PUBLIC VERSE AND PROPERTY: MARVELL’S “HORATIAN ODE” AND THE OWNERSHIP OF POLITICS

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Andrew Marvell’s “An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland” is a perplexing poem; its detached tone and hesitant sympathies are as elusive as its subject and occasion are obvious. Long ago, the ode served as the field for a battle with methodological and professional stakes much larger than the poem itself as titans Cleanth Brooks and Douglas Bush hurled mountains at one another.¹ Scholars since then have variously read the poem as a debate on the merits of the active and contemplative lives, as an expression of the critical difficulty of evaluating Providence’s hand in politics, and as an endorsement of Machiavellian republicanism in England.² Although its author’s intentions in writing the poem and, indeed, the degree of his loyalty to the new regime will likely forever frustrate critical efforts of recovery, we can discern Marvell’s preoccupation with imagining the contours of a newly forming public space for action in England. Blair Worden has rightly termed the ode “the most private of public poems”; it remained unpublished and perhaps uncirculated in any form until after Marvell’s death, and yet its subject opens outward on the world of politics and ideas rather than staging the withdrawal into the space of the mind that is characteristic of so many of Marvell’s lyrics.³ I argue that the “Horatian Ode” eschews the narrower forms of ideological loyalty typical of panegyric in order to represent the social and cultural underpinnings of the recent revolution that cannot be measured strictly in terms of loyalty. Instead of praise for a strong individual, the “Horatian Ode” delivers praise to a strong state that works on behalf of its citizens to secure domestic tranquility and opportunities for acquiring property. The poem adapts older models of aristocratic and civic virtue to the state’s contemporary needs, fashioning from recent economic and social changes in the nature of property ownership the tools needed for civic organization and political participation. Rather than simply ratify new republican ideologies or strike a posture of critical equipoise between old and new forms of political partisanship, Marvell’s ode offers an explanation for the dramatic increase in the number of opportunities...
for gaining mobile property and for the redistribution of that property in England that the revolution had brought about.

In an influential essay first published in 1979, J. G. A. Pocock argued that when late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political philosophers theorized the relationship between property and political institutions, they confronted an intricate dialectic between a classical ideal of landed wealth and a modern, commercial notion of movable property. One kind of property could be measured in landholdings, the other in mercantile wealth. The older conception allowed property owners the leisure to participate in civic life, to realize their potential as political beings, while the modern ideal of commercial property permitted the exchange of civilized values among heterogeneous populations. This latter ideal came to be known generally as le doux commerce, and eighteenth-century political and moral philosophers, especially Montesquieu, embraced it enthusiastically as a condition for the moderation of the passions and the maintenance of a peaceable civil society. Pocock locates the momentous shift in the English public’s perception of its government in the 1690s with the establishment of the Bank of England and the invention of the national debt. With the availability of government debt for purchase, Pocock argues, the stability of the state was dependent on the public perception of its strength as reflected in the price of that debt. Property, in other words, “has ceased to be real and has become not merely mobile but imaginary.” The state depended as much upon the imagination of its stability as upon tangible proofs of that stability. The “Horatian Ode” belongs to a period earlier than the one with which Pocock concerns himself, but the poem offers a similar representation of the state as an imaginary entity whose existence movable property both necessitates and makes secure. Several decades before the financial innovation of the 1690s could put a price on the creditworthiness of the state, the ode evaluates the strength of the state on the basis of the public perception of its work in securing private property rights. By doing so, the “Horatian Ode” not only diagnoses the relative health of the institutions of the state but also implies that its citizens’ perceptions of that health constitute a rudimentary form of ownership of government.

In reading the “Horatian Ode,” I will be looking less for evidence of Marvell’s tortured political loyalties, as most critics have done, than for the poem’s conceptions of the role that real and movable property plays in legitimating political institutions. The dominant historicist approaches to the literature of the Cromwellian years have directed attention to the recovery of political languages that earlier Whiggish
scholarship had attempted to simplify. Historicist criticism of this period has been overly concerned with fitting literary works into larger republican or royalist aesthetics. The linguistic turn in the history of political thought, which the writings of Pocock, Quentin Skinner, and John Dunn inaugurated, has paid ample dividends for literary critics in the form of richer and more historically accurate contexts for literary readings as it has provided a theoretical foundation for the efficacy of literature in shaping public discourse. At the same time, however, this methodology has obscured some of the social and institutional commitments of early modern political writing that transected ideological boundaries. Attention to “republican languages” or to the “writing of royalism” can reconstitute aesthetic and political commitments but cannot fully account for the range of institutional, ideological, and personal attachments that writers may hold. While these linguistically contextualized readings have pushed recent historicist criticism in exciting directions, they have also tended to suggest that political loyalism as a category of analysis maintains a primacy over other affiliations among writers and other ideological commitments that literature represents or questions. In many cases, this methodology may impose an ahistorical perspective on the subject at hand.

As an alternative, I argue that, in Marvell’s ode, contemporary concerns about the distribution of property in England and, especially, Ireland around 1650 animate the poem. By insisting that only the imaginary entity of the state, in contrast to the will of a sovereign, is a true reflection of the distribution of property in England, the “Horatian Ode” looks beyond narrow republican loyalism and even beyond categories of ideological loyalty. Whereas historicist critics of the poem tend to focus either on Marvell’s “troubled and divided loyalties” (the phrase is Worden’s) or on Marvell’s ideological support for republicanism and, in particular, his keen passion for Oliver Cromwell (David Norbrook), Marvell’s political thought in the “Horatian Ode” engages more closely with the social and cultural foundations of republicanism for which property ownership is central. Along with praise for Cromwell’s military success, the ode reserves a space for encomia to the revolutionary changes in property distribution in England. The contours of the ode’s debts to Horace and Lucan have been well mapped, but the poem also owes thematic debts to much of the verse on public affairs of the 1640s. After a brief survey of some of this polemical and elegiac poetry, I will situate the “Horatian Ode” in the context of Parliament’s attempts to finance its war effort by encouraging speculation in Irish land. The “Horatian Ode” evaluates
the shifting distribution of property in England as it asks for a response to political authority that changes to reflect these fluctuations. The poem suggests that only the imaginary entity of the state, in contrast to the will of a sovereign, can be a true reflection of the distribution of property in England and represents the authority of the state as a new and distinct category of political analysis.

I.

The execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649 left a lasting mark on literature of all kinds. An explosion of elegiac verse, much of it in manuscript, followed the king’s death, royalist romances modeled on Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* circulated widely in the 1650s, and the ever-popular newsbooks rushed into cheap print topical verses in doggerel stuffed with slanderous invective and sexual innuendo. The regicide also marked what to many seemed the conclusion of a saga that brought the financial motivations of all public actors to a new prominence. Charles’s disputes with Parliament had at their origins competing claims about the authority to raise revenue; during the Civil Wars, neither side could pay its soldiers in full; and meanwhile a new class of merchants seemed to find ways to profit from the woes of their political and economic adversaries. In one elegy for the dead king, an anonymous royalist blamed England’s descent into a destructive quest for lucre for the collapse of civil authority and moral accountability:

Free Loanes, fore’d Loanes, Taxes and penalties;  
Pole-moneys, weekly meales and Subsidies,  
All these cannot their greedy guts suffice.  
An hundred millions they’ve near spent and lost,  
And not one penny of it of their cost:  
Yet still they owe some millions of arreares:  
With great ingagements more as it appears.  
The Publique Faith is now so faithlesse found,  
Lenders would take five shillings in the pound;  
And maney for arreares right glad would be,  
For every twenty shillings to have three.

This author’s point that public finance had become a sorry mess under parliamentary rule was undeniable; at the same time, however, the Commonwealth had inaugurated not only a new political system but also a new set of public relationships based on public faith in the government. It might be true that “[p]ublic Faith is now so faithlesse found,” but the new underlying principle that a government’s legitimacy was based on the trust of its citizens had emerged.
Allegiance to Charles rested on an entirely different kind of faith, one that could be measured not by the market value of promissory notes but in terms of divine favor. Panegyric and elegy for Charles routinely emphasized his incomparable lineage, majesty, and heroism. By and large, it celebrated in exaggerated terms Charles the man for personal displays of valor on behalf of the kingdoms. The universities each put out celebratory volumes on the occasion of his return from Scotland in 1641 after concluding a peace settlement with the Scottish bishops. Cambridge’s volume, *Irenodia Cantabrigiensis*, laid lavish praise at Charles’s feet for the supposed success of his negotiations as it also displayed the impressive linguistic skills of its students: most of the contributions were in Latin, but there were also poems in English, Greek, Hebrew, and Anglo-Saxon. The precocious Abraham Cowley, a fellow of Trinity College (as it happens, Marvell’s college as well), submitted a competent exercise in elegiac meter that praised the peace-loving king whose brows were now fittingly adorned with olive:

\begin{quote}
Vicerunt alii bellis & Marte cruento;  
Carole, Tu Solus vincere bella potes.  
Others conquer by wars and with the aid of bloody Mars;  
you only, Charles, can conquer wars.\footnote{11}
\end{quote}

The emphasis on Charles’s individual heroism would come to seem increasingly anachronistic in public poetry after his death as poems turned instead to praising the communal strength of the English nation.

Poems in Charles’s honor also celebrated his providential blessing, a focus which after his death easily spilled into idolatry, confirming John Milton’s stinging rebuke of the English people who were “prone oftentimes not to a religious onely, but to a civil kinde of Idolatry in idolizing thir Kings.”\footnote{12} Although it became immediately commonplace to identify Charles’s death as a Christ-like martyrdom, many went further by blurring the distinction between regicide and deicide. One elegy, probably written in Ireland, lamented that “[o]ur great iust soveraigne dyed / our God on Earth, as Christ was Crucified.”\footnote{13} Another, from Scotland, inserted Charles in Christ’s place in typological readings of Old Testament prophecy: “In Davids Psalmes wee’l read our Royall King, / None but King David can Charles Prayses sing.”\footnote{14}

After the king’s death, panegyric and elegy begin to abandon these characteristics. Edmund Waller, for instance, composed a panegyric for Cromwell in 1655 praising the state’s efforts at securing foreign trade. At the Restoration, he wrote another for Charles II in similar terms, as did John Dryden.\footnote{15} But it was not simply the absence of a
royal sovereign that led to this change. Even with Cromwell’s consolidation of power in the mid-1650s, the future of the republican state was never entirely secure. A widely reported carriage accident in September 1654, in which Cromwell was thrown to the ground from the moving car causing a pistol he carried in his pocket to discharge, underscored the uneasy degree to which the stability of the state rested on one man. Property represented a more durable and broader way to define the strength of the state, although increasingly in the 1650s instances of property ownership might prove ephemeral or imaginary, and the political responsibilities of its possessors accordingly less certain. By reading the “Horatian Ode” less for evidence of its author’s political loyalties than for its conceptions of a newly ascendant state that maintained national peace by securing private ownership of property, we can better understand how the representational difficulties Marvell faced in assessing the new regime influence the composition of his ode. The ode offers a space for articulating why and how the relative fluidity of property ownership during this time was a primary contingency in any government’s hold on power.

II.

Marvell began his literary career with three poems that he published in 1648 and 1649 that display varying degrees of sympathy with the fading royalist cause. The last of these poems was a lament for Henry, Lord Hastings, who died of smallpox on 24 June 1649 at age nineteen. The dramatist Richard Brome hastily assembled a memorial anthology, Lachrymae musarum, to commemorate his sudden death, and Marvell’s contribution, “Upon the death of the Lord Hastings,” appeared in a supplementary section at the end of the volume. The critical tradition of this poem has emphasized its royalism and its rich, if not wholly plausible, imagery, often taking that imagery as evidence of Marvell’s aesthetic—and to a large degree, his political—sympathies in his late twenties. William Empson judged some of the images supremely beautiful, if immature. More recent critics have attempted to class the poem with others in Marvell’s royalist period with only limited success. In contrast to Marvell’s other early poems, the Hastings ode resists clear categorization as an expression of royalist political sympathies, even though it appeared in a resolutely royalist volume of verse. Marvell avoids linking Hastings’s death with the most obvious representations of royalism, as many of the other contributors to the volume had done. Hastings’s death is neither divine retribution for
the execution of Charles, as John Denham claimed, nor is it evidence that England has disintegrated into political anarchy, as Marchamont Nedham worried. Unlike other dashing teenaged royalists such as the late Francis Villiers, Hastings did not die on the battlefield nor had he by the age of nineteen identified himself as a particularly forceful defender of kingship. Marvell’s ode contextualizes Hastings’s death as part of an ordered and rational universe governed by the principles of human political action. The heavens are not interested in punishing England for its shocking execution of a sovereign, but instead look very much like human institutions of state, governed by “state-jealousy” and “maxim[s]” of policy. Although we have no reason to believe that Marvell was not still a royalist at this point, the Hastings elegy shows him to be less attracted to the display of his ideological partisanship in verse than he is to some of the deep structural forces that move politics. He will put this strategy at the service of a wider and more sweeping representation of English society in the aftermath of the Civil Wars in the “Horatian Ode.”

