STUDIES IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY POLITICAL POETRY OF THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

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DAVID C. JUDKINS
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ABSTRACT

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The seventeenth century has always been a fertile period for students interested in English political poetry, but much of the attention has been directed to the latter half of the century following the Restoration. My purpose in this dissertation is to examine some poetry written earlier in the century, roughly between 1639-1653. This is the period of the English Civil War and extending to the establishment of Cromwell as Lord Protector.

The political poetry of this period deserves consideration. It is obviously of interest to students of popular Restoration satire, but it can be read with insight into the tastes and attitudes of the times. But aside from these points, the poetry I deal with has, I believe, a certain charm and interest of its own. It is impressive political poetry which should be looked at closely and seriously. One of the problems a reader faces with much of this verse is its

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The seventeenth century has long proved a fertile ground for students interested in English political poetry, but most of the attention has been directed to the latter half of the century following the restoration of Charles II. It is my purpose in this dissertation to examine political poetry written earlier in the century during the extended decade of 1639-1653. This is a period opening with the First Bishop's War and extending to the appointment of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector. It, of course, includes the Civil War.

The political verse of these years warrants our consideration. It is obviously a forerunner to the more popular Restoration satire. It also provides us with insight into the tastes and attitudes of the times. But aside from these points, the poetry I deal with has, I believe, a certain charm and interest of its own. It is impressive political poetry which should be looked at closely and seriously. One of the problems a reader faces with much of this verse is its

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highly topical nature, and I think much can be learned from putting the poems in their historical and political contexts. In this dissertation I have brought together information on the times which allows the reader to read the poems with understanding and, I hope, pleasure.

After examination of a great body of political verse I have selected for consideration poems which are interesting and important but have up to now received relatively little attention. All the poets included save those in the last chapter supported the king. The dissertation is divided into eight chapters, and the poetry is discussed in chronological order of the events it concerns. After the "Introduction" I take up John Denham's Cooper's Hill. Written on the eve of the war, it was an appeal for moderation when there was yet time to avert bloodshed. Abraham Cowley wrote two fairly long poems during or about the first years of the war. The Puritan and the Papist is a biting satire and more interesting than his unfinished chronicle, A Poem on the Late Civil War. John Cleveland, the king's most vigorous poetic advocate, wrote most of his political verse during the early years of the war. In the fifth chapter I take up the very popular poet, Alexander Brome, who did his most interesting work during the protracted period of Royalist defeat. The sixth chapter concerns the satiric elegies of Henry King, the three longest of which were written on the final days of the war. King's two elegies on Charles I are probably

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the best written on the monarch. In the years immediately following the war Henry Vaughan wrote a number of moving meditative poems on the violence that had ripped his country in half. These poems provide an interesting contrast to earlier Royalist attitudes. In the final chapter I turn from the Cavalier viewpoint to examine the poetic assessments of the new leader, Oliver Cromwell. Here I will concentrate on three poems: one by Andrew Marvell, another by John Milton, and the third by Edmund Waller.

There was, of course, excellent political poetry written later in the interregnum after the time at which my study terminates including, for instance, Marvell's "The First Anniversary" and Dryden's interesting "Heroic Stanzas." The limits of my discussion, however, are justified for several reasons, especially by a shift in the focus of political poetry after 1653. The later poets were concerned with either the celebration of Cromwell or the outspoken hostility to his "reign." The Civil War had begun to slip into the background.

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A THESIS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The interest in seventeenth century political poetry has been increasing over the past decade. C.V. Wedgwood's Poetry and Politics under the Stuarts was one of the first books to draw my interest toward the period, and I am sure it has done the same for others. It goes without saying that many other publications have been useful to me, but I would particularly note Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington's The Poems of John Cleveland and Margaret Crum's The Poems of Bishop Henry King. Without these two excellent editions my work would have been far more difficult.

One incurs a multitude of personal debts in writing a thesis only a few of which can be acknowledged here. Peter Trumbull and Walter Burinski at the Michigan State University Library have assisted me in gathering research materials. Mrs. Caroline Blunt, whose cheerful manner is a welcome contrast in the Rare Book Room, has been particularly helpful. I have, I believe, learned much in writing the thesis owing mainly to the English Graduate Faculty at Michigan State University. Professor Lawrence Babb has given more aid than he perhaps realizes. Professor George Price has guided my studies from my first days at the University. His willingness to continue as acting chairman of my doctoral committee and handle many

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bothersome chores in the absence of Professor Summers is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Professor John Yunck for his help in the final stages of preparing the thesis. Professor Joseph Summers has given more of his time and energy in seeing the project through than any student has the right to expect. Without his patience, understanding, and guidance this thesis could never have been completed.

Finally, I owe an unpayable debt to my wife, who has been a source of encouragement, hope, and even labor for me.

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Chapter I

Introduction: The Men and the Times

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In the latter part of the 1630's the inept and dogmatic policies of the English monarch, Charles I, began to catch up with him. In the 1640's the country was torn by the great Civil War which culminated in the public decapitation of Charles. England had seen civil wars before, but they were for the most part inter-family feuds. The question in these early wars was not, Will we have a king? but rather, Who will be king? And after one nobleman took over for another, or the king successfully put down a rebellion, life went on pretty much as it had before. But the Civil War was different. The aristocracy was not fighting amongst itself, rather Parliament, or more precisely the House of Commons, was struggling for more control of the government. During most of the war the dissident M.P.'s would not even admit they were fighting against the king, but claimed they only wanted to remove the king's evil advisers.

This tumultuous and exciting period inspired a number of poets to express their opinions in verse. In the course of this dissertation I would like to examine some of their work. This provides an interesting study of the way intelligent and sensitive men view the catastrophic events of

[1] Robert Herrick, The Poems of Robert Herrick, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford, 1965), p. 331.

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their time. One would expect to see covered those writers commonly grouped under the anthology heading, "Cavalier Poets." Usually found listed in such a section are: Carew, Suckling, Lovelace, Cowley (if he is included in the book at all), and sometimes Herrick. But actually none of these men were valuable to the king as soldiers. Few were involved in battles and none in any important action. Carew died in 1639 before the fighting began. Herrick, a clergyman, had long since been relegated to "dull Devonshire." Suckling and Lovelace were strong in their support of the king but not very coordinated in their actions. The former led one hundred horse for the king in the First Bishop's War, but they were better known for their brilliant attire than their valor. In 1641 Suckling took part in a plot to secure command of the army for Charles, but the plot was discovered and Suckling had to flee to France where he died a year later, probably of self-induced poison. Lovelace's career was not quite such a failure. In 1642 he personally read a petition to Parliament for which he was predictably thrown into jail. He was released only after promising not to fight for the king again. Lovelace finally broke his promise in 1645, but by then the king's cause was lost. The poet's fortunes sank as steadily, though not as quickly, as his monarch's, and in 1658 he died nearly penniless. Cowley was a scholar at Cambridge before the war. After moving to Oxford he got a court appointment and served most illustriously as an under-secretary to Henrietta Maria in Paris. Nevertheless, Cowley did write some interesting

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war poetry which I will discuss in the second chapter. Other poets to be considered are: John Denham, John Cleveland, Alexander Brome, Henry Vaughan, and Henry King. These men were Cavalier poets in that they wrote poetry supporting Charles in his fight against Parliament. In the last chapter I will discuss three poems on Cromwell by Marvell, Milton, and Waller.

A very legitimate question to bring up at this point is: Why would anyone wish to study such poetry? There are, I think, several good reasons, aside from the obvious need to satisfy a doctoral degree requirement. It is true that these poets were writing to satisfy a contemporary audience, and they likely had no thoughts of gaining immortal fame through such topical partisan verse. But many of the problems these men wrote about still exist today in only slightly altered form. The points Cowley raised in his satire, The Puritan and the Papist, are still formidable obstacles in the current ecumenical movement. Denham's appeal for a government more responsive to the needs of a large minority of the citizens still holds a great deal of meaning for readers today. King's assessments of various Civil War leaders were controversial when he wrote and for the historian remain controversial today. In addition to these parallels there are other reasons to study Civil War political poetry. It is a link with the past illuminating an extraordinary period of history and providing insight into the troubled thoughts of men who were suffering through difficult times. It acquaints the modern reader with the tastes

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and attitudes of the era. Finally, this is a period of transition in English poetry. The metaphysical style begins to die out notwithstanding the efforts of Cleveland and Cowley to keep it alive. At the same time we witness the revival of a poetic style which was to become very popular during the Restoration and the rising importance of satire among serious poets.

In order to give some sense of unity, continuity, and movement to the dissertation it is organized in a loose chronological fashion. After the introduction I will begin by looking at Sir John Denham's Cooper's Hill written on the eve of the war. In chapter three I will take up Abraham Cowley's satire The Puritan and the Papist and his unfinished chronicle A Poem on the late Civil War, both of which were written during or about the first two years of the war. John Cleveland, the king's most vigorous poetic advocate, wrote a number of satiric pieces during the early years of the war, and a consideration of them will constitute the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter I will take up the political poetry of Alexander Brome, who did his most interesting work when the Royalist cause was as good as lost. The sixth chapter deals with the satiric elegies of Henry King; his two most important elegies were written on Charles. I will discuss some of the more private reflections on the war in chapter seven. Henry Vaughan did the most interesting work in this area, and a consideration of his meditations written in the years just after Charles was executed will

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constitute the body of this chapter. Finally, I will briefly examine what the poets had to say about the new leader, Oliver Cromwell, as he consolidated his power.

Douglas Bush has made the point that few poets during this period were what we would call professional writers.[2] During the first half of the seventeenth century it was nearly impossible to make a living at writing, and none of our poets were able to do so. Some had private incomes, others secured court appointments, one was a don, another was a clergyman, and so on. The point is that most of these poets were active men who took some part in the struggle between king and Parliament. At least three were under fire at some time or another. And all the men had their lives drastically altered by the events of the war.

I make this point to emphasize here that it is highly unlikely any of the poetry I will be studying was written as a detached academic exercise. I believe that in every case the persona and the poet are one. As a matter of fact I will use the overworked term only in the discussion of one poem. These poets are relating the thoughts and arguments which burned deeply within them. When Henry King writes of the Earl of Essex and his followers:

> Spight of Their Endless Parliament, or Grants,
> (In Order to those Votes and Covenants
> When, without Sense of their black Perjury
> They Sware with Essex they would Live and Dye)

[2] Douglas Bush, English Literature of the Earlier Seventeenth Century, rev. ed. (London, 1961), p. 5.

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I don't believe he is exercising his wit to amuse or impress his friends. He is rather making a personal statement on a man, now dead, and those whom he led into battle. King uses the medium of poetry because he believed he could speak most effectively and emphatically within the medium's narrow restrictions. Certainly some of the poets, notably Cleveland, are conscientiously witty, but they remain very personally committed to the ideas they express. Because King and other Royalist poets were so deeply committed, it is helpful to know something about them and their cause. It is only with this background of historical information that one can begin to appreciate the efforts of these poets.

It is important to remember at the outset that we are discussing not only a political war but a religious and to some degree a class conflict as well. Religion and politics were bound so tightly together through a complex web of covenants, dispensations, and Parliamentary acts that when one uses the term "political" in connection with this period, he is necessarily speaking of ecclesiastical as well as secular politics. The major schism within the church was between those satisfied with the Anglican establishment, and the Puritans, but there were other divisions as well, particularly within the Puritan ranks. The king, of course,

[3] Henry King, The Poems of Henry King, ed. Margaret Crum (Oxford, 1965), p. 100.

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was the champion of the Anglicans and the aristocracy; he fought not only for his title but for his faith, and ultimately it was for his faith that he was beheaded. The majority of the members of Parliament tended to support the policies and programs of the Puritans. The war between king and Parliament was not solely the result of religious differences, but these differences certainly added fuel to the fires of the conflict by making it more important to people who might otherwise have seen little relevance in the high level bickering. Nor was the war purely a class struggle; yet here again sides tended to divide themselves along class lines and in so doing, they heightened the intensity of the conflict.[4]

As a matter of fact, today, three hundred years after the war, people are still unable to agree on exactly what all the fighting was about. Outwardly it appears to have begun over religious differences. Charles and his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, were determined to impose upon Scotland, where Presbyterianism was very strong, a new prayer book modeled after the English Book of Common Prayer. The Scots refused to accept this and went to war. Charles needed money in order to fight. To get money he had to call Parliament--something he had not done for eleven years. Both the Short Parliament and the Long Parliament

[4] Richard Baxter was one of the first writing on the period to note this class division. He discusses the social or class breakdown of the two sides in Reliquiae Baxterianae (London, 1696), Part I, page 29 ff.

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refused to give him the money needed unless he met certain conditions which would have reduced his power. Neither side would give way on its demands, and eventually the two drifted into war.

So it appears that the problem was one of religious differences. But it has also been pointed out that this is not necessarily the case, for if the king had had money, he would not have needed to call Parliament. These historians argue that it was because of the rise of capitalism that the king was losing his power. Still others argue that the real bone of contention was not religion or economics but the people's desire for greater political liberty.[5] I do not intend to try to solve the problem here; I review the case only because these three topics: religion, economics, and political liberty are so very often satirized or commented upon in some other way by our poets.

One of the first things the Long Parliament did was to arrest the king's principal advisers, the Earl of Strafford and Archbishop Laud. Strafford was hurried off to the scaffold rather quickly. Laud was allowed three years in the Tower before he went the same way. After Strafford's execution Charles realized that time was running short for him to take some action, and after he made peace with Scotland,

[5] For a thorough and documented discussion of the causes of the Civil War the reader should consult Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution, (Manchester, Eng., 1968).

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he journeyed north to raise a Royalist party there. He was not particularly successful, but when he returned to London in November 1641, he was in good spirits and so, suprisingly, were his subjects. "Guards of honour provided by the City Companies lined the streets; the citizens, heartened by the claret which was running from the fountains, leaned over the railings which had been put up 'for the advantage of the show' and cheered loud and long. After banqueting at Guildhall, the King and his family continued the homeward journey, past the south door of St. Paul's, where the choir hailed them with an anthem, down the Strand to Whitehall, the citizens lighting them all the way with flaming torches."[6]

For their part to honor the king's return, students and fellows at Cambridge composed a book of poems setting forth praises of Charles. Two of the poets who will be discussed later in the dissertation contributed selections to the book. These verses of Abraham Cowley and John Cleveland are typical of a kind of political poetry written mostly before the war but also continued through and after the war. For some time poets had found inspiration to pen verses on the royal family on particular occasions. When the king went to Oxford, he nearly always received some poetic tribute. When a new child was born to the king and queen, leading poets would generally write a few lines to mark the occasion. So it is well that we pause and look at these two poems by Cowley and Cleveland,

[6] C.V. Wedgewood, The King's War (London, 1958), p.16.

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not because they are of outstanding merit, but because they are an example of the type of political poetry popular in the age before the war.

Cowley was very patriotic, very pro-Charles, but not very insightful. His poem is an elaborate, highly embellished little panegyric which is extreme but typical of the excessive praise heaped on a monarch. For instance in the second stanzaic paragraph he prepares the way for the returning king:

> Let Cygnus plucke from the Arabian waves
> The ruby of the rocke, the pearle that paves
> Great Neptunes Court, let every sparrow beare
> From the three Sisters weeping barke a teare
> Let spotted Lynces their sharpe tallons fill
> With chrystall fetch'd from the Promethean hill
> Let Cythereas birds fresh wreathes compose
> Knitting the pale fac't Lillie with the Rose.
> Let the selfe-gotten Phoenix rob his nest,
> Spoile his own funerall pile and all his best
> Of Myrrhe, of Frankincense, of Cassia bring,
> To strew the way of our returned King.[7]

The poet cannot hail his king as victorious since he fought no battles. Nevertheless, Cowley finds something ingenious to say about the peacefulness of the mission:

> Let Alexander call himself Joves peere,
> And place his Image next the Thunderer,
> Yet whilst our Charles with equall balance reignes
> 'Twixt Mercy and Astrea, and maintains
> A noble peace, 'tis he, 'tis only he
> Who is most neere, most like the Deitie.[8]

For the modern reader the poem seems overdone; more importantly,

[7] Abraham Cowley, Essays, Plays, and Sundry Verses, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge, 1906), p. 46.

[8] Essays, Plays, and Sundry Verses, p. 47.

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Cowley seems oblivious to the monumental problems facing Charles. The poet does recognize the desirability of peace, but calling it a "noble peace" is euphemistic, to say the least, since the Scots had just humbled the English and Parliament had humbled the king.

Cleveland's poem is more ingenious and metaphorical than Cowley's. It shows heavier traces of the metaphysical style than did the first poem. Cleveland delights in playing with the metaphysical problem of whether or not the king had actually been away. Of course the whole poem and the problems it toys with are structured as an elaborate compliment:

> Return'd? I'll ne'r believe't; First prove him hence;
> Kings travel by their beams and influence.
> Who says the soul gives out her gests, or goes
> A flitting progresse 'twixt the head and toes?[9]

The poet continues by comparing Charles to, among other things, a tree which grows both upward and downward at once, the natural movement of the spheres and the counter movement of the prime mover, a sheep which runs to one of her lambs when it cries and then turns to its twin when it begins to cry. But Cleveland at least acknowledges that all is not well on the king's return when he writes:

> Now the Church-militant in plentie rests,
> Nor fears like th' Amazon to lose her breasts.
> Her means are safe, not squees'd untill the blood
> Mix with the milk and choke the tender brood.[10]

[9] The Poems of John Cleveland, ed. Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington (Oxford, 1967), p. 2.

[10] Cleveland, p. 3.

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When Charles was gone, Parliament passed the Grand Remonstrance, which among other things would strip some powers from the Church of England. Upon his return to London in a brief speech Charles vowed to defend the protestant faith. Cleveland therefore welcomes Charles since he apparently plans to prevent Parliament from tampering with the Church.[11]

Both of these poems reflect the old tradition of political poetry. They are richly complimentary. They are completely uncontroversial, and neither gives the slightest hint of advice for the king. Neither Cleveland nor Cowley alludes to any current setbacks or any other current events, with the one exception I have noted. The modern reader who daily sees his own political leaders examined, psychoanalyzed, and dissected by the press reads with disbelief these inflated tributes which give no indication anything is amiss when in fact the pressure is so intense that the safety valves have blown and the boiler is in danger of exploding at any moment. I once heard Joseph Summers remark that he did not believe Charles really thought he would be killed even as he was on his way to the scaffold. This was no doubt an exaggeration to make a point, but is it any wonder that the king maintained an unrealistic view of his subjects' affection for him when he was regularly treated to such effusions of flattery as we have looked at?

[11] See Morris and Withington's explanatory notes for a full explanation. Cleveland, pp. 81-82.

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After his return from Scotland, Parliament waited eagerly for Charles' reaction to the Grand Remonstrance. His vague reference to the document, cited above, was hardly the response Parliament had expected. Instead, the king chose to ignore the matter and plotted to arrest and try for treason five of the Parliamentary leaders: Pym, Hampden, Haslerig, Holles, and Strode. The plans were laid out carefully, but there was a security leak--probably a number of them--and when the king arrived at Westminster, the men he was after had fled. Shortly thereafter Charles was forced to leave Whitehall with his family. The London mobs had become so menacing that the king feared for the safety of his wife and children. During 1642 the situation continued to deteriorate with each side going through the steps to prepare for war. On August 22, 1642, the king formally raised his standard, proclaiming that his enemies, namely members of the House of Commons, were traitors.

The war went well for Charles at first, and as a result we find a good bit of poetry being turned out by jubilant Royalists. At Edgehill, the first major engagement of the war, neither side won a clear-cut victory, but the Parliamentarians were the first to withdraw, leaving the way open for the Royalists to advance upon London. Though Charles chose not to attack the city, the London citizens were in a near state of panic for fear of the raiding Cavaliers. The king's fortunes reached their high point toward the end of 1643, when the Royalists controlled about two thirds of the country. Near the end of this year the great Parliamentary leader,

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John Pym, died, and things began to look very bleak for the Roundheads, But before he died Pym managed to negotiate a treaty with the Scots whereby they would send troops to aid Parliament. It was this Scottish intervention which ultimately tipped the balance in favor of Parliament. From this time on Charles was outnumbered and out-gunned.

On July 2, 1644, at Marston Moor the Royalists suffered their first major defeat. They were beaten because of the tenacity of the Scots and the ferociously hard charging cavalry under Oliver Cromwell. Still the war was not lost, and the Royalists achieved several minor victories. But the next year the whole matter was virtually decided when on June 14, 1645, the greatest battle of the war was fought at Naseby in Northamptonshire. This was the first major test of the New Model Army, and it passed with flying colors.

From this point on the road was a steady downhill grade for the Royalists, and little more than a year later Charles surrendered to the Scots, from whom he hoped to get better treatment than he would at the hands of Parliament. However, when he refused to accept the Scots' harsh conditions, they turned him over to Parliament for the sum of £400,000 and withdrew from the country. Now that Parliament had the king they didn't really know what to do with him. In addition, since the common enemy had been defeated, Parliament's members began to fall out amongst themselves. The main division was between the Presbyterian majority and a small independent minority backed by the New Model Army.

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The quarreling between these two factions led many Royalists to believe that a second war might be more successful than the first. Charles managed to escape from the army and fled to Carisbrook Castle in the Isle of Wight, and early in 1648 the second Civil War began. Things never went well for the Royalists in the second war. The various risings around England were ill-timed, and the Scots, who had agreed this time to help Charles, were late invading England. On the other hand, Cromwell rose to his greatest heights as a general. He was now convinced that so long as the king lived there could not be peace. As Cromwell's power rose, Parliament's declined. Late in 1648 it was purged of most its strong Presbyterian members. What was left was called the Rump. This remnant of the Long Parliament decided to try the king as a traitor. On January 27, 1649, Charles was found guilty and sentenced to die. Three days later he was beheaded before the citizens of London.

There was still much work for Cromwell to do. A ten-year-old rebellion in Ireland had to be put down, and Charles' son, Charles II, had ideas that he might now try to be king of England. The Irish revolt was ruthlessly suppressed with deceptive ease in about a year. It took the best part of another year for Cromwell to squelch Charles II's hopes to regain the throne with the assistance of his Scottish allies. Obviously these victories did nothing to hurt Cromwell's prestige. Upon returning from these two campaigns he began to assume responsibility for the executive functions of the

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government. At first he served Parliament, but it was not long before Parliament was serving him. Finally, on April 20, 1653, Cromwell, disgusted with Parliament's reluctance to follow his advice as closely as he thought it should, dissolved the Rump. Later that year he had himself named Lord Protector and became military dicator of England for the next five years.

This brief outline of events gives some background for the poetry we will be discussing and hopefully will eliminate any repetition. I will not cover every writer who ever penned a line on the war. Some minor poets such as Thomas Jordan, John Collop, and Marchamont Nedham have not been included in this study. There were a tremendous number of anonymous popular ballads written on the war and its effects. Professor Hyder Rollins printed the best of these in his book, Cavalier and Puritan (New York, 1923). I have not included this kind of popular poetry; in fact, a full dissertation could be written on anonymous war ballads. What I have tried to do is work with poets engaged in the war--men who were strongly partisan and whose lives and fortunes were materially altered by the conflict. At the same time I have limited my study to quality poetry, for there was much light, hastily written verse which might just as well be forgotten. Through the development of this study one will see revealed the way in which various poets regarded the conflict through its different stages. Let us return then to that time shortly before the king raised his standard.

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Chapter II

A Political Interpretation of Sir John Denham's Cooper's Hill

> Bear me, O bear me to sequester'd Scenes,
> The Bowery Mazes, and surrounding Greens,
> To Thame's Banks which fragrant Breezes fill,
> Or where ye Muses sport on Cooper's Hill.
> (Windsor-Forest, ll. 261-264)

Sir John Denham's topographical poem, Cooper's Hill, is one of the most interesting political poems written during the decade under consideration; yet surprisingly, the political aspects of the poem have only been recently discussed.[1] The work of interpreting the poem has been complicated by textual problems.[2] The poem was first published in 1642 and was reprinted four times before Denham published a new version in 1655. "In the preface of the first authorized edition of 1655 the editor stated that there have been five previous impressions 'all but meer repetitions of the same false transcript.' Of these but three are extant 1642, 1643, and 1650. The text of all three save for obvious printer's errors and the inevitable differences of spelling, is identical. The 1655 text differs only in a few minor details from that of the collected

[1] The two most detailed discussions are: Rufus Putney, "The View From Cooper's Hill," University of Colorado Studies, VI (1957), 13-22; and Earl R. Wasserman, The Subtler Language (Baltimore, 1959), pp. 45-100.

[2] Brendan O Hehir's new edition of Cooper's Hill, Expans'd Hieroglyphicks: A Critical Edition of Sir John Denham's Coopers Hill, due to be published in 1969, will likely solve these problems, but this was not available at the time of my writing.

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edition of 1668, which is the final form."[3] Essentially, then, there are two basic forms of the poem: the 1642 edition and the 1668 edition. My citations will be taken from the 1668 edition unless otherwise noted. I will sometimes print both 1642 and 1668 versions to illustrate significant changes. All quotations will be from The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham, ed. by Theodore Howard Banks (New Haven, 1928).

Unlike Cowley, and many others, Denham remained a true though not terribly enthusiastic Royalist throughout the Civil War and interregnum. He was a moderate supporter of the king at the beginning of the war and was driven into the Royalists ranks as the lesser of two evils. In Cooper's Hill we will find lines critical of Charles and the nobility as well as anti-Puritan passages. During the war itself Denham was for a time an unsuccessful military commander and later worked for the king in various plots and intrigues. He may have had some part in helping Charles escape from the army at Hampton Court in 1647.[4]

During the interregnum Denham was in and out of England. Apparently he was bothered as much by creditors as by Parliament. At any rate he suffered through it all maintaining his loyalty to the king, and when Charles II was restored,

[3] Theodore Howard Banks, Jr., "Introduction," The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham (New Haven, 1928), p. 50; however, Mr. O Hehir contends that the first edition was not pirated; his arguments are quite convincing. Brendan O Hehir, Harmony From Discords (Berkley, 1968), pp. 50, 62, 109.

[4] Banks, p. 13.

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Denham was repaid for his devotion by being appointed Surveyor of the Works, a position for which he was singularly unsuited. The final years of his life were marred by an unfaithful wife and a period of insanity. The wife's infidelity may have driven Denham out of his mind. The poet died on March 10, 1669.[5]

Cooper's Hill is without doubt the best thing Denham ever wrote. The poem is of particular interest to one studying Civil War political poetry because of its unusual approach to domestic problems. Ostensibly a topographical poem in praise of the English countryside, Cooper's Hill is actually a commentary on contemporary politics. But unlike most political poetry it cannot be easily catagorized. It is not a satire, though there are satiric passages in it. It is not a panegyric, though there are passages in it in which Charles is flattered and praised. And finally, though the poem only appears to be of the topographical genre, there are many lines which seem to be nothing more than English complimentary verse. What is one to make of it all?

To begin with, the poem is structured as the description of the panoramic scene from a particular hill outside London. After an apostrophe to the hill itself, the poet describes

[5] Brendan O Hehir's full length biography of Denham, Harmony from Discord, should be consulted for a detailed account of the poet's life. The book, published in 1968, became available to me only just before completing this draft. A cursory examination of the book confirms that Mr. O Hehir and I are not in substantial disagreement, though he sees Cooper's Hill as being a more totally Royalist poem than I do.

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what he sees from the pinnacle. He first looks upon London and makes pointed observations upon the city and its inhabitants. Then his eye fastens upon Windsor and he is moved to comment upon its residents, both past and present. On a nearby hill he sees the ruins of Chertsey Abbey and considers the earlier religious upheaval during the reign of Henry VIII which resulted in the desecration and destruction of many fine buildings and religious artifacts. The Thames next attracts the poet's attention, and he presents a lengthy description of that river. Then he turns to the plain and forest at the foot of the hill and describes an imaginary stag hunt, after which he surveys another plain, Runnymede, where King John was supposed to have signed the Magna Charta. The poems ends by drawing a parallel between the similar political situations which John and Charles faced.

From this outline I believe the reader can see that there is a unity of sorts in structure; but what about theme? It might seem that the poem is essentially descriptive , and any comments on current events are thrown in as a kind of afterthought. But I believe this is not the case. Cooper's Hill is a political poem, though not in the usual striking, overt manner, addressed to all the English people including Charles. In it the poet tries to disengage himself from the raging controversy. At the summit of the hill he is in an elevated position from which he can see both sides. The hill itself is located between London on the east and Windsor on the west. Situated in this intermediary position, Denham,

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in a uniquely seventeenth century way, demonstrates the desirability for peace among the conflicting parties. I believe this theme is strongest in the 1642 edition, but it is also clearly apparent in later editions. Throughout the poem one is impressed by the beauty of the countryside. I don't believe Denham writes of it just to bask in a glorious description; instead, he implies that the beautiful scene spread before him should not be spoiled by Englishmen fighting Englishmen. The view from Cooper's Hill includes not just London, Windsor, the Thames, etc., but the entire country; and to consider the lovely green fields stained by Englishmen's blood, shed not fighting an invader but fighting among themselves, is an ugly and repugnant thought.

But Denham is more explicit than this in his political comments. He tries to persuade the parties to resolve their quarrel. It is indeed a soft sell, but the persuasion is there nevertheless. To begin with, notice the description of London, the Puritan stronghold. There is much more restraint shown here than in most political poetry of the decade, and the poet is critical not just of Puritans, but of any money grubbers regardless of their party or religious affiliation. First I print the passage from the 1642 edition and then the account from the 1668 edition. A comparison of the two will illustrate my point that in 1642 the poet was even more interested in pointing out the follies of the war than he was later. Speaking of St. Pauls Cathedral, recently

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rebuilt by Charles, Denham writes:

Now shalt thou stand though sword, or time, or fire,
Or zeal more fierce than they, thy fall conspire,
Secure, whilst thee the best of Poets* sings,
Preserv'd from ruine by the best of Kings.
As those who rais'd in body, or in thought
Above the Earth or the Ayres middle Vault,
Behold how winds, and stormes, and Meteors grow,
How clouds condense to raine, congeale to snow,
And see the Thunder form'd, before it teare
The ayre, secure from danger and from feare,
So rais'd above the tumult and the crowd
I see the City in a thicker cloud
Of businesse, then of smoake, where men like Ants
Toyle to prevent imaginarie wants;
Yet all in vaine, increasing with their store,
Their vast desires, but make their wants the more.
As food to unsound bodies, though it please
The Appetite, feeds onely the disease,
Where, with like hast, though several ways, they run
Some to undo, and some to be undone;
While luxury, and wealth, like war and peace,
Are each the others ruine, and increase;
As Rivers lost in Seas some secret vein
Thence reconveighs, there to be lost again.
Some study plots, and some those plots t' undoe,
Others to make 'em, and undoe 'em too,
False to their hopes, afraid to be secure
Those mischiefes onely which they make, endure,
Blinded with light, and sicke of being well,
In tumults seeke their peace, their heaven in hell.
(pp. 64-65, ll. 21-50)

When Denham revised this passage, he greatly shortened it.

