1972

Perspectives in irony: a reconsideration of Marvell's An Horatian ode.

Eiluned Mary. Jenkins
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/3071

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.
PERSPECTIVES IN IRONY -
A RECONSIDERATION
OF
MARVELL'S 'AN HORATIAN ODE'

BY
EILUNED MARY JENKINS

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the
Department of English in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts at
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario
1972
ABSTRACT

Marvell's "An Horatian Ode" has yet to be looked at comprehensively as an organic poem where each frame of reference used by the poet, classical, historical and traditional, is seen to be a highly complex and ironic shifting of perspectives.

In Chapter I of this thesis, the background of the Civil War, which Marvell chose for his theme when he wrote his poem in 1650, is examined. Marvell's portraits of both Cromwell and Charles are very much influenced by contemporary views and pamphlets which were circulating at the time of the King's defeat, imprisonment and death. In the second part of Chapter I some of these views are related to Marvell's treatment of his protagonists, and the ironies which he must have known were implicit in such an epoch-making situation are pointed out.

Chapter II considers "An Horatian Ode" in relation to the classical tradition from which it sprang. Care is taken not to equate directly the views in the poem to the models of Lucan and Horace which Marvell almost certainly used. Once again, the ambiguities of such influences are seen to be at work.

The "Ode" has for some time been suspected of possessing many traditional and dramatic associations, and these aspects are examined in some depth in Chapter III which follows,
together with the very significant precedent of Shakespeare's Richard II. "An Horatian Ode" comes very close to duplicating ideas and themes explored by Shakespeare, and it shows a similar conflict to that exemplified in the history plays, the contest between might and the more traditional divine right.

The final chapter is an attempt to draw these frames of reference together, in order to show that Marvell's "An Horatian Ode" is an organic and amazingly complex poem, where patterns of irony are constantly shifting, yet where the background of a more stable plan of Providence remains irrefutably constant.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;An Horatian Ode&quot;</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Historical Background</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1642 to May 1650</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Public Opinion</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Classical Influences: An 'Horatian' Stance?</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Traditional Patterns</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval theology and the Bible</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic Precedents: A Shakespearean View</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. A Critical Analysis: 'An Horatian Ode' 'Atomised'</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Horatian Ode upon Cromwel's

Return from Ireland

The forward Youth that would appear
Must now forsake his Muses dear,
Nor in the Shadows sing
His Numbers languishing.
'Tis time to leave the Books in dust,
And oyl th'unused Armours rust;
Removing from the Wall
The Corslet of the Hall.
So restless Cromwel could not cease
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,
But through adventurous War
Urged his active Star.
And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
Breaking the Clouds where it was murst,
Did thorough his own Side
His fiery way divide.
For 'tis all one to Courage high
The Emulous or Enemy;
And with such to inclose
Is more than to oppose.
Then burning through the Air he went,
And Pallaces and Temples rent;
And Caesar's head at last
Did thorough his Laurels blast.
'Tis Madness to resist or blame
The force of angry Heavens flame;
And, if we would speak true
Much to the Man is due:
Who, from his private Gardens, where
He livy'd reserved and austers,
As if his highest plot
To plant the Bergamot,
Could by industrious Valour clime
To ruines the great Work of Time,
And cast the Kingdoms old
Into another Mold.
Though Justice against Fate complain,
And plead the antient Rights in vain;
But these 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.
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 subtle fears with hope,
He wove a Net of such a scope,
That Charles himself might chase
To Carebrooks narrow case:
That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragic Scaffold might adorn,
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.
He nothing common did, or mean,
Upon the memorable Scene;
But with his keener Eye
The Axz 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.
This was that memorable Hour
Which first assur'd the forced Pow'r.
So when they did design
The Capitles first Line,
A bleeding Head where they begun,
Did fright the Architects to run;
And yet in that the State
Foresaw its happy Fate.
And now the Irish are asham'd
To see themselves in one Year tam'd;
So much one Man can do,
That does both act and know.
They can affirm his Praises best,
And have, though overcome, confess
How good he is, how just;
And fit for highest Trust:
Nor yet grown stiffer with Command,
But still in the Republick's hand:
How fit he is to sway
That can so well obey.
He to the Commons Pest presents
A Kingdome, for his first years rents;
And, what he may, forbears
His Fame to make it theirs:
And has his Sword and Spoyls ungirt,
To lay them at the Publick's skirt.
So when the Falcon high
Falls heavy from the Sky,
She, having kill'd, no more does search,
But on the next green Bow to pearch;
Where, when he first does lure,
The Falckner has her sure.
What may not then our Isle presume
While Victory his Crest does plume;
What may not others fear,
If thus he crown each Year!
A Caesar he ere long to Gaul,
To Italy an Hannibal,
And to all States not free
Shall Clymacterick be.
The Pict no shelter now shall find
Within his party-colour'd Mind;
But from this Valour sad
Shrink underneath the Plaid:
Happy if in the tufted brake
The English Hunter him mistake,
Nor lay his Hounds in near
The Caledonian Bear.
But thou the Wars and Fortunes Son
March indefatigably on,
And for the last effect
Still keep thy Sword erect:
Besides the force it has to fright
The Spirits of the shady Night;
The same Arts that did gain
A Pow'r must it maintain.

All subsequent quotations from the poems of Andrew Marvell will be taken from the above edition.
INTRODUCTION

Upon the occasion of Marvell's tercentenary anniversary celebrations in Hull, for which borough he had been member of Parliament from 1659 until his death in 1678, T. S. Eliot was prompted to say:

'To bring the past back to life - the great, the perennial, task of criticism - is in this case to squeeze the drops of the essence of two or three poems.' 1

Since Eliot's essay, contemporary critics have come to believe that there are more than "two or three poems" 2 from which "to squeeze the drops" 3 of that precious essence of poetry. Yet "An Horatian Ode" has always been included among those "two or three" 4.

In 1861 Arnold sent the French critic Sainte-Beuve a copy of The Golden Treasury, and in a covering letter drew attention enthusiastically to 'An Horatian Ode'. 'Il a aussi déterré des vrais trésors qui restaient enfouis, et inconnus à presque tout le monde; remarquez surtout une Ode à Andrew Marvell à p. 50. Tout le monde l'ignoret, et cependant qu'elle est belle et forte, cette Ode!' 5

Nine years later, the American, James Russell Lowell


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

wrote an essay on Dryden, including in it these words on "An Horatian Ode", words which formed the basis for future misunderstandings of the poem:

"Marvell's 'Horatian Ode', the most truly classic in our language, is worthy of its theme. The same poet's 'Elegy' on Cromwell, in parts noble, and everywhere humanly tender, is worth more than all Carlyle's biography as a witness to the gentler qualities of the hero, and of the deep affection that stalwart nature could inspire in hearts of truly masculine temper."

6

Lowell here equates the sentiments of Marvell's "A Poem upon the Death of C. C." which were definitely laudatory, with those found in "An Horatian Ode". Lowell's opinion has caused critics ever since, to fight the battle to find out where Marvell's sympathies in "An Horatian Ode" lie. The claims that the poem is Royalist or Cromwellian, constitute a battle that never need have been fought, or as Marvell himself believed about the real Civil War which critics mirror in their writing:

The cause was too good to have fought for. 7

Strangely enough poets and critics before Lowell were not concerned with the supposed bias of "An Horatian Ode". Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge, reflecting the preoccupations of their age with revolution, believed that the poem sprang from a Republican point of view.


Possibly, readings of the poem from the Romantic era on through the Victorians, have implied that the poem reflected the ideals of those times.

The idea that "An Horatian Ode" reflects ideas and attitudes of the age in which it is currently being criticised, continued throughout the twentieth century, and culminated in the epic battle fought by Cleanth Brooks and Douglas Bush. Brooks is possibly the first reader of the poem who considers that it expresses a fundamentally Royalist viewpoint. In reply to Brooks's revolutionary opinions, Bush wrote his "Marvell's "Horatian Ode"", refuting the claim that the poem is pro-Charles, and stating far more categorically than ever before, that Marvell expresses in this poem, a totally Republican attitude, and that "An Horatian Ode" is exactly what it seems, an Ode for Cromwell.

The next serious consideration of Marvell's provocative poem was attempted by the French scholar, Pierre Legouis. In his book, Legouis claims that "An Horatian Ode" is characterised indeed, by a series of conflicting ironies, yet ultimately the poem's bias is Cromwellian.

The biographical evidence of Legouis was followed up in 1968, by John Wallace, who called his book on Marvell

---


Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell,
and claimed that Marvell's political bias was probably
moderate, and that "An Horatian Ode" was a rhetorical
expression of this opinion.

The critics who have dealt with Marvell's poem
have not underestimated the valuable study of "An Horatian
Ode" written by William Raymond Orwen. Orwen's thesis
claims that the poem is basically "a protest against
Caesarism," and this view is proved by Orwen through a
manipulation of Marvell's sources of Horace and Lucan.
Orwen's method of looking at the classics in order to
estimate Marvell's republicanism has motivated critics
like R. H. Syfret and John S. Coolidge to expand and
extend Orwen's findings. John S. Coolidge intelligently
relates "An Horatian Ode" to the Odes of Horace, whilst
considering the Horatian aspects of Marvell's poem as
being slightly distorted by the poet's use of Lucan.
Coolidge reaches the conclusion that "An Horatian Ode"
is probably a poem whose prime purpose is to demonstrate
an attitude of ironic Horatian detachment. R. H. Syfret
continues a consideration of the classical elements of
the poem, yet fails to reach any credible conclusions, as

11 John Wallace, Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism
of Andrew Marvell (Cambridge, 1966).

12 William Raymond Orwen, A Study of Marvell's
"Horatian Ode" (University of Syracuse, 1956).

13 Ibid., p. 36.

14 R. H. Syfret, "Marvell's 'Horatian Ode,'" in

she draws too literal and too specific a parallel between
Marvell and his Latin models.

Both Christopher Hill and Joseph A. Mazzeo have
attempted to draw parallels which are too narrow-minded.
Hill even goes so far as to suggest that Marvell was a
'marxist', and that "An Horatian Ode" exemplifies:

... the needs of the state ... as triumphing
over the private interests of the individual.

Mazzeo is preoccupied with proving that Cromwell is portrayed
by Marvell as both a Machiavellian prince, and a Davidic
king.

The idea that "An Horatian Ode" stands almost last
as an example in the long line of the English dramatic
tradition, was treated briefly by Patrick Cruttwell in
his very fine book The Shakespearean Moment. It is
this view of Cruttwell's, implying the broader vision
of a dramatic tradition still evident in Marvell's poem,
which shows the irrelevancy of previous arguments as to
where Marvell's sympathies lie.

The poem has not been looked at satisfactorily, as


17 Joseph A. Mazzeo, "Cromwell as Machiavellian
Prince," from Journal of the History of Ideas XXXI (Jan-March, 1960); and "Cromwell as Davidic King," from Reason and


19 Patrick Cruttwell, The Shakespearean Moment
a poem, and moreover, has hardly been considered as an organic and highly complex piece of writing, where the main tension and balance is achieved by a masterly construction of an ironic conflict. It is this irony, these levels or perspectives of irony, which create a poem similar in tone and theme to a play by Shakespeare.

I will attempt in this thesis to break down and analyse the different levels of meaning that Marvell is exploiting in "An Horatian Ode", with a view to finding the several conflicting layers of an irony which are, I believe, ultimately dramatic.

The poem itself, is thematically modelled on the specific events of Cromwell's rise to power, his conquests, and anticipated future conquests; and of course, the important central section of the poem deals with the execution of Charles I, on 30th January, 1649. Rumours, legends, strong religious and traditional convictions, rose to a pitch with this catastrophic event. Charles was considered by Royalists, almost hysterically, to have been a saint and martyr; in fact, he was seen by his supporters in the same way that he doggedly saw himself, as "the Martyr of the people".20 Parliamentarians, and those in power, on the other hand, were never so concerned as in the few months after the King's death, to brand him as a tyrant and exploiter of his people, who

had been justly struck down for his misdeeds by God's instrument of Justice, the English Parliament. It was to guard against the fear of another popular rising in sympathy with the dead King that Parliament enlisted the powerful support of the pen of John Milton. The times were those of acute crisis, and this crisis bred a fearful spate of rumours and legends around the emotive figure of the beheaded King Charles. Marvell, in "An Horatian Ode", manages, with great success, to convey this mood where rumour counteracts rumour, where the whole breakdown of an old and traditional order is seen against the background of a vaster plan for mankind. The possible echoes from Milton in Marvell's poem, will not be looked into in great depth; but the inferences which Marvell catches from the more popular pamphlets of Marchamont Nedham will surely prove the poet to possess an acute eye for irony; and, if we would point to any political opinion which he supports, it is surely that of a hater of the "party-colour'd Mind"; that mind which Nedham exemplifies in all its contemptibility.

---

21 Nedham changed sides many times during the Civil Wars, usually for his own gain. During the course of his career, he became spokesman for both sides, King and Parliament. In 1648, he wrote A Plead for the King & Kingdom, yet followed this up with a pamphlet, urging the nation in 1650, to take the Oath of Engagement to the Parliament, entitled The Case of the Common-Wealth of England Stated: Or the Equity, Utility, and Necessity, of a Submission to the present Government.
An examination of Marvell's "Ode" in the light of those written by Horace, will support the claim for Marvell's impartiality and detachment, his 'Horatian' stance. The echoes from Lucan will show that the ironic detachment of the initial Horatian position is carried still further. Studies of the "Ode" in the recent past, it seems to me, have made the mistake of attempting too eagerly to find in the poem "some Roman cast similitude" by which Marvell, himself, has nothing so final in mind at all. His use of a classical frame of reference is in the line of a long tradition, yet it adds an unique richnessto the poem. We cannot see "An Horatian Ode" simply as a panegyric to Cromwell as a conquering Caesar, or an extolling of the virtues of the brave Charles, in the role of the dying Pompey. There are strong and shifting characteristics of both Caesar and Pompey in each of Marvell's protagonists. In the central part of the poem, there are definite hints that Charles possesses some of the qualities of Cato, the hero of Lucan's The Civil War. It will be made clear, then, that Marvell does not force any kind of strict parallel with either Lucan or Horace, in his "Horatian Ode". He is more concerned to show the complexity of a situation, where the real danger is to become blinded by a prejudice for one side or the other.

As previously stated, Patrick Cruttwell has claimed that Marvell's poem is a true example of "the Shakespearean moment", demonstrating that the dramatic aspects of the "Ode" are indeed part of the long tradition of drama in England which still, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, caused poet and Parliamentary puritan alike, to see their Civil War in terms not unlike those which were anticipated by Shakespeare and Elizabethan writers half a century before. Yet these dramatic precedents have infinitely more profound a meaning, when one considers the traditionally medieval beliefs in a hierarchical society mirroring that divine hierarchy of Heaven. In this "Elizabethan World Picture", which was still a strong influence on seventeenth century thinking, the King was King by divine right. He assumed the role of God, or Christ on earth, and the word 'role' implies too, that the King was indeed a divinely inspired actor. Shakespeare himself, had explored this point in ironic depth in his play Richard II, and it would therefore not be surprising if Marvell, too, had seen the similarity between the two situations - Richard deposed in the fourteenth century, and Charles, tried and more drastically executed, by his subjects in the seventeenth.

It is for this reason, that Marvell chooses to point out the traditional "Rights" of a king, his birth into the role of "Royal Actor", and the Biblical and theological implications of the old hierarchical order which has been so bitterly toppled in the preceding decade. However, like Shakespeare, Marvell is not concerned with a moral judgement, on either Cromwell or Charles. His country has only recently been torn apart by just such violent judgements and prejudices. Instead, he would rather examine the many facets of each situation, of each main character, whilst setting them in a complicated framework, not unlike that of the earlier history play, and point out to the reader, the ironies inherent in such a conflict.

Many of the lines, many of the pictures, which Marvell presents to us, are highly condensed in the manner of the metaphysical 'conceit', and regard the subject in hand from a multitude of different perspectives. Charles's execution on the block at Whitehall is at once a 'vignette' of the "Tragick Scaffold" of the traditional stage, a re-enactment of Calvary, with the King as traditional substitute for God and Saviour, and an allusion to Cato's noble offer of self-sacrifice for the good of his country. In an attempt to catch this complexity, I will 'break down' the poem in Chapter IV, and try to examine it under a critical microscope.

I believe that my largest contention in this thesis
is that Marvell's poem is not dramatic or ironic merely to create a complex poem, or to attempt to recreate an Elizabethan usurper play, or a truly 'Horatian' ode; it is all of these, and more; but it seems to me, that Marvell's vision in "An Horatian Ode" will be seen to be comparable to that profoundly experienced in Shakespeare - the pattern of the recurring cycle of man's doings as seen against the infinitely more significant design of Providence, God, Nature and Fate.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

August 1642 to May 1650

It is generally accepted by scholars that Andrew Marvell wrote his "Horatian Ode" in 1650, some time after Oliver Cromwell’s return from Ireland in May, and before Cromwell’s campaign in Scotland in July of that year. For an understanding of the poem, it is useful to examine the way in which Marvell considers contemporary events and political opinions, in order to comment upon the last decade of civil war in England.

The causes which ultimately sparked off the clash between King and Parliament are not considered in "An Horatian Ode"; however Marvell does comment upon some specific events and incidents during the eight years of the Civil Wars. It will be helpful to look at some of the historical facts as they 'actually' occurred, and compare our conclusions to Marvell's particular way of looking at them.

The King raised his standard of war in Nottingham on August 22nd, 1642, and from that day onwards, recruitment of men, either to the King's side, or to that of Parliament, was on in earnest. The King appeared to come off far better in the first part of the war, as far as military victories were concerned. Joshua Sprigge, writing
his *Anglia Rediviva* in 1647, five years after the outbreak of hostilities, draws a bleak picture for the Parliamentary armies in the field in May 1645. Sprigge however, has chosen to omit the successes of the Earl of Essex, who, with the help of an obscure captain and the latter’s highly trained cavalry regiment, had cleared most of East Anglia for the Parliament.

It was the year 1645, which was to prove to be the turning of the tide against the King, for it was then that Parliament finally amalgamated its diffused armies into the powerful mobile force known collectively as the New Model Army, and commanded by the Lord General Fairfax. It was indeed true that Parliament had not been too successful in the earlier pitch-battles of Edgehill, Cheriton, the first battle of Newbury, or in the campaigns in the south and west; but if the battle of Marston Moor in July 1644 showed the King the limit of his victories, then the formation of the New Model Army was certainly the final push for Charles, to his ultimate disaster. In 1644, the Parliament was in control of London, the east, and most of the south and north, including all the essential supply ports to the Continent. The King was surviving

---

mainly by conserving his fast-dwindling supplies of men and ammunition, and basing his strategy on a series of guerrilla skirmishes, combined with brilliant tactical withdrawals from heavy engagements in a large battle, where his lighter cavalry would be no match for the solid weight of Captain Cromwell's well-armed and well-disciplined horse. Cromwell was indeed the man of the moment, and in 1645, was rapidly rising to a position of considerable influence, both in military and political matters. He had come to the notice of Sir Philip Warwick, a Royalist M. P., during the King's last Parliament, when he had fiercely defended 'free-born' John Lilburne who had been cast into prison for his 'marxist' advocations of freedom and equality for the commoners of England.

