversal of gender and gendered roles: the female Agrippina enacting domination as if she were a man, and the male Claudius performing submission as if he were a woman.

May’s portrayal of Nero’s tyranny followed suit. In the *Tragedy* the young Emperor has an inordinately lustful and acquisitive nature, which causes his sexual and political relationships to become controlling and dangerous. Similar to earlier portrayals of Appius Claudius as a lustful and thereby corrupted ruler,<sup>55</sup> the *Tragedy* equated lust with tyranny; within the play Nero’s passions lead him to pursue indiscriminately all pleasures whether they be bodily or political, sexual or power-seeking. The structure of the play emphasized the private and public consequences of such lust/tyranny. In the subplot, Nero chases Acte and Poppaea with insatiable desire until sexually obtaining them, while in the main plot, he greedily seizes upon state power until becoming absolute ruler; by the fifth act of the tragedy, Nero acquires both absolute power and Poppaea. Through an important speech of Narcissus, a virtuous statesman forced to retire from the

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<sup>53</sup> From 1351 to 1828, the willful murder of a husband by his wife constituted “petty treason,” because “there is subjection due from the wife to the husband, but not *e converso*.” Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 138.

<sup>54</sup> May, *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, 64 (4.305-6 and 312).

<sup>55</sup> See chapter 1 above.

corrupt court, May explicitly connected Nero's sexual and political conduct, while simultaneously attributing this tyrannical activity to his nature, not adolescence:

Those that are neere,  
And inward with his nature, doe suspect  
In [Nero] all seedes of vice and tyranny,  
Though smoother'd for a time, at least, not hurtfull  
While he refraines from meddling with the state  
That his night rambling revels, drinking feasts,  
And cruell sports that he's delighted in,  
Are vices of his nature, not his youth.<sup>56</sup>

In these ways, May's depiction of Nero embodied Plato's description of the tyrannical soul in the *Republic*, especially as Socrates argued that within every person a "dangerous, wild, and lawless form of desire" existed, which would not shrink from any beastly or savage behavior, even "trying to have sex with a mother, as it supposes, or with anyone else at all, whether man, god, or best," or committing "any foul murder" or any other shameless act. The tyrant, like an insane, drunken, or deranged man, becomes ruled by this insatiable desire, and is thereby led into every destructive activity.<sup>57</sup> Through his portrayal of Nero as possessing an utterly corrupted nature which leads him into cruel sports and cruel governance, May illustrated the paradox of tyrannical absolutism which Plato had observed, that the tyrant "tries to rule others when he can't even control himself....In truth, then, and whatever some people may think, a real tyrant is really a slave, compelled to engage in the worst kind of fawning, slavery, and pandering to the worst kind of people."<sup>58</sup> Within the play, Nero's achievement of absolute power over Rome coincides with his complete enslavement to his passions and the wicked people surrounding him. To achieve this position of power, Nero in a significant soliloquy at the

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<sup>56</sup> May, *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, 57 (4.50-57).

<sup>57</sup> Plato, *Republic*, IX.571c-573c, pg. 1180-81.

<sup>58</sup> *Republic*, IX.579c-e, pg. 1187.

end of the fourth act, with “his lookes...wilde / And full of rage,” declares that he has no choice but to commit the unnatural crimes of parricide in order to secure his own power and manhood:

My feares have been too slow, and twas high time  
That *Agrippinaes* thundring threats had wak'd  
My sleeping mischeefes; which shall now no more  
Study disguises, but appeare in bold  
And open acts with *Caesars* stampe upon um,  
Feirelesse of vulgar whispering jealousyes.  
Upon thy death, *Brittanicus*, a price  
No lesse then *Romes* imperiall wreath is set.  
The deede, when done, will priviledge it selfe,  
And make the power of *Nero* strong enough  
To warrant his misdeede, who dare revenge  
Or blame th'offence that frees mee from a rivall?  
But I shall leave a worse, and nearer farre  
Behind, my mother *Agrippina* lives;  
Shee lives my rivall, nay my partner still,  
Nay more then that my Queene and Governesse.  
I am no Prince, no man, nothing at all  
While *Agrippina* lives....<sup>59</sup>

Directly following this speech, the audience finds that Nero has not committed bold acts of murder as he claims, but has rather succumbed to the “womanly” plots of poison and witchcraft by hiring the witch, Locusta, to murder Britannicus. Learning that Locusta’s poisonous craft has failed, Nero launches into a rage and brutally beats Locusta onstage while berating her as “hagge...Witch. / Feind, fury, divell.”<sup>60</sup> Nero likewise hides like a coward behind the treachery of an assassin, Anicetus, to complete his matricide during the final act. Learning that his secret plot to drown Agrippina has failed, the tyrant screams, “Oh, I am lost and dead.../ ...What shall I doo?,” and he begs his mistress, Poppaea, and assassin, “Advise mee,...But yet advise mee nothing but [*Agrippina*’s]

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<sup>59</sup> May, *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, 82-83 (4.961-978).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 83 (4.993-94).

death, / No other course is safe. *Nero* must dy / If *Agrippina* live.”<sup>61</sup> In his fear, Nero uxoriously follows Poppaea advice, deciding Anicetus should finish her off. This is Nero’s last appearance onstage.

May named his play *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, and it is indeed the fall of Agrippina that concludes his drama. Unlike his portrayal of the tyrant Nero, who plots in irrational frenzy at the advice of his mistress, May depicted the tyrant Agrippina as sitting alone in “solitude” and “Ill-boding silence,” contemplating her fate, bidding farewell to the world’s “fading glories” and remembering those she has wronged.<sup>62</sup> As Anicetus and the other assassins burst into her room, Agrippina turns to rational speech as her defense, bidding them “heare mee but speake” and attempting to persuade her murderers that their crime will only bring them ruin. Anicetus remains unconvinced by Agrippina’s rhetoric, and he pronounces the chilling lines, “Can they bee innocent, / That disobey their Prince his will?” With Nero’s will thus declared, Agrippina resigns herself to her fate and delivers the final lines of the play:

Then strike this wombe  
This tragicall, and ever cursed wombe,  
That to the ruine of mankinde brought forth  
That monster Nero, here, here take revenge  
Here Justice bids you strike. Let these sad wounds  
Serve to appease the hatred of the earth  
‘Gainst Agrippina for dire Nero’s birth.<sup>63</sup>

There was not a classical writer who denied that Agrippina demanded the assassins strike her womb; none claimed, however, that she got her wish. May in this final scene departed from a long tradition of classical scholarship by depicting Agrippina onstage as not only crying for a stab in her womb, but dying from its blow. The location of this

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 97 (5.479 and 484-87).

<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*, 99-100 (5.537-77).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-101 (5.599-600 and 611-17).



wound was central for May's depiction of tyranny as the disruption of gender.

Agrippina's womb represented her own femininity, and thus her limitation as a masculine actor; it also represented that which created "that monster Nero," and thus engendered the "ruine of mankind" and of Agrippina herself. By commanding the destruction of her womb, Agrippina resembled an infanticidal mother who would pervert the ideals of maternal nurture through the unnatural and savage shedding of blood; in this case, however, it is the womb itself and not the womb's product that receives the blow.<sup>64</sup>

Although shocking, Agrippina's final act appears congruous with her character throughout the play. May never portrayed Agrippina as possessing the natural tenderness of a mother, nor does he physically locate her within the space of the home except for the final scene. His Agrippina acts in public, political and masculine spaces, and even in her death she exhibits, and is granted, agency. By calling for the destruction of her womb, Agrippina demands that her gender inversion be made complete, and with it any semblance of future pregnancy or motherhood.

The destruction of the womb at the same time labeled Nero as a monstrous birth, which in this period could be understood as an omen of God's judgment for heretical or sinful living, the product of a lascivious woman's womb, or the result of a pregnant woman's *vis imaginativa* or contemplation of images.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the tragedy, the first two explanations seem most plausible, and May employed scenes of the court and Agrippina's immoral behavior to represent the royal household and its members as

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<sup>64</sup> See Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*, 74-78.

<sup>65</sup> For monstrous births as judgment, see John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 268-70, 297-302; Aaron W. Kitch, "Printing Bastards: Monstrous Birth Broad-sides in Early Modern England," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England* (London: Ashgate, 2005), 221-36; for monstrous births and the mother's imagination, see Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993), 15-27.

corrupted. Pamphlets announcing monstrous births always called for repentance, and May in his introductory scene with Megaera had clearly argued that the royal household and court were those locations in need of such repentance for vice, for virtue lurked in the cottages of rural swain. The destruction of her womb marked the completion of Agrippina's masculinity and her own ruin, but the prevalence of the monster, Nero, hauntingly remained. With the banishment of Ciceronian civic virtue, with Nero's rise to absolute power, and with his subjugation to passions and mistress, the cycle of tyranny would continue: a tyranny which perverted the very gender of the ruler and the gendered order of family and society.

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The year after *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* was acted on stage, George Chapman, a very well-known poet and playwright of Jacobean England, produced an original satirical pamphlet about Nero, entitled *A Iustification of a Strange Action of Nero, In burying with a solmne Fvnerall, One of the cast Hayres of his Mistresse Poppaea* (1629). Like May, Chapman prized humanist learning and the antique past, especially praising the ideal of self-control and self-sufficiency found in the Stoic philosophy of Seneca and Epictetus. He understood learning as bringing harmony to the human soul, and described the end of learning as peace in this life and the next through the good "gouernance" of one's "sensuall parts":

But this is Learning; To haue skill to throwe  
Reignes on your bodies powres, that nothing knowe;  
And fill the soules powers, so with act, and art,  
That she can curbe the bodies angrie part;  
All preturbations; all affects that stray  
From their one obiect; which is to obay

## Her Soueraigne Empire.<sup>66</sup>

As Gordon Braden has underscored, Chapman presented “the most concerted effort in English to create an image of ‘Senecal man’ as an ethical norm,” and his vast collection of dramatic and poetic writings and classical translations very often promoted the life of virtue and constancy. Chapman’s poetry in praise of the cult of the virgin Queen Elizabeth further connected the individual’s self-restraint to the corporate mastery of the body politic and empire: “a *pax imperii* both inward and outward.”<sup>67</sup> With his admiration of Stoicism, it is unsurprising that Chapman’s only Roman tragedy, *The Warre of Pompey and Caesar* (1631, reprinted 1653), celebrated Cato, contrasting his self-control and virtue with the ambitious and Machiavellian Caesar and the ambitious, although more sympathetic, Pompey.<sup>68</sup> Before falling upon his sword in the tragedy, Cato advises his children that the virtuous man must remain constant and “thriue in honor,” even in corrupt times “howsoeuer ill.” In this way “Iust men are only free, the rest are slaves.”<sup>69</sup> Composed around 1604, Chapman finished his Roman tragedy in the same period that he completed a number of plays which offered veiled criticisms of monarchy, including the anti-Scottish satire in *Eastward Ho* (1605), which landed him and his fellow co-authors briefly in prison.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> George Chapman, *Euthymia Raptus; or The Teares of Peace: With Interlocutions* (London: 1609), sig. c3r. See also sigs. c1r-c2v.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon Braden, “George Chapman,” in *Elizabethan Dramatists*, ed. Fredson Bowers. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 62 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1987), 4.

<sup>68</sup> Pompey claims that he resorts to war “more for feare of *Cesar*s violence to the State, than mov’d with any affectation of his own greatnesse,” and he deepens in virtue and constancy after suffering defeat against Caesar. George Chapman, *The Warre of Pompey and Caesar, Out of whose euent is euicted this Poposition. Only a iust man is a freeman* (London: 1631). It was probably composed c. 1604-1605. See Mark Thornton Burnett, “Chapman, George (1559/60–1634),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5118>]. For a discussion of the 1653 printing of this play, see chapter 5 below, p. 289-90.

<sup>69</sup> Chapman, *Warre of Pompey and Caesar*, sig. I4r and K1r.

<sup>70</sup> Gilles Bertheau has contended that Chapman’s idealized portrayals of Queen Elizabeth in his plays *Bussy D’Ambois* (1604) and *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* (1607-8), and his “Epicede on

By the 1620s, Chapman had been publishing poems, translations, and dramas for over thirty years. Alongside the printing of *The Warre of Pompey and Caear* and an ornate production of *The Crown of All Homer's Works* (1624?), Chapman's last decade of publishing included two important, although very often overlooked, political and satirical pieces. These works demonstrate that Chapman participated in the burgeoning culture of contestation made possible by libel and satirical writings in the early Stuart period, a culture which not only challenged particular factions or political rivalries at court, but more significantly challenged the very ideological basis of sacred kingship and political consensus in this period, as Alastair Bellany, Thomas Cogswell, and Andrew McRae have shown.<sup>71</sup> In 1622, after King James had issued proclamations restricting public criticism of his policies, Chapman published an encomium for the English General, Horace Vere, which implored the King to support the Protestant Cause and especially Vere's English troops on the Continent who were suffering a debilitating siege by Imperialist and Spanish forces.<sup>72</sup> Entitled *Pro Vere, Avtvmni Lachrymae, Inscribed to the Immortal Memorie of the most Pious and Incomparable Souldier, Sir Horatio Vere, Knight: Besieged, and distrest in Mainhem* (1622), Chapman's poem celebrated the military general as "This Thunderbolt of Warre," whose defense of Christendom

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Henry Prince of Wales" were likewise critical of the monarch. See Bertheau, "Jacques I au miroir de la Tragedie Chapmanienne," *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Anglo-Américaines des XVII et XVIII Siècles* 62 (2006): 193-207. See also Bertheau, "George Chapman's French Tragedies, or, Machiavelli beyond the mirror" in *Representing France and the French in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jean-Christophe Mayer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 110-24.

<sup>71</sup> Alastair Bellany, *Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Thomas Cogswell, "Underground Verse and the Transformation of early Stuart political culture," in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995), 277-300. See also Adam Fox, "Ballads, Libels, and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," *Past and Present* 145 (1994): 47-83.

<sup>72</sup> See above, p.101.

underscored his august faith and virtuous character.<sup>73</sup> Chapman warned that Vere's demise at the hands of Catholic forces would mean the defeat not only of a great man and of the Continental Protestants he defended, but also of England. England must intervene with great military force, Chapman urged:

But (being There  
Circled with Danger) Danger to vs All;  
As Round, as Wrackfull, and Reciprocall.  
Must all our Hopes in Warre then: Safeties All;  
In Thee (O Vere) confound their Spring and Fall?  
And thy Spirit (Fetcht off, Not to be confinde  
In lesse Bounds, then the broad wings of the Winde)  
In a Dutch Cytadell, dye pinn'd, and pin'de?  
O England, Let not thy old constant Tye  
To Vertue, and thy English Valour lye  
Ballanc't (like Fortunes faithlesse Leuitie)  
Twixt two light wings: Nor leaue Eternall Vere  
In this vndue plight. But much rather beare  
Armes in his Rescue....<sup>74</sup>

Like many ultra-Protestant pamphlets during the Spanish Match Crisis, Chapman argued that the King must exercise armed force rather than diplomacy in defense of the "true" Christian faith.<sup>75</sup> What was at stake, Chapman claimed, was England's "old constant Tye / To Vertue" and her "Valour," both of which could only be exercised by boldly entering the Continental battle. In short, Chapman's poem argued for a significant reversal: it was the King who should emulate his valorous subject, General Vere, by leading the English into war.

According to Chapman, James's policy of peace derived from his immense failure in masculinity and virtue. The King had grossly disordered the English nation by

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<sup>73</sup> George Chapman, *Pro Vere, Avtvmni Lachrymæ. Inscribed to the Immortal Memorie of the most Pious and Incomparable Souldier, Sir Horatio Vere, Knight: Besieged, and distrest in Mainhem*. (London: 1622), sigs. A4v-B1r. Entered into Stationers on November 8, 1622, corresponding with the imminent fall of Mannheim to Tilly's forces.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs. B2r-v.

<sup>75</sup> See chapter 2 above, p. 96-98.

refusing to discipline his own and his country's womanish passions. At the heart of his poem—occupying the very central lines—Chapman poignantly referenced Book II of Aristotle's *Politics*, in which Aristotle argued that “libertie which was giuen vnto women, is hurtfull and incommodious, both for the purpose of their Commonweale, and also for the happie estate therof”; Aristotle warned that the failure of lawgivers to order and discipline women, permitting them “to liue in all licentiousnesse and dissolute intemperancie,” would “cause an undecencie and indecorum in the Commonweale” and further “engender auarice and couetousnesse.” To demonstrate his claim, Aristotle turned to the example of Sparta, in which women had been given such command over themselves that their commanders were essentially “commanded by women,” with the “most part of their [men's] affairs ordered by the direction of women.”<sup>76</sup> Aristotle contended that Lycurgus could only seek to establish his constitution over the Spartans by reining in the liberty of women for the sake of the military state, disciplining Venus for the sake of Mars.<sup>77</sup> Chapman drew upon this argument in *Pro Vere*, maintaining that King James for a “long time” had “serued (the Paphian Queene),” Venus, and that the King should now “resemble her” by laying aside the feminine vices to create a masculine militarized state:

(all asham'd of her still-giglet Spleen)  
 She [Venus] cast away her Glasses, and her Fannes,  
 And Habites of th'Effeminate *Persians*,  
 Her *Ceston*, and her paintings, and in grace  
 Of great Lycurgus, tooke to her Embrace,  
 Cask, Launce, and Shield.....

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<sup>76</sup> Loys Le Roy, *Aristotles Politiques, or Discovrses of Government. Translated ovt of Greeke to French, with Expositions taken out of the best Authours...*, *Concerning the beginning, proceeding, and excellencie of Ciuile Gouernment* (London: 1598), 110.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, n110 and 112. This edition of Aristotle's *Politics* was interspersed with significant commentary on Aristotle's text. As I am unsure whether Chapman used this English edition, or another Latin or Greek edition, I have restricted my analysis to Aristotle's text only.

...Be (I say) like her,  
In what is chaste, and vertuous, as well  
As what is loose, and wanton; and repell  
This Plague of Famine, from thy fullest Man.<sup>78</sup>

This comparison was remarkable, as Chapman likened James to the female goddess Venus, rather than the legendary male lawgiver, Lycurgus. The implications of this comparison were likewise remarkable: James, like Venus, must cast away his coquettish spleen and effeminate practices—luxurious fashions, vanity, flirtation, ostentation—for a masculine vigor prepared to engage in war alongside Lycurgus (who presumably represented Vere). Vere’s soldiers on the Continent had already adopted the austere conditions required by the soldier’s life, Chapman argued, enduring in “Forts and Tents, / And not in soft SARDANAPALIAN Sites / Of Swinish Ease, and Goatis Veneries.”<sup>79</sup> James must likewise abandon his decadent and “effeminate” lifestyle, or, as Aristotle had maintained, there would be grave consequences for the commonwealth. England would become indecent and disordered, plagued by licentiousness, intemperance, avarice, and covetousness.

The year after May’s *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina* was performed onstage, Chapman published *A Iustification of a Strange Action of Nero, In burying with a solemne Fvnerall One of the cast Hayres of his Mistresse Poppae. Also a iust reproofe of a Romane smell-Feast, being the fifth Satyre of Ivenall* (1629).<sup>80</sup> An obscure publication neglected by scholars, Chapman’s *Iustification* offered a darkly humorous critique of the

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<sup>78</sup> Chapman, *Pro Vere*, sig. B3r.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B4r.

<sup>80</sup> As noted in the title, the *Iustification* was printed with a translation of Juvenal’s *Fifth Satire*. Chapman’s decision to translate Juvenal’s fifth satire may have been a reflection on his lifetime struggle with securing aristocratic patronage. Prince Henry had been most generous to Chapman, agreeing to sponsor his project of translating Homer with £300 and a pension following its completion, but the Prince’s death in 1612 left Chapman, as well as many other lettered men, unsupported. The royal favorite Robert Carr, earl of Somerset, became Chapman’s later significant patron, but his disgraceful fall in the Overbury Trial again left the poet bereft.

obscene and absurd practices of corrupt emperors, and by extension, of King Charles's practices in the year that began his personal rule. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Chapman composed and published his work, as no record of it exists in the Stationer's Register; however, perceptible distrust between Parliament and King, tensions over religious reform, including Arminianism and Charles's seeming accommodation of popery, and related debates concerning the constitutional character of the government, war finance and foreign policy, all characterized the political scene before and during the dissolution of Parliament in that year.<sup>81</sup> Early in its 1629 session, the House of Commons had to investigate the printing of the Petition of Right, as the King had suppressed the initial printing and substituted a second edition which presented a case for the crown. This activity, alongside significant debates over tonnage and poundage and the seizure of merchants' goods, re-enforced the fear that the monarch continued to exercise arbitrary power over subjects' liberties as he had in the Forced Loan and *Five Knights Case*.<sup>82</sup> Contemporaries understood the dissolution of Parliament in March of 1629 as a significant event, signaling the failure of Church reform and pro-war policy, and the King's alignment with an insular set of advisors—Catholic, crypto-Catholic, and Laudian. Rule without Parliament and its financial support required Charles to seek peace, even as many of his subjects continued to regard the Thirty Years' War as a necessary military engagement for "true" Protestants.<sup>83</sup>

The dedicatory epistle in *A Iustification of a Strange Action of Nero* reflected Chapman's disillusionment with this political culture. Writing to Richard Hubert,

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<sup>81</sup> The printer, Thomas Harper, faced allegations for intending to produce a collected edition of parliamentary speeches in 1641, but he had just begun printing in the late 1620s. Sheila Lambert, "The Beginning of Printing for the House of Commons, 1640-42," *The Library* 6, ser III (1981): 43-61, esp. 51.

<sup>82</sup> Reeve, *Charles I*, 91-93.

<sup>83</sup> Russell, *Crisis of Parliaments*, 309-13; Reeve, *Charles I*, 89-90.



Chapman lamented that “Greate workes get little regard,” while “little and light are most affected with height.” It was “now the fashion to iustifie Strange Actions,” he contended, and although this activity was “vtterly against mine owne fashion,” he would follow the “vulgar” by justifying a strange action of Nero’s: the burying of a single strand of his mistress Poppaea’s hair.<sup>84</sup> Chapman’s *Iustification* should be understood as a paradoxical encomium, a popular and distinct *genre* of early modern writing which often masked serious political and cultural criticism through the absurd celebration of “unworthy, unexpected, or trifling objects.” As Erasmus, whose *Praise of Folly* is the most famous example of the *genre*, explained, “literary jests may have serious implications, and...a reader with a keen nose may get more from a skillful trifle than from a solemn and stately argument.”<sup>85</sup> Paradoxical encomia further offered writers the chance to exercise their wit in the creation of wholly original conceits and arguments, and in the *Iustification*, we find Chapman drawing upon historical accounts of Nero to invent a highly original, satirical piece.

Chapman’s *Iustification* opened with the description of a “solemne Pageant” by the Emperor Nero, who wears a “mourning habit.” After him process “all the state of the Empire either present or presented,” including “Peeres” of the realm, and a hearse bearing a “poore hayre broken loose” from the head of Nero’s Mistress, Poppaea.<sup>86</sup> From its opening pages, the *Iustification* emphasized the dual meaning of its language. On the one hand, it presented Nero as truly mourning the loss of Poppaea’s strand of hair and as earnestly believing such a trifle deserved honor. On the other hand, it signaled that many

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<sup>84</sup> Chapman, *A iustification of a strange action of Nero* (London: 1629), sig. A2r-v.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Knight Miller, “The Paradoxical Encomium with Special Reference to Its Vogue in England, 1600-1800,” *Modern Philology* 53.3 (Feb. 1956): 145-78, esp. 145-47.

<sup>86</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 1.

within Nero's realm viewed this ceremony with derision, and that the reader should as well. Some "laugh in their sleeues" at the procession, Chapman explained, and the Peers process "with drie eyes," presumably due to their recognition of the Emperor's delusions.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, the very use of the word "pageant" denoted the binary wordplay of the satire's prose. While pageants were generally defined as stately spectacles or processions, in 1608 Chapman had coined a new figurative meaning of the term as an empty, delusional, or specious display or tribute.<sup>88</sup> Chapman's *Iustification* thereby indicated the contemptibility of this funeral and the "troope of fooles" gathered for it, but adopted the persona of a funeral orator (ostensibly) resolved to justify Nero's action against condemnation and "detracting tongues." He would present a speech to the Emperor which "shall make it appeare to all vpright eares, that it is an action most worthy your wisdom (my gracious Sovereigne) and that this silly, this base, this contemptible hayre on this Herse supported, receiues no thought of honour, but what it well deserueth."<sup>89</sup>

Why would hair be the subject of Chapman's encomium and the honored object of Nero's procession? The explicit answer Chapman provided was Nero's failure to heed the philosophical teachings of Seneca.<sup>90</sup> "*Etiam capillus unus habet urnam suam* [even one hair has a shadow], was the saying of your master *Seneca*," the orator explained, "and may not your Highnesse goe one step further, and say, *Etiam capillus unus habet urnam suam* [even one hair has an urn]?"<sup>91</sup> Within this clever joke Chapman crystallized

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>88</sup> "pageant, n. and adj." in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>89</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 3.

<sup>90</sup> Early modern histories, plays, and poems commonly reflected upon Nero's failure to learn philosophy from Seneca.

<sup>91</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 3.

Nero's transgressive blindness and self-deception. Rather than realizing through philosophical contemplation that even his smallest action would leave a mark on the world around him, Nero sought to worship the trivial and thereby caused devastating harm.

The subject of hair likewise provided a compelling representation of Nero's decadence, corrupt character, and enslavement to the lower passions, and within the context of seventeenth-century England, it offered by extension a significant criticism of the vanities and sinfulness of the Stuart court and king. The puritan vogue for cropped hair would peak in the 1640s with the outbreak of the civil war, but as early as the turn of the seventeenth century, godly writers questioned and condemned long hair on men and excessive hairstyles in general as promoting vanity and pride, undermining masculinity, and blurring gender distinctions.<sup>92</sup> They turned to several Biblical proofs for this view, such as the Old Testament story of the rebellious Absalom, who suffered defeat in the Battle of Ephraim after being caught in a tree by his hair; they also drew upon the Apostle Paul, who maintained in I Corinthians, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering."<sup>93</sup> The author of *Absolom his fall, or the ruin of roysters, Wherein euery Christian may in a mirrour behold the vile and abominable abuse of curled long hair* (1590), for example, relied heavily upon both Biblical sources, denouncing the pride and ambition of the age and arguing that men who

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<sup>92</sup> Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 130-31.

<sup>93</sup> I Corinthians 11:14-15, King James Version.

dressed as women, or wore their hair in a long, feminine style, were an “abomination to the Lord” by altering the “order of nature.”<sup>94</sup>

In 1628, William Prynne published a fiery censure of such fashions in *The Vnlouelinesse, of Love-Lockes. or, A Symmarie Discovrse proouing: The wearing, and nourishing of a Locke, or Loue-Locke, to be altogether vnseemely, and vnlawfull vnto Christians. In which there are likewise some passages collected out of Fathers, Councells, and sundry Authors, and Historians, against Face-painting; the wearing of Supposititious, Poudred, Frizled, or extraordinary long Haire; the inordinate affectation of corporall Beautie: and Womens Mannish, Vnnaturall, Impudent, and vnchristian cutting of their Haire; the Epidemicall Vanities, and Vices of our Age.* In typical Prynne fashion, this treatise’s lengthy title encapsulated an extensive list of “epidemicall vanities and vices,” whose adoption in Prynne’s view had led to “these Degenerous, Vnnaturall, and Vnmanly times,” in which women “are Hermophradited, and transformed into men,” and men are “wholy degenerated and metamorphosed into women.”<sup>95</sup> Prynne understood vain fashion as posing an exceptionally dangerous threat to the gendered order of society, and even more, to the very character of the English nation and their eternal salvation. Such fashions were especially to be found at court, where the gentry “hold a Counsell about euery Haire,” he claimed, for “Would they not rather haue the Common-wealth disturbed, then their Haire disordered?”<sup>96</sup> Moreover, moralizing authors such as Prynne censured “face-painting” and hair-tincturing women for their vanity, self-absorption,

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<sup>94</sup> *A godly and profitable treatise, intituled Absolom his fall, or the ruin of Roysters, Wherein euery Christian may in a Mirrour behold the vile and abominable abuse of curled long hair....* (London: 1590), 9.

<sup>95</sup> William Prynne, *The Vnlouelinesse, of Love-Lockes. or, A Symmarie Discovrse proouing: The wearing, and nourishing of a Locke, or Loue-Locke, to be altogether vnseemely, and vnlawfull vnto Christians* (London: 1628), “To the Christian Reader.” Here Prynne is describing an *actual* metamorphosis between the sexes. See Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 134-35.

<sup>96</sup> Prynne, *The Vnlouelinesse, of Love-Lockes*, “To the Christian Reader.”

wastefulness, and deception, and even more, as refusing to submit passively to the rightful social order by redefining their own value through counterfeiting.<sup>97</sup> Within this context, it seems clear that Chapman's *Iustification* presented a highly significant and timely criticism of monarchy that would not have been lost on his contemporaries. His text indicated that Poppaea's hair had indeed been crafted by an unnatural process, as its color and substance would be "impossible for nature in her whole shop to patterne it."<sup>98</sup> Laying in its hearse, the hair no longer suffered the "cruell combe," "curling bodkins," or being "tied vp each night in knots" by Poppaea seeking to style it.<sup>99</sup> The fact that Nero obsequiously mourned such a piece of hair indicated his delusional and dangerous passion for his mistress, his corrupted nature, and his emasculation; what was more, it was believed that a practice so decadent and effeminate would disrupt the rightful order of societal and gendered hierarchies across the realm.

This connection between hair, passion, and court corruption was further supported through one of Chapman's historical sources, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. Pliny described that among Nero's other "fooleries and gauds wherein he shewed what a monster he was in his life," the Emperor became so enamored with his mistress's hair that he created a "sonnet in praise of the haire...., which he compared to Amber."<sup>100</sup> Nero's enthusiasm for his mistress's amber hair encouraged the vanity and decadence of his court, according to Pliny, as the "daintie dames and fine ladies have begun to set their

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<sup>97</sup> Francis E. Dolan, "Taking the Pencil out of God's Hand: Art, Nature, and the Face-Painting Debate in Early Modern England," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 108.2 (Mar., 1993): 224-39, esp. 229-30.

<sup>98</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>100</sup> *The Historie of the World. Commonly called, The Natvrall Historie of C. Plinivs Secyndvs. Translated into English by Philemon Holland* (London: 1601), 608-9.

mind upon this colour, and have placed it in the third rank of rich tincture.”<sup>101</sup> In the *Iustification*, Chapman played upon this description of Poppaea’s hair color by arguing that it not only enflamed Nero’s passion and provoked courtly vanity, but further betrayed Poppaea’s moral character. “[A]s red hayre on a man is a signe of trechery,” he explained, “what tis in a woman, let the sweet musique of rime inspire vs.”<sup>102</sup> Presumably, as it rhymed with “trechery,” a woman’s red hair was a sign of lechery. Poppaea’s amber hair, thereby, denoted her habitual lustful indulgence, and Nero’s worship of this hair implicated his own sordid activities and desires.

When praising objects, paradoxical encomia usually described the antiquity, nobility, beauty, and utility of the object praised, exaggerating what was meritorious and avoiding or underplaying what was detrimental or unworthy.<sup>103</sup> Significantly, Chapman’s *Iustification* did not deny that “hayre were of it selfe the most abiect excrement that were.” As this was a “cast Hayre,” the word “excrement” emphasized that Poppaea’s hair had been shed due to being decayed or superfluous; Chapman here may also have been likening Poppaea’s hair to another kind of “excrement,” the discharge of waste matter.<sup>104</sup> However, Chapman’s oration argued that because this single strand of hair originated from Poppaea’s head, it was in fact “honourable.” Indeed, he reasoned, not all excrements have no value, and that which Nature “giues...with the left hand...Art receiues with the right,” such as “Sublimate and other drugges” that are by nature “poyson” until Art transforms them to “wholsome medicines.”<sup>105</sup> Chapman thus

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 6. Chapman here may have been thinking of Judas Iscariot, who traditionally was depicted as having red hair.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, “Paradoxical Encomium,” 148.

<sup>104</sup> See *OED* excrement, n.<sup>1</sup> and n.<sup>2</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 4 and frontispiece.