Now shalt thou stand though sword, or time, or fire,
Or zeal more fierce than they, thy fall conspire,
Secure, whilst thee the best of Poets* sings,
Preserv'd from ruine by the best of Kings.
Under his proud survey the City lies,
And like a mist beneath a hill doth rise;
Whose state and wealth the business and the crowd,
Seems at this distance but a darker cloud:
And is to him who rightly things esteems,
No other in effect than what it seems:
Where, with like hast, though several ways, they run
Some to undo, and some to be undone;
While luxury, and wealth, like war and peace,
Are each the others ruine, and increase;
As Rivers lost in Seas some secret vein
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Professor Putney, commenting on the first version, calls it a "venomous attack."[6] And Denham is attacking the London merchants and bankers, but not all of these men were Puritans. In this respect the attack is bipartisan. But I don't believe the tone of the passage is terribly venomous, particularly when it is compared to some of Denham's later satiric poetry. There is, for instance, his short satire,"To The Five Members Of The Honourable House Of Commons. The Humble Petition Of The Poets," in which the poet sarcastically thanks the five members for the benefits they have bestowed upon the country. In the next chapter we will see Cowley use the sarcastic"thank you" in the brilliant conclusion of his satire. Denham writes:

> Therefore, as others from th' bottom of their souls,
> So we from the depth and bottom of our Bowls,
> According unto the blessed form you have taught us,
> We thank you first for the Ills you have brought us,
> For the Good we received we thank him that gave it,
> And you for the Confidence only to crave it.
> (p. 128, ll. 7-12)

The first passage from Cooper's Hill does not match this in vindictiveness, though admittedly it is much more to the point than the second version. I would suggest that Denham in 1642 was making a rather sincere effort to demonstrate the significance of greed in the developing conflict. The tone is critical, somewhat patronizing, perhaps even condescending, but hardly venomous.

After this mild rap on the knuckles for the Londoners'

[6] "The View from Cooper's Hill, " 16.

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materialism and intrigue, the poet moves on to praise the British monarchy, first through a short panegyric passage on Charles and then by sketching in the vast tradition upon which the monarchy rested. In keeping with the style of the epic romance, the poet goes all the way back to Caesar for the beginning of that tradition. Denham quickly works his way back to Charles again for some final complimentary lines. This section serves two purposes. First, it presents the king in the best possible light. It is flattering; but again when compared to Denham's contemporaries, the praise is restrained. Secondly, within the praise is a certain amount of advice which the poet will define more specifically later. Again, I cite the more explicit 1642 edition:

> With such an easie, and unforc'd Ascent,
> Windsor her gentle bosome doth present;
> Where no stupendious Cliffe, no threatning heights
> Accesse deny, no horrid steepe affrights,
> But such a Rise, as doth at once invite
> A pleasure, and a reverence from the sight.
> Thy Masters Emblem, in whose face I saw
> A friend-like sweetnesse, and a King-like aw,
> Where Majestie and love so mixt appeare,
> Both gently kinde, both royally severe.
> (p. 64, ll. 41-54)

Warren L. Chernaik in his new book makes the point that these passages are not always intended simply to flatter the king. "In praising a ruler for virtues he may or may not have, the poet is in fact recommending a particular course of action or outlook. In the words of Erasmus: 'No other way of correcting a prince is so efficacious as presenting in the guise of flattery, the pattern of a really good prince. Thus do you instill virtues and remove faults in such a manner that

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you seem to urge the prince to the former and restrain him from the latter.'"[7] In Denham's passage praising Charles, the poet has given his monarch a high ideal to live up to; and he has outlined in general terms advice which he will discuss in greater detail at the end of the poem.

Denham has now introduced the two principals who are at the center of the developing conflict. The London merchants, many of whom leaned toward Puritanism in their religion and Parliament in their politics, were criticized but not viciously satirized. King Charles has been roundly praised, but more for the purposes of persuasion than flattery. Immediately following these thoughts on Charles, Denham turns to an earlier king and is quite critical of his reign. The poet's rumination on Henry VIII is inspired when he views the ruins of Chertsey Abbey:

> Viewing a neighboring hill, whose top of late
> A Chappel crown'd, till in the Common Fate,
> The adjoyning Abby fell: (may no such storm
> Fall on our times, where ruine must reform.)
> Tell me (my Muse) what monstrous dire offence,
> What crime could any Christian King incense
> To such a rage? Was't Luxury, or Lust?
> Was he so temperate, so chast, so just?
> Were these their crimes? They were his own much more:
> But wealth is Crime enough to him that's poor,
> Who having spent the Treasures of his Crown,
> Condemns their Luxury to feed his own.
> And yet this Act, to varnish o're the shame
> Of sacriledge, must bear devotions name.

[7] Warren L. Chernaik, The Poetry of Limitation: A Study of Edmund Waller (New Haven, 1968), p. 134.

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No Crime so bold, but would be understood
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Who fears not to do ill, yet fears the Name,
And free from Conscience, is a slave to Fame.
Thus he the Church at once protects, & spoils:
But Princes swords are sharper than their stiles.
And thus to th' ages past he makes amends,
Their Charity destroys, their Faith defends.
Then did Religion in a lazy Cell,
In empty, airy contemplations dwell;
And like the block, unmoved lay: but ours,
As much too active, like the stork devours.
Is there no temperate Region can be known,
Betwixt their Frigid, and our Torrid Zone?
Could we not wake from that Lethargick dream,
But to be restless in a worse extream?
And for that Lethargy was there no cure,
But to be cast into a Calenture?
Can knowledge have no bound, but must advance
So far, to make us wish for ignorance?
And rather in the dark to grope our way,
Than led by a false guide to erre by day?
Who sees these dismal heaps, but would demand
What barbarous Invader sackt the land?
But when he hears, no Goth, no Turk did bring
This desolation, but a Christian King;
When nothing, but the Name of Zeal, appears
'Twixt our best actions and the worst of theirs,
What does he think our Sacriledge would spare,
When such th' effects of our devotions are?
(pp. 71-73, ll. 112-156)

This passage is taken from the 1668 edition. Perhaps because of the point Denham is trying to make, the later edition is longer and more explicit than the earlier one. Obviously the poet is using the past to draw a lesson for the present. But to whom is the lesson being taught? It can hardly be overlooked that the poet has just finished talking about Charles to whom he now contrasts Henry VIII. This surely cannot be just a coincidence, since the poet is not bound to notice these landmarks in any particular order. There must be some truths in the lesson for Charles; if nothing else, the poet is saying that kings can be wrong, a point which

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Charles was reluctant to accept. But most importantly the analogy was to be made with the Puritans' zeal which was sweeping the land, yet here again the point is mixed. Denham is saying that the Puritans should not be like Henry VIII, a man for whom the Puritans had little affection and would normally not be inclined to imitate. His personal excesses and lack of self-discipline were the very antithesis of Puritan austerity. The Puritan reader would recoil at the very thought of being compared to the hedonistic monarch. In answer, then, to the question asked at the beginning of the paragraph, the lesson is for both Royalist and Roundhead, namely, that both parties should take moderate stands and avoid the overly zealous pursuit of religious reform.

Denham's description of the Thames takes up over fifty lines. It is good poetry and contains the most famous lines in the poem:

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
> Strong without rage, without ore-flowing full.
> (p. 77, ll. 189-193)

Denham's poetic style is most often recognized as transitional. He eschews the elaborate embellishments of the Elizabethans and the extravagance of the metaphysical poet. His verse points toward the elegance and refinement of the Augustans. Denham's poetry is characterized by an austere plainness which can be nonetheless rather lovely. For instance, in the passage cited earlier on Henry VIII one might have noticed several couplets devoid of figurative language depending upon

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> Can knowledge have no bound, but must advance
> So far, to make us wish for ignorance?
> (p. 73, ll. 146-147)

But Denham does not consistently use the closed couplet. Frequently the mark of punctuation at the end of a couplet is a weak comma; sometimes there is no pause at all:

> A Crown of such Majestick towrs doth Grace
> The Gods great Mother, when her heavenly race
> Do homage to her, yet she cannot boast
> Amongst that numerous, and Celestial host,...
> (p. 67, ll. 59-63)

Only occasionally do we find a real epigramatic couplet such as that quoted above from page seventy-three. Though I certainly would not contend that Denham invented or rediscovered the closed couplet, he probably did direct more attention to it and increased its popularity. What we see here then is a very competent though often inconsistent beginning of Augustan conciseness. Denham is moving toward a classical simplicity which represents something of a rebellion against metaphysical extravagance. But he has not captured the neo-classical elegance and grace which characterized the latter part of seventeenth century and most of eighteenth century poetry.

The exact purpose of the Thames passage is puzzling. Professor Putney confesses, "I find it difficult to determine whether Denham meant his regal similes to imply Charles' shortcomings or his virtues."[8] I believe Denham is trying

[8] "The View From Cooper's Hill," p. 19.

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to say something a little more general and is not pointing out the strengths or weaknesses of the king. The Thames is pictured as a giant artery carrying its life blood to England, and so the passage concerns not only the Thames but the land as well:

> His genuine, and less guilty wealth t' explore,
> Search not his bottom, but survey his shore
> Ore which he kindly spreads his spacious wing,
> And hatches plenty for th' ensuing spring.
> (p. 75, ll. 167-170)

The Thames is a beautiful and benevolent dispenser of gifts to the land and its people. In its serene and predictable manner it becomes a steady source of contentment for all. In his effort to point out its beauty and graciousness, the poet personifies and deifies the river:

> But God-like his unwearied Bounty flows;
> First loves to do, then loves the Good he does.
> (p. 75, ll. 177-178)

The river then becomes not so much a kind of example for what Charles ought to or ought not to be doing, but a symbol of the tranquility which Denham would have permeate England. The river is contrasted with the "steep horrid roughness of the Wood." The poet notes that all things are not the same, and in dissimilarity "Wonder from thence results." However in nature these various and contradictory elements can exist together. The point here seems to be: Why cannot man follow nature's example?

> Here Nature, whether more intent to please
> Us or her self, with strange varieties,
> (For things of wonder give no less delight
> To the wise Maker's, than beholders sight.
> Though these delights from several causes move
> For so our children, thus our friends we love)

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Wisely she knew, the harmony of things,
As well as that of sounds, from discords springs.
Such was the discord, which did first disperse
Form, order, beauty through the Universe;
While driness moysture, coldness heat resists,
All that we have, and that we are, subsists.
While the steep horrid roughness of the Wood
Strives with the gentle calmness of the flood.
Such huge extreams when Nature doth unite,
Wonder from thence results, from thence delight.
(pp. 77-79, ll. 197-212)

I think Denham says a good deal with the position of various passages in the poem. I have already noted how the praise of Charles was immediately followed by criticism of Henry VIII. Now we see the beauty and peacefulness of the Thames juxtaposed to the fierce action of a stag hunt, one of the best known sections of the poem. Various poets used the stag hunt allegory to illustrate the king's plight in the last years of the war. We will look at poems by Brome and King, among others, who use this device. It may be that Denham intended for the stag to symbolize Charles in the 1656 edition, though it is questionable since the king fires the fatal shaft which brings the stag down. In the 1642 edition it seems likely that the poet had Strafford in mind as the quarry hunted by Parliament, but the parallel is not precise. Certainly Denham was disturbed by Strafford's execution. Professor O Hehir has discovered that Denham was one of the few witnesses called for the defense in Strafford's trial.[9] The poet's elegy on the statesman's death is one of the most moving occasional pieces he wrote:

[9] Harmony From Discords, p. 28.

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> So did he move our passion, some were known
> To wish for the defence, the Crime their own.
> Now private pity strove with publick hate,
> Reason with Rage, and Eloquence with Fate:
> Now they could him, if he could them forgive;
> He's not too guilty, but too wise to live;
> (p..154, ll. 15-20)

There are certain points in the stag hunt which loosely resemble some of the final maneuvers in Strafford's trial. The prosecution did not really have a strong case against the accused. That is, there was no single act for which Strafford could be considered guilty of treason. Rather, Pym and the other prosecutors hoped that a number of small acts would add up to grand treason. C.V. Wedgwood quotes one observer, "They have so banged and worried him as it begets pity in many of the auditors."[10] This pecking away at petty points is very much like the nipping of the hounds at the stag whom they finally surrounded. It is not difficult to see the majestic stag as a symbol for Strafford in the dock:

> So fares the Stagg among the enraged Hounds,
> Repels their force and wounds returns for wounds.
> (p. 85, ll. 311-312)

Since the prosecution was unable to present a convincing case, Strafford's enemies decided to pass a Bill of Attainder for his execution. It seemed possible, indeed at first even probable, the House of Lords would refuse to pass the bill. But Charles and his advisers bungled the whole business so badly that those moderates who might have voted against killing

[10] C.V. Wedgwood, Strafford (London, 1935), p. 342.

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Strafford either voted for the execution or else simply stayed at home. Strafford must have felt very much like the stag who got no help from the herd:

> Then tries his friends, among the baser herd,
> Where he so lately was obey'd, and fear'd,
> His safety seeks: the herd, unkindly wise,
> Or chases him from thence, or from him flies.
> Like a declining States-man, left forlorn
> To his friends pity, and pursuers scorn,
> With shame remembers, while himself was one
> Of the same herd, himself the same had done.
> (pp. 81-83, ll. 269-276)

Denham seems to be saying here that not only Strafford, but all members of the herd are marked for extinction. In this sense all the king's advisers are "declining States-men."

In the final stages of the hunt the exhausted stag is held at bay by the dogs, but it is left up to the king to send the fatal shaft into his heart. Of course, after the Bill of Attainder was passed against Strafford in both houses, it still required the king's signature. Many thought that Charles would never sign the execution papers (some of Strafford's friends used this as their excuse in voting for the bill), but the cries of the London mob, like the baying of the hounds, swept the king into this final but futile act. The closest parallel between this passage and the actual event is the manner in which the stag seems to "beg his fate, and then contented falls." In his letter to Charles on May 4, 1641, eight days before the execution, Strafford virtually delivered his life into the hands of his king, offering himself as a sacrifice that Parliament and the king might be

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reunited.[11] It might be pressing thingsa bit to say that Strafford was "glad to dy," but in Miss Wedgwood's account of those last days, we see a man resigned and content; a man secure in his faith in God and strong in his devotion to his king:

> So fares the Stagg among th' enraged Hounds,
> Repels their force, and wounds returns for wounds.
> And as a Hero, whom his baser foes
> In troops surround, now these assails, now those,
> Though prodigal of life, disdains to die
> By common hands; but if he can descry
> Some nobler foes approach, to him he calls,
> And begs his Fate, and then contented falls.
> So when the King a mortal shaft lets fly
> From his unerring hand, then glad to dy,
> Proud of the wound, to it resigns his bloud,
> And stains the Crystal with a Purple floud.
> (p. 85, ll. 311-322)

Nevertheless, the poet immediately casts doubt on this analogy when he contrasts the innocence of this chase with another hundreds of years earlier which took place in the same area. It was at Runnymede, in the same general location as the stag hunt, that King John was forced to sign the Magna Charta which Denham describes as a document

> wherein the Crown
> All marks of Arbitrary power lays down:
> Tyrant and slave, those names of hate and fear,
> The happier stile of King and Subject bear:
> Happy, when both to the same Center move,
> When Kings give liberty, and Subjects love.
> (p. 85, ll. 329-334)

This then is the second time a monarch has been criticized by the poet. For here Denham is not opposed to the Magna Charta, but opposed to John's arbitrary and despotic policies which spawned the unrest that culminated in a power struggle.

[11] Wedgwood reprints the letter in Strafford on page 328.

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The poet is saying that the Magna Charta should never have been necessary; the king and his subjects should work together in a climate of mutual respect and love. That such a climate did not exist in 1642 would have been painfully obvious to the contemporary reader. The poet's transition from past to present is so smooth as to be nearly unnoticeable. In the above citation the shift from singular king, referring to John, to plural kings, including Charles, effects the transition. Immediately following this passage the poet slips back into the past before addressing himself to the present again. In this next passage we not only see the number of the noun being used to make the transition, but also the more noticeable verb tense is shifted from past to present. Speaking of the continued struggle after John signed the Magna Charta, Denham writes:

> Therefore not long in force this Charter stood;
> Wanting that seal, it must be seal'd in bloud.
> The Subjects arm'd, the more their Princes gave,
> Th' advantage only took the more to crave.
> Till Kings by giving, give themselves away,
> And even that power, that should deny, betray.
> (p. 87, ll. 335-340)

I do not mean to dwell unnecessarily on the matter of transition, but I do think it is important to point out the very delicate manner in which Denham turns to specific current problems, for this cautious and highly diplomatic approach characterizes the tone of the entire poem. Although advice and criticism were offered before in the poem, they were presented in a guarded and covert manner. Now, not as an afterthought but as a final summation, the poet explicitly

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states the problems that Parliament and the king face. Geographically located halfway between the two sides and completely committed to neither, Denham can see the dangers in both extreme positions. Essentially these are the dangers which appear at any time of civil turmoil. On the one hand the government is unresponsive to the needs of a large though perhaps minority group of its citizens. On the other hand, radical extreme factions in their frustration would destroy that good which has accumulated over the years by a reckless and relentless purge of existing institutions. In the 1642 edition from which I will quote, Denham was more pointedly critical of Charles than he was in the revised edition. This is certainly understandable, for what would be gained by instructing a dead man in his weaknesses and shortcomings? But in the earlier edition the poet finds fault with his king for at first trying to extend his authority and power and now, when challenged, being weak and ineffectual in using his power. One cannot help but feel that the somber warnings to Parliament are also suggestions and encouragement for Charles:

> Therefore not long in force this Charter stood;
> Wanting that seal, it must be seal'd in bloud.
> The Subjects arm'd, the more their Princes gave,
> Th' advantage only took the more to crave.
> Till Kings by giving, give themselves away,
> And even that power, that should deny, betray.
> "Who gives constrain'd, but his own fear reviles
> "Not thank'd, but scorn'd; nor are they gifts, but spoils.
> And they whom no denyall can withstand,
> Seem but to aske, while they indeed command.
> Thus all to limit Royalty conspire
> While each forgets to limit his desire.
> Till Kings, like old Anteus, by their fall
> Being forc't, their courage from despaire recall.
> When a calm river raised with sudden raines,
> Or Snowes dissolv'd o'reflowes th' adjoyning Plaines

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> The Husbandmen with high rais'd bankes secure
> Their greedy hopes, and this he can endure,
> But if with Bogs, and Dammes they strive to force,
> His channell to a new, or narrow course.
> No longer then within his bankes he dwels,
> First to a Torrent then a Deluge swels
> Stronger, and fiercer by restraint he roares,
> And knowes no bound, but makes his power his shores:
> Thus Kings by grasping more then they can hold,
> First made their Subjects by oppressions bold,
> And popular sway by forcing Kings to give
> More then was fit for Subjects to receive,
> Ranne to the same extreame, and one excesse
> Made both by stirring to be greater, lesse,
> Nor any way but seeking to have more
> Makes either loose[sic], what each possest before.
> Therefore their boundlesse power tell Princes draw
> Within the Channell, and the shores of Law,
> And may that Law which teaches Kings to sway
> Their Scepters, teach their Subjects to obey.
> (pp. 86-88, ll. 343-end)

Unlike most political poems, Cooper's Hill was not designed to provide flattery or mere enjoyment and entertainment for a single side. No rallying calls will be found here; there are no quotable couplets which Royalist wits might have committed to memory to be recalled at some appropriate point in future conversation. Denham has not taken the popular Cavalier clichès and transposed them into poetic form. Instead, as I have tried to indicate in my commentary, his poem is a studied and tactful assessment of a desperate situation. His call for moderation on both sides and effective leadership from the Royalist side was a reasonable demand. With our hindsight it is now apparent to most that Charles largely brought about his own fate; however, had Pym been less forceful and less energetic, the war might have been postponed if not avoided. Cooper's Hill reflects the thoughts of a person who obviously had a sincere devotion to his

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country. As England teetered on the brink of all-out civil war, Denham, unlike so many patriots, did not rush out with sword in hand to join the noble struggle without first pausing to reflect on the loveliness of his country and to ask if something could not be done to prevent its despoiling. The peacefulness of the countryside which the poet beautifully portrays is supposed to symbolize the essential tranquility of the English people, a tranquility which the poet sees soon to be disrupted by a quarrel in which few of the common people had any interest. But this is not to say that Denham was a guardian of the status quo. He is far bolder than most Royalist poets in suggesting that Charles had made some grave and fundamental errors. But how can one educate his king and at the same time calm his opponents? Some writers have been responsible for altering the course of history, but Denham is not among them. In this particular situation three hundred and sixty odd lines of poetry were simply not up to the task. Denham's pen was no match for the thousands of impatient swords.

Chapter III

The Political Poetry of Abraham Cowley

What Rage does England from it self divide
More than the Seas from all the World beside.[1]

During the decade of 1637-1647 Abraham Cowley wrote his most interesting and satisfying poetry. The first two books of Davideis, his uncompleted religious epic, were written while he was a student at Cambridge.[2] The poem is read today mainly because of its possible influence on Milton, but it is not devoid of a certain charm and grace of its own. At the end of the decade Cowley's, The Mistress, was published. This collection of love lyrics (there were eventually eighty-four) was mainly responsible for the poet's contemporary reputation as one of the greatest English poets living. Between these major works Cowley wrote two minor poems which I believe also reveal his considerable poetic skill. The Puritan and the Papist was published as a broadside in 1643. A Poem on the Late Civil War was, like Davideis, never completed and was not printed until 1679. Strangely enough the two vigorously partisan poems have attracted almost no scholarly attention.

[1] Abraham Cowley, The English Writings of Abraham Cowley, II, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge, 1905-06), 467. There is no outstanding modern edition of Cowley. When using the above source I will put a "W" before the volume and page reference. The other two editions I will use are: John Sparrow's The Mistress, with other Select Poems of Abraham Cowley, 1618-1667 (London, 1926) indicated by S1, and Sparrow's "The Text of Cowley's Satire The Puritan and the Papist," Anglia, LVIII (1934), 78-102, indicated by S2.

[2] Arthur H. Nethercot, Abraham Cowley (London, 1931), p. 49.

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During the 1640's Abraham Cowley's life was disrupted as much as most Englishmen's. Yet perhaps because of this ferment, rather than in spite of it, Cowley turned out a surprising amount of good poetry. He was a scholar at Cambridge, where he studied "with great intenseness,"[3] when the king raised his standard, but his studies were interrupted as the Puritan element gained more and more power in the university. In 1643 he moved to Oxford, where Charles made his headquarters.

Cowley had earlier expressed himself on Puritanism. In "A Vote" published in 1637, he left no doubt about where he stood in the religious controversy:

> I would not be a Puritan, though he
> Can preach two hours, and yet his Sermon be
> But half a quarter long,
> Though from his old mechanicke trade
> By vision he's a Pastor made,
> His faith was grown so strong.
> Nay though he think to gain salvation,
> By calling th' Pope the Whore of Babylon.
> (S1, p. 9, ll. 9-17)

As the two sides edged closer and closer to open conflict, Cowley's dislike for the Puritans hardened into hatred. In March of 1641/42 he was given an opportunity to express this contempt and disgust to a sympathetic audience. "On Saturday, March 5, the news reached Cambridge that one week later the young Prince of Wales, with his retinue, would pause at Cambridge on his way to York....The traditional manner of entertaining all great visitors was by offering

[3] Samuel Johnson, Abraham Cowley, taken from The Works of the English Poets, ed., J. Aikin (London, 1802), I, v.

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them a play. Abraham Cowley was the leading dramatist of the university [this reputation rested on the pastoral comedy Love's Riddle] .... The play which he evolved was a comedy, The Guardian, written mostly under the 'humours' school of Jonson."[4] With less than a week in which to write the play it is not surprising that it turned out a highly conventional comedy with a complicated plot full of intrigue. It is noted here because of the satirical caricatures of Puritans which Cowley developed. He sets the stage in the "Prologue."

> But our Scene's London now, and by the rout
> We perish if the Roundheads be about:
> For now no ornament the head must wear,
> No Bays, no Mitre, not so much as Hair.
> (W, II, 161, ll. 4-7)

The play itself, often clumsy and disjointed, is nevertheless an effective Puritan satire which Cowley later revised for the early Restoration stage, changing the title to The Cutter of Coleman Street. In the revised form it was given a mixed reception but enjoyed a week's run, which was rather good then.

Cowley's move to Oxford was motivated primarily by his hatred of the Puritans, but he also was irresistibly attracted by the aura of royalty. "He had always worshipped the royal family, and now he was associating with it on more and more intimate terms."[5] The poet's support of Charles' policies

[4] Nethercot, p. 73.

[5] Nethercot, p. 90.

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rested on a fervent desire to see peace and order maintained. Cowley despised factionalism and adored harmony, a fact which will become obvious when we look at his satire.

Although the poet tried to continue studying and working at Oxford, as one might imagine, it was terribly difficult to get anything done since Charles had moved his court to the university. "All Souls was a store for arms and munitions of war, and students at the threat of an assault would doff their gowns and don their leathern jerkins digging trenches with the zeal of youth. Lectures were few and far between and the dons, stirred from their usual placidity, surrendered the college plate to be melted down in the mint set up at New College."[6]

It was only natural that since conditions for writing and study were so nearly intolerable, the poet would seek a position at court. Johnson believed that Cowley wrote The Puritan and the Papist to gain court preferment. By writing the satire he "so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the king, and amongst others of lord Faulkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended."[7] Whether or not this was the specific reason for undertaking his satire, Cowley did receive a court appointment. Sometime in 1644 he became secretary to Baron Jermyn, who was secretary to

[6] F.M.G. Higman, Charles I (London, 1932), p. 230.

[7] Johnson, vi-vii.

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Henrietta Maria. When the queen went to France in April of that year, Jermyn accompanied her. It is not known if Cowley was with them, but it appears that he was in Paris by the end of 1644. He probably wrote no political poetry on the war after he removed himself from the stimulating environs of Oxford and the court. Other poems of this period have been ascribed to Cowley. In 1648 a small volume entitled The Four Ages of England or the Iron Age. With Other Select Poems,"Written by A. Cowley" was published. Our poet strongly disowned the work on his first opportunity. Modern editors have taken him at his word and judged the attribution to be the work of an unscrupulous publisher.

Apparently Cowley saw no combat during the war, and it is probably just as well, since he had no military training, nor did he seem to have the passion for battle which might have offset this deficiency. What fighting he did do was with a pen rather than a sword. Not only did he satirize Parliament and the Puritans, but he also worked hard in his position as undersecretary to the queen. Most of his work consisted of tediously ciphering and deciphering letters. Sprat, Cowley's first biographer, may not be exaggerating the extent of the poet's labors when he states, "For he cypher'd and decypher'd with his own hand, the greatest part of all the Letters that passed between their Majesties, and managed a vast Intelligence in many other parts: which for some years took up all his days and two or three nights

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every week."[8] Although he worked hard while in Paris, he seems to have been comfortably situated. Henrietta and her entourage were given spacious quarters in the Louvre,[9] and Jermyn was one of the few English exiles who had sufficient funds to maintain himself in a manner to which he had been previously accustomed. Of course, a number of Englishmen fled to Paris, and as the king's cause grew more desperate the number of exiles arriving increased. Hobbes was one of the first off the sinking ship. Waller arrived in 1646 after gaining his release from prison for the part which he played in the comic plot to gain control of the army. With him came John Evelyn, who became very close to Cowley.

Cowley did not return to London until 1655, when the final politically important chapter of his life was enacted. Though this is a little out of our period of consideration, mention of the events along with the poetry Cowley produced at this time is essential in gaining a full picture of the man. Nethercot, after some rigorous scholarly roadwork pieced together the particulars.[10] I would only say here that both the Royalist underground and Cromwell suspected Cowley of operating against them. Cromwell finally had him imprisoned. In order to demonstrate his loyalty to the new

[8] Sprat's account of Cowley's life is found in the introduction of L.C. Martin's edition Abraham Cowley Poetry and Prose (Oxford, 1949); this citation is on page xix.

[9] I.A. Taylor, Henrietta Maria, II (London, 1905), 318.

[10] Nethercot, pp. 142-157.

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regime the poet wrote some pindaric odes and revised the fourth book of his religious epic Davideis, much of which can be read as a political allegory.

Cowley's ode, "Brutus," is the most blatantly anti-Charles poem he wrote. In this thinly disguised allegory, the poet equates the regicidal act of "Excellent Brutus" with that of Cromwell's. The poet's glorification of Brutus can be seen as an agrandizement of Cromwell. The justification of Caesar's assassination can be read as a rationalization for Charles I's execution. One must admit that this is pretty strong stuff for the former undersecretary to the queen to write:

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From thy strict rule some think that thou didst swerve
(Mistaken honest Men) in Caesars Blood;
What Mercy could the Tyrant's Life deserve,
From him who kill'd Himself rather than serve?
Th' Heroic Exhalations of Good
Are so far from Understood,
We count them Vice: alas our Sight's so ill,
That things which swiftest Move seem to stand still.
We look not upon Virtue in her height,
On her supreme Idea, brave and bright,
In thee Original Light
But as her Beams reflected pass
Through our own Nature or ill Customs Glass
And 'tis no wonder so,
If with dejected Ey
In standing Pools we seek the sky,
That Stars so high above should seem to us below.