Cromwell was not of noble family, although he had lands in Huntingdonshire. He was a country squire, who had gone up to represent his county-town in Parliament, and who, in 1628, had risen to aid his constituents, the men of the East Anglian fens, in their protest against the enclosure of common land by the Earl of Bedford. The Earl of Clarendon, Edward Hyde, describes Cromwell in terms which might strike a chord of memory when we remember some of Marvell's lines in "An Horatian Ode":

... who, from a private and obscure birth ...  
("Who, from his private Gardens, where/ He liv'd reserved and austere,") ... (though of good family,) without interest or estate, alliance or friendship could raise himself to such a height and compound and knead ... ("Could by industrious Valour cliame/ To ruine the great Work of Time,"/
And cast the Kingdoms old/ Into another Mold")

... such opposite and contradictory tempers,
humours, and interests into a consistence, that
contributed to his designs, and to their own
destruction, whilst himself grew insensibly
powerful to cut off those by whom he had climbed,
in the instant that they projected to demolish
their own building... ("And like the three-
fork'd Lightning, first/ Breaking the Clouds
where it was nurst,;/ Did thorough his own Side/
His fiery way divide;/ For 'tis all one to Courage
high;/ The Emulous or Enemy;/ And with such to
inclose;/ Is more than to oppose.;/ Then burning
through the Air he went;/ And Pallace and Temples
rent;/")... yet wickedness as great as his could
never have accomplished those trophies, without
the assistance of a great spirit... ("And
therefore must make room;/ Where greater Spirits
come.");... and admirable circumspection and
sagacity, and a most magnanious resolution... When
he once resolved, in which he was not rash,
he would not be dissuaded from, nor endure any
contradiction of his power and authority; but
exorted obedience from them who were not willing
to yield it... He was not a man of blood, and
totally declined Machiavelli's method, which
prescribes, upon any alteration of government, as
a thing absolutely necessary, to cut off all the
heads of those, and extirpate their families, who
are friends to the old one... 2

The similarities between this, and Marvell's "Ode" might
suggest to us that these views of Cromwell were quite
common to the age.

At the outbreak of war, Cromwell had been under the
command of the Earl of Essex when the Army of the Eastern
Association was formed to mop up pockets of rebellion in
East Anglia, and to recruit men to the cause of Parliament.
Cromwell had formed the core of the Eastern Association
with his finely trained and well-equipped band of

2 Sir Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, History of the
Rebellion and Civil Wars (London, 1753, new edn. Oxford,
cavalrymen, all of whom burned with the zeal of the Lord.

Promotion soon followed for Cromwell. On January 22nd, 1644, he was appointed Lieutenant-General of the Army of the Eastern Association, thereby ousting his former commander, Essex, who was becoming suspicious of the justness of Parliament's cause. Cromwell, however, had no such doubts at all, and it was soon after he took command of the Association, that his troops saw their first major action at Marston Moor. Here that Royalists were outflanked and routed, and their force was cut by at least half. It was at this battle that the cavalry under the command of Cromwell, was dubbed 'Ironsides' by the defeated Prince Rupert of the Palatine. Marston Moor was a turning point in many respects. Morale in the King's army (never high), dwindled to such an extent that many men deserted to the Parliamentary troops, or ran home. Apart from the physical loss of men, munitions, and baggage-trains, the King also lost most of the land beyond the Trent.

Marston Moor not only marked the definite turning of the King's fortune against him, it also marked the next step on Cromwell's road to fame. Marvell notes this stage of Cromwell's rise after the battle of Marston Moor, in this way:

And like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
Breaking the Clouds where it was hurst,
Did thorough his own Side
His fiery way divide,
For 'tis all one to Courage high
The Emulous or Enemy;
And with such to inclose
Is more than to oppose.
In early 1645, Cromwell charged the Scots with having come to impose their hierarchical system of religion upon the English. This was true, since the taking of the Covenant had been the price that the Scots had demanded for the military aid which helped Parliament to victory in July, 1644. Cromwell's threat against the hierarchy of the Church of Scotland explains the way his mind was working. His attack on the Scots was a veiled threat against King, the nobility and the prelates of England. It was not long before Cromwell was accusing Lord Manchester, one of the Parliamentary generals, and an aristocrat, of treason. Manchester was one of the main leaders of the Presbyterian Church in England, and the drift of Cromwell's attack was not lost by the English nobility, or by the Scots. One by one, Cromwell proceeded to arraign the other generals for their alleged incompetence during the first part of the war. By clever manipulation of the Parliament, Cromwell relentlessly pushed his opinions through. Essex, Manchester and Waller, the old-time Parliamentary generals, were sent into retirement; and, the pliable, yet brave. Lord Fairfax was chosen to command the combined forces of the Parliament, now to be known as the New Model. Cromwell had made his point. He had caused the Scots, and those with Scottish or Presbyterian bias, to be liable to the charge of treachery against the 'egalitarian' principles of the 'democratic' Parliament. He had a well-respected, yet amenable, man in control of his beloved Army; and his fellow-politicians had
noted that he was as formidable in the Committee room as he was on the battle-field, and that whoever opposed him in either sphere would ultimately suffer ignominious defeat.

Whether or not Cromwell's ambitions at this point in time aspired consciously so high as to topple the "antient Rights" that belonged by divine sanction to the King, it is difficult to say. It could be argued that Cromwell's aims to rid the country of the old aristocratic and church hierarchy implied the toppling of the King, who stood traditionally at the head of this hierarchy. The fact that Parliament rejected time and again the King's pleas to treat for peace, which were now becoming more urgent since his defeat at Marston Moor, would demonstrate that the only article over which they were willing to negotiate would be the total surrender of monarchy, Anglican Church, and miscreant Royalists, by a puppet King. This Charles would never assent to. Treaties were no sooner instigated, than they were abandoned in deadlock. So, in the spring of 1645, the New Model Army took to the field for the first time, against the severely handicapped forces of the King. The battle of Naseby, fought in June 1645, utterly smashed the King, and subsequent action was confined to a widespread recapture of Royalist-held castles and towns for Parliament.

Fate now seemed to take an even more decisive turn against Charles. Counting upon the hostility of the Scots
against Parliament, after the latter's rejection and betrayal of the Covenant agreement, he fled to the Scots and attempted to persuade them to throw their weight on his side. The Scots demanded the enforcement of the Covenant by the King. The King would not agree to compromise his Church in this, but promised to think of concessions which he could make. Meanwhile, the "party-colour'd" Scots, receiving once more, attractive offers from the frightened Parliament, struck the bargain of Iscariot. The parallel with the betrayal of Christ did not go unnoticed in the Royalist ranks. The King was handed over to Parliament, who had 'bought' him for a large sum of money, and a pledge to enforce Presbyterianism. The King had this to say, in a book allegedly written by him, upon the subject of his Scottish betrayal:

"Yet may I justify thos. Scots to all the world in this, that they have not deceived me, for I never trusted to them further than to men; if I am sold by them I am only sorry that they should do it; and that my price should be so much above my Saviour's."

Once in the safe hands of the government, Charles was removed to Holmby House and kept a close prisoner. However, dissention and strife were growing within the ranks of the winning side. The Army, militant and zealous in their outlook, inspired by the intolerance of their religious beliefs, fell upon Holmby House, and held the King prisoner.

and hostage until their demands for a rigidly Independent Parliament were satisfied. Once Pride had purged the House of recalcitrant Presbyterians, or demi-Royalists, as they were called, in 1648, the King was committed to Hampton Court—once more safe in Parliament’s hands.

In 1647, a new political influence was making itself felt very strongly in the ranks of the Army which had now virtually become effective ruler in England. These were the Agitators, who demanded among other things, the complete destruction of King and monarchy. At the time that these revolutionary forces were making themselves felt in no uncertain terms, it was rumoured that Cromwell, to serve his own ends, and to avoid possible political embarrassment from the actions of the Army, whilst the King was in his hands, had allowed Charles to escape. This is intimated in "An Horatian Ode" in the following way:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{And Hampton shows what part} \\
&\text{He had of wiser Art:} \\
&\text{Where, twining subtle fears with hope,} \\
&\text{He wove a Net of such a scope,} \\
&\text{That Charles himself might chase} \\
&\text{To Caresbrooke narrow case.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Just as Marvell’s poem moves quickly on to its climax, so the events of 1648-9 moved with almost hypnotic speed on to their inevitable conclusion. The pressure of the Independents and Agitators became such, that the now almost wholly Independent Parliament impeached the King, on 1st January, 1649. The first draft of the impeachment was quickly accepted and passed on to the House of Lords. An
examination of the general drift of the impeachment shows us how Marvell manages to build up an ironic, yet poignant picture of the King, in his poem:

"The King was therein designated as Charles Stuart, at present King of England. He was first charged with the same crime for which Strafford had been condemned, namely with having sought to overthrow the ancient liberties and fundamental laws of the nation, and to introduce a tyrannical and arbitrary government." 4

Marvell must have been aware of the bitter irony of this impeachment. He portrays the "antient Rights" as being on the side of the King, and implies that it is Fate and War, the Parliament, and Cromwell in particular, which have caused this turn of events.

The second accusation levelled against the King was that he had brought war, bloodshed and rapine upon the people of England. Ironies and counter-ironies pervade Marvell's treatment of this situation in which the unfortunate King found himself; for ultimately, Marvell is neither supporting the old order nor extolling the virtues of the new. He is observing or commenting upon the conflict between each. It is Cromwell, hints Marvell, who delights in war, and who has perpetrated these crimes; it is Cromwell who is the creature of "adventurous War" and is "the Wars and Fortunes Son". This same ironic implication is present in the line in which Marvell seems to suggest a touch of

Cromwell's humanity:

And, if we would speak true,
Much to the Man is due:

The last line here might remind the reader that Charles was known as 'The Man Charles Stuart', and was commonly referred to by Parliamentarians as 'The Man of Blood'. The line may also carry Christian overtones, for we may remember Pilate's fatal words - "Ecce Homo". Clarendon's description of Cromwell himself as not being a "man of blood" strikes a chord of memory here. Cromwell's humanity, therefore, would seem to include an ironic view of Charles's alleged tyranny and bloodshed, and Marvell effectively juggles with these two ironies, placing the title of "the Man" here upon Cromwell, yet suggesting elsewhere that Charles is somehow more human.

Just before his trial, Charles was conveyed to Windsor Castle, where finally the reality of what was happening must have dawned upon him. He did not have long to wait for Parliament to summon him to justify his kingship in the eyes of the world. On January 20th, 1649, he was brought before a makeshift court assembled in Westminster Hall. The trial lasted a bare eight days, and was indeed a travesty of justice. Charles was rarely allowed to speak or defend himself, as he refused from the first to recognise the court. The tribunal, itself, was well aware that it had no legal authority to try anyone, let alone its King. It is Bradshaw, chief justice of this court, who makes remarks in his speech after the sentencing
of the King which Marvell takes up, and treats with his special brand of irony. C. V. Wedgwood reports Bradshaw's speech thus:

He went on to a rather far-fetched comparison of Charles to Caligula, and then proceeded to give examples of the manner in which kings both in ancient and more recent times, have been accounted answerable for their crimes. As for the alleged hereditary right of the sovereign, Bradshaw had no difficulty in pointing out that this had frequently been passed over both in Scotland and in England. There were also precedents for calling kings to account; Edward II and Richard II had been deposed for their misdeeds, though these did not 'come near to that heigt and capitalness of crimes that are laid to your charge.'

As we shall see later on, Marvell fuses the image of Charles, Christ and Richard II together into a composite image - that of king, martyr, actor and saviour of the people. It is also ironic to note that it is Bradshaw, representing the 'revolutionary' Parliament, who cites examples of "Justice" and "antient Rights".

The King had two days of life left him after he left Westminster Hall on January 27th, 1649. Outside Whitehall Palace a high scaffold was already being erected on which the people might watch the enactment of the death of their King. And on January 30th, Charles appeared to "adorn" that "Tragick Scaffold", both King, "Royal Actor", and Martyr. He made this latter fact quite clear in his final speech before his death:

'Sirs, it was for this that now I am come here.

---

If I would have given way to an arbitrary way, for to have all laws changed according to the power of the sword, I needed not to have come here. And therefore I tell you, and I pray God it be not laid to your charge, that I am the martyr of the people."  

This speech was probably not heard by many, for as Rosalie Colie tells us, the soldiers standing by, Marvell’s “armed Bands”, were ordered to “clap their bloody hands”, to drown the King’s last words. Charles’s chaplain, Bishop Juxon, subsequently read the lesson. Charles expressed surprise, and asked the Bishop if he had chosen the reading on purpose. Juxon replied that it was the lesson for the day. He was quoting Matthew, Chapter XXVII, which deals with the trial and death of Christ, and Charles could hardly have failed to make comparisons between his own sacrifice for his country, and Christ’s sacrifice for the world.

Just before the King bowed his head to the block, he saw a man brush up against the axe with his cloak. Sharply he cried, “Hurt not the axe that must hurt me”. It is maybe this ironic aspect of Charles as witty actor, even on his deathbed, that Marvell wants to convey, when he says:

But with his keener Eye  
The Axes edge did try.

---


Charles's speech on the scaffold contained the germ of the most violent discussions over the merits of the later government. As we shall see, opinions shifted strongly from those who believed implicitly that Charles was in fact a Christ-figure and a 'salvator mundi', to those who preferred to rationalise the government's power as residing in the justice and might of the sword. These shifts of opinion also underlie the texture and construction of Marvell's poem, where the "antient Rights" of the "Royal Acton" are played off against the erect sword of Cromwell's militaristic government.

The final third of Marvell's poem is based upon the political events of the year following the King's death. The immediate action of the Royalists, after the execution, was to proclaim the dead Charles Stuart's son, King Charles II. Parliament now had to cope with the rising tide of loyalty for the new King in Scotland, where he was conditionally proclaimed at Edinburgh on February 5th, 1649, and also with his sympathisers in England. In late February, Charles decided to take the proffered aid of the Irish Royalists, and sent Prince Rupert to Ireland, to recruit men and raise money and support for the dead King's cause. Definite preparations on the part of Parliament were now necessary in order to stem a possible Irish invasion of England under the new King. But mutinies and insurrections were now brewing within the Army itself. The men had not been paid, and some of their number had been severely
penalised for their parts in earlier agitation. An excise tax on imported goods was hastily levied to pay the Army their arrears, and on June 15th, 1649, Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, was named Lieutenant-General of Ireland, and Cromwell, himself, was formally appointed Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Ireland.

On August 13th of the same year, Cromwell finally patched up his financial difficulties and sailed for Ireland, to avenge the slaughter of Anglo-Irish Protestants by the native Irish Royalists and liberators under Ormond. His motives were ostensibly those of a second Gustavus Adolphus, the Swedish King, who, earlier on in the century had fought to stem the advancing tide of 'Papism' in Europe; but, in reality, Cromwell was far more concerned with the danger of the re-unification of the Royalist factions combined in an offensive from Ireland. Marvell trusts that Cromwell will be a resurrected Gustavus Adolphus, a new English champion for Protestantism, and a liberator of "all States not free". Ironically enough, Charles I, himself, had, at his accession, been expected to throw down Papist Spain, and re-conquer Europe for the Protestants. Marvell's imagery of Cromwell as the "Falcon" who will hunt catholic prey, echoes a poem by Phineas Fletcher, anticipating Charles's own Protestant conquests:

Here, noble Charles enter thy chivalric;

The Eagle scorns at lesser game to flie;
Onely this warres a match worthy thy Realmes and Thee. 9

The campaign in Ireland was not a difficult one for
Cromwell, but it was certainly one of the bloodiest. His
first offensive was Drogheda, a supply garrison in the
hands of the Marquise of Ormond. After a brave and strong
resistance, the town was breached, and all the 'Papists',
both soldiers and civilians, were ordered to be put to the
sword. At least Cromwell felt the necessity, on this
occasion, of justifying his slaughter, for he wrote to
Lenthall, the speaker of the House of Commons:

I am persuaded, that this is a righteous judgement
of God upon these barbarous wretches who have
imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood,
and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of
blood for the future, which are satisfactory
grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot
but work remorse and regret." 10

On October 8th, Wexford followed the way of Drogheda, and
then Kilkenny, and on May 10th, 1650, Clornell, after stout
resistance, fell to Cromwell's army. Cromwell, himself,
however, could not consolidate his victories, for on
May 26th, answering a summons from Parliament, he sailed
back to England, leaving Ireton and the rest of the army
behind to subdue any pockets of resistance that might still
be left.

9 Cited by G. V. Wedgwood, Poetry and Politics under

10 Thomas Carlyle, Letters ov. Cromwell to Lenthall,
Sept. 17th, 1649. Cited by S. R. Gardiner, History of the
Commonwealth and Protectorate Vol. I
Marvell in "An Horatian Ode", sees Cromwell both as a liberator in the style of Gustavus Adolphus, (an ironic view, maybe, when we think back to Protestant hopes for Charles I at his accession), and as a conqueror much in the style of Hannibal and Caesar, who, posing as liberators, were nothing short of bloody dictators. Marvell makes the beaten Irish 'confess': "How good he [Cromwell] is, how just, / And fit for highest Trust ". Yet from the Irish viewpoint, this confession surely constitutes a heavy irony. But for England and for the Parliament, Cromwell's victory over the Irish and his submissive and affable behaviour upon his return was the proof that he was indeed "fit for highest Trust", for he was "still in the Republik's hand", an obedient and useful servant, a rejuvenated Gustavus, to fly like a hunting-falcon against the perverters of God's word. Yet despite general trust in Cromwell's submissiveness in May 1650, there were those who suspected that he was considerably more ambitious, and was aiming for nothing less than the Crown itself.

Parliament next suggested that Cromwell should lead the New Model with Fairfax against the Scots who were supporting Charles II. Things were, however, not so easy as Parliament had anticipated, for Fairfax, who was politically a moderate, refused to take on the commission, on the grounds that the Scots had committed no aggressive act against England. The English Parliament, and Cromwell in particular, were more concerned about a recent uprising in
Scotland by Montrose and the Royalists to be able to spend much time urging Fairfax not to resign his position. They were also hastened to their decision that Cromwell, himself, should head the invasion, by the fact that Charles II had been treating with the Scottish commissioners both at Breda in March 1650, and then in late June, when he landed in Scotland to help organise the invasion of England.

The resignation of Fairfax led moderates in England, and the Levellers, to accuse Cromwell once again of political maneuvering for supreme control of both Army and Parliament. Despite these ugly rumours, Cromwell was forced to march. On June 28th, 1650, he and his army set out for the north, and on July 22nd, he entered Scotland.

Some time between May and July 1650, Marvell wrote his "Horatian Ode", reviewing ironically the recent events of Cromwell's career, his rise to fame, his victory against the Irish and his anticipated conquest of Scotland. It seems likely that Marvell joined the household of the ex-Lord General Fairfax, now in retirement at Nun Appleton House in Yorkshire, in April or May 1650, although the precise month is still a matter of conjecture. The poet was to tutor Lord Fairfax's daughter, Maria, and it seems unlikely that Fairfax, who was himself an Independent, but whose wife was a Presbyterian and an ardent hater of Cromwell, would tolerate either a staunch supporter of the King, or a professed admirer of the Parliament from which he himself had only recently resigned in complete
disillusionment.

... As we examine the references to public opinion of the time, which are certainly found in "An Horatian Ode", we will come to see that political extremism is exactly what Marvell is condemning as dangerous both to his country and to his countrymen. A reasonable view in such troubled times was one which included all aspects of the situation, and this is, in fact, what produces the fundamental ironies in Marvell's poem.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Contemporary Public Opinion

Warfare from 1642 to the end of the Civil Wars had not been confined merely to the two opposing armies' tactics in the field. Pamphleteers and ballad-writers had also taken sides. Matthew Parker, one of the most notable and notorious ballad-writers, turned out 'scurrilous' pro-Royalist songs at a phenomenal rate, and until Parliament imposed censorship laws, and later the even severer penalties of fine and imprisonment for infringement of these laws, he was read widely, and copies of his songs were circulated freely throughout London during 1642 and 1643.