<sup>105</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 4.

highlighted the grotesqueness and danger of Nero's passions by making the absurd suggestion that Nero's mistress could engender honor in an object likened to feces and poison. Indeed, the comparison between a woman's hair and the radical potential of art to transform nature would have been unconvincing in the seventeenth century. As Frances Dolan has demonstrated, discourses in this period censured women who tried to exercise art (or rather artifice) over nature, especially in relation to cosmetics and hairstyle; according to art-nature discourses, the female "creatrice" refused to submit to her natural role in society and competed with or opposed her divine maker.<sup>106</sup>

Although Chapman's discussion of Nero was highly original, departing from the more fundamental histories of Nero's reign, Chapman defined tyranny in the same manner as earlier writers. His portrait of tyranny emphasized the obscenity and destructiveness of the tyrant's disordered passions and disordered household. As the encomium explained, Poppaea's hair was so very exceptional that it moved "into softnesse" even the "Adamantine heart" of Nero, who "neuer was knowne to shrinke at the butchering of his owne mother *Agrippina*; and could without any touch of remorse, heare (if not behold) the murther of his most deare wife *Octavia* after her diuorce."<sup>107</sup> In this passage Chapman stressed the horror of Nero's crimes against family by adopting the word "butchering" and then "murther." Chapman likewise highlighted the irony of Nero's deep affection for the cast-off hair, stating that any subject viewing the grand burial procession would assume the hearse to be Nero's "deare Mother *Agrippina*" or his "beloued wife *Octauia*," until realizing it was for "her whom you preferre to them both,

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<sup>106</sup> Dolan, "Taking the Pencil out of God's Hand," 229-30.

<sup>107</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 7.

your diuine *Poppaea*.”<sup>108</sup> Nero’s sinful passion for Poppaea, then, destructively inverted the rightful place of mother and wife; his and Poppaea’s unlicensed sexuality corrupted the natural social order.<sup>109</sup> To fulfill this inversion, Chapman adopted the language of enslavement to summarize the Emperor’s position: this single strand of hair, “[s]o subtile and slender as it can scarce be seene, much lesse felt” was indeed “so strong as it is able to binde *Hercules* hand and foot.”<sup>110</sup> At the same time, Nero’s personal enslavement and failure to exert patriarchal control had direct consequences for the behavior of his court. The noble indulged openly in lewd acts, while the lower-class exacted a price for their sins: “And how many yong gallants doe I know my selfe, euery hayre of whose chin, is worth a thousand crowns; and others (but simple fornicators) that haue neuer a hayre on their crownes, but is worth a Kings ransome?”<sup>111</sup> Throughout the *Iustification*, thereby, Chapman connected the monarch’s personal character, household governance, and court morality. “All the state of the Empire either present or presented” marched alongside Nero and his mistress’s hearse bearing a single strand of hair; his destructive, moral failings infected the entire commonwealth.

In these ways, Chapman crafted a significant portrait of corrupted monarchy in 1629, one which mocked the decadence and debauchery of corrupt power and represented the tyrant as repulsive and dangerous. Although a seemingly farcical subject matter, Chapman’s mock commendation of hair reflected the serious concern of puritans that decadent fashion and lewd behavior disordered the rightful, gendered organization of society and promoted the sins of pride and vanity which would estrange the English

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2002), 54-99.

<sup>110</sup> Chapman, *Iustification*, 8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*



nation from its God. By thus ridiculing and lampooning the monarch and court, Chapman's mock encomium importantly articulated the growing ideological differences and political conflict in Stuart England.

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In February 1634, William Prynne was charged and found guilty in the Star Chamber of writing a seditious book, *Histrio-mastix* (1633), which attacked stage-plays, masques, dancing, and festivals as “sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions,” and denounced the King and Queen for allowing, sponsoring, and participating in such activities. According to his accusers, Prynne's *Histrio-mastix* preached rebellion, as he “indeavoured to infuse an opinnyon into the people that ytt is lawfull to laye violent hands vppon Princes that are either actors, favourers, or spectatores of stage playes.”<sup>112</sup> Attorney General William Noy defended these charges by citing numerous examples (easily found) in the thousand-page *Histrio-mastix*, and he characterized Prynne's writing as deeply inflammatory, even when indirect. Noy maintained that Prynne often refused to write by “precepts,” which “would be to[o] playne” for his purpose, preferring instead to censure the monarch by adopting “examples and other implicite meanes,” including “sheweinge the lyfe and death of princes that loved stage playes.” Prominent among these historical examples was Nero, the “playerlyke, citharedicall lyfe of this vitious emperour, which made him soe execrable to some noble Romanes, that to vindicate the honor of the Romane empire, which was thus

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<sup>112</sup> Prynne, *Histrio-mastix, the Players Scovrge, or, Actors Tragædie* (London: 1633), titlepage; Samuel Rawson Gardiner, ed. *Documents relating to the Proceedings against William Prynne, in 1634 and 1637* (London: Nichols, 1877), 1-2.

basely prostituted, they conspired his distrucion.”<sup>113</sup> In the end, Prynne’s book was deemed to be such a “huge, scandalous, infamous, and seditious lybell against the Kinge and Queene,” that he was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment and a five-thousand pound fine, stripped of his legal practice and university degrees, expelled from Lincoln’s Inn, publicly humiliated in the pillory, his ears mutilated at Westminster and Cheapside, and his books burned by the hangman in front of his eyes—the last being an innovative punishment in Caroline England.<sup>114</sup> The charge of sedition for a printed book was itself an innovation. In 1578, judges had ruled that “sedition cannot be committed by words, but by publick and violent action.”<sup>115</sup> With the case of Prynne, one could be charged with sedition for words, even when those words heavily referenced the historical past.

Annabel Patterson has well described the irony of Prynne’s book: “That drama could have any didactic or analytical function was endlessly denied; yet Prynne himself made copious use of the dramatists’ sources of indirection: old stories, other men’s words.”<sup>116</sup> Prynne’s *Histrion-mastix* not only borrowed the imaginative and historically-centered allusions of dramatists, poets, and historians; his work simultaneously employed the critical language of opposition against corruption and tyranny in Charles’s government that these previous writers had developed. Some scholarly accounts have downplayed the oppositional character of Prynne’s *Histrion-mastix*, arguing that he “had

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<sup>113</sup> Gardiner, *Proceedings against Prynne*, 12-13. By “citharedicall,” Prynne is referring to Nero’s citharizing, or passion for playing the harp. See *OED* “citharize, v.” and “cither, n.”

<sup>114</sup> Gardiner, *Proceedings against Prynne*, 20-21.

<sup>115</sup> Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Caroline England* (NY: Cambridge, 2001), 120; Christine Noelle Reese, *Controlling Print? Burton, Bastwick and Prynne and the Politics of Memory* (PhD Thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 2007), 35.

<sup>116</sup> Annabel M. Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 114. What David Cressy has likewise highlighted was the remarkable theatricality of Prynne’s public performances and publications. See “The Portraiture of Prynne’s Pictures: Performance on the Public Stage,” in *Travesties and Transgression in Tudor and Stuart England* (NY: Oxford UP, 2000), 213-33

not attacked the crown, even if he had been rude about amusements patronized by it,” or that he “had *merely* spoken in rude and intemperate language of amusements patronised by the King.” Others, ignoring the vast contemporary responses to Prynne, have claimed that his case received “little public attention or sympathy.”<sup>117</sup> What these statements overlook is how very significant Prynne’s gendered and exemplary language was in an early modern context where the King’s “amusement” could be understood as directly compromising his masculinity, religion, and ability to rule, just as it had compromised Nero. They also tend to overlook how very central and well-known Prynne’s case became in Caroline England as a tangible indication of the King and his Courts’ overweening power and persecution of the godly. Prynne’s work was pivotal in the emergence of political conflict and religious polemic in Caroline England, as several scholars have persuasively shown<sup>118</sup>; yet *Histrio-mastix* simultaneously adopted a significant gendered criticism of Charles’s government by referencing negative historical exempla already in circulation in England. This section will analyze how *Histrio-mastix*, like other texts before it, developed a gendered construction of monarchy and the historical past which criticized the masculinity, and thereby effectiveness, of King Charles, and the gendered and sexual order of Charles’s household and court. Through his arguments, Prynne did not seek to abolish monarchy as such in England, but he called for the reformation of Charles and Henrietta and their cavalier court, lest the kingdom of England fall to ruin and divine punishment.

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<sup>117</sup> [My emphasis]. William Lamont, “Prynne, William (1600–1669),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, May 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22854>]; Lamont, *Marginal Prynne* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 33; Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 676 and 680.

<sup>118</sup> McRae, “Stigmatizing Prynne: Puritanism & Politics, 1630s,” in *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State*, 188-207; Cressy, “The Portraiture of Prynne’s Pictures,” 213-33; Bellany, “Libels in Action: Ritual, Subversion, and the English Literary Underground, 1603-42” in *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 99-124.

Prynne's *Histrion-mastix* condemned the "sinfull, wicked, unchristian pastimes, vanities, cultures, and disguises" of the ungodly. While the theater was the primary target of his treatise, Prynne also argued passionately against numerous other activities, games and fashions as being "wicked, sinfull, unchristian" in their own right and "concomitants or fruites of Stage-playes." These "vanities" included:

effeminate mixt Dancing, Dicing, Stage-playes, lascivious Pictures, wanton Fashions, Face-painting, Health-drinking, Long haire, Love-lockes, Periwigs, womens curling, pouldring and cutting of their haire, Bone-fires, New-yeares-gifts, May-games, amorous Pastoralls, lascivious effeminate Musicke, excessive laughter, luxuriouvs disorderly Christmas-keeping, Mummeries, with sundry such like vanities which the world now dotes on.<sup>119</sup>

The practices here described were not merely amusements patronized by the King; they were condoned, culturally associated with and practiced by the King and his court. Indeed, the royal court's fashions, entertainments, and displays of magnificence, consumption and cultural patronage were central to the King's performance of power and international diplomacy, and to the court's function as an honorable and profitable opportunity and marriage market for aristocratic families.<sup>120</sup> On the elaborate sets of Whitehall Palace, and in the gardens and great halls of aristocratic households, the King, Queen, and courtiers staged luxurious and deliberately wasteful entertainments, meant to emphasize their grandeur and status. Even those not invited to dance and act in these performances or to witness their spectacles could read about the decadent sets, costumes,

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<sup>119</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, "To the Christian Reader."

<sup>120</sup> Caroline Hibbard, "Henrietta Maria in the 1630s: perspectives on the role of consort queens in *Ancien Régime* courts," in *The 1630s: Interdisciplinary Essays on Culture and Politics in the Caroline Era*, eds. Ian Atherton and Julie Sanders (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2006), 92-110, esp. 102; Sharpe, *Image Wars*, 93-99; Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 131-208.

and designs in printed accounts or experience them through repeat performances on the public stage.<sup>121</sup>

Criticisms of the indecent “wanton Fashions” of the King’s court, including face-painting and elaborate long hair, were longstanding, and they were especially circulated in the wake of political scandals such as the Overbury Affair and Buckingham’s assassination.<sup>122</sup> A number of letters, pamphlets, treatises and libels denounced the “painted pride, lust, malice, powdered hair, yellow bands, and all the rest of the wardrobe of Court-vanities,” as one letter described it.<sup>123</sup> Thomas Tuke’s *Discovrse against Painting and Tincturing of Women* (1616), packed with Biblical and patristic allusions similar to *Histrion-mastix*, denounced face-painting as vain, duplicitous, and idolatrous, as a cause of “Murther and Poysoning: Pride and Ambition: Adultery and Witchcraft,” and as being “the roote” of “Disobedience to the Ministry of the Word.”<sup>124</sup> By “adultering her face” with “vile drugs,” Tuke argued, the painted woman “Closely allures the adulterers imbrace.”<sup>125</sup> Tuke’s treatise directly connected such “wanton fashion” with the royal court, including an image of a court lady dressed in ostentatious style on the title page. Prynne’s attack upon amusements thereby assaulted practices at the heart of monarchical and aristocratic representation and culture.

*Histrion-mastix* further targeted Stuart policies concerning observance of the Sabbath, challenging King James’s ruling that many sports and games may be

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<sup>121</sup> Lauren Shohet, *Reading Masques: The English Masque and Public Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 63-66 and 81-124.

<sup>122</sup> See above, p. 55-56, 59-60.

<sup>123</sup> Letter from John Castle to James Miller, British Library MS Cotton Titus B.vii, fol. 476. Qtd in David Lindley, *Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), 179.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas Tuke, *A Discovrse against Painting and Tincturing of Women* (London: 1616), titlepage and 2.

<sup>125</sup> Here Tuke was drawing upon a description of Jezebel from Josuah Sylvester’s translation of Du Bartas. See, *Discovrse against Painting*, B2v.

appropriately practiced on Sundays. “[D]auncing, either men or women, Archerie for men, leaping, vaulting...May-Games, Whiston Ales, and Morris-dances, and the setting vp of Maypoles” had all been justified in James’s *Book of Sports* (1618), which rebuked “Puritanes” for prohibiting recreations on the Sabbath and holy days which the King deemed “lawfull” and “honest.”<sup>126</sup> Throughout the late 1620s, Sunday Sabbatarians, who tended to be Puritans but also included Anglicans, argued that Christians should observe a strict Sabbath and thereby honor the fourth commandment and the practices of the primitive Christian church.<sup>127</sup> As Prynne sat imprisoned in the Tower for *Histrion-mastix*, Charles republished his father’s book, intending to remind his subjects of the “princely wisdom” of allowing “lawfull Sports” and presumably also intending to refute Prynne.<sup>128</sup>

Beyond these explicit assaults upon Charles’s government, Prynne’s accusers argued that he had deliberately attacked Queen Henrietta Maria for her participation in these courtly activities, especially as she rehearsed Walter Montague’s masque, *The Shepherd’s Pastoral* (1633) for a performance just six weeks after the printing of *Histrion-mastix* had commenced. Although Prynne had spent more than seven years constructing his large book, and thereby defended himself as not commenting upon current affairs, it was argued that he had expanded the index to *Histrion-mastix* during the Queen’s rehearsals.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> James VI and I, *The Kings Maiesties Declaration to His Subiects, Concerning lawfull Sports to be vsed* (London: 1618), 2 and 7.

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, Theophilus Brabourne, *A Discourse vpon the Sabbath* (London? 1628), 2-3.

<sup>128</sup> *The Kings Maiesties Declaration to His Subiects, Concerning lawfull Sports to bee vsed* (London: 1633), 2.

<sup>129</sup> Prynne claimed in his preface “To the Christian Reader” that the book took him seven years to compose, and he later argued it during his trial. However, Prynne would have probably had access to his index during the work’s printing, and the particular index entry in question was on one of the very last pages of the text.

The index entry that carried especial offense in relation to the Queen was “*Women-Actors*, notorious whores,” which cited a law of Justinian banning actresses and several Biblical examples from the Apostle Paul before concluding: “And dare then any Christian women be so more then whorishly impudent, as to act, to speake publikely on a Stage, (perchance in mans apparell, and cut haire, here proved sinfull and abominable) in the presence of sundry men and women?...O let such presidents of impudency, of impiety be never heard of or suffred among Christians.”<sup>130</sup> Although some scholars have written this off as merely a “careless entry” on Prynne’s part,<sup>131</sup> this entry was very characteristic of *Histrion-mastix* as a whole and labeled the practices of the royal court and Queen as indecent, irreligious, and a threat to the gendered order of society. In seventeenth-century England, “whore” was an extremely common term of abuse which signified all unchaste sexual behavior, including purchased sexuality and unpurchased promiscuity, adultery, and fornication outside of wedlock. Because women’s lust was understood as peculiarly high due to the humoral composition of their bodies and less-developed rational capabilities, their subordination to men and the stamping out of whoredom was deemed necessary for the spiritual and political order of society.<sup>132</sup> Female actresses were likewise “notorious,” in Prynne’s view, because they performed before men and mixed audiences; as Prynne underscored, Saint Paul had admonished women from speaking publicly in the church, teaching, or “usurp[ing] authority over the man.”<sup>133</sup> Prynne’s rhetoric thereby emphasized that women actresses threatened to undermine the gendered

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<sup>130</sup> *Histrion-mastix*, index, “Women-Actors.” This index entry was cited explicitly at the trial. See Gardiner, *Proceedings against Prynne*, 10-11.

<sup>131</sup> Leo E. Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509-1640* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 186.

<sup>132</sup> Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex & Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London and NY: Arnold, 1995), 8-18; Lake, *Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat*, 67-68; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, 59-110.

<sup>133</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, index, “Women-Actors.” He cited I Corinthians 14:34 and I Timothy 2:12.

order of the realm, allowing women to assume an unnatural role in the social hierarchy over the command of men – “ouer-ruling nature and their Husbands both at once.”<sup>134</sup> In this position, women actresses could engender sinful sexual appetites and irreligious behavior in the men they dominated.

Prynne’s admonishment that women-actors may wear “mans apparell, and cut haire” further betrayed his anxiety that sinful fashions and pastimes blurred gendered distinctions, even to the point of metamorphosing men and women into the alternative gender. Prynne had argued in his earlier *The Vnloveliness of Loue-Locks* (1628) that “our Mannish Impudent, and inconstant Female sexe, are Hermophradited, and transformed into men,” while “so diuers of our Masculine, and more noble race, are wholly degenerated and metamorphosed into women” when women adopted cut hair and men long hair.<sup>135</sup> Throughout this work, Prynne did not argue that these men and women merely look like the other gender, but that they actually undergo a physical transformation.<sup>136</sup> Prynne continued this logic in *Histrion-mastix*, arguing that male players were “metamorphosed into women” by adopting female hair, gestures, and speech.<sup>137</sup> In his discussions of women transforming into men, Prynne often emphasized an association between the Roman Catholic religion, gender alteration, and patriarchal disorder. He cited with disdain the “solemn Ceremony at the admission of all their Nonnes into their unholy orders, to poll their heads, and cut their haire, in token that they are now immediately espoused unto Christ, and so are freed from all subiection to men, or to their husbands, (as I presume those English women think they are, who cut their

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<sup>134</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, 205.

<sup>135</sup> Prynne, *The Vnloveliness of Loue Locks*, “To the Christian Reader.”

<sup>136</sup> For a further discussion of this, see Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 133-35.

<sup>137</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, 171.



haire).” An example of this was Pope Joan, who gained power by “transforming her selfe into the habit and tonsure of a man.”<sup>138</sup> Englishwomen who crop their hair likewise intend “to turne men outright and weare the Breeches, or to become Popish Nonnes,” Prynne explained.<sup>139</sup> What was at stake in these portrayals was a disruption of the gendered hierarchy. Targeting female actors and Roman Catholics, *Histrion-mastix* unmistakably criticized Queen Henrietta Maria.

In these chapters, we have seen through a large number of texts that the historical exemplum of Nero was especially significant for denigrating monarchy; this claim is further verified by Prynne’s trial, as Attorney General Noy accused Prynne of committing a crime against the King’s person by comparing the King to such a “vicious emperor.”<sup>140</sup> Noy argued that Prynne in the “Epistle Dedicatory” had made the King worse than Nero by describing how many more playhouses Charles had opened in London than Nero in Rome. Later, Prynne had compared Charles to Nero as a person of “rancke and quallitye,” whose voluntary acting in or attending plays led to his downfall; what was most disturbing about this second example, in Noy’s view, was Prynne’s argument that Nero’s “playerlyk, citharedicall lyfe...made him so execrable to some noble Romanes, that to vindicate the honor of the Roman empire, which was thus basely prostituted, they

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 185, 201-202.

<sup>140</sup> Prynne also specifically apologized for comparing the King to Nero in *Mr William Prynne his defence of stage-plays, or A retraction of a former book of his called Histrion-mastix* (London: 1649), 5-6: “...it is no disparagement for any man to alter his judgement upon better information, besides it was done long ago, and when the King (whose vertues I did not then so perfectly understand) governed without any controul, which was the time that I took the better to shew my conscience and courage, to oppose that power which was the highest, but had I truly known the King, I must confesse with sorrow, I should not have compared him to *Nero* the most wicked of the Roman Emperors (as I did in that book) for loving of Stage-plays; nor have given the Queen those bitter and cruell words of whore and strumpet, for playing a part in *Mr Montagues Pastorall*...”

conspired his distrucion.”<sup>141</sup> Prynne’s crimes thereby rested both in the direct comparison he was accused of drawing between Nero and Charles, and in the very treasonous suggestion that Charles’s activities could lead to regicide, as Nero’s activities had led to his own death. The prosecution clearly understood Prynne’s turn to history as motivated by rebellious intent and as aiding this rebellion, for as the Solicitor General explained, “Yf [Prynne] had possitively named his *Maiestie* in theis places, his meanyng would have been to playnne, therefore he names other princes, and leaves the application to the reader.”<sup>142</sup> That Prynne was charged and severely punished for, among other things, comparing the “best of men to the worst of tyrantes” illustrates how very seriously Charles and his government understood negative historical exempla, especially of tyrants and tyrannicide, as a threat to the King’s sacred image and authority.

Noy’s charge that Prynne treasonously encouraged regicide was very significant, but historians should not overlook that the Attorney General also highlighted the connection Prynne drew between Nero’s love of entertainments and the Roman nobility’s claim that such activity “basely prostituted” the Roman Empire. Like the many early modern authors before him who connected Nero’s vices and effeminacy with the ruin of Rome, Prynne’s treatment of Nero focused primarily on how the Emperor’s “private” vices led to “public” corruption and disorder. One of many examples can be found in Prynne’s discussion of how plays lead to the “generall depravation” of the “mindes” and “manners” of actors and audiences:

Tacitus and other authors “inveigh[ed] much against that Monster Nero,...and other dissolute Roman Emperours; for acting, countenancing and frequenting Playes; and harbouring Stage-players, which did not only exhaust their treasures, and impoverish their subiects, but even corrupt

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<sup>141</sup> Gardiner, *Proceedings against Prynne*, 11-13.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

their discipline, and strangely vitiate and deprave not onely their owne, but the very peoples mindes and manners, by drawing them on to all licentious dissolutenesse, and excess of vice, to the very utter subversion of their States, as these Authors ioyntly testifie, whose walls could not secure them when as their vertues, their manners were gone quite to ruine.”<sup>143</sup>

Within this passage, Prynne highlighted that Nero’s passion for amusements fiscally undermined the realm and morally corrupted the thoughts and actions of the Roman people. The first charge would have been very significant in Stuart England, where King James’s notorious love of fine clothing and entertainments, and Charles’s expensive literary and artistic patronage, court masques, and art collecting had been blamed (and indeed were partially responsible) for the fiscal conflicts of the 1620s, unjust taxation such as the Forced Loan, decadent court culture, and the King’s seeming inability and unwillingness to fight for the Protestant Cause on the Continent.<sup>144</sup> One Stuart libel, for example, charged that courtiers lined their pockets from corrupt and scandalous practices, while Parliament had to foot the bill for the King’s luxurious expenditures on the newly renovated Banqueting House:

When the Banquetting howse is finished quite  
then Jones Sir Inigo we will call  
& Poetts Ben brave maskes shall write  
& a Parliament shall pay for all.<sup>145</sup>

Much like the King’s patronage of Jones and Jonson, Nero put himself up to “miserable expenses” by “prostituting” his “grace and favour unto Players” and sponsoring their entertainments, according to Prynne.<sup>146</sup> In *Histrion-mastix*, Prynne further connected such lavish spending and corruption with the loss of martial prowess, arguing that empires that

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<sup>143</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, 451-52.

<sup>144</sup> See above, pg. 106-8, and chapter 2, pg. 95-101.

<sup>145</sup> “When Charles, hath got the Spanish Gearle,” Oxford Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 38, fos. 229r-v.” See “Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources,” eds. Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, *Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series I* (2005), [<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts/libels/>].

<sup>146</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, 318.

wasted their wealth on spectacles undermined their ability to secure the realm against foreign invasion. Greece, for example, had “left no mony in their Exchequer to rigge their Ships, to set forth their Navy, or to defend their Country: in so much that their enemies laying hold on this their penury, prevailed much against them.”<sup>147</sup> Prynne’s sentiment resonated with another libel from the 1630s, which commanded England to “Come arme they self.../ Put on thin iron coate” and shed those “silken robes of peace / Which made our enymyes / And our passions cease.”<sup>148</sup>

Prynne went far beyond describing the monetary drain of luxury, however; within the above passage and throughout *Histrion-mastix*, he emphasized the moral depravity of decadent entertainments through explicitly gendered language. As we saw with women-actors, Prynne urged his readers to forswear acting, dancing, and theatrical entertainments lest they pervert gender, the social hierarchy, and nature itself. Through his historical exempla, Prynne especially exhorted monarchs to forbid stage-plays within their realm, both because monarchs carried the power to outlaw such activities and because stage-plays would corrupt monarchs themselves to the detriment of the entire realm. Indeed, “Roman Emperours who delighted most in Stage-playes,” Prynne warned, “were the most deboist, luxurious, dissolute, ebrious, of all others.” The emperors’ insatiable passions for amusements betrayed their souls as out of order, their intemperate appetites as enslaving their reason. Rather than exercising the control and sobriety expected of grown men and householders, they enjoyed excess associated with loose women or

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 312. For the discussion of Nero doing such, see 318.

<sup>148</sup> British Library MS Sloane 1792, fos. 74v-75v. See “Early Stuart Libels,” [<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts/libels/>].

adolescents, and thereby, would be unable to discipline their social inferiors.<sup>149</sup> Prynne further emphasized that Nero not only delighted in amusements, and hence suffered a corrupted moral character, but he was “so much besotted with Stage-playes, as sometimes to play the Actor, to his eternall infamy.”<sup>150</sup> These exhortations would have been very offensive for King Charles and even accusatory, as the King enjoyed theatrical entertainments and publicly acted and danced in several masques throughout the 1630s.

The “pernicious effects” of stage-plays numbered at least twenty, Prynne argued, including wastefulness, sexual perversion, dissimulation, excessive indulgence, violence, effeminacy, irreligion, idolatry, and as a result, divine punishment and damnation.<sup>151</sup> Although “effeminacy” received its own chapter in *Histrion-mastix*, almost every one of these vices was understood as a characteristic of failed masculinity in seventeenth-century England, where the ideal man was thought to be rational and in control of his passions.<sup>152</sup> Nero’s history served as a significant example of the danger of theater for a monarch’s masculinity, and thereby effectiveness as a ruler. His “grosse intermperance,” Prynne argued, including excessive drunkenness and luxury, acting on the stage, wearing of women’s clothing and adopting of women’s gestures, had “effeminated” Nero’s body; as a result, the tyrant indulged in “lewd” and “whorish” practices, even “sodomitticall ones” inspired by his “invirility.”<sup>153</sup> Being thus corrupted in body and practice, Nero corrupted the entire “Roman Nation,” Prynne concluded, “and drew them on to all kinde of vice of luxury and lewdnesse.”<sup>154</sup> Simultaneously, his kingdom suffered divine

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<sup>149</sup> See Shepard, “The Violence of Manhood,” in *Meanings of Manhood*, 127-51; Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London and NY: Longman, 1999), 39-48.

<sup>150</sup> Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, 511 and 460.

<sup>151</sup> Prynne explored each of these through twenty “scenas” in “Actus 6.”

<sup>152</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, 39-48; Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, 21-38, 46.

<sup>153</sup> See Prynne, *Histrion-mastix*, 200, 206, 208-9, 213, 511, 514.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

punishment through plagues, pestilences, and civil discord.<sup>155</sup> Prynne's *Histrio-mastix* thereby connected the love of stage-plays with tyranny, as "tyrannicall dispositions" drove emperors to stage-plays, and as stage-plays caused the tyrannical ruin of kingdoms.<sup>156</sup>

Prynne's characterization of tyranny resonated with previous treatments of Nero in the 1620s and 1630s, while hardly masking his condemnation of the contemporary practices of Stuart court and King. Although *Histrio-mastix* was perhaps more forceful in explicating the relationship between the monarch's "private" sinful indulgence, the corruption of his gender, and the resulting ruin of the kingdom, it was not exceptional in its view, as these past chapters have demonstrated. After his 1634 trial, Prynne continued to defy his enemies even while imprisoned in the Tower by writing and smuggling out inflammatory pamphlets, especially against prelacy and "popish" forms of worship.<sup>157</sup> Prynne's belligerent *Newes from Ipswich* (1636) furthered his arguments in *Histrio-mastix* by attacking those "domineering lordly prelates," especially Archbishop Laud and Bishop Matthew Wren, for suppressing godly preaching and "all afternoone Sermons on the Lords own Day" so that the "vulgar might have more time to *dance play, revell, drinke, and prophane Gods Sabbaths*, even in these dayes of plague and pestilence." These prelates, or "truebred sons to the Roman Antichrist," Prynne argued, seek to

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 562.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 517.

<sup>157</sup> Prynne printed all of his works anonymously, including *The unbishoping of Timothy and Titus. Or A briefe elaborate discourse, proving Timothy to be no bishop (much lesse any sole, or diocaesan bishop) of Ephesus, nor Titus of Crete and that the power of ordination, or imposition of hands, belongs jure divino to presbyters, as well as to bishops, and not to bishops onely* (Amsterdam: 1636); *Certaine quaeres propounded to the bowers at the name of Iesvs and to the patrons thereof. Wherein the authorities, and reasons alleadged by Bishop Andrewes and his followers, in defence of this ceremony, are briefly examined and refuted...* (Amsterdam: 1636).

“drown us in popish superstition and idolatry” by subverting the preaching of God’s word with Roman sacramental practices.<sup>158</sup>

*Newes from Ipswich* and other “libellous books” against the ecclesiastical government led to a second trial before Star Chamber in 1637 for Prynne and two other Puritan authors, a divine named Henry Burton, and the physician John Bastwick.<sup>159</sup> Like Prynne and Bastwick, Burton had preached against the prelacy on Guy Fawkes Day, contending that all Anglican Bishops were Bishops of Rome whose claims of apostolic succession and *jure divino* threatened monarchical authority. Each of these men associated the Laudian church government with popery, idolatry, and tyranny; after suffering the public chopping of their ears in the Westminster palace yard, £5000 fines, perpetual imprisonment and banishment, Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton became the “puritan triumvirate” or the “three martyrs” to the godly community. Their great significance in the political culture of late Caroline England and in the lead up to civil war should not be overlooked. To the mass public, their public mutilation identified them as figures of illicit opposition and sufferers of governmental tyranny, and as seen through a number of popular activities, print productions, libels, and songs, their trial flamed opposition to Charles’s government and especially to Archbishop Laud, who became styled as the “Arch-Wolf of Cant[erbury]” and was threatened on a placard in Cheapside with a “pillory of ink.” The godly recast the punishment of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton as a “glorious wedding day,” in which the martyrs as brides would be united with their mystical groom, Jesus Christ. Sir Kenelm Digby’s letter to Viscount Conway,

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<sup>158</sup> *Newes from Ipswich. Discovering certaine late detestable practises of some domineering Lordly Prelates, to undermine the established doctrine and discipline of our Church, extirpate all Orthodox sincere Preachers and preaching of Gods Word, usher in Popery, Superstition and Idolatry* (Amsterdam? or Edinburgh?: 1636), sig. 1v and 3r. See Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, 223.

<sup>159</sup> See above, p. 150-51.

although scoffing and sarcastic, significantly described the “venerations” to these “martyrs” by “puritans,” who “keep the bloody sponges and handkerchiefs that did the hangman service in cutting off their ears.” Prynne likewise described those who “dipped their handkerchers in [the blood] as a thing most precious.” For this reason, scholars have recognized the punishment and later triumphal re-entry of these three banished “martyrs” as very culturally and politically significant in the lead-up to civil war.<sup>160</sup>

During his trial, Bastwick had denounced his accusers and judges by declaring that “he stood before them as Paul stood before Nero.”<sup>161</sup> After 1637, Burton likewise adopted the history of Nero to condemn Star Chamber, prelacy, Laud, and even the King himself. He equated the exercise of prerogative power by the Star Chamber and the High Commission with tyranny; Laudian ecclesiastical policies with popery and idolatry; and the prosecution and punishment of puritans with the historical martyrdom of “true” Christians.<sup>162</sup> The Nero he described, thereby, was the tyrant who cruelly burned early Christians as torches to light his gardens or threw them into arenas to be torn apart by wild animals, as the classical histories claimed.<sup>163</sup> Within these stories, Burton fashioned himself particularly as the Apostle Paul, who had suffered death at Nero’s bidding.

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<sup>160</sup> See Cogswell, “Underground Verse,” 277-78; Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, 225-26; McRae, *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State*, 189-90.

<sup>161</sup> See above, p. 151. *State Papers* 16/261 f.76.

<sup>162</sup> Star Chamber and the High Commission became such hated symbols of religious tyranny that the Long Parliament abolished them in 1641. See *A Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom*, Die Mercurii 15 Decemb. 1641, *It is this day Resolv'd xupon the Question, By the House of Commons, That Order shall be now given for the Printing of this Remonstrance, of the State of the Kingdom* (London: 1641), 36-37. More recently scholars, such as Kevin Sharpe, have sought to redeem Star Chamber from this negative portrayal. See *Personal Rule*, 665-682; See also J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966), 117.