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Can we stand by and see
Our Mother robb'ed and bound, and ravisht be,
Yet not to her assistance stir,
Pleas'd with the Strength and Beauty of the Ravisher?
Or shall we fear to kill him, if before
The cancell'd Name of Friend he bore?

> Ingrateful Brutus do they call?
> Ingrateful Caesar who could Rome enthrall!
> An Act more barbarous and unnatural
> (In th' exact Ballance of true Virtue try'ed)
> Then his Successor Nero's Parricide!
> There's none but Brutus could deserve
> That all men should wish to serve,
> And Caesars usurpt place to him should proffer;
> None can deserve't but he who would refuse the offer.
> (W, I, 195-196, ll. 15-46)

These lines leave little doubt of what Cowley is talking about. It is not too surprising that after the Restoration when the poet protested that Charles II had not properly rewarded him, Clarendon replied, "Your pardon Sir, is your reward."[11]

For all his efforts to appease Cromwell, Cowley was never shown any favor by him, and, as a result of Cowley's poetic recantations along with the Royalists' earlier suspicions of him, he was never given substantial preferment by Charles II. The poet died in 1667; the last years of his life had been spent in a rather unproductive retirement. In retrospect he seems a man whose poetic fires burned out early. The political intrigues in which he found himself involved, and for which he was particularly unsuited, may in part account for his waning poetic powers. As an editor of his prose has said, "His delicacy of feeling and unfeigned enthusiasm for the nobler and purer joys of life, for great literature, friendship, science, and nature, rendered him singularly unfitted for a profligate and cynical

[11] Ruth Nevo, The Dial of Virtue (Princeton, 1963), p. 124.

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Although critics have spent little time on Cowley's satire, I believe it deserves more consideration. The closed couplets are often harsh, strained, and uneven; the allusions may be a bit too topical for the modern reader's taste; and the point of the whole thing generally lacks the universal appeal we have come to expect in great poetry (although, some of the differences cited between protestants and Catholics, and between fundamentalist low church and conservative high church still exist today). But it is a very witty poem which offers the reader a chance to gain greater insight into the times, to look closely at a rough prototype of Restoration satire, and to read an exciting poem forged in the fires of the war itself.

The Puritan and the Papist is not quite what Professor Nevo has termed it, "a plague on both your houses,"[13] for it is essentially a Puritan satire. It would not be accurate to say that the Catholics were used as a foil to illuminate Puritan follies. The Catholics are occasionally chided for some of their beliefs, but the overwhelming weight of the satire rests on the Puritans. Cowley's point in the poem is in complete accord with one common Anglican position: namely, that although the Pope at sometime or another strayed from

[12] Alfred B. Gough, Abraham Cowley: The Essays and Other Prose Writings (Oxford, 1915), p. xxiii.

[13] Nevo, p. 61.

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the path of the true religion, his error was not nearly so great as the Calvinists', Baptists', and other heretical sects' complete break with what the Anglicans considered the pure religion. In addition, the thrust of the satire is directed against the Puritans because they posed an immediate threat to the king. One reason--though not the major one--that English Puritanism had grown during the early seventeenth century was fear. The people were afraid that a Catholic army would invade England and reclaim it for the Pope. Their religious suspicion was fired by the traditional nationalistic hatred of the Spanish and the French and was further heightened by a fundamental distrust of the policies of their monarch. Parliamentarians capitalized on this fear and distrust, inciting the populace by claiming to reveal plots and schemes designed to return England to the Pope. Charles certainly did not help matters any with some of his blunders. The king never seemed to realize how important it was for his actions on religious matters to be completely beyond reproach. A large part of the humorous effect of the poem is derived by concocting arguments to establish likenesses between the religious rivals.

Cowley's satire is 302 lines long and breaks into two major parts. The first two hundred lines is a comparison. The poet takes those Catholic practices to which the Puritans objected and shows that either the Puritans did the same thing or something which was just as bad. In other words, Cowley was saying that there was no essential difference

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between the two. This comparison is handled with great wit and cleverness. In the second part, the last one hundred lines, the poet abandons the comparison in favor of pure invective against the Puritans.

Arguing that Puritans and Catholics were alike would today be like comparing Birchers to Maoists or Black Panthers to Klansmen. The two were bitter enemies who were emotionally committed to the suppression, even eradication of their foes. Cowley wittly throws the two opposing factions together in the first lines:

> So two rude waves, by stormes together throwne,
> Roare at each other, fight, and then grow one.
> Religion is a Circle; men contend,
> And runne the round in dispute without end.
> Now in a Circle who goe contrary,
> Must at the last meet of necessity.
> (S2, p. 78, ll. 1-6)

And so the basic theme of the first two thirds of the poem is stated. At a time when many men were actually dying for religious ideals, the poet will satirically contend that there were no important differences between the Puritans and their hated enemies, the Catholics.

Throughout the poem Cowley picks the most unsavory qualities of both groups for comparison. After the introductory passage I have cited, the poet says that both factions are liars. The passage is rather lengthy, and I am most interested in the very witty ending which we will look at more closely. Leading up to that conclusion the poet states that the Puritan presses have turned out so many falsehoods he questions if they can even turn out an accurate Bible.

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He lashes out at Puritan ministers:

> Lies for their next strong Fort ha 'th' Pulpit chose,
> There throng out at the Preachers mouth, and nose.
> (S2, p. 78, ll. 18-19)

Cowley hints at the Puritans own self-deception when they claim "Brainford" [Brentford] as a victory, when in fact it was a victory for the Cavaliers. The poet will return to this point later. But the most clever part of the passage comes near the end when Cowley injects the concept of mental reservation, essentially meaning to lie with your fingers crossed. A modification of this concept is often used today by the US State and Defense departments in obtaining the release of our captured spies. But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries only the Catholics formally supported the doctrine. "In the sixteenth century a prolonged controversy arose as to the permissibility of restricto pure mentalis, viz. a mental reservation the presence of which is not indicated by any external circumstances whatsoever."[14] Catholic priests in England after the Reformation found the doctrine particularly useful, since it permitted them to lie, without committing a sin, if the lie would save their own or their fellow Catholics' lives. As might be expected, the protestants took a dim view of the practice. "Protestant moralists reject the doctrine of mental reservation."[15] Cowley turns the thing around. Now

[14] G.H. Joyce, "Mental Reservation," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VIII, ed., James Hastings (New York, 1916), 555.

[15] Joyce, 555.

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it is the Puritan preachers and Parliamentarians who make the unseen and unheard reservation when they expound their cause before the public:

> With many a Mentall Reservation,
> You'le maintaine Liberty, Reserv'd [your owne.]
> For th' publique good the summes rais'd you'le disburse;
> Reserv'd, [The greater part for your owne purse.]
> You'le root the Cavaliers out, every man;
> Faith, let it be reserv'd here; [If yee can.]
> You'le make our gracious CHARLES, a glorious King;
> Reserv'd [in Heaven,] for thither ye would bring
> His Royall Head; the onely secure roome
> For glorious Kings, whither you'le never come.
> To keepe the estates o' th' Subjects you pretend;
> Reserv'd [in your owne Trunkes;] you will defend
> The Church of England, 'tis your Protestation;
> But that's New-England, by'a small Reservation.
> (S2, p. 79, ll. 35-48)

While crying for liberty, the Puritan fails to mention that he means only his own liberty. While raising money, he reserves most of it for himself. The Puritan says he will root out the Cavaliers, and the poet remarks that there is more truth there than the Puritan bargained for. In a surprisingly prophetic moment Cowley forecasts the outcome of the conflict, and at the same time he lays bare the fallacious argument that Parliament was fighting to protect the king. After noting the sequestering of Royalists' estates, the poet turns to the religious question in the final couplet. The reader can almost visualize a Puritan preacher swearing to defend the Church of England while under his breath inserting the prefix "New" before England.

This passage is an excellent example of Cowley's satiric powers. With surprising skill the poet uses antithesis and reversals to make his points. In the first line of a couplet

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or sometimes in the first half of a line he sets forth what at first appears a noble Puritan reform, but then he turns and comes back with what the reformer really means--what the real intention was. Later in the dissertation I will briefly discuss the difficulty ordinary Englishmen had in actually knowing what was going on during the war. Cowley is playing on this problem here. He first gives the Puritan story and then contrasts it with the "truth." Though effective, this is far from perfect poetry. The last couplet really consists of two and one half lines which, makes for a certain awkwardness. The numerous parenthetical phrases causes jerkiness in reading which adds to the poetic effect.

There is no general development in the first two hundred lines of the poem. Cowley abruptly moves from one point to the next, and often there is no connection between the two except that each concerns the same central theme. With only a paragraph division to mark the shift, Cowley quickly turns and takes aim at the Puritans for yet another barrage.

Shortly after the above passage the poet satirizes the Puritans for their use of laymen in the church and for their unending extemporaneous prayers. Again the poet leads off with a Puritan criticism of the Catholics but then goes on to point out the Puritan's own offense which he considers more grave:

> They keepe the Bible from Lay-men, but ye
> Avoid this, for ye have no Laytie.
> They in a forraigne, and unknowne tongue pray
> You in an unknown sence your prayers do say:
> So that this difference 'twixt ye does ensue,
> Fooles understand not them, nor Wise men you.
> (S2, p. 79, ll. 57-62)

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The final couplet here is most effective. The two lines are carefully balanced and the caesura in the final line emphasizes the difference in the comparison. The final line summarizes and accents the whole point of the passage.

In other places the poet seems to praise the Puritans only to turn back on them in dramatic reversals. For instance he commends them for so obviously accepting Paul's definition of faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews, XI:1)

> But oh your faith is mighty, that hath beene,
> As true faith ought to be, of things unseene.
> At Worc'ster, Brainford, and Edge hill, we see,
> Onely by faith you' have gotten victory.
> Such is your faith, and some such unseene way
> The publique faith at last your debts will pay.
> (S2, pp. 79-80, ll. 75-80)

Cowley satirizes the Puritans' faith in two ways. Worcester, Brentford, and Edgehill were all battles which more or less went for the Royalists. The battle of Worcester, which was more of a skrimish than a battle, was the first victory for Prince Rupert, Charles' nephew, who commanded the cavalry. Its importance was vastly exaggerated by the Royalists. Rupert's victory at Brentford was followed by sacking the city. I have referred to Edgehill earlier. Its outcome was more questionable than Cowley implies. The poet humorously suggests that for the Roundheads to believe these engagements victories is a supreme test of their faith. But again the final couplet is particularly good. I have already mentioned that Parliament used the "public faith" as collateral for their forced loans. Cowley points out that when the time

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comes to repay those loans, the "faith," i.e., money, will be as unseen as the Roundhead victories.

In one interesting but perhaps puzzling passage Cowley speaks of ignorance, duty, and obedience:

> They keepe the people ignorant, and you
> Keepe both the People, and yourselves so too.
> Nay such bold lies to God him selfe yee vaunt
> As if you'd faine keepe him too ignorant.
> They blind obedience and blind duty teach;
> You blind Rebellion and blind faction preach.
> Nor can I blame you much, that yee advance
> That which can onely save yee, Ignorance;
> Though Heaven be praysed, t'has oft beene proved well
> Your Ignorance is not Invincible.
> (S2, p. 80, ll. 103-112)

The poet has a number of things going here. A common Protestant complaint against the Catholics regarded the priest's power in religious matters. Parishioners were kept ignorant of theological doctrines and had no alternative but to do what the priest told them and hope for the best. (And the average illiterate plowman or tradesman probably didn't care.) In addition the Puritans objected to the total power of the Pope. Protestants opposed blind obedience to the Pope, but interestingly enough protestants who supported the divine right of kings used Papal arguments in their monarch's defense. "It is in the gradual rise of Papal claims to universal supremacy, that are first put forth those notions which form the basis of all theories of Divine Right; the conception of sovereignty, of the absolute freedom from positive laws of some power in an organized human society; the claim that this sovereignty is vested in a single person by God, and that

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resistance to the sovereign is the worst of sins."[16] The Puritans were nearly as opposed to the divine right of kings as they were to the supremacy of Papal authority. But Cowley again works the reversal, pointing out that Parliamentary leaders are mired in ignorance and yet demand if not blind obedience and blind duty, at least "blind Rebellion" and "blind faction." But the ignorance which surrounds these men is not "invincible"; this brings us to another play on Catholic doctrine. "A man is said to be in a state of invincible ignorance if, when he acts, he is altogether unaware of the law or of the facts of the case, and hence is unconscious of the obligation of further inquiry on the point; or, again, if after reasonable effort he is unable to arrive at certain knowledge."[17] Calvin opposed the doctrine. "Our ignorance, he says, is always vincible ignorance of the crass or supine sort."[18] Cowley here remarks that the Calvinist Parliamentarians' "ignorance" can be defeated on the battlefield and is therefore not invincible.

From plays on doctrinal belief the poet jumps to a rather strained joke on fornication. The Puritans are against it but,

> Zeal and the Spirit, so work among you then
> At all your meetings are begot new-men.
> (S2, p. 80, ll. 117-118)

[16] John Neville Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, Harper Torchbook Edition, (New York, 1965), p. 45.

[17] G.H. Joyce, "Invincible Ignorance," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VII, ed., James Hastings (New York, 1916), p. 403.

[18] Joyce, p. 403.

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This is followed by a nasty jab at the rumored corruptibility of John Pym and a passing shot at the Westminster Assembly. The poet then turns to the Irish rebellion:

> They sev'rall times appoint from meats t'abstaine;
> You now for th' Irish warres a Fast ordaine;
> And that that Kingdome may be sure to fast
> Yee take a Course to sterve them all at last.
> (S2, p. 81, ll. 131-134)

The Puritans generally objected to fast days. They maintained that people used these self-imposed punishments to excuse sins of a greater magnitude. The approach of a fast period was an excellent excuse for feasting and frolicking. But as news filtered into London of the Irish rebellion and the fate of many English colonists, Parliament proclaimed a fast day.[19] The second couplet refers to the means used to raise enough money to suppress the revolt. Parliament asked wealthy Englishmen to advance it the funds, and in return Parliament promised to seize two and one half million acres of Irish farmland to pay off the debt. The scheme brought in a great deal of money. Although Charles signed the bill authorizing the land grab, Cowley obviously opposed the plan. (Charles later also regretted going along with the idea, since most of the money was used against him rather than the Irish.)[20]

Continuing the idea of fasting, Cowley concludes the paragraph with a humorous comment on the observance of Sunday:

[19] Wedgwood, The King's War, p. 66.

[20] A full account of Parliament's action on this matter is found in The King's War, pp. 68-72.

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> Nay though yee keepe no Eves, Fridayes, or Lent,
> Not to dresse meate on Sundayes you're Content;
> Then you repeat, repeat, and pray, and pray;
> Your Teeth keepe Sabboth, your Tongues, working day.
> (S2, p. 81, ll. 135-138)

In their zeal to make Sunday a day of rest the Puritans forbid that women should cook during the day. Cowley sees this as a complete reversal of the purpose of Sunday. Rather than it being a feast day as the Anglicans and Catholics observed it, the Puritans were turning Sunday into a Jewish fast sabbath. Still they did not observe the prohibition against work since their tongues were kept busy all day long in what the poet would consider meaningless incoherent babbling on religious matters of which the self-appointed Puritan ministers knew nothing.

The poet does not always stick to abstract theological disputes. Throughout this broadside he unhesitatingly takes aim at prominent M.P.'s and their families. The following passage is one of Cowley's more bitter attacks:

> They preserve Reliques; you have few or none,
> Unlesse the Clout sent to John Pym be one.
> And Hollises rich Widow, Shee who carryed
> A Relique in her wombe before she married.
> (S2, p. 81, ll. 139-143)

The "Clout" a cloth or leather patch is no doubt the plague rag sent to Pym on October 25, 1641, "which showed how intense was the bitterness and hatred of which Pym by this time had become the object. A letter was delivered to him in his place in the house. As soon as he opened it a rag, foul with the foulness of a plague sore, dropped on the

floor."[21] Denzil Hollis was a prominent member of Parliament, one of those whom the king attempted to arrest. On March 12, 1642, he married for a second time. His new wife, Jane Shirley, had already outlived two other husbands, Sir Walter Covert and John Freke.[22] At the time of the marriage there may have been some local scandal surrounding the bride. It seems to have died out completely, as I have been unable to find any trace of the rumor. The DNB states that Hollis had no children by his second wife, a fact which would seem to confirm the baselessness of the rumor.

Cowley continues through a veritable catalogue of similarities between Catholics and Puritans, including the founding of the Church:

> They in succeeding Peter take a Pride;
> So doe you; for your Master ye'have denyed.
> (S2, p. 81, ll. 143-144)

The use of music in the church, the legitimacy of miracles, the question of images, transubstantiation, the Pope, women in the clergy, the relative importance of church and state, all find their way into the poem.

Finally after exhausting his wit in this comparison, Cowley turns his full fury on the Puritans, and in the last one hundred lines he systematically castigates them for their covetousness in squeezing money out of the citizens of London,

[21] Samuel R. Gardiner, History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War 1602-1642, X, (London, 1883-1884), 38.

[22] DNB, "Denzil Hollis."

for their ambition in trying to supersede the king's power with their own, for their sacrilegious effort to replace the English Church, and for their tyranny. Finally the poet sarcastically thanks the Parliament for all the "benefits" it has bestowed upon the country:

> We thanke ye for the wounds which we endure,
> Whil'st scratches and slight pricks ye seeke to cure.
> We thanke ye for true reall feares at last,
> Which free us from so many false ones past.
> We thanke ye for the Bloud which fats our Coast.
> (That fatall debt paid to great Straffords Ghost.)
> We thanke ye for the ills receiv'd and all
> Which by your diligence in good time we shall.
> We thanke ye, and our gratitude's as great
> As yours, when you thank'd God for being beat.
> (S2, p. 84, ll. 293-302)

The Puritan and the Papist is an excellent public political poem, superior to usual broadsides. The poet will not convince many of his enemies of the justness of the king's cause. His arguments rather obviously are not intended to be taken literally; but this does not mean they are not to be taken seriously, for The Puritan and the Papist is as much a weapon to be used against the enemy as a Cavalier's sword. It is a poem designed to lift the Royalists' spirits. It is a crystallization or a summary of many anti-Puritan jokes, and in subsequent chapters we will see the same jokes being used again. At the same time Cowley injects a number of more esoteric theological points from which to ring more satiric humor. The poem then has the quality of an old joke with a new twist. The contemporary reader knew what Cowley was up to--they had heard the story before--but they marvelled at the poet's ingenuity. The poem is rough and unpolished,

but speed was important. It was intended as a morale builder, not a classic, yet despite this it can still be read with interest and enjoyment.

A Poem on the Late Civil War differs markedly in tone and was written for a different reason from the satire, though it does have some brilliant satiric jabs in it. Cowley is credited with having written this second poem by Dryden, Grosart, and his most recent editor, A.R. Waller. But the poem was never printed in his works during his lifetime. Although he did not finish the poem, Cowley's original purpose must have been to write an epic poem on the war which, through its ranks of heroic couplets, would build to a final glorification of Charles' ultimate victory over the rebels. One can almost visualize Cowley's description of the king's triumphant entry into London:

> Now he approaches to his rightful seat:
> London, England, the World are at his feet.
> Now has his hour come, revealed his fame,
> While the multitude kneels in fear and shame.

But the opportunity to write these lines, or some very much better, never came. As the king's prospects darkened, Cowley lost interest in the poem, and we are left with a 565 line fragment.

It is not surprising that Cowley attempted the project. It will be remembered that while he was at Cambridge he had written the first two books of his projected religious epic, Davideis. He then adopted a similar epic style to write his

current history. Though the poem is, as might be expected, largely a failure, it has some qualities which attract our interest. The main problem is that Cowley was too close to the events he was describing; he was too involved to get the necessary perspective. Indeed it is surprising that he saw things as clearly as he did. As I have said before, Cowley was essentially a peaceful man, and he was greatly saddened by the prospect of Englishmen killing their fellow countrymen. His adulation of Charles is directed not so much toward the man as toward the symbol of peace and order. His detestation of the Puritans stems not only from doctrinal differences but also from fear of the chaos the zealous pursuit of their true religion would bring.

On the late Civil War has a feeling of immediacy about it; the events described seem to have just taken place. It probably was written about the same time as The Puritan and the Papist. There is a certain similarity in the opening lines of the two poems. The Puritan and the Papist began:

> So two rude waves, by stormes together throwne,
> Roar at each other, fight, and then grow one.
> (S2, p. 78, ll. 1-2)

On the late Civil War also uses sea imagery in its opening. This time the sea divides rather than unites:

> What Rage does England from it self divide,
> More than the Seas from all the World beside.
> (W, II, 467, ll. 1-2)

The first one hundred or so lines of the poem sketch in the history of the English people. Cowley uses this background to make an essential point: England has achieved

her greatness through victory over foreign powers, not through internecine strife. Such internal struggle weakens the country and makes it vulnerable. Of course he lays the blame for the conflict on the Puritans, but at this point who is at fault seems almost secondary (but it will not be later in the poem). What is most important is that the country return to peace. Referring to this struggle which now divides the country Cowley writes:

> It was not so when in the happy East,
> Richard our Mars, Venus's Isle possest.
> 'Gainst the proud Moon, he the English Cross display'd,
> Eclips'd one Horn, and the other paler made.
> When our dear Lives we ventured bravely there,
> And digg'd our own to gain Christs Sepulchre.
> . . . . . .
> It was not so when Edward prov'd his Cause,
> By a Sword stronger than the Salique Laws.
> . . . . . .
> It was not so when Agincourt was won,
> Under great Henry served the Rain and Sun,
> A Nobler Fight the Sun himself ne'r knew
> Not when he stop'd his Course a Fight to view!
> . . . . . .
> It was not so when that vast Fleet of Spain
> Lay torn and scatter'd on the English Main
> Through the proud World, a Virgin, terror struck,
> The Austrian Crowns and Rome's seven hills she shook:
> To her great Neptune Homaged all his Streams
> And all the wide-streched Ocean was her Thames.
> (W, II, 467-68, ll. 21-64)

The Wars of the Roses were not so long past that all Englishmen had forgotten the ugly bitterness that accompanies a civil conflict. Cowley seems to have been one of those who could forsee the magnitude of the impending war. As he describes those days leading up to the outbreak of hostilities the poetic tone is one of reflective sadness. He regrets the inevitable but needless bloodshed:

> How could a war so sad and barbarous please,
> But first by slandring those blest days of Peace?
> (W, II, 470, ll. 110-111)

But the sadness for the country quickly gives way to hatred for Parliament, which the poet implies is almost completely responsible for leading the country to war. Even if Cowley grants that Charles may have made some mistakes, the cure for these ills is far worse than the small discomfort they now cause:

> And then with Desperate boldness they endeavor,
> Th' Ague to cure by bringing in a Feavor:
> The way is sure to expel some ill no doubt,
> The Plague we know, drives all Diseases out.
> (W, II, 470, ll. 114-117)

And Cowley continually emphasizes that much of the dissension was fomented in the Puritan controlled churches:

> The Churches first this Murderous Doctrine sow,
> And learn to kill as well as Bury now.
> The Marble Tombs where our Fore-fathers lie,
> Sweated with dread of too much company.
> (W, II, 470, ll. 128-131)

Though he was sad to see the war begin, Cowley obviously relished describing the early Royalists' victories. The accounts are, as might be expected, exaggerated, but one has the feeling that he is reading the court's impressions of the battles. There is an element of excitement in these depictions as if news of the battle had just drifted back to Oxford. The Royalists' first victory came at Worcester, which I have mentioned earlier. The fact that the action was only a minor skrimish was unimportant--it was a victory. Prince Rupert led the cavalry charge which completely routed the Parliamentarians. It was the first of the several

victories for the young prince which were to make him the most famous of all the Cavaliers. The poet lauds the hero in more lines than I wish to cite here and probably more than he deserved for his rather unstrategic little victory. What Cowley does convey here is the importance of the battle to the morale of the Royalists. It was not important that Worcester was indefensible and had to be abandoned a few days later. What was significant was that Charles had a clear cut win to chalk up.

The battle of Edgehill is certainly the major event in the poem; Cowley devotes more lines to it than to any other single occurrence He tries to give the battle an epic stature through the use of allegory. Not only are the armies facing each other on opposite hills, but so are the values each holds:

> Here stood Religion, her looks gently sage,
> Aged, but much more comely for her Age!
> There Schism Old Hagg, tho' seeming young appears,
> As Snakes by casting skins, Renew their years;
> Undecent Rags of several Dies she wore,
> And in her hand torn Liturgies she bore.
> Here Loyalty an humble Cross display'd,
> And still as Charles pass'd by she bow'd and pray'd
> Sedition there her Crimson Banner spreads,
> Shakes all her Hands, and roars with all her Heads.
> (W, II, 472, ll. 214-223)

This gives the reader an idea of what Cowley is doing. The entire passage is rather lengthy. Later the poet has "White Truth" against "Perjuries" and "Lies;" "Learning" and the "Arts" against "Ignorance;" "Mercy" and "Justice" against "Vengeance," "Oppression, "Rapine," and "Murder." I leave it to the reader to guess which of these figures is on which

side. Such moralistic allegorizing was popular in the seventeenth century as it had been earlier. This allegory is one of the strongest comments Cowley makes on the purity and essential rightness of the king's cause. It is also in the concluding passage on Edgehill that Cowley pens the most effective satiric passage in the poem. Although the victor at Edgehill was questionable, Essex, the Parliamentary commander, solved the problem by announcing he had won, and then paradoxically retreated. The situation provided a perfect opportunity for satirical comment:

> For this the Bells they ring, and not in vain,
> Well might they all ring out for thousands slain,
> For this the Bonefires, their glad Lightness spread,
> When Funeral Flames might more befit their dead.
> For this with solemn thanks they tire their God,
> And whilst they feel it, mock th' Almighties Rod.
> They proudly now abuse his Justice more,
> Than his long Mercies they abu'sd before.
> Yet these the Men that true Religion boast,
> The Pure and Holy, Holy, Holy, Host!
> What great reward for so much Zeal is given?
> Why, Heaven has thank'd them since as they thank'd Heaven.
> (W, II, 475, ll. 310-321)

After Edgehill the chronicle continues at a brisk pace. Brentford receives its paragraph, but the poet makes no mention of the ruthless pillaging carried out by the Cavaliers. The king moves his court to Oxford, "the British Muses second fame," and the poet pauses to ponder the magnificence of the university. He is saddened to think of what the Puritans did to his beloved Cambridge. In an apostrophe to Oxford he writes:

> Amidst all Joys which Heaven allows thee here,
> Think on thy Sister, and then shed a tear.
> (W, II, 476, ll. 364-365)

Although this may seem a trifle sentimental to the modern reader, I think Cowley's sorrow at the fate of Cambridge was sincere. In a more peaceful time the poet would probably have never left the university. He enjoyed the peacefulness its cloistered life provided. He enjoyed the opportunity to pursue his studies in quiet meditation. But it was not to be for him, and he moved on in his record of Royalist triumphs.

During late '42 and early '43 the king's men enjoyed their greatest success. They had the advantage of a somewhat tighter and better established organization behind them. Parliament was not quite certain whether it wanted to fight a war, and neither Fairfax nor Cromwell had emerged as the powerful leaders they were to become before the end of the war. Much of the good news reaching Charles at this time came from the southwest, where the Royalists were having considerable success at the expense of William Waller, the commander of the Parliamentary army. The campaign culminated in the battle of Roundway Down, where on July 13, 1643, the Royalists in a savage cavalry charge snatched victory from Waller's grasp. On the same day Charles and Henrietta were reunited. The king met her at Edgehill, scene of the earlier battle. Henrietta had been back from Holland for several months, but this was the first time she and Charles were together again. This joyous day may well have been the high mark for Charles and his cause.

> God fought himself, nor could th' event be less,
> Bright Conquest walks the Fields in all her dress.
> Could this white day a Gift more grateful bring?
> Oh yes! it brought bless'd Mary to the King!
> (W, II, 479, ll.490-493)

But from this point on the king's fortunes were more mixed. Perhaps Cowley sensed that Charles was treading a path to the scaffold, for after trying to gloss over some Parliamentary victories in the North, he broke off his narrative.

Chapter IV

John Cleveland: The King's Spokesman

> This, this is he who in Poetic Rage
> With Scorpions lash'd the Madness of the age.[1]

The most vigorous poetic advocate for the Royalists was John Cleveland. Phillips notes that Cleveland's "Verses in the time of Civil War begun to be in great request, both for their Wit and zeal to the King's cause, for which indeed he appear'd the first, if not only, Eminent Champion in Verse against the Presbyterian Party."[2] A similar comment is made in Fasti Oxonieses. "At length upon the eruption of the Civil War, he was the first champion that appeared in verse for the king's cause against the presbyterians."[3] Cleveland was obviously not the only man to pen Royalist verses, but he was the only poet of some stature who took seriously the need for partisan poetry and who therefore devoted care and attention to the composition of political verse. As Professor Previté-Orton pointed out some seventy years ago, "Cleveland stands preeminent as a satirist of real distinction and originality, the founder of a new department in English literature."[4]

[1] Winstanley prints this in The Lives of the Most Famous Poets (London, 1686), p. 173. He claims it was an elegy written on Cleveland. It is by A.B., possibly Alexander Brome.

[2] "Eminent Poets among the Moderns," Theatrum Poetarum (London, 1675), p. 104.

[3] Antony A. Wood, Fasti Oxonieses, I, ed., Phillip Bliss (London, 1815), 499.

[4] C.W. Previté-Orton, Political Satire in English Poetry (Cambridge, 1910), p. 62.