Marvell does not seem to have been particularly impressed with these rather crude protestations of sympathy for the King and there are certainly no echoes of these ballads in his "Horatian Ode". Indeed we have no reason to suppose that he should have taken notice of the popular press, as most of the Broadside ballads and Royalist pamphlets which were circulating at the time were hardly serious or intelligent comments on the inadequacies of Cromwell and his government, but relied for their effect mainly upon malicious remarks about Cromwell's nose

Now Oliuer must be he,
Now Oliuer must be he,
for Ollieus nose
is the Lancaster rose,
And thence comes his soverainety. 11
and upon his fifteenth-century connections with the
family brewery firm in Putney:

Sing old Noll the Brewer, sing old Noll the Brewer,
With his Copper-face, and ruby nose, now is routed
sure:
Let Cromwels nose still reign, let Cromwels nose
still reign,
'Tis no disgrace to his Copper-face, to Brew strong
Ale again. 12

Their Royalist sentiments were severely limited to
recreations of a time when Good King Charles reigned, lace
and feathers were not forbidden, and cavaliers were loyal,
swash-buckling and debonaire.

However, more studied attempts were made to slander
Cromwell, and Marvell might have incorporated an opinion
expressed in a pamphlet written by Royalist Clement Walker
into his poem "An Horatian Ode": Clement Walker writes:

"Oliver is a bird of Prey, you may know by his
Bloody Beak 13
and Marvell presents us with an image of Cromwell as just
such a "bird of Prey":

So when the Falcon high
Falls heavy from the sky,
She, having kill'd, no more does search,

Clement Walker was later imprisoned for his subversive
writings.

11 "O Brave Oliver"(December, 1648) from Cavalier and
12 "A Hymne to Cromwel"(October,1649). Cf. Rollins,
p. 288.
Cited by John Wallace, "Marvell's 'Horatian Ode'," PHIL,
Bulletins and newspapers were also circulated during the first part of the war, and were quickly siezed upon by people eager for news. Most of these papers were pro-Royalist, and the most popular of them were those edited by the phantom writer, Mercurius, who went under many names - "Mercurius Politicus", "Mercurius Elenoticus", "Mercurius Pragmaticus", "The Man in the Moon", and others. These papers were attributed by rumour to Matthew Parker and Marchamont Nedham, and were printed on presses which could easily be transported to a place of safety when the officers of Parliament threatened to track them down.

Most of Parliament's propaganda was conveyed to the public from the pulpit, in the form of a sermon or homily. The pamphlets and papers which they did circulate, were austere and moralistic in tone, and did not appeal to the general public, who were still familiar with the gaiety, wit and splendour of the late Court, and paid little attention to the grim fanaticism of the Puritan ethic. Most of Parliament's efforts therefore went into the censoring and denouncing of the attacks in the Royalist pamphlets, together with more active attempts to catch up with, and imprison, writers still at large, and proclaiming the King's cause.

There were, however, those who like Marvell, paid little attention to popular views and viewed the situation with a relatively detached eye. Such detachment, however, was
a luxury, for most people found themselves forced into taking the side of one party or the other. The true tragedy of the war was that sincere and well-meaning men were forced back, like the ill-fated Lord Falkland, to traditional loyalties, whilst others found their hands lifted against their friends on the side of the Parliamentary revolution. Sir William Waller, a Parliamentary general, realised exactly this point when he wrote to Sir Ralph Hopton, general for the King, and whom he was to beat later at the battle of Lansdowne:

"The great God who is the searcher of my heart knows with what reluctance I go upon this service and with what perfect hatred I look upon a war without an Enemy. The God of Peace in his good time send us peace, and in the meantime fit us to receive it. We are both on the stage, and we must act the parts that are assigned to us in this tragedy." 14

and Marvell himself, as late as 1673, still believed that "the cause was too good to have fought for" 15, and that "The King himself, being of so accurate and piercing a judgement, would soon have felt where it stuck." 16

Many of the writers of the day, for example Thomas Hobbes, found themselves in 1642 supporting the King, and later in 1648, the Parliament. Their justification, in all sincerity, was that the well-being of the people depended upon their obedience to the powers that be. Marvell's


16 Ibid., p. 212-3.
hatred of "party-colour'd" turncoats such as Tom May, Marchamont Nedham and Edmund Waller, as demonstrated in his *The Rehearsal Transpos'd*, must be due in part at least, to the struggle he experienced in his own heart. Before the war he had had friends at Court, such as Sir Richard Fanshawe and Sir Richard Lovelace, yet he saw men he honoured - Milton and Sir Thomas Fairfax, arrayed in force against them. His later association with Fairfax, a man whose honour was never in doubt by either side, yet who was moderate in his aims and retired bitterly from the conflict, when he saw to what extremities Parliament's ambitions were carrying the country, may itself be indicative of Marvell's own political views. His hatred of a biased opinion is present in "An Horatian Ode", where he is always careful to portray a many-sided vision of any one event or character.

The metaphor of the stage and the tragedy, as used by Sir William Waller, was an apt one for more than one reason, and will be discussed in depth in Chapter III. C. V. Wedgwood, in *The Trial of Charles I* cites an incident which demonstrates public opinion on the subject of the enforcement of the closure of the theatres, and Marvell may well have been aware of this event, as he does incorporate a theatrical metaphor in his poem. Wedgwood demonstrates that people did not take kindly to the closing of the theatres, for by the New Year, 1648, four of the old theatres were open. These theatres were raided by
Parliamentary troops:

'But at Salisbury Court they found a play in full swing, interrupted the performance and carried the players prisoners to their headquarters at Whitehall in their theatrical finery. It was not an ill-natured business; all down the Strand people cheered the actors, the soldiers allowed them to respond and even to perform a sort of spontaneous pantomime as they went along. One of them was in crown and robes, and his attendants alternately discrowned and re-crowned him with appropriate gestures, eliciting groans, jeers, laughter and applause from the crowd.' 17

In this macabre little scene, it is surely significant and ominous that the destination of the crowned and uncrowned actor was Whitehall, where a year later, King Charles would lose not only his crown but his head.

The general public in London, whilst agreeing with the principles of Parliament, were confused and wavering when it became clear that Parliament's intentions were to arraign the King and charge their monarch with high treason and anarchy. Official and semi-official statements from Parliament in 1648 and 1649, were now very necessary.

The statement from the Army, in the person of General Edmund Ludlow, was clear, concise, and fired with divine zeal. He considered that

... an accommodation with the King was both politically unsafe and contrary to the will of God because it was written in the Book of Numbers that 'the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein but by the blood of him that shed it.' 18


Marvell is to take up this theme of Charles as the scapegoat and sacrifice in his poem, but his viewpoint will be subtly different from that expressed so violently by Ludlow. An ecclesiastical Puritan opinion was expressed by John Goodwin, the popular minister of Coleman Street, who

Taking up the title of an angry Presbyterian manifesto called 'Might Overcoming Right' he called his pamphlet 'Right and Might Well Meet'.
In it he argued the necessity that the King must perish in the interests of the nation whom he had deluded and betrayed, . . . . 19

It was not, however, until the eve of the King's execution in January 1649, that Parliament felt the necessity for justifying the legality of their sentence to the people through the writing of John Milton, their official propagandist. In his pamphlet *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, published in 1649, Milton summarises the arguments of Bradshaw and the Court, but manages to achieve a power of reasoning and logic which Bradshaw could never convey when faced with the calm and unruffled Charles in Westminster Hall. It is from Milton's pamphlet that Marvell may remember a reference to Richard II, and other precedents of divine right flouted by revolutions. As an answer to the King's charge that there was no historical precedent for the English Parliament bringing their king to trial, Milton cites the deposition of Richard II as an example of

exactly this:

"When doubtless our Ancestors who were not ignorant with what rights either Nature or ancient Constitution had endowed them, kings when Oaths both at Coronation, and renew'd in Parliament, would not serve, thought it no way illegal to depose and put to death their tyrannous Kings. Inasmuch that the Parliament drew up a charge against Richard the second, and the Commons requested to have judgement decreed against him, that the realms might not bee endangered." 20

The words which Milton uses here - "rights", "Nature" and "ancient constitutions" - remind the reader of the words which Marvell uses in his poem - "antient Rights", "Nature" and "Fate" - and Marvell's "An Horatian Ode" mirrors the conflict between might and right which Milton is trying to weight on the side of Parliament's 'might'. Marvell's poem can, however, in no way be said to be didactic in the way that Milton's propaganda is didactic. Marvell is far more concerned to reveal ambiguities and ironies in this clash between "antient Rights" and "Fate".

In Chapter III, we will see that Marvell links Charles with Shakespeare's dramatic presentation of the tragedy of Richard II, also a dramatisation of the battle between traditional hierarchy and the force of a violent but energetic usurper; and both Milton's and Bradshaw's arguments, and Charles's protestations that the weight of tradition supported his claims, appear to show that the age

was well aware of the necessity of justifying their actions by historical precedents.

The arguments that King Charles himself used to redeem his past actions, and to justify himself for the war into which he had unwillingly been drawn, show him using Parliament's own justifications for his trial against them. Through his speech on the scaffold, and through the very popular Eikon Basilike, a book allegedly written by him whilst in the custody of Parliament, he drew much sympathy to himself and his cause, and helped to cultivate his image as martyred saint, for he compared his sacrifice for his people, to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Parliament had argued that he should die as a scapegoat, and as a punishment for his sins, but Charles assumed the role of an innocent Christ, a King dying that his country might be redeemed from its sins. Charles raised a far greater following by his acquiescence to his fate and his willingness to die 'for his people', than he would have, if he had "given way to an arbitrary way for to have all laws changed according to the power of the sword."21 Juxon's choice of the Passion according to St. Matthew, as the reading at the execution, whether conscious or unconscious, also hinted at the parallel between Charles and Christ.

But even Marchmont Nedham, one of the most notorious turn-coats of the Civil Wars, could, when his loyalties were directed towards the King, write a pamphlet called A Plea

---

for the King & Kingdom in which he too argued indignantly for the King, using parallels from the Bible and from history to make his case:

... yet in no History can we find a parallel for this, that ever the rage of Rebels extended so far to bring their Sovereign lord to public trial and execution, it being contrary to the law of Nature, and the custom of Nations, and the Sacred Scriptures. What Court shall their King be tried in? Who shall be his peers? Who shall give sentence? What eyes dare be so impious to behold the execution? What arm be stretched out to give the stroke against the Lord's Anointed...? 22

Parliament, once more sensing that popular opinion was swaying dangerously against them in favour of the King, commissioned Milton to write a pamphlet refuting and ridiculing Eikon Basilike. On October 6th, 1649, his Eikonoklasstas appeared. It was modelled satirically after the book allegedly written by the King, but showed under each heading that Charles was despicable rather than admirable, a fool and a buffoon rather than a saint.

Milton's sharp satire did not win many adherents. The touching picture of Charles in misery had gone to the hearts of thousands, and the negative criticism which Milton indulged in did very little to alter their sympathies.

Marvell picks up hints of these contemporary ideas, and incorporates them into "An Horatian Ode". Charles's execution is described in ways which are strongly reminiscent

---

of Christ's death on the Cross. Christ's meekness at the "memorable Hour" of his death is compared to Charles's bowing "his comely Head/ Down, as upon a Bed." The "armed Bands" who "olap their bloody hands" suggest overtones of the soldiers standing on Calvary, and hint also at the binding of Christ's arms with bonds. "Bloody hands" points an accusing finger at the people of England, who like the Jews, in front of whom Pilate washed his hands of the blood of Christ, cried "His blood be upon us and our children!" Royalists, shocked and leaderless, were quick to respond to the image of Charles as Christ. "A Handkerchief for Loyale Mourners", available as early as February 2nd, 1649, three days after the execution, was printed unlicensed and without the name of author or printer. The pamphlet was subtitled 'A Cordiall for drooping Spirits" and it frankly compared the King's 'martyrdom' to the Crucifixion.

Parliamentarians were equally quick to spring on another of the points raised by the King, that he could have changed the laws of the country by force, instead of relying upon the strength of tradition to sustain and uphold them. This was indeed a question being asked as early as 1648, when the pamphlet 'Might Overcoming Right' was issued and refuted by John Goodwin. Goodwin's argument had been that right and might were well met, and that the justification for Parliament's power resided in their swords which were used effectively in the service of God. However, Parliament sensing that the public were less convinced of this than
ever, after the bloody execution of January 1649, issued an order in February 1650, that every male in England should take the Oath of Engagement, by which he would profess his loyalty to the Commonwealth. Many people were indeed calling Cromwell's government 'the sword government', and were denying their own reasons for supporting it during the war which was supposed to restore them to their rightful liberties. They were now accusing their liberators of usurping the very power which the King had professed to refuse to utilise against his people.

Marchamont Nedham, in 1650 turned staunch Parliamentarian, became the spokesman for his new party. In his pamphlet The Case of the Commonwealth of England Stated, he urged the people to take the Engagement Oath, with these encouragements:

'That the Power of the Sword Is, and Ever Hath Been, The Foundation of All Titles to Government.'

Marvell was probably aware of this statement and of the King's when he portrayed Cromwell, the creature of the Parliament, unbuckling his "Sword and Spoyls" "To lay them at the Publick's skirt." We may notice too, that at the end of "An Horatian Ode", Cromwell, who gained his power by force, is warned that he will have to keep his "Sword erect" in order to maintain his authority.

Furthermore Nedham, eager to cite historical analogies,

demonstrates the necessities for revolutions and changes of government. Marvell in the structure of his poem "An Horatian Ode", strongly suggests a cyclical pattern in government. Cromwell will have to be wary, warns the poet, if he is going to guard against other "forward Youth[s]" who might usurp his power, as he has usurped that of Charles.

One historical example which Nedham quotes, is that of the Biblical tyrant, Nimrod, as an instigator of

"a new and arbitrary way of government . . . by a power seated in his sword . . . and therefore called a mighty hunter."

Nedham's words unluckily echo those of King Charles, whilst also refuting his own words in his earlier pamphlet in defence of the King, yet he seems unaware of the irony of this. Marvell, too, chooses Nedham's example of Nimrod, to show Cromwell, in his might, as "The English Hunter", the English tyrant, and Nimrod.

If Marvell did in fact read Nedham's pamphlet, which seems very likely, then he must have read it quite closely, for the most striking parallel in Marvell's poem is a strong echo of Nedham's justification of Cromwell's maintaining of power by force. Nedham quotes from Seneca's drama Hercules Furens:

"quod civibus tenere te invitas scias,\nstrictus tustur ensis" 25

("What thou knowest thou holdest against the citizens will, the unsheathed sword must maintain") 26


These are Marvell's lines which conclude "An Horatian Ode":

And for the last effect
Still keep thy Sword erect:

The same Art; that did gain
A Pow'r must it maintain.

It is surely significant that both Nedham and Milton quote passages from *Hercules Furens*, a classical Latin play, and Marvell's words "for the last effect" surely refer back to the stage setting which the two propagandists have used to justify their arguments. The lines also suggest that Cromwell may well be a tyrant as well as a liberator of his country. If Marvell seems to be justifying power, he also may be suggesting that Cromwell holds power against the will of the people, in the same way that Cromwell and his court accused Charles of being a bloody tyrant and an oppressor of his people.

In my reading of the poem, I hope to show that Marvell is eager to put forward views of the situation which echo aspects of public opinion, ironically, and yet go far beyond these echoes in depth and perspicacity. The poet is perhaps concerned to show that it is opinions and factions, however, which cause dissention and bloodshed; therefore he, himself passes no moral judgments, aligns himself with neither one side or the other, but exploits contemporary events and considerations in an attempt to show the ironic implications behind the situation. His method is not didactic, it is not propagandist, it is an attempt to enlighten.
CHAPTER II

CLASSICAL INFLUENCES: AN "HORATIAN" STANCE?

The basic difficulty in examining the classical models which Marvell used in constructing his poem "An Horatian Ode" appears to be that of bringing together the attitudes of two vastly different writers, Lucan and Horace. Much has been written upon Marvell's supposed bias towards the one or the other. Echoes from both Horace's Odes, and Lucan's The Civil War are present in the words, and in the tone which Marvell uses in his poem, and will be discussed at greater length later. First, however, it is important to decide whether Marvell is in fact using Lucan's Caesar to portray Cromwell, Horace's Cleopatra from Ode I. 37, to describe Charles; in short, whether he is espousing the attitudes of these two Roman poets towards their leaders, to portray his own. R. H. Syfret, in a very fine and balanced article, suggests tentatively that

"If Marvell so consistently draws Cromwell as Lucan had drawn Caesar, . . . might not Marvell's attitude to Cromwell perhaps have been the same as Lucan's to Caesar?"[1]

This, of course assumes that because Marvell has echoed lines from Lucan or Horace, he has, of necessity, adopted their positions in order more forcefully to emphasise

parallels between the contemporary situation he found himself in, and the times upon which Lucan and Horace comment. The danger of such an inflexible and obvious parallel between these two situations is pointed out by Marvell himself, in his poem "Tom May's Death", ascribed by critics to late 1650, a few months after the writing of "An Horatian Ode":

Polydore, Lucan, Allen, Vendale, Goth, Malignant Poet and Historian both, Go seek the novice Statesman, and obtrude On them some Roman cast similitude, Till Shakespeare's Liberty, the Stories fine, Untill you all grow Consuls in your wine. Or thou Dictator of the glass bestow On him the Gato, this the Cicero. Transferring old Rome hither in your talk, As Bethlem's House did to Loretto walk. Foul Architect that hast not Eye to see How ill the measures of these States agree. And who by Rome's example England lay Those but to Lucan do continue May.

George de F. Lord has this to say about this poem, and about Tom May himself:

*Tom May's Death*; May (1595-1650) translated Lucan’s Pharsalia (1627) and published a continuation in Latin and English, which carried the story down to the death of Caesar. Despite many favors from Charles I, May went over to the Parliamentary side in the Civil Wars, perhaps out of disappointment at not receiving the laureateship. 2

It is likely that it is May’s attempts at seeing close parallels between the Civil Wars of the 1640’s, and those

---

2 Note by George de F. Lord, ed., *Andrew Marvell: Complete Poetry* (New York, 1968), p. 263. de F. Lord places "Tom May's Death" among the poems of doubtful authorship, and conjectures that this poem was probably written in November 1650.
which sundered the Roman State which Marvell is crying out against in "Tom Has My Death", and he would surely not have fallen into the same trap himself.

I do not think that exact parallels are implied at all in the echoes of classical works which pervade "An Horatian Ode"; however, there are certain similarities between Augustan Rome and England in 1650 of which Marvell is certainly aware. It is the inclusion of these hints and similarities which Marvell uses that help to throw the ironies of England's Civil Wars into high relief, and to weight the contemporary situation with the full significance of man's history.

Marvell's Cromwell is a man of forceful energy, a conqueror against whom all opposition will fall. In "An Horatian Ode" Marvell has made use of Lucan's presentation of Caesar. Lucan's Caesar, having crossed the Rubicon, makes his first objective the conquest of Ariminum. Caesar has returned from his foreign conquests in the service of Rome, only to turn against his own country and aim for complete dictatorship. It is plain that Lucan wishes to show Caesar as the first offender; and is there a suggestion in Marvell's poem that Cromwell has returned from his conquest of Ireland only to emulate Caesar in aspiring for supreme power? The Latin poet describes his hero in this way:

When Caesar had crossed the stream and reached the Italian bank on the further side, he halted on the forbidden territory: 'Here,' he cried, 'here I leave peace behind me and legality which has been
scorned already; henceforth I will follow Fortune. Hereafter let me hear no more of agreements. In them I have put my trust long enough; now I must seek the arbitrament of war.' Thus spoke the leader and quickly urged his army on through the darkness of night. Faster he goes than the bullet whirled from the Balearic sling, or the arrow which the Parthian shoots over his shoulder. Ariminum was the nearest town... The inhabitants were roused from sleep. Starting from their beds, the men snatched down the arms that hung beside the household gods - such arms as the long peace supplied; they lay hold on shields that are falling to pieces with framework exposed, javelins with their points bent, and swords roughened by the bite of black rust.