<sup>163</sup> According to Eusebius, Nero was the “first of the emperors to be the declared enemy of the worship of Almighty God.” Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. G. A. Williamson (NY: New York UP, 1966), 104-5. Tacitus described in detail how Nero persecuted the Christians after blaming them for the burning of Rome: “Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly



In a remarkable passage of *A Narration of the Life of Mr. Henry Burton* (1643), Burton offered 27 reasons why his persecution not only rivaled the Apostle Paul's under Nero, but even surpassed it. Although he considered himself "but a dwarfe" to Paul, Burton argued that he had suffered in the same manner and degree as the apostle throughout his career, and yet received no help from governmental authorities as Paul had in his initial imprisonment under Nero: "*Paul* was rescued from the hands of the cruell Jewes, High Priests, and Pharises, by his appealing to *Caesar*, a heathen Emperour, who protected him from their violence: but I, by appealing from the cruell Prelates, was not rescued from their bloody hands."<sup>164</sup> Here Burton argued that Charles was worse than a heathen prince for his unwillingness to rescue a Christian brother. He went even further than this, however, declaring that his punishment from the Star Chamber ruling exceeded Paul's suffering under the tyrant Nero:

Twelfthly, *Paul* (if the story be true) suffered death, by being beheaded, with the sword, under *Nero* at *Rome*: And I suffered that on the pilary in *England*, my native Country, which was more painefull, and no lesse, if not more disgracefull, then such a death. For my head hung two full hours on the pilary, as if it had been separate from my body; and there were my two eares disgracefully and butcherly cut off with the hangmans knife, whereby my blood was abundantly shed, even to the expiring of the soule; all which was, both for the present, and afterwards in the time of healing, much more painfull, then the chopping off of the head with one stroke.<sup>165</sup>

Indeed, Charles's government had also surpassed Nero's tyranny by refusing to allow Burton to meet with friends, use pen, ink, and paper while imprisoned, or bring witnesses to testify on his behalf before the Star Chamber.

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illumination, when daylight had expired." Moses Hadas, ed. *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (NY: Modern Library, 1942), 380-81.

<sup>164</sup> *A Narration of the Life of Henry Burton. Wherein is set forth the various and remarkable Passages thereof, his Sufferings, Supports, Comforts, and Deliverances. Now published for the Benefit of all those that either doe or may suffer for the Cause of Christ. According to a Copy written with his owne Hand* (London: 1634), 35.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

In 1640, after three years of imprisonment following their public mutilation, the Long Parliament invited the “three martyrs” to return triumphantly to London. They re-entered through a celebratory pilgrimage, with their way “so full of Coaches, Horses, and people to congratulate their returne, that they were forced to make stoppes, and could not ride scarce one mile an houre.”<sup>166</sup> Prynne and other witnesses recorded that these exuberant crowds honored them with bonfires and bells, rosemary and bays, with the godly praising the Lord for their return. “Oh blessed be the Lord for this day,” the puritan Robert Woodford joyfully composed, “for this day those holy living martyrs Mr. Burton and Mr. Prynne came to town, and the Lord’s providence brought me out of the Temple to see them. My heart rejoiceth in the Lord for this day; it is even like the return of the captivity from Babylon.” Even those not sharing in the euphoric refrains reported, such as Thomas Hobbes did, that the men arrived “as if they had been let down from heaven.”<sup>167</sup> According to several witnesses, there had never been a show like this in London and with such an impressive multitude: one report estimated one hundred to three hundred coaches, one thousand to four thousand horse, as well as “a world of foot.”<sup>168</sup> Following this triumphal entry, the House of Commons heard Prynne’s testimony and in April 1640 declared the Star Chamber sentence against Prynne to be “unjust” and “illegal, and given without any just Cause or Ground”; by June, the Commons approved a bill regulating the Privy Council and abolishing Star Chamber altogether.<sup>169</sup> The public

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<sup>166</sup> Prynne, *A new discovery of the prelates tyranny, in their late prosecutions of Mr William Pryn, an eminent Lawyer; Dr. Iohn Bastwick, a learned physitian; and Mr. Henry Burton, a reverent divine* (London: 1641), 114.

<sup>167</sup> Qtd in Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, 230-31; Hobbes qtd in Ethyn Williams Kirby, *William Prynne: A Study in Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1931), 53.

<sup>168</sup> Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, 230-31.

<sup>169</sup> Bastwick’s ruling was likewise reversed on 25 February 1640, and Burton’s on 24 March that year. For Prynne, see “House of Commons Journal Volume 2: 20 April 1641,” *Journal of the House of Commons*:

suffering and triumph of Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton dramatized how the Caroline government and its instruments, including Star Chamber and ecclesiastical prelates, had enacted vicious persecution resembling even that great tyrant, Nero. Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton had openly characterized Charles as such, and they were not alone; in 1639, the year before their triumph, Thomas May had likewise warned the public of such Neronian tyranny through the printing of his previously acted *Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*. What Nero's stories provided for these writers was a powerful and imaginative portrait of tyranny, understood as a perversion of the tyrant's soul, gender, identity, and even his gendered body, which inevitably led to the destruction of family, court, church, and kingdom. An emasculated monarch, they argued, disordered political society and perverted religious belief and practice, thereby leaving subjects corrupted in a fallen world. Neronian history thus contested and deconstructed the image of sacred monarchy in dangerous, significant and very public ways, and should be considered as one significant cultural and intellectual origin of the civil wars which would soon erupt in Britain.

## Chapter 4

### John Milton on Domestic Virtue, Public Liberty, and the Failure of the Royal Marriage

“In the first place, [the King] did enormous harm to his people by his example; secondly, the time he spent on his lusts and pleasures, which was a great deal, was all stolen from the state which he had undertaken to govern; finally, his domestic extravagance wasted huge sums of money, countless wealth that was not his own but belonged to the state. It was then within his own household that he began to be a bad king.”

John Milton, *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (1651)<sup>1</sup>

Like Edmund Bolton in his *Nero Caesar* (1624) and other royalists before him who had sought to separate the public rule from the “private lives of Princes...(which often times doe not concerne the people in any point so much as not to haue them laid open),” Claudius Salmasius in his *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I* (1649) argued that a king’s private character and domestic activities would not dictate his ability to govern well. A renowned Protestant scholar at Leyden, Salmasius defended monarchy and condemned the English regicide by arguing that even a king “*vinosus est & libidinosus & luxuriosus & prodigus & avarus*” will nonetheless not stand in the way of good governance, for personal vices, including murder and adultery, which may be committed by magistrates as well as private citizens, have nothing in common with those crimes committed in

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<sup>1</sup> *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 10 volumes, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-1982), IV.2.52-21. Hereafter cited as *CPW*.

ruling and administering the empire.<sup>2</sup> In the case of King Charles, however, the English had been blessed with a “good, pious, chaste, and religious prince,” whose matchless purity of character brought to perfection the Christian virtues, according to Salmasius.<sup>3</sup> Although accused by the “English rebels and parricides” of ruling like Nero as a “tyrant, traitor, and murderer,” Charles had been just and benevolent to his people.<sup>4</sup> Salmasius argued that kings should set virtuous examples for their subjects, but, as they are anointed by God, they are above the law and can be judged by God alone.

John Milton, however, held that there was an essential relationship between a monarch’s character and his ability to govern for the people’s welfare and liberty; simultaneously, he contended that the character and disposition of the people was a “mighty factor in the acquisition or retention of liberty.”<sup>5</sup> Whether discussing the private citizen, then, or the public magistrate, Milton contended in his *Defensio Secunda* (1654) that “true and substantial liberty,” including ecclesiastical, domestic or personal, and civil liberty, is that “which must be sought, not without, but within, and which is best achieved not by the sword, but by a life rightly undertaken and rightly conducted.”<sup>6</sup> For this reason, Milton argued in the early 1650s that the personal character of King Charles, and his activities “within his own household,” including debauchery, lust, wasteful

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<sup>2</sup> “Regum quoque vita, ut & magistratum interior, & domestica, civium vitiis laborat, quæ nihil habent cum iis criminibus commune, quem in regnando & administrando imperio committuntur...cui tamen hi mores à bene regendo no obstant....Non tamen idem semper qui bene vixit, etiam optimè rexit.” Salmasius continued by claiming that the reverse is true: the king who is righteous in his private life may not be a good ruler, citing Emperor Trajan as an example. He named King David as an example of one who lived a vicious private life of homicide and adultery but ruled well. Claudius Salmasius, *Defensio Regia pro Caroli I ad Serenissimum Magnæ Britanniae Regem Carolum II. Filium natu majorem, Heredem & Successorem legitimum. Sumptibus Regiis.* (n.p.: 1649), 626-28.

<sup>3</sup> “Si querimus quomodo vixerit Carolus, ne inimici quidem ejus, ac rebelles subjecti, qui caput illi scelerato judicio, quasi homini facinoroso securi carnificis amputarunt, aliter possunt dicere, quin bonus, pius, castus & religiosus princeps fuerit...” Ibid., 629-30.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 631-33, e.g. “Quasi non sufficeret nocentem fecisse, & proscelerato latrone ad mortem condemnasse, crudeliorem Nerone & omnibus modis pejorem traducunt.”

<sup>5</sup> *CPW*, IV.680; See also IV.343, 367, 391-92; I.420.

<sup>6</sup> *CPW*, IV.624.

extravagance, murder, and idolatry, had resulted in the tyrannical misgovernance of the commonwealth. Due to these “private” vices, the King had publicly oppressed the people with heavy taxation, then squandered the monies on depraved and luxurious practices; murdered his own subjects and petitioned foreign armies to do so; unlawfully billeted troops in private homes; and submitted the consciences of godly men to violence by forcing “all certain rituals and superstitious practices which he had brought back into the church from the depths of popery.”<sup>7</sup> Because Milton believed that “the king was, until his last breath, so treacherously hostile that it was quite evident that, as long as he lived, our faith would be in danger and our freedom lost,” he supported the public trial, condemnation, and execution of Charles in January of 1649, and argued passionately in defense of England’s revolution which most Europeans found scandalous and sacrilegious.

This chapter aims to take seriously Milton’s claim in the *Defensio*, “It was then within his own household that [Charles] began to be a bad king.”<sup>8</sup> Although Milton explicitly leveled this charge after the regicide, the chapter argues that Milton’s articulation of the relationship between virtue and liberty, private character and public governance, was central throughout his career, and that he diagnosed the vices of idolatry, lust, and extravagance as emasculating and particularly pernicious to individuals, households, churches, and governments. This chapter seeks to demonstrate, therefore, how Milton adopted the gendered vocabulary of tyranny studied in earlier chapters of this dissertation, and how it came to shape his definition of republicanism and his explicit criticisms of the King and Queen. When we consider the centrality of

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<sup>7</sup> *CPW*, IV.372-73, 408, 431, 512, 520-23.

<sup>8</sup> “*Itaque domi rex malus primum esse coepit.*”

conceptions of virtue, gender, and family in characterizations of tyranny and good governance, Milton's public defense during the civil war of "domestic or personal liberty" as indispensable for civil and ecclesiastical liberty appears significant and fitting; for as Milton himself described, "in vain does he prattle about liberty in assembly and market-place who at home endures the slavery most unworthy of man, slavery to an inferior."<sup>9</sup> As we will see, Milton first defined and defended masculine virtue in the 1620s and 1630s, and by the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* in 1644, he defended the freedom of divorce by arguing that a man's marriage shapes his private character and masculinity, and thereby determines a man's ability to lead a virtuous and godly life in service of the commonwealth. Marriage thereby became indispensable for virtuous, free and participatory government: in a word, republicanism. Applying these arguments to King Charles and his Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria, Milton condemned Charles's vices "within his own household," including the King's uxoriousness, effeminacy and popery, and he argued that the royal marriage had corrupted the King beyond reform.

Previous chapters have demonstrated how oppositional writers in Jacobean and Caroline England adopted imaginative and historically-centered stories and genres to draw attention to the problems and dangers of monarchical rule and to criticize the Stuart kings and court as corrupt and potentially (or actually) tyrannical. These writers often condemned tyranny in highly gendered terms, describing monarchical failure as a failure in manliness, or more particularly, portraying the King as lacking rational authority in the household and state, military prowess, prudence, virility, and constancy. Within this cultural and political milieu, Milton's poetry and prose, even in his early career, contested and criticized Charles and the royal court. Scholars have long debated whether Milton

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<sup>9</sup> *CPW*, IV.625.

“at every stage...took up a reformist and oppositional stance,” as Barbara Lewalski has argued, or whether his political radicalization and animosity toward royalism and the King developed fully only later in his career.<sup>10</sup> Due partially to the complex spectrum of English political associations during this period, and Milton’s fusion of both royalist and poetic forms and topics in his early poetry, several scholars have cautioned against arguing that Milton consistently opposed Caroline court culture before his production of *Lycidas* in 1637.<sup>11</sup> However, these scholars have often failed to pay significant enough attention to the centrality of gendered political arguments in Caroline England, and to Milton’s employment of gendered language within this context. From his early characterization of manliness and emasculating vice to his later castigations of the “sonnetting” King Charles, Milton opposed what he understood to be an effeminate, idolatrous, and dangerous royal household and court. In these ways, Milton’s writings had a corrosive effect on the image of monarchy well before the civil war.

Milton consistently adopted an ethical outlook promoting godliness, wisdom, chastity, and temperance as those virtues which equipped men to live rightly, and castigating idolatry, ignorance, intemperance, and extravagant luxury as emasculating

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara Lewalski, “How Radical was the Young Milton?” in *Milton and Heresy*, eds. Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (Cambridge and NY: Cambridge UP, 1998), 49-72, esp. 50; George F. Sensabaugh, *That Grand Whig Milton* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1952); Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977); Andrew Milner, *John Milton and the English Revolution: A Study in the Sociology of Literature* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1981); Annabel Patterson, “‘Forc’d Fingers’: Milton’s Early Poems and Ideological Constraint,” in *The Muses Commonwealth: Poetry and Politics in the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988), 9-22; David Aers and Gunther Kress, “Historical Process, Individual and Communities in Milton’s Early Prose,” in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century (Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1980)*, eds. Francis Baker, et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1981), 283-300.

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas McDowell, “The Caroline Court,” in *Milton in Context*, ed. Stephen B. Dobranski (Cambridge: Cambridge 2010), 237-47, esp. 246; Thomas N. Corns, “Milton before ‘Lycidas,’” in *Milton and the Terms of Liberty*, eds. Graham Parry and Joad Raymond (Suffolk and Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 23-36, esp. 23-24. See also David Lowenstein, “‘Fair Offspring Nurs’t in Princely Lore’: On the Question of Milton’s Early Radicalism,” *Milton Studies* 28 (1992): 37-48.



men and enslaving them to brutish and slavish appetites. In *De Doctrina Christiana* (1825), which he composed throughout his career,<sup>12</sup> he outlined this very catalogue of “special virtues” including temperance, sobriety, chastity, frugality, and high-mindedness, as regulating “our appetite for external advantages.”<sup>13</sup> When he believed them to be corrupted by the vices opposing these “special virtues,” Milton criticized, and in some cases rejected, the faculty and students at Cambridge, the court, the bishops and clergy, and the monarch. For this ethical structure, Milton was largely indebted to Plato—“Milton’s darling!” as Samuel Taylor Coleridge termed him.<sup>14</sup> Milton accepted Plato’s tripartite division of the soul into reason, will and appetite, and applied this doctrine to understand the individual soul and political society: justice as the harmony of the soul and the city, tyranny as the rule of appetite over reason, etc.<sup>15</sup> From this psychology, Milton considered what constituted the good life, concluding with Socrates in the *Republic* that pursuing fame, wealth, or pleasure would not satisfy the deepest of human longings or lead to psychic harmony. In his seventh Prolusion, a disputation he delivered at Cambridge probably in the autumn of 1630, Milton passionately argued the Platonic view that human beings are “insatiably desirous of the highest wisdom,” and that contemplation of the Good, “conjoined with integrity of life and uprightness of character” would lead men to true happiness.<sup>16</sup>

As a young man, Milton committed himself to the pursuit of truth and godly, upright living, especially in regard to the “special virtues” of temperance and chastity. In

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<sup>12</sup> *CPW*, VI.117-21. See also Maurice Kelley, ed., “Introduction,” in *CPW*, VI.15-22.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 724-37.

<sup>14</sup> *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, vol II (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 866.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Agar, *Milton and Plato* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1928), 12-18; Irene Samuel, *Plato and Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1965), 159. For example, see *CPW*, I.293.

<sup>16</sup> *CPW*, I.291-92.

his “*Elegia Sexta*” to Charles Diodati (1629), Milton claimed that the serious epic poet, which he desired to become, should “live sparingly, like the master of Samos (Pythagoras)” and even when young be “free of crime and chaste,” with “strict morals, and a hand free from stain.”<sup>17</sup> Milton seems to have adopted such a lifestyle even while at Cambridge, living in the midst of the youthful misrule characteristic of student life. Studying the male youth culture of early modern Cambridge, Alexandra Shepard has demonstrated how young men often asserted their manhood by performing rituals of excess, bravado, and violence, including nocturnal escapades, binge drinking, brawling, slanderous speech, and sexual exploits.<sup>18</sup> To “establish himself as a man,” according to Anthony Fletcher, a boy was expected to engage fully in this libertine and unruly lifestyle, especially demonstrating his sexual prowess.<sup>19</sup> In his early student years, Milton found “almost no intellectual companions” at Cambridge, as he confided to his friend Alexander Gil,<sup>20</sup> and he was generally unpopular for his “honest haughtiness.” Although his fair complexion may have contributed to taunting, it seems it was his rejection of the rowdy masculine culture at Cambridge and his refusal to participate in the fraternal bonding of his peers that earned him the mocking and emasculating nickname, “The Lady at Christ’s College.”<sup>21</sup> Milton refuted this nickname, and the culture of masculinity supporting it, in a public speech he delivered at the conclusion of the summer term in July 1628. After relating that his fellow students the year before had failed to

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<sup>17</sup> Milton, *Elegia Sexta. Ad Carolum Diodatum Ruri Commorantem*, in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, eds. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (NY: Modern Library Edition, Random House, 2007), 192.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Shepard, “Youthful Excess and Fraternal Bonding,” in *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 93-126.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 92-3.

<sup>20</sup> *CPW*, I.314.

<sup>21</sup> *CPW*, III.304; Aubrey claimed that Milton was called the “Lady” because of his “exceeding faire” complexion, and Anthony à Wood repeated the information. See *CPW*, I.283n.

present this annual speech because they “had shown such activity in the town” that they had been excused from the duty, Milton reveled in the irony that this year, he, the so-called “Lady,” had received the title “Father” as the master of ceremonies for the occasion, and took the opportunity to defend what he understood to be truly masculine:

Some of late called me ‘the Lady.’ But why do I seem to them too little of a man? Have they no regard for Priscian? Do these bungling grammarians attribute to the feminine gender what is proper to the masculine, like this? It is, I suppose, because I have never brought myself to toss off great bumpers like a prize-fighter, or because my hand has never grown horny with driving the plough, or because I was never a farm hand at seven or laid myself down full length in the midday sun; or perhaps because I never showed my virility in the way these brothellers do. But I wish they could leave playing the ass as readily as I the woman.<sup>22</sup>

Here Milton rejected masculinity defined through violence, physical labor, a ruddy complexion, or sexual bravado. Milton continued acting in the temperate ways of “true masculinity” upon leaving Cambridge four years later. During his European tour of the late 1630s when confronted with notorious cities “where so much licence exists,” Milton claimed in his *Defensio Secunda* that he had lived “free and untouched by the slightest sin or reproach, reflecting constantly that although I might hide from the gaze of men, I could not elude the sight of God.”<sup>23</sup> By the publication of his 1645 *Poems*, Milton could confidently maintain that he was impervious to becoming frenzied by Cupid’s arrows, for the “shady Academia offered its Socratic streams, and made me unlearn the burden which I had taken up.”<sup>24</sup>

As Milton committed himself to temperate living, and understood this commitment as necessary for true manliness, he condemned vicious excess, especially as

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<sup>22</sup> *CPW*, I.284.

<sup>23</sup> *Defensio Secunda* (1654), *CPW*, IV.620.

<sup>24</sup> Milton, *Haec Ego Mente* (a postscript to his elegies), in *Complete Poetry of Milton*, 198.

he saw it fostered in irreligion and idolatry. At the age of 17, he composed a Latin miniature epic about the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, *In Quintum Novembris* (1626), which celebrated the triumph of Protestantism over what he understood to be the emasculating intemperance, extravagance, and idolatry of “popery.”<sup>25</sup> Like other Protestants in the 1620s, Milton drew a strict distinction between Protestant and Catholic worship, characterizing their beliefs and practices as binary opposites. Whereas true religion rested upon the authority of God and scripture alone, Catholics followed the dictates of man and the Church, and hailed the created rather than the Creator as their authority.<sup>26</sup> Protestants likewise maintained that Catholics insulted God’s power by insisting that human effort was necessary for divine justification. Such usurpation of true authority resulted in idolatry, the worship of false, human-made idols, images, sacraments, and vestments over the right worship of God. Anti-Catholic discourses adopted gendered imagery to portray the threat of such rebellious idolatry, constructing Catholics as unruly, insubordinate, and treacherous women and the Catholic Church as the grotesque Whore of Babylon. Protestant writers defending the “true religion” regularly accused papists of moral degradation, especially libertinism, sodomy, effeminacy and tyranny, for they understood popery as perverting natural desires and practices into unnatural ones and as undermining the just hierarchies and restraints of patriarchal authority and moral law.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I employ the derogatory terms “popery” and “papists” when referring to English Protestant representations of Roman Catholicism.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Lake, “Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice,” in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, eds. Richard Cust and Anne Hughes (NY: Longman 1989), 72-106, esp. 74.

<sup>27</sup> Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999), 36-37, 49-54; Peter Lake with Michael Questier, *Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2002), 54-99; John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 197-223 and 282-87; Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford UP, 1971), chap. 1.

The binary opposition that Milton understood between temperate virtue and intemperate vice became easily mapped onto this Protestant-Catholic dichotomy.

Milton's *In Quintum Novembris* warned that the English nation must be defended from that "fierce tyrant" Satan and the treacherously wicked Pope, whose alliance might again result in a plot against England much like the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.<sup>28</sup> *In Quintum Novembris* maligned popery as idolatrous, extravagant, and hypocritical by presenting the ceremonial procession for St. Peter's Eve in mocking terms, with genuflecting Princes and beggarly monks roaring Bacchanalian hymns and "singing orgiastic songs," bearing with them "gods made of bread."<sup>29</sup> After the ceremony, Satan enters the Pope's private rooms, which Milton described as "his bridal chamber (for the secret adulterer does not spend fruitless nights without a soft whore)." The devil has donned the self-effacing costume of Saint Francis in an attempt to deceive and persuade that great deceiver, the Pope, to arise from his soft bed and attack those "sacrilegious" sinners, the English nation. By the end of his speech, Milton's Satan successfully coaxes the Pope to avenge the scattered Spanish Armada and reestablish the "Marian ages" of Catholicism in England by organizing conspirators to blow up the parliamentary meeting house by gunpowder. Satan finally assures the Pope that he should not be afraid of enacting this plot, for "the gods and goddesses are favorable, all the divinities that are celebrated in your holidays."<sup>30</sup> Having thus depicted the Pope as thoroughly idolatrous, lustful, cowardly, and corrupt, Milton claimed that the Lord, on the side of "his people" in England, "looks down and laughs at the vain efforts of that perverse mob" of popish

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<sup>28</sup> Stella P. Revard, *Milton and the Tangles of Neaera's Hair: The Making of the 1645 Poems* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 56.

<sup>29</sup> Milton, *In Quintum Novembris*, in *Complete Poetry of Milton*, 207.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-29.

conspirators and calls upon Rumor to reveal this hidden treachery. The poem concluded hastily with the perpetrators being brought to justice and Englishmen celebrating God's protection.<sup>31</sup>

Milton crafted this damning portrayal of Roman Catholicism in 1626, a significant moment when popish idolatry seemed to threaten "right religion" and the freedom of the English commonwealth both at home and abroad. On the Continent, England's Protestant allies had just suffered several major blows in the Thirty Years War, with the city of Breda falling into Spanish control in 1625 after a long siege, and Christian IV of Denmark being soundly defeated by an Imperial army at the Battle of Luter in August of 1626. At home, Charles had recently assumed the throne, with his intentions and ability to support the Protestant cause being openly criticized in Parliament and his marriage to a French Catholic princess raising further suspicions. In 1625 and 1626, the Commons questioned and denounced the royal chaplain Richard Montague for his anti-Calvinism, leniency toward Rome, and support of prayers to the saints; meanwhile, with the death of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, William Laud filled the post of dean of the Chapel Royal and received the promise of the archbishopric of Canterbury. On June 15, 1626, after the House of Commons drew up a Remonstrance of the commonwealth's ills and lampooned the royal favorite, Buckingham, Charles dissolved Parliament and forfeited the military subsidies he needed to support the European war.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, it is significant that Milton's *In Quintum Novembris* and other poems from 1625-27 celebrated the noble deeds of Protestants fighting on the Continent while characterizing Catholics as enforcing idolatrous worship not through open warfare

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 211-13.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 2, p. 86-87.

but through trickery befitting of Satan. In his miniature epic, for example, Milton contrasted the “devout” James, who in the daylight summons lords, noblemen, and aged counselors to the meeting house, with the Pope, who in the night meets secretly with a disguised Satan to enact his power through cowardly plots and conspiracies. His poem further warned, perhaps in light of Charles’s recent marriage to a French Catholic, that the French and Spanish had planned to invade England and reestablish Marian rule had the Gunpowder Plot succeeded.<sup>33</sup> In the same year, Milton composed his “*Elegia Tertia*” for Lancelot Andrewes (1626), whose death had prompted Laud’s promotion to dean of the Royal Chapel. In it, Milton like Thomas May and George Chapman supported the Protestant military effort on the Continent while lamenting the death of those captains who had suffered defeat in open war: “And I remembered the heroes whom all Belgia saw snatched up into the skies and mourned as lost leaders.”<sup>34</sup> Unlike other university students in these years, Milton did not commemorate the death or funeral of James, nor Charles’s coronation or wedding to Henrietta Maria, nor Charles and Buckingham’s visits to Cambridge, nor the births and deaths of royal children.<sup>35</sup> Instead of celebrating Buckingham’s Cambridge visit, Milton composed “*Elegia Quarta*” (1626) to his Puritan tutor Thomas Young, comparing Young’s exile from Charles and Henrietta to Elijah as he fled King Ahab and that “dire woman of Sidon,” the idolatrous Queen Jezebel.<sup>36</sup>

While significant, Milton’s references to contemporary politics remained oblique in the 1620s, but one of his closest boyhood friends, Alexander Gil, Jr., received harsh

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<sup>33</sup> Milton, *In Quintum Novembris*, 209.

<sup>34</sup> Milton, “*Elegia Tertia, In Obitu Præsulis Wintoniensis*,” in *Complete Poetry of Milton*, 177; Lewalski, “How Radical was the Young Milton?,” 52. For May and Chapman, see chapter 3 above.

<sup>35</sup> Not until later, such as in his first *Defensio*, would Milton bombastically charge Buckingham with murdering James by poison. See *CPW*, IV.372-73, 408, 451.

<sup>36</sup> Milton, “*Elegia Quarta. Ad Thomam Iunium Praeceptorem Suum....*,” in *Complete Poetry of Milton*, 184; Lewalski, “How Radical was the Young Milton?,” 52-3.

censure for explicit protestations. A few years before Milton's *In Quintum Novembris*, Gil wrote a vituperative poem rejoicing in the death of 90 Roman Catholics when their Blackfriars' chapel collapsed; as the incident had occurred on 5 November (according to the Catholic Gregorian Calendar), he understood it as God's revenge for the Gunpowder Plot.<sup>37</sup> After the death of the Duke of Buckingham in 1628, Gil drank to the health of John Felton, Buckingham's assassin, and reportedly said that "if ther were a hell & a divell in it, surely the duke was there."<sup>38</sup> Two days later, he further disparaged the late King James and King Charles, who he swore had only enough wit to keep a shop. After incriminating "libels and letters" by Gil were found, perhaps even including "The Five Senses," which articulated anxieties concerning the potentially homosexual relationship between Buckingham and James, court and judicial corruption, and the creeping influence of "popery" on the court, Gil received the sentence of being degraded from the ministry and dismissed from his ushership at St. Paul's School, deprived of his Oxford degrees, fined £2000, publicly mutilated by the cropping of his ears, and imprisoned in the Fleet Prison at the King's pleasure.<sup>39</sup> Through the successful petitioning of his father, Gil escaped mutilation but remained in prison for over two years.

Just before this incident in 1628, Milton had written to Gil complaining about the lack of intellectual companions he had found at Cambridge as compared to London, where Gil resided, and the poor state of theological scholarship at the university, where students "completely unskilled and unlearned in Philology and Philosophy alike," patch

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<sup>37</sup> See Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 9. The poem was entitled, *In ruinam camerae Papisticae Londoni Octob. 26* (1623).

<sup>38</sup> Public Records Office, *State Papers* 16/117 and 16/111/15.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon Campbell, "Gil, Alexander, the younger (1596/7–1642?)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10730>]; See "From such a face whose Excellence," or "The Five Senses," at *Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources*, eds. Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, *Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series* I (2005), [<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/texts/libels/>].



together such hodge-podge and inexpert sermons as would “make one fear that the priestly Ignorance of a former age may gradually attack our Clergy.”<sup>40</sup> His later letter to Gil in 1634 proposing they meet “on Monday in London (God willing) among the Booksellers,” and their exchange of Greek and Latin verses, demonstrate that their friendship continued well after Gil’s public censure.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after leaving Cambridge in the 1630s, Milton even more forcefully articulated his staunch opposition to idolatry, extravagance, and intemperance, and those in civil or religious power who displayed their corrupted characteristics. His lengthiest exploration of the emblematic struggle between temperate virtue and intemperate vice can be found in *A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle, or Comus* (1634), which he composed for the Earl of Bridgewater and his family just after the Earl’s appointment as Lord President of Wales and the Marches.<sup>42</sup> Featuring three of the Earl’s own children in its performance at Bridgewater’s estate in Wales, far removed from the royal masques of the Stuart court, Milton’s masque located virtue within the Earl’s family and household, while simultaneously decrying the court revelry found in London and Whitehall as enslaving and viciously corrupt.

*A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle, or Comus* celebrated the triumph of chastity over wanton gluttony and sexual indulgence by telling the tale of a pure Lady, who becomes lost in a wood and is taken prisoner by the corrupt and deceitful magician,

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<sup>40</sup> *CPW*, I.314.

<sup>41</sup> *CPW*, I.322. In 1632, Gil turned from insulting the King to publishing a collection of poems, *Parerga*, in his honor. While demonstrating Gil’s new loyalty and deep respect for the King and Laud, the publication could also be understood as offering advice to the King, through which Gil may have hoped to instruct and even reform his monarch for virtuous rule.

<sup>42</sup> For an excellent description of the political circumstances of this masque, see Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, “The Milieu of Milton’s *Comus*: Judicial Reform at Ludlow and the Problem of Sexual Assault,” *Criticism* 25 (1983): 293-327; see also Marcus, “Milton’s Anti-Laudian Masque,” in *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986), 169-212.

Comus. Comus ensnares the Lady at his lecherous banqueting hall, but through her steadfast and chaste resolution, she repels his advances until saved by her brothers, an Attendant Spirit, and Sabrina the river goddess. Similar to the jeering characterization of popery through Satan and the Pope in *In Quintum Novembris*, Milton's *Mask* provided an extensive portrait of luxury and sexual perversion through the character of Comus. The offspring of Bacchus and Circe, Comus roams the dark woods searching for a new foolish human to enslave. He is a master necromancer, using his "orient liquor in a Crystal Glasse" and wand to transform wayward travelers into "som brutish form" of wild animal, and thus cause their outward appearance to mirror their brutish inner appetites.<sup>43</sup> The stage directions note that these revelers were "headed like sundry sorts of wilde Beasts, but otherwise like Men and Women."<sup>44</sup> This mixture of beastly head and human body in the masque's costumes perhaps emphasized their condition as corrupted human beings, with their appetites ruling as reason should. "[S]o perfect is their misery," the *Mask* explained, that they "Not once perceive their foul disfigurement, / But boast themselves more comely then before."<sup>45</sup> Echoing anti-Catholic rhetoric that associated idolatry and moral corruption with the intimate household rebellion of mothers and wives, Milton further portrayed Comus and his deceptive activities as effeminate, having been corrupted by his lewd and rebellious mother who named him and brought him up in her "witcheries."<sup>46</sup> He seeks power and revelry through treacherous secret plots, much as Satan and the Pope had done, and he likewise betrays idolatrous

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<sup>43</sup> Milton, *A MASK Presented at LUDLOW-Castle, 1634* in *John Milton Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. Stella P. Revard (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), lines 60-70 and 522, p. 90 and 104.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 73-75, p. 90.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 56-58 and 522, p. 90 and 104. See Lake, *Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat*, 54-99; Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 49-54.

tendencies, being so “aw-strook” by the beauty of the Lady’s noble brothers that he “worshipt” them.<sup>47</sup> Intemperate, extravagant, deceptive, effeminate, and idolatrous, Comus embodied Milton’s conception of excessive vice.