And he was particularly well suited for this task. An examination of his non-political poetry reveals that he nearly always wrote in a satiric vein. His "love songs" are for the most part parodies on that Elizabethan genre. They are humorous, taking lightly that which the Elizabethan poets usually took seriously. In this respect they resemble some of Donne's more outrageous poetry. "A young Man to an old Woman Courting him" is a good example of this, with such lines as,

> Can Wedlock know so great a curse
> As putting husbands out to Nurse?
> (p. 18, ll. 11-12)[5]

Or look at the very funny opening of "The Antiplatonic":

> For shame, thou everlasting Woer,
> Still saying Grace and ne're fall to her!
> Love that's in Contemplation plac't,
> Is Venus drawn but to the Wast.
> Unlesse your Flame confesse its Gender,
> And your Parley cause surrender,
> Y' are Salamanders of a cold desire,
> That live untouch't amid the hottest fire.
> (p. 54, ll. 1-8)

Cleveland's most interesting work in this mode is found in two poems, "A Song of Mark Anthony" and "The Authors Mock-Song to Marke Anthony." The last stanzas of the two poems exemplify the poet's powers at parody:

> Mysticall Grammer of amorous glances,
> Feeling of pulses, the Phisicke of Love,
> Rhetoricall courtings, and Musicall Dances;
> Numbring of kisses Arithmeticke prove.
> Eyes like Astronomy,
> Streight limbs Geometry,
> In her arts ingeny

[5] All quotations from Cleveland's poetry will be taken from The Poems of John Cleveland, ed. Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington, (Oxford, 1967).

Our wits were sharp and keene.
  Never Marke Anthony
  Dallied more wantonly
With the faire Egyptian Queen.
(p. 41, ll. 39-49)

And in the parody he writes:

Mysticall Magicke of conjuring wrinckles,
Feeling of pulses, the Palmestry of Haggs,
Scolding out belches for Rhetoricke twinckles,
With three teeth in her head like to three gaggs;
  Rainebowes about her eyes,
  And her nose weatherwise;
  From them their Almanacke lies
  Frost, Pond, and Rivers gleane.
    Never did Incubus
    Touch such a filthy Sus,
    As was this foule Gipsie Queane.
(p. 43, ll. 30-40)

It was only natural that with this ready and biting wit Cleveland would turn his creative efforts to the Civil War when that conflict broke out. In 1641 Cleveland was at Cambridge where he had been studying since 1627. He was very popular and quite successful at the university, taking his B.A. in 1631 and M.A. in 1635. He was elected a Fellow of St. John's College and directed the work of undergraduates. No one who has read his work can deny that Cleveland was a learned man. Although Cambridge was not the place for a good Royalist to reside during the war, he remained probably until sometime after March 1643, and then joined the king's camp at Oxford, where he wrote poems and pamphlets designed to delight Royalists and enrage Roundheads. By March, 1645 Cleveland had been installed as Judge Advocate at Newark, where he remained until the king's surrender to the Scots in May of 1646. What happened to the man over the next ten years is not clear. He likely wandered about the country living with

some of his more fortunate friends, and he may have been in London for a time. But Cleveland had bred a large number of enemies with his acid pen; those enemies now had the power to retaliate, not with words but actions. In November 1655 the poet was finally apprehended and imprisoned at Yarmouth. The final paragraph of the indictment against him would make the heart of any man of letters swell with pride: "Mr. Cleveland is a person of great abilities and so able to do the greater disservice."[6] Some ten or eleven years earlier Cleveland had written,

> A Poet should be fear'd
> When angry, like a Comets flaming beard.
> (p. 29, 11, 7-8)

It must have given him great pleasure to have proof of his importance. He was released after addressing a dignified and eloquent appeal to Cromwell. During the last years of his life Cleveland lived in London and was a kind of resident wit at Gray's Inn. Here he was given the admiration and respect of younger poets which he so richly deserved. On April 29, 1658, he died of an intermittent fever.[7]

Cleveland's popularity was at its peak during his lifetime. Numerous editions of his poems were brought out, and

[6] Thurloe State Papers, M.S.Rawl. A. 331.

[7] For a full biographical account see John M. Berdan's "Introduction," Poems of John Cleveland (New Haven, 1911). This has been supplemented by S.V.Gapp, "Notes on John Cleveland," PMLA, XLVI, 1931, 1075-86.

poets often attached his initials to their work in an effort to increase the sales of their verse. (In the introduction of their edition of Cleveland's poems, Morris and Withington give a most interesting account of how they arrived at the poems actually written by Cleveland. Of the one hundred and forty-seven which were ascribed to him, the editors ended up with only thirty poems definitely by Cleveland and four others which were likely written by him. The other one hundred and thirteen were by poets hoping to cash in on Cleveland's fame.) He was without doubt the most influential poet of the 40's and 50's. Samuel Butler's debt to him in the writing of Hudibras has frequently been cited, but Marvell, Dryden, and other lesser known figures also fell under his influence.[8] The modern reader probably finds it difficult to account for this popularity. The poetry is very difficult to understand because of its extraordinary obscurity. Cleveland's conceits are often fantastic comparisons which sometimes seem to defy explanation. But the most difficult problem to accept is the all too frequently anemic thought hidden beneath the elaborate versification. Professor Summers has written, "The reversals of fashion in literary matters are often sudden and unpredictable: We find it hard to believe that there was ever a time when people did not read both Donne and Milton--or when

[8] J.L. Kimmey, "John Cleveland and the Satiric Couplet in the Restoration," PQ, XXXVII, (1958), pp. 410-123.

they considered Cleveland a poet of importance."[9] I think this accurately reflects the attitude of most scholars toward Cleveland today. Yet, for a time intelligent men of sound taste held Cleveland in high esteem. He was considered by some not only a poet of importance, but "the best of English poets."[10] Between 1647 and 1687 twenty-five separate editions of Cleveland's poetry came off the London presses; a fact which offers indisputable proof of his popularity.[11]

This remarkable popularity rested on two pillars. First, the poet's understanding of the contemporary scene and his satiric interpretation of important events earned him the admiration of like-minded men. Not only was he funny, but useful as well. His admirers stated that he struck with his pen "blows that shaked the triumphing Rebellion."[12] Secondly, he was the sharpest wit of the decade. Men wondered at the range and quickness of his mind. Whether he used a short jab or hammered his opponent with both fists, Cleveland seemed always ready to meet the challenge.

One of the devices he used which illustrates both his perception and wit is developed in a quartet of poems. In "Smectymnuus," "A Dialogue between two Zealots, upon the &c.

[9] "Notes on Recent Studies in English Literature of the Earlier Seventeenth Century," MLQ, XXVI, (1965), 144.

[10] Phillips, p. 105. I should add that Phillips reports this opinion but does not hold it himself.

[11] Brian Morris, John Cleveland: A Bibliography of his Poems, (London, 1967), p.10.

[12] David Lloyd, Memoirs, (London, 1668), p. 617.

in the Oath," "Upon Sir Thomas Martin," and "The Mixt Assembly," Cleveland seizes upon some visual discord or peculiarity and wrings his satiric acid from it. The dependence upon wit to construct a framework, delicately balanced on this fragile incongruity, from which the poet can hang his sharp satiric couplets is clearly evident in these poems. Such verbal balancing acts which Cleveland brought off so expertly thoroughly delighted his fellow Royalists. But these four poems are also interesting since they reveal a certain evolution in Cleveland's satiric style. They were written over a period of about eighteen months, but much can happen during a year and a half of war. In this particular situation the promise and hope which Royalists began with gave way to bitter resignation and fear of defeat. Cleveland reflects this change of attitude; the earlier poems are witty and humorous, but as the war dragged on he became increasingly vindictive.

"A Dialogue..." is based upon a religious quarrel that arose over an oath of allegiance the established church required its ministers to sign. The oath contained the clause, "nor will I ever give my consent to alter the government of the church by archbishops, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, &c., as it now stands established."[13] Collier mentions that the oath was loudly declaimed against and much battered

[13] Jeremy Collier, An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, VIII (London, 1852), 178.

in the next parliament."[14] Fuller is more specific. "Many took exception at the hollowness of the oath in the middle therof, having its bowels puffed up with a windy et caetera, a cheveril word, which might be stretched as men would measure it,"[15] To the modern reader this sounds like a very minor point; in fact, there was some basis to the controversy. The acceptance of the oath would have perpetuated a church system which the reformers were very much opposed to. Cleveland makes the argument seem very trivial. His poem is aimed at developing that triviality through hyperbole. He delights in playing with the questioned ampersand, but his is a vicious game which ridicules the questioners, Puritans, for their concern over this misshapen character. The poem is structured as a dialogue between two seedy Puritan zealots who visualize fantastic wickedness springing from the belly of the ampersand. Cleveland with great effectiveness presents the opponents to the oath as unlearned but all-knowing. It is not hard to see the great pleasure he took in playing his intellectual game as he tricked out such lines as:

> The Quarrell was a strange mis-shapen Monster,
> &c. (God blesse us) which they conster,
> The Brand upon the buttock of the Beast,
> The Dragons taile ti'd on a knot, a neast
> Of young Apocryphaes, the fashion
> Of a new mentall Reservation.[16]
> (p. 4, ll. 11-16)

[14] Collier, p. 179.

[15] Thomas Fuller, The Church History of Britain, III(London, 1868), 461.

[16] For discussion of "mental reservation" seeabove p. 49.

or:

> I say to the &c. thou li'st,
> Thou art the curled locke of Antichrist:
> Rubbish of Babell, for who will not say
> Tongues are confounded in &c.?
> Who sweares &c. swears more oathes at once
> Then Cerberus out of his Triple Sconce.
> Who views it well, with the same eye beholds
> The old halfe Serpent in his numerous foulds.
> (pp. 4-5, ll. 25-32)

or:

> The Trojan Nag was not so fully lin'd,
> Unrip &c. and you shall find
> Og the great Commissarie, and which is worse,
> Th' Apparatour*upon his skew-bald Horse.
> (p. 5, ll. 45-48)

And the coup de grace comes when the two now inebriated zealots leave the tavern where they have been holding their discourse:

> So they drunk on, not offering to part
> Til they had quite sworn out th' eleventh quart:
> While all that saw and heard them joyntly pray,
> They and their Tribe were all &c.
> (p. 5. 1159-63)

This final twist of turning the ridiculous and extravagant arguments used by these self-appointed authorities against them and their tribe is a master stroke and a brilliant conclusion to a very funny poem. But it is just that--a funny poem, not the bitter invective one comes to expect later. No Puritan leaders are named, and Cleveland obviously realized that although the incident was of topical importance, it would hardly be recorded as oneof the major issues of the war.

* "The Apparitor was an officer of a civil or an ecclesiastical court. Both 'Commissary' and'Apparitor' in Cleveland's time could inspire hatred and fear." (Morris and Withington, p. 85.)

"Smectymnuus" was the name signed to a Puritan pamphlet on church reform. It is remembered today largely because it was a name in the pamphlet war in which Milton played a major role. The word is make up of the initials of the five men who collaborated in writing the tract: Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurstow. The argument over the reforms these men advocated went on at some length, and Cleveland's poem is yet one more voice added to the quarrel. Cleveland first looks upon the name in wonder and disbelief:

> Smectymnuus? The Goblin makes me start:
> I' th' Name of Rabbi Abraham, what art?
> Syriac? or Arabick? or Welsh? what skilt?
> Ap* all the Bricklayers that Babell built.
> (p. 23, ll. 1-4)

But, of course, the poet really knew what the letters stood for, and he puts to use for his satiric purposes the strange situation of five men having one name. He hints that this is a cowardly way of hiding and asks, "Who must be Smec at th' Resurrection?" (p. 24, l. 54)

The images become more grotesque, and a slight bitterness emerges in a mock wedding between Smec and Et caetera of the oath discussed above. Cleveland, like other Civil War writers, frequently used mock weddings for their satirical appeal, and this will not be the only one we witness. The poet asks what off-spring can be expected from such a union? Then he goes ahead to report opinions on this question:

* "The Welsh 'Ap', meaning 'son of'." (Morris and Withington, p. 102)

> One sayes hee'l get a Vestery; another
> Is for a Synod: Bet upon the Mother.
> Faith cry St. George, let them go to't, and stickle,
> Whether a Conclave, or a Conventicle.
> Thus might Religions caterwaule, and spight,
> Which uses to divorce, might once unite.
> But their crosse fortunes interdict their trade,
> The Groome is Rampant, but the Bride is Spade.
> (p. 25, ll. 84-90)

The passage illustrates the utter confusion over church reform. Some thought that Anglicanism would be strengthened by reform. Here a vestry means "a litter of little Anglicans."[17] A synod is associated with Presbyterians. Then both of these are exaggerated with conclave, an assembly of cardinals, and conventicle a meeting of dissenters. But most important is the final couplet. The poet believes this is a sterile marriage from which there will be no issue. Cleveland is not just being funny here; he strikes at an issue which genuinely troubled devout Anglicans who saw in the bitter religious wrangling the end of organized religion in England.[18]

In "Upon Sir Thomas Martin, Who subscribed a Warrant thus: We the Knights and Gentlemen of the Committed, &c. when there was no Knight but himself," Cleveland becomes more

[17] Morris and Withington, p. 107.

[18] See Archbishop William Laud's "Sermon on the Scaffold" in Works, IV (Oxford, 1856), 434, in which he says, "It [the Church of England] hath flourished, and been a shelter to other neighboring Churches, when storms have driven upon them. But alas! now it is in a storm itself, and God only knows whether or how it shall get out. And...it is likely to become an oak cleft to shivers with wedges made out of its own body; and at every cleft, profaneness and irreligion is entering in...men that introduce profaneness are cloaked over with the name, religionis imaginariae--of imaginary religion."

vehement in his denounciations as a strong personal vindictiveness creeps into the poems. As the war began to get tougher, as positions on each side hardened, Cleveland's poems become exercises in character destruction. In this particular poem there is also a bit more at stake than the wording of an oath or the authorship of a pamphlet: the property, which is to say the income, of the poet's fellow Royalists was being confiscated under Parliament's authorization. The title of the poem pretty well tells the story. Parliament, in order to provide money for arms, passed legislation allowing Royalists' property to be appropriated. Committees were set up in counties to implement this act which could reduce to poverty the king's backers. Sir Thomas Martin was one member of the committee at Cambridge who, according to Cleveland, broadly interpreted the latitude of his power and acted alone as the committee. Cleveland's pen certainly finds its mark as the poet takes aim at this hated enemy. There is nothing gentle or coaxing as he sarcastically acclaims with incredulity this new twin-headed monster:

> Hang out a flag, and gather pence! A piece
> Which Africke never bred, nor swelling Greece
> With stories timpany, a beast so rare
> No Lecturers wrought cap, nor Bartlemew Fare
> Can match him; Natures whimsey, one that out-vyes
> Tredeskin and his ark of Novelties.
> (p. 53, ll. 1-6)

The last allusion is to a "physic garden and museum, 'Trandescants Ark,' on the east side of South Lambeth Road in London."[19] In other words Sir Thomas is a freak of

[19] Morris and Withington, p. 145.

nature since he refers to himself as being plural when he calls himself a committee. The poet finds a chance for further humor in the name Thomas Martin, either part of which could be a first name:

> But is this bigamy of titles due?
> Are you Sir Thomas and Sir Martin too?
> (p. 53, ll. 9-10)

But Martin's power was great, and we can see Cleveland's frustrated anger as he flails his subject with witty abuse. Finally the poet becomes more practical, warning Sir Thomas of his fate when the king is victorious. Just as he asked which of the five men who signed themselves Smectymnuus would admit to writing the document on Judgment Day, Cleveland now asks Sir Thomas if the other nonexistent knight will go to the gallows for him:

> Fond man! whose fate is in his name betray'd,
> It is the setting Sun doubles his shade.
> But its no matter, for Amphibious he
> May have a Knight hang'd, yet Sir Tom go free.
> (p. 54, ll. 34-38)

The last of these four poems, "The Mixt Assembly," is a satiric consideration of the famous Westminster Assembly, which held its first meeting July 1, 1643. Milton wrote his tailed sonnet, "On the new forcersof Conscience under the Long Parliament," on the problems of the Assembly. But Milton was concerned with the direction the Assembly was headed, whereas Cleveland was more than a little displeased that the Assembly was meeting at all. Milton, of course, agreed that there should be reform; Cleveland wanted the episcopacy to remain intact. The three Cleveland poems just

discussed were written while the poet was at Cambridge;"The Mixt Assembly" may well be one of the first poems Cleveland wrote after leaving Cambridge. The poet calls it a mixed assembly because its membership was made up of laymen as well as divines. Parliament called the assembly to reform the English Church along the lines of the Presbyterian. The fact that laymen were to take part in these proceedings along with clergymen was a minor reformation in itself and served to rankle those loyal to the established religion. As might be guessed from the title, Cleveland finds his vehicle for satire in the heterogeneity of the group:

> Fleabitten Synod: an Assembly brew'd
> Of Clerks and Elders ana,* like the rude
> Chaos of Presbyt'ry, where Lay-men guide
> With the tame Woolpack Clergie by their side.
> Who askt the Banes'twixt these discolour'd Mates?
> A strange Grottesco this, the Church and States
> (Most divine tick-tack) in a pye-bald crew,
> To serve as table-men of divers hue.
> (p. 26, ll. 1-8)

"Fleabitten" is an interesting word choice. The immediate connotation is an old, dirty, uncared for animal which is of little use to anyone, but the relationship between "fleabitten" and "mixed" is not immediately clear. Saintsbury suggests that it is an image of laymen, the fleas, on the back of the clergy.[20] Morris and Withington provide a more convincing explanation when they state fleabitten is a "pejorative, used of a horse or dog, means 'Having bay or sorrel spots or streaks, upon the lighter ground', an apt

[20] George Saintsbury, Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, III (Oxford, 1921), 111.

* "In equal quantities or numbers." (Morris and Withington, 109)

description of the mixed quality of Assembly."[21] Throughout the poem one finds these witty but vicious metaphors; however, there is a note of personal vindictiveness stronger in this poem than in the other three already discussed. Cleveland is no longer content to stand back and hurl stones at the meeting hall: now he pulls the offenders out into the sunlight by naming names. He unlooses his personal rage against individuals rather than faceless groups. The jokes are coarse and often sexual:

> Kimbolton, that rebellious Boanerges,
> Must be content to saddle Doctor Burges.
> If Burges get a clap, 'tis ne're the worse,
> But the fift time of his Compurgators.
> (p. 28, ll. 75-79)

The men referred to, Kimbolton and Burges, were important members of the Assembly. The attack is especially potent since there is an element of truth in it. Dr. Burges had been judged guilty of adultery in the Court of High Commission.[22] Whether or not he picked up venereal disease in his adventures is not known. Shortly after this attack the poet turns his attention to Pym, a member of the Assembly. As in "Smectymnuus" we are treated to another marriage:

> Pym and the Members must their giblets levy
> T' incounter Madam Smec, that single Bevy.
> If they two truck together, 'twill not be
> A Childbirth, but a Gaole-Deliverie.
> (p. 28, ll. 83-86)

[21] Morris and Withington, p. 114.

[22] Morris and Withington, p. 114.

The poet says the off-spring of this strange union will not be children but "the scourings"[23] from the local jail. The point here is, just as it was in "Smectymnuus," that the mixing of unequal or dissimilar elements invites disaster. Only a deformed, diseased, and base creature can result from the union of such a miscellaneous group. The entire poem is unified by the mixing imagery just as in the other three poems a similar central image becomes the supporting structure on which the poet hangs his satiric couplets.

These four poems make a good introduction to Cleveland's work. The reader can see from the passages cited that Cleveland is an energetic and vigorous poet. As Harry Levin states, "There is never a dull moment in store for the reader of Cleveland. He is kept alert and even nervous, by an intermittent series of electric shocks."[24] Cleveland depends upon these shocks to make his satiric points. Obviously it is not just enough to point out the folly and ridiculous actions of those whom one opposes. The satirist must go beyond simple explanation; he must elucidate the ludicrous with such strength and power as to convince others of the justness of his cause. In short, he is a propagandist, not an objective reporter. Cleveland uses an epigramatic style to generate shock waves. Each poem is actually made up of

[23] Morris and Withington, p. 115.

[24] Harry Levin, "John Cleveland and the Conceit," The Criterion, XIV, (1934), 43.

many short poems, some no longer than a couplet, others of six or eight lines. Cleveland strings a number of these terse verses together, all on the same subject, to make the complete poem. The development is sometimes very loose, but there is always a unifying thread which holds the whole thing together.

One frequently hears Cleveland referred to as one of the last of the metaphysical poets. Along with Cowley he comes at the end of that great tradition and, with more self-consciousness than his predecessors, constructs ingenious conceits for which the school is known. Professor Williamson refers to his conceits as "strong lines." "A stout fancy produced strong lines, with strenuous rather than 'soft melting phrases'; and such lines were 'rich and pregnant'."[25] The combination of a taut, epigramatic style and strong masculine lines resulted in a forceful, sometimes harsh, but always powerful poetic expression.

Nearly all of Cleveland's political poetry is satiric, though at times he seems to begin with something else in mind. "To P. Rupert," which was written probably while Cleveland was still at Cambridge, begins, with rather artificial conviction, as a panegyric. Prince Rupert was a youthful, dashing, and, in the early stages of the war, successful cavalry commander. He was not what one would call a great

[25] "Strong Lines," English Studies, XVIII, (1936), 154. Williamson did not coin the term, but only reports on its meaning and use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

military hero, but he was the closest thing to it which the Royalists had. Not surprisingly Cleveland pictures the man as a military genius superior in courage, virtue, and sagacity to Caesar, Pompey, and the late Swedish hero, Gustavus Adolphus-- combined. Nor is it particularly surprising when the praise for Rupert gives way to disparagement of his enemies. How does one go about praising a person? He can call him all number of wonderful things. He can compare him favorably to other men in history engaged in the same activity-- and Cleveland, as I have explained, does this. But he can also compare him to his contemporaries, and when Cleveland turns to this means of praise he turns to satire.

The Earl of Essex, son of the conspirator against Elizabeth, commanded the Parliamentary forces at this time. It was only natural that Cleveland would compare the two men; yet he does not liken the two men's military powers, but instead uses the unfortunate circumstances surrounding Essex' personal life to belittle the Parliamentarian and elevate the Royalist. Essex' first marriage to Lady Frances Howard had ended in drawn-out and highly scandalous annulment proceedings which his wife instituted on the grounds that her husband was impotent. Gardiner states that Lady Frances with the help of a doctor administered drugs to Essex which caused his impotency.[26] In 1630 Essex married again, but the union never worked out and a separation

[26] A History of England, II, 168.

agreement was finally drawn up.[27] It is on the basis of these facts that Cleveland makes the following accusation:

> Impotent Essex! is it not a shame
> Our Commonwealth, like to a Turkish Dame,
> Should have an Eunuch-Guardian? may she bee
> Ravish'd by Charles, rather then sav'd by thee.
> But why, my Muse, like a Green-sicknesse-Girle,
> Feed'st thou coales and dirt? a Gelding-Earle
> Gives no more relish to thy Female Palat,
> Then to that Asse did once the Thistle-Sallat.
> (p. 34, ll. 45-52)

And of course the poet turns from the "barren theme" to the fruitful Rupert, and in one of the most complicated conceits in the history of English poetry reveals the reproductive power of Rupert's valor-- a quality placed in sharp contrast to the sterility of Essex:

> Give RUPERT an alarum, RUPERT! one
> Whose name is wit's Superfoetation,
> Makes fancy, like eternitie's round wombe,
> Unite all Valour; present, past, to come.
> He, who the old Philosophie controules,
> That voted downe plurality of soules,
> He breaths a grand Committee; all that were
> The wonders of their Age, constellate here.
> And as the elder sisters, growth and sence
> (Soules Paramount themselves) in man commence
> But faculties of reasons Queen; no more
> Are they to him, who was compleat before,
> Ingredients of his vertue....
> (pp. 34-35, ll. 55-67)

The underlying image of the lines is the contagion of Rupert's valor, and it is true that the state of military art then placed a greater emphasis on courage than on tactics. The general who fearlessly set an example for his troops and was lucky enough not to get killed would usually hold the high

[27] Walter Bourchier Devereux, Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex, II, (London, 1853), 303-305.

ground at the end of the day.[28]

Another major leader for Parliament at this time, John Pym, a speaker not a fighter, comes in for his share of abuse as well; but to Cleveland the Parliamentarian is so detestable that he cannot be even mentioned in the same line with Rupert. Instead, the poet skillfully uses the prince's dog for the comparison, and it does not take much intuition to guess what that dog is going to do to Pym. Cleveland begins by stating that even the dog is more courageous than the Roundheads:

> they fear
> Even his Dog, that four-legg'd Cavalier:
> He that devoures the scraps, which Lundsford makes,
> Whose picture feeds upon a child in stakes:
> Who name but Charles, hee comes aloft for him,
> But holds up his Malignant leg at Pym.
> (p. 36, ll. 121-126)

Then Cleveland turns his full fury on Pym, carefully delineating his dog-like characteristics, and for the second time in this "panegyric" the reader is treated to the brute force of the poet's satiric power. The transition comes quickly as Cleveland outlines the four ways in which Pym resembles a dog:

> First, that he barks against the sense o'th House:
> Resolv'd Delinquent, to the Tower straight
> Either to th' Lions, or the Bishops Grate.
> Next, for his ceremonious wag o'th taile:
> But there the Sisterhood will be his Baile,

[28] As for the particular meaning of lines 60-67 especially, I can do no better than send the reader to Morris and Withington whose lengthy and comprehensive explanation I think unnecessary to reproduce here. Their note is on page 126.

> At least the Countesse will, Lust's Amsterdam,
> That lets in all religious of the game.
> Thirdly, he smells Intelligence, that's better,
> And cheaper too, then Pym's from his owne Letter:
> Who's doubly pai'd (fortune or we the blinder?)
> For making plots, and then for Fox the Finder.
> Lastly, he is a Devill without doubt:
> For when he would lie downe, he wheels about,
> Makes circles, and is couchant in a ring;
> And therefore score up one for conjuring.
> (pp. 36-37, ll. 128-143)

The arguments he presents certainly do not orginate with Cleveland. One of the basic Royalists' points was that Parliament was being controlled through intimidation by a minority of its members. And it is true that several M.P.'s in strong opposition to some of the things being done by Parliament found themselves in the tower for voicing this opposition.[29] The second characteristic refers to the Anglicans' fear of a dilution of all religious discipline once the established church was broken. Thirdly, it was a common Royalist complaint that plots against both Parliament and the king were conceived then discovered by Pym for propaganda purposes. The final characterization of Pym circling the spot on which he intends to lie down is not a recorded idiosyncrasy but used only to tie the dog image to the sorcerer image.

My point in citing these passages is not only to reprint some of the more clever vindictive lines, but also to show how Cleveland is constantly on the attack. In a time of national peril his readers were not content simply to

[29] C.V. Wedgewood, The King's War, (London, 1958), p. 36.

read how well they were doing and how noble their heroes were; they wanted to see the fight continued off the battlefield. Cleveland is always at his best when carrying the Royalist offensive forward with his pen.

The other poem which has certain panegyric qualities about it, "The Kings Disguise," is a marked contrast to his poem on Rupert. It may be remembered that Vaughan has a similar poem on the same subject which he says was written about the same time Cleveland wrote his. Vaughan's is an interesting and satisfying poem; Cleveland's is more complex, and, it seems to me, reveals the conflicting emotions of a man totally committed to a defeated cause. Professor Nevo calls "The Kings Disguise" "...a good example of Cleveland's panegyric method."[30] She goes ahead to explain that abuse is essential in all of Cleveland's political writings. However, the question in this poem is: who is being abused? In many lines the answer comes close to being, King Charles.

In the poem Cleveland shows his disappointment that Charles, in a last desperate effort to retain some of his power, would join the hated Scots. At the same time he abhors the forces which have pushed Charles into this decision. But it is not always clear whether he is castigating Parliament for their relentless pressure on the king, or whether he is actually questioning the wisdom of Charles' action. The final meaning is often ambiguous, and I think it is intentionally so.

[30] Ruth Nevo, The Dial of Virtue, (Princeton, 1963),p.45.

In addition to these two poems which are not specifically satiric and are ostensibly panegyric, Cleveland wrote some elegies. One, "Upon the death of M. King drowned in the Irish Seas," is of only indirect interest to us here. A second is "On the Archbishop of Canterbury." Two other elegies are ascribed to Cleveland, but no modern editor is willing to say positively that he wrote them. An "Epitaph on the Earl of Strafford" printed by all three modern editors, though each has reservations, seems very likely to have been written by Cleveland. Both Berdan and Saintsbury print "An Elegy upon King Charles the First, murdered publicly by his Subjects"; Morris and Withington however, decide against it on the rather strong grounds that a note on a 1649 manuscript attributes it to a Walther Mountacute.[31]

"On the Archbishop of Canterbury" is yet another illustration of Cleveland's natural gravitation toward abuse and satire. The opening lines of the elegy are highly conventional and most unconvincing.[32] In trying to show his deep personal grief, Cleveland strains for metaphysical ingenuity and falls far short of an honest expression of loss. But after enduring these preliminaries, Cleveland comes up with some excit-

[31] Morris and Withington, p. xxxvii.

[32] Cleveland's first lines of the earlier elegy on Edward King are similar to his opening lines on Laud. Both develop elaborate conceits to describe the river of tears flowing from the poet's eyes. In commenting on the earlier poem, Harry Levin says, "one thinks the poet doth protest too much. Such disclaimers are all too frequent in the verse of the period, and only indicate how thoroughly the authors had absorbed their literary convention." -- "John Cleveland and the Conceit," p. 42.

ing and effective lines in the actual body of the poem as he balances the execution of Laud with the bitterness he holds for the executioners. Death permeates this entire section of the poem in a fashion one seldom sees in ordinary elegies. It becomes a massive image which touches every word. The tone remains solemn as Cleveland subdues his natural wit, working out the well-balanced couplets which steadily rise to a climatic line:

> There is no Church, Religion is growne
> From much of late, that shee's encreast to none;
> Like an Hydropick body full of Rhewmes,
> First swells into a bubble, then consumes.
> The Law is dead, or cast into a trance,
> And by a Law dough-bak't, an Ordinance.
> The Lyturgie, whose doome was voted next,
> Died as a Comment upon him the Text.
> There's nothing lives, life is since he is gone,
> But a Nocturnall Lucubration.
> Thus you have seen deaths inventory read
> In the sum totall--Canterburie's dead.
> (p. 39, ll. 19-30)

It is not difficult to see that contained within this very tight form there is a great deal of emotion. Yet the poet is not so much grieved at the personal loss of Laud as he is outraged and saddened by the event. The Archbishop of Canterbury had been publicly executed, and in these lines I think one can see Cleveland grasping at the full significance of the fact. He tries to make the detestable episode hit the reader with the same force he has felt. The starkness of such statements as "There is no Church," is not typical of Cleveland. The main poetic device which he relies upon in this passage is paradox, but not the highly ingenious and witty paradox we saw in such poems as "Smectymnuus" or "Upon

Sir Thomas Martin." The modern reader has little difficulty following the train of thought in the above passage, and although Cleveland's contemporaries might have been disappointed in the absence of witty conceits, they surely could not help but have been impressed by the power of his expression.