Lucan's violent bias against Caesar is not emulated in Marvell's picture of Cromwell, yet the offensive at Ariminum could be aptly compared to the first lines of Marvell's poem:

The forward Youth that would appear
Must now forsake his Muse dear,
Nor in the Shadows sing
His Numbers languishing.
'Tis time to leave the Books in dust,
And oyl th'unused Armours rust:
Removing from the Wall
The Corslet of the Hall.

and Cromwell is indeed shown in "An Horatian Ode" as abandoning 'peace' and 'legality', and claiming for himself the title of the "Wars and Fortunes Son". Moreover he is described in terms of a violent, forward-pushing force. Thus Marvell's description of Cromwell compares in tone quite aptly to Lucan's picture of Caesar. Allusions, however, are so confusing and conflicting in the poem, that it is no wonder that R. H. Syfret says with some

---

exasperation:

Unfortunately for straightforward interpretation, there are other parallels between the 'Horatian Ode' and Lucan's epic. 4

Indeed, these other parallels are in evidence. Just as Marvell has integrated tones of Lucan's Caesar into his portrayal of Cromwell, he also transforms his general into Lucan's hero of the piece, Pompey. R. H. Syfret cites the praise given to Pompey by Lucan in May's translation of Pharsalia:

... one powerfull growne
Not wronging liberty; the people prone
To serve, he only private still remain'd;
He sway'd the Senate, but the Senate reign'd.
Nought claim'd he by the Sword, but wish'd what he
Wish'd most, the Senates freedome to deny;
Great wealth he had, but to the publicke hoord
He brought far more than he retain'd; the sword
He tooke, but knew the time to lay it down;
Arm'd he lov'd peace, though armes before the growne
He still preferr'd; and ever pleas'd was he
Entring, or leaving his authority. 5

and compares it to lines written in "An Horatian Ode" which seem to echo Lucan:

Not yet grown stiffer with Command,
But still in the Republicke's hand
How fit he is to sway
That can so well obey.
He to the Commons Feet presents
A Kingdome, for his first years rents:
And, what he may, forbears
His fame to make it theirs;
And has his Sword and Spoyle ungirt,
To lay them at the Publick's skirt.


5 Cited by Syfret, ibid., p. 167.
A contradiction to this statement of Cromwell-Pompey's obedience and docility can be traced in Marvell's poem to Lucan's description of Caesar as a mighty natural force which it is impossible to gainsay:

But Caesar had more than a mere name and military reputation; his energy could never rest, and his one disgrace was to conquer without war. He was alert and headstrong; his arms answered every summons of ambition or resentment; he never shrank from using his sword lightly; he followed up each success and snatched at the favour of Fortune, overthrowing every obstacle on his path to supreme power, and rejoicing to clear the way before him by destruction. Even so the lightning is driven forth by wind through the clouds; with noise of the smitten heaven and crashing of the firmament it flashes out and cracks the daylight sky, striking fear and terror into mankind and dazzling the eye with slanting flame. It rushes to its appointed quarter of the sky; nor can any solid matter forbid its free course, but both falling and returning it spreads destruction far and wide and gathers again its scattered fires.

Marvell describes his 'Caesar' thus:

So restless Cromwel could not cease
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,
But through adventrous War
Urged his active Star;
And, like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
Breaking the Clouds where it was hurst,
Did thorough his own Side
His fiery way divide.

For 'tis all one to Courage high
The Emulous or Enemy;
And with such to inclose
Is more than to oppose.
Then burning through the Air he went,
And Pallaces and Temples rent;
And Caesar's head at last
Did thorough his Laurels blast.

Marvell seems to imply that it is impossible to see Cromwell simply as a resurrected Pompey, since there are elements

of the forceful Caesar in his nature too. We are discour-aged from seeing, as Thomas May has seen, "some Roman cast similitude", but it is implied by the use of less specific comparisons, that history repeats itself in some consistent kind of pattern. A too literal parallel between the Roman and English state of affairs dismisses many other historical patterns, thus creating an attitude in the reader which will be too simplistic and parochial, and the wider and more far-reaching aspects of this situation will be ignored. Marvell emphasises the universal pattern of his contemporary situation with its full relevance in time.

Just as Cromwell is laid open both for blame and for praise, Charles I, too, is seen to be a more complex personality than mere literal comparison would suggest. Charles is not only comparable to Lucan's Pompey, but I notice that echoes of Cato are present also. Even Lucan, the glorifier of Pompey Magnus, seemed to have realised that there was a complacency in Pompey's character which ultimately liberated the vital energies of Caesar. He is described as:

... somewhat tamed by declining years; for long he had worn the toga and forgotten in peace the leaders past; courting reputation and lavish to the common people, he was swayed by the breath of popularity and delighted in the applause that hailed him in the theatres he had built. 8


It is Charles's lack of authority, his congenital weakness, also, which has allowed Cromwell's star to rise to pre-eminence, but the theatre in which he appears is one where he is the chief tragic actor:

That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragiok Scaffold might adorn,
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.

Marvell, however, not only implies Charles's complacency and lack of authority as one of the main causes of strife; (as does Lucan with Pompey), he sees further into the sacrificial scapegoat that Charles must perform become. Into the mouth of Cato, the 'vir pius', Lucan has put these words, which may remind us strikingly of Charles, the martyr for the people:

(i) But would it were possible for me, condemned by the powers of heaven and hell, to be the scapegoat for the nation!

(ii) Let my blood redeem the nations, and my death pay the whole penalty incurred by the corruption of Rome.

(iii) My blood, mine only, will bring peace to the people of Italy and end their sufferings; the would-be tyrant need wage no war, once I am gone.

Marvell could hardly have been unaware of the aptness of these passages.

---


10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.
Marvell's attitude towards both Cromwell and Charles is therefore seen to be not quite as simple as critics like R. H. Syfret would have us believe. Yet it is this very complexity, this ability to maintain a balanced and unbiased attitude amid a situation fraught with ironies, both of the past and of the present, which makes Marvell's poem truly 'Horatian'.

Steele Commager in his inspired book *The Odes of Horace*, seems to have hit upon readers' attitudes to Horace which could apply equally accurately to readers of Marvell:

In the majority of these poems Horace seems to stand detached from the alternatives he explores. At times he seems also to be reading over our shoulder, and we suspect that we are identifying ourselves more closely with some attitude he strikes than he himself does. 12

It would, therefore, appear unnecessary to read "An Horatian Ode" as either a pro-Cromwell poem, or as a pro-Charles poem. The very fact that Marvell has adopted an Horatian attitude in his poem suggests that he wished to maintain a position of objectivity and relative detachment. "An Horatian Ode" is apparently an occasional poem, written on Cromwell's return in triumph from his victories in Ireland. The poem is similar to Horace's Ode XIV from Book III, which celebrates Caesar's triumphant return from his conquests in Spain. In tone, both of these poems are cautious, and the paean of praise is conditional. Steele Commager explains

Horace's conditional praise in this way:

\[\ldots\] Not until after Actium did the hope of escaping from the spiral of wars become more than sporadic, and even then there were no firm guarantees \ldots and Horace, well schooled in scepticism by the collapse of each previous settlement was not likely to fall prey to sudden certainties. 13

It is exactly this cautious praise found in Horace's Ode, which allows Marvell to adopt the same tone to warn his conqueror, Cromwell. The Civil War with Charles is over, explains Marvell, but Cromwell will need to "still keep" his "Sword erect" to maintain his power which he has won with violence. It is not likely that a power won by force will maintain itself by any other means. Horace's ironic comment on this subject is shown in his Ode beginning, "Herculis rite modo dictus \ldots"). Horace questions whether indeed Caesar's victories have assured victory and peace:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{I celebrate, and with good cause,} \\
&\text{A day that banishes dark cares,} \\
&\text{While the world's bound by Caesar's laws,} \\
&\text{I need not apprehend} \\
&\text{War or a violent end.} \quad 14
\end{align*}
\]

Marvell suggests that Cromwell will have to be on the alert, if he wants to avert "the Spirits of the shady Night" who will haunt him for his violent usurpation. He must also be wary that another "forward Youth" does not come forward from the "Shadows" of a Virgilian idyll of peace, to challenge his authority in the same way he, himself, challenged


the kingship of Charles.

A Latin scholar, writing of Horace's hopes for
Augustus's reign, has this to say:

... and while Horace demanded a Parthian war to
wipe the bloodstains of civil war off Roman
swords, Augustus was delaying and preparing
eventually to negotiate a sound Parthian peace... his [Horace's] aspirations are generally accom-
panied by an equal pessimism, a feeling that the
old Roman virtues cannot be restored, that the
downward pull of history is too strong. 15

Whether Marvell also adopts this pessimistic tone of Horace,
is debatable, but when Marvell wishes that Cromwell would
be "A Caesar he ere long to Gaul,/ To Italy an Hannibal",
he is perhaps, like Horace, hoping that foreign wars will
absolve Cromwell from the shedding of English blood in
a civil war.

The obvious parallels between Horace's 'Cleopatra'
Ode (I.37), and Marvell's treatment of Charles in "An
Horatian Ode" have often been noticed. R. H. Syfret
comments:

One of the most famous of the Odes is I.xxxvii.,
which, beginning as a song of triumph for
victorious Octavius, ends as a magnificent and
moving tribute to defeated Cleopatra. A not
dissimilar pattern is observe in Marvell's Ode
where also the most moving lines of the poem are
a tribute to the vanquished. One might note, too,
as an indication that this ode of Horace's was in
Marvell's mind, that Horace's images of Octavius
pursuing Cleopatra as a hawk the dove or a hunter
the hare are recalled in the images Marvell uses
for Cromwell. 16

16 R. H. Syfret, "Marvell's 'Horatian Ode,'" from
This is correctly observed but, once again, the writer attempts to make concrete parallels between the characters in the Latin poems, and Marvell's Cromwell and Charles.

Both Horace and Marvell would appear to state that it is partisanship and the taking of sides which ultimately lead to civil war. They have duplicated a civil war in their odes, where the susceptibility of the reader is exposed and exploited. If we were to read Horace's 'Cleopatra' Ode in isolation, we would invariably forget (as Miss Syfret has done), that Horace portrays Cleopatra also as a debauched and drunken queen, a woman, who, like Helen of Troy, has caused bloodshed and civil war to divide the country. If we do not trouble to read the other odes, we would forget, in our emotional response to the 'Cleopatra' Ode, that Octavian, later Augustus, ultimately through his victory at Actium in 31 B.C., brought comparative unity to the Roman State. Is it not more likely that Horace includes a multitude of attitudes in his Odes, the better to present before the reader a balanced and objective point of view, an informed opinion which will deter the reader from adopting a bias which has its only foundation in the emotions?

It could well be argued that Marvell's 'panegyric' adopts this stance also. Like Horace, he detests civil war; like Horace, he is capable of portraying very complex characters. Cromwell is not merely a victorious conqueror, he is an usurper, a saviour of his country like Augustus,
and also a willing servant of the State, like Pompey.
Charles is the brave and vanquished Cleopatra, the Cato
willing to sacrifice himself for the State, and the Pompey
who, through weakness, has allowed the energy of Caesar-
Cromwell to disrupt the country's peace. One aspect does
not necessarily preclude the others.

This complexity of attitude recognises both fiery
courage and sacrificial meekness, but above all it asserts
the folly of quick decisions that result in violence.
May's attitudes in his translation of Lucan, of investing
Cromwell with the one-sided energy of Cromwell, and Charles
with the narrow complacency of Pompey, weight his con-
temporary situation with a historical precedence of bias
which can result only in the creation of more violence
and prejudice. Marvell's poem is Horatian precisely
because politically it admits to ironies which emotional
judgement might be blinded to, whilst investing the
situation under consideration with a weight and complexity
of allusion, tone and echo which proclaim a personal
objectivity and detachment, and a truly manifold artistic
vision.
CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL PATTERNS

Medieval theology and the Bible

Since Marvell is portraying a conflict in his poem between traditional and new orders, it will be useful to understand exactly what the old symbols and ideas of monarchy stood for in his time. Why were they so important? Why were the death and deposition of a king such a sacrilege in the eyes of the traditional seventeenth-century man?

The idea of the King's Two Bodies, that of the body politic and of the almost deified body of the King's majesty, is one which had not completely died out when the Civil War challenged it in the 1640's. In fact the ideal of a divinely-appointed king ruling a formal hierarchical society reappeared after the Restoration (1660) with an even more exaggerated force. The Commonwealth, Cromwell's Republic, had probably shattered the idea that such a hierarchy was practicable, yet the return of a Stuart King resulted in the exhumation of many archaic ideas. These ideas, such as that of divine right, however, probably only constituted a forced attempt at that time, to return to the pre-1640's where society was stable and relatively well-ordered.

In his book The King's Two Bodies, Kantorowics traces this

concept of the double and multi-symbolic nature of kingship through the Middle Ages, and shows how Charles I, his majesty and authority compromised by the Parliamentary revolution, reacted strongly against the threatened overthrow of the divinely inspired hierarchy of which he was head. Kantorowicz, moreover, draws a comparison between King Charles's fate at the hands of his rebellious subjects, and that of Shakespeare's Richard II, who experienced a similar fate:

It would not be surprising at all had Charles I himself thought of his tragic fate in terms of Shakespeare's Richard II and of the king's twin-born being. In some copies of the Eikon Basilike there is printed a lament, a long poem otherwise called Majesty in Misery, which is ascribed to Charles I and in which the unfortunate king, if really he was the poet, quite obviously alluded to the King's Two Bodies:

'With my own power my majesty they wound,
In the King's name the king himself uncrowned.
So does the dust destroy the diamond.' 2

It is significant that the concept of King, involved, as both Richard II and Charles I discovered to their cost, a clinging to the belief of the King as Christ's substitute on earth. Charles always emphasised the triple aspects of his kingship, when he stated time and time again, in reply to the revolutionary demands of the Parliament:

There are three things I will never part with, my Church, my Crown, and my Friends. 3

Recognising himself as the visible Christ, ruler of an


earthly church, as Christ is ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven, Charles refused to surrender his title as Defender of the Faith; his position as Christ-King would not allow him either to give up his Crown or to abandon his subjects.

Kantorowicz emphasises this concept of King as Christ with a significant quotation from a medieval political theologian whom he calls the Norman Anonymous:

"The power of the king is the power of God. This power, namely is God's by nature, and the king's by grace. Hence, the king, too, is God and Christ, but by grace; and whatsoever he does, he does not simply as a man, but as one who has become God and Christ by grace." 4

This belief of the king as Christ led Shakespeare to ask whether the usurper of Richard, Bolingbroke, and the latter's descendants, were not liable to pay the debt for the sacrilege of deposing Christ in the person of King Richard II. Marvell, too, in "An Horatian Ode", is concerned with the Christ figure of the deposed and humiliated Charles. Although farther away in time from the more strict medieval traditions of King as Christ, the events of Charles's trial and execution, together with the weight of sympathetic opinion which hailed Charles as the 'Royal Martyr, the 'Man Charles Stuart', could hardly fail to have made a significant impression upon Marvell, and caused him to consider once more the nature of Christ's Crucifixion

as a counterpart to Charles's own death.

Charles himself, furnished the original material for the image of himself as Christ the sufferer and the martyr for the people. He persisted in seeing parallels between his own trial and execution and those of his Saviour, Christ. His poem *Majesty in Misery* (if written by him) strikes a chord which reminds both his contemporary readers, and us, of the laments of Christ in the medieval liturgy for Good Friday, of which Marvell may well have been aware. That Marvell should have known the liturgy for Good Friday would not be surprising, for Rosemond Tuve in her book *A Reading of George Herbert* traces the tradition of the Anglican liturgy through to Herbert, and shows how seventeenth-century poets were in fact influenced by the Holy Week services. Tuve catches the tone of the Good Friday Reproaches, a tone which Charles might consciously have emulated in 'his' book *Eikon Basilike*:

Because I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Saviour.
Because I led thee through the wilderness forty years, and I fed thee with manna . . . thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Saviour.
Before thee I opened the sea, and thou hast opened my side with a spear.
O my people, what have I done to thee . . .

The poignancy of both Charles's poem, and the Reproaches which it might echo, are present in the pitying, yet

---


dignified presentation by Marvell of Charles’s suffering and death.

Kantorowicz states:

The kings of the New Covenant no longer would appear as the 'foreshadowers' of Christ, but rather as the 'shadows', the imitators of Christ. The Christian ruler became the *christos mimetēs* - literally the 'actor' or 'impersonator' of Christ - who on the terrestrial stage presented the living image of the two-natured God, even with regard to the two unconfused natures. 7

It is interesting that Kantorowicz should portray the king as the 'impersonator' of Christ upon "the terrestrial stage," for Marvell also chooses to portray Charles as the "Royal Actor born", which would suggest that he too, like Shakespeare, conceived of the idea of the king as the reflection of Christ, or *christos mimetēs*. His image obviously derives much more force from the precedents of Shakespearean and Elizabethan history plays than critics have previously suspected, and it is interesting and significant that Charles himself saw his role as king, as the great role of Christ on earth.

But Marvell is always concerned, as we have seen, to portray ironies, to point out the conflicting elements in any one situation, or in any one character. Both Charles and Cromwell are held up for close and critical examination in the light both of medieval and Biblical tradition. There is something ironic in the way in which Charles plays his

---


8 Ibid.
part as Christ, and Marvell takes this up. The poet must have been aware of the dramatic nature both of Charles’s role as king, and of the sadness of his own natural doom as man.

As a young man in 1638, Charles had acted in D’Avenant’s masque Britannia Triumphant, and later in 1640, both he and the Queen appeared in another masque by D’Avenant and Inigo Jones, Salmacida Spolia; Marvell may have been aware of this, and that Charles was indeed a "Royal Actor born". Certainly Charles emphasised without ceasing, the figure he was called upon to play in later life, the martyred king and victim, the antetype of Christ. Marvell calls Charles "the Royal Actor born", almost as if to suggest that Charles is not only born to play a Royal part, but also that he is a ’born actor’. There is, for example, some grim exaggeration in the way in which Charles, with his "keener Eye", tries the "Axes edge" at his execution.

But if Charles’s role is not exempt from Marvell’s ironic eye, then neither is that which Cromwell plays in the poem. Having portrayed Cromwell very much in classical and traditional terms, as the lightning force of nature - "The Wars and Fortunes Son" - and also as the scourge of God, or rather of the gods, Marvell anticipates the way in which Cromwell will behave when he sets out to quell the rebellious Scots in a few months time. When he has given

us his picture of the fiery Cromwell, much as Lucan paints
his Caesar, as the force of natural law and fate's own
nemesis, Marvell has this to say about his forthcoming
Scottish campaign:

The Plot no shelter now shall find
Within his party-colour'd Mind;
But from this Valour sad
Shrink underneath the Plaid;
Happy if in the tufted brake
The English Hunter him mistake;

Why, if Marvell's poem is mainly an attack on the evils of
Caesarism in the style of Lucan, as William Raymond Orwen,
would have us believe, does Marvell refer to the "English
Hunter"? It is worth remembering that the first tyrant
depicted in the Bible was Nimrod. In Genesis 10:8-9, we
are told:

And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be a mighty
one in the earth.
He was a mighty hunter before the Lord:
wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod
the mighty hunter before the Lord.