While the anthology Lachrymae musarum was assembled in the late summer or fall of 1649, Cromwell was already in Ireland beginning what would become a resoundingly successful campaign that would provide Marvell with the subject of his next occasional poem. Parliament had appointed Cromwell commander-in-chief of the armed forces and governor general of Ireland for a three-year term, during which time he enjoyed carte blanche in his subjugation of the Irish rebellion. His nine-month campaign was swift and nasty. Cromwell’s mercilessness, especially the massacres of the garrisons at Drogheda and Wexford, ensured a relatively quick end to the decade-long war and a minimal number of casualties for the parliamentarian army. By May 1650, his artillery had breached the walls of Clonmel, the rebel leader Hugh O’Neill had retreated, and Cromwell was sufficiently satisfied with his successes that he left his son-in-law, Henry Ireton, in charge in Ireland and sailed for England. Cromwell landed at Bristol on 29 May and entered London to many accolades on 1 June.

The “Horatian Ode” captures this celebratory atmosphere in June 1650 before the war in Scotland began later that summer. In weighing the importance of Cromwell’s victory, the poem considers the value of the active life in comparison with contemplation, offers a sympathetic vignette of Charles’s execution, and foretells the future success of republican government. We have no clear indication that the poem was published as a broadside or in any other printed form before 1681, although some very limited circumstantial evidence sug-
gests it may have circulated in manuscript. This extraordinary piece of verse does, however, offer evidence of Marvell’s engagement with the tumultuous theory and practice of politics at the beginning of the Commonwealth and provides an example of some of the ways in which mid-seventeenth-century poetic invention grappled with the jumble of fast-moving political and social events.

Machiavellian readings of the poem are now de rigueur, although the poem more precisely exemplifies the political thought of Niccolò Machiavelli as read by Marvell’s friend, James Harrington. The Machiavellian reading dates to 1960, but critical interest in this topic emerged only after 1984 with the publication of Worden’s watershed article on the poem. Since then, Brian Vickers and Norbrook have amplified his arguments. Machiavellian readings, though, tend to conflate Britain of 1650 with early sixteenth-century Italy, which was Machiavelli’s subject. The differences between these two regions’ political and social organization, however, were considerable. Northern Italian states could draw on native and contemporary republican traditions, while English thinkers needed to reach back to a shadowy ancient constitution. English wealth consisted principally in landholdings whose ownership over the previous century had begun to pass from great aristocratic estates to smaller yeoman farmers. England’s economy in 1650 was still agrarian, whereas that of Venice or Florence during Machiavelli’s time was increasingly mercantile. As Machiavelli himself was quick to point out, the sort of government that a state obtains will reflect to a large degree the distribution of property within that state. The “Horatian Ode” is, to be sure, a Machiavellian exercise on the ways in which individuals obtain and keep power. But it is also a meditation, using Ireland as a case study, on the relationship between property ownership and political action. Ireland in the 1640s and early 1650s saw some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil Wars and at the same time was the site of an experimental exercise of parliamentary authority to redistribute land to further its political ends. Marvell found in Ireland a convincing example of the ways in which property ownership affects the strength of the state and an explanation for why a redistribution of property should follow a change in the form of government during a revolution.

Formalist and historicist critics alike have read the “Horatian Ode” as a careful study of Cromwell’s character that stops just short of offering unqualified praise for its subject. The poem, however, contains less praise for Cromwell and even less for republicanism in general than it does for the social structures that buttress the new regime. The first
part of the ode focuses on Cromwell’s actions before and during the Civil Wars, but it manages to capture some of his mystique by telling us surprisingly little about his character. In addition to praise for Cromwell, Marvell offers this moment as a groundbreaking incident in the history of the young commonwealth. His challenge in the ode is to draw a convincing link between the execution of Charles I and Cromwell’s recent military victories in Ireland so that these events serve as two poles of a triumphant arc of historical continuity. Marvell needs to craft a narrative that will allow the reader to interpret the regicide through the teleological perspective of what he wants to claim is a pivotal victory for the republican government and for the new political order. But the problem with this argument was the patently unfinished nature of the Commonwealth’s consolidation of power in June 1650. The future Charles II, whom parliamentarian newsbooks had already dubbed “young Tarquin,” was sailing for Scotland to raise an army at the moment Cromwell was returning to England. Marvell must acknowledge the tentative nature of the Commonwealth’s battlefield victories and the amount of work that remains to do. The end of the poem, which has seemed bombastic to many readers, asserts the Commonwealth’s future military success in Scotland and even on the Continent, but it can offer nothing more than past success to support such assertions. Much of the tension in the poem derives from the uneasy coexistence of Marvell’s claim that victory in Ireland has proved that fate has ordained republican triumph and the undeniable fact that the Commonwealth’s military work, to say nothing of its social or political work, is scarcely half-finished.

Cromwell’s return from Ireland marked, at best, a midpoint in the long armed struggle for parliamentary supremacy. The decisive victories at Dunbar and Worcester were yet to come, as were the challenges that remained for Ireton and Edmund Ludlow to sort through in Ireland. A celebration of victory in Ireland in brash, definitive strokes raises the danger that the young poet might easily overplay his hand. Ireland, after all, lay on the periphery of the Commonwealth’s realm and had been settled by English colonists since the twelfth century; the subjugation of Scotland presented a trickier problem since Parliament had consistently treated Scotland differently in constitutional terms owing to its recent conjunction, but not unification, with England. The Commons abolished the House of Lords and the monarchy simultaneously in February 1649 in England and Ireland, but not in Scotland. Charles’s difficulties with the Scottish church over the imposition of the Laudian prayer book in the 1630s had sparked the Bishops’ Wars
and cautioned Parliament from imposing a religious settlement with too heavy a hand. Ireland was inhabited by a recalcitrant Catholic peasantry, but if rates of English colonization since Elizabeth's reign could be any guide, the country offered ample opportunity for further influxes of Protestant colonists who would firmly entrench English interests there. Victory over papist rebels in Ireland, as welcome as such news was to Parliament, could hardly be an assurance of victory against the Stuart monarchy in Scotland, let alone military or ideological success on other fronts.