"On the Archbishop of Canterbury" is probably not an outstanding conventional elegy. It doesn't do those things which one has come to expect of elegies; namely, there is no eulogy of the dead man, there is no sincere lamentation for his passing, and most important, the poet does not come to terms with his grief and end with optimistic hope for the future. But if the poem fails as an elegy, it certainly succeeds, at least in places, as a powerful comment on a contemporary public event.

Earlier, when Strafford was executed, a short epitaph appeared, which is generally ascribed to Cleveland. C.V. Wedgwood has remarked, "The mock epitaph of a famous man was a common enough type of broadsheet, but no earlier one that I know of has this formidable power, or the close political exactitude which characterises Cleveland's known satirical work."[33] Strafford was the first human sacrifice Charles futilely offered up to conciliate Parliament. All the anxiety toward one who is caught in the middle of a power play is reflected in this poem. Again we see stark paradox used

[33] "A Metaphysical Satyrist," Listener, LIX (1958), 770.

to great advantage in describing Strafford and the circumstances of his death which were so paradoxical in themselves:

> Here lies Wise and Valiant Dust,
> Huddled up 'twixt Fit and Just:
> STRAFFORD, who was hurried hence
> 'Twixt Treason and Convenience.
> He spent his Time here in a Mist;
> A Papist, yet a Calvinist.
> His Prince's nearest Joy, and Grief.
> He had, yet wanted all Reliefe.
> The Prop and Ruine of the State;
> The People's violent Love, and Hate:
> One in extreames lov'd and abhor'd.
> Riddles lie here; or in a word,
> Here lies Blood and let it lie
> Speechlesse still, and never crie.
> (p. 66, ll. 1-14)

In no other Cleveland poem does form follow meaning better than this. It is probably one of his earliest political poems, and it is noteworthy for its satirization of all of Strafford's enemies--Parliamentarians and Royalists. The poet seems to have one purpose in mind--to recall the conflict and struggle which surrounded Strafford. He was what newspaper columnists call today a polarizing figure; he was either loved or hated. The problem was that those who loved him were weak and yielding; those who hated him were strong.

But to return to Cleveland's forte, satire, I will close this chapter by looking at "The Rebel Scot," written shortly after the Scots entered the war as allies of the Puritans. The nationalistic dislike which nearly all Englishmen held for their northern neighbors was augmented for the Royalists by the Scots alliance. The move was a bitter blow for Charles who, perhaps naively, did not expect his countrymen to take up arms against him; and later thought that even in defeat

they would support him as their king.

The Scottish intervention was particularly difficult to take since the Royalists were by no means overwhelming the Parliamentarians. "As the second winter of the war closed in, the combatants faced each other in a mood in which hope and fear were evenly balanced. Neither could be certain of victory, but neither had need to despair of it."[34] With the sides so evenly matched it must have seemed particularly unfortunate that the Scots would throw their weight on the side of Parliament. Six months later at the battle of Marston Moor when the Scots successfully repulsed the determined Royalists' attacks, the importance of their intervention was fully realized by the king's men. But it did not take a battle to convince Cleveland of the gravity of the event. The poet rises to new satiric heights as he methodically lashes the Scots with such lines as:

> But that there's charm in verse, I would not quote
> The name of Scot, without an Antidote.
> (p. 29, ll. 13-14)

Cleveland affects a rage that reduces him to confused anger. He does not know where to begin, and so he concludes this opening paragraph stating:

> Yet to expresse a Scot, to play that prize,
> Not all those mouth-Granadoes can suffice,
> Before a Scot can properly be curst,
> I must (like Hocus) swallow daggers first.
> (p. 29, ll. 23-26)

In numerous poems Cleveland protests his inability to do

[34] The King's War, p. 350.

justice to his subject, and as we can see here,"The Rebel Scot" is no different. The poet then calls for help, and the second paragraph begins with a very strange invocation to the muse:

> Come keen Iambicks, with your Badgers feet,
> And Badger-like, bite till your teeth do meet.
> Help ye tart Satyrists, to imp my rage,
> With all the Scorpions that should whip this age.
> (p. 29, ll. 29-30)

One thing which stands out in the poem and may be in part responsible for its success is Cleveland's use of animal imagery. It even imposes a kind of informal unifying structure upon the poem. Cleveland's conceits here usually involve some comparison with an animal, and much of the humor in the poem comes from recognizing the ingenuity of the comparison:

> Now as the Martyrs were inforc'd to take
> The shapes of beasts, like hypocrites, at stake,
> I'le bait my Scot so; yet not cheat your eyes,
> A Scot within a beast is no disguise.
> (p. 30, ll. 33-36)

The development of animal-like characteristics of the Scots continues throughout the poem. They are likened to wolves, ostriches, serpents, and, of course, leeches. In a related manner the Scots are called parasitic and are compared even to "Hemerods." Not only does the poet attack Scotsmen, but he also levels his abusive bombardment at the Scotish countryside itself. Cleveland calls it a wilderness, "A Land that brings in question and suspense/ Gods omnipresence...," "Rags of Geographie," and a "leaner soyle." This aversion for the bleak Scotish landscape inspires the best couplet in the poem.

> Had Cain been Scot, God would have chang'd his doome,
> Not forc'd him wander, but confin'd him home.
> (p. 30, ll. 63-64)

These may well be the most potent lines Cleveland ever wrote. One sees in this couplet a model for Restoration poets to follow in the evolution of the finely polished heroic couplet. A powerful thrust is contained within the two lines which set up a kind of antithetical proposition. The rhyming of "doome" and "home" dramatically emphasizes the antithesis which the poet is making. The little twist in the last phrase contains just the right amount of cleverness and surprise to bring off the couplet perfectly. The meter in these lines is more consciously regular than is typical of Cleveland. The placement of the caesura is also important in understanding the reason for the impact of the couplet. In the first line the caesura falls at the end of the second foot; in the second it comes exactly halfway through the line. This seemingly minor shift affects the rhythmic quality giving an extra punch to the final stressed syllable, "home." In writing about the effectiveness of the couplet in satire, Professor Humbert Wolfe said, "Satire needs hooks to grapple the mind, such hooks as mere beauty can away with."[35] The couplet quoted above is one of the sharpest hooks Cleveland ever fashioned.

"The Rebel Scot" is Cleveland's finest poem. He was inflamed by the Scots' actions, yet not so much that his

[35] Humbert Wolfe, Notes on English Verse Satire (New York, 1929), p. 51.

poetic powers were consumed in the fires of hatred. Unlike most of his satires, "The Rebel Scot" needs relatively little annotation for the modern reader to comprehend at least what Cleveland is doing. This is not to say that there are no obscure allusions in the poem, but compared to others such as "Smectymnuus" or "The Mixt Assembly," "The Rebel Scot" is a much easier poem. The Scots apparently understood it also, as Saintsbury reported that the University of Edinburgh library did not contain a single one of the numerous seventeenth century editions of Cleveland's poems.[36]

With these three men, Denham, Cowley, and Cleveland, we have examined the Royalists' poetic reactions in the early, and for the Cavaliers, most successful stages of the war. All of these men had less and less to say as there were fewer military victories to report. But one popular writer, Alexander Brome, continued writing in these dark days, and what he had to say is, I think, rather interesting.

[36] Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, III, 56.

Chapter V

Alexander Brome's Popular Political Poetry

> Thou (Brome) to cure the Kingdoms wrong
> Dids't hatch new loyalty with a song.[1]

During the war a great deal of popular political poetry was turned out. In London the authorities did not object to anti-Royalist rhymes being sold in the streets, and even though Parliament tried to tighten the censorship laws to curtail the publication of poems written against it, most Royalist poets could also find a press somewhere to crank out their barbed ballads. Alexander Brome, called by at least one critic "the best of the ballad writers,"[2] was a London lawyer who wrote popular anti-Parliamentary poems apparently all through the war.[3]

In some ways Brome was rather untypical of Royalists in general. He was not a member of the aristocracy or the landed gentry. He was not a High Anglican clergyman or an Oxford don.

[1] Robert Napeir, "To the Ingenious Author Mr. A.B.," a commendatory poem found in Alexander Brome's, Songs and Other Poems (London, 1664), sig. B 3.

[2] Previté-Orton, p.68.

[3] The first edition of Brome's poems was printed in 1660. In the text many of the political poems are dated, and I have found no reason to doubt that the date refers to the year of composition. Unfortunately there is no modern edition of Brome's poems. All of my citations will be taken from the second edition of Songs and Other Poems (London, 1664)

But he was a man who enjoyed life and felt no guilt in saying so. Early in his literary career Brome wrote a play, The Cunning Lovers, which was first staged sometime around 1639.[4] Though the play was successful, he wrote no others. When they gained power, the Puritans planned to close the theaters. This could not have made Brome any more sympathetic to their cause. But more important than this single point was the general tone of Puritan simplicity, plainness, and austerity, coupled with what the poet considered massive hypocrisy on the part of self-seeking reformers. Time and again Brome cries out against what he sees as the gross charlatanism of Puritan leaders. It is this insincerity, deceit, and hollowness that drove Brome to his most emphatic denounciations of the Puritans

C.V. Wedgewood writes, "With the end of the first Civil War and the defeat of the Cavaliers, popular poetry reflected with a kind of cheerful despair the chaos that had been made of government...."[5] Brome's poems of this period reflect this despair, though they are not too cheerful. His political poems can actually be divided into three groups: poems satirizing the Parliamentarians, poems critical of the

[4] John Lee Brooks, "Alexander Brome: Life and Works," an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard, 1934) p.21. Brooks' study is the latest, indeed about the only thing I have found on Brome, though there have been some short pieces in N&Q on his translation of Horace and some literary analogues.

[5] C.V. Wedgewood, Poetry and Politics under the Stuarts (Cambridge, 1960) p.91.

Royalists, and poems critical of the general contemporary picture. I do not believe that each group marks a precise period during the war; instead, I would say that composition of the poems overlaps. At the time Brome was writing satires against the Puritans, he was also writing poems critical of the Cavaliers. While chiding the Royalists, he was probably writing about a life free of political and social pressures. But I do think that the first group was written toward the beginning of the war, the second group during the middle of the war, and the third group toward the end and some perhaps even after the war.

Brome's satirical poetry is unlike Cowley's or Cleveland's. It is far less allusive, less clever, and not so witty. On the other hand, Brome's poems seem to me far more persuasive than Cowley's or Cleveland's. Brome appears to be aiming his poems at the waverer. "A Serious Ballad," dated 1645, is what we might call today, a soft sell. There appears to be no outrage here, no consuming fires of hatred. Instead, the poet seems to be using "common sense" and rather simple reasoning. There is no doubt about whose side the poet is on, but his reason for being there is a sincere devotion to his country rather than a zealous commitment to the principles at stake. The opening lines convey a kind of bipartisan appeal:

> I Love my King and Countrey well,
> Religion and the Laws,
> (p. 175, ll. 1&2)

Who would say he doesn't love these things? In 1645 even Parliament would find these lines unobjectionable. The

refrain, "And the King and his Realms agree" also appears rather innocent. But throughout the course of the poem Brome gets in some telling thrusts at Parliament, and the final stanza is an all-out attack against the Roundheads; although it is still cloaked in the guise of innocent sincerity:

> We have pray'd and pay'd that the war might cease,
> And we be free men made;
> I would fight, if my fighting would bring any peace
> But war is become a trade.
> Our servants did ride
> with swords by their side,
> And made their Masters foot-men be;
> But we will be no more slaves,
> To the beggars and knaves
> Now the King and the Realms do agree
> (p. 177, ll. 50-59)

During the same year "A Serious Ballad" was written, the poet composed what can only be considered outright recruiting poetry. Most of Brome's poems were meant to be sung, and "The Commoners" probably by recruiting officers as they rounded up more men for the king's army. The poem has three stanzas, the second of which I believe is the most effective. Brome includes all the key words to draw the would-be foot soldier from the ranks of curiosity seekers standing alongside the street:

> Now our lives,
> Children, wives
> And estate,
> Are aprey to the lust and plunder,
> To the rage
> Of our age
> And the fate
> Of our land
> Is at hand
> 'Tis too late
> To tread these Usurpers under.
> First down goes the Crown,
> Then follows the gown;

Thus levell'd are we by the Roundhead,
While Chruch and State must
Feed their pride and their lust.
And the Kingdom and King confounded.
(p. 57, ll. 18-34)

Brome wrote a number of anti-Roundhead poems including "The New Courtier," "The Safety," "The Independents Resolve," "The Leveller," "The Lamentation," "The Riddle," and possibly his most famous poem, "The Clean Contrary Way." In some of these the poet is bitter and cynical, but in most he is regretful, disappointed, and sorrowful. In another group of poems Brome blames the Royalists for the fate of the country. Had the officers not been drinking and whoring all the time, they might have won some battles. One critic has stated, "He [Brome] wrote with spirit and effect, he was capable of learning from adversity, and he had a power which few of the political satirists show of detecting the vices and weaknesses of his own side... Brome's most remarkable characteristic is that rare balance of judgment which enables him to criticize his own friends.[6] "The Royalist," written in 1646, is a good example of this type of poem. Brome is clearly being ironical when he suggests that the defeated Royalist brush off his sorrow with a cup of sack, and, in fact, the poet is criticizing those who make such a suggestion. The sarcasm of the following stanza is especially heavy:

We do not suffer here alone,
Though we are beggar'd so's the King
'Tis sin t' have wealth, when he has none,

[6] Hugh Walker, English Satire and Satirists (London, 1925), pp. 123-124.

Tush! poverty's a Royal thing!
When we are larded well with drink,
Our heads shall turn as round as theirs,
Our feet shall rise, our bodies sink
Clean down the wind, like Cavaliers.
(p. 56, ll. 17-24)

"A Mock Song" is something of a parody. It is a poem which uses the same arguments as the "enemy," but holds them up to ridicule. In this case the "enemy" is the fellow Royalist who easily dismisses all the defeats by saying that so long as there is wine things cannot be too bad:

Hang up Mars
And his wars,
Give us drink,
We'l tipple my Lads together;
Those are slaves
Fools and knaves,
That have chink
And must pay,
For what they say,
Do, or think,
Good fellows accompt for neither;
Be we round, be we square,
We are happier than they're
Whose dignity works their ruin:
He that well the bowl rears,
Can baffle his cares
And a fig for death or undoing.
(p. 59, ll. 1-17)

That Brome did not really feel this way is evident when one reads something like "The Lamentation," where, after he has recorded the ugliness of London now that the Puritans have taken over, the poet writes:

Cry London cry;
Now, now petition for redress.
(p. 119, ll. 31-32)

When the Second Civil War broke out and the country was again wracked with fighting and plundering, the poet began to see both sides as equally bad. Now it seemed to make little

difference who won; the country had been so scarred by the ravaging swords that it seemed peacefulness would never return. In an untitled song written in 1648 Brome reflects his disgust and contempt for both sides:

> Twixt Square-head and Round-head
> The Land is confounded,
> They care not for fight or battle,
> But to plunder our goods and cattle.
> When ere they come to us,
> Their chiefest hate,
> Is at our Estate
> And in sharing of that,
> Both the Roundheads and Cavies agree.
>
> In swearing and lying,
> In cowardly flying,
> In whoring, in cheating, in stealing.
> They agree; in all damnable dealing.
> He's a fool and a widgeon,
> That thinks they're Religion,
> For Law and right
> Are o're rul'd by might;
> But when they should fight,
> Then the Roundheads and Cavies agree.
>
> (p. 166-167, ll. 41-59)

This disenchantment that the poet expresses leads him to wish for a complete retreat from the affairs of state. His strongest expression against the busy, powerful man of affairs is found in a poem entitled "The Polititian." This poem is dated 1649 in the seventeenth century edition and would therefore have been written after the execution of Charles. The word "politician" itself was an insult. It had more sinister overtones for Brome's contemporaries than it has today. A politician was then considered a "schemer, crafty plotter, or intriguer."[7] There is no meditative reflection in this

[7] OED, first meaning.

poem; it is a bitter denounciation almost certainly directed at Cromwell, who

> by night
> Sits with his host of Bill-men,
> With their chalk'd weapons, that affright
> The wondering clown that haps to view
> His Worship, and his Gowned crew,
> As if they sate to Kill men.
> (p. 92, ll. 19-24)

In the final stanzas of the poem Brome cries out in anguish against the usurper who has so altered British life and government. The poet conveys very well his sense of hopeless futility. It seems to him that there is no justice; all moral precepts have been reversed. The good and right have been remanded, and wickedness now prevails. The poet is powerless to alter a headlong rush toward oblivion:

> Since all the world is but a stage,
> And every man a player;
> They're fools that lives or states engage;
> Let's act and juggle as others do,
> Keep what's our own, get others to;
> Play whiffler clown or Maior:
> For he that sticks to what his heart calls just,
> Becomes a sacrifice and prey
> To the prosperous whirlegigs lust.
>
> Each wise man first best loves himself,
> Lives close, thinks and obeys;
> Makes not his soul a slave to's pelf;
> Nor idly squanders it away,
> To cram their mawes that taxes lay,
> On what he does, or sayes;
> For those grand cords that man to man do twist,
> Now are not honesty and love
> But self and interest.
> (p. 93, ll. 38-56)

The antithesis of the self-seeking, opportunistic individual, the busy, worldly, and unscrupulous man of affairs described above is found in "The Anti-Polititian," also written in 1649. The two are not companion pieces; they differ

in length and stanza form, and they do not rely upon one another for effect. "The Polititian" is one (and not the first one) of a number of poems in which Brome glorifies the quiet, unincumbered life. There is a strong Horatian influence running through these poems which praise retirement and simplicity. Actually Brome edited a translation of Horace--the first English translation of the complete works of the Latin poet.[8] But others before Brome had been attracted to Horace, who exerted a considerable influence on mid-and late seventeenth century poets.[9] It was easy for a man like Brome to identify with Horace who had also lived in an age that saw the collapse of old systems and the rise of a new order. The reign of Augustus was the culmination of civil war and tumultous political struggles that left men exhausted and crying for peace. But in his verse Horace found a way of steering a course through life and maintaining his sanity. It was natural for Brome to turn to the Latin poet for help and inspiration.

The anti-politician was a man removed from all the problems of state. The poem appears to be a kind of credo for Brome himself. I cannot see that anyone else is meant to represent "I" in the poem. The anti-politician is a man completely without pride, lust, or envy. So long as his simple

[8] The Poems of Horace, by Several Persons, ed., Alexander Brome (London, 1666).

[9] See Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man, I, 2nd. ed. (Oslo, 1962), for a full discussion of Horace, Virgil, and other classical poet's influence on seventeenth century writers' interest in the retired life.

wants are filled--and these are truly minimal--he asks for nothing else:

> I can enjoy my self and friends,
> W'thout design or fear,
> Below their envie, or base ends,
> That Polititians are.
> I neither toyle, nor care, nor grieve,
> To gather, keep, or loose;
> Without freedom and content I live,
> And what's my own I use.
> (p. 100, ll. 9-16)

Brome had written other poems toward the close of the war which show his contempt for public life. In "The Safe Estate" the poet derides those qualities which he believes were responsible for the Puritan leader's rise to power. At the same time he extols the quiet life free of worldly commitments:

> How happy a man is he,
> Whose soul is quiet and free,
> And liveth content with his own!
> That does not desire
> To swell or aspire
> To the Coronet, nor to the Crown.
> (p. 88, ll. 1-6)

The opening of Horace's second Epode is not too different from this. Brome believes that contentment leads to freedom; Horace maintained that this contentment was to be found in poverty:

> How happy in his low degree,
> How rich in humble poverty is he
> Who leads a quiet country life,
> Discharged of business, void of strife.[10]

For Brome and other Royalists it seemed that the kingdom's

[10] Trans. John Dryden in The Complete Works of Horace ed. C.J. Kraemer, jr. (New York, 1936), p.89.

trouble was largely caused by vain Parliamentarians who were not content but aspired for power and possessions which were not rightfully theirs. These men gained power through the crafty manipulation of the ignorant mob. The king they usurped, or would usurp, was not deceitful, and therefore was unable to hold the throne:

> But Princes and Nobles are still,
> Not tenants for life, but at will,
> And the giddy brain'd rout is their Lord:
> He that's crowned to day,
> A Scepter to sway,
> And by all is obey'd and ador'd;
> Both he and his Crown
> In a trice are thrown down;
> For an Act just and good,
> If mis-understood,
> Or an ill-relish'd word;
> While he that scorns pelf,
> And enjoyes his own self,
> Is secure from the Vote or the Sword.
> (p. 90, ll. 43-56)

Finally, I would call the reader's attention to a clever little poem which shows, perhaps, some indirect Horatian influence. "The Advice" is not very political. The suggestions Brome gives here are directed more toward personal and domestic problems than public life. Still, the basic course the poet outlines is toward the classical via media, and he would lead the reader to believe that this tongue-in-cheek admonition would bring him to a happy life:

> He that a happy life would lead,
> In these dayes of distraction,
> Let him listen to me, and I will read
> A lecture without faction;
> (p. 125, ll. 1-4)

The poet counsels the reader to beware of three things: wealth, wife, and wit; they bring only trouble.

Let not his Wealth prodigious grow,
For that breeds cares and dangers;
Make him hated above and envyed below,
And a constant slave to strangers.
. . . . . .

Nor must he be clogg'd with a Wife;
For houshold cares incumber;
And do to one place confine a mans life
'Cause he can't remove his lumber.
. . . . . .

Nor let his brains o'rflow with wit,
That capers o'rs discretion;
'Tis costly to keep, and tis hard to get
And 'tis dangerous in the possession.
(p. 127, ll. 20-44.)

I think this poem is very possibly a little satire on the poet himself. The poem is undated, but if it were written before 1651 as a kind of encouragement for a poor, not very bright bachelor, no one rejected the advice more than Brome himself, who in 1651 married a bookseller's widow who had inherited from her late husband some four or five thousand pounds.[11] In one stroke the poet saw "his Wealth prodigious grow," and was "clogg'd with a Wife," not to mention that he was dangerously close to letting "his brains o'rflow with wit" taking care of all those books.

In our brief survey of Brome's poetry we have seen a faltering and often contradictory development of the poet's attitude toward the war and its conflicting problems. Brome reveals a sense of discouragement and disillusion with a war that was dragging on and on and getting no place. But gradually the net tightened on Charles and the remnant of his followers, and in the next chapter we will look at Henry King's elegies on Charles as well as two elegies on other Civil War figures.

[11] Brooks, pp. 43-44.

Chapter VI

Bishop Henry King and the Satiric Elegy

> What spouts of melting Clouds, what endless Springs,
> Powr'd in the Ocean's lap for Offerings,
> Shall feed the hungry Torrent of our grief
> Too mighty for expression or belief?[1]

Henry King is one of the few poets who saw the occasion of death as an opportunity to make satiric comments on the deceased, or more frequently, on his enemies. In so doing he combined seventeenth century poets' passion for elegiac verse with the pre-Restoration revival of satiric poetry. The casualty lists from the Civil War provided ample material for King; however, he wrote only five Civil War elegies, all essentially satiric. One, on his brother-in-law Edward Holt, is a clever and engaging poem but is of no direct interest to us as it deals with a family quarrel. The other four "On the Earl of Essex," "An Elegy on Sir Charls Lucas, and Sir George Lisle," "A Deepe Groane," and "An Elegy upon the most Incomparable King Charls the First" are about political or military figures and are of special interest to the student of political poetry.

Funeral elegies as a minor genre were quite popular in the seventeenth century. Books of these elegies to which many poets had contributed would often be issued when royalty died. For lesser figures "these pieces seem commomly to have been composed either for the funeral rites, at which they were

[1] Citations from King in my text are to The Poems of Bishop Henry King, ed. Margaret Crum (Oxford, 1965). This quotation is found on page 117.

sometimes recited or sung, or for the subsequent procession when they were affixed to the hearse on its way to the grave; sometimes they seem to have been thrown into the grave along with appropriate symbolic flowers; and in New England and Old, they were printed on broadsides and distributed among the mourners."[2] As for King, nothing could make him reach for his pen faster than the news that a friend, relative, or well-known personage had died. Almost anyone whom King cared about would receive a poetic tribute when the grim reaper paid his call. Ronald Berman writes that King "had an observable passion for the funeral elegy....He may well be considered the poet of the funereal, for most of his verse is either a celebration of the death, or of death."[3] Not surprisingly the finest poem King wrote, "The Exequy," is a superb elegy on the death of his young and beautiful wife. T.S. Eliot called it "one of the finest poems of the age."[4]

Other poets have grafted satire on elegies before the war. Milton's famous digression on the English clergy in "Lycidas" is a case in point.[5] But King had seen the advantages of uniting the two genres as early as 1618 when Sir

[2] John W. Draper, The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism (New York, 1929), p.9.

[3] Ronald Berman, Henry King and the Seventeenth Century (London, 1964), p.4.

[4] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays (London, 1963), p.283.

[5] For a full account of the history of the political elegy leading up to Henry King, see Sister Mary Paulette Schmerber's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Political Elegies of Bishop Henry King: A Historical and Critical Study," University of Michigan, 1968.

Walter Ralegh was executed. In the poem, a short lyric and not a lengthy pastoral elegy, King defends Ralegh and condemns his detractors.

> Or I would pity those
> Thy most industrious and friendly foes:
> Who when they thought to make thee scandall's story,
> Lent thee a swifter flight to heav'n and glory.
> (p.66, ll.15-19)

The Civil War provided the impetus for this early tendency toward satire to prosper and grow. King personally felt the impact of the war more severely than any other poet we have studied, with the possible exception of Lovelace. He was emotionally and intellectually a strong Royalist. He firmly believed in the divine right of kings. In addition to this personal commitment, the war began at a most inopportune time for King. In 1642 he was appointed Bishop of Chichester. In modern jargon we could say, he had made it; he had arrived. But within the year a Puritan force captured Chichester, which resulted in a nineteen year interruption of the Bishop's tenure. In other words, just at the time King was given a fitting reward for his "literary connections, his family's reputation, and his own undoubted piety,"[6] the lid blew off. The Bishop was not the type of man to seek a court appointment or a military post. He and his family fled before the plundering troops of William Waller and became virtual refugees. Describing his personal loss, Miss Crum cites a petition the Bishop submitted to Charles II after the Restoration in

[6] Berman, p.15.

which he claims to have been deprived of his estate, bishopric rents, goods, library, house, and private papers.[7]

Before looking at King's four Civil War elegies it ought to be understood that the poet was no liberal. He distrusted the people and felt that they should be given as little voice in the government as possible. King's conservatism was based not only on his fear and suspicion of the masses, but also on his concept of divine order. "His first principle is that order is the manifestation of God. Without order there could be no universe: in a very real sense, order in being is the universe."[8] His best statement on his understanding of that system of order is incorporated in a sermon which he preached on the eve of the Civil War. In "A Sermon Preached at St. Pauls March 27, 1640 Being the Anniversary of his Maisties Happy Inauguration To his Crowne" (London, 1640), hereafter called "The Anniversary Sermon," King set forth his ideas on government and society. His thoughts are not new or greatly different from what other men were saying at the time, but the sermon is interesting to us as a preface to King's political elegies.

King, like other Royalist advocates in the late 30's and early 40's, voiced a stronger belief in divine right than even James I introduced. Figgis states in his classic study

[7] Margaret Crum, "Introduction," The Poems of Henry King (Oxford, 1965), p.20.

[8] Berman, p.52.

"From the time however that the conflict between King and Parliament entered upon its acute stage there grew up a passionate sentiment of loyalty to the Crown, which would be satisfied with nothing less than the doctrine of Divine Right in its extremest form."[9] King's sermon is an example of this "extremest form." He bases his argument for divine right on Biblical authority, divine universal order, and modern practicality.

Like a lawyer building a case, King cites Scripture after Scripture in developing his argument. He uses for the text of his sermon Jeremiah 1:10. "Behold I have this day set thee over the Nations and over the Kingdomes; to Root out, and to pull down, to destroy and throw down, to build and to plant." Woven through the Scriptual authority is King's concept of universal order. God, of course, is the supreme ruler. But he appoints a mortal to rule over man on earth. Those who would revolt against the man God appointed are revolting against God. "As the King casts down His Crowne before the Lord, Let the people cast themselves down before the King. They that lift up their hands against him in publike Rebellion, or their Tongues in murmur against his commands, or their Hearts in disobedient and discontented thoughts, are as ill Subjects to God as to the King."[10]

[9] John Neville Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, Harper Torchbook ed. (New York, 1965), p.141.

[10] "The Anniversary Sermon," p.11.

King provides other arguments to support his notion of unquestioned obedience to the crown. He states that since the Fall, God has meant that man should labor and given each person a particular task to perform. The king has his job just as others have theirs. To try to disrupt the pattern is to go against God's will. In addition to the scriptural support King discusses the practical advantages of a monarch. What better way is there to keep the people in line than placing a king above them? "Common-wealths without their Governor were like Ships without an Helme, in danger to strike upon the Sand or break upon the Rocks. The King is the States Pilot, and His Law the Compasse. By Him are we kept safe from Enemies, who by invasion might break in upon us from abroad, and by Him defended from Domesticke quarrels in which by falling foul on one another, our Fortune might be broken into notheing. Sheep without a Shepherd, and Water without a Bank, and a Body without an Head are Emblems of a State without a King."[11] The lesson is simple, the principles firm. People need a strong man over them to keep them from tearing each others' throats out. God has recognized this and made provision for it. To revolt against God's proxy is to revolt against Him--an unthinkable act for a Christian.