In "An Horatian Ode" Marvell tentatively suggests that
Cromwell will be "to all States not free", "Clymaeterick";
yet a few lines later, he implies the possibility of
Cromwell emulating not only the conquerors Hannibal and
Cassar, men, incidentally, who were not liberators but rather
dictators, but also Nimrod, the first tyrant and "the
mighty hunter".

One of the accusations levelled against Charles was
that he had been not a lawful and a just king, but rather

10 William Raymond Orwen, "A Study of Marvell's
'Horatian Ode';" unpublished Ph. D. dissertation
(University of Syracuse, 1956).
a tyrant and a despot, and it is possible that Marvell is transferring the irony of that accusation of Charles, onto the head of Cromwell, hitherto shown as the innocent weapon in the hand of a higher power. Marvell indeed had cause to see a certain irony in the way Cromwell had hunted his Irish prey, and yet had justified his mass-slaughter as the work of God.

But even before he proceeds to present a complex picture of his main protagonists, suggesting the conflicts in their acting of their roles, Marvell opens his poem with lines which suggest an echo from the Preacher - Ecclesiastes. The words "'Tis time to leave the Books in dust, / And oyl th'unused Armours rust!", may remind us not only of Horace's stance in his Ode beginning "iam satie" - enough of war - but also of:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which has been planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Images of building, of breaking down, of planting, of war and of peace, can all be found throughout Marvell's poem, suggesting not only the poet's belief in the cyclical nature of life and government, but also his confirmation of the complexity of these things, and a belief in an ultimate providence which shapes and patterns them. As previously quoted from The Rehearsal Transpos'd, Marvell believed
that

... all things happen in their best and proper time, without any need of our officiousness...

This Biblical and medieval belief in the Providence of God, the eternal revolution of Fortune, and the decay and rebirth of man and government, is not only to be found in Marvell, but in countless late medieval, Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. The infamous Marchamont Nedham, in *The Case of the Commonwealth of England*, spends at least one chapter tracing the ever-recurring pattern of a cycle in the nature of government, in an attempt to justify the commonwealth of Cromwell in an acceptable and traditional way. This idea of the cycle of Fate or Providence, is present in Marvell's poem, and once more focuses upon the problem of the dead King Charles.

Kantorowicz explains the traditional belief that the King as symbol, and as the appointed of Christ can never die. Although the person of a king may pass away, his office is self-perpetuating, just as Christ is self-perpetuating. Marvell comes close to explicitly stating this belief, founded in Biblical and Christian tradition, that the King cannot be annihilated. At the end of the poem,


he warns Cromwell that he must keep his sword held high, if he is to "fright/ The Spirits of the shady Night,". These words, of course, cannot be read in one way only. Marvell's allusions are, as usual complex. Marvell pictures Cromwell with an erect sword suggesting that the Protector will have to practice justice. We may remember, too, classical echoes from the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*, where the heroes hold their swords aloft to exorcise restless spirits from Hades. Yet these spirits could very well be those who, like the "forward Youth", might once more rise in the body of the descendant of the dead Charles, Charles II, his son, to wrest the lawful throne from the usurper Cromwell. Evidences of this belief are frequent in Shakespeare's history cycle, and the suggestion may be similar here. Just as Christ, the King, rose from his execution on Easter Sunday, so Cromwell is to be warned against the rising of the dead Charles I in the person of his son. Marvell does not only hint that the spirit of the dead King is still a living force in his son, the "forward Youth", but reminds us also that the second royal Charles Stuart, the emblem of whose house was the "Caledonian Deer", is still a physical force to be reckoned with.

"An Horatian Ode" may thus be seen to explore contemporary characters and situations in a way which holds them up

---

Against the backdrop of Biblical and medieval theory on kingship and the implications of monarchy. This exploration presents to the reader an opinion which is widely informed, complex, yet always aware of the universal nature and the universal irony of the questions he is asking.
CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL PATTERNS

Dramatic Precedents:
A Shakespearean View

I have frequently made the claim that "An Horatian Ode" has qualities very akin to those of the traditional drama. This is not to negate any of the other influences which are present in the poem, and indeed that the "Ode" is 'Horatian' would suggest that Marvell is attempting to recapture some of the dramatic qualities of Horace's Odes, as well as those of the Elizabethan genre to which he is closer in time.

It is generally conjectured that the drama suffered an ultimate decline as an expression and metaphor for society, with the death of James I. The conclusions drawn from this opinion are that expressions and traditions of the drama lost currency as the seventeenth century drew towards the brink of civil war in the 1640's. Patrick Cruttwell, in his book The Shakespearean Moment, demonstrates the way in which popularised and Elizabethan stage drama and its concepts, remained very much alive in the poetry of John Donne. Donne's dramatisation of experience had an incalculable effect upon the writers who followed him, and his influence is detectable in Carew, Suckling, Lovelace and Marvell, all of whom attempt to capture in some way, and with varied success

the unifying of thought and feeling which make his poetry so striking and so dramatically immediate.

Andrew Marvell was as much a product of a literary tradition based on the solid foundations of Shakespeare, Jonson and Donne, as anyone else. Cruttwell remarks that:

His [Donne's] favourite triple structure, which appears in so many poems, and which Marvell borrowed for the 'Coy Mistress' may have come from the syllogism of medieval logic, but more fruitful is the comparison with the acts of a play. 16

And, of course, it is not only in 'To His Coy Mistress' that Marvell uses images and words which are drawn from the popular stage:

'He nothing common did or mean,' says Marvell of Charles I on the scaffold, 'Upon that memorable Scene'. The vision is all dramatic; for 'studied' means the studying of his part by an actor, and Marvell's 'Scene' is scenae, the Roman stage. 17

But how far was this vestige of dramatic tradition merely a property of the more learned men of letters in the seventeenth century? It is perhaps important to realise that the concept of "All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players" was not buried with the decline of Elizabethan drama, but continued to exist and flourish as a valid and significant metaphor for people in all walks of life, throughout the seventeenth century. Phineas Fletcher, son of a cobbler, could write quite


17 Ibid., p. 85.

sincerely in his poem *The Purple Island* (1633):

Now like's the world unto a tragick stage;
Where every changing scene the actours change;
Some subjects crouch and fawn; some reign and rage
And strange new plots bring scenes as new & strange
Till most are slain; the rest their parts have done.

(Canto I.37) 19

And the macro-microcosm was not unfamiliar to those who
were neither particularly learned, nor poets. The metaphor
of world as stage was never so strong as when the Civil War,
fearèd and yet anticipated with such accuracy by Shakespeare
and his contemporary playwrights, burst into flame in 1642.
Sir William Waller, the Parliamentary general, sent this
letter to his friend, the Commander of the King's armies,
Sir Ralph Hopton:

> The great God who is the searcher of my heart knows
> with what reluctance I go upon this service and with
> what perfect hatred I look upon a war without an
> enemy. The God of Peace in his good time send us
> peace, and in the meantime fit us to receive it.
> We are both on the stage, and we must act the parts
> that are assigned to us in this tragedy. 20

And if Parliamentary generals can use the metaphor of the
world as the stage, then it is hardly surprising that
Charles I, himself an actor in his younger days in masques at
his father's court, and reputed to have provided the plot
for D'Avenant's play, *The Gamester*,21 can also see himself in
the role of an actor on the tragic stage of England's Civil


War. Cruttwell traces what he calls "The dramatic self playing of the Renaissance mentality" and concludes that it was a creed by which men in the seventeenth century lived. For Donne, it was not merely a facetious exercise to rehearse his death, and pose for his shroud, for Walton says of Donne, "He had studied death long." Charles's words on the morning of his execution are similar to those of Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, who called for a clean shirt on the morning of Newbury, where he was killed. Charles also wished to meet his death with flair:

'Herbert', he said to his attendant, 'this is my second marriage-day. I would be as trim today as may be; for before night I hope to be espoused to my blessed Jesus.'

Even if the Puritans attempted in the closure of the theatres in 1642, to banish a dramatic tradition which was fundamentally based upon a varied and ritualistic view of the world, their staunchest propagandist, Milton, could still refer in his Defensio Secunda to Charles as "having made his exit from the stage of the world," and in The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Milton can use a quote from Seneca's Hercules Furens, for justification of the King's murder:

- Víctima haud illa amplior
Potest, magisque opima maestari Jovi
Quam Rex iniquus


23 Walton's words, cited by Cruttwell, ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 127.

- There can be slain
  No sacrifice to God more acceptable
  Than an unjust and wicked King - 26

This is, in fact, the very idea that Marvell also uses,
when he, too, portrays Charles as a necessary sacrifice
for the good of the State:

  So when they did design
  The Capitol first Line,
  A bleeding head where they begun,
  Did fright the Architects to run;
  And yet in that the State
  Foresaw its happy Fate.

However, it is clear that Marvell has distanced himself
farther from the event of the King's execution through the
use of a classical parallel. His remarks, nevertheless,
catch ironically onto Milton's quotation from Hercules
Furioso, but whereas Milton justifies the King's death with
a precedent from Latin drama, Marvell questions, in the same
way as Shakespeare in Richard II, whether indeed the
sacrifice was necessary, or the results would be beneficial.

After the closure of the theatres in 1642, the
Parliament must have decided that propaganda would be much
more effective if it appealed to the popular imagination.
Thus Parliament attempted a play, reputedly written by
Milton in 1643, called Tyrannical Government Anatomised,
which dealt, ironically enough, with a subject set in the
medieval Catholic tradition of the mystery play. The play
deals with the deposition of a tyrant; that tyrant is
Herod, a thinly disguised Charles I, with Parliament in the

26 John Milton, The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates
heroic role of the prophet John the Baptist, and catholic Henrietta-Maria as the adulterous Herodias. Paint parallels to Marvell's "Ode" are present in this speech from the play, spoken by Herodias (Henrietta-Maria):

\[\ldots\text{. Now shall we vindicate}\\ \text{Cur royal dignity, in future times}\\ \text{To be of none derided; now I'll force}\\ \text{The stubborn people to speak well of kings,}\\ \text{Or learn it to their grief, and make them hold}\\ \text{That all their king's commands, they gladly must}\\ \text{Bear and obey, though never so unjust.} 27\]

And less famous playwrights, although gone underground, were no less active during the period of the Civil Wars. In 1649, shortly after the death of the King, appeared an anonymous play, in the chronicle tradition, called The Famous Tragedy of King Charles the First, and earlier we are led to understand that Tatham's The Distracted State, 1641, displays in the disjointed fashion of a chronicle play a tragic struggle over succession to a throne. 28

Alfred Harbage claims that:

\[\ldots\text{. during the period of the Civil Wars a number of such political pamphlets in dialogue appeared, usually anonymous and claiming on their title pages to be plays.} 29\]

The dramatic tradition, then, was still very much alive, and was being used to illustrate contemporary political problems in much the same way that Shakespeare and his


\[28\text{Alfred Harbage, \textit{ibid.}, p. 185.}\]

\[29\text{\textit{ibid.}, p. 186.}\]
fellow-playwrights used their history-chronicles to elucidate and comment upon the policies of the Tudors. Nor did the theatre in the 1640's lack an audience. Clandestine performances were staged in the closed theatres quite frequently during the early part of the Civil War, and later on, in 1648, when officialdom clamped down more heavily:

The official classification of drama as a gin of the devil did not prevent the stubborn survival of a love of plays. Private theatricals and surreptitious professional performances were not the only means of indulging this love, since plays could still be read. Old stock plays were made available in print, and others already available were issued in new editions.  

It is clear then, that the drama as a way of life had never really died. Its metaphor for the policies of states and kingdoms had remained viable both for the supporters of King Charles, and for ardent Parliamentarians. Most significant of all, perhaps, is the dramatic treatment which King Charles, the central figure in the tragic conflict, received from Royalists and Puritans alike:

When Milton is concerned to ridicule the portrait of King Charles prefixed to Eikon Basilike, and designed, he says, to present the King as a 'saint and martyr', he does so by sneering at 'the conceited portraiture before his book, drawn out to the full measure of a Masking Scene' (i.e. the decor of a masque) and talking of 'quaint Emblems and devices begg'd from the olde Pageantry of some Twelxe-nights entertainment at Whitehall.'

If the Royalists, on the other hand, wish to portray Charles, as Marvell himself, too, intimates in "An Horatian Ode", as a saint and as a martyr, it is because they are aware instinctively of the traditional concept of the King as christomimētēs - the impersonator or actor of Christ. As previously shown, medieval thought conceived of the King as Christ on earth, and Shakespeare, in Richard II is concerned with the vital question of the deposing of this mortal Christ.

The most vital problem, which concerned Elizabethan dramatists such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, was the conflict between might and right. As Cruttwell puts it:

The ideological shape which the war took [the Civil War] and in particular its two central human figures, Cromwell and the King, made realities, and gave those realities enormous emotional force, out of two of the most vital imaginative and dramatic personae of the age. Cromwell embodied the military hero, the self-made conquering usurper; Charles, the legitimate appointed monarch, the King by the Grace of God. These two figures are of enormous importance to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama; the struggle between them makes the backbone of Marlowe's Tamburlaine, of Shakespeare's English histories, and of Macbeth. 32

It is not only Patrick Cruttwell who finds this similarity between "An Horatian Ode" and Shakespeare's histories:

The 'Ode' (1650) is Shakespearean in its dramatic force and in the scrupulous fidelity with which it presents opposing regimes and leaders. It might profitably be compared to the Shakespearean tetralogy dealing with Bolingbroke's usurpation and its consequences, which seems to anticipate Marvell's tense, chiastic treatment of Cromwell and his martyred victim. 33

32 Patrick Cruttwell, The Shakespearean Moment (New York, 1960), p. 188.

As we have seen, not only was the dramatic metaphor revivified in the 1640's, owing to the highly traditionally dramatic nature of the Civil War conflict, but old plays were hurriedly reissued for the edification of eager readers. One could be pretty sure that Marvell, then, was quite aware of Shakespeare's great theme of the division between the Houses of York and Lancaster. Grosart, in his notes to The Rehearsal Transpos'd, lists at least eight references by Marvell in this book, to plays by Shakespeare, one of them being a direct quotation from Act.II sc.iw of Henry IV Part I; reasons grew as plentiful as blackberries.  

Grosart observes of Marvell that, "He was a reader of Shakespeare." Apart from this, Marvell also had behind him, in the not too distant past, a traditional set of images, belonging primarily to the stage, with adequate and apt metaphors for the usurper and for the king by right. That Parliament itself was using precedents from English history which had, in the past, been dramatised, must also have been known to him.

That Charles himself recognised his role as Christ is obvious from a reading of Eikon Basilike, which although maybe not written by King Charles, was still accurate enough in sentiment to deceive the members of Charles's own family.


35 Cf. Grosart, p. 573.
and retinue. In the prayer of the twenty-sixth chapter, we read:

O let not my blood be upon them and their children, whom the fraud and faction of some, not the malice of all, have excited to crucify me. 36

and in the verses printed at the end of the book:

With such a bloody method and behaviour,
Their ancestors did crucify our Saviour. 37

Richard II, in Shakespeare's play of the same name, also sees the parallel between himself and Christ, for with the fine instinct of a graceful actor he dramatises his situation in these words:

Nay, all of you, that stand and look upon me,
Wilt'at that my wretchedness doth bait my self,
Though some of you, with Pilate wash your hands,
Shewing an outward pity; yet you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sowe Cross,
And water cannot wash away your sin. (IV.i) 38

Marvell sees Charles as a graceful actor, much in the same traditional role as Richard. Marvell’s Charles does nothing “common” or “mean”, nothing which is not delicately ritualised in the manner of a dying Christ, and in the manner of the protagonist of that supremely ritualistic play Richard II. For Marvell has Charles, as he prepares to die, bow “his comely Head,/ Down as upon a Bed.”

Similarly, there is a faint hint of over-exaggeration in the way in which Charles, “the Royal Actor born”, tries the


37 Ibid., p. 209.

edge of the axe "with his keener Eye". There is something here of the over-playing of Richard, who, in the deposition scene of his play, can call for a mirror and look for his banished kingship in the glass. But the important thing is that Charles is a symbol, in the same way that Richard is a symbol. They are both kings, and as such, it is clear that they should be portrayed in their sacramental roles as Christs-on-earth. In the case of both Richard and Charles, however, it is their sacrificial martyrdom which makes their kingship all the deeper, all the more infused with the divine parallel. The especial poignancy in both Shakespeare's treatment of Richard, and in Marvell's portrait of Charles, lies in the fact that both Charles and Richard are men, good men, yet both are unequal in some way to the burden of imposed kingship.

Shakespeare's achievement in Richard II, is ultimately the balance he maintains between sympathy for Richard of Bordeaux, and irony for Richard, King and "Royal Actor born". This is very similar to the balance which Marvell maintains in his picture of Charles I, and it is also similar in tone to Horace's Ode to Cleopatra. The poise achieved by Marvell, then, is the dramatic poise of both Shakespeare and Horace, and his portrait of Charles is one which is shot through with an intricate web of dramatic ironies. The nature of this dramatic presentation does not invite censure or admiration, but it calls for understanding and sympathy.
Professor Cruttwell sees traditional patterns taken or assimilated from Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Shakespeare's Henry Bolingbroke, in Marvell's depiction of Cromwell. Cromwell's rapid rise to fame is, in very many respects, similar to that of the Scythian shepherd, Tamburlaine, to the villainous Edmund Mortimer in Marlowe's Edward II, and of course, to Bolingbroke. In all these plays, the force of the usurper is portrayed in terms of a violent uprooting of the stability of Nature herself. Before a revolution throws down the old order, Nature must also rebel. In Richard II, a captain voices his fear of disruption and chaos in the State:

'Tis thought the King is dead; we will not stay. 
The bay-trees in our country are all wither'd; 
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven; 
The pale-fac'd moon looks bloody on the earth, 
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change; 
Rich men look sad, and ruffians dance and leap - 
The one in fear to lose what they enjoy, 
The other to enjoy by rage and war. 
These signs forerun the death or fall of kings.

(II.iv)

Similar omens can be traced in all of Shakespeare's plays where civil strife is about to take the place of a regular, hierarchical order. In Julius Caesar, ghosts gibber and squeak in the streets; in Macbeth, Duncan's horses unnaturally devour each other. Nature, in all cases, mirrors the anarchy


which is let loose on the state. Marvell, too, following a tradition which is basically classical, but which was easily assimilated into Elizabethan drama, portrays his Cromwell as just such a powerful force. Cromwell urges "his active Star" (meteor), he is like the "three-fork'd Lightning", and the bays which crown the head of Caesar-Charles will be blasted in just the way the captain predicts Richard's bays will be withered when he resigns his kingship.

It is typical of these Elizabethan war-heroes that they are self-made men. Tamburlaine is "the Scourge and Wrath of God", the shepherd who climbs from obscurity to the greatness of many empires. Marvell’s Cromwell, also, is made in a similar mould. From "his private Gardens, where/He liv’d reserved and austere", Cromwell is going to rise to become "the Wars and Fortunes Son"; in the same way, Tamburlaine can boast:

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains
And with my hand turn Fortunes wheel about. 42

The idea of the violent conqueror shown as a natural force and energy is very common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing. John Ford, in his play *Perkin Warbeck* (1634), pictures the pretender, Warbeck, in the words of the threatened King Henry VII:

We know all, Clifford, fully since this meteor,
This airy apparition first discradled
From Tournay into Portugal, and thence

---


42 Ibid., Act. I, sc. II.
Advanc'd his fiery blaze for adoration
To th'superstititious Irish; since the beard
Of this wild comet, conjur'd into France,
Sparkled in antic flames in Charles his court;
But shrunk again from thence and hid in:
darkness,
(I.iii) 43

and even later, in the 1640's, a cultivated poet in the
Fairfax circle of men of letters, could still see a violent
conqueror in the wrathful colours of a Tamburlaine.