Marvell's decision to focus on Charles's execution and the conquest of Ireland, then, seems a risky strategy for praising Cromwell. His juxtaposition of two events that seem only loosely connected asks his readers to clarify in their minds the causal link between two moments sixteen months apart. He delicately asserts not only that the regicide and Irish campaign represent Cromwell's greatest achievements, but also that the first was a precondition for the second. Indeed, the regicide foretold Cromwell's future greatness. The question of the balance of sympathy in this poem that has particularly vexed critics emerges as a central component of Marvell's strategy. By asking his readers to visualize Charles on the scaffold “[w]hile round the armèd bands / Did clap their bloody hands,” Marvell also asks that they number Cromwell among that crowd (55–56). Cromwell as the defender of republican liberty against the arbitrary government of royal prerogative emerges nowhere explicitly in the poem. Nor is it immediately clear how victory in Ireland will ensure the preservation of parliamentary authority in England. As Parliament was making a fuss over Cromwell's entry into London, royalist polemics seized on the event to argue that it was much ado about nothing. John Crouch, the editor of the royalist newsbook The Man in the Moon, downplays the significance of Cromwell's return for the parliamentary cause. In his last issue before parliamentary authorities suppressed his publication and jailed him for sedition, he offers sarcastic praise to join a growing chorus: “God blesse us; my Lord Cromwell is come safe home; pray ring the Bells backward, and bring all the Town-Buckets to quench his Nose, lest it sett fire on the Parliament-house; and then we were in a sweet case indeed, to have the keepers of our Liberties burnt?” Later in this issue, Crouch raises the more serious point that no one has verifiable intelligence of what, exactly, Cromwell did in Ireland. Perhaps “he is beat out of Ireland”; perhaps “he hath kill'd all but an old man, and a boy.” Ultimately, Cromwell's Irish campaign “is a State-Mystery.”

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Marvell demands much of his readers in this poem and not only at the level of comprehending his compressed syntax and oblique references. This is a poem about revolution, and he asks for an appropriately revolutionary understanding of events and of the images that constitute the memory of those events. Like the Hastings ode, this poem asks how one is to make an adequate judgment of events for which there are only inadequate precedents. As an answer, the poem proposes a new reading of the forces that drive history. The climax of the first half of the poem poses the challenge of interpreting Charles’s dignified execution when it is obvious that the poem’s teleology requires that sympathy for Charles give way to admiration for the Commonwealth. The reader’s task is to fit the regicide into a pattern of revolutionary events by counterintuitively interpreting a severed head as an augur of a stable republic:

This was that memorable hour,
Which first assured the forcèd pow’r.
   So when they did design
The Capitol’s first line,
A bleeding head where they begun,
Did fright the architects to run:
   And yet in that the State
Foresaw its happy fate.

(65–72)

Marvell’s interpretation of the event is at once classical and distinctly English. Varro, Livy, or Pliny could have furnished this story for Marvell in which excavators on Capitoline Hill unearthed an immaculately-preserved severed head, but not a bleeding one, during the reign of Tarquin. Marvell replays this event for an English audience by superimposing it on the scene of the execution that he has just recalled in the poem. Most surviving contemporary depictions of the execution are found in Dutch and German broadsides and show the scaffold outside Whitehall upon which the executioner holds up Charles’s decapitated head for the crowd to behold. Women faint; others raise their caps in approbation or in deference to their slain sovereign. Some of the broadsides depict Charles’s apotheosis as his soul is immediately received into heaven. The poem’s representation of the event remains neutral on this point. Instead, Marvell channels a macabre substratum in royalist elegy that focused on the graphic details of the execution. One particularly lurid elegy for Charles asked rhetorically, “[c]an you unweave the Nerves, then twist their thred, / And to th’unravell’d corps re-fit the head?” The “Horatian Ode” does not preclude a

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martyrological reading, but suggests that this sort of reading misses
the point that the king’s execution has severed the political and social
order violently and permanently. Whether Charles died for his belief
in the divine right of kings or simply for want of the proper tools of
statecraft is irrelevant now that the Commonwealth era has begun.

Marvell’s strategy for offering support for the Commonwealth is
much less aggressive than almost any other republican apologist,
especially one like Milton in *Eikonoklastes*. While Milton refuses to
concede any ground to justifying Charles’s actions in life or praising
the dignity of his death, Marvell rises above what was still by mid-1650
the epicenter of a propaganda battle. Charles’s execution outside of
Inigo Jones’s banqueting house ensures that Whitehall will no longer
stand as a symbol of royalist excess (the palace had exhibited most of
Charles’s sumptuous picture collection of the Italian masters, which
was sold at auction beginning in late 1649), but rather will become the
new capitol of the English republic appropriately cleansed of ostenta-
tion. Marvell slights those MPs and army grandees who had refused
to countenance the king’s execution (notably Lord-General Thomas
Fairfax), suggesting that the regicide “[d]id fright the architects to
run,” but even their hesitancy is now of little importance since more
dispassionate minds have coalesced to form a state that can interpret
correctly the events of the revolution.33 The abolition of old symbols is
unnecessary; the poem aims instead to infuse those symbols with new,
revolutionary meaning. Marvell’s lyric “The Gallery,” probably written
about this time, shows a similar interpretative process by depicting the
lover’s mind as a portrait gallery of images of his beloved in alternating
pleasing and terrifying postures.