In all four of King's political Civil War elegies his anti-democratic ideas rise to the surface. But in "On the Earl of Essex" there is a particular strong and forceful expression of

[11] "The Anniversary Sermon," p.13.

these thoughts. I have already discussed Essex' private life when concentrating on Cleveland's "To P. Rupert." His public life was not so embarassing, though one would not know it from reading King's poem. Essex was a capable leader of men and had a respectable military record up to the beginning of the war. He had faithfully led the king's armies with moderate success. But as Charles and Parliament moved toward an open confrontation, Essex began more and more to side with Parliament. "In July of 1641 the king made Essex lord Chamberlain and nominated him as commander of all forces south of the Trent."[12] But Essex was unimpressed and when the king summoned him to York, where he was informally holding court in the summer of 1642, Essex remained in London. On July 12, 1642, he was declared a traitor. Although Essex experienced some success in the early days of the war, as the fighting continued, his effectiveness was reduced and he made some significant military blunders. Apparently he could never bring himself to attack the Royalists when Charles himself was in the field. On April 2, 1645, Essex resigned his commission in anticipation of passage of the Self-Denying Ordinance. King believes that Essex gave his support to Parliament because he saw a shift of power coming and wanted to be on the right side. The poet chooses to believe that the general's forced resignation was a fitting reward for so obvious an opportunist.

Essex "died unexpectedly, after being 'four days anguishly

[12] DNB, XIV, p.441.

distempered, then fiercely assaulted with a lethargy',"[13] in mid-September of 1646. Miss Crum remarks that "King's rather majestic statement of the royalist view seems to show an undercurrent of respect for the 'Dead General'."[14] I would agree that the poet does show some deference for the stature and power of Essex, but he detests that which misled him:

> Essex twice made unhappy by a Wife,
> Yet Marry'd worse, unto the People's strife:
> He who by two Divorces did untie
> His Bond of Wedlock, and of Loyalty:
> Who was by Easiness of Nature bred
> To lead that Tumult, which first Him misled;
> Yet had some glimm'ring Sparks of Virtue lent
> To See (though late) his Errour, and Repent.
> (pp. 99-100, ll. 1-8)

King cleverly and somewhat maliciously compares Essex' private problems--the two divorces--with the difficulties he had in public life. As the war progressed and Parliament became more radical, Essex' own stand, though changing little, appeared more conservative. King maintains the general did "Repent." I find no evidence that Essex renounced his past, but, of course, he did give up his commission when virtually forced to do so. Because of his more conservative stand Essex might have been able to stem the tide against the king. Clarendon stated, "It is very probable considering the present temper of the city at that time and of the two Houses, he might if

[13] C.V. Wedgwood, The King's War (London, 1958), p.558.

[14] Crum, p.209.

he had lived, have given some check to the rage and fury that then prevailed."[15] But he did not live long enough, so the whole matter is conjecture, and for the poet Essex remains only partially redeemed. After paying this initial respect, King viciously attacks the values and judgement of Essex:

> He shews what wretched bubbles Great Men are
> Through their Ambition grown too Popular:
> For They, built up from weak Opinion, stand
> On Bases false as Water, loose as Sand.
> Essex in differing Successes try'd
> The fury and the falshood of each Tide,
> Now with applauses Deify'd, and then
> Thrown down with Spightfull infamy agen.
> (p.100, ll.13-20)

It is in lines such as these that we can see how deeply King's distrust of the masses goes. He sees in the fate of the fallen general, the fate of the aristocracy of the country if the Parliamentarians were finally to gain control. The multitude of people can be given no credence, for they are too easily swayed. The man who relies on popular opinion, as the poet maintains Essex did, will ultimately be deposed as Essex was when he was forced to resign. But King may have something more in mind than just the fact that Essex was discharged. At the time of his death it was rumored that the late general had been poisoned. Some also speculated that Oliver Cromwell had a hand in it.[16] Nothing ever came of these rumors, and modern historians maintain that Essex died of natural causes. But King's dark and solemn tone, his grim warning to others

[15] Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, ed. W.Dunn Macray (Oxford, 1888), IV, 219.

[16] Clarendon, IV,219.

may, in part, be owing to the suspicion that Essex died by the hand of his fellow conspirators. Possibly Essex' life and his death warns others that

> what Arts soever them support
> Their Life is meerly Time and Fortunes's sport,
> And that no Bladders blown by Common breath
> Shall bear them up amidst the Waves of Death.
> (p. 100, ll. 21-24)

In the final paragraph of the poem we see traces of the grotesque imagery which Cleveland and to a lesser extent Brome used. King also phrases one of his most forceful and cogent expressions of the final superiority of divine order to any other plan conceived by man. This paragraph builds to a powerful conclusion designed to cool the most heated Roundhead:

> Tells them no Monstrous Birth, with Pow'r endu'd
> By that more Monstrous Beast the Multitude,
> No State-Coloss' (though Tall as that bestrid
> The Rhodian Harbour where their Navy rid)
> Can hold that ill-proportion'd Greatness still,
> Beyond His Greater, most Resistless Will,
> Whose dreadfull Sentence written on the Wall
> Did sign the Temple Robbing Tyrant's fall.
> But Spight of their vast Priviledge, which strives
> T'exeed the Size of ten Prerogatives,
> Spight of Their Endless Parliament, or Grants,
> (In Order to those Votes and Covenants
> When, without Sense of their black Perjury
> They Sware with Essex they would Live and Dye)
> With Their Dead General ere long they must
> Contracted be into a Span of Dust.
> (p. 100, ll. 25-40)

The elegy on Essex is unique for King. It is the only time he wrote a funeral elegy on a man he disliked. It is also the only political poem he wrote on a man who did not die by violent means, though as I have stated, King may have thought Essex' death was unnatural. I think this elegy is

the Bishop's most concise and reasoned anti-Parliamentary statement. He has taken advantage of the opportunity to drive home with persuasive logic the strong anti-democratic logic which underlies his pro-Royalist position. The figure of Essex betrayed by the people he had served, by the people who had given him a high rank among those in the movement to reform the government, is, according to King, like a tragic character in an Elizabethan drama who has overreached his grasp. Though King may not have believed or even heard the story that Essex was poisoned by Cromwell, the picture of a sick, broken, and discredited man dying in disgrace provided a sufficiently vivid image to inspire the poet to write his most stinging attack of Parliament and the principles on which it based its actions.

Unlike Essex, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were Royalists who died at the hands of the enemy. Many officers were killed in battle, and for the most part, King has little to say about them. He considered their deeds to be their monument. But Lucas and Lisle were not killed in combat; instead they were executed before a firing squad, and the act stirred King's blood. The two men commanded the Royalist troops who were beseiged at Colchester. When all hope for relief of the garrison vanished, the city was surrendered to Fairfax, who commanded the Roundheads. Fairfax decided that since the defense of Colchester had been so obstinate, an example should be made of its leaders. Thereupon Lucas and Lisle were sentenced to death. Clarendon

gives the following account of their execution. "Sir Charles Lucas was their first work, who fell dead; upon which George Lysle ran to him, embraced and kissed him, and then stood up, and looked those who were to execute him in the face; and thinking they stood at too great a distance, spake to them to come nearer; to which one of them said, 'I'll warrant you, sir, we'll hit you:' to which he [Lisle] answered smiling, 'Friends, I have been nearer you when you missed me.' And thereupon they all fired upon him, and did their work home, so he fell down dead of many wounds without speaking a word."[17] The firing squad was no way for a gentleman to be dealt with in the seventeenth century. If an execution was necessary, it was only proper that the job be done correctly by a headsman. The Royalists were outraged by Fairfax' action. "This summary vengeance on the Royalist leaders was an entirely new proceeding, not hitherto sanctioned by precedent or example. Up to this time the name of the sovereign was allowed to justify a resort to arms. The worst penalties exacted from those who lost the day, worsted in the fight, were imprisonment fines, or the confiscation of estates. The carnage in cold blood of these two valiant commanders shook to its center the fabric of English society." The author of this passage then quotes from a contemporary clergyman: "Whenever loyalty and obedience shall have the reputation of virtues, there shall the names of Lucas and Lisle be ever honoured: for to omit the honour of

[17] Clarendon, IV, 388.

their extraction, the honour of their employments, the honour of their martial achievements, the honour of their last sufferings, render them most honourable."[18] Reverend Townsend is rather obviously a biased writer, but a more recent biographer of Fairfax admits that not a few people were critical of the act. "It was a deed which profoundly stirred contemporaries, and which from that day to this has been the subject of much controversy. Pamphleteers of the day extolled the valor of the dead men, and heaped execrations upon their 'murderers.' Years later it was believed that even the forces of nature shared in the general horror at the outrage: 'In that place where they fell the grass doth not grow or hide the earth, though it grows thick and plentiful round about',"[19]

The entire poem has a bitter, sardonic tone. As might be expected, the lamentation is not so much for Lucas and Lisle as it is for the manner in which they died:

> Had they with other Worthies of the Age,
> Who late upon the Kingdome's bloody Stage,
> For God, the King, and Laws, their Valour try'd,
> Through Warr's stern chance in heat of Battel Dy'd,
> We then might save much of our grief's expense
> Reputing it not duty, but offence.
> They need no tears nor howling Exequy,
> Who in a glorious undertaking Dye;
> Since all that in the bed of honour fell
> Live their own Monument and Chronicle.
> (p. 101, ll. 9-18)

But it was not the fate of our heroes to go down in battle. The poet recounts their brave deeds, unquestioned bravery,

[18] George Flyer Townsend, The Seige of Colchester (London, 1848), pp. 127-128.

[19] M.A. Gibb, The Lord General (London, 1938), p. 203.

and fierce, though merciful, combat. King's description is vivid and colorful but obviously romanticized:

> They whose bright swords ruffled the proudest Troop
> (As fowl unto the towring Falcon stoop)
> Yet no advantage made of their Success
> Which to the conquer'd spake them merciless;
> (For they, when e'r 'twas begg'd did safety give,
> And oft unasked bid the vanquish'd live;).
> (p. 102, ll. 33-38)

After the poet has carefully sketched his compassionate picture of the dead heroes, he draws a contrast to the army responsible for their execution. The satirical description of the army and its commanders is the real body of the poem, and one cannot help but think that this is the real purpose for King's having written the poem. Sister Mary Schmerber remarks that in this poem King "has several specific grievances, all of which traditionally provide targets for satire: the hypocrisy of the leaders, mercenary practice, cruelty, and private interest replacing public good."[20] What she does not say is that many other contemporary poets were satirizing the same things, unless by "traditionally" she meant currently as well. At any rate, few poets satirized the army with the stinging effectiveness that King achieves:

> You wretched Agents for a Kingdom's fall,
> Who yet your selves the Modell'd Army call.
> (p. 103, ll. 75-76)

The bitterness simply drips from this couplet. The full weight of the poet's scorn falls on "Modell'd Army." There is nothing

[20] "The Political Elegies of Bishop Henry King" p.104.

witty or humorous about it; it is pure acid which King in hopeless frustration dashes in the face of the aggressor.

King implies that Lucas and Lisle were murdered because there was no other way to stop such capable soldiers. There is some truth in this implication. During the Civil War men captured in battle were most often released after pledging not to fight against their captors again. One of the reasons Fairfax gave for ordering the executions was that both men had been captured before and released on parole of honor.[21] So King could with some legitimacy say that the two men were such vigorous fighters and so loyal to their cause that only death would stop them. Since they could not be cut down on the field of battle, they had to be, according to King, deceived and then murdered. But as with the execution of Ralegh, the poet points out that this hurts the killers more than it does those who have suffered at their hands, for this is not the work of soldiers:

> Henceforth no more usurp the Souldier's Name:
> Let not that Title in fair Battails gain'd
> Be by such abject things as You profan'd;
> For what have you atchiev'd, the world may guess
> You are those Men of Might which you profess.
> (p.103, ll.80-84)

King continues in this verse paragraph to list the dishonorable and ungentlemanly things which the Roundheads were guilty of, but there seems in some cases little or no logic in the poet's condemnation. For instance, he castigates the

[21] Clements R. Markham, The Life of the Great Lord Fairfax (London, 1870), p.329.

Roundheads for using the Scots as allies during the war. But Charles was always trying to find a foreign ally to help him, and in this passage King acknowledges Charles' efforts and even supports them when he berates the Swedes for attacking Denmark, which prevented the Danes from sending troops to aid Charles. The Bishop says that Parliament paid Sweden to attack Denmark:

> Those blest Reformers who procur'd the Swead
> His armed Forces into Denmark lead,
> (p. 104, ll. 105-106)

But he does not mention the high price Charles had agreed to pay for the Danes help, and he surely realized they weren't going to transport an army to England simply out of love for Charles.

At other places King lightens the tone by being a bit more witty and humorous. From lines 111 to 138 he develops an extended metaphor comparing the army's leaders to Matthew Hopkins, a witch hunter who was himself finally convicted of sorcery and hanged. Through this metaphor he develops one of the favorite themes of Royalist writers: that the fires of evil and wickedness, from which Parliament claimed to be protecting the people, were in fact ignited by Parliament itself. A few lines beyond this passage he continues on the same theme.

> You may for Laws enact the Publick Wrongs,
> With all fowl Violence to them belongs;
> May bawl aloud the People's Right and Pow'r
> Till by Your Sword You both of them Devour,
> (For this brave Liberty by You up-cry'd
> Is to all others but Your-selves deny'd,)
> May with seditious fires the Land embroyl,
> And in pretence to quench them take the Spoyl.
> (p. 105, ll. 143-150)

The balance of these couplets is particularly impressive and surely reminds the reader of some of Dryden's Restoration satire, though it is less playful than the later writer's. In the second and third couplets of this passage, the standard Parliamentary party assertion given in the first lines is revealed as false and deceptive in the second lines. In the first and fourth couplets, Parliamentary injustices alluded to in the first lines are intensified in the second lines. In the fourth couplet, Parliament is not only accused of starting the fires it claims to put out, but it is also charged with collecting booty in the process. King here is referring to the plundering of cathedrals, sequestering of estates, and the confiscation of personal property, all of which he had himself been subjected to.

One of the most interesting things about the poem and the event it describes is the way in which it foreshadows Charles' execution. The poem was written near the end of the second Civil War, sometime after October 29, 1648, [22] and at two places in the poem King looks forward to Charles' beheading. The meaning of the first passage I cite is ambiguous. In speaking of the Parliamentary army he writes:

> Yet when your Projects, crownd with wish'd event,
> Have made you Masters of the ill You meant,
> You never must the Souldier's glory share,
> Since all your Trophies Executions are:
> Not thinking your Successes understood,
> Unless Recorded and Scor'd up in Blood.
> (p. 105, ll. 153-158)

[22] Crum, p. 210.

The poet is thinking mainly of Lucas and Lisle here, In the second line of the passage he looks forward to the eventual total victory of Parliament, and from that point on the verb tense makes for, what seems to me, intentional ambiguity. If the past success, the capture of Colchester, was "Recorded and Scor'd up in Blood," is it not likely that the total defeat of Charles will be recorded in a like fashion? Miss Crum calls attention to the poet's most obvious forewarning.

> And such are ours, which to the Kingdome's eyes
> Sadly present ensuing miseries,
> Fore-telling in These Two some greater ill
> From Those who now a Pattent have to kill,
> (p. 108, ll. 255-258)

which is explicit enough to leave little doubt of the poet's meaning. The elegy should not be read primarily as a warning against regicide, but the poet is thinking about this, and I believe it enriches the reader's understanding of the poem when he realizes that talk of Charles' execution was already in the wind.

As the poem moves toward a conclusion, King focuses more tightly on the personalities involved. Fairfax was mainly responsible. He commanded the troops and ordered the execution to be carried out. But the two officers most directly involved, Whalley and Rainsborough, received most of the satirical scorn. Whalley was

> Twice guilty coward! first by Vote, then Eye,
> Spectator of the shamefull Tragedy.
> (p.108, ll.235-236)

King dwells longer on Rainsborough, since he provides, the poet believes, proof of the injustice of the act. Rainsborough

was not only one of the officers in charge of the firing squad that killed Lucas and Lisle, but he was also "known as having been one of the first to advocate a trial of the king."[23] About two months after Lucas and Lisle were executed, a party of Cavaliers made their way out of the besieged city of Pontefract and rode to Doncaster where Rainsborough had his headquarters. On a pretext they gained entrance to his rooms and attempted to take Rainsborough prisoner. When he refused, they shot him and then slipped back to Pontefract. King believes these men were carrying out the judgment of God:

> Nor could he an impending Judgment shun
> Who did to this with so much fervour run,
> When late himself, to quit that Bloody stain,
> Was, midst his Armed Guards, at Pomfret slain.
> (p.108, ll.247-250)

It would seem to me that in emphasizing "Armed Guards" King might be hinting that Rainsborough's own troops conspired with the Royalists.

The other principals in the event were of course the slain men, and King ends his poem with a lament for them. Borrowing images used by Jonson in his "To the Immortall Memorie, and Friendship of that Noble Paire, Sir Lucius Cary, and Sir H. Morison," King writes:

> From this black region then of Death and Night
> Great Spirits take your everlasting flight:
> And as your Valours' mounting fires combine,
> May they a brighter Constellation shine
> Than Gemini, or than the Brother-Starrs
> Castor and Pollux fortunate to warrs.
> (p.109, ll.171-176)

[23] Gardiner, Civil Wars, IV, p.232.

Jonson does a good deal more with the image in his famous ode:

> In this bright Asterisme:
> Where it were friendships schisme,
> (Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry)
> To separate these twi-
> Lights, the Dioscuri;
> And keep the one half from his Harry,
> But fate doth so alternate the designe,
> Whilst that in heav'n, this light on earth must shine.[24]

King makes a final appeal that these men, what they stood for, and the manner in which they died, be remembered forever:

> Last, that nor frailty nor devouring time
> May ever lose impressions of the Crime.
> (p.110, ll.307-308)

One thing which may insure that more than anything else is King's own lasting and fitting memorial to them.

In some ways it seems that King's own concentration on the elegy had always been leading up to the execution of Charles. It is as if he had unknowingly for over thirty years been in training for this awesome event. Many elegies were written on Charles, not all of which survive, but King's are probably the finest, most eloquent which have come down to us. Speaking of the second elegy, Joseph McElroy states, "In its detail and its poetic skill, Henry King's "Elegy" remains the most substantial tribute to Charles I."[25] The title of the first elegy, written shortly after the execution, gives the reader an indication of what he might expect of this two

[24] Ben Jonson, Poems of Ben Jonson, ed. G.B. Johnston (Cambridge, 1962), p.213, ll.87-96.

[25] Joseph P. McElroy, "The Poetry of Henry King," An unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Columbia, 1960, p.160.

hundred and forty line poem: "A Deepe Groane, fetched at the Funnerall of that incomparable and Glorious Monarch, Charles the First, King of Great Britaine, France, and Ireland, &c. On whose Sacred Person was acted that execrable, horrid, & prodigious Murther, by a trayterous Crew and bloudy Combination at Westminster, January 30. 1648." With such a title as this, one is not surprised to see follow a very emotional poem. But in this case it becomes too emotional, for no one to the best of my knowledge has been able to sustain pure invective for two hundred and forty lines while retaining the reader's interest and sympathy. But the poem does appear to reflect the public's general reaction to the execution. Gardiner says that when the executioner held aloft the king's head "A loud groan of horror and displeasure was the answer of the people."[26] C.V. Wedgwood reports, "A boy of seventeen, standing a long way off in the throng saw the axe fall. He would remember as long as he lived the sound that broke from the crowd, 'such a groan as I never heard before, and desire I may never hear again'."[27] Henry King was living near Eton College at the time at the home of Lady Salters,[28] so it is unlikely that he saw the execution. Still as the news spread across the country the reaction of the people was much the same as it was among

[26] Civil Wars, IV, p.276.

[27] C.V. Wedgwood, A Coffin for King Charles (New York, 1964), p.223.

[28] Crum, p.22.

those who witnessed the beheading. "Through the press, the story of the King's last hours would reach his subjects in the farther parts of the Kingdom, to be received at first--and in spite of the long weeks of forewarning--with a kind of stunned incredulity."[29] Other historians and biographers give similar accounts of the reactions of the people all over the country which explain--may even excuse--King's vehemence. In this first elegy his shock and anger are too great for him to make an artistic and measured statement. He is too close to the event even to feign detachment. Rather he speaks with a combination of uncontrolled fury and honest compassion and regret.

Speaking of King's general satiric tone, Sister Mary Schmerber states his "satire has not the urbane detached tone of Horace or the English Augustans. Neither does it resemble the picaresque satire of Nashe or the 'humorous' satire of Ben Jonson or the burlesque of Samuel Butler. Rather King's elegies resemble, in method and tone, the combative, censorious, angry tone of Juvenal or Claudian."[30] At no other place is this "angry tone" more apparent than in "A Deepe Groane."

> W'are sunke to sense; and on the Ruine gaze,
> As on a curled Comet's fiery blaze:
> As Earth-quakes fright us, when the teeming earth
> Rends ope her bowels for a fatall birth:
> As Inundations seize our trembling eyes
> Whose rowling billowes over Kingdomes rise.

[29] A Coffin for King Charles, p. 228.

[30] "The Political Elegies of Bishop Henry King," p. 91.

> Alas! our Ruines are cast up, and sped
> In that black Totall--Charles is Murthered.
> (pp.110-11, ll. 11-18)

The poet's sense of outrage can be seen as he strikes out at everything. And notice in the last couplet how he employs a technique Cleveland used so often: the polysyllabic "Murthered" is rhymed with the single syllable "sped," making it necessary for the reader to draw out and emphasize the last word in the couplet.

In the following passage the poet cleverly utilizes celestial imagery and paradox to heighten the sense of loss and injustice:

> Accursed Day that blotted'st out our Light!
> May'st Thou be ever muffled up in Night.
> At Thy returne may sables hang the skie;
> And teares, not beames, distill from Heaven's Eye.
> Curs'd be that smile that guilds a Face on Thee,
> The Mother of prodigious Villanie.
> (p. 111, ll. 35-40)

But a few lines further on one can see King's confusion in hastily pouring out his anguish:

> Good-Friday wretchedly transcrib'd; and such
> As Horrour brings alike, though not so much.
> (p. 111, ll. 45-46)

The obvious analogy to Christ which so many writing on Charles' death used is handled very clumsily here. To say that Charles' execution is like the crucifixion of Christ, but then to hastily add, though not quite so bad, makes for a weak and unconvincing statement. It is as if the poet, pausing at the caesura in the second line, realized that his statement might be close to blasphemy, and so tempered it with the last four words. At other places the strong and bitter invective is unsustainable:

> Spirits-of-witch-craft! quintessentiall guilt!
> Hel's Pyramid! another Babell built!
> Monstrous in bulke! above our Fancies' span!
> A Behemoth! a Crime Leviathan!
> (p. 112, ll. 59-62)

The imagery in the poem is particularly gory, with blood spouting from nearly every paragraph. But here again King is simply being true to the times. Almost every contemporary painting or engraving of the execution I have seen shows blood gushing from the headless torso or dripping from the dismembered head. Apparently spectators at the execution were singularly bloodthirsty, for as soon as the deed was done the scaffold became a booth and "Those who from piety or hatred or curiosity wished to dip their handkerchiefs in the King's blood were admitted for money...." The soldiers' "hands and sticks were tinged by his blood and the block, now cut into chips, as also the sand sprinkled with his sacred gore, were exposed for sale. Which were greedily bought, but for different ends; by some as trophies of their slain enemy and by others as precious relics of their beloved prince."[31] Bloody imagery is found throughout the poem, but King saves his most vivid wording for a description of the hoped-for day when Charles II will return to reclaim the throne. It is remarkable that after the almost total defeat of the Royalists and the unconditional surrender of the king, the poet remained convinced that the monarchy would be restored. In the poem he speaks as if this is not just a vain hope or groundless speculation but a fervent belief, and if Charles I's execution seemed gory, King

[31] Hugh Ross Williamson, The Day They Killed the King (New York, 1957), p. 147.

looks forward to Charles II's triumphant return through London's streets washed with the blood of the regicides:

> Thus Thou our Martyr died'st: but Oh! we stand
> A Ransome for another Charles his Hand;
> One that will write Thy Chronicle in Red,
> And dip His Pen in what Thy Foes have bled;
> Shall Treas'nous Heads in purple Caldrons drench,
> And with such veines the Flames of Kingdomes quench.
> (p.116, ll.205-210)

From this point the poem moves neatly to its conclusion. When Charles II is restored, he will have his father's body removed to it rightful place in Westminster Abbey and a suitable epitaph will be inscribed on his tomb. The poet thoughtfully provides an example. I doubt that King ever expected the epitaph to be used, because in it he voices a mild criticism of Charles. In "The Anniversary Sermon" the Bishop had hinted that Charles had been a little soft on his enemies, and in this epitaph he suggests as much again:

> Inviting Treason with a pardoning looke,
> Instead of Gratitude, a Stab He tooke.
> (p.117, ll.231-232)

The tone of the epitaph is much more subdued than the rest of the poem, and perhaps because of that the most moving lines of the poem are found here:

> With passion lov'd, that when He murd'red lay,
> Heav'n conquered seem'd, and Hell to bear the sway.
> A Prince so richly good, so blest a Reigne,
> The World ne're saw but once, nor can againe.
> (p.117, ll.233-236)

King's second poem on Charles, "An Elegy upon the most Incomparable King Charles the First" hereafter called "An Elegy", "cannot have been finished and printed before 1659.... The first draft of the poem was probably finished on 11 March 1648/49,

the date which appears at the end of the poem but it was prepared for publication only when the Restoration was in sight."[32] "An Elegy" generally reflects more thought and ingenuity than "A Deepe Groane," although in its five hundred lines there are some rather long and dull passages. Much of the poem is a recapitulation of the events of the Civil War. It is a kind of satiric history. Like "Lucas and Lisle" the poem exists not only as a tribute to Charles, but as a condemnation of Parliament as well. A good deal of this satiric history is quite effective. Introducing the history, King uses the old routine of comparing early promises of Parliamentary reform to final results. But again the poet manages to use this rather common technique with greater skill than his predecessors:

> You who did pawn your Selves in Publick Faith
> To slave the Kingdom by your Pride and Wrath;
> Call the whole World to witness now, how just,
> How well you are responsive to your trust,
> How to your King the promise you perform,
> With Fasts, and Sermons, and long Prayers sworn,
> That you intended Peace and Truth to bring
> To make your Charls Europe's most Glorious King.
> (p.119, ll.65-72)

There is a consistent development in this passage; a steady relentless buildup of irony. Beneath the passage one can see boiling in the poet's heart a caldron of hatred, but the flame is controlled and the last line, "To make your Charls Europe's most Glorious King." burns into the reader with all the intensity that King had intended. The stanzaic paragraph

[32] Crum, p.214.

continues in a grave and solemn tone. All the political moves, all the pamphleteering and rationalizing has come to this:

> Did you for this Lift up your Hands on high,
> To Kill the King, and pluck down Monarchy?
> These are the Fruits by your wild Faction sown,
> Which not Imputed are, but Born your own:
> For though you wisely seem to wash your Hands,
> The Guilt on every Vote and Order stands;
> So that convinc'd, from all you did before,
> Justice must lay the Murther at your Door.
> (p.119, ll.73-80)

And again in this passage the climax comes in the last words of the last line: the grim warning that regicides can never escape. Their guilt would be even more powerful just before the Restoration than at any other time.

King shows that he was probably influenced by Denham in another passage when he uses the stag hunt metaphor to describe the pursuit for Charles. Denham used the same metaphor in Cooper's Hill describing the events leading up to the trial and execution of Strafford. King may have considered this something of an extension of Denham's poem. He first mentions Strafford and then almost immediately begins the metaphor of the hunted king, as if he were simply taking up where Denham left off:

> And now to make Him hopeless to resist,
> You guide His Sword by Vote, which as you list
> Must, Strike or Spare (for so you did enforce
> His Hand against His Reason to divorce
> Brave Strafford's Life,) then wring it quite away
> By your usurping each Militia:
> Then seize His Magazines, of which possest
> You turn the Weapons 'gainst their Master's Breast.
> (p.121, ll.129-136)

From this he moves directly into the invasion of Whitehall:

> This done, th'unkennell'd crew of Lawless men

> Led down by Watkins, Pennington, and Ven,
> Did with confused noise the Court invade;
> Then all Dissenters in Both Houses Bay'd.
> At which the King amaz'd is forc'd to flye,
> The whilst your Mouths laid on mantain the Cry.
> (121, ll.137-142)

Depicting Charles as a hunted stag is most effective not only for what it does for the king but for what it does to his detractors as well. Portraying the Parliamentarians as a pack of baying hounds is something less than complimentary. In the above passage King is taking a little license, since Charles actually fled before there was an invasion of Whitehall, but it was only a matter of time before Parliament would make some attempt to apprehend Charles, and it was the fear of such an attempt that drove the king from the palace.

> The Royal Game dislodg'd and under Chase,
> Your hot Pursute dogs Him from place to place:
> Not Saul with greater fury or disdain
> Did flying David from Jeshimon's plain
> Unto the barren Wilderness pursue,
> Than Cours'd and Hunted is the King by you.
> The Mountain Partridge or the Chased Roe
> Might now for Emblemes of His Fortune go,
> And since all other May-games of the Town
> (Save those you selves should make) were Voted down,
> The Clam'rous Pulpit Hollaes in resort,
> Inviting men to your King-catching Sport.
> (p. 121, ll. 143-154)

The whole thing is very ironic since many of the Puritans who were responsible for Parliament's actions were very much opposed to hunting for sport. King's lines point out the incongruity between on the one hand preaching against the hunting of wild animals while on the other hand arousing people to go out and chase their king across the English countryside. Likewise, the Puritans wanted to discontinue May Day celebrations, since they were considered frivolous

and sinful. But again the poet makes implicit the question: Which is worse, the innocent sports of May Day or hunting down and killing the king?