This ribald spectacle of Comus and his “rout of Monsters” dancing in a disorderly fashion echoed the anti-masques of the royal court entertainments which the King and Queen had performed in the years just preceding Milton’s *Mask. Tempe Restor’d* (1632), for example, opened with Circe having enamored a young Gentleman by giving him “to drinke of an enchanted Cup, and touching him with her golden wand transformed him into a Lyon.”<sup>48</sup> *Loues triumph through Callipolis* (1631) also opened with “certain Sectaries, or depraud Louers” dancing “with anticke gesticulation...expressing their confus’d affections.”<sup>49</sup> In these royal masques, the Queen and King, through their virtuous splendor and wedded harmony, cleanse the city before transcending into an exquisite garden where “*Beauty and Love*” may flourish in their household and kingdom. Milton’s masque, however, directly challenged this image of the regal court purifying the disordered and sinful city. In what would have been a shocking departure from generic expectations, Milton’s Comus is not overcome or purified by courtiers, but himself transforms into a court masquer, leading the Lady out of the woods into a “stately Palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness,” including “soft Musick, Tables spread with all dainties.”<sup>50</sup> By bringing the Lady to his “stately Palace,” Comus tempts his aristocratic audience with the extravagant luxury and riotous idolatry that Milton and others associated with Caroline Cavalier culture. As Barabara Lewalski and Cedric Brown have

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<sup>47</sup> Milton, *Mask*, lines 302-303, p. 98.

<sup>48</sup> Aurelian Townshend, *Tempe Restor’d. A Masque presented by the Queene, and fourteene ladies, to the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall on Shrove-Tuesday. 1631* (London: 1632), 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Milton, *Mask*, 108.

demonstrated, the striking political criticism of this scene would not have been missed, especially as Comus's speeches echoed the *Carpe Diem* and *Carpe Floream* poems popular amongst Cavalier poets in the period.<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, Comus's words likewise insulted the ideal conception of beauty which the Queen herself had personified in royal entertainments. *Tempe Restor'd*, for example, had stated that "Corporeall *Beauty*, consisting in simetry, colour, and certain vnexpressable Graces, shining in the Queenes Maestie, may draw vs to the contemplation of the *Beauty* of the soule, vnto which it hath Analogy." Similarly, the lusty Comus in Milton's *Mask* contended that the Lady should "be not coy," for "Beauty is natures brag, and must be shown / In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities / Where most may wonder at the workmanship."<sup>52</sup> The Lady's response to Comus does not defend beauty as the Queen might have – arguing that her outward beauty was a reflection of inner virtue and could, thereby, transfix the observer to contemplating divine beauty. Rather, the Lady described a sobering devotion to chastity, which Comus could not nearly comprehend due to his depravity:

Thou hast nor Eare, nor Soul to apprehend  
The sublime notion, and high mystery  
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginitie<sup>53</sup>

Such virginitie opposes intemperate waste, lust, and idolatry of all kinds, according to the Lady. Whereas Comus's speech beckoned the Lady to revel in and worship the "waste fertility" of nature's bounty, the Lady lives according to the "sober laws/...of spare

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<sup>51</sup> Barbara Lewalski, "Milton's Comus and the Politics of Masquing," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, eds. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 296-320, esp. 309; Cedric Clive Brown, *John Milton's Aristocratic Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 57-77; see also David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (Oxford and NY: Oxford UP, 2002), 238.

<sup>52</sup> Townshend, *Tempe Restor'd*, 19; Milton, *Mask*, lines 739-47, p. 111.

<sup>53</sup> Milton, *Mask*, lines 784-87, p. 112.

Temperance,” and explains that if “every just man that now pines with want” had a moderate share in “that which lewdly-pamper’d Luxury / Now heaps upon som few with vast excess,” all would be blessed with plenty.<sup>54</sup>

Royal masques particularly glorified the wedded harmony of the royal couple, with *Albion’s Triumph* (1632), for example, proclaiming that Charles and Henrietta’s “happy Vnion...was preordeyned by the greatest of the Gods.”<sup>55</sup> Adopting the fashionable Neoplatonism of the Caroline Court, the masques styled Henrietta and Charles as complementary lovers — Divine Beauty and Heroic Lover, Intellectual Light and Reason, Will and Understanding — whose union would help them and their kingdom transcend the lower sensual and appetitive desires to achieve rational and psychic harmony. Milton’s *Mask*, however, warned of the vicious enslavement of a bad union. Comus becomes enamored with the Lady after spying her in the woods and hearing her song. Exclaiming that “such a sacred, and home-felt delight, / Such sober certainty of waking bliss / I never heard till now,” he vows that “she shall be my Queen.”<sup>56</sup> The brutish Comus and the virtuous Lady would clearly make a disastrous alliance, one comprised only of lurid physical sexuality, and the language Milton adopted throughout the *Mask* fittingly emphasized procreation in grotesque and corrupted forms: Comus and his monstrous rout celebrate the “Dragon woom / Of Stygian darknes” which “spets her thickest gloom, / And makes one blot of all the ayr”; the Attendant Spirit portrays Comus as hidden “Within the navil of this hideous Wood”; Comus describes his court as containing “all the pleasures / That fancy can beget on youthfull thoughts,” and Nature as

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., lines 764-75, p. 111-12.

<sup>55</sup> Aurelian Townshend, *Albions Triumph, Personated in a maske at court. By the Kings Maiestie and his lords. The Sunday after Twelfe Night. 1631* (London, 1631), 2.

<sup>56</sup> Milton, *Mask*, lines 262-65, p. 97.

being “strangl’d with her waste fertility.”<sup>57</sup> This emphasis finds its fullest articulation in the elder brother’s speech, when he contends that lustful corruption swells up within the body and impregnates one with monstrous spawn:

but when lust  
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
But most by leud and lavish act of sin,  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite loose [lose]  
The divine property of her first being.<sup>58</sup>

Milton stressed that Comus himself has been thus polluted, being born and bred through Circe’s lustful womb, reveling in the swollen woods as he imbibes intemperate vice. His marriage plans would enact the ravishment of the Lady, impregnating her with metaphorical and actual defilement. Milton’s language in the *Mask* emphasized the metaphorical defilement of lustful procreation, but he would continue to worry about the actual political ramifications of it. Possibly as early as 1639, Milton noted in his commonplace book that lecherous or unfit unions would harm the commonwealth by producing children lacking in virtue and character: “Bonficase says...that a people born of lechery and unalwful union will be sluggish and very destructive of the fatherland.”<sup>59</sup>

In the 1637 expanded edition of the *Mask*, the Lady’s story concluded with a tribute to pure marriage, and perhaps a gesture to the future marriage of Bridgewater’s daughter, Lady Alice, who played the part. In this speech presented by the Attendant Spirit, the sensual relationship of Adonis and Venus, who sits “sadly” by as Adonis heals from his deep wound, is contrasted with the legitimate and consensual union of “Celestial

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., lines 130-31, 266, 520, 668-69, 729, p. 92, 97, 104, 109-10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., lines 463-69, p. 102-103.

<sup>59</sup> *CPW*, I.369.

*Cupid*” who “farr above in spangled sheen...Holds his dear *Psyche* sweet intranc’t.”<sup>60</sup>

Here the *Mask* followed the tradition of Christian allegorists who understood Apeleius’s fable in *The Golden Ass* of Psyche laboring to marry Cupid as representing the soul’s quest for union with Christ. Psyche has won her place as Cupid’s “eternal Bride” through “wandring labours long,” just as Revelation 19:7 described, “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”<sup>61</sup> Their offspring are not the messy products of sensual desire, but rather “Two blissful twins.../ Youth and Joy.”

Before his publication of *Lycidas* in 1637, Milton had already articulated a staunch opposition to those intemperate vices which would enslave and brutalize one, and in his *Mask*, he defended the chaste lifestyle and hinted that a pure marriage, modeled upon the mystical union of Christ and his believers or Church, would bring one to full satisfaction. Milton’s *Mask* located temperate virtue within the persons and households of the countryside, rather than stately royal palaces. Indeed, the Lady states that “courtesie, / ...oft is sooner found in lowly sheds / With smoaky rafters, then in tapstry Halls / And Courts of Princes, where it.. / is most pretended.”<sup>62</sup> *In Quintum Novembris* demonstrated the wicked and dangerous plots which could result from vicious, effeminate, and popish belief and practice. By characterizing and castigating vice and tyranny through these highly personal and gendered terms, Milton’s early writings reflected the criticisms of James and Charles which contemporaries leveled through historical exempla.

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<sup>60</sup> Milton, *Comus*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston and NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), lines 1003-5, p. 170.

<sup>61</sup> King James Version. See William Shullenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth: Milton’s Comus as Initiation* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2008), 270.

<sup>62</sup> Milton, *Mask*, lines 323-26, p. 98.

It was not until the eruption of civil war in the 1640s, however, that Milton fully developed and expressed his conviction that personal character, “marriage and the family” is the very foundation of a free commonwealth and must be “set right first” before the commonwealth could be reformed.<sup>63</sup> As he explained in the revised introduction to the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce; Restor’d to the good of both Sexes* (1644):

He who marries, intends as little to conspire his own ruine, as he that swears Allegiance: and as a whole people is in proportion to an ill Government, so is one man to an ill mariage....For no effect of tyranny can sit more heavy on the Common-wealth, then this household unhappines on the family. And farewell all hope of true Reformation in the state, while such an evill as this lies undiscern’d or unregarded in the house. On the redresse whereof depends, not only the spiritfull and orderly life of our grown men, but the willing, and carefull education of our children.<sup>64</sup>

In this significant passage, Milton outlined the parallel and fundamental relationship between the aims of household and political society and the means of establishing and protecting these aims. Neither political nor familial society intended the ruination of men or their happiness; their end, rather, is toward a “spiritfull and orderly life,” which Milton defined throughout his treatise as a life of virtuous activity, intellectual conversation, liberty of conscience, and the right worship of God. No man entered a marriage seeking his own destruction, Milton argued, but when finding himself suffering from the tyranny of a bad marriage, he had the liberty, and perhaps even the duty, to dissolve the bonds of matrimony. In his divorce pamphlets, Milton never expressly argued for the parallel right of revolution, but his description of the relationship between the marriage oath and the oath of allegiance, and his address of this treatise “*To The Parliament of England, with the Assembly*” as that Parliament waged war against the King, clearly indicated Milton’s position in favor of revolution.

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<sup>63</sup> *The Ivdgement of Martin Bucer, concerning Divorce* (1644), *CPW*, II.431.

<sup>64</sup> *CPW*, II.229-30.



It has been maintained since Milton's anonymous "earliest" biographer that, although Milton already held strong convictions regarding divorce, these convictions became urgent after his new wife, Mary Powell, abandoned him in 1642.<sup>65</sup> Due largely to this biographical point, Milton's divorce pamphlets have been combed for their personal and autobiographical significance but have not received the attention they deserve for what they say concerning politics and the household.<sup>66</sup> Milton developed his account of marriage and domestic liberty in the divorce tracts not only at a moment when his wife abandoned him, but also at a moment in which he and other Englishmen had entered civil war with a king they regarded as badly married, being enthralled by the Catholic "idoltrous heretick," Henrietta Maria. In the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and other divorce writings, Milton argued that good marriage is necessary for men and their commonwealth to attain and maintain liberty, while bad marriage threatened individual and corporate godliness and freedom. Although largely absent in his earlier writings, this view of marriage was essential for Milton's virtue ethics, specifically his championing of temperance and his vilification of intemperance, idolatry, and luxury described above. In light of this view, and in consideration of Milton's

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<sup>65</sup> "He...could ill bear the disappointment hee mett with by her obstinate absenting: And therefore thought upon a Divorce, that hee might bee free to marry another; concerning which hee also was in treaty. The lawfulness and expedience of this...had upon full consideration & reading good Authors bin formerly his Opinion: And the necessity of justifying himselfe now concurring with the opportunity, acceptable to him, of instructing others in point of so great concern...hee...writt The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." Qtd in Ernest Sirluck, "Introduction," *CPW*, II.138.

<sup>66</sup> Cedric Brown's article is one exception. See "Milton and the Idolatrous Consort," *Criticism* 35.3 (Summer 1993): 419-39. Apart from autobiographical concern, scholars have studied the pamphlets in connection to Milton's views on metaphysics, theology, ecclesiastical reformation, and Biblical hermeneutics. See, for example, Arthur Barker, "Christian Liberty in Milton's Divorce Pamphlets," *The Modern Language Review* 35.2 (Apr. 1940): 153-61; Stephen M. Fallon, "The Metaphysics of Milton's Divorce Tracts," in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, eds. David Lowenstein and J. G. Turner (NY: Cambridge UP, 1990), 69-83; Kenneth R. Kirby, "Milton's Biblical Hermeneutics in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*," *Milton Quarterly* 18 (1984): 116-25; Claude A. Thompson, "The *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, 1643-45: A Biographical Study," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 7.1 (1977): 74-93.

explicit writings against Charles and Henrietta's marriage in the 1640s and 1650s, the chapter will conclude by exploring Milton's argument that Charles's tyranny began within his own household.

Milton's divorce tracts outlined an extensive argument for the recognition of divorce as a private liberty, separate from legal policy and religious mandate. Whereas English law deemed divorce a legal and religious violation except in cases of adultery, impotence, or failure to consummate, and at most allowed for separation *a mensa et thoro* without hope of remarriage, Milton pursued a liberalization of divorce to include mental and temperamental incompatibility as reasonable grounds for separation, and for that separation to include the right of remarriage for both parties.

In *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton defined marriage and its importance by maintaining that men have a "pure" and "inbred desire" not to be left alone, a desire to be joined together in "conjugal fellowship" with a "fit conversing soul." This desire, which "is properly call'd love," could only be satisfied in marriage by uniting two minds "fitly dispos'd, and enabl'd to maintain a cherful conversation, to the solace and love of each other, according as God intended and promis'd in the very first foundation of matrimony."<sup>67</sup> Milton modeled the relationship between husband and wife on the Biblical description of Adam and Eve in Genesis, in which God declared that it was "*not good that man should be alone,*" and thereby made a "*help meet for him*" by creating woman.<sup>68</sup> In *Paradise Lost*, Milton later dramatized Adam's recognition of this deep desire for unification when Adam names the animals in the garden:

I named them, as they passed, and understood  
Their nature, with such knowledge God endued

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<sup>67</sup> *CPW*, IV.251 and 328.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.245-46.

My sudden apprehension: but in these  
I found not what methought I wanted still;<sup>69</sup>

In this scene, Adam understands and knows the animals, but their company cannot fulfill his rational longing for a “fit soule” to converse with. A wife, in Milton’s view, accomplishes her role as a “help meet” through providing intellectual conversation for her husband. Although contemporary interpretations of the Genesis story often limited Eve’s role of helping Adam to procreation, Milton treated procreation as a “secondary end in dignity, though not in necessity” of marriage.<sup>70</sup>

Echoing the distinction between Comus’s desire for marriage and the marriage of Cupid and Psyche in his *Mask*, Milton’s definition of marriage emphasized the union of minds rather than bodies, signified by his description of the desire for union as a “rationall burning.” Throughout the pamphlets he vehemently argued that the satisfaction of that “other burning, which is but as it were the venom of a lusty and over-abounding concoction” and the related procreation of children were not God’s intended purpose in creating marriage.<sup>71</sup> To make this point palpable to his readers, Milton characterized physical sexuality which lacked “the souls union and commixture of intellectual delight” as vile and disgusting: “rather a soiling then a fulfilling of mariage-rites”; the “disappointing of an impetuous nerve” in the “channell of concupiscence”; the flowing “quintessence of an excrement”; and the “Promiscuous draining of a carnal rage.”<sup>72</sup>

Milton’s argument here relied upon an uncompromising dualism between body and mind, with the privileging of the “solace and satisfaction of the mind...before the sensitive

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<sup>69</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *Complete Poetry of Milton*, VIII.352–5, p. 507.

<sup>70</sup> *CPW*, IV.235. For contemporary views, see James Grantham Turner, “The State of Eve’: Female ontogeny and the politics of marriage,” in *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 96-123.

<sup>71</sup> *CPW*, IV.251.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.248-49 and II.355.

pleasing of the body.”<sup>73</sup> As Stephen Fallon has persuasively argued, Milton employed such dualistic language not to describe the ideal marriage or sexual life, but to vilify his contemporaries who affirm “the bed to be the highest [end] of marriage” and thus privilege the body over the mind.<sup>74</sup> Milton contended that the tradition of Canon lawyers and the laws of England so privileged the body because they limited divorce to bodily justifications, including adultery, non-consummation, and impotence. By defining marriage as a fellowship of souls, Milton could argue for divorce on the grounds of dispositional, mental, and spiritual incompatibility.<sup>75</sup>

To describe the ideal marriage, Milton instead adopted a monist perspective, which understood souls and bodies as manifestations of the same substance.<sup>76</sup> Through this view, Milton could argue that a marriage which united minds through conversation would not eradicate the union of bodies, but transform it. That which “flows” in a good marriage would be a “far more precious mixture” of “acts of peace and love”; the sexual act would be transformed to “the pure influence of peace and love, whereof the souls lawfull contentment is the onely fountain.”<sup>77</sup> In such a marriage, the spiritual and sexual are combined, logos and eros made companions. Milton’s description of the marriage relationship as “meet and happy conversation” thereby encapsulated both the rhetorical

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., IV.246.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., IV.269; Fallon, “The Metaphysics of Milton’s Divorce Tracts,” 69. See also Turner, *One Flesh*, 199-210.

<sup>75</sup> However, as Fallon has shown, Milton’s monism collapses the strong distinction between body and soul, and thereby renders humoral physiology as partly determining compatibility. See Fallon, “The Metaphysics of Milton’s Divorce Tracts,” 78-79.

<sup>76</sup> As Fallon has well documented, Milton’s mature rationalization of monism would not be revealed until *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*. See “The Metaphysics of Milton’s Divorce Tracts”; see also “Material Life: Milton’s Animist Materialism” in *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1991), 79-110, esp. 89-98.

<sup>77</sup> CPW, IV.248-49

and sexual connotations of the word “conversation,” but only when a marriage initially forged the minds of compatible partners.

Milton argued that good marriages, and the corresponding liberty of divorce to eradicate bad marriages, would greatly benefit men, women, and the commonwealth. In the preface to Parliament in the revised second edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton argued that good marriage and its protection by the allowance of divorce would

restore this his lost heritage into the household state; wherwith be sure that peace and love, the best subsistence of a Christian family will return home from whence they are now banisht; places of prostitution will be less haunted, the neighbours bed lesse attempted, the yoke of prudent and manly discipline will be generally submitted to, sober and well order'd living will soon spring up in the Common-wealth.<sup>78</sup>

Marriage that supported the union of minds, in Milton's estimation, better served the home and commonwealth, for “all human society must proceed from the mind rather than the body, els it would be but a kind of animal or beastish meeting.”<sup>79</sup> Rather than emphasizing the production of physical children, thereby, he characterized the intercourse of fit souls as producing tangible acts of peace and love for human society. Against opponents who deemed him libertine for supporting divorce and remarriage, Milton argued that the “liberty” of divorce would support true manliness and guard against sexual “licence,” prostitution, or adultery, not lead to it: “the agrieved person shall doe more manly, to be extraordinary and singular in claiming the due right [of divorce] whereof he is frustrated, then to piece up his lost contentment by visiting the Stews, or stepping to his neighbours bed, which is the common shift in this mis-fortune.”<sup>80</sup> And

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., IV.230.

<sup>79</sup> CPW, IV.275.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., IV.247.

those men whose “rationall burning” had been fulfilled through good marriage could resist the lower burnings of brutish sexual desire.<sup>81</sup> Because the happily married man, in Milton’s account, is physically, intellectually, and spiritually fulfilled, he can live virtuously and in control of his own and his household’s affairs. He need not, nor does he desire, to resort to lower sordid or illicit sexual relations as effeminate, enslaved or tyrannical men do. Milton maintained that the well-married man is prudent, manly, and free to act upon his conscience; he can thereby rightly order his household and serve the commonwealth.

Even the single man can easily curb the flesh through practices of temperance, Milton contended, but only marriage can satisfy that “inbred” desire of “joyning to it selfe in conjugall fellowship a fit conversing soul.” In a significant passage, Milton quoted from the *Song of Songs* to describe the depth and nature of this desire for intellectual union: it is “*stronger then death, as the Spouse of Christ thought, many waters cannot quench it, neither can floods drown it.*”<sup>82</sup> Contemporaries generally understood the *Song of Songs* as an allegorical description of the loving and salvific relationship between humans and their God, with the Beloved or “Bride of Christ” signifying both individuals and the Church. Here Milton’s reference echoed the many contemporary articulations of love as a mighty affection unrelentingly drawing men to union. As the puritan preacher Richard Sibbes described in *A Glance of Heaven* (1638), “where there is true love, and affection, there is a desire of union, of knitting and coupling with the thing loved, of necessitie it must be so:...it hath a magneticall force, the

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<sup>81</sup> This is not to claim that Milton supported the commonplace Pauline argument that a purpose of marriage was to satisfy lust. Milton boldly denies this claim. See “not properly the remedy of lust, but the fulfilling of conjugall love and helpfulness,” *CPW*, IV.252-53; II.339; IV.326-27; IV.246-47.

<sup>82</sup> *CPW*, IV.251.

force of a Load-stone.”<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Milton’s assertion of Christian liberty throughout the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* likewise harmonized with Biblical commentators in the 1630s and 1640s who utilized the *Song of Songs* to encourage individual spiritual experience rather than obedience to the authority of Church and State.<sup>84</sup> The specific verse Milton referenced (*Song of Songs* 8:7) was often employed to connect martyrology and mystical marriage, describing how the martyr might endure all suffering and humiliation due to his all-consuming desire for union with Christ. By referencing the *Song of Songs* in the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton signaled that the human desire for *earthly* marriage was affective, powerful, and uncompromising and an end in itself, remedying that “intelligible flame” for companionship. And yet, just as the *Song of Songs* pointed beyond earthly union to the mystical marriage of Christ and his Beloved, Milton’s argument for marriage emphasized that good marriage yielded significant benefits necessary for psychic harmony and the godly life, which in turn, were necessary for spiritual transcendence and the true worship and love of God.<sup>85</sup>

Simultaneously, Milton’s rhetorical strategy in the divorce pamphlets included frequent vigorous warnings about the harmful effects of bad marriage on individual men and the commonwealth. Whereas good marriage would allow men to perform virtuous acts of peace and love, Milton argued that unfit marriage caused men to “dispair in vertue,” and throughout the pamphlets he describes how these men would become enslaved to lust, loneliness, intemperance, inconstancy, wrath, melancholy, and sloth.

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Sibbes, *A glance of Heaven, or, A precious taste of a glorious feast* (London: 1638), 176.

<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion, and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 6-9, 61-62, 111-112; Barker, “Christian Liberty in Milton’s Divorce Pamphlets,” 160.

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion, in turn, of how republicans adopted the marriage metaphor to denote the divine purpose of the ideal commonwealth, see Sharon Achinstein, “Saints or Citizens? Ideas of Marriage in Seventeenth-Century English Republicanism,” *Seventeenth Century* 25.2 (Autumn 2010): 240-64.

Whereas good marriage refines the soul to rational and transcendent existence, bad marriage pulls men down to bestial and corrupt subservience:

That the ordinance [of marriage] which God gave to our comfort, may not be pinn'd upon us to our undeserved thralldom; to be coop't up as it were in mockery of wedlock, to a perpetual betrothed lonelines and discontent, if nothing wors ensue. There beeing nought els of mariage left between such, but a displeasing and forc't remedy against the sting of a brute desire; which fleshly accustoming without the souls union and commixture of intellectual delight, as it is rather a soiling then a fulfilling of marriage-rites, so it is enough to imbase the mettle of a generous spirit, and sinks him to a low and vulgar pitch of endeavour in all his actions, or, which is wors, leavs him in a despairing plight of abject & hard'n'd thoughts.<sup>86</sup>

Throughout the divorce pamphlets, Milton's portrait of the man enslaved in bad marriage is rich and evocative. To escape desperation and loneliness, this man loses his "manly discipline" and seeks brutish sexual pleasure, only to find himself further debased and dissatisfied. Discontent leads to "vexation and violence" and "hatred"; the children produced become "*children of wrath and anguish*."<sup>87</sup>

At the same time, Milton argued that the man badly married also suffered through "slavery to an inferior," his wife.<sup>88</sup> Although his view of marriage elevated women from a mere partner of physical procreation to an intellectual "help meet," Milton decisively supported that "wholsom Law," as he called it, "*that every man should beare rule in his own house*."<sup>89</sup> Employing a number of Biblical examples, Milton contended that God created men and women with different *teloi*, the woman being "created for man, and not man for woman." For this reason, Milton deemed the unhappily married man without the liberty of divorce "overthrown" in his authority as "head of the other sex which was

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<sup>86</sup> *CPW*, IV.339. See also IV.254.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.258-60.

<sup>88</sup> For an explanation of this slavery in Aristotelian terms, see David Hawkes, "The Politics of Character in John Milton's Divorce Tracts," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62.1 (Jan. 2001): 141-160, esp. 146-47.

<sup>89</sup> *CPW*, IV.325; on procreation and marriage, see Turner, *One Flesh*, 120-23.



made for him.”<sup>90</sup> His “honour and preeminence” in the household thus overruled, his rationality and virtue overridden, the unhappily married man would become emasculated and enslaved.

According to Milton, the consequences of this unhappy state of marriage are public as well as private, political as well as domestic, extending far beyond the enslaved man to his wife, household, friendships, and wider society. As he later described in *Tetrachordon* (1645), a bad marriage “degenerates and disorders the best spirits, leavs them to unsettl’d imaginations, and degraded hopes, careles of themselvs, their houshold and their friends, unactive to all public service, dead to the Common-wealth.”<sup>91</sup> Thralldom to bad marriage causes the “endles aggravation of evil” by making men incapable of virtue, and thereby incapable of friendship, good household governance, and political activity. This view was consistent with Milton’s wider corpus of writing, in which he frequently warned his fellow Englishmen that the freedom of their commonwealth depended upon their *own* character and liberty:

my fellow countrymen, your own character is a mighty factor in the acquisition or retention of liberty. Unless your liberty is such as can neither be won or lost by arms, but is of that kind alone which, sprung from piety, justice, temperance, in short true virtue...there will not be lacking one who will surely wrench [it] from you.<sup>92</sup>

Like Englishmen before him, Milton arrived at this view by studying the example of the Romans, who becoming “unruly, and impotent with overmuch prosperity,” were no

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<sup>90</sup> *CPW*, IV.347.

<sup>91</sup> *CPW*, II.632. See also IV.347.

<sup>92</sup> *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* (1651) in *ibid.*, IV.2.680; Milton concluded *Eikonoklastes* (1649) by likewise claiming, “The happiness of a Nation consists in true Religion, Piety, Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and the contempt of Avarice and Ambition. They in womsoever these vertues dwell eminently, need not Kings to make them happy, but are the architects of thir own happiness,” *CPW*, III.542. In the *Readie and Easie Way* (1659), Milton also contended “...to fall back, or rather to creep back so poorly as it seems the multitude would, to thir once abjur’d and detested thralldom of kingship, not only argues a strange degenerate corruption suddenly spread among us, fitted and prepared for new slaverie, but will render us a scorn and derision to all our neighbours.” *CPW*, VII.356-57.

longer “fit to be free” and thereby simultaneously “became slaves” to “thire owne ambition and luxury” and to monarchy.<sup>93</sup> When men became privately enslaved to their passions, and domestically enslaved to an inferior, their commonwealth would become publicly and corporately enslaved to an unjust ruler.

As we have seen, in the earlier seventeenth century Englishmen had articulated this relationship between the private and public through the study of ancient history; however, scholars have generally overlooked how Milton’s divorce pamphlets greatly augmented this view. In these pamphlets, Milton argued that an ideal marriage, in which the compatible husband and wife engage in “meet and happy conversation,” is *essential* for masculine nature to reach its perfection. A harmonious and rightly ordered marriage leads to a harmonious and purified soul; the well-married man, in Milton’s view, achieves not only bodily, rational and political fulfillment, but even spiritual fulfillment. Earlier seventeenth-century portraits of republican men such as Virginius had stressed the necessary relationship between virtuous household rule and good political rule, but Milton’s pamphlets elevated marriage as having spiritual as well as political significance. He argued that a fit union between husband and wife would lead to physical, intellectual, and spiritual purification and transcendence, and by extension, the freedom and good governance of the commonwealth.<sup>94</sup> Marriage thereby became a primary and central institution to promote virtue and political participation.

That Charles’s marriage to Henrietta Maria failed to qualify as a good marriage is clear in the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, for Milton argued that marriage to an

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<sup>93</sup> Milton, *Commonplace Book*, CPW, I.420.

<sup>94</sup> For a discussion of later republican languages of marriage, see Achinstein, “Saints or Citizens?”

“Idolatresse” was a “mis-yoked” marriage, which could never achieve the true fellowship of spouses:

Where there is no hope of converting, there alwayes ought to be a certain religious aversation and abhorring, which can no way sort with Mariage: Therefore saith S. Paul, *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousnesse? what communion hath light with darknesse? what concord hath Christ with Beliall? what part hath he that beleeveth with an Infidell?*<sup>95</sup>

Sacrificing the wedded harmony achieved in good marriage, the man married to a heretic would “despair in vertue” like all unhappily married men. His virtue and manliness compromised, he would become subjected to bodily desires and incapable of serving the commonwealth.

And perhaps even more worryingly, according to Milton, marriage with a committed Idolatress would “alienate [a husband’s] heart from the true worship of God.” Milton contended throughout his divorce pamphlets that the idolatrous wife would “pervert” her husband “to superstition by her enticing sorcery” or “disinable him in the whole service of God through the disturbance of her unhelpful and unfit society.” As they “shall perpetually at our elbow seduce us from the true worship of God, or defile and daily scandalize our conscience by their hopeles continuance in misbelief,” Milton contended, idolatrous wives would weaken their husband’s “Christian fortitude with worldly perswasions,” and unsettle their “constancie with timorous and softning suggestions.”<sup>96</sup> At last, “through murmuring and despair,” the Christian husband would be driven even to “Atheism.”<sup>97</sup> So ruled by their idolatrous wives, and abject in idolatrous worship, these husbands endure the worst form of slavery. Milton thereby

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<sup>95</sup> *CPW*, II.262.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, II.263.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, II.260.

urged the Christian man to consider a “totall and finall separation” from a heretical partner, lest he suffer defilement and be reduced to such bondage and irreligion.<sup>98</sup>

Although Milton did not directly label or reference Henrietta Maria as an idolatress in his divorce pamphlets, the fact that he detested her religious practice and feared its influence upon his King and commonwealth is clear. The year after Charles married Henrietta, Milton had crafted *In Quintum Novembris*, and in the years following he consistently identified popery as inherently idolatrous and enslaving. The continuance of this view in the 1640s can be ascertained through the strident criticisms he leveled in five anti-prelatical pamphlets against the ceremonial worship and episcopacy of the Laudian Church, which he likened to the sensual “Idolatry” of Catholic worship and the placing of a “Pope in every Parish.”<sup>99</sup> Between May 1641 and April 1642, Milton argued in these pamphlets that ritualistic worship corrupted the soul, pulling her “wing apace downward” from heaven by “over-bodying her...in performance of *Religious duties*.”<sup>100</sup> Such practice enslaves the worshipper’s soul and prevents him from the true religion and knowledge of God, Milton argued in *Of Reformation* (1641), for with “her pineons now broken” and her “heavenly flight” forgotten, the soul is “left the dull, and droyling carcas to plod on in the old rode, and drudging Trade of outward conformity.”<sup>101</sup> Milton here claimed that perverted religion enslaved the soul in carnal or fleshly pursuits, much as he had argued previously. Exchanging “cheerefull boldness” for “Servile, and thral-like

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., II.263.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., I.522 and 570. The ritualistic worship and Arminianism of Laud was most associated with Catholicism. See Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 282-87; Achash Guibbory, “John Milton: carnal idolatry and reconfiguration of worship, part 1, 1634-1660,” in *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 147-86; Neil Forsyth, “The English Church,” in *Milton in Context*, 292-302.