Interpreting the “Horatian Ode” requires something of the same
facility at shifting one’s perspective among different images of the
same phenomenon. It is hard to distinguish Cromwell’s persona from
that of the supposedly arbitrary monarch except by comparing the
outcomes of their choices. The current government is, after all, a
“forced power” (66). “Caesar” in this poem refers both to Charles and
to Cromwell at different moments, neither of which appears to be
ironic. The “memorable scene” (58) of the execution gives way a few
lines later to the “memorable hour” (65) of the founding of the Com-
monwealth. If Charles is to be a creditable historical predecessor and
a worthy counterpart to Cromwell, he must act the part. The second
half of the 1640s had been for Charles a continual exercise in public
debasement. At Naseby in 1645, the parliamentarian army captured
his private correspondence, which Henry Parker and others gleefully
annotated and published. In 1646, Charles fled Oxford as it appeared that the royalist army was about to lose his headquarters, hastening from the city disguised as a servant toting a cloak-bag and sporting an appalling haircut. The Scots captured him and promptly sold him to the parliamentarians for the colossal price of £200,000. And in 1648, as Marvell mentions in this poem (47–52), Charles’s botched escape from Carisbrooke Castle solidified the opinions of many of his enemies that he could never be trusted to acknowledge Parliament’s authority. Newsbooks and poems alike reported these events dutifully. Marvell, however, needs Charles to remain as dignified in his office as possible right until and including the moment of his execution if he is to seem worthy of eclipse by Cromwell. Unlike nakedly partisan arguments for the legitimacy of the republic’s seizure of power, Marvell grants Charles and the monarchy somber recognition as appropriate institutions of government whose time has passed. The “ancient rights” of kingship are not illogical but superannuated (38). Charles either acknowledges the truth of this proposition on the scaffold or, Christ-like, acquiesces to God’s will in deposing him by refusing to call on heaven “[t]o vindicate his helpless right” (62). There is nothing left of that right except a tragic nostalgia for royalist institutions. Marvell might agree with Milton’s mean-spirited argument that Charles should not have been preserved for “the meere useless bulke of his person,” but on the scaffold that now-useless body takes on the dramatic qualities that underwrite the permanence of the political and social changes at hand. Charles will play the part of “the royal actor” as he mounts the stage of “[t]he tragic scaffold” and will perform a final heroic death for the audience in the street (53–54). Marvell’s scene shows a legitimate, orderly, and meticulously staged transfer of power, not the somewhat chaotic coup d’état that purged the Commons, stifled the Lords, and led to Charles’s special trial for treason.

Marvell suggests in the “Horatian Ode” that the Commonwealth should foster mental agility among its supporters rather than simply point to the right visual cues to interpret significant events. It is not necessary to promote iconophobia, but at the same time it is proper to move beyond the decadent aesthetics of the Stuart court. This mode of interpretation concedes some ground to Puritan critics of the wickedness of royalist iconography as it also counters royalist arguments that the republicans have no taste. The first image in the poem of Cromwell’s tangible success incorporates a new republican sensibility about the primacy of the common good as it pays deference to the obsolete customs of the landed aristocracy:
He to the Commons’ feet presents 
A kingdom, for his first year’s rents.
And, what he may, forbears 
His fame, to make it theirs.
And has his sword and spoils ungirt 
To lay them at the public’s skirt.

(85–90)

Marvell, as we have seen, takes pains to avoid humiliating the king at his death, but he attends equally to the royalist allegation that the authority of the republican government rests on naked aggression and the promise of wealth for the avaricious. These lines diffuse this charge by depicting Cromwell subordinating his own designs to the common good. The kingdom he presents is Ireland; the “Commons” might be the general populace, but the term refers as well to the House of Commons, now the supreme legislative and quasi-executive authority. Cromwell presents himself humbly before the people and the people’s representatives, subordinating the military trappings of his office to a republican ideal of the rule of law as he imitates the tenant’s yearly obligation to pay in-kind rents for the use of the lord’s farmland.

Marvell submits Cromwell’s presentation of Ireland to the people of England as evidence enough of his just intentions and forthright behavior. Although Marvell does not mention Charles’s dealings in Ireland in the poem, Cromwell’s behavior offers a notable contrast since the king’s attempts to secure a secret pact with Catholic Irish rebels that would transfer de facto control of Ireland to a native, Catholic parliament in exchange for the Irish rebel army’s aid in England, constituted a major charge against him. Charles had failed even to keep these proposed compacts with the Irish secret, while Cromwell, acting on the authority of Parliament and therefore the English people, amazingly subdued this bellicose race in one year. But Cromwell’s apparent respect for the rule of law is at odds with what elsewhere clearly seems to be the cultivation of loyalty through patronage. Just before describing his presentation of Ireland to the Commons, Marvell reminds us he is “still in the Republic’s hand,” an oblique reference to the fact that Cromwell had remained incommunicado while in Ireland despite Parliament’s repeated attempts to contact him (82). Intelligence was unreliable, and the rumors circulated feverishly during the first months of that year. Marvell manages to capture some of the uncertainty of the time prior to his arrival. That Cromwell is “still” a servant of the republic suggests mild surprise on the part of the author or the public at large and reintroduces a significant element of personal choice into
the narrative of Cromwell’s decision to submit the property of his conquests to the commonwealth. Cromwell is no automaton of the state but a politician who has studied carefully how and upon whom to bestow his benevolence. He has even managed to coerce the Irish to praise his fitness to rule after having just laid waste to their country (73–74). It is less the contrast between Charles’s and Cromwell’s actions or between their characters that makes the difference here than it is the revolutionary outcomes of their strategies. Charles’s scheming came to nothing, but Cromwell’s is masterful.

There is more to the story of Cromwell’s return than Marvell makes explicit. Ireland represents more than just the latest front in advancing the republican cause and more even than a large step toward the symbolically important reunification of the British Isles. Ireland had been something of Parliament’s pet affair throughout the 1640s, despite Charles’s ill-advised attempts to exercise his authority there. The conquest of Ireland marked the beginning of a successful conclusion to an experiment in parliamentary authority that had begun in 1642. In response to English plantation policies that had blatantly favored Protestant English colonists for the previous half-century at the expense of the native population, a coalition of aggrieved Irish Catholics revolted against English rule in 1641. Meanwhile in England, the deteriorating stability of the state meant that the government was running short on credit and in any case anxious about sending soldiers to Ireland when their need at home appeared imminent. In February and March 1642, hoping to raise £1,000,000 to finance a military operation in Ireland, Parliament offered two-and-a-half million acres in Ireland to speculators who would advance money to Parliament and be repaid in Irish land once the rebellion had been quelled. At four to ten shillings an acre, the land was priced to sell, and the scheme offered investors a chance to further the godly mission of Protestantizing Ireland that had been underway for several decades. The proposition was something of a gamble for support among London’s merchant community that would eventually succeed in transferring huge tracts of Irish land to English speculators. Many investors were MPs or future holders of prominent public offices, including Cromwell, John Pym, John Hampden, Bulstrode Whitelock, Oliver St. John, Arthur Haselrig, and Anthony Ashley Cooper. Initially, Parliament’s efforts failed to raise the hoped-for sum, securing not quite £300,000. But even the moderate subscription rates failed to disabuse Parliament of the inherent merit of the plan. A few months later, at the behest of very eager investors, Parliament approved a bill for the “Additional
Sea Adventure,” which licensed the private financing, organizing, and execution of a campaign to Ireland with the aim of assisting the war effort, and which authorized the campaign’s members to make off with as much booty as they could seize. But by the summer of 1643, Parliament, after funneling the investors’ money to pay for its army in England and losing ground in Ireland, again needed new infusions of cash. Since most of the original investors were infuriated that their money had been diverted toward furthering civil war at home and, in any case, had lost much of their confidence in the will or ability of Parliament to conduct the Irish campaign, Parliament offered twice the land to any investor who would venture an additional 25% of his original investment. Land was not quite as cheap as stinking mackerel, but almost. This “Doubling Ordinance” brought in only a little more than £12,000. But, since many of the adventurers were London merchants, they quickly realized the profitability of working as military contractors selling and shipping supplies to Ireland. The parliamentary committee charged with overseeing Irish affairs at this time included many adventurers, and war contracts were awarded accordingly. On 27 November 1643, this parliamentary committee and the investors’ association merged with no apparent trepidation over conflicts of interest.44 Although the adventurers had to wait until 1653 to receive the land due them, in the meantime many were able to profit from the war that would eventually secure their original investment.