About one hundred lines beyond this passage King interrupts his narrative to apostrophize the Puritans. Surely this passage was either inserted or greatly revised just before publication. The point of view that the poet assumes is one of looking back on events now that the dust has settled and the Restoration is in sight. Again we note that King never lost faith that the Parliamentarians and Cromwell would ultimately fail in permanently establishing a new form of government in England. The tone of this passage is that of a reasonably patient reiteration of many of the points King made before. He refrains from saying, "I told you so," but simply asks how anyone could have thought the outcome would have been different:

> Brave Reformation! and a through one too,
> Which to enrich Your selves must All undo.
> Pray tell us (those who can) What fruits have grown
> From all Your Seeds in Blood and Treasure sown?
> What would you mend? when Your Projected State
> Doth from the Best in Form degenerate?
> Or why should You (of All) attempt the Cure,
> Whose Facts nor Gospel's Test nor Law's endure?
> But like unwholsome Exhalations met
> From Your Conjunction onely Plagues beget,
> And in Your Circle, as Imposthumes fill
> Which by their venome the whole Body kill;
> For never had You Pow'r but to Destroy,
> Nor Will, but where You Conquer'd to Enjoy.
> (p.124, ll.254-266)

The satire here is not so powerful, not quite as bitter as it is later in the poem. The poet does not want to have "Treas'nous Heads in purple Caldrons drench." Instead the

frequent use of rhetorical questions give the passage more the character of a reprimand to a disobedient child who has foolishly attempted something which his elders knew was not only undesirable but quite impossible.

King saves his finest, most carefully wrought satiric statement for the end of the elegy. As the narrative of events leading up to the execution draws toward a close, the poet with careful deliberation lays the blame for Charles' fate squarely on the shoulders of the army and Parliament. He quickly traces the split between Independents and Presbyterians but notes that neither can escape his share of the guilt:

> Though then the Independants end the Work,
> 'Tis known they took their Platform from the Kirk;
> (p.129, ll.443-444)

As the country moved toward the Restoration, the question arose: what was to be done with those responsible for the beheading? King does not suggest a punishment, but he does argue that the breadth of responsibility should extend to Parliament. Most of the Parliamentarians did not actually sign the death warrant, but the poet does not think this should excuse them from their part in the execution:

> For you, whose fatal hand the Warrant writ,
> The Prisoner did for Execution fit;
> And if their Ax invade the Regal Throat,
> Remember you first Murther'd Him by Vote.
> Thus They receive Your Tennis at the bound,
> Take off that Head which you had first Un-crown'd;
> Which shews the Texture of our Mischief's Clew,
> If Ravell'd to the Top, begins in You,
> Who have for ever stain'd the brave Intents
> And Credit of our English Parliaments:
> And in this One caus'd greater Ills, and more,
> Than all of theirs did Good that went before.
> (p.130, ll.451-462)

King does not press his argument for equal treatment to all who opposed the king. Actually he is using this whole buildup as a technique. I noted earlier that in the poem he used a common device of comparing early Parliamentary promises with final results. Now near the close of the poem he is up to the same business. After declaring that both army and Parliament, both Presbyterian and Independents, are responsible for Charles' end, in a masterful reversal King reveals that Charles has indeed come out the winner. In an ironic way the king's enemies have in spite of themselves fulfilled the false promises. Despite the worst they could do, Charles' glory still shines, now even more spectacularly than it did before:

> Yet have You kept your word against Your will,
> Your King is Great indeed and Glorious still,
> And You have made Him so. We must impute
> That Lustre which His Sufferings contribute
> To your preposterous Wisdoms, who have done
> All your good Deeds by Contradiction:
> For as to work His Peace you rais'd this Strife,
> And often Shot at Him to Save His Life;
> As you took from Him to Encrease His wealth,
> And kept Him Pris'ner to secure His Health;
> So in revenge of your dissembled Spight,
> In this last Wrong you did Him greatest Right,
> And (cross to all You meant) by Plucking down
> Lifted Him up to His Eternal Crown.
> (p.130, ll.463-476)

The poet is, of course, correct in his assessment of popular responses to the execution. King, who at least revised this poem ten years after the execution, had the benefit of hindsight. He could see the cult of martyr worship which was then springing up and would dominate British thinking on the event for nearly two hundred years. Henry King had his

own part to play in the canonization of Charles I. He contributes his own eloquent lines to the growing memorial of words:

> With This Encircled in that radiant Sphear,
> Where Thy black Murtherers must ne'r appear;
> Thou from th'enthroned Martyrs' Blood-stain'd Line
> Dost in thy Virtue's bright Example shine.
> And when Thy Darted Beam from the moist Sky
> Nightly salutes Thy grieving People's Eye,
> Thou, like some Warning Light rais'd by our fears,
> Shalt both provoke and still supply our Tears,
> Till the Great Prophet wak'd from his long Sleep
> Again bids Sion for Josiah weep:
> That all Successions by a firm Decree
> May teach their Children to Lament for Thee.
> (pp.130-131, ll.477-488)

As an Anglican clergyman after the Restoration, King was bound by law to preach a suitably pious sermon on Charles I each year on the anniversary of his death.[33] It was, in part, owing to the work of King and his successors that until 1845 Cromwell was regarded by most of the British as a black villain for whom nothing good could be said.

[33] This law was not revoked until 1855. Helen Randall, "The Rise and Fall of Martyrology: Sermons on Charles I," Huntington Library Quarterly, X, (1947), p. 163.

Chapter VII

Henry Vaughan's Meditative Political Poetry

> For in this bright, instructing verse
> Thy Saints are not the Conquerers.[1]

The poets we have considered so far dealt with political subjects to flatter, persuade, or denounce. In all of these cases the poet's purpose was to publish his poems so that they would have a maximum effect. In other words it was a kind of utilitarian poetry-- it had an immediate job to accomplish. But the war inspired a certain amount of private poetry, much of which was written after the fighting was over, which was not necessarily marked for publication. These poems have a sad but not bitter tone; the poets are usually more melancholy than angry. Some poems appear to have been written for a close friend or mistress; others are personal meditations on the war and its consequences. In either case the poems are very private and not intended for a public audience. Henry Vaughan did the most interesting work in this area, but I would like to look at some poems by Lovelace and Herrick as an introduction to Vaughan's verse.

In his famous and frequently anthologized war poems, Richard Lovelace is not concerned so much with the enemy or his cause. Rather the poet ponders the effect of the war upon himself and his countrymen, and we can observe its influence in ways Lovelace never intended. His own developing

[1] Henry Vaughan, The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford, 1957), p. 517.

attitude toward the war is typical of most Royalists. Early in the conflict, though not overjoyed at the prospects of bloodshed, he believed it a matter of honor to serve his king when called. "To Lucasta Going to the Warres" may have been written at the time Lovelace departed for the first or second Bishop's War.[2] Though not enthusiastic about the prospect of leaving, he does not disparage the conflict and deals with the whole situation in a rather witty manner:

I
Tell me not (Sweet) I am unkinde,
That from the Nunnerie
Of thy chaste breast, and quiet minde,
To Warre and Armes I flie.

II
True; a new Mistresse now I chase,
The first Foe in the Field;
And with a stronger Faith imbrace
A Sword, a Horse, a Shield.

III
Yet this Inconstancy is such,
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee (Deare) so much
Lov'd I not Honour more.[3]

The poem turns on the word "Honour" and its meaning for the two people. To the lady it means chastity, and we are assured in the first stanza that she still maintains her honor. By the same token the poet states that he must uphold his honor--that is, his reputation for courage and valor. For

[2] In the first war Lovelace served as an Ensign to George, Lord Goring. For the second he was commissioned a Captain. C.H. Wilkinson, "Introduction," The Poems of Richard Lovelace, I (Oxford, 1925), xxi.

[3] The Poems of Richard Lovelace, II, ed. C.H. Wilkinson (Oxford, 1925), xxiii.

both, honor is the foundation of true love. She has protected hers; now he must defend his.

The other two important war poems by Lovelace were written while he was in prison. The first "To Althea from Prison" was composed in 1642 when he was confined in the Gatehouse at Westminster for having read a petition before Commons demanding the restoration of Charles and the Episcopacy.[4] The poem, which contains the famous "Stone Walls doe not a Prison make" stanza, is a witty rationalization in which the poet argues that he is not really in prison. Lovelace captures here Cavalier idealism in a way no other writer could. He expresses a self-reliance and an independence of spirit for which the Cavaliers have always been admired. The whole thing is rather unrealistic but, like the first poem, terribly noble.

The second prison poem was written in 1648 when Lovelace was incarcerated upon returning to England from Europe. It is not an the subject of imprisonment but more of a reflection on the war while lying in prison. It is most interesting because of the substantive change which the poet has undergone since the two earlier poems were written. This change can be seen not only in the ideas and arguments but in the tone of the poem as well. The "Cavalier spirit" is close to breaking. No longer do we see the flamboyant but charming warrior wittily arguing for his release from his mistress.

[4] Wilkinson, xxiii.

No longer does the poet with clever logic reason his way out of jail.

In the opening stanza the poet, or the persona, asks Lucasta for his freedom from her so that he can pursue other mistresses. He then proceeds with a catalogue of false or impossible mistresses, and he concludes that the king is "th'only spring/ Of all our loves and joyes." In describing the false mistresses the poet comes as close to satire as in anything he wrote:

> The Publick Faith I would adore
> But she is banke-rupt of her store;
> Nor how to trust her can I see,
> For she that couzens all, must me.
> (Poems of Lovelace, II, 46.)

During the war when Parliament ran out of funds, which was often, it levied forced loans. That this money would be paid back was guaranteed by "the public faith." Men such as Lovelace who would give money and property to Parliament only under great compulsion used this term with great contempt.[5]

Since the persona cannot transfer his love to any of these things (Parliament, religion, liberty, property, reformation, or the public faith), he turns to his king and ends the poem with four stanzas which I believe are some of the most beautiful lines ever written on Charles:

> XI
> Since then none of these can be
> Fit objects for my Love and me;
> What then remaines, but th' only spring
> Of all our loves and joyes? The King.

[5] The King's War, p. 136.

XII
He who being the whole Ball
  Of Day on Earth, lends it to all;
When seeking to ecclipse his right,
  Blinded, we stand in our owne light.

XIII
And now an universall mist
  Of Error is spread or'e each breast,
With such a fury edg'd, as is
  Not found in th' inwards of th' Abysse.

XIV
Oh from thy glorious Starry Waine
  Dispense on me one sacred Beame
To light me where I soone may see
  How to serve you, and you trust me.
(Poems of Lovelace, II, 44-46)

Robert Herrick wrote only one contemplative poem on the war, but it is worth our consideration. Although he did write a certain amount of occasional political verse, the real anguish Herrick felt about the war is best reflected in the very personal poem, "The bad season makes the Poet sad." The poet may have intended to evoke some of the traditions of the Elizabethan sonneteers in this fourteen line lyric. It begins not unlike some of Shakespeare's sonnets. The opening lines of "When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes," or "Tired with all these for restful death I cry," have a similar ring to Herrick's,

Dull to my selfe, and almost dead to these
My many fresh and fragrant Mistresses:
Lost to all Musick now; since every thing
Puts on the semblance here of sorrowing.[6]

It would appear from this beginning that we are simply led into another lover's complaint. In part this is true, but the poet's mistress is not a fair lady. It is his country:

[6] The Poems of Robert Herrick, p. 300.

> Sick is the Land to' th' heart; and doth endure
> More dangerous faintings by her desperate cure.

Herrick perhaps is deliberately making up his own rules for for the sonnet. He rhymes in couplets rather than using a traditional interlocking rhyme scheme. Instead of the usual octave and sestet division, he reverses the order beginning with a sestet and ending with an octave. In this case the octave resolves the mystery lingering in the reader's mind:

> But if that golden Age wo'd come again,
> And Charles here Rule as he before did Raign;
> If smooth and unperplext the Seasons were,
> As when the Sweet Maria lived here:
> I sho'd delight to have my Curles halfe drown'd
> In Tyrian Dewes and Head with Roses crown'd.
> And once more yet (ere I am laid out dead)
> Knock at a Starre with my exalted Head?

The poem is a very moving meditation on the restoration of the royal family, not so much for public reasons--although he does note that the season would again be "smooth and unperplext"--but mainly for the sensuous delight in royalty and the court. When younger Herrick had been an admirer of the court. He had gone reluctantly to Devonshire disappointed in removing himself from London and the hub of activity. In this poem the grey dullness of the first four lines contrasts to the brilliant color and sensuous pleasure in the last four. Between the two quatrains the poet explains the reason for the difference: Charles and Maria no longer rule the land. The queen was in France; the king was dead; and the golden age of aristocracy seemed ended forever.

[7] The Poems of Robert Herrick, p. 300.

Henry Vaughan also reflected on the war in private meditations, but his theme was different from Herrick's. Vaughan was concerned with the spiritual laceration of his countrymen. Families were divided. Fathers had fought against their sons. The very fabric of the country had been ripped into pieces by what Vaughan considered a cruel and senseless war.

For a religious poet Henry Vaughan wrote a surprising amount of Civil War poetry. His friend, Thomas Powell, was prompted to write:

> Fairly design'd! to charm our Civil Rage
> With Verse, and plant Bayes in an Iron Age.[8]

His biographer shows evidence that the poet saw combat and that his own disclaimers of taking an active interest in the war were written only to deceive the Roundheads.[9] Vaughan refers to the war in a number of poems. He wrote two elegies on friends who went down in battle. In the first, "An Elegie on the death of Mr. R.W. slain in the late unfortunate difference at Routon Heath, neer Chester, 1645," the poem does seem to indicate that Vaughan participated in the battle:

> O that day
> When like the Fathers in the Fire and Cloud
> I mist thy face! I might in ev'ry Crowd
> See Armes like thine, and men advance, but none

[8] "Upon the Ingenious Poems of his Learned Friend, Mr. Henry Vaughan the Silurist" in The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed., L.C. Martin (Oxford, 1957), p. 618. All citations of Vaughan will be from this text.

[9] F.E. Hutchinson, Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation (Oxford, 1947), pp. 55-71.

So neer to lightning mov'd, nor so fell on.
(p.50, 11.50-54)

The other elegie on Mr. R. Hall was written about the time Charles was killed. Hall died in the seige of Pontefract, and there is no evidence that Vaughan was involved in the action.

But these two occasional poems are not so interesting as Vaughan's introspective meditations, in nearly all of which he begins by contemplating some abstraction, concrete object, or Biblical passage. At first the reader is not aware of the purpose of the reflection; then the poet's line of thought can be discerned, and we see where the meditation is leading us. The parallel between that which is being contemplated and the bearing it has on current affairs is always clear but never labored. In these poems Vaughan displays a variety of moods. In some he is optimistic. In others he is filled with sadness and melancholy. Occasionally a little bitterness slips in.

I think one of the best meditations is "The Constellation," an extended comparison between a constellation and England and between the individual stars and individual Englishmen. The poem is carefully structured. It breaks into two major sections thirty lines long, each of which is divided again into parts fifteen lines long.

The poem begins as a meditation upon the mysterious movement of the constellation across the heavens. Through the first fifteen lines Vaughan dwells upon the magnitude of this movement and questions how it can be effected with

such silence and precision. At line fifteen the emphasis shifts from the stars to man. What the poet has been saying about the stars is now contrasted to man:

> Silence, and light, and watchfulnes with you
> Attend and wind the Clue,
> No sleep, nor sloth assailes you, but poor man
> Still either sleeps, or slips his span.
> (p.469, ll.13-16)

From the majestic, unerring sweep of the stars, Vaughan turns to the poor fumbling mortal. Man is so beset by the problems of survival that he seldom turns his eyes heavenward. When on an occasional night he does look up at the stars, he does not see the lesson being played out for him there:

> But seeks he your Obedience, Order, Light
> Your calm and wel-train'd flight,
> Where, though the glory differ in each star,
> Yet is there peace still, and no war?
> (p.470, ll.29-32)

We can now begin to see the aptness of the comparison Vaughan has set up. The stars and the constellations were, for the seventeenth century reader, obviously controlled by God. They apparently did not have the freedom of action that man has. Each star in compliance with divine order remained in its place and did as God willed it. Certain stars were always brighter than others, yet there seemed to be no competition or animosity. Vaughan questions why man cannot follow divine order as easily as the stars and then answers his own question:

> But here Commission'd by a black self-wil
> The sons the father kil,
> The Children Chase the mother, and would heal
> The wounds they give, by crying, zeale.
> (p.470, ll.37-40)

It is here that we note that the poem may have been written after Charles was executed. It seems to me that "father" stands

for the king. Because of "self-wil" the citizens have turned against the king; parishoners have revolted against the church. Such an imbalance of nature led to the wounds which now scar the country. But the last fifteen lines look with hope to a time when man will follow this order. In a final prayer to God Vaughan writes:

> Settle, and fix our hearts, that we may move
> In order, peace, and love,
> And taught obedience by thy whole Creation,
> Become an humble, holy nation.
>
> Give to thy spouse her perfect, and pure dress,
> Beauty and holiness,
> And so repair these Rents, that men may see
> And say, Where God is, all agree.
> (p.470, ll.53-60)

Vaughan began his meditation on the constellation, and through four well ordered stages he has shown the relevance of its order in motion to the very troubled times England was experiencing.

Even though Vaughan may have actively participated in some of the fighting, he had a deep revulsion against the shedding of blood which was surpassed only by his love for Charles. We will note in most of the following poems a continued reference to blood and a kind of exploration of the seriousness of bloodletting. H. Weller Robinson pointed out that "To the modern mind, blood which has left its organism is no more than any other fluid...but for the ancient mind, blood, even when shed, was still perilous and potent, full of latent life, and capable of working on persons or things in contact with it."[10] It is this ancient concept of the

[10] Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 715.

blood that Vaughan incorporates in these poems. Vaughan is not being superstitious but very perceptive about the importance of bloodletting.

Most of these meditations are triggered by Biblical allusions. "The Men of War" is based on New Testament citations. The title is taken from Luke 23:11. "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate." The whole point of the poem is that God rewards the man of love, not the man of war. Vaughan's meditation on this gives him renewed hope:

> Were not thy word (dear Lord!) my light,
> How would I run to endless night.
> (p. 517, ll. 9-10)

"Righteousness" is a meditation on what constitutes the righteous life. Among the many things which Vaughan lists, two are related to the current upheaval that disturbed the poet. The righteous man is one.

> Who spills no blood, nor spreads
> Thorns in the beds
> Of the distrest, hasting their overthrow;
> Making the time they had
> Bitter and sad
> Like Chronic pains, which surely kill, though slow.
> (p. 525, ll. 25-30)

Although this is not mainly a Civil War poem, we can see from the above passage that the war is never far from Vaughan's thoughts. Again we note the poet's preoccupation with blood, this time linking it with other disruptive activities designed to overthrow the existing government. Like Henry King, Vaughan says that not only are the signatories of the king's death warrant guilty of shedding his blood, but all those who fought against hem must accept some responsibility for the

execution.

In another poem the rainbow serves as an emblem upon which Vaughan meditates. To the poet the rainbow is not just a reminder of God's promise not to destroy the world by flood; it has become a symbol of God's honesty and strength of will. The promise was made thousands of years ago, and God has not reneged. In contrast to this Vaughan looks at man's pitiful attempts to keep any commitment to God:

> O foul, deceitful men! my God doth keep
> His promise still, but we break ours and sleep.
> After the Fall, the first sin was in Blood.
> (p.510, ll.19-21)

Murder came only after lust. The poet thinks it inconceivable that the basic evil of war was not apparent to those fighting, all of whom claimed to be good Christians. Using traditional symbols, Vaughan points out that not even a great flood of water was able to wash away this blood:

> Water (though both Heavens windows and the deep,
> Full forty days o'r the drown'd world did weep,)
> Could not reform us, and blood (in despight)
> Yea Gods own blood we tread upon and slight.
> (p.510, ll.27-30)

"Jacobs Pillow and Pillar" picks up again the theme of blood fueding. The poem alludes to the experience Jacob had while fleeing from the wrath and vengeance of his brother, Esau. In his flight Jacob stopped one night at Bethel, where he had a dream in which he saw a ladder touching earth and reaching into heaven. Angels ascended and descended the ladder. Jacob was told that he would be successful in his travels and would eventually return safely to his homeland.[11]

[11] Genesis 28: 11-15.

"The dream represents under a striking symbolism the thought that heaven and earth are connected, that an ever present Providence watches over the destinies of man."[12] Vaughan contrasts the purpose and desire of God with what has actually happened in England. He points out the mission of Christ, but then remarks on man's failure to follow the plan:

> Man slights his Maker, when familiar grown,
> And sets up laws, to pull his honor down.
> (p. 527, ll. 19-20)

The quarrel between Jacob and Esau was being relived, only on a greater scale in England:

> But blessed Jacob, though thy sad distress
> Was just the same with ours, and nothing less;
> For thou a brother, and blood-thirsty too
> Didst flye, whose children wrought thy childrens wo.
> (p. 528, ll. 41-44)

Yet this poem too ends on an optimistic note that illustrates Vaughan's boundless faith in Christ's saving grace:

> But we a healing Sun by day and night,
> Have our sure Guardian, and our leading light;
> What thou didst hope for and believe, we finde
> And feel a friend most ready, sure and kinde.
> Thy pillow was but type and shade at best,
> But we the substance have, and on him rest.
> (p. 528, ll. 49-54)

The best of Vaughan's meditations on the war is "Abels blood," a singularly powerful poem on the inherent evil of war as fratricide. The poet's theme here is extended beyond that of the other poems. He is not content just to cry out against the war, but begins to explore tentatively its far-reaching effects. The opening of the poem immediately

[12] A Dictionary of the Bible, ed., James Hastings, II (New York, 1911), p. 528.

focuses on the shedding of blood, but the imagery is more graphic than we have previously seen:

> Sad, purple well! whose bubling eye
> Did first against a Murth'rer cry;
> Whose streams still vocal, still complain
> Of bloody Cain,
> And now at evening are as red
> As in the morning when first shed.
> (p.523, ll.1-6)

Two things bother Vaughan. First, he questions why in the length of time between Cain's sin and the Civil War mankind seems to have learned nothing. The race seems just to be perpetuating the same mistake. This leads the poet to his second question: if the magnitude of guilt increases with each murder, how will some of these soldiers ever atone for their sins? Addressing Abel, Vaughan says:

> If single thou
> (Though single voices are but low,)
> Could'st such a shrill and long cry rear
> As speaks still in thy makers ear,
> What thunders shall those men arraign
> Who cannot count those they have slain,
> Who bath not in a shallow flood,
> But in a deep, wide sea of blood?
> (p.523, ll.7-14)

All this leads up to the essential point of the poem. Civil wars have a tendency to linger and often flare-up again. Unlike a conventional war, the invading armies don't fold their tents and go home once a peace settlement has been worked out. Rather, the belligerents remain in the same area facing each other. England's former civil wars had lasted over one hundred years. The poet recognizes that reconciliation this time will also be difficult. We hear today that violence breeds violence. But Vaughan also was aware of the barriers in

stopping the bloody cycle:

> I,* may that flood,
> That proudly spilt and despis'd blood,
> Speechless and calm, as Infants sleep!
> Or if it watch, forgive and weep
> For those that spilt it! May no cries
> From the low earth to high Heaven rise,
> But what (like his, whose blood peace brings)
> Shall (when they rise) <u>speak better things</u>,
> Then <u>Abels</u> doth! may <u>Abel</u> be
> Still single heard, while these agree
> With his milde blood in voice and will,
> <u>Who</u> pray'd for those that did him kill!
> (p.524, ll.33-44)

Unlike Henry King who looked forward to the Restoration when "Treas'nous Heads in purple Caldrons drench," Vaughan, though as strong a Royalist as King, looks forward to a meaningful peace even under a different sort of government. King used bloody imagery in his poems to excite the reader and strengthen the cry for revenge. Vaughan alludes to blood and blood-feuding to call for peace. He is more aware of the contagion of revenge and cautions that it must be stopped. To those who cry for justice, Vaughan answers that God will make the final judgment and justice will be done then.

The Royalists did finally admit defeat and put away their swords but not so easily or readily as one might suspect. Charles II still lived and for a time actively campaigned for his father's throne. But many Englishmen who had fought for his father felt as Vaughan did, that the violence had to stop. More importantly, there appeared

* aye

little chance for a Royalist victory as Cromwell became the dominate figure in England. It is to this new leader that we now turn our attention.

Chapter VIII

The Figure of Cromwell

> To pardon willing, and to punish loath
> You strike with one hand, but you heal with both.[1]

A study of Civil War poetry should include some treatment of the poetic tributes dedicated to the victor--Oliver Cromwell. In this chapter I will take up three poems which celebrate the ascendancy of Cromwell. The three poems come at significant periods while Cromwell consolidated his power. Marvell's "Horatian Ode" commemorates Cromwell's successful Irish campaign. Milton's sonnet "To the Lord General" was written after Cromwell subdued the Scots. Waller's panegyric seems to have been written shortly after the title Lord Protector was conferred upon Cromwell in 1653. This marks the point at which Cromwell became virtually dictator of England. He had dismissed Parliament--both the Rump and the ill conceived Little Parliament--and from this point until his death he and his army ruled England.

Cromwell was such an enigmatic personality that today he still attracts a great deal of controversy. Was he a saint or a devil? Did he save England or simply destroy all the good which had come from the Renaissance? Was he a seventeenth century Hitler, as Winston Churchill thought,[2] or a man sent by God to purge a corrupt kingdom? Cromwell's contemporaries were as strongly divided in their opinion of him.

[1] Edmund Waller, The Poems of Edmund Waller, II, ed. G. Thorn Drury (London, 1905), 15.

[2] Maurice Ashley, Churchill as Historian (London, 1968), pp. 33-34.

The Royalist historian, Clarendon despised the man but could not help but admire his power: "Without doubt, no man with more wickedness ever attempted anything, or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion and moral honesty; yet wickedness as great as his could never have accompanied those trophies without the assistance of a great spirit, and admiral circumspection and sagacity, and a most magnanimous resolution."[3] Other writers, some of whom we will look at, were quick to praise Cromwell. For nearly two hundred years after the Restoration Cromwell was regarded by most Englishmen as a fanatic and king killer, but with the publication of Carlyle's Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell in 1845, a more balanced view was taken. In his important biography written at the end of the century, Sir Charles Firth makes the following observation, which reveals how much opinion on Cromwell had shifted from the pre-Carlyle period: "Either as a soldier or as a statesman Oliver Cromwell was far greater than any Englishman of his time, and he was both soldier and statesman in one. We must look to Caesar or Napoleon to find a parallel for this union of high political and military ability in one man."[4] More recently Professor Hill reviewing the various modern conceptions of Cromwell states, "Mr. Ashley saw him as 'the conservative dictator',

[3] Clarendon, VI, 91.

[4] Sir Charles Firth, Oliver Cromwell (London, 1953), p.453.

Professor Abbott as a proto-fascist. Professor Trevor-Roper as a declining gentleman, a 'country-house radical' and 'Natural back-bencher,' who could lead a revolution or destruction but who had no positive political ideals or abilities. Dr. Paul sees him as the Christian trying to make God's will prevail in this world, torn between religious ideals and the necessities of political action."[5]

Cromwell was a man of his time. Scholars and laymen still argue over which side, Royalist or Roundhead, was really "right"; therefore, it follows that they still argue over the justness of Cromwell's actions. I believe that this continuing controversy colors our interpretations of the words and acts of men living in this critical period. What we often fail to perceive is that regardless of who was right or wrong, one lesson stood out for men on both sides. "The civil war and the King's execution enhanced as nothing else was ever to do again in English history a general sense of the world's mutability."[6] It was indeed a time of change. Issues were complex; loyalties divided. Many intelligent and concerned people found it difficult to adapt a rigid and unyielding stance, not because they lacked courage or fortitude nor because they were intimidated or coerced, but simply because they could see the

[5] Christopher Hill, Oliver Cromwell 1658-1958 (London, 1958), p.5.

[6] John M. Wallace, Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, 1968), p. 37.

usefulness and attractiveness of something they had been previously set against. Of the three poets whose work we are looking at here, one, Edmund Waller, found himself shifting loyalities when the Royalists' chances for victory seemed forever extinguished. Marvell's earlier political sympathies are conjectural; he seems not to have been deeply committed to either side. Milton, who had always been an independent, did alter his opinion of Cromwell considerably. For many Royalists the acceptance of Cromwell was made easier by the arguments advanced to support the king during the war. Professor Wallace gives an excellent account of these Civil War debates in his new book. His thesis, which evolved after he had studied the pamphlets and tracts written to justify each side's position, is that upon entering into open warfare both sides agreed to a trial by combat, and insofar as God determined who would rule the country, He would exercise His will by influencing the outcome of the war. "There had in truth been an appeal to arms, and the manoeuvres of the casuistical battle had revealed that both sides accepted conquest theory as a reality."[7] Wallace summarized his thesis when he stated, "The casuistry of the civil war, and especially the royalist dogmas of power and conquest, reveal that the foundations of the constitution were more shakable by argument than anyone had imagined, and the dying cadences of

[7] Wallace, p. 23.

the reign already prophesied a future of inescapable trial, and a necessary compliance with an act of God."[8]

Andrew Marvell's position on the war is largely unknown. There seems to be no written record that he supported the king; he did not enlist in the army of either side. For much of the war he was traveling in Europe.[9] When the Puritans took over he accepted Cromwell's leadership. Marvell's poem, "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," is one of the most famous poems he wrote, and it has been the subject of a tremendous amount of criticism over the past twenty-five years. Critics have wrestled with the question of Marvell's intention--his purpose in writing the poem. More particularly they have questioned the poet's attitude toward Cromwell in the poem. In his notes Margoliouth, Marvell's modern editor, comments: "The ode is the utterance of a constitutional monarchist whose sympathies have been with the King, but who yet believes more in men than in parties or principles, and whose hopes are fixed now on Cromwell, seeing in him both the civic ideal of a ruler without personal ambition, and the man of destiny moved by and yet himself driving (l. 12) a power which is above justice (see l. 37). The detachment of Marvell's judgment is well seen here; it is also free, in that age remarkably, from any bias of

[8] Wallace, p. 43.

[9] Pierre Legouis, Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot (Oxford, 1965), p. 9.

religious policies."[10] The first person to challenge seriously this view was Professor Cleanth Brooks. In an attack upon historical criticism, Professor Brooks suggested that we should not try to interpret the poem in light of Marvell's unknown and perhaps shifting allegiance, but should disregard these extraneous matters and concentrate upon the poem itself. When he undertakes this action, Professor Brooks came to the conclusion that the poem is essentially anti-Cromwellian.[11]

In a commentary on this essay, Douglas Bush summarized Brooks interpretation of the poem: "namely that a sensitive, penetrating, and well balanced mind like Marvell could not really have admired a crude, single-minded, and ruthless man of action like Cromwell."[12] Bush is critical of Brooks' consistent "pejorative choice among 'ambiguous' possibilities,"[13] and contends that essentially Brooks' interpretation is often based on nothing more than what the critic personally believes.