<sup>100</sup> *CPW*, I.522.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

feare,” Milton contended, the people become subservient to internal fear and external tyranny, both religious and political.<sup>102</sup> Thus, in *An Apology Against a Pamphlet* (1642), Milton argued that “God hath inseparably knit together” religion and “native liberty,” and “hath disclos’d to us that they who seek to corrupt our religion are the same that would intrall our civill liberty.”<sup>103</sup> Throughout his career, Milton consistently understood “popery,” ritualistic worship and prelacy, that Catholic ecclesiastical structure, as drawing individuals from the true worship of God and the commonwealth from just laws. As he later summarized in his first *Defensio*, “We cannot bear popery, for we know that it is less a religion than a priestly despotism under the cloak of religion, arrayed in the spoils of temporal power which it has violently appropriated in defiance of the clear teaching of Christ.”<sup>104</sup>

At the same time that Milton prepared these statements for his anti-prelatical pamphlets in the early 1640s, he concluded that marriage “with one of a different religion [is] dangerous” through a study of the history of Charles’s courtship to the Spanish Infanta and marriage to Henrietta Maria.<sup>105</sup> Drawing upon André Du Chesne’s *Histoire D’Angleterre, D’Escosse, et D’Irlande* (1614), Milton noted in his commonplace book the personal and political dangers of a Catholic match for a commonwealth, as it would subject Charles individually and England collectively to the thralldom of the Catholic religion. He recorded that Pope Gregory XV had sent a letter to Charles in 1623 calling him “a favourer of the Catholick cause...and of the Roman prælacie, because he sought in

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid. and I.853. See also Blair Worden, “Milton’s republicanism and the tyranny of heaven,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, eds. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 225-46, 236.

<sup>103</sup> *CPW*, I.923-24.

<sup>104</sup> *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (1651), *CPW*, IV.2.321-22.

<sup>105</sup> *CPW*, I.399.

marriage a daughter of Spain.” Of especial interest to Milton, and to other “hotter Protestants” in this period, were the details of Charles’s approval of the terms of his marriage and his permission for English Catholics to practice their religion.<sup>106</sup>

Milton was not alone in flagging Pope Gregory’s letter as significant. In 1642, perhaps at the same time that Milton wrote his commonplace book entry, an anonymous pamphleteer translated this letter and Charles’s cordial reply to the Pope into English, and thereby brought it to the attention of the English public. A year later, William Prynne reprinted the English translation of these letters in *The Popish Royall Favourite* (1643), claiming that the letters and articles of the Spanish Match “layd the foundation stone of all his Maiesties ensuing favours to Romish Recusants, Priests, Iesuites...and his good affection and inclination to the Roman Party, if not to that Religion, even since manifested towards them.”<sup>107</sup> Charles’s letter to the Pope could have been understood as merely complimentary. According to John Rushworth’s translation printed in 1659, Charles expressed only his “Moderation, as to abstain from such actions which may testifie our hatred against the *Roman* Catholick Religion.”<sup>108</sup> The anonymous pamphlet of 1642 and Prynne’s pamphlet in 1643, however, fashioned Charles’s reply as a highly suspicious concession to Catholicism, and led Englishmen such as Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon to assert that “the letter to the Pope by [Charles’s] favour is more than

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<sup>106</sup> This is clear because of the page numbers Milton listed in his commonplace book. See *CPW*, I.399. See also Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 98-99.

<sup>107</sup> *Behold! Two Letters, the one, Written by the Pope to the (then) Prince of Wales, now King of England: the other, An Answer to the said Letter, by the said Prince, now his Maiesty of England. Being an Extract out of the History of England, Scotland, and Ireland; Written in French by Andrew du Chesne, Geogropher to the K. of France, (lib. 22. fol. 1162. Printed at Paris cum privilegio) and now Translated into English.* (London?: “Printed in the yeare of Discoveries” 1642). Reprinted in 1648. William Prynne, *The Popish royall favourite or, a full discovery of His Majesties extraordinary favours to, and protections of notorious papists, priestes, Jesuites, against all prosecutions and penalties of the laws enacted against them* (London: 1643), 36.

<sup>108</sup> John Rushworth, *Historical collections of private passages of state Weighty matters in law. Remarkable proceedings in five Parliaments. Beginning the sixteenth year of King James, anno 1618. And ending the fifth year of King Charls, anno 1629* (London: 1659), 82-83.

compliment.”<sup>109</sup> Milton himself cited this letter several times as proof of Charles’s Catholicism. Arguing in his first *Defensio* that Charles’s beheading was not enacted by Protestants against a Protestant king, Milton contended, “Can he really be called Protestant who in writing to the pope hailed him as ‘Most Holy Father,’ and who was always more kindly disposed toward Papists than toward the Orthodox?”<sup>110</sup> And in *Eikonoklastes* (1649), Milton cited the letter a number of times as proof that Charles had “ingag’d himself to hazard life and estate for the Roman Religion.”<sup>111</sup>

Milton thereby considered marriage to one of a different religion to be dangerous, especially as it concerned the English monarch marrying a Spanish Catholic who sought to evangelize England. In another commonplace book entry on Paolo Sarpi’s *History of the Council of Trent*, he again confirmed this view by recording the speech of a divine at the Council of Trent who claimed that Philip II of Spain had “‘married Mary of England for no other end than to reduce that Island to that religion.’”<sup>112</sup> Charles’s eventual marriage to the French Henrietta, however, troubled Milton and other Protestants for it threatened to contaminate the royal household and heir to the throne. Prynne, for

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<sup>109</sup> Clarendon letter to Secretary Nicholas, Jersey, Feb. 12 1646-47, in *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, vol. II, ed. Rev. W. Dunn Macray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869), 337. Compare, for example, the following two translations of the same sentence: “Therefore your Holiness may be assured, That we are, and always will be of that [ A] Moderation, as to abstain from such actions which may testifie our hatred against the *Roman* Catholick Religion; we will rather embrace all occasions whereby through a gentle and fair procedure all sinister suspitions may be taken away; That as we all confess one Individual Trinity, and one [ B] Christ Crucified, we may unanimously grow up into one Faith.” Rushworth, *Historical collections*, 82-83. Anonymous Pamphlet: “Therefore I intreate your Holynesse to believe, that I have been alwaies very far from encouraging Novelties, or to be a part of any Faction against the Catholike, Apostolike Roman Religion: But on the contrary, I have sought all occasions to take away the supicion that might rest upon me, and that I will employ my selfe for the time to come, to have but one Religion and one faith, seeing that we all beleve in one Jesus Christ.” *Behold! Two Letters*, 6.

<sup>110</sup> *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (1651), *CPW*, IV.327-28.

<sup>111</sup> *CPW*, III.537. Milton here showed his awareness that people debated whether the letter was “in complement...or in earnest.” He contended that either way, “God, who stood neerer then he for complementing minded, writ down those words; that according to his resolution, so it should come to pass.” See also *CPW*, III.421 and 515.

<sup>112</sup> This entry was under the label, “Mariage with Papists dangerous to England,” *CPW* I.402.

example, warned that Englishmen “have great cause to feare (if *Adams, Solomons, or Ahabs* seducements by their wives be duly pondered) that his Majesty, (now wholly alienated from his Parliament, and best Protestant Subjects, by the Queen and popish Counsellors...) may ere long be seduced to their Religion.”<sup>113</sup> In his commonplace book, Milton recorded that Charles’s marriage to the French Henrietta “was no lesse dangerous if the conditions obtained by the Marquesse D’Effiat, and Richelieu be true.” From the list of these concessions, including Henrietta’s “libre exercice de la Religion Catholique. Apostolique & Romaine” and the placement of private chapels in all of her palaces, Milton noted in particular “that the children should be bred in the papists religion till 13 years old.”<sup>114</sup>

For Milton, who understood Catholic thought and practice as enslaving the intellect and soul of its practitioners and simultaneously threatening the civil liberty of a commonwealth, this concession would have seemed dangerous indeed. The royal children would be “bred in the papists religion” in three senses, being formed and birthed through the womb of the Catholic Henrietta, raised in ceremonial practices of the faith, and educated in its doctrine.<sup>115</sup> As medical views in this period generally held that mothers had the ability to shape and alter the disposition and attributes of their fetuses in the womb, Henrietta’s Catholic disposition, which would be imprinted upon the future king, posed a substantial threat to the future of English liberty.<sup>116</sup> This marriage concession further reinforced Protestant associations of Catholicism with unruly women,

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<sup>113</sup> Prynne, *Popish Royall Favourite*, 59.

<sup>114</sup> In his commonplace book, Milton listed the page numbers of where Du Chesne listed these conditions. See André Du Chesne, *Histoire D’Angleterre, D’Escosse, et D’Irlande...* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition rev. et augm. (Paris, 1641), 1182-84.

<sup>115</sup> See *OED*, “breed, v.” definition 1a and 10b and (b).

<sup>116</sup> See chapter 2 above, p. 123, fn. 66.



especially the view that Catholic women corrupted the foundations of household and society through their marriages and their rearing of children in the Catholic faith. Catholic households were often characterized as schools of lawlessness and godlessness, so much so that Parliament proposed legislation for “the taking of Papists’ children from them” to be educated in Protestant households or schools nine times between 1605 and 1649.<sup>117</sup> After forming the royal children in her womb, the Queen and her Catholic advisors would have 13 years to ensure that the seeds of the Catholic faith would take root and thrive in the minds and hearts of the royal children.<sup>118</sup> Milton’s fears were shared by Parliament, which in November 1641 ordered that the Queen relinquish custody of her son to a governor named by Parliament to protect the Prince of Wales from popish, and thereby tyrannical influence; simultaneously in the publicly printed *Grand Remonstrance* (1641), Parliament associated the Irish rising with a Papist faction at court and the Queen’s Catholicism, threatening to impeach her.<sup>119</sup> For Milton in the early 1640s, Charles’s marriage to Henrietta exemplified the “danger” of marrying outside one’s religion: it would corrupt the monarch, his children and household, and England as a whole. And Charles’s contractual terms of marriage ensured that there would be no hope of converting Henrietta to the “true religion.”

That Charles did not forsake Henrietta, but indeed adopted her ritualistic practices and popery for the English Church and state, became a significant contention in Milton’s later prose works. His observations that Charles and his household had adopted

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<sup>117</sup> Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 137. See also 55-57, 124-27, 136-56.

<sup>118</sup> For similar fears concerning James’s formation through the womb of Mary Stuart, see chapter 2 above, pg. 119-25.

<sup>119</sup> Michelle Anne White, *Henrietta Maria and the English Civil Wars* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 49-59; C. V. Wedgwood, *The King’s War, 1641-47* (London: Collins, 1959), 47. See *A Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom*, Die Mercurii 15 Decemb. 1641, *It is this day Resolv’d upon the Question, By the House of Commons, That Order shall be now given for the Printing of this Remonstrance, of the State of the Kingdom* (London: 1641), esp. 5, 13-14, 21, 23-24.

intemperate practices that went hand-in-hand with idolatry, including debauchery, extravagance, and secret plots, deepened this conviction. In *Eikonoklastes* (1649) and the *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (1651), Milton passionately argued that Charles's tyranny and his failure to rule England for the sake of liberty and right religion had resulted from his intemperate moral character and from a bad marriage which had corrupted him and his household.

In the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton had forcefully warned against marriage with an "idolatrous Heretick," due to the "spirituall contagion" of idolatry and the threat that such a wife would "pervert him to superstition by her enticing sorcery." Should the man fail to convert his idolatrous wife, he would face disastrous consequences by continuing in the marriage, including his loss of virtue, constancy, manliness, sexual continence, and his ability and desire to serve the commonwealth. Most significantly, his heart would become alienated from the true worship of God leading even "to thoughts of Atheism."<sup>120</sup> In the wake of the regicide in 1649, Milton was commissioned to write *Eikonoklastes* in response to *Eikon Basilike* (1649), a highly popular and sympathetic "Portrature of his sacred Majesty in his *Solitudes and Sufferings*" which legitimated Charles's rule and presented him as a persecuted king and royal martyr. Milton sought to shatter this royalist portrait, in part by demonstrating that the King had not only failed to convert Henrietta to the "true religion," but had even hindered her conversion through his own moral and political failings. These failings included the "dissoluteness of his Court, the scandals of his Clergy, the unsoundness of his own judgement, the lukewarmness of his life, his Letter of compliance to the Pope, his permitting Agents at *Rome*, the Popes

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<sup>120</sup> *CPW*, II.260.

*Nuntio*, [and her Jesuited Mother] here.”<sup>121</sup> Rather than being drawn to conversion, the Queen “had bin averse from the Religion of her Husband...every yeare more and more,” Milton claimed.<sup>122</sup> Charles’s particular lack of constancy in religion, and his general failure to live a temperate and virtuous life, hindered him from converting his wife, and at the same time made him particularly susceptible to her enchantments. It was “her Religion,” Milton explained, that “wrought more upon him, then his Religion upon her, and his op’n favouring of Papists, and his hatred of them call’d Puritants...made most men suspect she had quite perverted him.”<sup>123</sup>

As would be expected from his previous writings concerning marriage and virtue, Milton argued that Charles and Henrietta’s relationship had significant political consequences:

[Charles] ascribes *Rudeness and barbarity worse then Indians* to the English Parliament, and *all vertue* to his Wife, in straines that come almost to Sonnetting: How fitt to govern men, undervaluing and aspersing the great Counsel of his Kingdom, in comparison of one Woman. Examples are not farr to seek, how great mischeif and dishonour hath befall’n to Nations under the Government of effeminate and Uxorious Magistrates. Who being themselves govern’d and overswaid at home under a Feminine usurpation, cannot but be farr short of spirit and authority without dores, to govern a whole Nation.<sup>124</sup>

Here Milton portrayed Charles as bewitched by the “enticing sorcery” of his idolatrous wife, his ethical outlook being so corrupted that he idealized Henrietta, rather than the Parliament of elected men, as the model of “*all vertue*.” In an inversion of the gendered hierarchy, Charles became subservient to female rather than male advice, as his

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., III.421-22. For the letter to the Pope, see above p. 240-42.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., III.420.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> *CPW*, III.421.

passionate affection for Henrietta clouded his judgment.<sup>125</sup> Thus, Milton described such a marriage as a “Feminine usurpation,” and the magistrate as “effeminate” for being thus ruled by a woman. Milton further represented this subservience by describing the King’s emasculate “straines that come almost to Sonnetting,” thereby characterizing Charles’s desire for Henrietta as irrational and unmanly, and simultaneously associating Charles with a Cavalier court culture that Milton had mockingly criticized through his depiction of *Comus*.<sup>126</sup>

In this passage, Milton echoed the many criticisms leveled at the royal marriage in the 1640s, which had warned that within the intimate space of the bedroom the Queen could effectively persuade the King toward idolatrous rule. As the anonymous author of *The Great Eclipse of the Sun, or Charles His Waine Over-Clouded, by the Evill Influences of the Moon* (1644) contended, the King “should have been a *Sun*, shining by example and maintaining the *Light* of the *Gospel*,” but he was “totally eclipsed by [the Queen’s] Counsell, who under the Royall Curtaines, perswaded him to advance the Plots of the Catholikes, under the colour of maintaining the *Protestant Religion*.” His affections thus governed by the “*Curtaine Lecture*,” he began to “look with a discontented brow upon his Parliament” and enact Popish plots against the English people. Had Charles “Conquer’d himselfe, Conquer’d his own passion, subdu’d his affection to Poperie and subiected himselfe to reason, and come home unto his

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<sup>125</sup> See Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 124-25; Michelle A. White, “‘She is the man, and Raignes’: Popular Representations of Henrietta Maria during the English Civil Wars,” in *Queens & Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, eds. Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 205-223.

<sup>126</sup> See above, p. 222-25.

Parliament,” the pamphlet argued, he would not have killed and terrorized his own subjects.<sup>127</sup>

Milton had argued in his divorce pamphlets that it was the thralldom of bad marriage, not the legal allowance of divorce, which would lead men to vicious license and their neighbor’s adulterous bed. His later *Defensio* made this claim true for the King, stating that Charles had been lured to idolatry by his wife, and that his resulting indecent and depraved behavior had been observed even in the public theater: “he kisses women wantonly, enfolds their waists and, to mention no more openly, plays with the breasts of maids and mothers.”<sup>128</sup> Milton’s portrait of Charles was reminiscent of the decadent and debauched Comus, as Charles passed much of his time on “lusts and pleasures” and “in feasting and plays and troops of women.”<sup>129</sup> Because of his royal position, however, these otherwise “private” vices greatly harmed the liberty and religious faith of the English nation, Milton argued. To support his “life of luxury,” the King “imposed very heavy taxes on the people” and abolished Parliament; he also forcibly restrained the English people by stationing troops in their towns. At the same time, Charles “did great violence to the conscience of godly men, and forced on all certain rituals and superstitious practices which he had brought back into the church from the depths of popery.”<sup>130</sup> Himself being “lured to idolatry” and then enslaved by a popish wife, Charles not only “lured others by the richest rewards of a corrupt church,” Milton further contended, “but also compelled them by edicts and ecclesiastical regulations to erect

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<sup>127</sup> Anon., *The great eclipse of the sun, or, Charles his waine over-clouded, by the evill influences of the moon, the malignancie of ill-aspected planets, and the constellations of retrograde and irregular starres* ([London]: 1644), 3-4.

<sup>128</sup> *CPW*, IV.372-73 and IV.408.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* and IV.520.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.520-22.

those altars which are abhorred by all Protestants, and to worship crucifixes painted on the walls and hanging over these altars.”<sup>131</sup> The King’s own subjugation to a woman and her idolatry thereby resulted in the physical and spiritual subjugation of the English people.

According to Milton, Charles went further than practicing idolatry and forcing it upon English consciences and churches: he erected himself as a god to be worshipped. It is a “form of idolatry,” Milton maintained, to seek a king “who demands that he be worshipped and granted honors like those of a god.” And what a “strange god” it is, he added, for such a king is “seldom reasonable, usually a brute beast who has scattered reason to the winds.”<sup>132</sup> The very title of his earlier book, *Eikonoklastes*, underscored Milton’s conviction that this idolatry had successfully corrupted his fellow citizens, for Milton understood his work as shattering the image of prostrate worship and deference to Charles found in *Eikon Basilike* just as historical iconoclasts had shattered “superstitious Images to peeces.”<sup>133</sup> Milton charged the English people with being “prone” to religious and civil idolatry and “ready to fall flatt and give adoration to the Image and Memory of this Man, who hath offer’d at more cunning fetches to undermine our Liberties, and putt Tyranny into an Art, then any British King before him.”<sup>134</sup> Their abject posture mirrored the king they worshipped; his perversion became their perversion.

In his preface to the revised *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, Milton had urged Parliament to restore the “lost heritage” of divorce “into the houshold state,” for only then would men otherwise enslaved in bad marriage – men living in contentious

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., IV.372-73.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., IV.370.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., III.343.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. and III.364. I retained Milton’s use of the word “prone” because he probably intended it as a pun.

households, pursuing prostitutes and the neighbors bed – be reformed and submit to “the yoke of prudent and manly discipline.” Milton insisted that the reformation of the husband and household would lead to the reformation of the state, allowing “sober and well order’d living” to “spring up in the Common-wealth.”<sup>135</sup> In the wake of the regicide, Milton further maintained that the King himself had been subjected to a bad marriage, and his resulting effeminate luxury and idolatry had corrupted his English subjects. Without a divorce from his popish wife, Charles was beyond reform, and the English nation withheld from the true and salvific worship of God. Milton believed the English people had had no choice, thereby, but to divorce their king.

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<sup>135</sup> *CPW*, IV.230.

## Chapter 5

### **‘So much power and piety in one’<sup>1</sup>: Oliver Cromwell in Republican History**

King Charles I was led to the scaffold on January 30, 1649, wearing two shirts so that he might not shiver in the cold and thereby appear afraid. He declared to the attending crowds that he was “the Martyr of the People,” being executed by self-interested men who had forgotten that “A Subject, and a Sovereign, are clean contrary things.”<sup>2</sup> Within days of his execution, the purported spiritual autobiography of Charles, *Eikon Basilike* (1649), movingly depicted the King as such a martyr on his knees, Christlike, clasping the bitter crown of martyrdom while trampling down the crown of England as “*vanitas*”: “I slight vain things, and do embrace / Glorie, the just reward of Grace.”<sup>3</sup> The devotional cult of Charles grew rapidly in 1649 with forty English-language impressions and issues of this book and twenty more in Latin, Dutch, French, German, and Danish.<sup>4</sup> Those who supported Oliver Cromwell as military general and eventually Protector, including republicans such as John Milton, stood in the midst of a culture embracing the memory of Charles as king and martyr. Cromwell’s supporters found themselves charged with the substantial task of legitimating government, which in this context entailed defending regicide to a horrified English and European audience whilst simultaneously distancing themselves from more radical, unorthodox groups bent on erasing distinctions between

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Waller, *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector, or The present Greatness and joynt Interst of His Highness, and this Nation* (London: 1655), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Lloyd, *Memoires of the Lives, Actions, Sufferings and Deaths of those Personages, that suffered by Death, Sequestration, Decimation: or otherwise for the Protestant Religion and the great Principle thereof, Allegiance to their Sovereigne, in our late intestine Wars from the Year 1637 to 1660: With the Life and Martyrdom of King Charles I* (London: 1668), 218-19.

<sup>3</sup> *Eikòn Βασιλική, The Pourtracture of His Sacred Majestie, in his Solitudes and Sufferings* (London: 1649), “The Explanation of the Embleme.”

<sup>4</sup> Mark A. Kishlansky and John Morrill, “Charles I (1600–1649),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5143>].



ruler and ruled, elite and non-elite, man and woman. In this moment of rupture, political and religious discourse itself erupted into a struggle between “alternative claimants of a mantle of authentic tradition and its necessary conservation,”<sup>5</sup> where the mere appearance of innovation or a breach with tradition could undermine the newly formed regime. Conservatism rooted in history and tradition was the effective polemical strategy of competing groups in the civil wars and revolution, and the real losers in this power struggle would be those “least effective in employing seventeenth-century polemical strategies that aggressively sought to claim the mantle of conservatism and paint opponents as innovators.”<sup>6</sup> Even more significantly, supporters of the regicide turned to history because they understood themselves as engaged in an act of restoration, especially of renewing that primitive virtue which had allowed their historical forbears to live as free men. In a world “turned upside down,” thereby, supporters of Cromwell needed historical precedents more than ever to understand, legitimate, promote, and defend the new government and its eventual figurehead. The most significant—and perhaps only viable—historical source for justifying Cromwell lay in the Roman republic.

This dissertation has examined how the study of history was generative of political thought in Stuart England before the regicide, particularly focusing on how history shaped Englishmen’s conceptions of tyranny and their expectations of political rule. The portrait of tyranny on offer in the stories of Appius Claudius or Nero characterized misgovernance in highly gendered terms, casting the tyrant as effeminate, uxorious, lustful, and idolatrous, enslaved by his passions as well as by his mistresses and

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<sup>5</sup> Conal Condren, *The Language of Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 158.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Cooper, “Reassessing the Radicals,” *The Historical Journal* 50.1 (Mar. 2007): 241-52, esp. 247-48. On debates surrounding the term “radical,” see also Andrew Bradstock, *Radical Religion in Cromwell’s England* (London: IB Tauris, 2011): xxiv-xxv.

false religion. Tyrants as such not only ruled unjustly in the state; they corrupted their households and disrupted what was considered to be the natural and rightful social order of conjugal society. Because injustice stemmed from the ruler's corrupted soul, Englishmen expected that a ruler unjust in his person, marriage and household would govern his commonwealth unjustly, and vice versa. Stories of tyranny were thus deeply personal, focusing on the tyrant's most intimate relationships, his most private thoughts and actions. What this study has suggested, then, is that King Charles's specific activities in the 1630s and 1640s did not create the initial or subsequent charges of tyranny, rebellion of subjects or conceptualizations of regicide in the 1640s and 1650s; even before the personal rule, and even during James's reign, English subjects had developed a language of tyranny which shaped their perceptions of English monarchy and allowed them to read the King's household and governmental activities through a critical, historically-framed lens.

This grammar of tyranny did not disappear. After the regicide, it became a criterion whereby the new regime and its figurehead, Oliver Cromwell, would be understood, justified, and judged. The language of tyranny built upon Roman history complemented and even fueled the republican argument that the best and most virtuous should rule, and that kingship, which was not necessarily antithetical to the republic, might hinder justice and virtue by deteriorating into tyrannical vice. As we will see, republicans embraced this negative grammar of tyranny while necessarily adopting and developing a positive language of good governance and Roman empire to ground their republican political thought; for, few (if any) viable models of republican government existed in seventeenth-century Europe, and no other commonwealth had judged and

beheaded its own king. Throughout the 1650s, Cromwell simultaneously fulfilled and betrayed the political expectations which had led to the condemnation of Charles, leading some republicans to welcome Cromwell as the most virtuous citizen, and thus the greatest hope and natural ruler of the newly formed English republic, and others, republican and anti-republican, to read within his character and actions the harmful and threatening attributes of corrupted and usurped kingship. Whereas scholars of republicanism have generally focused on republican dismissals of Cromwell, this chapter will focus primarily on how writers defended Cromwell as the best answer to Stuart tyranny.<sup>7</sup> The chapter demonstrates the centrality of Roman history and gendered conceptions of governance in texts supporting Cromwell by showing how proponents emphasized Cromwell's masculinity, right religion, and self-control through historical exempla, and it argues that republicans defending Cromwell understood him to be a highly virtuous man, father, and military general, capable of reforming a society made unmanly, cowardly, and weak by tyrannical kings. Despite Cromwell's seeming potential, however, he ultimately would disappoint those who deemed him the restorer of virtue and liberty.

To republicans, the Interregnum presented an opportunity—one that had not been available to the British since before the Norman invasion. They could craft a free commonwealth, a society of true liberty equal to that of the Roman republic. Juxtaposed with enslavement to vicious passions as well as the “lusts and wills of tyrants,” as Levellers John Lilburne and Richard Overton articulated in *The out-cries of oppressed Commons* (1647), the state of liberty entailed both the government of selves, where citizens would rule their own passions by reason and virtue, and collective government of

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Scott provides a helpful analysis of why some republicans defended or opposed the formation of the Protectorate. See *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), part III.

the people by virtue and rule of law.<sup>8</sup> Milton likewise argued in *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda* (1654) that men consumed by “pride and base desires” could not be free or have a free, self-governed commonwealth, for “to be free is precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just, and temperate, careful of one’s property, aloof from another’s, and thus finally to be magnanimous and brave.” A “nation which cannot rule and govern itself, but has delivered itself into slavery to its own lusts,” Milton maintained, “is enslaved also to other masters whom it does not choose, and serves not only voluntarily but also against its will.”<sup>9</sup>

Although often overlooked by scholars, gender played a very significant role in this republican theory, with slavery characterized as emasculated, effeminate, or childish, while liberty was celebrated as mature manhood. Thus the weekly news writer and political activist, Marchamont Nedham, employing Machiavellian distinctions to celebrate the English people, described “*Northern...People*” as “more manly” and “endued with a greater courage and Sence of Liberty” because they “have no Acquaintance with luxurious Diets and Apparrell, nor care much to obtain Them, nor to taste of those melting Enchantments of more wanton Nations” which has led the “delicate parts of the world” into “effeminacy” and “miserable Slavery, at the will of imperious Tyrants.”<sup>10</sup> In *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660), Milton described those who had

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<sup>8</sup> John Lilburne and Richard Overton, *The out-cryes of oppressed Commons* (London: 1647), 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 10 volumes, gen. ed. Don M. Wolfe, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953-1982), IV.1, 680-82. Hereafter *CPW*. See also the opening paragraph of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), where Milton argued that freedom, free government, and the willingness to eradicate tyranny required men to “be govern’d by reason, and not generally give up their understanding to a double tyrannie, of Custom from without, and blind affections within.” Those men who were “slaves within doors,” Milton continued, would strive to have the commonwealth reflect that “inward vitious rule, by which they govern themselves,” rather than a state of true liberty which required good men and the exercise of popular sovereignty. *CPW*, III.190.

<sup>10</sup> Marchamont Nedham, *The Case of the Common-Wealth of England Stated: Or, the Equity, Vtility, and Necessity, of a Submission to the Present Government*, second edition (London: 1650), 42.

established “a free Commonwealth” as “the manliest” as well as the noblest, most equal, most just, virtuous, and Christian.<sup>11</sup> Those who chose to devolve power on a single person over government by the people were “more like boyes under age then men.” “How unmanly must it needs be,” Milton explained, “...to hang all our felicity on him, all our safety, our well-being, for which if we were aught els but sluggards or babies, we need depend on none but God and our own counsels, our own active vertue and industrie.”<sup>12</sup> These gendered formulations and related discussions of virtue and vice stressed that the state of the people’s liberty was internal as well as external, just as statesmen had understood the state of tyranny as a reflection on the ruler’s soul as well as the commonwealth.<sup>13</sup> This view of liberty was thereby a perfect corollary to conceptions of tyranny already examined, which understood the tyrant’s degenerate soul as corrupting and enslaving subjects, and even barring them from the right knowledge of God.

For many Englishmen who had characterized Charles and James before him as failing in kingship and masculinity, Cromwell appeared to be the perfect solution. To them, the Stuart Kings had refused to engage in battle for the Protestant Cause, or failed on the battlefield, while Cromwell and his New Model Army fought victoriously in the name of Christ. The Stuart Kings had dressed in luxurious and seemingly effeminate styles, delighted in pleasurable pursuits, danced and acted upon the stage, and in the case of Charles, even allowed women to do so; Cromwell pursued an abstemious lifestyle, dressed simply and seemed to pursue the serious activities of arms and letters. To critics, the Stuarts had seemed to blur the lines of gender distinction and corrupted the natural,

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<sup>11</sup> *CPW*, VII.359.

<sup>12</sup> *CPW*, VII.362.

<sup>13</sup> Quentin Skinner, “A Third Concept of Liberty,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117 (2002): 237-68, esp. 239; Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth Principles* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 151-53.

social order; James appeared to engage in sodomitical activity with his favorites, while Charles appeared to fawn uxoriously over the Catholic Henrietta Maria, succumbing to her charms and popish seductions. Cromwell, however, seemed to direct a godly family, exercising proper authority in his household, advancing morality and the true Protestant religion. In short, for critics who had identified wasteful extravagance, popery, persecution, absolutism, disorder, excess, and effeminacy in Charles, Cromwell seemed to embody simplicity, true religion, reformation, consensual government, order, modesty, and masculinity. As Thomas I'Wright summarized upon Cromwell's death in 1658: "for we find Him not subject to passion, lordliness, stateliness, or presumption, (the common and inseparable flaws and faults of greatness) but of an even, grave, stayed, patient and affable comportment towards all men."<sup>14</sup>

Cromwell was often celebrated or commemorated for these particular qualities during the Interregnum in the deluge of pamphlets and cheap print which circulated widely and beyond London to an engaged reading public in the 1640s and Interregnum.<sup>15</sup> After Cromwell's death, Henry Dawbeny's extravagant tribute, *Historie & Policie Reviewed, in the heroick transactions of His Most Serene Highnesse, Oliver, late Lord Protector* (1659), sought to establish Cromwell's masculinity in part through his physical appearance and valor. The *Historie* provided a detailed comparison between Moses and Cromwell, the former delivering God's people from the bondage of the tyrannical

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas I'Wright, *An exact character or, narrative of the late right noble, and magnificent lord, Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland; with the domi[ ]tons thereof. Together with a brief recapitulation (or declaration) of his many miraculous victories, virtues, and achievements, throughout the three nations. With his decease on Friday, the 3d of Septemb. 1658. being above 60 years of age; and the election of his eldest son the Lord Richard to be Lord Protector of England, Scotland, & Ireland, &c. With the proclaiming of His Highness on Saturday, (the 4th instant) throughout the cities of London and Westminster* (London: 1658), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Jason Peacey, "Accessibility of Print," in *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 56-91.