This context informs Marvell’s interpretation of Cromwell’s Irish campaign. The spoils of war that Cromwell lays before the gates of London represent the long-delayed fruits of its citizens’ investments. His “advent’rous war” (11) recalls at once the danger inherent in the undertaking and the collective name of the speculators who had invested, or “adventured,” capital in the Irish land scheme in 1642–43. (This meaning survives today in the term “venture capital.”) By 1644 they had formed a lobby, calling themselves the “Committee of Adventurers in London for Lands in Ireland,” and began formally to petition Parliament for increasingly favorable terms for the payment of the remainder of their subscriptions. The investors understood that they had bought not only Irish land but the war effort as well. Parliament could gain time by offering less exacting terms, but it was never free from the influence of these investors on matters of Irish policy. The ceremony for Cromwell’s return in the “Horatian Ode” shows the commander’s deference to the people and at the same time demonstrates the state’s commitment to maintaining a tight relationship between investors and government. Marvell is deliberately and
cannily vague about the distinction between the people and their government here. After February 1649, parliamentary committees no longer oversaw the adventurers’ claims for Irish land; in their place, the executive authority of the Council of State assumed direct control for all military operations in Ireland. Ultimately, it would be the Council of State that would direct the disbursement of Irish lands to soldiers and speculators. But upon his arrival in London, Parliament rewarded Cromwell with additional Irish lands for his successful efforts. To this award, Cromwell could add the lands he expected to receive from his £600 adventure of several years earlier. Marvell’s casual remark that “if we would speak true, / Much to the man is due” takes on added meaning as it becomes clear that the English people and their government owe Cromwell not simply praise but quite a lot of the war spoils as well (27–28).

Although speculation in Irish lands was not a firm statement of political ideology in the early 1640s, fewer than 10% of the investors would eventually side with the royalists. Since the surviving lists of the investors do not indicate the time at which they first subscribed, it is impossible to know whether those disposed favorably toward Parliament in 1642–43 were more likely to invest in the scheme or whether those who had already invested were more likely to declare their allegiance for Parliament once it became clear to them that they had a substantial financial stake in a specific political outcome. Royalists suspected the latter explanation might be the case. In a broadside published the day before Charles’s execution, an anonymous polemicist argued that the parliamentarians were plundering the countryside and sending prisoners of war to English plantations overseas in order to keep the populace weak and repay their debts. This “last damnable Designe of Cromwell and Ireton,” as the title had it, was the collusion of moneyed interests and political rebels that encouraged self-interested gain at the expense of legitimate authority. The author went on, hysterically, to charge the parliamentarians with selling the plunder to Jewish financiers “whom they have lately admitted to set up their bancks, and magazines of Trade amongst us; and these shall be their Merchants to buy off for ready money.” Although evidence for plans to readmit Jews in England at this point is scarce to nonexistent, the author’s fear that Parliament could finance perpetual war when guaranteed access to cheap credit was not unfounded. With an entire class of moneylenders beholden to the government for their livelihoods, the alliance between political power and private capital was cemented. Charles had realized this dangerous alignment of interests too late in 1648 when, in a desperate attempt to
beg for the restoration of his authority, he offered to reimburse “the greedy and bold adventurers” who had lent money to Parliament, no doubt without thinking through the full political ramifications of their actions. This was a humiliating admission from the embodiment of royal prerogative that profit motives were now supreme.

For Marvell to provide a convincing alternative to the narrative that profiteering ultimately caused the regicide, he must do better than assimilate the spoils of war with a general offering to the public. Critics of republican egalitarian language had asserted, not without some reason, that such language really amounted to calling black white. While writing for the royalist side, Marchamont Nedham pointed out the absurdity of “ventur[ing] mony upon those Lands of the Irish which were unconquer’d (which was as his Majesty said, to divide the Beares skin before they could catch him;).” But rather than an isolated incident, the Irish land scheme was part of a sea-change in government that was radically altering the terms on which that government met its citizens. Condemning Parliament’s levy of forced loans during the second Civil War, Nedham related that “the Citizens are Ordered to lend 70000 li. (upon the credit of the Excise) for the present supply of the Navy,” adding bitterly, “which must needs be very credible security, seeing themselves and their Trades; with the rest of the Kingdome, are bound for the performance.” Since excise taxes were generated from the sale of domestic goods, Nedham worried that merchants would be forced to accept lower profits in order to recover the sums they had lent Parliament. He is understandably gloomy about the people’s prospects for reversing this relationship with government, but he is even more concerned that citizens will come to regard this state of affairs as normal: “So that publick faith having been long since quite out of date, it is very necessary, lest the good cause sterve, to hold up both Excise and Customs, that all the Customs may be changed which were given us by our Fathers.” As if by fiat, Parliament has changed to the point of absurdity the meaning of the crucial terms of politics. In what sense is Irish land in possession of one’s enemy or dubious future excise-tax revenue security against a government default on its debts? And how do the securities that back these loans provide for national security? In lieu of tangible proof of its legitimacy, Parliament has asked for trust, but this is impossible, Nedham asserts, when Parliament encourages its citizens not to trust but to act from self-interest.