Bush's reply to Brooks certainly did not end the controversy over this poem, but I do not mean for this chapter to be simply a review of criticism. I have cited Brooks and Bush to indicate the degree of division which exists or at least

[10] H.M. Margoliouth, The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, I (Oxford, 1927), 236.

[11] Cleanth Brooks, "Literary Criticism," English Institute Essays (New York, 1946), p.142.

[12] Douglas Bush, "Marvell's Horatian Ode," Sewanee Review, LX (1952), 364.

[13] Bush, p.364.

did exist over this one-hundred-and-twenty-line poem. I have implied that the uncertainty in interpretation is owing in part to the poem and in part to the man the poem is about. Eighteen months before the "Horatian Ode" was written, Cromwell's popularity had dropped to its lowest ebb. He was primarily responsible for Charles' beheading, which rapidly became a very unpopular act. Now as he returned victorious from Ireland his popularity began to rise.

The Irish rebellion which Cromwell extinguished had swept the country for some ten years. It was the same rebellion which Charles had sought to crush earlier. Parliament's unwillingness to advance the king the money and authority to organize an army and put down the rebellion led to the final rupture of the monarch and Parliament. Ironically Cromwell's ability to crush the revolt helped him consolidate his power. The Irish conflict had been particularly bitter. When in the early stages of the rebellion cities, ports, and estates fell to the rebels, several thousand English colonists were killed. Gardiner estimates four or five thousand, but by the time accounts reached England, the figures had been fantastically exaggerated. "Clarendon speaks of 40,000 and even wilder estimates give 200,000 or even 300,000."[14] In addition to the exaggerated numbers, many gruesome stories were circulated telling of inhuman atrocities committed against the English. Yet Parliament would never grant Charles control

[14] History of England, X, 68.

of an army to supress the rebellion for fear that he would use it against them. As the king's fortunes declined, the political situation in Ireland became more complicated. The rebels knew that eventually an English army would land in Ireland to try to retake captured areas. Further, the rebels, mostly Catholics, feared greater persecution at the hands of the Puritans than from the Royalists. In 1649 after Charles I was executed an agreement was worked out whereby the rebels would support Charles II. There were then a number of reasons for Cromwell to go to Ireland in 1650. The English still craved vengeance for the colonists killed in the late thirties; the Puritans saw an opportunity to deal a blow against Rome; Cromwell wanted to stop Charles II's bid for the throne before it gained broad support; and finally, lurking in the background was nationalism--the English and Irish simply hated one another. Is it any wonder that Cromwell would be hailed upon returning from a successful campaign against this long-time enemy? He had subdued the rebels with deceptive ease. At the beginning of the campaign Cromwell had brutally put to the sword two fortresses which held out against him; as a result many cities capitulated just upon word of his approach. His military might became almost legendary. It is no wonder that even a former English moderate would be attracted to this power and want to glorify it. Nor is it surprising that such a man would finally come to believe that all Cromwell's praying might be getting some results and that God actually was guiding the general's sword and checking his opponents'.

In the text of the poem Marvell depicts Cromwell as operating under divine guidance, not only in the Irish campaign, but from the very beginning of his career:

> And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
> Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,
> Did thorough his own Side
> His fiery way divide.
> (p.87, ll.13-16)

The reference, of course, is to Cromwell's rise to power. Cromwell was not a dynamic figure in Parliament. He was neither a lawyer nor orator. He had no military training. He had attended Cambridge for little over a year, but during the early part of his life "he settled down as a squire and farmer, and devoted himself to the cultivation of his estates and the procreation of children."[15] From such innocent beginnings what possible explanation could there be for his advancement other than the fact that he had been touched by God? But we note in this citation that it was through his <u>own</u> side that he had to fight his way. This then is not simply a tribute to a general who has been victorious over the enemy, but a recognition of the factional obstacles Cromwell had to hurdle before he was in a position to successfully campaign against Charles. In addition it is a recognition of the personal sacrifice he has made, for Cromwell forsook an idyllic Horatian existence to immerse himself in the problems of state. The second line of the above passage refers to that shattering of the old way of life with the new. When one

[15] Maurice Ashley, <u>Oliver Cromwell: The Conservative Dictator</u> (London, 1937), p.24.

reflects on the formidable task which confronted Cromwell at the beginning of the war, it is not surprising that Marvell wrote, continuing the celestial imagery:

> 'Tis Madness to resist or blame
> The force of angry Heavens flame:
> And, if we would speak true,
> Much to the Man is due.
> (p.88, ll.25-28)

Surely this along with the earlier citation makes it evident that Marvell regards Cromwell as a man virtually sent by God to set the kingdom right. The poet might wish that it had been otherwise, but it wasn't, and Wallace insists both sides had pretty well resigned themselves to the fact that in the final analysis God would have a hand in deciding the outcome of the war. (Even during the war some Royalists did not regard this as a very happy prospect. Before one battle Royalist, Sir John Oglander, commented, "Truly all the greatest part of the King's commanders were so debased by drinking, whoring, and swearing that no man could expect God's blessing on their actions."[16] And from passages in Brome's poetry we can discern that Royalists were not completely unprepared for the outcome.)

Nevertheless, Marvell still had pangs of regret. He knows that what took place had to come about, but he also knows that the regicide was outside the laws of justice man had developed:

> Though Justice against Fate complain,
> And plead the antient Rights in vain:

[16] Ashley, Cromwell, p.75.

But those do hold or break
As Men are strong or weak.
Nature that hateth emptiness,
Allows of penetration less:
And therefore must make room
Where greater Spirits come.
(p.88, 11.37-44)

I think this is one of the really magnificent passages in the poem. In many respects it defies explication. It stands before the reader as a concise, penetrating statement of an event which obviously troubled the poet deeply. How could anyone come out unscathed from a contest between justice and fate? The words "plead," "vain," "hold," "break," "strong," and "weak" all contribute to emphasize the complexity of emotions that the poet feels. The use of "Fate" and "Nature" prepare for the inevitablity of events which the poet goes ahead to describe:

What Field of all the Civil Wars,
Where his were not the deepest Scars?
And Hampton shows what part
He had of wiser Art.
Where, twining subtile fears with hope,
He wove a Net of such a scope,
That Charles himself might chase
To Caresbrooks narrow case.
(p.88 11.45-52)

Marvell pictures here the unbeatable Cromwell, who, the poet has suggested earlier, is the messenger of "Fate"--one of the "greater spirits" come to fill the "emptiness." Never mind the fact that he did not plot to catch Charles at Caresbrook. This historical inaccuracy is an unimportant to the appreciation of this poem as is the fact that Cortez did not discover the Pacific Ocean for an appreciation of Keats' famous sonnet. The important thing here is that Marvell is

emphasizing Cromwell's valor and cunning.

Immediately following this sketch of Cromwell is the noble and sympathetic picture of Charles:

> That thence the Royal Actor born
> The Tragick Scaffold might adorn:
> While round the armed Bands
> Did clap their bloody hands.
> He nothing common did or mean
> Upon that memorable Scene:
> But with his keener Eye
> The Axes edge did try:
> Nor call'd the Gods with vulgar spight
> To vindicate his helpless Right,
> But bow'd his comely Head,
> Down as upon a Bed.
> (pp.88-89, ll.53-63)

Much has been made of this oft quoted passage, and some would seem to have us think it was the entire poem. As I have tried to indicate, however, it is only a part of a developed argument. First Marvell pointed out the need for a strong ruler. Next he indicated that Cromwell had the necessary qualities of strength, courage, and cunning, while at the same time he implied that Charles, though a gentleman of admirable composure, simply was not the man for the job.

But what is one to make of this lovely tribute paid to Charles in a poem dedicated to his arch-enemy? The fact of the matter is, the king went to his death so nobly that it was difficult for Englishmen to erase the picture from their minds. Nearly everyone except the hardcore Puritans was infected by the extraordinary aristocratic stature of the king in his final moments. Marvell is simply reflecting this feeling, and in so doing he has penned a very lovely tribute to Charles.

The poet turns from this to Cromwell's victory over the Irish rebels. Brooks thought the passage was intended to be ironic, but one must keep in mind that the general's triumphant return from Ireland provided Marvell the occasion for writing the poem. We must also remember that the poet believed Cromwell an instrument of God. He came to this conclusion only after seeing the awesome power of Cromwell, so he assumes the Irish have come to the same conclusion after witnessing first hand what they had only heard about earlier. In addition, Professor Wallace points out that Marvell did not really exaggerate things very much: "The reports that filtered back to London and were reported in the weekly newspapers exonerate Marvell from being guilty of more than a mild exaggeration, the purpose of which the poem explains. From the start the government had been anxious to publish accounts of submission from all over the British Isles, and Ireland was no exception."[17]

Because of Cromwell's success in Ireland, the poet looks forward to a new era for England; he senses that perhaps Cromwell will usher in a new period of English power:

> What may not then our Isle presume
> While Victory his Crest does plume!
> What may not others fear
> If thus he crown each Year!
> (p. 89, ll. 96-100)

This is not just a vague warning. Marvell is thinking ahead to the forthcoming wars with Scotland. Charles II was preparing to make a final bid to regain the throne and had enlisted the Scots as his allies when he saw that the Irish were of no further use. Cromwell had, in fact, been recalled

[17] Wallace, p.85.

from Ireland before his business was finished there to deal with the Scottish menace. Marvell accurately forecast the outcome of the war; although when he wrote, it was only wishful thinking to foresee the Scots hiding under their plaids:

> The Pict no shelter now shall find
> Within his party-colour'd Mind;
> But from this Valour sad
> Shrink underneath the Plad.
> (p.90, ll.105-108)

The poem closes with Marvell's advising Cromwell to keep up his guard. There were many in addition to the Scots at home and abroad who if given a chance would willingly dislodge Cromwell. But the poet, like most Englishmen had seen enough fighting and instability; he wants someone who can maintain control and keep things on an even keel.

Marvell's tribute to Cromwell is not ambiguous or confusing. It is an accurate appraisal of a dynamic figure by a thoughtful and somewhat troubled man. If Marvell's Cromwell is not the ideal leader, should we criticize the poet or the general? If the poet does not find the general's every move above reproach, should we censure Marvell or Cromwell? My point is just this: we are dealing with a perspicacious man's thoughts on a complex figure. Marvell's poem is as true and consistent as the man he is writing about.

Almost two years after Cromwell's return from Ireland, Milton was prompted to write a sonnet which recounts the Scottish victories that Marvell forecast. Milton's sonnet "To the Lord General Cromwell, May 1652, on the proposals of

certain ministers at the Committee for Propagation of the Gospel," is a good example of laudatory poetry written not just to praise a particular man but to persuade him on a particular course of action as well. Of the various Parliamentary factions, Milton sided with the Independents against the Presbyterians. He fervently believed in religious toleration and freedom of the press. He had been involved in a censorship fight before when some ministers demanded that his divorce pamphlets be burned. That quarrel also became the subject of some sonnets. The sonnet to Cromwell was prompted by a group of ministers' demand that all public utterances--written and verbal--on religious matters be allowed only by individuals who had received the approval of a select committee of pure Christians. Milton saw the danger of such a proposal and attempted to check it.

Like Marvell, Milton acknowledges the formidable obstacles which Cromwell has surmounted. Also, they both acknowledge the religious purpose and divine guidance which have assisted Cromwell in his victories. Milton has more evidence of the general's invincibility than Marvell did. Victory over the Scots had not been easy. At Dunbar the English were outnumbered, morale was low, and many of the men were ill as a result of the damp, inclement weather. Cromwell's lieutenants counseled for a retreat to England, but the Lord General engaged the enemy, and as a result of his superior logistics and his commanding leadership at a crucial point in the battle, he turned the tables and brought about a solid English victory.

> Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
> Not of war only, but detractions rude,
> Guided by faith and matchless Fortitude,
> To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough'd,
> And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
> Hast rear'd God's Trophies and his work pursu'd,
> While Darwen stream with blood of Scots imbru'd,
> And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,
> And Worcester's laureate wreath;...
> (p. 160, ll. 1-9)[18]

Milton's verse here is not only lovely but accurate; he does not sacrifice meaning for sound. The "Detractions rude" refers to the factional fighting in Parliament. Milton mentions it here not only to recall the general's past successes, but to strike the theme for the poem in its early lines: factionalism still exists and Cromwell must still fight against it. Both Hughes and Honigmann note that "peace and truth" was a common phrase used during this period.[19] Milton uses it here advantageously to continue the development of his theme. With his sword Cromwell has restored peace to the kingdom, but he must not lose sight of the fact that he is also striving to capture truth. The theme of victory over factionalism is further advanced by Milton's references to Cromwell's victories over the Scots i.e., Presbyterians: "It is surely no accident that he cites three of Cromwell's victories against the Scots Presbyterians rather than his

[18] Citations to Milton in my text are from John Milton Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957).

[19] Hughes, p. 161, E.A.J. Honigmann, ed., Milton's Sonnets (New York, 1966), pp. 147-148.

triumphs over the English royalists or Irish rebels. Through the Covenant with the Parliamentary faction the Scots had hoped to extend their brand of Presbyterianism into England.... Cromwell himself had warned the Scots against their attempts to impose uniformity of religion, and for using the Covenant as a cover for less than respectable political manoeuvring."[20]

At the beginning of the sestet of the sonnet there is a noticeable turn or volta which Milton frequently, though not always, employed as a stylistic device.. It is given light emphasis with the word "yet."

> yet much remains
> To conquer still; peace hath her victories
> No less renown'd 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.
> (pp. 160-161, ll. 9-14)

Tactfully, Milton has followed his compliment in the octave with advice in the sestet. In these last five and one half lines Milton implores the Lord General to keep his "sword erect" but now for peaceful rather than military victories. After so much fighting he is afraid Cromwell will grow tired and lose in the conference room what he had gained on the battlefield. Religious liberty, for which the Independents had striven, was being threatened by yet another group of self-appointed protectors of the faith. The problem was that although Cromwell filled the vacuum of leadership in the executive government, no one filled the vacuum in church

[20] Honigmann, p. 147-148.

government. Parliament "had abolished Episcopacy without replacing it by any other system of Church government.... The Church was a chaos of isolated congregations in which a man made himself a minister as he chose, and got himself a living as he could."[21] Politically, Cromwell was firm and dictatorial, a good substitute for a king. But he had a strong desire to break down the barriers of religious prejudice. As a result he was unwilling to impose on others his own religious convictions. (During the debate on the proposals Milton is writing about, Cromwell is supposed to have declared, "I had rather that Mahometanism were permitted amongst us, than one of God's children should be persecuted.")[22] Surely Milton's magnificent appeal aided in encouraging Cromwell to resist the "hireling wolves." In these few lines Milton has immortalized the man to whom he devoted himself for so many years of what might have been the most productive period of the poet's life.

Finally I would like to look at Waller's "A Panegyric to My Lord Protector." Although the poem was not printed until 1655, Waller's editor believed that much of it had been written and circulated in manuscript shortly after Cromwell was appointed Lord Protector on December 16, 1653.[23]

[21] Firth, p. 299.

[22] Firth, p. 300-301.

[23] G. Thorn Drury, "Notes," The Poems of William Waller, II (London, 1905), 195.

Waller is best remembered, unfortunately, for the ridiculous plot in which he was involved to capture Parliament for the king early in the war. The blot on Waller's character did not result from his serving Charles, but from his cowardly conduct after the plot had been discovered. Apparently in order to get off with his own life, Waller gave evidence needed to hang several of his fellow conspirators; upon paying a large fine, he was allowed to flee to Europe. In late 1651 Parliament passed a resolution revoking his sentence of banishment. C.V. Wedgwood writes, "It is not very easy to admire poor Waller as a man, though he may legitimately be admired as a poet."[24]

There is a strong temptation to say that the poet wrote his panegyric to get back in the good graces of Cromwell. This temptation is even greater when we study Waller's inglorious Royalist record. Today we tend to view with great suspicion any man who makes an extended and elaborate compliment to someone above him. The modern reader is likely to presume before reading a line that the poem is nothing more than a piece of shallow flattery. Surprisingly, Waller reveals himself in this poem not as a whimpering coward begging for mercy--after all, mercy had already been granted--but as a strong writer who was sometimes presumptious, often playful, and always persuasive. The poem is an honest expression of admiration tempered by advice and the promotion

[24] Poetry and Politics Under the Stuarts, p. 118.

of self-interest. Miss Wedgwood comments that Waller "probably wrote at this time with a fair degree of sincerity, for the Cromwellian government brought a sufficient measure of prosperity at home, and that respect from European nations of which England had been starved since Elizabethan days."[25]

Still these comments may not make the "Panegyric" much more palatable. This problem did not exist with Marvell's ode or Milton's sonnet. One cannot accuse Marvell of simply writing superficial flattery because there is much which obviously isn't flattering, though it is not necessarily condemning either. Milton's sonnet is clearly aimed at persuasion, and even when he praises the Lord General in the first eight lines, the things praised are leading up to the advice given in the sestet. Waller's comments on Cromwell are always complimentary, and the advice he gives is not as clear and discernible as Milton's. So there have been no duels between critics over ambiguous meanings in the "Panegyric." Nor do we need a body of historical information to learn exactly what Waller is trying to convince Cromwell that he ought to do.

To begin with, one of the purposes of the "Panegyric" is to convince recalcitrant Royalists to give up their opposition to Cromwell and make their peace with the new regime. First Waller takes Cromwell's authority as an accomplished fact. He can see no usefulness in fighting

[25] Poetry and Politics Under the Stuarts, p. 118.

against it. Secondly, the poet is quick to see the advantages for England in accepting Cromwell. The Lord Protector was at the time effecting a sharp rise in English prestige. So from a purely pragmatic point of view there were two good reasons to support the Lord Protector: he had united the kingdom and increased its influence abroad:

> While with a strong and yet a gentle hand,
> You bridle faction, and our hearts command,
> Protect us from ourselves, and from the foe,
> Make us unite, and make us conquer too.
> (p.10, ll.1-4)[26]

This first stanza of the poem is an excellent example of Waller's poetic craft. No other poet up to this time had used the caesura with more regularity and telling poetic effect. Note the antithesis between "strong" and "gentle," "ourselves" and "foe." In the second and third lines he uses the caesura in balancing similarities of "bridle" and "command," "unite" and "conquer."

In the second and third stanzas Waller continues his appeal to Royalist hold-outs. He first questions the motives of these people, suggesting that their dedication to a lost cause may be more the result of their own selfish desires for power than their devotion to Charles. He contrasts this to Cromwell's own selflessness in the third stanza:

> Let partial spirits still aloud complain,
> Think themselves injured that they cannot reign,
> And own no liberty but where they may
> Without control upon their fellows prey.

[26] Citations from Waller in my text are to The Poems of Edmund Waller 2 vols.,ed., G.Thorn Drury (London, 1905).

> Above the waves as Neptune showed his face,
> To chide the winds, and save the Trojan race,
> So has your Highness, raised above the rest,
> Storms of ambition, tossing us, repressed.
> (p. 10, ll. 5-12)

After these first stanzas, which may be called the poem's introduction, Waller moves from praise of Cromwell to glorification of England. The transition is nearly unnoticeable since the poet credits Cromwell with having made England great. Nevertheless, for the next sixteen stanzas there is very little mention of Cromwell:

> Heaven, (that has placed this island to give law,
> To balance Europe, and her states to awe)
> In this conjunction does on Britain smile;
> The greatest leader, and the greatest isle!
>
> Whether this portion of the world were rent,
> By the rude ocean, from the continent;
> Or thus created; it was sure designed
> To be the sacred refuge of mankind.
> (p. 11, ll. 21-28)

Waller's super-chauvinism may be related to his exile from England. Upon returning from his seven years leave in Europe, he found the country stronger and more influential than when he left it. In the first of these two stanzas we see how Waller can on occasion get extra emphasis from his rhymes. He heralds the place God has made for England, leader of all countries. The emphasis on "law" and "awe" punctuates this meaning. "Smile" and "isle" counterbalance the solemnity of the first couplet and stress the attractiveness of the new position to Englishmen.

The major reason for England's new influential status was the success of her reorganized and rebuilt navy. Professor Michael Lewis remarks, "It is well known that

Cromwell and his contemporaries created the New Model Army.... What is often forgotten, though equally correct, is that the same men created the New Model Navy."[27] This was not the first time Waller used the navy as a subject for his poetry. An earlier poem, "To the King on His Navy," appears to have been written for a particular occasion, but Waller was so vague and general that scholars have been unable to determine what the occasion was.

The poet this time had good cause to pen some lines in tribute to the navy. For twenty or thirty years British ships had been humilated by the Dutch who were then the leading European maritime nation. Charles had tried to build a new fleet to remedy the situation, but the ship-money controversy was all that came from his efforts, and the Dutch continued to have their way. Under the Commonwealth a new fleet was built. After it had driven off Prince Rupert, who with a few ships from Charles' old navy had been harassing British ships from the off-shore islands, Cromwell's navy took on the Dutch.

The First Dutch War lasted only two years, but six major engagements were fought in that short time. The English won all battles save one. The fighting was fierce--in one battle each side had over one hundred ships under sail. When the smoke finally cleared, the English once more had control of the seas. Not since Elizabeth had Englishmen been

[27] Michael Lewis, The History of the British Navy (London, 1957), p. 82.

free to roam the "world's great waste" as they now were. At home the victory added to Cromwell's prestige; abroad it added to England's influence:

> Lords of the world's great waste, the ocean, we
> Whole forests send to reign upon the sea,
> And every coast may trouble, or relieve;
> But none can visit us without your leave.
>
> Angels and we have this prerogative,
> That none can at our happy seat arrive;
> While we descend at pleasure, to invade
> The bad with vengeance, and the good to aid.
>
> Our little world, the image of the great,
> Like that, amidst the boundless ocean set,
> Of her own growth has all that Nature craves;
> And all that's rare, as tribute from the waves.
> (p. 12, ll. 41-52)

Waller concludes the first half of the poem with a brief tribute to the strength and tenacity of the English fighting men. At about line seventy-five the emphasis shifts back to Cromwell. At first the poet speaks of his recent military victories, and then he turns to domestic policies, speaking of Cromwell's merciful attitude toward those whom he conquered:

> Tigers have courage, and the rugged bear,
> But man alone can, whom he conquers, spare.
>
> To pardon willing, and to punish loath,
> You strike with one hand, but you heal with both;
> Lifting up all that prostrate lie, you grieve
> You cannot make the dead again to live,
>
> When fate, or error, had our age misled,
> And o'er these nations such confusion spread,
> The only cure, which could from Heaven come down,
> Was so much power and clemency in one!
> (pp. 14-15, ll. 115-124)

When the poet wrote these lines, he may have been thinking of the pardon given him, or he may have had in mind the Act

of Oblivion for Royalists which Cromwell pushed through Parliament shortly after his return from Scotland.[28] In any event, the point is well made that, although Cromwell fought with singular ferocity during the battle, once the guns were silent he and his soldiers were, by seventeenth century standards, kind and merciful toward the enemy.

If Waller was not thinking about himself in the last stanza, he certainly is in the next:

> One! whose extraction from an ancient line
> Gives hope again that well-born men may shine;
> The meanest in your nature, mild and good,
> The noble rest secured in your blood.
> (p. 15, ll. 125-128)

At first this seems like just another compliment, but it should be remembered that Waller himself came from an old and established family which was known as "a family of great wealth and antiquity, originally settled in the county of Kent."[29] The poet then is appealing to Cromwell's own sense of aristocracy. He addresses the Lord Protector as a man who, like the poet, would have a special interest in maintaining the authority of wealthy landlords. (Lilburne's earlier popularity and power had put fear in the hearts of the aristocracy and landed gentry.) But notice how subtle, almost sly, Waller's little entreaty is. He isn't pushy, and he doesn't dwell on the matter, but moves quickly on to the next stanza:

[28] Ashley, Cromwell, p. 181.

[29] Drury, I, xii.

Oft have we wondered how you hid in peace
A mind proportioned to such things as these;
How such a ruling spirit you could restrain,
And practise first over yourself to reign.

Your private life did a just pattern give,
How fathers, husbands, pious sons should live;
Born to command, your princely virtues slept,
Like humble David's, while the flock he kept.

But when your troubled country called you forth,
Your flaming courage, and your matchless worth,
Dazzling the eyes of all that did pretend,
To fierce contention gave a prosperous end.

Still as you rise, the state, exalted too,
Finds no distemper while 'tis changed by you;
Changed like the world's great scene! when, without noise,
The rising sun night's vulgar light destroys.

Had you, some ages past, this race of glory
Run, with amazement we should read your story;
But living virtue, all achievements past,
Meets envy still, to grapple with at last.
(pp. 15-16, ll. 129-148)

As in Marvell's "Horatian Ode," Waller pictures Cromwell as being called from his peaceful retired life to save the country. The Biblical and classical analogies naturally follow. First he alludes to David, called from the life of a shepherd to serve his country. In the last stanza quoted above Waller likely has in mind Cincinnatus. The story of his being called from the fields to save Rome was and still is a favorite among youngsters in primary school.

The classical analogy leads Waller to compare the contemporary political situation with first century B.C. Rome. It may at first seem odd that Waller notes the similarities between Caesar and Cromwell. Caesar was assassinated, and we assume that Waller did not want the same thing to happen to Cromwell. As a matter of fact, it is because the poet

wants to justify the Lord Protector's seizure of power--both from the king and from Parliament--that he makes the comparison. Rome was wracked by a series of civil wars after Caesar's assassination; Waller contends that the same thing would be in store for England if Cromwell were killed:

> This Caesar found; and that ungrateful age,
> With losing him fell back to blood and rage;
> Mistaken Brutus thought to break their yoke,
> But cut the bond of union with that stroke.
>
> That sun once set, a thousand meaner stars
> Gave a dim light to violence, and wars,
> To such a tempest as now threatens all,
> Did not your mighty arm prevent the fall.
>
> If Rome's great senate could not wield that sword,
> Which of the conquered world had made them lord,
> What hope had ours, while yet their power was new,
> To rule victorious armies, but by you?
> (p. 16, ll. 149-160)

It is hard to say whether Waller is referring to the dissolution of the Rump or Barebones, that brief experiment of Government by the saints. The Rump could hardly be considered new; its members had sat for thirteen years, though they did not have complete power over the country all that time. The Little Parliament, however, was so insignificant that it is surprising Waller would even mention it.

A few lines later, still maintaining the Roman parallel, the poet seems to cite the actual assumption of full control by Cromwell:

> As the vexed world, to find repose, at last
> Itself into Augustus' arms did cast;
> So England now does, with like toil oppressed,
> Her weary head upon your bosom rest.
> (p. 17, ll. 169-172)

It wasn't exactly by popular decree that Cromwell became

Lord Protector, or what we would call today, military dictator. News that he had dismissed the Rump was given a "mixed reception."[30] And hardly anyone noticed the ineffective Little Parliament was gone when he sent its members packing. Perhaps Englishmen who knew what was going on were relieved that the talking was over and the country could now settle down. This is obviously what Waller wants us to believe was the general reaction.

Professor Chernaik points out that the last four stanzas are a kind of summary of earlier themes. He notes that "To end his poem on a properly resounding note, Waller has to move from peace back to war, from the theme of order and serenity to the theme of glory."[31]

> Then let the Muses, with such notes as these,
> Instruct us what belongs unto our peace;
> Your battles they hereafter shall indite,
> And draw the image of our Mars in fight;
>
> Tell of towns stormed, of armies overrun,
> And mighty kingdoms by your conduct won;
> How, while you thundered, clouds of dust did choke
> Contending troops, and seas lay hid in smoke.
>
> Illustrious acts high raptures do infuse,
> And every conqueror creates a muse.
> Here, in low strains, your milder deeds we sing;
> But there, my lord; we'll bays and olive bring
>
> To crown your head; while you in triumph ride
> O 'er vanquished nations, and the sea beside;
> While all your neighbour-princes unto you,
> Like Joseph's sheaves, pay reverence and bow.
> (p.17, ll. 173-188)

[30] Ashley, Cromwell, p. 188.

[31] Chernaik, p. 167.

The contrast between the three poems on Cromwell is very interesting. All I think are good poems; they are successful in that they accomplish what their authors set out for them. Marvell's ode and Milton's sonnet have long been recognized as outstanding poems of the seventeenth century. But Waller's poem is also effective and has not received the attention and acclaim it should. Critics have seen "A Panegyric to My Lord Protector" as a forerunner to Augustan poetry. The carefully wrought lines, the well balanced couplets, and the tightly controlled quatrains prelude the coming poetic style. But it also stands on its own as a fine poem, and surely the best thing that Waller ever wrote.

Each poet also presents a different picture of Cromwell. Marvell was a constitutional monarchist, who saw Cromwell as a selfless man leading England into a new era of greater liberty and more prosperity. Marvell particularly praised Cromwell for his untyrannical qualities:

> Nor yet grown stiffer with Command
> But still in the Republick's Hand.
> (p. 89, ll. 81-82)

And the whole point of Marvell's extended falcon metaphor is to show that Cromwell is the servant of the people and not their master.

Milton was a republican. He believed Cromwell would end the religious and political oppression under which people suffered during Charles' reign. The intention of Milton's sonnet is to beseech Cromwell to remain true to his guiding

principles.

Waller was essentially a monarchist. He wrote in commemoration of Cromwell's "coronation." For him the Lord Protector was another king. Not a few times Waller addresses Cromwell as "your Highness" in the poem. Waller points out that under Cromwell England has become a major world power. The greatness of England was attributable to the greatness of Cromwell. Again and again Waller advises his readers to submit to the dominating power of the Lord Protector. But so far as Cromwell was concerned, consent of the people was unnecessary. After he was made Lord Protector, for five years England was ruled by as strong an autocracy as she had ever known.

During the remainder of the interregnum more interesting political poetry was written. But there was a shift of focus in the following years. The issues of the Civil War receded; poets were more concerned with either praising Cromwell or criticizing his administration. Once he had established himself as head of state, much of the controversy of the 1640's had been resolved, certainly not to everyones satisfaction; but it was resolved nevertheless.

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