Pharoah and the irreligion of Egyptian magicians, the latter liberating God's people from the prelatical "Magicians of *England*," and the "dire ebullitions of Tyranny, over our Religions, liberties and properties."<sup>16</sup> As well as highlighting Cromwell's divine purpose and blessedness in this comparison, Dawbeny further described how each of these patriarchs ascended a sacred Mount to the "highest pitch of all princely perfection."<sup>17</sup> Dawbeny received sharp criticism for this Mosaical comparison and the portrayal of Cromwell as a prince. The next year, William Winstanley contributed a mocking rebuttal in *England's Worthies* (1660) calling Dawbeny "an arranter devil" than Machiavelli.<sup>18</sup>

In the "Second Ascent" of *Historie & Policie Re-viewed*, Dawbeny admitted that Cromwell's body may not have been equal to his "most incomparable soul," but declared that he nevertheless possessed a "true Masculine beauty" and "Princely form," which "carries nothing of effeminate beauty in it, but a prerogative planted in the forehead which consists in looks and gestures." Cromwell's "Masculine beauty" comprised a "comely largenesse, in proportion of members, in apt lineaments, in colour, moisture,

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<sup>16</sup> Although Dawbeny was criticized for the comparison of Cromwell and Moses, Cromwell had been often compared to Old Testament figures including Moses, Gideon, and David in the 1640s and 1650s. Cromwell seems to have believed that God sent him on a divine mission to free the enslaved English people, much as the Israelites had been redeemed. For example, Cromwell referenced the story of Gideon in his letter to Fairfax in 1648, after Parliament had voted to reopen negotiations with the King: "surely it is not [the mind of God] that the poor people of this kingdom should still be made the object of wrath and anger, nor that our God would have our necks under a yoke of bondage...for these things that have lately come to pass have been the wonderful works of God, breaking the rod of the oppressor as in the day of Midian, not with garments much rolled in blood but by the terror of the Lord; who will yet save His people and confound His enemies as in that day." Qtd in John Morrill, "Cromwell, Oliver (1599–1658)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6765>].

<sup>17</sup> H. D., esquire, "To the Reader" and "The eighth Ascent" and "The Parallel," in *Historie & Policie Re-viewed, in the heroick transactions of His Most Serene Highnesse, Oliver, late Lord Protector. From his cradle, to his tomb: Declaring his steps to Princely Perfection; as they are drawn in lively Parallels to the Ascents of the Great Patriarch Moses, in thirty Degrees, to the Height of Honour* (London: 1659), 53-64.

<sup>18</sup> William Winstanley, *England's Worthies. Select Lives of the most Eminent Persons from Constantine the Great, to the death of Oliver Cromwel late Protector* (London: 1660), 560. For the Machiavellianism of Dawbeny, see Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print, 1645-1661* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 155-58.

etc.,”<sup>19</sup> a description whereby Dawbeny emphasized Cromwell’s manly strength as well as bodily self-control. Whereas humoral theory posited that the ideal male body was hot, dry, balanced and contained, allowing men to be rational, virile, and controlled, women suffered from excessive moisture and porousness; their weaker “leaky vessels” rendered them grotesque, uncontrolled, unreliable, lusty, emotional, irrational, fundamentally immodest, and thereby in need of male authority.<sup>20</sup> Men whose humoral composition resembled women’s moistness, according to the Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius, would have slow minds and tongues, their “wit neither sharpe nor fine, their courage base and nothing haulty, not attempting any high enterprises, nor caring for any glorious and difficult adventures”; over-moist men who lacked heat were even worse: “effeminate, nice, tender, without courage and spirit, sleepy, slothfull, weaklings, meycokes, and not apt nor able to beget any children, because their Sperme is too thin and moyst,” although most desirous of “carnall knowledge and venerous acts.”<sup>21</sup> According to Dawbeny, not only did Cromwell possess a balanced masculine body, he and other good rulers refrained from “borrowing too much from Barber or Looking-glasse,” as “below a man,” thereby rejecting the lavish court styles, practices, and preoccupations of effeminate (and recent English) kings. Accordingly, Cromwell possessed a “true Masculine beauty,” which was “virile,” “Princely” and equal to “those great *Romans*.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> H. D., *Historie & Policie Re-viewed*, 11-13.

<sup>20</sup> Gail Kern Paster, “Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy,” in *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 23-63; Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 40; Peter Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,” in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986), 123-42.

<sup>21</sup> Levine Lemnie, *The Tovchstone of Complexions: Expedient and profitable for all such as bee desirous and carefull of their bodily health* (London: 1633), 130.

<sup>22</sup> H. D., *Historie & Policie Re-viewed*, 13.



Whereas Charles was castigated for his marriage to a Catholic woman and his “popish” church governance, writers argued that Cromwell’s masculine control would protect him from the luring seductions of women and false religion. In this period, several early modern moralists constructed women, their charms and beauty, as entrapping or bewitching men. Joseph Swetnam warned his male readers in *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, Unconstant Women; or, the Vanitie of Them, Choose You Whether* (1615) that “thou shalt see the power of women, how it hath benee so great, and more prevailed in bewitching mens wits, and overcoming their sences, then all other things whatsoever....therefore stay not alone in the company of a woman, trusting to thy owne chastity.”<sup>23</sup> As we have seen, Catholic women were viewed as especially dangerous.<sup>24</sup> Cromwell, however, appeared exceptional. The English translation of Payne Fisher’s *Irenodia Gratulatoria* (1652) emphasized that Cromwell had not only overthrown his enemies but also conquered himself, his appetites and passions.<sup>25</sup> In complete self-possession, he resisted even the seducing allure of feminine beauty: “For *you* a charging horse, and sword embrace / Before the witch-crafts of a womans face.”<sup>26</sup> Throughout this passage, Fisher compared Cromwell to Scipio Africanus, a Roman general often admired for his continence; as the poem described, Scipio was a commander “whose name no blot / Ever receiv’d, whose vertue ne’re had

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<sup>23</sup> Qtd in Francis E. Dolan, “Taking the Pencil out of God’s Hand: Art, Nature, and the Face-Painting Debate in Early Modern England,” *PMLA* 108.2 (Mar. 1993): 224-239, esp. 230. See also Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (Harlow, UK: Addison Wesley, 1999), 55-57.

<sup>24</sup> See p. 195-96, 243-44; Francis E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999), 34-42.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Manley, *Veni; Vidi; Vici. The Triumphs of the Most Excellent & Illustrious, Oliver Cromwell, &c. Set forth in a Panegyricke. Written Originally in Latine, and faithfully done into English Heroicall Verse, by T[homas] M[anley]* (London: 1652), 11. For a fuller discussion of Manley and Payne Fisher, see below, p. 282-85.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

spot.”<sup>27</sup> According to Livy, after capturing the city of New Carthage in the Second Punic War, Scipio’s soldiers brought him an extremely attractive woman as part of the spoils of war. Although Scipio was astonished by her beauty, after he learned of her engagement he returned her to her fiancé “unspotted and untouched” and refused to accept her family’s ransom payment.<sup>28</sup> Scipio’s self-control aided the Roman cause, as this fiancé and his city swore allegiance to Rome as a result.

Self-governed in his passions, Cromwell could be further celebrated as a godly head of household, governing his family with piety, law, and compassion. Edmund Waller’s *Panegyrick to My Lord Protector* (1655), for one, touted that before Cromwell ruled England, he had practiced “first over [him] self to Reign,” and thereby became an exemplary model for family conduct and governance: “Your private life did a just Pattern give / How Fathers, Husbands, Pious Sons should live.”<sup>29</sup> I’Wright’s *An exact character or, narrative of the late right noble, and magnificent lord, Oliver Cromvvell* (1658) described the late Protector as a loving and devoted husband and father, whose household received God’s blessing:

He was always exceeding loving towards Her, that had the Honour of His bed: and a most Tender and Indulgent Father, towards all those which God had sent Him, by the only dear Consort both of his youth, and old age: a happiness and blessing seldome seen to accompany old and young to their graves: and to see their Issues honourably disposed of in his life time; which is a visible signe and argument, that God had bestowed this great blessing upon Him, and His.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>28</sup> Livy, *The Romane historie vwritten by T. Livius of Padua. Also, the Breviaries of L. Florus: with a chronologie to the whole historie: and the Topographie of Rome in old time. Translated out of Latine into English, by Philemon Holland* (London: 1600), 623-24.

<sup>29</sup> Waller, *Panegyrick to My Lord Protector*, 8. For a fuller discussion of Waller, see below, p. 294-97.

<sup>30</sup> I’Wright, *An exact character...Oliver Cromvvell*, 6. See also pg. 5.

Andrew Marvell's "A Poem upon the Death of his Late Highness the Lord Protector" (1659) likewise emphasized Cromwell's private virtues and godly fatherhood, balancing the image of Cromwell as grand military leader with the "wondrous softness of his heart." Marvell, a learned and talented friend of Milton and James Harrington, came to know Cromwell's family intimately by serving as governor of Cromwell's nephew and ward, William Dutton, from 1653-57, and by acting as Latin secretary to the council of state and to the head of the government's intelligence service until the Restoration.

Cromwell's deep love for his second daughter, Elizabeth, who had died one month before him, became Marvell's central image of Cromwell's family devotion and piety:

Her when an infant, taken with her charms,  
He oft would flourish in his mighty arms;  
And, lest their force the tender burden wrong,  
Slacken the vigour of his muscles strong; (31-34)<sup>31</sup>

Although capable of great force and strength, Cromwell cradled his daughter gently in his "mighty arms," Marvell imagined; he "softly" moved his daughter to her mother's breast, "Which while she drained of milk, she filled with love." From this tender parenting, Elizabeth "as with riper years her virtue grew," as well as her beauty and mind. Marvell explained that her and her father's affections became so intimately intertwined that her death led to her father's passing due to his deep love and grief: "And in himself so oft immortal tried, / Yet in compassion of another died."<sup>32</sup>

Marvell celebrated that Cromwell had "Twice...in open field him victor crowned"; had "first put arms into Religion's hand, / And tim'rous Conscience unto Courage manned"; had taught soldiers the "inward mail to wear, / And fearing God how

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<sup>31</sup> Andrew Marvell, "A Poem upon the Death of his Late Highness the Lord Protector," ed. Nigel Smith, in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, revised edition (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2007), 305.

<sup>32</sup> Marvell, "A Poem upon the Death of his Late Highness," 305-306.

they should nothing fear”; had stormed strong cities “by his prayer”; had kept contrary minds in agreement through his “prudence more than human.”<sup>33</sup> Yet, in Marvell’s estimation, it was his faithful and unfailing fatherly love which demonstrated how very much he cared for the commonwealth:

Friendship, that sacred virtue, long does claim  
The first foundation of his house and name:  
But within one its narrow limits fall;  
His tenderness extended unto all....  
If he Eliza loved to that degree,  
(Though who more worthy to be loved than she?)  
If so indulgent to his own, how dear  
To him the children of the highest were?  
For her he once did Nature’s tribute pay:  
For these his life adventured ev’ry day.  
And ‘twould be found, could we his thoughts have cast,  
Their griefs struck deepest, if Eliza’s last (lines 201-4, 209-16).<sup>34</sup>

With his household founded upon virtuous friendship, Cromwell could rightly love his subjects, those “highest” elect of God, for whom he sacrificed himself daily. Marvell thus portrayed Cromwell as a sacrificial, loving, and complete father of household and commonwealth. His private virtues and familial devotion extended into virtuous ruling—the very opposite of characterizations of Nero, whose personal impiety and viciousness had led to the ruination of family and realm.

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Several scholars have commented that, despite Cromwell’s military efficacy, religious faith, and sober lifestyle, glaring criticisms of his masculinity abounded in print and manuscript.<sup>35</sup> Critical representations of both Charles and Cromwell regularly

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 307-9.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>35</sup> Diane Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 132; Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, 19-30, 46-52; David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1999), 307-25.

focused on failed masculinity, yet in opposite registers: Charles as lacking masculinity and Cromwell as excessively masculine. Despite their oppositional relationship, however, criticisms of Cromwell very closely resembled criticisms of Charles—writers during the Interregnum adopted the language of tyranny developed through historical exempla in the Jacobean and Caroline period which this study has traced. These writers included Englishmen representing groups as various as royalists, Presbyterians, Levellers, and even some republicans, the latter especially after the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in 1653. To these groups, Cromwell became a symbol of tyrannical abuse and acquisitiveness, as he seemingly pursued the desired objects of his own excessive and even insatiable lust: his excessive masculinity had led to uncontrolled and dangerous appetites, much as had Charles's seeming lack of masculinity.

How exactly Cromwell's masculinity was challenged in this period is worth further consideration. Beginning in June 1647, he became the target of sustained personal criticism through a flood of print by royalists and presbyterians charging him as a crafty, untrustworthy, violent, and ambitious machiavel. Royalist satire often envisioned the Cromwellian body as hypermasculine, his military success and disciplined body as enormous and grotesque. The Dutch satire, *The Coronation of Oliver Cromwell* (1649), portrayed Cromwell with a monstrous and absurd codpiece, dominating his otherwise beastly body which included paw-like feet and an ermine cloak forming a serpentine tail. His figure eclipsed the scaffold upon which Charles's decapitated and yet well-formed body spews blood, thereby linking Cromwell's hypermasculine sexual rapaciousness with bloodlust, violence, and ambition. The image emphasized that

Cromwell's usurpation of masculine power exposed his loss of masculine self-control.



*The Coronation of Oliver Cromwell*, etching and engraving (Amsterdam: 1653) © British Museum, London. Used with permission.

Through the circulation of pamphlets and cheap print, writers likewise sought to undermine Cromwell's masculinity by satirizing what they deemed excessive phallic qualities written onto his body, especially his nose: "If any Man, Angell or Devill can tell where the bodies of Oliver Cromwell and Tom Fairfax are no resident," one satire explained, "you may know the one by his refulgent copper nose, which he euer kept well burnisht, that so he might not be constrained to trouble the devill to light him, or grope

out his way to hell.”<sup>36</sup> The cultural imagination of early modern England drew a significant connection between noses and genitalia, believing that through the nose (as well as ears) one could understand, mock, and discipline the hidden body through the socially revealed body.<sup>37</sup> A whore’s nose, for example, represented her own “tail” as well as the penis of her male sexual partner(s); a man’s nose, and its size, corresponded to his penis. These sexual connections underscore why the public mutilation and amputation of noses and ears were punishments enacted upon those condemned for having unworthily assumed authority, such as William Prynne, Henry Burton, and John Bastwick, as described previously.<sup>38</sup> Masculine authority was coded phallically, and early modern Englishmen not only saw a correlation between sexual misbehavior and the usurpation of authority, but causation between sexual license and political or religious license.<sup>39</sup> Cromwell’s massive nose, and by extension his unwieldy phallus, represented his rebellious lust for power, his excessive and dangerous masculinity. As another satire, *The Disease of the House* (1649), exclaimed:

Cromwel, how soon will thy *Nose* be consumed, when the fire is in’t already? and how just will it be, that it should burn thee downwards, as far as thy rotten dissembling heart; when thou hast unheaded thy King, and destroyed that Scepter held in the hand of God: prithee, who shall answer for all the Treasons, Murders, Rapines, Burnings, Spoyles, Desolations, Dammage and mischief of this Nation then? CHARLS

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<sup>36</sup> Anon., *A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose, and the Cure of Tom Farifax’s Gout. Both which Rebels are dead, and their deaths kept close, by the policy of our new States* ([London]: 1648), 1. See also John Cleveland, *The character of a London-diurnall with several select poems* ([London]: 1647), 4-5; *Mercurius Elencticus* (15-22 March), *Communicating the unparallel’d proceedings at Westminster, the head-quarters, and other places; discovering their designs, reproving their crimes, and advising the kingdome* (London: 1648), 131; Anon., *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I* ([London]: 1649), 2.

<sup>37</sup> For example, signs of syphilis were associated with the nose. Purkiss, *Literature, Gender, and Politics*, 140.

<sup>38</sup> See above, p. 202-3.

<sup>39</sup> For Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton, see chapter 3. Garthine Walker, *Crime Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2008), 91-93; Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 80-81 and 103-104; Foyster, *Manhood in early modern England*, 81; John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), esp. 218-219, and also 130-31, 264, 270, 304-307, 318.

STUART, or *Noll Cromwell* and his Agents; the *Evill counsellors*, or the *treacherous Estates*?<sup>40</sup>

According to the tragicomedy *Craftie Cromwell* (1648) by the prolific pamphleteer and bookseller John Crouch, members of Parliament had themselves become “foolish Cuckolds, that will suffer thus their noses to be bored!” for bending their will to Cromwell’s rebellious machinations, just as a husband might fail to control his wife’s errant sexuality.<sup>41</sup>

However, critical depictions of Cromwell drew importantly upon historical precedents, strongly resembling the Neronian exempla of the 1620s and 1630s which described how a ruler consumed by wicked and unnatural passions would govern family and commonwealth cruelly and lawlessly. As *Craftie Cromwell* aptly summarized: “Lust reigning Murther followes fast.”<sup>42</sup> With the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in 1653, Fifth Monarchy Men, republicans who had supported the Commonwealth, and royalists all extensively employed the specific exemplum of Nero to castigate Cromwell’s government. The apologetical epistle, *The Faithfull Narrative of the Late Testimony and demand made to Oliver Cromwel, and his powers, on the behalf of the Lords prisoners, in the name of the Lord Jehovah* (1654), which was signed by twelve Fifth Monarchy Men and addressed to the “Faithful Remnant of the Lamb...ingaged against the BEAST and his GOVERNMENT,” offered a report on the petitions made to Oliver Cromwell on behalf of the imprisoned Fifth Monarchists John Rogers, John Simpson, and Christopher Feake. The account argued that Cromwell’s government continued the history of “State-policy”

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<sup>40</sup> Presumably a “fire in the nose” indicated both a burning, lustful passion as well as venereal disease. Anon., *The disease of the House: or, the State Mountebanck: Administring Physick To a Sick Parliament* ([London]: 1649), 7.

<sup>41</sup> Mercurius Melancholicus, *Craftie Cromwell: or, Oliver ordering our New State. A Tragi-comedie. Wherein is discovered the Trayterous undertakings and proceedings of the said Nol, and his Levelling Crew* (London: 1648), 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



and the “practise of *proud Tyrants, Pedagogues, and persecutors*” by “*creating lyes against the Saints, and then bringing them into sufferings.*” “This principle and practice is revived again under this *Government Nero like,*” the account claimed, “to inrobe the *faithfullest* of the *assertors* of the truth and *testimony* of *Jesus* with *Bear-skins*, then to bait them with their *Mastiffs* or *Blood hounds*; like men that will report their *dogs mad*, when they have a mind to *hang* them?”<sup>43</sup> Charging Cromwell’s government with the tyranny of deceitful and anti-Christian policy, the Fifth Monarchists thus adopted the image of Christian persecution so powerfully wielded by Prynne, Burton, and Bastwick against King Charles in the 1630s.

John Streater, a prolific political pamphleteer, likewise castigated Cromwell and his activities by comparing them to Nero’s. Streater began vocally opposing Cromwell with the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in 1653. Through reading classical philosophy and history, Streater believed England required a republican settlement through a commonwealth government comprised of the most virtuous and duty-bound citizens who would rule by law in the protection of liberties. One-year term limits, freedom from censorship, free speech and public assembly, and the sharing of political wisdom amongst the populace all characterized Streater’s republican vision.<sup>44</sup> Streater employed Nero’s history to charge Cromwell with destroying the city of London and

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<sup>43</sup> *The Faithfull narrative of the late testimony and demand made to Oliver Cromwel, and his powers, on the behalf of the Lords prisoners, in the name of the Lord Jehovah (Jesus Christ,) king of saints and nations. Published by faithful hands, members of churches (out of the original copies) to prevent mistakes, and misreports thereupon. To the faithful remnant of the Lamb, who are in this day of great rebuke and blasphemy, ingaged against the beast and his government, especially, to the new non-conforming churches, and saints in city and country, commonly called by the name of fifth monarchy men* ([London]: 1654), sig. A2b. It was printed no later than 21 March 1655.

<sup>44</sup> Streater believed these principles would support the public good over private corruption. Nigel Smith, “Popular Republicanism in the 1650s: John Streater’s ‘Heroick Mechanicks,’” in *Milton and Republicanism*, eds. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 137-55, esp. 137-44; Adrian Johns, “Streater, John (c.1620–1677),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26656>].

persecuting its religious citizens. After blaming Cromwell for a tumult which erupted in St. Paul's Churchyard in October 1653, Streater reminded his readers that: "Nero set on, fired Rome, and laid it on the Christians; he thereby did punish Rome, and took an occasion to persecute the Christians."<sup>45</sup> At the other end of the political spectrum, the Church of England clergyman and chaplain to the royalist commander Lord Hopton, Richard Watson, argued that those flatterers extolling Cromwell were highly mistaken: "Thus highly you extol the worst of men; / Whilst Nero is by you, as Trajan, show'n, / And you, by praying, make his crimes your owne."<sup>46</sup> Abraham Cowley likewise directly condemned Cromwell as Nero in *A vision, concerning his late pretended highnesse Cromwell, the Wicked* (1661). Cowley's earlier poetic and satirical writings in the 1640s had vigorously supported the royalist cause; his couplet satire, *The puritan and the papist* (1643), roundly criticized both religious extremes, although Cowley admitted, were he forced to choose, he would himself become a papist.<sup>47</sup> In *A vision*, which he published in the early Restoration after his return from exile, Cowley questioned Cromwell's rebellious motivations by comparing the late Protector to Nero: "But did Cromwell think, like Nero, to set the City on fire, onely that he might have the honour of being founder of a new and more beautiful one?" Cowley then dismissed Cromwell's motives in destroying the monarchical house and family, deeming them less virtuous than Nero's in burning down the city Rome for the sake of founding a more beautiful city: "[Cromwell] could not have such a shadow of Virtue in his wickednesse; he meant onely to rob more

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<sup>45</sup> *A Further Continuance of the Grand Politick Informer*, 31 October 1653 (London: 1653), 43.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Watson, *The panegyrike and the storme two poetike libells by Ed. Waller, vassa'll to the usuper answered by more faythfull subjects to His Sacred Ma'ty King Charles ye Second* (Bruges?: 1659), sig. A4v.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Lindsay, "Cowley, Abraham (1618–1667)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6499>].

securely and more richly in midst of the combustion.”<sup>48</sup> In Cowley’s view, Cromwell lacked a “shadow of Virtue,” which even Nero possessed; the Protector’s motives were more corrupt than the famed tyrant’s, as Cromwell was driven by an insatiable desire for other men’s wealth.<sup>49</sup>

As Cromwell, unlike James and Charles, had no hereditary claim to power, Englishmen also deployed a range of new historical exempla to characterize him as lusty tyrant while emphasizing his role as rebellious usurper. One commonly cited and significant exemplum was Damocles, whose story Cicero related in his *Tusculanae Disputationes*. Damocles was a regular flatterer of the tyrant Dionysius, and after reckoning up the tyrant’s “power, myght, maiestie, and rule: his greate aboundaunce of all thinges, and his magnificence in building,” he declared to Dionysius that there must be no man who had ever been happier.<sup>50</sup> Dionysius responded that since Damocles was so delighted by the king’s fortune, he himself might try his pleasure at it. When Damocles heartily accepted, Dionysius commanded him to be robed in cloths of gold, precious ointments and perfumes, seated on his throne, surrounded by costly goods and tables spread with delectable treats, and young, beautiful boys attending to his every whim. “Then, seemed Damocles to be happy,” Cicero reported. However, in the midst of this auspicious luxury, Dionysius also “commaunded a glisterynge sword, to be hanged ouer [Damocles’s] head, by a horse heare. So that it might well nye touche his necke.” Completely robbed of his happiness and filled with fear, the “crownes fell downe from

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<sup>48</sup> Abraham Cowley, *A vision, concerning his late pretended highnesse, Cromwell, the Wicked containing a discourse in vindication of him by a pretended angel, and the confutation thereof, by the Author* (London: 1661), 39-40.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Those fyue questions, which Marke Tullye Cicero, disputed in his manor of Tusculanum: written afterwarde by him, in as manye bookes, to his frende, and familiar Brutus, in the Latine tounge*, trans. John Dolman (London: 1561), 277 (my pagination).

[Damocles's] head” and he abandoned the throne.<sup>51</sup> At heart, Cicero's story warned that what may look like the happiest and most enviable life, filled with luxury, power and fame, was in reality fraught with terror and subject to fortune—a mere hair away from disaster. As *Craftie Cromwell* described it, “the winding-paths that *Fortune* treads...can make even Kings to know her power.”<sup>52</sup> Cromwell's opponents argued that, as a Damocles, Cromwell had envied King Charles's throne, and like the flatterer of old, he was a mere usurper incapable of assuming the terrifying weight of regal power. *The Second Part of Crafty Crvmwell* (1648) by the prolific pamphleteer, Crouch, beckoned Cromwell enthroned to “look how ore thy head doth / A sharp and threatning sword / Denouncing terror to thy gang / And thee their perjurd Lord.”<sup>53</sup> This image was even extended to the commonwealth as a whole in *The English Devil* (1660), which claimed that due to Cromwell's tyranny, “Ruine hung over the Heads of the People, by as slender a Thrid, as the Sword did over the Head of *Damocles* at the Banquet.”<sup>54</sup>

The exemplum had great power in the early modern imagination, but it was also fraught with problems for royalists, for by emphasizing that even kings were subject to the whims of fortune, King Charles's defeat might seem less extraordinary or offensive to human and divine law. The tragicomedy *Craftie Cromwell* resolved this difficulty by emphasizing the divine protection of rightful kings: after one interlocutor described the moral of Damocles as “[Fortune] can make even Kings to know her power,” his friend

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 277-278 (my pagination).

<sup>52</sup> Melancholicus, *Craftie Cromwell*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Mercurius Melancholicus, *The second part of Crafty Crvmwell, or, Oliver in his glory as king a trage commedie wherein is presented, the late treasonable undertakings, and proceedings, of the rebels, their murdering of Capt. Burley, with their underhand workings to betray their King* (London: 1648), 32. See Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, 17-18.

<sup>54</sup> Anon., *The English devil: or, Cromwel and his monstrous witch discover'd at White-Hall...* (London: 1660), 4.

replied, “But yet the Heavens strong armes do compasse Kings; an host of *Angels* guards the Royall Throne.”<sup>55</sup> Divine protection could stay even fortune’s blade.

In addition to the exemplum of Damocles, Cromwell was often compared to other usurping tyrants famous especially for their cruelty. One such exemplum was Tamburlaine, the despotic central Asian conqueror who ruled with an insatiable hunger for power and bloodlust in the fourteenth century, and who had been made infamous in the English imagination through Christopher Marlowe’s play of that name. Through the history of Tamburlaine, royalists and other detractors portrayed Cromwell’s military victories as merciless bloodbaths, with Cromwell glorying in the suffering and slaughter of his fellow countrymen. As *On the Death of that Grand Imposter Oliver Cromwell* (1661) explained:

E're he had perfected that black Design,  
Which to this day brands the first *Cataline*,  
And stopt those lowder cries of blood that call  
For Curses, to attend his Funeral.  
The tracing of those sanguine paths he trod  
*Made Atila be styl'd*, The Scourge of God.  
Well made this *Scarlet Hypocrite* his boast,  
Not in the Prince of Peace, but Lord of Hoast  
Though to rejoice in numbers of Men slaine  
Suits not with *David*, but with *Tamberlain*.<sup>56</sup>

Cromwell’s “black Design” in shedding blood was motivated by excessive anger and obsessive, dominating violence, and this depiction hearkened back to the slew of Interregnum pamphlets characterizing Cromwell as hypermasculine. Whereas male disciplinary violence was a central instrument of state and household correction for the regulation of social relations in England, and violence was further considered a vital tool

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<sup>55</sup> Melancholicus, *Craftie Cromwell*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Anon., *On the death of that grand imposter Oliver Cromwell, who died September the 3. 1658* (London: 1661).

for men's maintenance of reputation, an excess of rage or madness by a grown man undermined his masculinity by proving him overruled by unbridled passions rather than reason. Men were understood as more prone to the vice of choleric, malicious violence due to the dry and hot composition of their bodies, and the heat of battle which called upon men to display anger, courage, and martial prowess simultaneously threatened to undermine their moderation and rational self-control.<sup>57</sup> Here Cromwell's pleasuring in the number of men slain emphasized his dangerous failure to order his passions. Other descriptions of Cromwell as Tamburlaine included the playlet *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I Basely Butchered* (1649): "like great *Tamberlaine* with his *Bajazet*, canst render him within an Iron-Cage a spectacle of mirth, when e're thou pleasest."<sup>58</sup> After defeating the Turkish King Bajazeth, Tamburlaine had placed the King in a cage, only allowing his release in order for him to serve as Tamburlaine's footstool. Alongside these portrayals of scornful pride and violence, Cromwell's enemies emphasized his rebelliousness by deeming him *Cataline*, the famous Roman conspirator railed against by Cicero for leading a rebellion. Asking "What Traytor ere like *NOI*, that mischief sought, / So-often, and so valliantly hath fought," *A Case for Nol Cromwells Nose* (1648) answered that Cromwell "acted *Cataline* in every limme: / He hated God, and Charles, with all his heart, / And to unking him us'd his utmost art."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Anne Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (NY: Routledge 2012), 13-14, 90-93; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 44-47 and 108; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 127-51; Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 73.

<sup>58</sup> Anon., *The famous tragedie of King Charles I basely butchered by those who are, omne nesas proni patare pudoris inanes crudeles, violenti, importunike tyranni mendaces, falsi, perversi, perfidiosi, faedifragi, falsis verbis infunda loquentes in which is included, the severall combinations and machinations that brought that incomparable Prince to the block...*(London?: 1649), 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Case for Nol Cromwells Nose*, 4.

This passage from *On the Death of that Grand Imposter Oliver Cromwell* further characterized Cromwell's rise to power and subsequent rule as bathed and stained in pools of scarlet-red blood. Blood, "a most pure Sweet *Homogeneous, Balsamick, Vital Juice*...ordained to be the seat of Life, the principal matter for Sense, Motion, Nutrition, Accretion, and Generation," as one seventeenth-century physician described it, held great symbolic weight and power in early modern England.<sup>60</sup> The thematization of blood in this passage, as bleeding wounds violated by Cromwell's sword cry out and condemn him, portrayed Cromwell as a "man of blood," a man defiled by blood guilt. In the 1640s, accusations of Charles as a "man of blood," especially by the Army, had been instrumental in bringing the King to the scaffold; it was argued that a "king polluted by blood could be a king no more," and numerous Biblical passages made clear that God required vengeance for the shedding of innocent blood.<sup>61</sup> Many Englishmen, parliamentarian and royalist, interpreted the bloodshed of the English civil wars as divine retribution for the corporate sins of England; their deliverance rested upon penitence as well as atonement. Throughout the 1650s and early 1660s, royalists further interpreted the king's death as a terrible act which made parliamentarians in particular guilty of blood and which required expiation. In this vein, *On the Death of that Grand Imposter Oliver Cromwell* graphically portrayed Cromwell as the *true* man of blood who had been allowed to scourge England, Ireland, and Scotland for their sins, but who ultimately deserved vengeance. The characterization of Cromwell as a scourge was accurate: during the Irish campaign, Cromwell's armies killed over 3,000 in Drogheda alone, including several hundred townspeople; in Wexford he had claimed the lives of over

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<sup>60</sup> Qtd from Paster, *Body Embarrassed*, 65.

<sup>61</sup> Patricia Crawford, "Charles Stuart, That Man of Blood," *Journal of British Studies* 16.2 (Spring 1977): 41-61.

2,000; and at Dunbar in Scotland, Cromwell boasted that his army killed 3,000 and imprisoned 10,000.<sup>62</sup> For these slaughters the pamphlet deemed Cromwell Attila the Hun, whose merciless cruelty and bloodshed had been interpreted as God's divine punishment against a sinful fifth-century Europe, thereby earning him the name "scourge of God (*flagellum Dei*).” In a sermon calling the citizens of London to make supplication for their own sins against God and thereby be delivered, the Church of England clergyman Thomas Reeve presented Attila the Hun as an exemplum of one who defended his vices with “impudence” rather than repent of them, for “when he was reprehended for his extream cruelty, he was not ashamed to say, I am *Atila*, King of the *Hunnes*, the *scourge of God*.”<sup>63</sup> Oliver Cromwell, too, had proven himself an unrepentant and merciless man of blood, royalists argued.

What has been underappreciated in scholarship, however, are the important historical exempla writers adopted to counter the image of the Lord Protector as a lustful and excessively phallic tyrant, and just how very significant these images were in the polemical culture of Interregnum England. For example, after the coaching accident in Hyde Park in May 1654, when Cromwell almost died from his musket exploding after being flung to the ground and dragged behind bolting horses, George Wither defended Cromwell by adopting the classical exemplum of Hippolytus. Wither's significance for the republican literary tradition has been only recently defended by David Norbrook.<sup>64</sup>

Wither was a prolific and successful “country” and prophetic poet, who had been an early

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<sup>62</sup> Peter Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell* (NY: NYU Press, 2004), 84-85 and 89.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Reeve, *God's plea for Nineveh: or, London's Precedent for Mercy. Delivered in certain sermons, within the City of London* (London: 1657), 138.