The “Horatian Ode” responds to the charge that public faith in government is outmoded by arguing for the appropriateness of new
forms of political obligation supplanting old ones even as this poem takes care to represent the Commonwealth’s revolution in a manner that does not entirely abolish the symbols of the ancien régime. When Marvell turns to the story of Cromwell’s origin as a national figure, he places that myth within a distinctly human, as opposed to mystical or quasi-divine, setting. Indeed, Marvell’s description of Cromwell’s life prior to his involvement in politics (about which little was and still is known) verges on the indecorous:

Who, from his private gardens, where  
He lived reserved and austere,  
   As if his highest plot  
To plant the bergamot,  
Could by industrious valour climb  
To ruin the great work of time,  
   And cast the kingdoms old  
Into another mould.  
(29–36)

It might be in keeping with the new republican aesthetic to replace an encomium to divus Carolus with one to the private gardener Cromwell, but finding a bergamot tree in this poem has perplexed commentators. Most editions attempt to explain it away by suggesting that Marvell intends a symbolic reference to a pear tree emblematic of royalty, despite the fact that it would be odd for Cromwell’s ambition to reach no higher than the cultivation of a royalist symbol. It is a silly reference, but Marvell suggests by the qualifying phrase “as if” that although ownership of a private estate seems to identify Cromwell as a partisan of the king, no intrinsic link exists between property and ideological loyalty. In any case, the movement here from private retirement to virtuous public service is a well-worn model for statesmen dating to antiquity. The importance of Cromwell’s estate to that transition is never fully explained, but in emphasizing his transition from private to public life, the poem offers a model for the civic uses of property that comes quite close to the ideal that many of the investors in Irish land had hoped to realize. By juxtaposing an image of Cromwell confined to his private property with one of Cromwell presenting the spoils of war before the citizens of London, Marvell offers a tableau not just of the multiplication of national wealth but of the communal benefits that the pursuit of self-interest has brought.

As Worden has shown, Marvell already at this point in the poem suggests a new model for political action that is indebted to Machiavellian statecraft. Worden notes that the terms “industry” and “valour”
were the translations of *industria* and *virtù* in the 1640 English edition of *The Prince*. Indeed, the term “industrious valour” would seem to question codes of aristocratic honor in which valor accrues less by industry than by natural disposition. The world of the “Horatian Ode” does indeed seem to be a Machiavellian one, particularly the chilling conclusion describing how Cromwell will keep his authority: “The same arts that did gain / A pow’r must it maintain” (119–20). But it is Machiavelli updated for the present time. The parliamentarian victories in the Civil Wars and especially the war in Ireland have created a military-government-commercial complex whose lasting strength depends on preserving a balance in the distribution of property that will keep enough stakeholders in government satisfied. The arts of war include not just martial strength but also the recalibration of politics to account for the distribution of property in England.

Marvell accords a central place to private ownership of property in this poem, deftly moving from an older, classical model of propertied ease, from which a sense of civic virtue prompts Cromwell to leave his private gardens and enter public life, to a new order in which the war spoils Cromwell distributes for the good of all will eventually find their way into private ownership. In this sense, Marvell’s poem more precisely agrees with the political philosophy of James Harrington, whose magnum opus, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), argued that all forms of government were temporary and subject to moments of stress that would result in the dissolution of the state. Politics was cyclical, as thinkers since Polybius had argued, but Harrington’s novel contribution to the debate was his thesis that a change in the distribution of property in a state determined when those moments of stress in history would occur.

The “Horatian Ode” delicately fuses praise for the man with praise for foundational social institutions, and by doing so it offers a panegyric less for Cromwell than for the emerging state. The poem succeeds on this front because it places nearly everyone and everything within a context of long-term tectonic processes of change. A Harringtonian model of the causes of social upheaval can explain England’s changes in government and the commensurate legitimization of new property owners. Charles acts as a type for Cromwell in this poem as his former majesty prefigures Cromwellian might. Charles was “Caesar” the tyrant; Cromwell is “Caesar” the brilliant general and clement statesman. Charles “nothing common did, or mean” (57); Cromwell submits before the Commons as is proper for a republican leader (85–90). The “Horatian Ode” is less a rhetorical exercise *in utramque partem* than it
is an attempt to decide whether and how Charles’s execution is relevant to political matters at hand in the summer of 1650. Whether the king ought to have been executed and whether republican government is legitimate appear to be slightly idle queries. The real question, Marvell implies, is now that Charles has been executed, what can that event foretell about the future of epochal political change? At a midpoint in the story of the Commonwealth, when it is proper to look back to the regicide and forward with expectation, the “Horatian Ode” argues for a historical continuity between monarchical past and republican future by foregrounding an ideal of private ownership of property. From the private, landed wealth of the poem’s nominal hero to that hero’s presentation of property as a foundation of the state, the poem offers visions of both social stability and rupture.

Just as Cromwell submits the rule of law and republican ideology to the goal of reconciling factions and extending English imperial dominion, so too does the “Horatian Ode” subordinate praise for Cromwell the individual to the larger aim of praising a strong state. The “advent’rous war” that Marvell places at the center of the “Horatian Ode” elegantly performs the Commonwealth’s vision of revolutionary social and religious change. By adventuring, or hazardizing, his fate in battle, Cromwell entrusts his success to Providence at the same time that he ratifies the new social vision that his merchant supporters had pioneered in the 1640s. He institutionalizes their war for private adventure, and Marvell performs the difficult rhetorical task of explaining the logical consistency of a culture that is simultaneously avaricious and godly.

The ode is an exquisite example of the hologram-like quality that critics have detected in Marvell’s verse, whether it manifest itself as an apparent lack of resolve that causes him to support whoever is in power or as an aesthetic preference for literally assimilating his body with the green shades of a garden. Now you see the bloodthirsty crowd clapping their hands at the scaffold, now a grateful multitude applauding Cromwell. Marvell’s apparent eagerness for retouching royalist symbols for republican use does not indicate any lingering sympathy for the royalist cause or even a simple hedging of his bets. Rather, his attention to the changing context of these representations of power constitutes an aesthetic and hermeneutic strategy for explaining revolution. This coyness is not a refusal on Marvell’s part to take a firm position on politics, but a canny observation that before one takes such a position one must acknowledge that most appraisals of Cromwell’s success have misjudged the proper context for evaluating
that success. His poetry of 1649–50 insists that to understand radical events, one must first understand the social forces that have caused those events. The “Horatian Ode” asks why revolutions happen when they do and proposes as an answer a fundamental shift in the way in which a society evaluates the ends of politics. The replacement of the monarchy with a republic, important as it is, gives way to a vision of stability grounded in the ownership of property. Indeed, Charles’s execution neatly appears between complementary representations of property ownership. Cromwell’s private garden retreat offers a hypothetical template for social reform that is realized only in the moment of presenting the spoils of war. By understanding the new way in which private ownership of property takes on social functions in the state, the “Horatian Ode” transforms the royalist criticism that Parliament is bought and paid for into a republican strength. At first, private property functions as a hermitage and a preserve from the concerns of the state, but by the poem’s end, the people maintain an ownership stake in their government. Ireland is but the first tangible evidence that the republic can offer of the mutual fruits of this relationship.