That such an usurper should be politic and cunning appears
once more in Marvell's picture of Cromwell. Marvell's
Cromwell seems to have aspects of the "wiser Art" of the
cautious Bolingbroke or the subtle Mortimer, who in Marlowe's
play Edward II, also leads his prey into a fatal trap.

The emphasis in Marvell's "Ode" is, however, always
upon the strength and force of Cromwell. It is possible
that his picture of Cromwell as the conqueror to whom "all
States not free/ Shall Glymaterick be" corresponds subtly
to Marlowe's satiric treatment of his martial hero Tamburlaine.
Another tentative link is created between Marlowe and Marvell,
when one remembers that Marlowe was a reasonable scholar

43 John Ford, Perkin Warbeck (London,1624), ed. Donald
K. Anderson, Jr. (University of Nebraska Press,1965).

44 Thomas Stanley, "Oronta, the Cyprian Virgin", ed. Galbraith Miller Crump, The Poems and Translations of
and had translated Lucan's *The Civil War*. It is possible that Marvell knew Marlowe’s version of Lucan, as well as the more contemporary rendering of the work by Thomas May.

There is, towards the end of the poem "An Horatian Ode", the sly suggestion that Cromwell might indeed have risen as a meteoric rebel only to reinstate once more the old order which he had smashed. Rumours were widely circulating at the time of Cromwell's return from Ireland that he meant to become king in Charles's stead, rumours which were in part born out in the future, when the throne of England was moved back into Parliament for the Lord Protector to occupy. Marvell here suggests that Cromwell is "the Falcon high" - a bird with traditional connotations of royalty - and that he will "crown each year". He is to "crown" his new Republic with the fruits of his conquests, but one could here think back to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the liberator of Rome from the yoke of tyranny, being thrice offered "a kingly crown" upon the feast of the Lupercalia. Shakespeare insinuates that Caesar had refused this crown with well-disguised reluctance.

The difficulties entailed in the keeping of an ill-gotten authority are continually being demonstrated by Shakespeare in his English and Roman history plays. Richard III is forced to murder to keep his throne; his must be a 'sword government' like that of Cromwell; Bolingbroke cries "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown", the crown which he usurped from Richard, and Marvell, too, is warning Cromwell that he
also will have to keep his sword aloft - "The same Arte that
did gain/ A Pow'r must it maintain." Furthermore Cromwell
is reminded of the "Spirits of the shady Night" who might
well haunt him for his sin of usurpation. Brutus, another
deposer of Caesar, by violence, is haunted by the ghost of
the murdered Julius Caesar before the fatal battle of
Philippi; and Richard III, in the fashion of the Mirror for
Magistrates, is visited by the spectres of those he had
killed to reach the throne, before he loses his life and his
crown at the battle of Bosworth field.

In Shakespeare's history plays, the pattern of usurper
and true king is shown to be cyclical, and the crimes due
for the snatching of a crown held by divine right will always
be paid for in full, at the end. The eight plays of the
Lancaster-York cycle show this theme of divine retribution
working itself out with inexorable inevitability. The crimes
of the father are always visited upon the innocent heads of
the descendants who follow. The blood of Richard II is
irreparably stained on the House of Lancaster, and similarly
Marvell seems to be hinting that the crimes of Cromwell may
one day rise up against him, firstly in the shape of the
vengeful "Spirits of the shady Night", and then perhaps
more positively in the body of a "forward Youth", who, like
Richmond, the victor at Bosworth, will avenge the original
sin of usurpation.

Behind this cycle, found in the English chronicle
plays, in the Mirror for Magistrates, and also in An Horatian
Ode"; lies a traditional belief in the providence of God and the divine plan of Nemesis which must ultimately work itself out. Shakespeare's plays were reminders to the statesmen of the day, and to Elizabeth herself, of the failures and mistakes of past rulers of England, and they were also warnings against the awful disruption of civil war, shown to such great effect in *Henry VI* Part III.

In 1642, all the fears of the Tudors, who had survived in an often perilous peace in the years before, were realised. Marvell's poem takes up the movement of Shakespeare's Lancaster-York cycle, presenting the cycle and pattern of change, mutability, Fate, and God's Providence. His views on his characters are complex in the same way that Shakespeare's are, and his pattern and his warning are the same also.

I suggest that the tradition of historical drama, which Marvell had behind him, influenced his poem greatly, for in it he presents, with a careful warning, an almost Elizabethan picture of the revolution of time and government, ultimately a traditional conception of the divine plan of God's Providence.
CHAPTER IV

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

"AN HORATIAN ODE" 'ATOMISED'

The only approach which ultimately can do justice to such a fine poem as "An Horatian Ode" is one which recognises the sophisticated delicacy of the mind from which it sprang. Critics, have, I feel, made the mistake of equating the models that Marvell used, and their sentiments, to the tone and convictions of "An Horatian Ode". This is to deny the intricacy of the poem, its closely-knit organic construction, and it also implies that Marvell himself was of the "party-colour'd mind" which he so obviously hated and feared. Through an indication of some of the frames of reference that were quite possibly in Marvell's mind when he was writing this poem in 1650, I have tried to show that Marvell's judgement and detachment are not in question at all in this poem. "An Horatian Ode" partakes of a similar nature to Elizabethan history plays, and ultimately both Marvell and Shakespeare deal with the same problems - a conflict of power, set against the

backdrop of a world where men ignore the plan of divine Providence and the pattern of Fate and Fortune. I do not believe that Shakespeare takes sides in his plays, and I think that what Marvell presents us with, is a 'drama', where many important questions are raised about the circumstances of his time. He is not taking a moral stance, either condemning Cromwell or overly praising him; the poem is neither Royalist nor Cromwellian; Marvell is presenting to us a situation shot through with a brilliant texture of subtly criss-crossing irony and counter-irony. This technique of shifting irony is that of the drama, which works through the same juxtapositioning of ironies to create and sustain tension. Themes or ideas built up steadily through the play are shown in different shades of light, in different situations; they interweave with other counter-themes, and change their nature, vary their complexion. The character of both the drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and Marvell's "An Horatian Ode", is the same, and they are equally complex - a counterpoint of word-themes.

The nature of this ironic complexity which I have mentioned is, in part, created and sustained through its implied multifariousness, its kaleidoscope of patterns; and one of the most fruitful ways to understand the tightly-knit structure which results is to unravel the poem, strand by strand, and see exactly how it 'works'. This I propose to do in the light of the information set down in the preceding
chapters, for they contain ideas, images and traditions of which Marvell may very well have been aware. They demonstrate too, the kind of subtle mind at work behind the poem. "An Horatian Ode" asserts continually the necessity for a mind capable of seeing a situation which is crucial and epoch-making, from every possible angle.

As Marvell is compressing his 'tragedy' into a poem of 120 lines, instead of spreading it through a play structure of five acts, we must realise that his ironies and tensions are likely to be compressed also. Thus every word which the poet uses is going to be employed for a multitude of purposes. For example, when we examine the first few lines of the poem

The forward Youth that would appear
Must now forsake his Muses dear,
Nor in the Shadows sing
His Numbers languishing.
'Tis time to leave the Books in dust,
And oyl th'unused Armours rust:
Removing from the Wall
The Corslet of the Hall.

we can realise, in part, the density of texture that will typify the whole poem. Who is the "forward Youth"? Why is he "forward"? Where will he "appear", and why? What are these "Shadows" of which Marvell speaks?

The beginning of the poem is equivocal if Marvell is using the classical formula of Horace, for Horace begins his Odes with the phrase "iam satis" - enough of war - and then continues to say that after a century of civil war, it is now time for peace. Typically Marvell's attitude here
is contradictory, and could be ironic, for he states that it is now time for war. The private man must now leave his seclusion and dedicate his energy to the State. Yet is not this twist of Horace a significant irony? When Horace pleads for peace, Marvell anticipates war. Still with the classics in mind, the reader might remember the first offensive of Caesar at Ariminum, when Thomas May's Lucan visionalises the end of an era of peace:

With this sad noise the peoples rest was broke, The young men rose, and from the temples took Their arms, now such as the long peace had marr'd. And their old bucklers now of leather bar'd; Their blunted pikes not of a long time us'd, And swords with the eatings of black rust abus'd.

2

Marvell's introductory lines are being used in the manner of the classical opening of an epic poem. Here are echoes of both Lucan and Horace. But is Marvell remembering more contemporary poems, written by poets he probably knew himself? Thomas Carew writes in words which Marvell might have recalled:

But let us that in myrtle bowers sit Under secure shades, use the benefit Of peace and plenty, which the blessed hand Of our good king gives this obdurate land, Let us of revels sing, and let thy breath (Which filled Fames trumpet with Gustavus death, Blowing his name to heaven) gently inspire Thy past'rall pipe...  3

This poem was written in the 1630's, and was an eulogising of the government of Charles. Still, having examined possible


points of reference, echoes to earlier works, we are still unaware as to whom these opening lines refer. The first eight lines speak of a young man who is "forward", intimating that he may be either bold and courageous, or, more sinisterly, presumptuous and ambitious.

Thomas R. Edwards, sees the "forward Youth" as Marvell himself, the poet who is called from the seclusion of his books, to contemplate and participate in the more active arena of warfare. I think Marvell's ambiguity is conscious, and that he has at least three people in mind, when he introduces this "forward Youth" into his poem. Remembering Clarendon's description of Cromwell's rise from obscurity to greatness, and Marvell's very similar depiction of Cromwell in the lines which follow, considering also the word "forward" which, as shown, could indicate ambition (which Cromwell certainly possessed to a large degree), we might conclude that the "forward Youth" is, like , Cromwell himself. We should also note that the introductory lines might possibly stand as an epic simile for Cromwell, by the connecting use of the word "So" (line 9), which links them to the lines which follow, and which specifically describe Cromwell's climb to power.

However, this particular "Youth" is depicted as leaving,
perforce, "his Muses dear", his "Books in dust"; moreover, he is to take from the wall, "The Coral of the Hall". This man is therefore a scholar, and possibly of the nobility, as he is to remove armour from the ancestral hall. Is Marvell, therefore, considering this introduction as part of a cyclical pattern? It is feasible that it is Charles II, the noble and learned son of the martyred King, who is to rise up from obscurity and exile in the Low Countries, to challenge the usurped power of Cromwell. This particular suggestion is emphasised, as we shall see, at the end of the poem, where Cromwell is warned against the "Spirits of the shady Night". Perhaps this "forward Youth" is but a spirit at present, "in the Shadows"; yet conceivably he will "appear" in time to overthrow Cromwell's regime and reinstate the office of the monarch. Marvell is possibly warning Cromwell, too, that there would certainly be many other "forward Youths" in England who might envy his power, and rise from the "Shadows" of a peaceful England to challenge his authority. This, too, would link the introductory lines to the end of the poem, where Cromwell is warned to be wary against such possible rivals.

The word "Shadows" is equivocal. It refers perhaps to the obscurity from which Cromwell has risen, to that from which Charles II may in future arise, but may also obliquely refer to the Civil War, where the 'shadows' of death and disruption were always present. In Virgil and many other
classical authors, a shadowy land was both an idyllic setting of peace and plenty, and Hades, land of the dead, the land of 'shades' or phantoms. Marvell manages to capture the more sinister aspect of "Shadows", and yet to convey the idea of a perilous but ideal peace about to be shattered by war.

A possible reminder from Ecclesiastes, present in "'Tis time to leave the Books in dust", tentatively and delicately moves the reader's mind back to "A time for peace and a time for war", which once again recalls the sentiments of Horace.

Thus we can see, from the first eight lines, that Marvell's ideas are far from simple. We move with lightning rapidity from considerations of Horace's "iam satis" and Lucan's reconstruction of Caesar's offensive at Ariminum - possible echoes of Ecclesiastes, suggestions, maybe, of a dramatic prologue in the tradition of an Elizabethan chronicle play - to the central figures here, of Cromwell and Charles II. As we read through the poem we attempt to see all these aspects, for Marvell's whole poem seeks to move spherically, embracing back-trackings into the past, and anticipating the possible pattern of future events.

The title "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland", is itself ambiguous. Apart from suggesting to reader obvious parallels with Horace's odes upon Caesar's 'returns', it is worth remembering that odes were written for Charles I, himself, on the occasion of his own 'returns'. 
In 1623, a volume of poems, chiefly in Latin, was published by the Cambridge laureates to celebrate Charles's safe return from Spain, where he had attempted to betroth himself to the Infanta; another Cambridge volume entitled *Rex Redux* was published after his return from his Scottish coronation; still another in 1641, with poems by Cowley, Cleveland and Cudworth, celebrated his return from the Scottish wars. There was an Oxford attempt as well, to which Jasper Mayne and Henry Vaughan contributed, to mark the King's return from those wars. Marvell is perhaps remembering all of these, when he writes the title to his own 'Ode on the Return'.

The lines which follow deal specifically with the rapid rise of Cromwell to power. These lines are not without precedent, and they are not free of irony:

```plaintext
So restless Cromwel could not cease
In the inglorious Arts of Peace,
But through adventurous War
Urged his active Star.
```

Here, much after his Latin model of Lucan's *The Civil War*, we are given a picture of Marvell's Caesar-Cromwell, the active man who, as we saw in Chapter II, is unwilling to conquer without war. To such a man as Cromwell, and indeed to a man like Caesar, peace is indeed inglorious, but conversely, it is difficult to imagine that to a man as sensitive as Marvell, seeing his friends ranged on both sides, war could be anything but inglorious.

---

The elemental nature of Lucan's Caesar is duplicated via the connecting link of a strong classical tradition, in Elizabethan plays such as Tamburlaine, Richard II, Henry IV and Macbeth, which deal with similar disruptions of the state by an usurper or energetic conqueror. These plays dealt with kingship pitted against power, and the theme of "An Horatian Ode" could be considered too, in this way. Here is a dramatisation of a conflict between might and right, with Cromwell in the role of conquering Caesar, mighty Tamburlaine and Bolingbroke the usurper. Cromwell's is the "active Star" of the meteor; John Sullivan commenting upon lines 10-11 of Act I, sc.1 of Henry IV Part One., has this to say about meteors:

"Meteors' meant any sort of atmospheric disturbance; they were thought to be caused by vapours. The image suggests not only that civil disturbances have a single origin, but also that disorder in society and disorder in nature are intimately related. 7

All the epithets which Marvell uses - "restless", "active", "adventurous", etc. - to depict Cromwell, are forceful and energetic. Moreover, in the style of Tamburlaine or Bolingbroke, Cromwell will break no opposition to his plans:

And like the three-fork'd Lightning, first
Breaking the Clouds where it was nurst,
Did thorough his own Side
His fiery way divide.

Looking back to Lucan's poem for this epic simile, we note that Caesar is described as just such a violent natural force. The simile also adapted easily to Elizabethan drama. In Richard II, Bolingbroke's plot against the King is hatched in clouds. In Act III, sc.1 of this play, Bolingbroke has returned from exile, and the future usurper remarks his languishing abroad, stating that he has "sighed... [his] breath in foreign clouds." It is the shadows and clouds of England before the Republic which have nourished the meteoric Cromwell.

The pattern of usurper versus king, and their relevant rights, now becomes clearer. In the same way that Shakespeare presents Bolingbroke as a man of action, yet inevitable destruction and war; following too, the patterns seen in Lucan's contest between Pompey and Caesar, Marvell portrays Cromwell. Marvell has included, too, a variety of response to his hero. We could consider the hatred that Lucan bears Caesar, the grudging admiration that Shakespeare accords Bolingbroke, yet too, Shakespeare's acceptance of some divine plan in the course of events; and coupled with these, the bitter satire with which Marlowe sets out the incredible exploits of the shepherd-emperor, Tamburlaine. What Marvell is possibly deploring, as is Shakespeare, is the meddling hand of man in

---

8 See Chapter II, pp. 48 and 50 of this thesis.

affairs of cosmic importance; this meddling which, of course, evinced the bloodshed of the Civil Wars of the 1640's:

... I think the Cause was too good to have been fought for. Men ought to have trusted God; they ought and might have trusted the King with that whole matter. 10

and:

... For men may spare their pains where nature is at work, and the world will not go faster for our driving. 11

If Cromwell, Bolingbroke, Caesar and Tamburlaine have no concern for their royal victims, it is equally true that neither will they brook opposition in their own ranks. It has been remarked upon, in Chapter I, that Cromwell dealt harshly with those who opposed his authority both on his rise to power, and also after the battle of Marston Moor in 1644. It might also be true to say that the lightning bolt of Cromwell's force had indeed split the Parliament itself into sides or factions; and that Marvell is possibly referring obliquely to the ruthlessness with which Cromwell purged Parliament of recalcitrant Presbyterians with the help of Colonel Pride, in 1648. Marvell emphasises this ruthlessness which characterises Cromwell in the lines which follow:

For 'tis all one to Courage high
The Emulous or Enemy;
The mindless energy of such a meteor, such a Tamburlaine,
becomes now an abstraction. How should such a combination of


11 Ibid., p. 213.
elemental forces and abstract concepts, such as "three-fork'd Lightning" and "Courage high", care, or even think about, anything that stands in its way? Similarly this force cannot be curtailed or contained:

> And with such to inclose
> Is more than to oppose.

Cleanth Brooks remarks upon these lines:

> The implied metaphor is that of some explosive which does more violence to that which encloses it, the powder to its magazine, for instance, than to some wall which merely opposes it - against which the charge is fired.  

This is an accurate observation, but the metaphor does more work than Cleanth Brooks implies. When Marvell specifically uses the word "inclose", we are reminded of the reasons why Cromwell originally came into prominence in the Parliamentary sphere. In 1628, Cromwell was chosen to represent the town of Huntingdon in Charles's third Parliament, and it was in 1630, that Cromwell rose to defend the fen-men of his constituency, who were rebelling against the Earl of Bedford's scheme to drain the Great Fen, a scheme which would have involved an encroachment upon the common and fishing rights of these men. Cromwell early allied himself with Lilburne and the Levellers, whose beliefs were that the ordinary man should possess the land in common with his fellows. Bedford's enclosure and drainage scheme was a flagrant opposition to this right. Marvell, here, is reminding us that Cromwell is

---

not merely the stock 'meteor' of an usurper, for he has
more humane attributes. However, this metaphor also points
ironically forward to lines later on in the poem where Charles
himself is seen as 'enclosed', trapped in the wily Cromwell's
net of power.

The image of the shooting star, Cromwell, is further
traced in its headlong career, and we note that it will even
presume to singe the traditionally inviolable laurels around
Caesar's head:

Then burning through the Air he went,
And Pallaces and Temples rent;
And Caesar's head at last
Did through his Laurels blast.

It is quite clear now, that Cromwell's job is to upset the
old order of "Pallaces", "Temples", and Caesars. But for
the first time, too, the words which Marvell uses, are taking
a subtly Christian tone, a tone which will further be borne
out as the poem proceeds. The pageantry of Richard II's
kingship, his temples, strautes and laws are gradually, as
Shakespeare's play unravels, smashed and broken; gradually,
too, Richard comes to recognise the full significance of his
divine right and the sacramental nature of his role as Christ.
At this point in Marvell's poem, the first hints appear, of a
tragedy, which, like that of Richard, will inevitably become
linked to the Passion and Death of the Prototype, Christ.
At the hour of Christ's Death, Matthew reports (27:51):

The vail of the Temple was rent in twain.

Just as the natural order was upset at the hour of the
Crucifixion, and those symbols of monarchy divinely inspired,
the Church, the hierarchical order, were pinned upon the Cross, Cromwell is seen as a natural force which can disturb and topple the old order of society mirrored in nature and led by a king who acts the role of Christ.