<sup>64</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 86-88, 140-58. Christopher Hill helped pave the way for this reassessment in his essay, “George Wither and John Milton,” in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Vol. I: Writing and Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England* (Brighton: Harvester, 1985), 135-56.



and active supporter of Parliament in the civil wars both through his sword and pen. He received patronage from Cromwell for his prophetic writings, as well as a number of appointments to political posts by the Commonwealth government and Protectorate, and from this platform levelled an important and early defense of popular political representation and participation in government. The exemplum Wither adopted, Hippolytus, served as a model of male chastity and stoic self-control, and, indeed, the very opposite of a Nero. According to Greek mythology, Theseus's son, Hippolytus, made a vow of chastity and scorned the company of women. Unlike Nero, who according to legend had submitted to his mother's incestuous advances, Hippolytus rejected his stepmother Phaedra's seduction, and as a result, Phaedra falsely accused him of rape. Theseus believed his wife in her accusation and cursed his son, causing Poseidon to send a sea-monster to terrorize Hippolytus' horses and smash their rider underfoot. Although his beautiful body was mangled, broken, crushed under the horses' hooves—an image depicted in tragic detail by writers and artists—Ovid claimed in his *Metamorphoses* that Hippolytus was healed by Apollo's son, Asclepius, given the name Virbius, and transported to the Grove of Aricia in Italy where he resided as a companion to the goddess Diana.<sup>65</sup> In *Vaticinium Causuale* (1654), Wither compared Cromwell's accident to Hippolytus, for it “was not want of skill, to use the *Raine*” that caused the “stout, and chast” Hippolytus to fall. Though “asunder dragd, his *Members* were, / It magnifide his *Wisdome, Love, and Care*.” Wither further explained that Hippolytus's fall “made him sound, more then it harmed him”: he was “*Regenerated, or New-borne*” into

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<sup>65</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk XV. Other classical treatments include Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Seneca the Younger's *Phaedra*.

Virbius.<sup>66</sup> Wither argued that Cromwell had likewise fallen to rise, “And to Arise with an improvement, too,” being thankful for escaping from harm and also receiving “that *Mark*, upon him set, / Of being GOD’s especial *Favourite*.” Wither thereby hoped that “when we have sum’d up all / Which, to his *Hignesse* hapned, by his *Fall*, / His *gaines*, will be much greater than his *cost*.”<sup>67</sup>

In the same year, the tragedy of *Appius and Virginia* (1654), which we have already studied in detail,<sup>68</sup> promoted rule and even revolution by a just, virtuous, military commander over a lustful tyrant who forfeited the preservation of the commonwealth for private passion. Within the dual portraits of Appius and Virginius offered in this play, and the higher number of contemporary references, early modern audiences would have recognized significant parallels between these Roman figures and Cromwell and Charles. Appius not only adopts the language of Stuart monarchy throughout the play—employing the “royal we,” describing himself as possessing “princely” virtues, being flattered by Clodius as creating “divine policy,” and remarking that “judges are term’d / the Gods on earth”<sup>69</sup>—he is several times compared to an oak tree, identifying him with royalist images of Charles as a felled tree and with his son’s escape from the Battle of Worcester in 1651 by hiding in an oak tree.<sup>70</sup> A comparison between Charles and Appius would have charged the late King with injustice, portraying his private yet raging lustful passions as undermining the due process of law, liberty of subjects, and gendered order of society.

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<sup>66</sup> George Wither, *Vaticinivm Cavsvale. A Rapture Occasioned by the late Miraculous Deliverance of his Highnesse the Lord Protector, From a Desperate Danger* (London: 1654), 4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>68</sup> See chapter 1 above, p. 64-85.

<sup>69</sup> See John Webster [and Thomas Heywood], *Appius and Virginia. A Tragedy* (London: 1654), 7, 8, 22, and 37. Here I am following the spelling of “Claudius” found in the 1654 printed edition.

<sup>70</sup> See above, p. 67-69.

As we have seen, the Jacobean tragedy further provided a significant portrait of the republican commander, Virginius, as an honest and courageous leader defending the needs of his army and the security of Rome as a whole. In an important scene, Virginius rebukes his hungry and mutinous soldiers, and through his virtuous conduct and governance successfully transforms them into a courageous and pious force.<sup>71</sup> Such a scene reflected the several poems and pamphlets of the early 1650s which celebrated Cromwell for his military valor and governance. Milton, for one, had argued in the *Defensio Secunda* (1654) that Cromwell's camp had proven to be "the foremost school, not just of military science, but of religion and piety"; even through periods of peace and war, shifts of opinion, varied circumstances, and opposition, Cromwell kept his soldiers "at their duty, and does so still, not by bribes and the licentiousness typical of the military, but by his authority and their wages alone."<sup>72</sup> By displaying his prudent governance of the military camp as well as his household, the tragedy further emphasized that Virginius possessed the qualities of a virtuous monarch, including liberality and clemency. We find his household governed by order and chastity, his daughter Virginia vowing to follow his guidance in all affairs. In the end, after reforming the state through revolution, Virginius succeeds as consul, continuing the tradition "which bold *Iunius Brutus* first / begun in *Tarquins* fall."<sup>73</sup> The revolution presented in this play was not conducted by a headless mob, but a well-ordered and disciplined military that is presented as bringing true justice to Rome and thereby restoring Rome's freedom.

Beyond these examples, defenders of the new republic and of Cromwell most often returned to the Roman histories which stood at the bookends of the republican

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<sup>71</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 15-19.

<sup>72</sup> *CPW*, IV.668.

<sup>73</sup> Webster [and Heywood], *Appius and Virginia*, 61.

period: the creation of the republic by Lucius Junius Brutus after King Tarquin's son raped Lucretia and the establishment of the Principate under Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus, against which Brutus's successor, Marcus Junius Brutus, had battled unsuccessfully. These stories were the natural place for British writers to turn—few examples of republican revolution existed historically, and within contemporary Europe, war with the Netherlands and the Dutch support of Charles I precluded a positive Dutch model. The contemporary Venetian model may have held more appeal, but its citizens had not displayed the hopes of conquest characteristic of English republicans.<sup>74</sup> Further, prior to the 1650s, the rape of Lucretia and Junius Brutus's ensuing revolution had especially captured the English imagination from sources such as Shakespeare's remarkable poem in the 1590s, Philemon Holland's translation of Livy in 1600, and Thomas Heywood's play in 1607.<sup>75</sup> The story of Lucretia uncovered the insatiable lust and cruelty of tyrants, with King Tarquin Superbus usurping the throne and reigning unjustly by fear, while his son Sextus, who had become "bewitched and possessed with wicked wanton lust" for the chaste Lucretia, ruthlessly violated her by threatening her honor.<sup>76</sup> The actions by both father and son emphasized the enslavement of Rome: the Roman people had been subjected to the whims of a family, a family made tyrannical by its own enslavement to ruthless and insatiable appetites. In avenging Lucretia's honor after the violent rape, Brutus became the "redeemer of the Citie" by casting out the race

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<sup>74</sup> Scott, "Empire," in *Commonwealth Principles*, 210-32; Scott, "Classical Republicanism in Seventeenth-century England and the Netherlands," in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage, volume 1: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 61-84, esp. 70-71; David Armitage, "John Milton: Poet Against Empire," in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. Armitage, Armand Himy, Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 206-25.

<sup>75</sup> William Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece* (1595); Thomas Heywood, *The rape of Lucrece a true Roman tragedie* (1608)

<sup>76</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 34-35 and 40-41.

of kings and establishing a new constitution by consuls which prized the rule of law.

Whereas Tarquin had ruled absolutely above the law and advice of council, Machiavelli and other commentators on Livy trumpeted Brutus's extraordinary commitment to justice, law, and the stable establishment of the republic, as seen in his willingness to sentence even his own sons to death for treasonous conspiracy against the republic.<sup>77</sup>

Brutus's history so powerfully shaped the conceptions of English statesmen in the aftermath of the regicide in 1649 that the Commonwealth Government sought to initiate an oath of loyalty to the new government as Brutus had done upon banishing the Tarquins.<sup>78</sup> For them, Brutus's story legitimized the regicide as necessary to restore the English constitution upon law and liberty.

A number of poets and panegyrists exalted Cromwell specifically as the new Brutus who would establish a prosperous and lawful republic in the wake of tyranny. In his single leaf *Radius Heliconicus or, the Resolution of a Free State* (1651), for example, R. Fletcher legitimated Cromwell's military campaigns in Ireland and Scotland as the battle to wrest a free republic from the hands of enslaving tyrants: "The pride and will / Of most extortious Tyrannies, are still / The sinew of our quarrels, which alone / Compell'd us to a Reformation."<sup>79</sup> Englishmen defy the "base yoke of bondage" inherent in tyrannical government, Fletcher argued, "Our Resolutions strike a higher string / Then

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<sup>77</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 46-47; *Machiavels discourses. upon the first decade of T. Livius*, trans. E[dward] D[acres] (London: 1636), 444-446.

<sup>78</sup> Livy reported that "whilst the people were yet greedie of this new freedome, for feare least they might any time after he won by entreatie or moved by gifts on the kings part, [Brutus] caused them to swear that they would never suffer any to be king at Rome." Livy, *Romane historie*, 44. See also Plutarch, *The lives of the noble Grecians and Romanes compared together by that graue learned philosopher and historiographer, Plutarke of Chaeronea*, trans. Thomas North (London: 1579), 107-8. For discussions of the English oath, see Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 192-93; Sarah Barber, "The Engagement for the Council of State and the Establishment of the Commonwealth Government," *Historical Research* 63 (1990): 44-57.

<sup>79</sup> R. Fletcher, *Radius heliconicus or, the resolution of a free state* (London: 1650), 1.

*Tarquin's* Base, Tenor, or Minikin.” Fletcher thereby called upon his fellow citizens to be as courageous as the brave Romans, for although Englishmen lacked “Roman bands, / Yet we have Roman hearts, and Roman hands.”<sup>80</sup> Andrew Marvell’s “Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s return from Ireland” (1650) likewise heralded Cromwell’s military victories as casting “the Kingdome old / Into another Mold,” as Junius Brutus had done.<sup>81</sup> The tyrant Tarquin had commanded that a temple to Jupiter be erected, which, according to Livy, “moved the gods to declare the future mightinesse of so great an Empire” as Rome.<sup>82</sup> The Augurs divined tokens and signs testifying to the perpetuity and greatness of the empire, and the builders discovered as they dug the temple’s foundation “a mans head, face and all, whole & sound.”<sup>83</sup> While Tarquin interpreted this omen as bolstering his own kingdom, republicans who knew the ending of the story understood this omen as prophesying the future grandeur of the Roman republic which Brutus would establish. In Marvell’s “Ode,” this bleeding head became a symbol marking the transition between the sacrifice of King Charles and the new foundation laid by Cromwell:

So when they did design  
The *Capitols* first Line,  
A bleeding Head where they begun,  
Did fright the Architects to run;  
And yet in that the *State*  
Foresaw it's happy Fate.<sup>84</sup>

The bloody sacrifice of Charles may have given England’s parliamentary architects pause, but they had broken the line of kings and laid the foundation for a free state.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Marvell, “An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland,” ed. Smith, in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, 275 (lines 35-36).

<sup>82</sup> Livy, *Romane historie*, 38.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Marvell, “Horatian Ode,” 276-77 (lines 67-72).

<sup>85</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 266-68. Some commentators have interpreted Interregnum poems about Brutus as ambiguous and even ironic. This surely seems true for exile literature written by

Although siding with the royalists in the first civil war, being subsequently imprisoned after defeat at Marston Moor, and opposing the regicide, Payne or Fitzpayne Fisher<sup>86</sup> became Cromwell's most significant panegyrist, producing *Irenodia Gratulatoria* (1652) to celebrate the commonwealth's victories and a series of poems lauding the Lord Protector, including *Inauguratio Olivariana* (1654).<sup>87</sup> With his work published by official printers, with official sponsorship, and decorated with dedicatory verses by other significant Cromwellian authors, Fisher served as "poet laureate" to the new regime and by 1655 styled himself "*Historiis et Satellitio Domini Protectoris.*"<sup>88</sup> The earliest panegyric, *Irenodia Gratulatoria* (1652), hailed Cromwell as a military general dedicated to the public good whose virtues and conquests had brought peace and plenty, true religion and justice again to the realm.<sup>89</sup> The poem circulated not only in Latin but also in an English translation produced by Thomas Manley and entitled, *Veni; Vidi; Vici. The Triumphs of the Most Excellent & Illustrious, Oliver Cromwell* (1652), and as David Norbrook has argued, both Fisher and Manley in his translation were keen to encourage Cromwell on a republican path.<sup>90</sup> Manley's translation underscored Fisher's exempla-rich rhetoric while further emphasizing the connection between Cromwell and Brutus. In a passage of *Irenodia* in which Fisher described the renewal of the empire under Cromwell's leadership, Manley added a reference to tyrannical rape not

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royalists, such as Abraham Cowley, but not for pro-Cromwellian panegyrics. See Christopher D'Addario, "Abraham Cowley and the Ends of Poetry," in *Literatures of Exile in the English Revolution and Its Aftermath, 1640-1690*, ed. Philip Major (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 119-32, esp. 130-32.

<sup>86</sup> His Latin works also appeared under the name Pagani or Fitzpaganus Piscatoris.

<sup>87</sup> *Panegyrici Cromwello* (1654); *Oratio anniversaria* (1655); *Oratio secunda anniversaria* (1657), and *Paean triumphalis in secundam inaugurationem* (1657).

<sup>88</sup> J. T. Peacey, "Fisher, Payne (1615/16–1693)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP: 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9506>].

<sup>89</sup> Payne Fisher, *Irenodia gratulatoria, sive Illustrissimi amplissimiq[ue] viri Oliveri Cromwelli, &c. epinicion* (London: 1652), sig. A1r and B1r-2r. Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, 58-61; Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 234-35.

<sup>90</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 236-38.

found in Fisher's poem; the reference argued that Cromwell, like Brutus before him, had liberated the commonwealth from the (sexual) violence of tyranny:

Nec minus interea positis moderatior Armis,  
Adventu Rediviva *Tuo Respublica* surgens,  
Lætius Imperii mutatas sensit habenas,  
Relligio *Tecum* rediit, clementia *Tecum*  
Creverit & Pietas (Fisher, *Irenodia Gratulatoria*)

[no less doth the State,  
Arms being laid aside, grown moderate,  
Revive and rise again even from her urne  
At thy so wished, they so joy'd returne,  
Feeling her changed reines she doth implore,  
*That Tyrants never her may ravish more.*  
Religion saw thee come and hasted hither,  
Mercy and Piety met thee together,  
And here began to settle] (Manley, *Veni; Vidi; Vici*, (my emphasis))<sup>91</sup>

Fisher's employment of exempla throughout his poems, however, most often argued that Cromwell had superseded the great heroes of the past: Cromwell reached new heights by possessing their virtues whilst overcoming their vices. In the later *Inauguratio Olivariana*, Fisher argued that Junius Brutus, the glorious founder of Italy's liberty who restored Law and political offices, would have rejoiced to live under such a leader as Cromwell.<sup>92</sup> For Cromwell established a sober commonwealth, avoiding the vices of gluttony and luxury,<sup>93</sup> while upholding the (sexual) order of civil and moral society:

Non ibi deformis *Lucretia* damna rapinæ  
Lugebit, castae nec solvet vincula *zonæ*  
*Virgo* Pudicitiae compos; *Te vindice* servat  
Jura *Thorus* Thalamusque; *fidem*: non fædus Adulter;

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, sig. B2r; Manley, *Veni; Vidi; Vici*, 4-5.

<sup>92</sup> "Vivere sub tali gauderet Principe, *Brutus*; / *Brutus* grande decus, Libertatisq; repertor / *Ausonæ*, qui Jura suis *fascisque* reduxit." Fisher, *Inauguratio Olivariana, sive Pro Præfectura Serenissimi Principis Angliæ, Scotiæ, & Hiberniæ, Dom. Protectoris Olivari: Carmen Votivum* (London: 1654), 43-44.

<sup>93</sup> "ubi sobria quisque / Adspersis salibus, nulla formidine, miscet. / Ebrietas ubi non, Gula vel circumflua luxu / Fædatam, norunt vitiis temerare, salutem." Ibid., 44.



[There Lucretia will not mourn the injury of dishonorable rape, nor will the virgin, in full control of her chastity, loosen her girdle's bonds; with you as avenger, the marriage bed and bedroom preserve the laws and fidelity;]

The fidelity of the marriage bed indeed had been supported through the Adultery Act of 1650, passed by the Commonwealth Parliament but enforced under the Protectorate.<sup>94</sup>

This unique act in English history “put the full machinery of the state behind the enforcement of sexual morality” by imposing imprisonment for fornicators; whipping, branding, the pillory, and three years imprisonment for brothel-keepers; and the death penalty for violators of incest, female adulterers and their male partners.<sup>95</sup> The Act arose in the wake of arguments in the 1640s that popish and inefficient church government through bishops had led to the moral degradation of society, especially the “great increase and frequency of whoredoms and adulteries,” as one Root and Branch petition argued.<sup>96</sup>

While historians have debated if the Act formed an effective part of the criminal code, its symbolic importance for ministers and statesmen seeking the godly reformation of the state should not be neglected.<sup>97</sup> Whereas James and Charles had been charged with undermining the gendered order of household and society by promoting luxurious and lascivious behavior and by failing in their masculine authority, the Commonwealth Parliament and Cromwell sought to establish legislatively an ordered society under the governance of good men and moral householders. Due to Cromwell's virtue and manliness, daughters and wives stood protected from violent violation; maidens remained

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<sup>94</sup> All but five of the 36 trials occurred under Cromwell's government.

<sup>95</sup> Keith Thomas, “The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered,” in *Puritans and revolutionaries: essays in seventeenth-century history presented to Christopher Hill*, eds. Donald Pennington and Thomas (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978), 257-81, esp. 257.

<sup>96</sup> Qtd in Thomas, “Puritans and Adultery,” 264.

<sup>97</sup> For a description and more recent assessment of this debate, see Bernard Capp, “Republican reformation: Family, community and the state in Interregnum Middlesex, 1649-60,” in *The Family in Early Modern England*, eds. Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 40-66, esp. 41.

pure, and wives obeyed the authority of their husbands. In connection to these sacred and secular concerns, the story of Junius Brutus provided a positive historical republican image for Cromwell, emphasizing his role as liberator from the violent threat and disorder of tyranny. At the same time, the exemplum directly challenged criticisms of Cromwell that presented his body as lusty, swollen, and grotesque, his actions and motives as those of Nero, Tamburlaine, or Cataline, as well as former criticisms that had been leveled against James and Charles. These poems displayed the manly Cromwell as republican hero, in control of his passions and thus reforming society with law, justice, and true religion.

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Thus far we have considered how Cromwell's gendered image was publicly constructed and debated in the 1640s and 1650s, and relatedly, the significance of historical exempla in castigating Cromwell as tyrant or celebrating him as liberator. The particular themes of these historical precedents map onto the gendered vocabularies of tyranny already traced in this dissertation. The other historical precedent which played a prominent role in understanding Cromwell's achievements and which publicly constructed his positive image, however, potentially undermined the positive, republican representation of the Protector as Junius Brutus. At the other bookend of Roman republican history was Julius Caesar, the renowned military general whose uncontrolled ambition transformed Rome from Republic to Principate. In the republican literary tradition, the three figures most celebrated in these final years were Pompey, Cato, and Marcus Brutus; all three staunchly opposed Caesar's rise to power. A central republican poem, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which circulated widely in Latin and in English through Thomas May's celebrated translation, bolstered the heroism of these republicans while maligning Caesar

for his devastating ambition. May had dedicated his *Pharsalia* translation to statesmen opposing King Charles's Forced Loan in 1627, aligning their efforts with the heroism of Cato and Pompey, who was "the true servant of the publike State" in May's estimation. Throughout Lucan's poem, however, Caesar was represented as subordinating public good to private interest and ambition, extinguishing Rome's liberty through brutal civil war and forcing her citizens to choose between bloodshed and tyrannical peace.

Despite this significant republican heritage, Julius Caesar became the preferred exemplum for panegyrists of Cromwell. Whereas Pompey, Cato, and Marcus Brutus had shown a resolute constancy and courage in the name of liberty and the public good, Pompey and Brutus failed as military commanders, while Cato chose the passive resistance of suicide to remain free. To contemporaries, Cromwell's extraordinary, decisive, and swift military victories evoked Caesar's triumphal victories rather than these Stoic defeats. Cromwell had been victorious in the civil wars, much as Caesar had, and contemporaries believed that such decisive military engagement was necessary for the future success of the republic. As Jonathan Scott has shown, English republicans, influenced by Machiavelli, sought to build a republic in the model of Rome: building empire and seeking glory, choosing expansion over preservation.<sup>98</sup> We see this in news pamphlets such as *A Modest Narrative of Intelligence Fitted for the Republique of England & Ireland* (16-23 June 1649) which advocated that the republican general "must wrastle with all difficulties, rather then quit the enterprise; but being once embarked, on he must, whether win or lose, with a *Cæsarian* Confidence at the *Rubicon* and a *Spartan*

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<sup>98</sup> Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 10-11, 210-32; Scott, "Classical Republicanism," 70-71.

Resolution to go on with the Sword.”<sup>99</sup> *The Perfect Politician* (1660), which seemed to provide a more measured biography of the former Lord Protector, celebrated the comparison between Cromwell and Caesar by boasting that “*Caesar’s Veni, Vidi, Vici*, may well be attributed to him, who no sooner came neer an Enemy and beheld him, but he overcame him.” It made the further grand claim that should Caesar have lived until the seventeenth century, he “might have turned Scholar, and learnt the Rudiments of Modern Discipline, by the Example of this excellent Commander.”<sup>100</sup> I’Wright likewise argued that “without flattery, it may be said of him, as it is of *Caesar*, that *Venit, Vidit, & Vicit*.”<sup>101</sup> R. Fletcher’s confident tribute to Cromwell further linked his Caesarian might with England’s imperial ambitions:

Let envy swell and burst; Malignancie  
Curse its hard fate, grow sullen, sick, and die:  
Whiles our triumphant palms spread & increase;  
Like the preservers of a common peace.  
*Caesar*, and *Cromwell*: why, ‘tis all but *C*.  
And why not *England* now, as *Italie*?  
*Rome*’s Basis was as small, as this whereon  
We hope to raise our Fame’s encomion:  
Nay, our encouragements are rather more.  
Smile gentle Fortune, as thou didst before.  
Then *Thames* as *Tybur* shall rejoice to be  
Crown’d with the spoiles of the worlds royaltie.<sup>102</sup>

Through Cromwell’s leadership, England could hope for imperial victory as that acquired by the mighty Caesar. And indeed, for those (particularly Protestant) statesmen who had lived through years of pacific policies under James and then Charles, English military boldness may have seemed especially welcome. As seen in previous chapters, much of

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<sup>99</sup> James Moxon, publisher, *A Modest Narrative of Intelligence Fitted for the Republique of England & Ireland, from Saturday, June 16. to Saturday, June 23 1649* (London: 1649), 89.

<sup>100</sup> Henry Fletcher, *The perfect politician, or, A full view of the life and action (military and civil) of O. Cromwel whereunto is added his character, and a compleat catalogue of all the honours conferr’d by him on several persons* (London: 1660), 176.

<sup>101</sup> I’Wright, *An exact character...Oliver Cromvvell*, 5.

<sup>102</sup> Fletcher, *Radius Heliconicus*.

the frustration with James and Charles voiced from 1618 onwards focused on their seemingly tepid support of Protestants in the Bohemian Crisis and ensuing Thirty Years War. Their masculine valor became challenged as luxurious court fashions and entertainments seemed to hold greater cultural and fiscal priority than the sober waging of war.<sup>103</sup> Cromwell's military prowess and swift domination over Ireland and Scotland fulfilled hopeful expectations of strong, authoritative, masculine rule and imperial glory for England.

The exemplum of Julius Caesar highlighted the grand hopes which rested in Cromwell by his supporters, but it simultaneously played into the significant anxieties his leadership produced, especially during the parliamentary elections of 1654 and 1656 in which opponents understood the commonwealth as in danger "of the utter subversion of Religion, Law, Liberty, Right, and Property." A 1656 petition, which may have been written by the army officer and politician Sir Arthur Hesilrige, second baronet, warned that the Lord Protector acted from "lawless ambition": he has "pretend[ed] that the people have consented to become his slaves" and "hath assumed an absolute arbitrary sovereignty (as if he came down from the throne of God)," declaring that his proclamations "shall be binding laws to Parliaments themselves" and judging "by no other rule or law then his pleasure, as if he were their absolute Lord."<sup>104</sup> Just as Marcus Brutus and the conspirators had feared that Julius Caesar meant to become king, so

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<sup>103</sup> See chapters 2-3, especially p. 95-101, 106-8, 175-78, 191-93.

<sup>104</sup> Hesilrige was one of the five members whom King Charles accused of treason and attempted to arrest in the Commons' chamber in December 1641. He staunchly supported the constitutional authority of Parliament, and opposed both Charles and Cromwell because of their seemingly unrepresentative rule. Anon., *To all the worthy gentlemen who are duely chosen for the Parliament, which intended to meet at Westminster the 17 of September 1656. And to all the good people of the Common-wealth of England. The humble remonstrance, protection, and appeale of severall knights and gentlemen duly chosen to serve their countrey in Parliament; who attended at Westminster for that purpose, but were violently kept out of the Parliament-house by armed men hired by the Lord Protector* (London: 1656), n. p. [1-3].

Englishmen—many of them republicans—feared that Cromwell sought the crown, and at the price of English liberty. In retrospect, John Toland in his preface to James Harrington’s reprinted *Oceana* (1700) would trumpet this highly critical comparison between Caesar and Cromwell:

LYCURGUS and ANDREW DORIA, who, when it was in their power to continue Princes, chose rather to be the founders of their Countrys Liberty, will be celebrated for their Virtue thro the course of all Ages, and their very Names convey the highest Ideas of Godlike Generosity; while JULIUS CAESAR, OLIVER CROMWEL, and such others as at any time inslav'd their fellow Citizens, will be for ever remember'd with detestation, and cited as the most execrable Examples of the vilest Treachery and Ingratitude. It is only a refin'd and excellent Genius, a noble Soul ambitious of solid Praise, a sincere lover of Virtue and the good of all Mankind, that is capable of executing so glorious an Undertaking as making a People free.<sup>105</sup>

With the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in 1653, and the “Instrument of government” creating Cromwell as an elected head of government, republicans especially employed Caesar’s exemplum to criticize bitterly Cromwell’s rise to power and to warn about the danger of ambition. Importantly, George Chapman’s *Caesar and Pompey: a Roman Tragedy, declaring their warres* was reprinted at this moment in 1653, with the moral declaring, “Onely a iust man is a free man.” As we have seen, Chapman composed the play around 1604, while crafting a number of plays which offered veiled criticisms of the new monarch.<sup>106</sup> In its original printing of 1631, the play had encouraged statesmen to emulate Cato by remaining constant, virtuous, and honorable

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<sup>105</sup> John Toland, ed. *The Oceana of James Harrington and his other works, som [sic] wherof are now first publish'd from his own manuscripts : the whole collected, methodiz'd, and review'd, with an exact account of his life prefix'd* (London: 1700), xx-xxi.

<sup>106</sup> Especially the anti-Scottish satire in *Eastward Ho* (1605), which landed Chapman and his fellow co-authors briefly in prison. See Bertheau, “Jacques I au miroir de la Tragedie Chapmanienne,” *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Anglo-Américaines des XVII et XVIII Siècles* 62 (2006): 193-207. See also Bertheau, “George Chapman’s French Tragedies, or, Machiavelli beyond the mirror” in *Representing France and the French in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jean-Christophe Mayer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 110-24.

even in corrupt times, and promoted a passive resistance to tyranny.<sup>107</sup> In this new context, with Cromwell gaining power after a brutal decade of civil wars, the play's bitter censure of Caesar defeating Pompey reached a heightened significance. The "Argument" of the tragedy contrasted Caesar and Pompey, the former commanding his forces "vnduly and ambitiously," with the latter fighting "more for feare of *Cæsars* violence to the State, then mou'd with any affectation of his own greatnesse."<sup>108</sup> In the opening scene, Cato labeled Caesar "tyranous" and a threat to Rome, surrounded by "such a flocke of Puttocks" drawn to his "ill-disposed Purse" as well as "Impostors, Flatterers, Fauorites, and Bawdes, / Buffons, Intelligencers, selects wits; / Close Murtherers, Montibanckes, and decaied Theeues."<sup>109</sup> Cato's suicide near the end of the play is described as a "thing manly, / and merely heauenly" for the sake of "iust mens liberties"; his final speeches include praise for his son-in-law, Marcus Brutus, whom the audience knows will later defend Rome's liberty by assassinating Caesar.<sup>110</sup> Caesar, meanwhile, concludes the play miserably even though victorious in war. As Cato's severed head is displayed before him in the final scene, Caesar exclaims that the "instant rapture" and "blisse" captured upon Cato's face is "the bitterest curse" to Caesar's "vext and tyrannisde nature."<sup>111</sup>

Less than a year after Cromwell assumed the Protectorship, the republican writer John Streater, a close associate of Marchamont Nedham, the printer of James Harrington's *Oceana* (1656), and a radical articulator of popular classical republicanism, levelled a sustained charge against Cromwell by providing a detailed historical analysis

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<sup>107</sup> See chapter 3 above, p. 289-90.

<sup>108</sup> George Chapman, *Caesar and Pompey: a Roman tragedy, declaring their vvwares. Out of whose events is evicted this proposition. Only a iust man is a freeman. As it was acted at the Black-Fryers* (London: 1653), sig. A4v.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1r-v.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. I2r and I4r;

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. K1v.

of Julius Caesar's life drawn from Suetonius, interlaced with his own political commentary.<sup>112</sup> The work was entitled *A Politick Commentary on the Life of Caius Julius Caesar* (1654) and woven throughout his serial news pamphlet, *Perfect and Impartial Intelligence*. In a small note at the end of a pamphlet from early 1654, Streater addressed the reader's potential wonderment that he should record Suetonius's history of Caesar and thereby "undertake to prove *Cæsar* a Tyrant and a Usurper"—perhaps especially in a context in which the new Lord Protector Cromwell was very often compared to Caesar. Streater defended his position by explaining that Caesar had "assumed the Supream authority and altered the Laws of his Country; the Gods as a just reward due for his so doing, permitted him to be slain in that sort he was," and in a provocative comment added that surely, "I shal not comit treason against him in my undertaking, I am told he is dead long since."<sup>113</sup> That anyone should want to be called a Caesar seemed preposterous to Streater, he added, for "to be like *Cæsar* is in effect to say they deserve to be killed by a *Brutus* as he was."<sup>114</sup> In the ensuing serials, Streater articulated Caesar's history, drawing very evident parallels in his historical glosses between what he understood to be the tyranny of Caesar and Cromwell—parallels evident enough that his work provoked repeated arrests and counter-newsbooks.<sup>115</sup> After describing how Caesar amassed armies to keep the empire in check, for example, Streater explained:

*Cesar* had no Commission for what he did, but because he had sucess and the Commonwealth the benefit by having its enemies vanquished: *Cesar* is

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<sup>112</sup> For more on Streater's republicanism, see above, p. 268-69. Smith, "Popular republicanism in the 1650s," 138-44; Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007): 313-17.

<sup>113</sup> *Perfect and Impartial Intelligence, Of the Affairs, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, And other Parts beyond the Seas, From Tuesday May 16 to Tuesday May 23, 1654* (London: 1654), 8.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 320.



not called to account, in this he usurpt absolute authority in raising forces and attempting to make war without authority of the Senate; by which it appeareth the Senate did decline in their policy as well as the Commonwealth in vertue: the Senate should have taken his head of[f] for that Act, and so have ridded the Commonwealth of a Usurper, the Commonweal of *Rome* turned to a Monarchy because the Senate did not keep the arms of the Commonwealth in their hands: the Senate after the disposing of the absolute power of Arms, signified no more then a Cipher, those Council and Senates that will be powerfull and just, must be free, not over awed with Arms, those that are, are not free.<sup>116</sup>

The message to Parliament was clear: Cromwell would turn England again into a monarchy because of Parliament's failure to keep control of Cromwell and his army. In this way, Streater passionately argued that Cromwell's great military success had provided him with absolute authority, leading to the decline of law, liberty, and virtue. Caesar's history provided a timely and poignant vehicle through which to understand the activities of the Lord Protector and through which to promote his demise.

Both through their own historical study and through witnessing pamphlets such as Streater's, Cromwell's supporters recognized the risks of deeming Cromwell a Caesar. As one biography of Cromwell directly questioned: "Nothing could satisfie *Caesars* Ambition, but a perpetual Dictatorship....; why then should our *Cromwel*, having the same aspiration, (and inspiration above them) be satisfied with less then a perpetual Protectorship?"<sup>117</sup> Fisher's *Irenodia Gratulatoria* (1652), amongst other works, sought to allay this fear by arguing that Cromwell's virtues and religious piety made him *greater* than Caesar, and thereby capable of overcoming the vices of ambition and greed. The significance of Caesar's exemplum within Fisher's poem is highlighted by Manley's English translation, which bore the title, *Veni; Vidi; Vici*, and included an original

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<sup>116</sup> *Perfect and Impartial Intelligence, of the Affairs, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, And other Parts beyond the Seas. Together with the Continuation of the History of Caius Julius Caesar, From Tuesday May 23. to Fryday May 26, 1654* (London: Printed and are to be sold by R[ichard] Moon, 1654), 13-14.

<sup>117</sup> Fletcher, *Perfect politician*, 252-53.

dedicatory epistle to Cromwell describing how Julius Caesar “never rejoiced more then when he heard his valiant exploits were spoken of in simple Cottages, alledging this, that a bright Sun shines in every corner, which makes not the beames worse, but the place better.”<sup>118</sup> After describing Cromwell’s victories at Marston Moor, Ireland, and Scotland, Fisher questioned with what military heroes Cromwell should be compared, for the English commander had blameless conduct, while for the famous commanders of old, “Some crimes their Vertue oftentimes did blot, / Their milky colour oft receiv’d a spot.” In Fisher’s poem, the most prominent example of a “spotted hero” was Caesar, for although “conquests did his honor raise, / And crown his temples with Imperiall bayes,” Caesar’s “treacherous dealing” merited dishonor, shame, and infamy: “For gold the very temples did he break, / And stayn’d his sword with country mens dear blood, / If His unlawfull pleasures they withstood.”<sup>119</sup> As Lucan’s *Pharsalia* had so powerfully described, Caesar’s vicious excess led him to desecrate temples and shed innocent blood for ambition and avarice. Fisher countered this negative exemplum by proclaiming that Cromwell, “Great Sir, Greater then *Cæsar* are”:

The Empire of your Vertues reacheth far,  
 And keeping Passion under, dost restrain  
 Its insolencies with the strongest rain.  
 No Avarice with it’s [*sic*] destroying hooks  
 Inrolles thy Name in Fames infamous books;  
 At hopes of Lucre *you* unmoved stand,  
 No wretched gold thy spirit can command.<sup>120</sup>

Fisher compared Cromwell’s virtues to his empire, having vast dominion over his passions as well as peoples. Through this description, he heeded Livy’s warning that the

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<sup>118</sup> Manley, *Veni; Vidi; Vici*, epistle dedicatory. Manley’s translation will be used for subsequent quotations of Fisher.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

Roman Empire after the rise of Caesar and Augustus faced decline as “wealth hath brought in avarice, abundant pleasures haue kindled a desire by riot, lust, and loose life, to perish and bring all to naught.”<sup>121</sup> It was this passage amongst others in Livy that convinced Machiavelli in the *Discourses* that the path of empire like Rome would bring greater glory to the republic, but also greater risk of corruption and ruin.<sup>122</sup> For Fisher and other supporters, Cromwell ushered in a glorious republican empire while remaining unmoved by Asiatic luxury, free of avarice and faulty passions. Moderation, sobriety, prudence, and clemency ruled the English leader, Fisher argued; forsaking the “*Carthaginian*” pleasures which make one “grow unfit for *Mars*, effeminate,” Cromwell became the true icon of masculinity and empire.<sup>123</sup>

Edmund Waller, whom Fisher and Dawbeny praised as the English Virgil, likewise produced *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector* (1655) to celebrate the Protector as Imperial Roman conqueror.<sup>124</sup> Although Waller was Cromwell’s kinsman, his championing of the Cromwellian regime in the 1650s garnered great public notice because Waller had been banished by Parliament in the 1640s for a plot to allow the King’s armies to enter London during the first civil war.<sup>125</sup> His *Panegyrick* sought to persuade Cromwell’s detractors that they should submit to the Protectorate, for Cromwell ruled England justly and amplified the commonwealth’s greatness. The importance of this poem can be measured by the large number of satiric poems and anti-panegyrics the work prompted.<sup>126</sup> Waller’s *Panegyrick* intertwined imagery of Cromwell’s personal

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<sup>121</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 2-3.

<sup>122</sup> Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 210-32.

<sup>123</sup> Manley, *Veni; Vidi; Vici*, 72-73.

<sup>124</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 307 and 311.

<sup>125</sup> Warren Chernaik, “Waller, Edmund (1606–1687),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OxfordUP: 2004), online edn. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28556>].

<sup>126</sup> See Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 311-16.

virtue and England's Imperial glory, arguing that Cromwell had ushered England into a golden age not only equal to Rome's, but surpassing it; for English virtue, restored by Cromwell, would prevent the corruption of Asiatic luxury and greed. Thus, the opening stanza celebrated Cromwell's own constancy and self-possession as bringing harmony to the souls of his subjects and peace among political factions:

Whilst with a strong, and yet a gentle hand  
You bridle faction, and our hearts command,  
Protect us from our selves, and from the Foe,  
Make us unite, and make us conquer too.<sup>127</sup>

Resurrecting this "drooping Countrey torn with Civil Hate," Cromwell had remade England into a "Glorious State" and "seat of Empire." He had subdued the Irish and Scotsmen and further established himself not only as England's just ruler, but the "Worlds Protector" by invading "The Bad" and aiding "the Good."<sup>128</sup>

This imagery of empire, along with subsequent stanzas describing tributes being paid, Arabic spices, Persian silks, "drink of ev'ry Vine," and gold pouring into England, graphically recalled the luxurious Roman Empire established by Julius Caesar. In these stanzas, Waller's *Panegyrick* seems to have taken the images of Andrea Mantegna's powerful nine-painting series, *The Triumphs of Caesar*, and translated them into poetry. Although purchased by King Charles, Mantegna's work continued to influence the imagination of Cromwell, who had them hung in his Hampton Court apartments.<sup>129</sup> On each 8 ½ x 9 ft (2.66m x 2.78m) painting in the series, Mantegna had detailed the exotic riches of empire—gold, slaves, armor, trophies, elephants, vases, cloth—paraded before a triumphant Julius Caesar who held the symbols of victory and sovereignty: palm leaf and

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<sup>127</sup> Waller, *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector*, 1.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>129</sup> Paul Kristeller, *Andrea Mantegna* (London, NY, and Bombay: Longmans, Green, 1901), 282.

scepter. Waller similarly concluded his poem by describing such a triumph for Cromwell:

Here in low streyns your milder deeds we sing,  
But there (My Lord) we'l Bayes and Olive bring:

To Crown your head while you in Triumph ride  
O'er vanquish'd Nations, and the Sea beside,  
While all your neighbour-Princes unto you  
Like *Josephs* sheaves pay reverence, and bow.<sup>130</sup>

Waller suggested that whereas English kings before had flattered themselves as a Julius Caesar, Cromwell had accomplished the military triumph over England's enemies.

Waller's *Panegyrick* further praised Cromwell through the historical tradition of Roman Empire by celebrating the Protector's clemency. In a passage echoing Seneca's *De Clementia*, Waller argued that "Tygres have courage, and the rugged Bear, / But Man alone can whom he Conquers, spare."<sup>131</sup> Through his mixture of "power and piety in one," Cromwell ruled with the arts of peace and war, exercising clemency and self-constraint alongside courage and military might. Fisher had resolved the difficulties of comparing Cromwell to Julius Caesar in *Irenodia Gratulatorio* by describing Cromwell's virtues as superior to Caesar's. While likewise emphasizing Cromwell's distinctive virtues, Waller overcame some of the limitations of this comparison between Cromwell and Julius Caesar by introducing a second historical exemplum: Cromwell had become Caesar Augustus, superseding Julius Caesar by ending civil war and ushering in the stability and Imperial riches of the *Pax Romana*:

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<sup>130</sup> Waller, *Panegyricke*, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Waller, *Panegyricke*, 7. Compare to the contemporary, rhyming English translation of *Lucius Annaeus Seneca, his first book of clemency written to Nero Caesar* (London: 1653), 10: "Tis womanish, in passion to run on: / And tis the property of beasts, that are / Not generous, with cruelty to tear / Such as lie on the ground. Whereas the rage / Of Elephants, and Lions will asswage, / When once they conquer. But th' ignoble race / Of Bears, and VVolves will dwell upon the place. / Feirce and unbounded anger ill befits / A King:./ But if to men obnoxious he gives life, / Or restores honour, then he does a thing, / That appertaines to none but to a King."

As the vext world to finde repose at last  
It self into *Augustus* Arms did cast:  
So *England* now, doth with like toyle opprest,  
Her weary head upon your bosome rest.<sup>132</sup>

According to Waller, Cromwell resembled Julius Caesar for his military might and conquest, but Augustus for his Imperial peace.<sup>133</sup>

As Laura Lunger Knoppers has argued, through visual sources and texts especially from 1649-53, Cromwell's constructed image became a part of the new republican aesthetic of the early Interregnum.<sup>134</sup> However, constructing Cromwellian Augustanism after his rise as Lord Protector was simultaneously a precarious endeavor, which risked alienating republicans and deeply infuriating royalists.<sup>135</sup> For Cromwell's republican opponents, the Lord Protector had betrayed republican principles for personal gain, ambition, and avarice; he had transformed the republic into a kingdom in all but name, just as Caesar had. To his royalist opponents, Cromwell's monarchism was a distorted and destructive mockery of true kingship; his claim to sovereignty a mere shadow of the Stuart dynasty. Even for Cromwell's supporters, however, the exempla of Julius Caesar and Augustus betrayed an anxiety that the Protectorate's Imperial glory carried great risk. What thereby became essential to Cromwell's advisors, expressed in the early 1650s and beyond, was that Cromwell must indeed regulate himself with virtue and successfully transition his great talents of war into the "arts of peace."

Milton expressed as much in Sonnet XVI, "To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652, On the proposals of certain ministers at the Committee for Propagation of the

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<sup>132</sup> Waller, *Panegyricke*, 10.

<sup>133</sup> For a description of the wide variety of historical accounts available on Julius Caesar and Augustus and their multivalent appropriations before the Interregnum, see Freyja Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic in Early Modern England* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>134</sup> Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, 66.

<sup>135</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 310.

Gospel.” As we saw in the previous chapter, Milton spent the early days of the Interregnum publicly defending the regicide, in part by arguing that the personal character of King Charles, his marriage and activities “within his own household,” had resulted in tyrannical misgovernment. *Eikonoklastes* (1649) had argued that Charles was so uxoriously enslaved to his heretical wife, Henrietta Maria, that he ignored the wise counsel of Parliament and sought to subjugate the English people to the idolatry of popery.<sup>136</sup> Cromwell, according to Milton’s sonnet of 1652, had proven himself victor in the arts of war and cause of God, breaking through enemies and “detractions rude” and thereby raising England far above ignoble enslavement. In the sonnet’s octave, Milton rejoiced that Cromwell had been “Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,” crowned by Fortune and laurel wreaths: “To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed.” Milton conveyed Cromwell’s achievements as indeed so numerous that their exultation spilled into the sestet, crowding Milton’s subsequent warning that these military victories on the battlefield must transform into victories in the political and religious sphere:

yet much remains  
 To conquer still; peace hath her victories  
 No less renowned than war, new foes arise  
 Threat’ning to bind our souls with secular chains:  
 Help us to save free conscience from the paw  
 Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw (lines 9-14).<sup>137</sup>

Milton thus coupled his exultation with an exhortation for Cromwell. The commander must resist the subjugation of “New foes,” who through anti-toleration legislation in the

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<sup>136</sup> See above, p. 245-50.

<sup>137</sup> John Milton, Sonnet XVI, “To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652, On the proposals of certain ministers at the Committee for Propagation of the Gospel,” in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, eds. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (NY: Modern Library Edition, Random House, 2007), 153-54.

Rump Parliament sought to regulate doctrinal unity within the church.<sup>138</sup> For Milton, these “hireling wolves” threatened to subjugate the consciences of Englishmen, just as former enemies had threatened English lives.

George Wither likewise urged Cromwell to translate his military prowess into good, godly governance. In his poem concerning the coaching accident, *Vaticinium Causuale*, Wither believed that as God had protected and guided Cromwell in battle, the coaching accident represented God’s “new *Experiment*.” In times of peace as well as war, Cromwell must keep up his guard and rely upon divine protection, remembering that “it is he alone, who doth prevent, / The Danger of his *Peace*; and, that, there are / Perils inclosing him, when none appear.”<sup>139</sup> As Cromwell “*Himself*, alone, / Might be his own *Destroyer*,” Wither argued that he must remain mindful and lawful, heeding the laws of God and of the realm, lest God withdraw his blessing.<sup>140</sup> Like Milton’s sonnet, Wither’s panegyric was also conditional, exhorting Cromwell to righteous and godly governance in times of peace as well as war.

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Historians of republican thought have tended to overlook positive portrayals of Cromwell and his supporters, emphasizing instead the writings of detractors or later supporters of the “Good Old Cause” as developing true republican theory. Those who understood Cromwell as the best of men, possessing great virtue and pure godliness, however, believed the Protector had a centrally important role to play in transforming the English state into a free commonwealth; for, as Milton, Wither, and others argued, the English

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<sup>138</sup> They would eventually prevail with the system of Triers and Ejectors to examine the orthodoxy of candidates for the ministry and existing clergy. Blair Worden, *God’s Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (NY and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 119-26.

<sup>139</sup> Wither, *Vaticinium Causuale*, 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6, 8.



people desperately required a restoration of their virtue before they could adopt the mantle of full liberty. As we have seen, diverse English writers had warned for decades that the rule of a degenerate king would have a corrupting effect on subjects, corroding their virtues and masculinity, disrupting the social and gendered order of society, and making subjects incapable of throwing off the bonds of servitude for liberty. The anonymous satire, *That Which Seemes Best is Worst* (1617) had argued that Appius Claudius's corrupt and vicious behavior had made the Roman youth "effeminate," "dissolute," and rebellious, and brought his country into "disorder, pride, and luxurie, / Discord, and in the end anarchy,"<sup>141</sup> while George Chapman's satire, *A Iustification of a Strange Action of Nero* (1629), maintained that the tyrant's absurd and dangerous fascination with his mistress led courtly youth into open acts of lewdness. William Prynne's *Histrion-mastix* (1633) had likewise contended that tyrannical rulers such as Nero corrupted the entire "Roman Nation" through their examples and drew their subjects on "to all kinde of vice of luxury and lewdnesse."<sup>142</sup>

From writings such as these and their own observations, republican writers in the Interregnum believed the English people to be in need of regeneration; their reading of classical authors such as Sallust and Livy convinced them that the restoration of liberty and the establishment of a free commonwealth required a renewal of the people's virtue and religion. Sallust, for example, had observed in *Bellum Catilinae* that a free commonwealth such as the Roman's entailed "Law and discipline," "*Courage* in Warre, and *Iustice* in Peace," while the Roman state after its degeneration into a "lawless

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<sup>141</sup> W.B., *That Which Seemes Best is Worst. Exprest in a Paraphrasticall Trascript of Iuvenals tenth Satyre. Together with the Tragical Narration of Virginias death inserted* (London: 1617), 21, 23-24 (my pagination).

<sup>142</sup> William Prynne, *Histrion-mastix, the Players Scovrge, or, Actors Tragædie* (London: 1633), 451. See above, p. 196-201. For Chapman, see p. 179-88.

tyranny” had produced unbridled ambition, avarice, cruelty, and irreligion until “men behaved themselves like women, and women made open prostitution of their reputation.”<sup>143</sup> Sallust held that the restoration of a free state would thereby entail the restoration of virtue, religion, and manliness. Likewise Livy in his highly influential history of the Roman republic maintained that one should not seek a revolution of government from kingship to a free state unless the people’s virtue could support such a change. He concluded his discussion of the banishment of Tarquin and the formation of the Roman republic under Junius Brutus by arguing that “even the verie same *Brutus*...should have done the same to the exceeding *danger* of the weale publick, if for desire of unripe and untimely freedome, he had wrested the roiall dignitie and governement: from any of the former princes.”<sup>144</sup> Enacting revolution for a corrupted people would lead to destruction and ruin. Having studied these authors as well as Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy* closely, Milton famously argued in his *Digression of the History of Britain* (1648?) that the second Brutus, Marcus Brutus, who had sought to free Rome had been unsuccessful because Roman virtues had already become corrupted:

For stories teach us, that Liberty sought out of season, in a corrupt and degenerate Age, brought *Rome* itself into a farther Slavery: For Liberty hath a sharp and double edge, fit only to be handled by Just and Vertuous Men; to bad and dissolute, it becomes a mischief unweildy in their own hands: neither is it compleatly given, but by them who have the happy skill to know what is grievance, and unjust to a People, and how to remove

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<sup>143</sup> C. C. Sallust, *The tvvo most vvorthy and notable histories which remaine vnmained to posterity (viz:) the conspiracie of Cateline, vndertaken against the gouernment of the Senate of Rome, and the vvarre which Iugurth for many yeares maintained against the same state* (London: 1609), 8-12. See Quentin Skinner, “John Milton and the Politics of Slavery,” in *Visions of Politics*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 286-307, esp. 290; Armitage, “John Milton: Poet Against Empire,” 209-10; Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 210-12. A (presumably republican) writer who opposed the Protectorate government issued an excerpt from Sallust’s history to urge war against those “Few Great and Ill Men [that] govern Us.” See Sallust, *The true patriot's speech to the people of Rome* (1656), 2.

<sup>144</sup> Livy, *Romane Historie*, 44, my emphasis. See Machiavels *Discovrses. upon the first Decade of T. Livius*, I.XVI, 81-87; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 44-45.

it wisely; what good Laws are wanting, and how to frame them substantially, that good Men may enjoy the freedom which they merit, and the bad the Curb which they need.<sup>145</sup>

If the English people were not ready, thereby, to cast off the yoke of kings, the Interregnum would prove disastrous.

As scholars have noted, Milton's writings throughout the 1650s betray his deep pessimism on just this issue. In the *Defensio Secunda* (1654), Milton exhorted his fellow countrymen to take on the "warfare of peace," driving "from your minds the superstitions that are sprung from ignorance of real and genuine religion" and expelling "avarice, ambition, and luxury from your minds, yes, and extravagance from your families as well."<sup>146</sup> "For, my fellow countrymen, your own character is a mighty factor in the acquisition or retention of liberty," Milton argued:

Unless your liberty is such as can neither be won nor lost by arms, but is of that kind alone which, sprung from piety, justice, temperance, in short, true virtue, has put down the deepest and most far-reaching roots in your souls, there will not be lacking one who will shortly wrench from you, even without weapons, that liberty which you boast of having sought by force of arms.<sup>147</sup>

Just as Milton had urged Cromwell to embrace the arts of peace as well as war, he admonished English citizens to arm themselves with true virtue like the citizens of Rome's republic. And he warned that "not even Cromwell himself, nor a whole tribe of liberating Brutuses" could bring about a free commonwealth unless the English people become "free," which meant "precisely the same as to be pious, wise, just, and temperate, careful of one's property, aloof from another's, and thus finally to be magnanimous and

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<sup>145</sup> *CPW*, V.1.448.

<sup>146</sup> *CPW*, IV.1.680-81.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

brave.”<sup>148</sup> Milton believed his countrymen so far had failed to cleanse themselves and accept this mantle of liberty, but that it was not yet too late.

Republican authors not only feared the common people for their seeming inadequate virtue and lack of embracing liberty, but the remaining noble lords who continued to act in the luxurious and selfish ways of the old regime. In *Respublica Anglicana* (1650), George Wither contrasted the current lords with those former “Brave Earles and Barons” who protected the people’s liberty and “purchased their Honors by spending their Bloud for their Countryes good, not by money gotten by oppressing their Country.” These lords of old drew their principles from education, cherished “scarres” as the “Ornaments of a noble face,” their “hair powdered with dust, and dewed with sweat, and bloud” whereby they courted their “Mistresse, *Heroick fame*”; they hawked and hunted to gain skill for war, treated their tenants justly and with dignity, and “were rather a Spurre, then bridle to the Commons in all good actions.”<sup>149</sup> Combining education and martial valor, these lords demonstrated their virtue and love of liberty through manly feats and self-sacrifice. Their leadership on the estates of England fostered a “valiant Yeomanrie” fit for war; their “frequent Parliaments” taught them to “manage great Counsels, perform worthy actions, restrain and curbe Tyrannical Monarchs.”<sup>150</sup> Wither argued however that the current lords, who had been tutored under Charles and infrequent Parliaments, had become “Apes unto the French,” cared who was the “finest” rather than bravest, and “followed most of [the French] fashions.” They prefer their hair filled with “perfum’d powders and *Gesmin* butter” rather than dust, sweat, and bloud gained in

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<sup>148</sup> *CPW*, IV.1.684.

<sup>149</sup> George Wither, *Respublica Anglicana, or The Historie of the Parliament in their late Proceedings* (London: 1650), 39.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

victory, and their hawking and hunting merely teach them “to swear more readily.”<sup>151</sup> In Wither’s view, court fashion and vanity had corrupted virtuous nobility and the needed martial prowess to safeguard virtue and liberty. These courtiers’ preference for dissoluteness, “gilded follies,” and “Muck-worms” over “daring and knowing men,” “hath choaked those Seeds of vertue and overspread the Garden with weeds and thistles,” Wither argued. “When a King will be a Tyrant,” such as Charles in Wither’s estimation, “his Lords and Courtiers must be slaves, or the design will never cotten, and it was easie to guess what a brood of Snakes was like to be by the Suns shining on Dunghils.”<sup>152</sup>

To these men, Cromwell thereby became the solution to monarchical corruption in two, interconnected ways: he would restore liberty to the English constitution and realm while simultaneously restoring the virtue requisite for liberty in English hearts and minds. Whereas Charles and James had corrupted the English people through luxury and effeminate pursuits, Cromwell would regenerate it through virtue. Through his renewal of virtue, order, and sexual chastity, as Fisher described in *Irenodia Gratulatoria*, Cromwell would renew the people and commonwealth and thereby resurrect its old, sacred liberties. The state will “Revive and rise again even from her urne,” Manley’s translation of Fisher maintained, and “Feeling her changed reines she doth implore, / That Tyrants never her may ravish more.”<sup>153</sup> Through Cromwell’s military victories “Half-buri’d *England*..., / Rais’d up her self again as from the Dead; / By *thee* regayning strength she rises free.”<sup>154</sup> Milton identified Cromwell as the very man of “unexcelled virtue” needed to restore England to her liberty:

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>153</sup> Manley, *Veni, Vidi, Vici*, 4-5.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 44.

[T]here is nothing in human society more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, nothing in the state more just, nothing more expedient, than the rule of the man most fit to rule. All know you to be that man, Cromwell! Such have been your achievements as the greatest and most illustrious citizen, the director of public counsels, the commander of the bravest armies, the father of your country.... You, the liberator of your country, the author of liberty, and likewise its guardian and savior, can undertake no more distinguished role and none more august. By your deeds you have outstripped not only the achievements of our kings, but even the legends of our heroes.<sup>155</sup>

Invoking the name of “*pater patriae*,” father of your country, Milton likened Cromwell to Cicero, who first bore the title after defeating the Catiline conspiracy, but also to Julius Caesar and Augustus who likewise adopted the title. Milton’s encomium for Cromwell in the *Defensio Secunda* was conditional, however. Within this passage he urged Cromwell to continue spurning the name of king, while also remembering “how precious a thing is this liberty which you hold, committed to your care, entrusted and commended to you by how dear a mother, your native land.”<sup>156</sup> Milton commanded Cromwell to honor the commonwealth, fallen soldiers, and himself by defending liberty through upright living, “piety, faith, justice, and moderation of soul,” while fleeing the “pomp of wealth and power.”<sup>157</sup> He must also not rule alone, in Milton’s view, but adopt a council of men eminently “modest, upright, and brave,” who “from the sight of so much death and slaughter before their very eyes have learned, not cruelty or hardness of heart, but justice, the fear of God, and compassion for the lot of mankind,” and who thereby believe that liberty must be “cherished the more dearly in proportion to the gravity of the dangers which they have exposed themselves for her sake.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *CPW*, IV.1.671-72.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.1.673.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.1.673-74.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

Monarchical tyranny had seeped far into English hearts and minds, republicans feared, damaging English virtues, their religion, their passions, their households, while confusing the sexual order, emasculating their men and deflowering their women. Since at least James's reign, writers had interpreted the English government imaginatively through a Roman lens and had understood its failures as the failure of an Appius or a Nero. Tyranny expressed itself and acted through effeminacy, uxoriousness, lust, cowardice, and idolatry, they concluded, and through this perspective, Englishmen sought a solution to the seeming problem of a corrupted Stuart court and kingship. This chapter has argued that many statesmen, including republicans, embraced Cromwell's leadership as the solution to Stuart tyranny and as the hope of moral regeneration for a beleaguered England. Englishmen celebrated Cromwell's military conquests, austere comportment, and ordered household as signs of masculinity, virtue, bravery, and true religion, and they interpreted the extraordinary events of 1649 as the beginning of a new Roman republic and empire. Cromwell would be a new Junius Brutus or Virginius, they argued; Cromwell would establish an empire worthy of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus while shunning the vicious Asiatic luxury that caused its downfall. Despite the hope of these writers, the Protectorate did ultimately fail to reform men capable of maintaining that precarious Roman liberty, a liberty built upon masculine virtue which Englishmen had sought for decades.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Jamie Gianoutsos was born in Dallas, Texas, on January 9, 1984. Her childhood was spent primarily in Amarillo, Texas, where she attended Amarillo High School. After completing a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Great Texts of the Western Tradition at Baylor University, Jamie read for two master's degrees at the Queen's University of Belfast and the University of Cambridge through the Marshall Scholarship. She began the PhD program in History at the Johns Hopkins University in 2008.

### **Education**

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#### **The Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, Maryland),**

- PhD Candidate in History (ABD as of April 2010)
- Supervised by Dr. John W. Marshall
- All comprehensive exams passed with distinction: Early Modern British History, Early Modern France, Medieval Historiography, and Early Modern Spain

#### **University of Cambridge, King's College (Cambridge, England)**

- MPhil in History: Political Thought and Intellectual Ideas, awarded July 2008
- GPA: 1<sup>st</sup> with Distinction
- MPhil Dissertation: "Cultivation as a Metaphor in English Pedagogical Literature, 1531-1644" (supervised by Dr. Clare Jackson)

#### **The Queen's University (Belfast, Northern Ireland)**

- M.A. in English: Reconciving the Renaissance, Literatures, Places, Cultures, awarded November 2007
- GPA: 1<sup>st</sup> with Distinction
- MA Dissertation: "Poetry, Virtue and Vision: John Milton's *Of Education* and the Double Aim of Learning" (supervised by Dr. Estelle Haan)

#### **Baylor University (Waco, Texas)**

- B.A. in Political Science and Great Texts of the Western Tradition (*summa cum laude*), Honors College, awarded May 2006
- GPA: 3.97/4.0
- Honors Thesis: "Education for a Liberal Polity: John Locke's Teaching on Fashioning Citizens and Statesmen" (directed by Dr. Dwight D. Allman)

### **Academic Positions**

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**Assistant Professor**, Mount Saint Mary's University (Emmitsburg, MD), Fall 2014

**Lecturer**, Mount Saint Mary's University, Spring 2013 - Spring 2014

## **Fellowships, Awards, and Distinctions**

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*Institute of Historical Research Travel Bursary* (£200), Ancients and Moderns: the 81<sup>st</sup> Anglo-American Conference of Historians, July 2012

*Stern Travel Fund Award* (\$300), North American Conference for British Studies, October 2011.

*Mellon Pre-Dissertation Fellowship* (\$5000), Institute of Historical Research, Summer 2010.

*Short-term Fellowship* (\$2500), The Huntington Library, awarded April 2010.

*Graduate Fellowship for Research in Europe* (\$6000), Charles Singleton Center for the Study of Pre-modern Europe, awarded April 2010.

*George and Sylvia Kagan Graduate Fellowship* (\$15,000), The Johns Hopkins University, 2008-2011.

*Marshall Scholarship, British Parliament*, 2006-2008.

*Honorable Mention, Alexander T. Butler Prize*, The Johns Hopkins University, April 2009.

*Honors College Nominee, Most Outstanding Graduating Senior*, Baylor University, 2006.

*Richard D. Huff Distinguished Student in Political Science*, Baylor University, May 2006.

*Outstanding Student in Political Science Department*, Baylor University, Spring 2005.

*Outstanding Student in Great Texts of the Western Tradition*, Baylor University, 2005.

*Robert T. Miller Scholar in Political Science*, Baylor University, 2004.

*Phi Beta Kappa, Zeta Chapter*, Baylor University.

## **Publications and Edited Features**

1. "Fabliaux," (co-authored with Michelle M. Sauer), *Companion to Pre-1600 British Poetry*. Ed. Michelle Sauer. New York: Facts on File, 2007. (Peer-reviewed)
2. "Virginité" (co-authored with K. Sarah-Jane Murray), *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Sex, Love and Culture in the Medieval World*. Ed. William Burns. Washington, D.C.: Greenwood Press, 2007.
3. "Locke and Rousseau: Early Childhood Education," *The Pulse*, Vol. 4.1, Fall 2006.
4. "The Education of Harry le Roy," *The Pulse*, Vol. 3.2, Spring 2006: 10-23.
5. "Performance Review: The Magic Flute," *Baylor Journal of Theatre and Performance*. Vol 3.2 (2005): 89-92. (Peer-reviewed)

## **Presentations**

- "John Milton, Divorce, and the Republican Household." Sixteenth Century Conference, Puerto Rico, October 2013.
- "A Chaste Virginia: Tyranny and the Corruption of Law in Jacobean England." Ancients and Moderns: the 81st Anglo-American Conference of Historians, London, United Kingdom, July 2012.
- "'And thus did the wicked sonne murther his wicked mother': Nero and the Tyranny of Household and Gender in Jacobean and Early Caroline England." Gender History Workshop, the Johns Hopkins University, March 2012.
- "The Contested History of Nero in Late Jacobean and Early Caroline England." North American Conference on British Studies, Denver, Colorado, November 2011.
- "The Danger of Evil Counsel: Thomas Gainsford and his Tacitean *Observations*." Midwest Conference on British Studies, Terre Haute, Indiana, November 2011.
- "The Murder of Julia Agrippina: Edmund Bolton, Thomas May, and the Gendered Language of Tyranny." Researching the Archives, Folger Shakespeare Library Institute, October 2011.
- "What Was Political Thought in Sixteenth-Century England?" Participant in the Folger Institute Spring Symposium, The Folger Shakespeare Library, April 2011.
- "Brutus and Essex: Justifications of Resistance through Historical Exempla in Late Elizabethan England." The European Seminar, Department of History, Johns Hopkins University, April 2009.

“Hrosvitha’s Virgins: Repression or Liberation?” Conference of the International Federation for Research in Women’s History, Sofia, Bulgaria, August 2007.

## **Courses Taught**

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### **Mount Saint Mary’s University:**

- History of the West: Renaissance to Revolutions, CVHI 102, Spring 2012
- Origins of the West (Ancient to Medieval World), VTCV 102, Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
- Imagination and Invention: Renaissance to the Great War, Honors, VTCV 201, Fall 2013
- Historical Methods: The French Revolution, HIST 360A, Fall 2013
- Tudor and Stuart Britain, HIST 227A & B, Spring 2014

### **The Johns Hopkins University:**

- History of Occidental Civilizations, 100.102: Medieval World, with Gabrielle Spiegel, Fall 2010 and Fall 2009
- History of Occidental Civilizations, 100.103: Europe and the Wider World 1492-1789, with Richard Kagan, Spring 2010

### **Baylor University:**

- Preceptor for Medieval Intellectual Tradition, Great Texts 2302, with Dr. K. Sarah-Jane Murray, Summer 2007

## **Professional Development**

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### **The National Humanities Center, Summer Institute in Literary Studies**

- Andrew Marvell: Lyric and Public Poems (Dr. Nigel Smith), Summer 2012

### **The Folger Shakespeare Library Institute**

- Introduction to Early Modern English Paleography (Dr. Heather Wolfe), Fall 2010
- Researching the Archives (Dr. Peter Lake and Dr. Nigel Smith), Fall 2011 and Spring 2012

### **Singleton Center and Sheridan Libraries Master Class**

- Texts and Contexts: Print and Manuscript Culture in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Europe (Dr. April Oettinger and Dr. Earle Havens), Spring 2010