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NOTES

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3 Worden “Andrew Marvell, Oliver Cromwell, and the Horatian Ode,” 150.


1 Pocock, “The Mobility of Property,” 112.

2 These quotations are from two exemplary works of scholarship on seventeenth-century literature and are emblematic of their focuses. See Norbrook; and Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism, 1628–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001).


5 A Flattering Elegie upon the Death of King Charles: The Cleane Contrary Way (n. p., 1649), 5.


8 “a copie on the execrable murder of our King,” Osborn Ms fb228, Beinecke Library, Yale University, page 63.

9 *The Scotch Souldiers Lamentation upon the Death of the Most Glorious and Illustrious Martyr, King Charles* (n. p., 1649), 33.

10 See Edmund Waller, *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector* (1655) and *To the King, upon His Majesties Happy Return* (1660); see also John Dryden, *Astraea Redux* (1660).


12 See the discussions of this poem by Michael Gearin-Tosh, “Marvell’s ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings,’” *Essays and Studies*, 34 n.s. (1981): 105–22; Art Kavanagh, “‘Without Redress or Law’: Justice and Necessity in ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings,’” in *New Perspectives on Andrew Marvell*, ed. Gilles Sambras (Reims: EPURE,

18 See Lachrymae musarum, ed. Richard Bronson (London, 1649), 41, 81. Although the later poem is signed “M. N.,” there is little doubt that this poem is by Marchamont Nedham.  


20 The critical consensus generally dates this poem to June or to the first half of July 1650 since it seems to anticipate Cromwell’s campaign to invade Scotland, which did not begin until 28 June. Cromwell did not cross the Scottish border until 22 July. Marvell could, of course, have revised the poem later. Derek Hirst and Steven Zwicker dissent from this chronology by pointing to Marvell’s reference to the Scot taking refuge in the “tufted brake” as an allusion to General Alexander Leslie’s elusive maneuvers in August (109). See their “High Summer at Nun Appleton, 1651: Andrew Marvell and Lord Fairfax’s Occasions,” Historical Journal 36 (1993): 247–69, esp. 249n8. These lines appear to me more a general statement of supposed Scottish fear rather than an allusion to a specific event.  


25 See Niccolò Machiavelli, Discourses, 1.55.7.  

26 Historian criticism of the “Horatian Ode” in the vein of Worden and Norbrook has argued that the poem represents a sharp break with conventions of royalist representation and instead attempts to forge links with a nascent republican culture even as it holds Cromwell at arm’s length. More recently, McDowell has brought some of the poem’s debts to royalist literary culture back into focus; see his Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars, 221–58.  

27 For this epithet, see, for instance, [Nedham], Mercurius Politicus, 6–13 Jun 1650, 12, and [Nedham], Mercurius Politicus, 13–20 Jun 1650, 22, 31, and 32.  

20) [Crouch], The Man in the Moon, 29 May–5 Jun 1650, 431.

20) See Varro, De lingua latina, 5.41; Livy, Ab urbe condita, 1.55.6; and Pliny, Naturalis historia, 28.4.


22) An Elegie on the Meekest of Men, the Most Glorious of Princes, the Most Constant of Martyrs, Charles the I. &c. (London, 1649), 1.

23) Norbrook makes a similar point in Writing the English Republic, 266.


26) For a lucid account of the interplay of newsbook reporting and occasional verse at this time, see Joad Raymond, “The Daily Muse; Or, Seventeenth-Century Poets Read the News,” Seventeenth Century 10 (1995): 189–218.


29) See, for instance, the 27 Feb 1644/5 letter to James Butler, Marquis of Ormond, Charles’s commander in Ireland, in which he freely admits that the political chaos has overcome his scruples and instructs his subordinate to strike “the best bargain [he] can” with the rebels (Kings Cabinet Opened, 16).


32) The standard work on this subject is Karl S. Bottigheimer, English Money and Irish Land: The “Adventurers” in the Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), from which I have drawn the information contained in this paragraph. See esp. 30–53, 82–83.


34) See British Library, MS Add. 4771, f. 3v. It was also ordered that “alle those members of the house that are adventurers are added to this comittee.” The creation of this joint committee had been discussed at the meeting of the parliamentary Committee for the Affairs of Ireland on 31 August 1643. See British Library, MS Add. 4782, f. 248v.

35) Cromwell had invested in the scheme in two £300 tranches in 1642. He perhaps invested a further £250 at some point before 1653. See Bottigheimer, 70, 179. For Parliament’s award of additional land, see House of Commons Journal, 31 May 1650.
For a helpful account of Cromwell’s financial and religious entanglements in Ireland during the 1640s, see Patrick Little, “Cromwell and Ireland before 1649,” in Oliver Cromwell: New Perspectives, ed. Little, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 116–41. On the family’s interests there in the following decade, his son’s letters provide a wealth of information. See Peter Gaunt, ed., The Correspondence of Henry Cromwell, 1655–1659: From the British Library Lansdowne Manuscripts, Camden Soc. 5th series 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007).


47 The Last Damnable Designe of Cromwell and Ireton, and Their Junto, or Caball (London, 1649).


49 [Nedham], Mercurius Pragmaticus, 25 Jan–1 Feb 1648, 5.

50 [Nedham], Mercurius Pragmaticus, 25 Jan–1 Feb 1648, 4.


52 See Worden, “Marvell, Cromwell, and the Horatian Ode,” 165.

53 The cyclicality of political institutions was a favorite theme among republican writers. Nedham’s explanation that revolutions were unavoidable and coincided with what he termed the “fatal periods” of a nation was typical. See The Case of the Commonwealth of England, Stated (1650), ed. Philip A. Knauchel (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1969), 12. For Harrington’s summary of the relationship between land tenure and political ideology, see The Commonwealth of Oceana (1656), in The Political Works of James Harrington, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 163–64.