It is particularly important to notice here the term of Caesar being applied to Charles, when only a few lines later, Cromwell, too, will be hailed as "a Caesar". John S. Coolidge notes that, in Horace's "Odes, Caesar is the title of the legitimate ruler, whereas, in Lucan's The Civil War, it refers to the scourge of nations. This would certainly appear to be in keeping with these lines in Marvell's poem. However, in typically equivocal fashion, Marvell does not hail Cromwell as Caesar, but as "a Caesar". Is this perhaps an irony on the one who has destroyed old orders merely to resurrect them again under new names? The same question is present in Richard II and Henry IV, where characters such as York are uncertain as to whether somebody referred to as King (Bolingbroke) is in fact a real king with divine sanction. Similarly Bolingbroke, too, does all in his power to reinstate the old order which he has destroyed. Marvell is well aware of the ambiguities implicit in the title of 'Caesar' or 'King'.

Following close upon the splendid description of Cromwell's "active Star" in its career across the heavens, we are told:

"Tis Madness to resist or blame
The force of angry Heavens flame;

and certainly we agree that Marvell's depiction of Cromwell
might make us believe this. It is obviously madness to
resist, for one has the precedent of the headless Charles
before one's eyes. Such a force as Tamburlaine or Cromwell
brooks no opposition. There is surely some 'tongue-in-cheek'
in this rather too pat aphorism. Cromwell is the "Scourge
and Wrath of God"14, in the same way as Tamburlaine, and the
two are treated with a hint of the mock-heroic.

The transition from "the force of angry Heavens flame" to
the lines:

And if we would speak true
Much to the Man is due.

is rather too violent to be credible. Is Marvell's 'speaking
true' the same as the confession of the oppressed and beaten
Irish?

How good he is, how just.
If so, then the irony is severe.

From the portrayal of Cromwell as the scourge of heaven,
we are invited to consider him as an ordinary human being.
It is significant that Parliament, after 1648, refused to
acknowledge Charles as King, but designated him as 'The Man
Charles Stuart'15, much in the same way that Robespierre and

14 Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great Part I,

15 Clarendon, Edward Hyde, Earl of, History of the
Rebellion and Civil Wars (London, 1759), new edn. (Oxford,
his cohorts, in the following century of revolution, called
King Louis XVI carefully by his family name of Capet. Yet
here, Marvell is calling Cromwell by the evocative term,
"the Man". We may remember too, that Christ himself, his
kingship denied by Pilate, was presented to the Jerusalem
mob clamouring for his death, with the significant words
'Ecce Homo' - behold the Man. Marvell is setting up a thick
density of irony which forces us to consider both Charles
and Cromwell in a variety of conflicting ways.

Having provided us with the epic story of Cromwell's
rise to power, we are asked to consider his humanity, and
the actual events which formed and moulded him and his life:

Who, from his private Gardens, where
He liv'd reserved and auster;

In these lines Marvell gives us a glimpse of the background
in which Cromwell lived before his rise to fame. We remember
Horace's pleas that the private man should sacrifice himself
for the good of the State. We think also of lines from
Clarendon, which echo those from "An Horatian Ode":

... Who from a private and obscure birth, (though
of a good family), without interest of estate,
alliance, or friendship, could raise himself to
such a height... yet as he grew into place and
authority, his parts seemed to be renewed, as if
he had had concealed faculties till he had occasion
to use them. 16

Yet this man has spent his retirement:

As if his highest plot
To plant the Bergamot
Could by industrious Valour climbe

16 Clarendon, Edward Hyde, Earl of, History of the
Rebellion and Civil Wars (London, 1759), new edn. (Oxford,
To ruin the great Work of Time  
And cast the Kingdoms old  
Into another Mold.

The word "plot", here, is a clever pun. Cromwell has spent his time planting the Bergamot (a pear-tree commonly associated with royalty), in his plot of garden. We remember that Marvell, in his poem *Upon Appleton House*, uses the traditional garden image in much the same way as Shakespeare, in *Richard II*, to represent the halcyon days of England's peace before the Civil War:

> Oh Thou, that dear and happy Isle  
The Garden of the World ere while... 

and Clarendon echoes these lines a few years later:

> ... whilst the kingdoms we now lament were alone looked upon as the garden of the world...

The garden, then, is a metaphor for the state, and has traditional associations with contemplation, seclusion and retirement. Ultimately, however, this metaphor finds its origin in the Garden of Eden, the primeval Paradise, in *Genesis*. Just as the innocence of that Garden was disrupted by the entry of sin and disobedience to the sovereign who is God, similarly Marvell's garden-state of England will be

---


19 Patrick Cruttwell, *The Shakespearean Moment* (New York, 1960), advances similar ideas, quoting these examples from *Upon Appleton House* and from Clarendon's *History*. Cruttwell traces the Garden-State metaphor and claims that it is ultimately a dramatic metaphor, with its origins in the drama.
disrupted by the 'plotting' of Cromwell against King Charles. Marvell also had the precedent before him of the garden-state metaphor used in a similar way by Shakespeare in Richard II, where, once again, England is referred to in its state of order as a garden, but where also, in Act III. sc. iv, a gardener instructs his assistant:

Go thou, and like an executioner
Cut off the heads of too fast growing sprays
That look too lofty in our commonwealth. 20

Marvell's word "plot", therefore, serves to emphasise his complex allusion to the "private Gardens", but it also serves to imply a somewhat more sinister meaning. Cromwell's seclusion is both praised and seen as salutary in the classical tradition of retirement, but also carries with it more questionable implications. Cromwell has been plotting "To plant the Bergamot"; he has possibly been planning his moves to become the supreme authority in the land.

The references to the pear-tree, the Bergamot, to climbing on the part of Cromwell, and to "the great Work of Time" (line 34), once more subtly suggest a possible interpretation in the light of Genesis. Cromwell is the rebel, a later version of the original rebel Adam, who was a gardener (like the early Cromwell in the poem), and who, by 'climbing' for the fatal fruit, rebelled against the primeval innocence of the Garden of Paradise, and against

the high sovereignty of God. Cromwell, too, is to shatter
the peace of England's garden-state, by planting the tree
of his own authority, and usurping that power given to
Charles by divine right. The "Kingdoms old" is a reference,
once more, which recalls the sanctified right of kings,
which was usurped, each in their turn, by both Adam and
Cromwell; and Cromwell is to distort and wrench the frame
of the natural hierarchy in the same fashion as Adam. He
is going to "cast", a word which implies the meaning 'cast
down' (i.e. the Fall), the perfect state of Man "Into another
Mold". Just as Adam's rebellion "cast" man into a sad
subjection to mortality, inevitably forcing him to become
once more a part of the "Mold" from which he sprang, so
Cromwell has caused the downfall of the old monarchy to
revert to a state where a man, or even a king, will no
longer possess an 'eternal' role in the old hierarchical
scheme of things.

These two lines also suggest, more obviously, the iron
fist of Cromwell's New Model Army, which will effectively
and physically wrench the old kingdoms into a new and
revolutionary shape. This imagery of casting and moulding
emphasises words which have gone before, such as "blast"
and "flame", which, altogether, create a picture of Cromwell's
forging of a new England, with the heat of his "three-fork'd
Lightning". He will become England's blacksmith.

In the lines which follow

Though Justice against Fate complain,
And plead the ancient Rights in vain:
But these do hold or break
As Men are strong or weak.
Marvell's preceding argument is summed up. This poem is to be a conflict, similar to that found in many Elizabethan history plays, between the "antient Rights" of a King by divine appointment, and the elemental forces of usurping Cromwell's "active Star", which has been set into motion by an angry Fate. The usurper is to be played off against the rightful monarch; and the abstractions of "Justice" and "Fate" are used to imply the ambiguity of such conceptions, in the same way that the term "Caesar" has been used. Later on in the poem, Cromwell, the merciless conqueror, will be hailed by the beaten Irish: "How good he is, how just"; and similarly the traditional "Rights" of Charles will be seen in a more severely ironic light, as the King helplessly resigns his authority, in the fashion of a Richard II, to an ignominious death on the scaffold. If the reader is therefore meant to conclude anything concrete from these lines, it is the realisation of the ambiguities involved in such large terms as "Justice", "Fate" and "Caesar". Both "Justice" and "Fate", are dependent upon some plan, for they "hold or break/ As men are strong or weak". Yet their arbitrary nature is demonstrated in this poem by the way in which Marvell alternately shifts the emphasis of "Justice" and "Fate" from Cromwell to Charles and then back again. At this point in the poem, for example, Cromwell can hardly be seen as a mere weapon in the hands of Fate, as his own efforts have aided him to "climb/ To ruine the great Work of Time." There is
a sense here that it is really neither Cromwell nor Charles
who manipulate "Justice" and "Fate"; neither is it Fate who
guides them, for these confrontations are part of the vaster
work of Heaven, the gods, and Providence, and are, moreover,
the work of Nature's own law of the survival of the fittest.
This is made clear in these lines which follow:

Nature that hateth emptiness,
Allows of penetration less;
And therefore must make room
Where greater Spirits come.

It is the irrevocable nature of "Justice" and "Fate", that
they must bow to a higher authority. That authority is a
property of Nature or Providence, which will brook no
vacuum in her scheme caused by a weak man - even if he be
a king - who lacks vital energy. The strong "active Star"
will inevitably rush forward to fill the "emptiness". This
does not mean that Marvell is justifying the vitality of
Cromwell, rather that he sees it in a more profound way.

The idea of Cromwell as the 'greater Spirit', leads on
to a physical description of his valour in the battle-fields
of the Civil Wars. Cromwell's greatness does not, as yet
in the poem, stem from his wisdom or justice, but from his
energy and vigour. He is depicted as courageous in batt'e,
which contemporary (Parliamentary) sources substantiate;
but Marvell is perhaps remembering, objectively, that Cromwell
was never seriously wounded at all, in all the battles in
which he participated. The conclusion which Marvell reaches
is similar to that reached by Lucan; Caesar-Cromwell may be
a valiant man indeed, but scars are not the mark of true
courage; rather they represent an empty glorification of it. In Lucan’s *The Civil War*, it is the country which bows beneath the fighting, and the homeland which bears the scars of civil dispute.

The poem is now reaching its climax, which will culminate in a picture of Charles’s execution:

> 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 Careesbrookes narrow case.

The inference in the above lines substantiates allusions to Cromwell’s ambitions - “As if his highest plot/ To plant the Bergamot” (lines 31/32). A rumour was circulating at the time, that Cromwell, playing cat and mouse, had allowed Charles to escape from Hampton Court in November 1647, only to chase him to a safer ground at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, a few weeks later. The images that Marvell uses here are those of a cunning hunter, images which will be strengthened later on in the poem. Later, Charles II will be hunted by Cromwell, who will track down the “Caledonian Deer”, a reference to the emblem of the Scottish Stuart House, which was indeed a “Deer”. “Careesbrookes narrow case”, however, is ominous for Charles I. In March 1648, he was apprehended in a vain attempt to escape through the barred casement window of his prison in Carisbrooke Castle; this is the literal setting. Yet, for Charles, Carisbrooke was indeed ‘Careesbrooks’ full of heavy care and sorrow; and the “narrow case” might well suggest the coffin (“case”) and the grave, and that
narrow gate through which he will enter into eternity.

Allusions and hints at allusions in the poem have now built up into a powerful crescendo, and actions seem to happen very fast, one after the other. Just like the pursuit of a stag in a hunt, Charles is captured, imprisoned, escapes, is recaptured, carried to the block and beheaded. Although these events in the poem follow in very quick succession (within the space of eighteen lines), the pace of the poem itself slows up very noticeably:

That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragick Scaffold might adorn;
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.

There is no doubt here that "An Horatian Ode" has become a tragedy in the true dramatic sense of the word. On the merely literal level, Charles is called "the Tragick Actor", he is to "adorn" the stage of the "Tragick Scaffold", and an audience of "armed Bands" will applaud his performance. In a more traditional and retrospective way, Charles is indeed an actor, for, as King, he is the appointed imitator of Christ. The "Tragick Scaffold" now takes on the significant tones of the "Scaffold" where the King of Heaven was crucified; Christ's title of King, incidentally, was also ambiguous, and one recalls the "armed Bands" who stood beneath the Cross mocking and jeering as he died. Rosalie Colie reminds us that at Charles's execution, the soldiers, standing by, clapped their hands to drown Charles's final speech. There is a

sense here, that the drama has been a satisfying one. Charles has played his part, just as Cromwell has played out his, bowing to no one but his own fate and fortune. The spectators voice their approval.

Richard II, too, is a very obvious "Royal Actor" in his drama, and plays the scene of his deposition to the hilt. We see a few lines further on in Marvell's poem that Charles has the actor's grace of Richard, as he acquiesces to his deposition and death. It is significant, too, that Richard is also aware of his more profound role as actor of Christ, for, as shown in the previous chapter, he compares his trial and deposition specifically to that of Christ. Charles, also, and his followers were well aware of the sacred nature of the office of kingship. In the twenty-sixth chapter of Eikon Basilike, Charles prays:

> 0 let not my blood be upon them and their children, whom the fraud and faction of some, not the malice of all, have excited to crucify me. 22

But perhaps more important to a consideration of Marvell's ultimate belief in the cyclical pattern of God's plan for the stage of the world, is a deeper look at the ideas implied in the comparison of King Charles to Christ.

Christ rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, his Kingship stated more emphatically and still more vigorously. Shakespeare certainly proves in his history plays that an usurper can never be free of the shadow of a rightful king, be he dead or

alive; and at the end of Richard III, which is the last play in Shakespeare's cycle of English history, the burden falls upon the young, but divinely inspired Earl of Richmond (the future founder of the Tudor dynasty, Henry VII), to repair the state and resurrect the office of a newly invigorated divine right.

In 1649, a poem appeared ascribed to Cleveland, and containing these lines upon the King's death:

Death had no sting for him, and its sharp arm
Only of all the troop, meant him no harm.
And so he looked upon the axe as one
Weapon yet left to guard him to his throne.
In his great name then may his subjects cry,
"Death thou art swallowed up in victory..."

These lines remind one strongly of the words Marvell uses to set his scene for Charles's death, and they are probably based on a pretty accurate eye-witness account. However, it is, I feel, important to note that in Cleveland's poem, the King is not merely about to win a martyr's crown in Heaven, as the echoes from Paul's Epistle to the Romans suggest, but the axe which kills him, is going to "guard him to his throne". His "great name" is still going to be called upon by his subjects. The idea here is that the King is not dead, although Charles Stuart may be lifeless. The King is now Charles II, for the office of kingship, as we have seen, can never die. Is it this idea too, which Marvell is, more

---

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
guardedly, hinting at in his poem? If Marvell chooses so obviously to equate Charles's death with that of Christ, bearing in mind the traditional links between King and Christ, then he is not likely to deny or forget the fact that Christ died and rose again for the salvation of the world. If this is so, then Charles's death, with its popular legend of royal martyr, takes on a colouring not dissimilar to Richard II's deposition.

It was the "memorable Hour". ("And about the ninth Hour": Matthew 27:46) of Christ's Crucifixion which effected the salvation of the world; similarly Marvell hints that it is this hour of Charles's Christ-like death and sacrifice upon the scaffold, which "assur'd the forced Pow'r", and ultimately resulted in the "happy Fate" of the new State. This idea harks back to references to the "private Gardens" where Cromwell, the antetype of Adam, hatched rebellion and civil war against his sovereign. It is possible that Marvell is thinking here, too, in terms of the idea of the 'Fortunate Fall', the belief that, without Adam's sin, Man would never have been redeemed to his "happy Fate". Is Marvell thinking that Cromwell's rebellion was just such a 'fortunate fall'? It is possible, then, that as Christ, the second Adam, ransomed Man from the sins of his original disobedience, so Marvell is implying that the sacrifice of Charles will save the country of England from its sin of rebellion, and will, moreover, provide firm foundations for a new and prosperous state. Charles himself went so far as to call
himself "the martyr of the people". We may remember, too, that Lucan's Cato, the hero of The Civil War, expresses his willingness to become the martyr for the Roman State:

Let my blood redeem the nations, and my death pay the whole penalty incurred by the corruption of Rome. 27

It is also suggested later on in the poem that Cromwell will have to hold the crossed hilt of his sword erect to exorcise the "Spirits of the shady Night", the ghosts of kings who have been deposed and beheaded. He will have to put this sword to good use against possible rivals, and against the newly resurrected body of the King, in the person of Charles II, who might well start the poem once more on its cyclical pattern, as the "forward Youth".

And yet despite the enormous implications with which Marvell has invested the death of King Charles, the man himself, as an "Actor born", is not free from a mocking irony. He does nothing "common" or "mean", from a natural sense of the graceful actor's exit from the stage, 28, for Charles is an actor born for his royal role, as he was a man who, in younger days, had acted in graceful masques at Court. Marvell attempts here one of the finest balances of irony in any literature, for he keeps both edges of vision on his character sharp and clear. Charles in the exaggerated


28 Milton in his Defensio Secunda, refers to Charles as having left and made his exit from the stage of the world.
and effete actor who is, like Richard, incapable of sustaining his royal role; for he will not call "the Gods with vulgar spight/ To vindicate his helpless Right."; rather he will 'depose himself', as does Richard, and bow "his comely Head,/ Down as upon a Bed.", whilst contemplating the fatal axe with the inventive and fantastical mind of a metaphysical poet.

The melodrama is subtle, yet undeniably present. Yet at the same time, we cannot help admiring Charles's fortitude, in the same way that we admire the courage of Cleopatra in Horace's Ode I.37, or the generous words of Cato in Lucan's The Civil War. And through this brilliant pattern of interweaving, constantly shifting vision, we are always aware of the context of the counterpart of Christ's more profound sacramental death and sacrifice.

It is the world here which, for Marvell, is the "Tragick Scaffold": the world/stage which for so many of his contemporaries was such an obvious metaphor, and which implied so many varied frames of reference. The poet makes it clear that every man in this drama must play his appointed role.

To pass from these central lines is to pass into the anti-climax of a great tragedy. Just as the poem has been skillfully built up into this high point, equally carefully our response is toned down. The vision achieved in this passage is translated into Marvell's present, and his presumed hopes and anticipations. That "memorable Hour" leaves us with an echo of the glorious climax of the poem, reminding us
once more of the deeper religious significance of the sacrifice on the Cross. It is this sacrifice, and this hour of glory, which has assured the "forced Pow'r" of Cromwell. The word "forced" suggests now, not only the energy of this man, but the contrast between his "Pow'r" and the gentle resignation of Charles at the block. But it is the event which allows England's future dictator or liberator to build the beginning of his new State upon the bloody sacrifice of Charles's severed head. George de F. Lord tells us that in the reign of Tarquin the Proud, last of the Roman kings:

... Pliny (Natural History, 28:2) relates how a human head was found in laying the foundations of the Capitol and how the most celebrated priest of Etruria, Olenus Galenus, interpreted the head as a favourable omen. 29

The designing of the Capitol of the Roman Republic upon the foundation of a human head, corresponds, in "An Horatian Ode", to Cromwell's founding of his Capitol upon the sacrificial offering of Charles's head. However, there is a suggestion here, too, that the "Architects" of such a state will be frightened, almost haunted, by the reappearance of this head. We recall, maybe, the Republican, Brutus, who is visited before the battle of Philippi, in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, by the ghost of the murdered Caesar. Towards the end of the poem, perhaps this idea is brought out again; thus it may be seen that the words which follow:

And yet in that the State
Foresaw its happy Fate.

are not free of irony. It is indeed the sacrifice of Christ-
Charles which lays the foundations of the English Republic,
and Charles is compared by implication to Tarquin, last of
the Roman dictatorial kings; but possibly this sacrifice has
been earned at the cost of gaining yet another tyrant and
dictator, for we must remember that Cromwell is a "forced
Pow'r".

The lines which follow:

And now the Irish are ashamed
To see themselves in one year tam'd:

are a return to the present object of the poem - "An Horatian
Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" - and a reconsideration
of the most recent events of the time. Yet there is a sugg-
estion here that Cromwell is attempting, in the same way
as a king, to impose "Justice" and "antient Rights" upon the
Irish. This is in keeping with some contemporary views, at the
time of Cromwell's return from his Irish conquests, that he
meant to adopt the authority of the king he had usurped. This
would appear to be tentatively hinted at, later on in the
poem, and the hints remind the reader of Elizabethan plays
(Tamburlaine the Great, Henry IV), where an usurper takes to
himself the justification of his power, by recreating the
monarchy and trappings of the old order which he has destroyed.
This kind of transference of allusion, and, in fact, the tone
of Cromwell's new government, as shown in the poem, may
begin to sound suspiciously like a circular pattern and
repetition of events, only this time, with different characters
and protagonists. One king is deposed and executed, and
another is set in his place.

As far as actual events in Ireland were concerned, Cleanth Brooks points out ironically that the Irish were indeed the right people to affirm Cromwell's praises best, since the Protector slaughtered half the population, and drove the remainder into the mountains, keeping Ireland as an English colony. The Irish, then, are "tam'd" in much the same way as the Scots will be in the coming invasion in July 1650. A different perspective is obtained on the Irish campaign, when we remember that Marvell states also that the conquest of Ireland is something for which England may surely praise Cromwell. The Parliament and the people may also look forward to a just retribution through Cromwell's anticipated victory over the despicable "PLOT".

The next ten lines deal with the immediate past, and contain significant and conflicting ironies on the man that Cromwell is, and the man he may likely become:

So much one Man can do,
That does both act and know.
They can affirm his Praises best,
And rave, though overcome, confess
How good he is, how just,
And fit for highest Trust:
Nor yet grown stiffer with Command,
But still in the Republick's hand:
How fit he is to sway
That can so well obey.

Marvell here summarises Cromwell's career of violent action

and subtle cunning with the words in conclusion, "So much one man can do," as if pausing to admire the epoch-making changes that this man has made. However, it is not only Marvell who affirms "his Praises", but the oppressed Irish. From an English point of view, the Irish are indeed confessing, as sinners and murderers who have risen up to slaughter innocent Protestant settlers, and Cromwell's actions become, therefore, the punishment of a righteous Protestant God. It is difficult not to see conflicting shades of irony in this passage: on one side, Marvell's poem is pure panegyric, on the other, a scathing comment on Cromwell's brutalities. Obliquely, the tone here may remind us of Mark Antony's speech to the citizens of Rome, where he sarcastically praises Caesar's murderers as "honourable men". We hear that the defeated Irish can indeed confess, a word with overtones of a forced confession, "How good he is, how just,/ And fit for highest Trust!". The idea of "how just", reverts back to the "Justice" of Charles (line 37), pitted against the stronger "Fate" which governs Cromwell, and it is clear that there are hints here that the "highest Trust" of which Marvell speaks is no less than that of the kingly office, to which Cromwell's ambitions possibly aspire. Yet Marvell indubitably sees Cromwell as the heroic demolisher of the old and tyrannous monarchy, and is hoping that the "highest Trust", which will be given to Cromwell, will prove him to be less of a dictator than the unfortunate Charles.

The lines which follow carry further the subtle suggestion of Cromwell's more sinister ambitions, and yet at the same time praise him, for he has not "yet grown stiffer with Command," and at the moment is "still in the Republiick's hand;". Is there the inference here, that Cromwell may very soon assume the role of monarch which he was previously believed to have made obsolete? If so, then this inference becomes stronger as the poem proceeds, but meanwhile the poet would appear to praise his hero for fidelity to his republican ideals:

How fit he is to sway
That can so well obey.

We may agree with the Aristotelian precept, but we ask how long Cromwell will indeed conform to it. History has not shown Cromwell to have been a meek and obedient man; his very character as usurper denies this possibility. He has certainly not been shown literally, earlier in the poem, as the kind of man who would agree with either "The Emulous or Enemy;". He is the "active Star" which has blasted Charles's head, and which will brook no opposition to his desires. It may, however, be significant, that a meteor burns itself out in the end, just as Marlowe and Shakespeare show their strong men inevitably destroyed by the full circling of the Wheel of Fortune.

Marvell will now begin to emphasise just how obedient Cromwell is, to his master, the Parliament:

He to the Commons feet presents
A Kingdom, for his first years rents;

Cromwell, then, has paid the price of his rise to fame through
presenting the Commons with the "Kingdome" of England (and Ireland). He has indeed paid a high price, that of civil war and bloodshed.

Echoes, again from Richard II, may well be present here. In Act II s. i, the dying John of Gaunt accuses his nephew King Richard, of having divided the land. Gaunt suggests that this division and leasing of land is indeed a prologue to the complete disintegration of the State by civil strife:

Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,  
It were a shame to let this land by lease . . .  
Landlord of England art thou now, . . .

and again:

This blessed plot . . .  
Is now leased out . . .  
Like to a tenement or pelting farm, . . .

There is the inference in Marvell's lines that Cromwell's bitter division of land has paid his "rents" at the cost of many English lands. Still, the irony works the other way also. For Marvell has hopes that Cromwell will prove to be another Gustavus Adolphus, and in the same way that he has fallen upon the Papist Irish, and forced them to 'confess' their sins, Cromwell will liberate catholic France and Spain from the bonds of Rome. Marvell's views here are much in tune with contemporary public expectations for Cromwell. It is suggested, tentatively, that the sacrifice which Cromwell

---

33 Ibid.
has demanded has resulted in the "happy Fate" of the new
English Republic. The ironies here are very carefully
balanced, and Marvell is careful to keep an equilibrium in
the opposing views of Cromwell which he here sets down.

This servant of the Commonwealth is modest, for he
"forbears/ His Fame", and attributes it instead to the
Parliament. He has not previously been shown by Marvell to
have been so faithful a servant, especially to a Parliament
with whom the actual Cromwell had so many disagreements.
John S. Coolidge has a word to say upon the classical
precedents in Marvell's lines at this point:

... When Marvell says that Cromwell "has his Sword
and Spoyles ungirt,/ To lay them at the Publick's
skirt" it is the memory of Augustus Caesar that he
is invoking, and Cromwell is again like the benef-
cient Caesar of Horace.

That occasion when Octavius Caesar resigned his
"Sword and Spoyles" (his various offices and powers)
to the Senate of Rome signalised the transformation
of the one kind of "Caesar" into the other; for the
Senate not surprisingly handed right back to him
his former powers, or the equivalent of them, now
decently legitimised and with the addition of a new
name, Caesar Augustus. Young Octavian had risen to
power as Julius Caesar's heir and avenger. He was
wholly the creature of the Caesarian mystique of
those very forces, that is, which were irresistibly
battering down the ancient structure of the Roman
Republic. His achievement was, first of all, to
draw those forces to himself. His second achievement,
however, was to make himself the embodiment of all
the ancient ideals of Rome, of that very structure
of values which the relentless tide of Caesarian
power was sweeping away. Octavius Caesar became
Caesar Augustus; "the Wars and Fortunes Son" became
the restorer of temples. Thus the name of 'Caesar'
came to epitomise both the ancient rights and the
"forced Pow'r" that was by its origin destructive of
them. It is the most ambivalent name in history,...

34 John S. Coolidge, "Marvell and Horace", from Andrew
Marvell: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. George de F. Lord
With Coolidge's remarks affording some substantiation, we come then to a realisation of our earlier suspicions — that Cromwell possibly does covet the "antient Rights", the "Temples" and the "Pallaces", which he has thrown down in his chaotic rise to power. Cromwell's modesty (lines 87/88) are looked at ironically, for he is seen as Augustus Caesar, and, like that Caesar, Cromwell knows quite well how to pose as the servant of his Parliament, whilst, in reality, it is he, himself, who wields the effective power. In a similar way also to Augustus Caesar, Cromwell is going to become an embodiment of all the ideals which he has demolished. Yet his acting of the role of King can never be anything other than "the last effect". Cromwell will always remain the "Wars and Fortunes Son", he will pay rents of kingdoms to maintain his authority, and he will serve as an useful war-machine, for "The same Arts that did gain/ A Pow'r must it maintain."

"Oliver is a Bird of Prey, you may know by his Bloody Beak", said Clement Walker. and Marvell now (lines 91-96) presents his Cromwell as an obedient falcon:

So when the Falcon high
Falls heavy from the Sky,
She, having kill'd, no more does search,
But on the next green Bow to search;
Where, when he first does lure,
The Falckner has her sure.

It is significant that the falcon is a bird traditionally associated with royalty; but Marvell might have had Horace's

---

image from Ode I.37 in mind, when he considered Cromwell as a hunter:

... accipiter velut mollis columbas aut leporem citus
  venator in campis nivalis
  Haemoniae, daret ut catenis
  fatale monstrum; ...

As swiftly as the hawk follows the feeble dove, or in snowy Thessaly the hunter
  The hare, so he sailed forth
  To bind this fatal prodigy in chains.

Horace's simile describes Caesar swooping down upon Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C., and Marvell's metaphor shows Cromwell, who has fallen "heavy from the Sky," to seize upon his royal prey, Charles I. Yet this Cromwell is not a man of blood, for he is presented as a useful servant of the "Falconer" - England, and he will always return to his perch, the "green Bow", when lured or called. But we are also meant to remember the Cromwell of the beginning of the poem, the lightning flash and "active Star", who could hardly be called an obedient "Falcon", especially when we bear in mind the subtle hints at Cromwell's supposed ambitions. As the falcon did indeed have connotations of sovereignty, perhaps it is important to keep these ambitions of Cromwell in mind.

There is a suggestion, as the poem proceeds, that Cromwell is likely to extend the boundaries of the English

Republic, and the Protestant faith, in his capacity as war-machine and hunting-falcon:

What may not then our Isle presume
While Victory his Crest does plume!

Is Marvell suggesting, as does Horace, that Cromwell should direct his conquests abroad, in order that more civil strife may be avoided? This is a likely reading, but the word "presume" carries inferences of a bolder presumption, an idea that Cromwell's future conquests will be of the sacrilegious nature of his earlier triumph over Charles. The lines which follow this subtly hint at that interpretation:

What may not others fear
If thus he crown each Year!

The stress of the first line of the couplet falls on the word "others", hinting that it is no longer England which has anything to fear from the energetic Cromwell. Yet the word "fear" looks back at the recent conquest of the Irish, whilst anticipating the fear of the soon to be hunted "Pict". And there are insinuations that Cromwell means to attempt the overthrow of other monarchies and religious institutions, for, as he has paid the kingdom of England "for his first years rents ", he is also likely to "crown" the subsequent years of his rule in a similar way. Marvell states, then, that Cromwell is to continue his job as the scourge of monarchy, and Anglo-catholic and Romish "Temples", as a new champion for Protestantism. Yet, in the next lines, Marvell hail Cromwell as

A Caesar he are long to Gaul,
To Italy an Hannibal.
suggesting once again that Cromwell is aiming for the crown of the institutions he has destroyed. Moreover, "to all States not free" Cromwell "Shall Clymacterick be." He is to be "A Caesar" and "an Hannibal", both of these men who won empires by posing as liberators. The idea, here, is that Cromwell will indeed be "Clymacterick", or epoch-making, in the same way as these antique heroes have been, and yet Marvell hopes as a liberator who has freed his own country from the yoke of tyranny. Possibly, however, this is only a prelude to a large-scale conquest, with Cromwell in the position of conquering Caesar, aspiring King, and tyrannical dictator. Marvell’s ironies, subtle as they are, are still undeniably present, and they present a double picture of Cromwell without the disguise of fame, valour, and a pedigree from Fate; and yet with all England’s hopes and anticipations resting upon his shoulders.

After this speculation on the possibilities for England under Cromwell, Marvell returns to the immediate future, and Cromwell’s proposals for an invasion of Scotland. Horace urges Caesar to the foreign conquest of the Parthians in his Ode III.5, and Marvell envisages the subjugation of the "party-colour’d" Picts. He remembers the false ‘colours’ of the Scots, and their continually shifting alliances from King to Parliament during the recent Civil Wars. Cromwell, however, will not be deceived by their falsehood, for

The Pict no shelter now shall find
Within his party-colour’d Mind;
Helen Gardner comments on Marvell's pun in these lines:

'Plot' was falsely derived from pingere, to paint. The derivation was used by other writers to support the charge of falseness and treachery against the Scots. 37

The Scot also, will have cause to find Cromwell's "Valour sad", for "sad" can mean 'steadfast', and Scotland has before her, the precedent of the "sad" defeat of the Irish through Cromwell's invincible courage. Indeed the Scot, with no shelter either in his "party-colour'd Mind" or underneath his native "Plad", will be

Happy if in the tufted brake
The English Hunter him mistake;
Nor lay his Hounds in near
The Caledonian Deer.

The "English Hunter" would seem to refer back to the "Falckner", who, with his obedient hawk/"Hounds", will flush all enemies of the State and of Protestantism, from their perilous cover. However, implications that it is rather Cromwell, himself, who is the "English Hunter" are borne out when we recall Horace's ironic imagery of Caesar as a hunter in his Ode I.37. The first hunter in the Bible was Nimrod, who was also the prototype tyrant. The less complimentary hints which have been building up throughout this 'panegyric' to Cromwell, have now been confirmed as accurate. Cromwell is possibly not as obedient as he might appear; moreover, he could well turn out to be a tyrant in the same way that

---

the King he has destroyed was accused of being a tyrant, for
here we have the precedents of Caesar, Hannibal and Nimrod.
And Cromwell is not only to subjugate Scotland, but his
task is to hunt Charles II - "The Caledonian Deer" - in the
same way that he has woven a net in 1648, to trap that other
unfortunate Stuart, Charles I.

Marvell ends his poem using the traditional address of
the ode to its subject:

But thou the Wars and Fortunes Son
March indefatigably on;
And for the last effect
Still keep thy Sword erect;

A poem by Cowley also echoes Marvell in calling Cromwell "this
Son of Fortune" 38, and we may be reminded too, of Richard's
Queen, who in Act II. sc. ii, of Richard II, anticipates the
fatal rise of Bolingbroke with these words:

... Yet again methinks
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune's womb.

At the conclusion of Marvell's poem, Cromwell is once
more portrayed as an elemental force. But the poem seems
strangely uneven at this point, like the jerky movements of
a machine. The very rhythm in the words "in-de-fat-ig-ab-ly-on"
crete the impression which is double, that the meteor-like
Cromwell is possibly burning himself out, or on the other
hand, that this war-machine will march on for ever. Yet it

38 Cited by C. V. Wedgwood, Poetry and Politics under

39 William Shakespeare, Richard II, from The Complete
Wright (New York,1911).
is to Cromwell that "the last effect" belongs, words which may remind us of Charles's last theatrical "effect" of testing the axe with his "keener Eye", on the scene of his execution. These words, at the same time, both urge Cromwell onward to further conquest, yet warn him that his power may soon be challenged.

The tiring Cromwell must keep his "Sword erect", not only to remain an effective and useful tool of the Republic, but also to drive away "The Spirits of the shady Night". On this note of warning, we are turned back to the frightened "Architects" of the State, running from the head upon which their Capitol is founded. Possibly Marvell is referring to Brutus, the arch conspirator, and 'saviour' of Rome, who sees the ghost of his victim, Caesar, come to herald his death at the battle of Philippi. Perhaps one recalls at this point the spirits of murdered dukes and kings, who threaten Richard III with "Despair and die"; on the eve of the battle of Bosworth field. And Miss E. Duncan-Jones states that Odysseus and Aeneas ward off the spirits of the dead with their crossed sword-hilts. "Spirits of the shady Night" pulls the poem tightly round in its circular frame of reference, for we remember the "forward Youth" (line 1) of the beginning of the poem, that young man who is likely to be


associated with Charles II, and the idea that the KING can never die. For it is this "Youth", says Marvell, who is to leave "the Books in dust", and take up arms for the defence or liberation of his country. We notice, too, that this "Youth" has risen from the "Shadows" where he has been forced to languish. It is therefore relevant that Marvell should warn Cromwell of the "Spirits" from the "Shadows" or "shady Night".

The last two lines of the poem:

The same Arts that did gain
A Pow'r must it maintain.

provide a warning to Cromwell, in the same cautionary way that Horace bids his Caesar be vigilant. Clarendon, too, has something to say about the purchase of a kingdom by violent means:

... They who enter upon unwarrantable enterprises must pursue many unwarrantable ways to preserve themselves from the penalty of the first guilt. 42

and these words seem to echo the sentiments found in Shakespeare's histories dealing with usurpation. Marvell's lines appear to duplicate other contemporary views on the subject of Cromwell's 'sword Government':

That every thing is kept and maintained by the same waives and means it was got and obtained; is a rule true in Philosophy and Policy. 43


The subject of might versus right was evidently a popular topic of the time. Charles I, in his speech at the execution block, affirmed that

If I would have given way to an arbitrary way, for to have all laws changed according to the power of the sword, I needed not to have come here. 44

Charles's sentences provide one theme of the ironic conflict in Marvell's poem, where "antient Rights" are played off against Cromwell's "active" but illegal "Star".

Pamphlets were issued continually by Parliament in 1650, to justify their violent wrenching of the crown from the rightful king, and it is Marchamont Nedham, that notorious ex-Royalist, who urges the people of England to take the Engagement Oath of allegiance to the Parliament with the words:

that the power of the sword gives title to government. 45

It is likely that Marvell is thinking of these very recent words and arguments, when he warns Cromwell of the necessity for constant vigilance, but it is possible, also, that he has the words of Christ to Simon Peter in mind (Matthew 26.52):

Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Marvell's "An Horatian Ode" is a vast and shifting pattern of imposed and superimposed irony, yet the pieces


appear to fit together as neatly as a jigsaw puzzle. He has the Horatian stance of non-commitment, but also the political ideas of an Elizabethan cyclical pattern behind him as a strong and valid tradition. His personal views on the contemporary situation cannot be said to intrude in this poem, either on one side or the other, for his artistry is too fine to sink to the level of moral judgement or faction. His opinions in this poem can best be surmised from two passages from his book The Rehearsal Transpos'd, which he wrote over twenty years later, and which would appear to add weight to my claim that what Marvell is predominantly concerned with, in "An Horatian Ode", is the description of Providence's cosmic pattern behind the meddling hand of man:

Whether it be a war of religion or of liberty, is not worth the labour to inquire. Whichever was at the top, the other was at the bottom; but upon considering all, I think the cause was too good to have been fought for. Men ought to have trusted God; they ought and might have trusted the king with that whole matter... 46

and:

The arms of the Church are prayers and tears; the arms of the subjects are patience and petitions. The King, himself, being of so accurate and piercing a judgement, would soon have felt where it stuck. For men may spare their pains where nature is at work, and the world will not go faster for our driving. Even as his present Majestie's happy Restoration did it selfe, so all things happen in their best and proper time, without any need of our officiousness... 47


47 Ibid., 213.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Editions of Marvell's Works


Secondary Sources:

Longer Works of Biography and Criticism


Shorter Works of Criticism


Background Books


----- A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions; during the War there, from the year 1642 till the year 1644 from Stuart Tracts. New York: Cooper Square, 1964.


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


---


--- *A Reading of George Herbert.* London: Faber and Faber, 1952.


VITA AUCTORIS

Eiluned Mary Jenkins

1948 Born in Britain.
1966 Graduated from Convent of the Holy Family, Exmouth, Devon.
1971 Graduated from University College, Cardiff.
1972 M.A. in English from University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario.