

**Loyalty to *Leviathan*:
Andrew Marvell's Politics in the Cromwellian Poems**

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Introduction

The ambiguities present in the poetry of Andrew Marvell have long confounded efforts to determine the precise thoughts of their author, especially with relation to politics. In the 17th century, being reserved about political beliefs had its uses: Marvell managed to sail effectively through the troubled straits of political vacillation, with the Royalist causes of Charles I (and later, Charles II) playing Scylla to Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarian Charybdis. John Milton and Marchamont Nedham—personal friends of Marvell—were not so fortunate; both were compelled to flee for their lives, and Nedham was thrice imprisoned. Therefore, it stands to reason that Marvell's ambiguous language might simply be a matter of simple self-preservation. However, the facts of Marvell's life seem incompatible with the idea of a man without convictions, willing to comment only ambiguously and indirectly through vague language, metaphor, and irony. John Kenyon observes that, as part of the duties involved in serving as a member of Parliament for Hull, Marvell was involved in trips to the continent and voted on issues of politics and religion, making speeches of great importance.¹ Here, Marvell argued strenuously enough to be considered something of a spokesman in opposition to the government of the time—hardly the behaviour of a man without convictions.² If he possessed beliefs of a political nature, as it appears he did, the ideological basis of those beliefs should be visible in three of his poems written on the topic of the most politically polarising figure of his time: Oliver Cromwell. Taken as snapshots of

¹ John Kenyon, "Andrew Marvell: Life and Times," in *Andrew Marvell: Essays on the tercentary of his death*, edited by R. L. Brett (Oxford: Oxford University Press / University of Hull Publications, 1979), 19-20.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

England under Cromwell, the poems—*An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*, *The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector*, and *A Poem upon the Death of His Late Highness the Lord Protector*—demonstrate Marvell's underlying political belief in an English *Leviathan* of the Hobbesian mould—a strong ruler whose military victories and popular support simultaneously acquire political authority and serve as evidence of a natural right to that political authority. Summing up the idea with admirable brevity, Stuart Sim and David Walker describe the Hobbesian state as one in which there was a condition of “absolute sovereignty, preferably in the person of a monarch, who could not be divided against himself, and absolute obedience on the part of the state's subjects, who could not question the sovereign's actions”.³ Furthermore, there is no evidence that the poems were retroactively tampered with, nor does it appear that they were modified so as to make them more appealing to one political faction or another.⁴ And recently, it has been recognised that Marvell may have known of Hobbes, for in *The Rehearsal Transpros'd*, Marvell adopts Hobbes' own line of reasoning with regard to the causes of the English Civil Wars as proceeding from the intransigence of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), a professor of theology at Leiden.⁵ As a result of investigating this avenue of inquiry, instead of resorting

³ Stuart Sim and David Walker, *The Discourse of Sovereignty, Hobbes to Fielding: The State of Nature and the Nature of the State* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 13.

⁴ Christopher Wortham, “Marvell's Cromwell Poems: an Accidental Triptych” in Condren and Cousins, *The Political Identity of Andrew Marvell*, 17.

⁵ Martin Dzelzainis, “Ideas in conflict: political and religious thought during the English Revolution,” in Keeble, *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, 32-33. Hobbes and Marvell both believed that the civil wars were a result of Arminius rejecting Calvin's predestination teaching regarding salvation; the ensuing dispute broke down along political lines with the Arminians supported by republicans and the Calvinists supported by the House of Orange; the matter was resolved at the Synod of Dort in the Calvinists favour, but the Arminians remained ascendant in England under Archbishop Laud. As the Anglican Church

to the tired charges of transience, internal contradiction, and ambiguity, it may be possible to make determinations about just what Marvell believed, and when.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, and the State of Nature

If Marvell's beliefs are similar to or identified with the political philosophy of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, then no examination of Marvell's beliefs should begin without first establishing what Hobbes is arguing in *Leviathan*. Only once these fundamental beliefs are established is it possible to look for evidence of them within Marvell's political verse. As an aid to this task, one book in particular figures prominently. Professor A. P. Martinich's *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (1992) serves to clarify the often dense text of *Leviathan* itself, and has been used as the primary analysis of *Leviathan* in this paper.

Through Hobbes' philosophy run principles of the Calvinist strain of Protestantism, a developing force in contemporary English religious thought. Therefore, it should be no surprise that, for the title of his political-religious work, Hobbes turned to the Bible, appropriating the name of *Leviathan*. As one of the three great creatures of Jewish folklore, Leviathan, along with Behemoth and Ziz, is to be destroyed by God at the last judgement. The beast is described extensively in Job 41:

Behold, the hope of a man is disappointed;
he is laid low even at the sight of him.
No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up.

became more Arminian, Puritans were alienated, and when Charles I and Laud tried to enforce it on the Presbyterian Scots, it led to rebellion, personal rule, and the Civil Wars.

[...]

Upon earth there is not his like, a creature without fear.

He beholds everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of
pride.⁶

Leviathan is seen as an indomitable enemy of the people—not a friend; in the Bible, it stands in as “a principle of chaos and disorder”, yet Hobbes presents his Leviathan—the commonwealth—as “the principle of rule and order”.⁷ Further references to Leviathan can be found throughout the Bible.⁸ In many of these places, the eventual destruction of Leviathan (by God) at the end of the world is alluded to or described. Further establishing Leviathan as a force of evil and disorder, John Milton (himself a friend of Marvell) draws comparisons between Satan and Leviathan in the first book of *Paradise Lost*.⁹ Moreover, Leviathan was sometimes identified with the medieval motif of the “Hellmouth”, the entrance to hell as envisaged in the form of a monster’s gaping maw. Thus, in Hobbes’ time, Leviathan was a predominantly negative image. The inversion is not, then, merely a matter of opposed principles of order, but also of good and evil. What is the reason for this inversion? Hobbes explains his choice in a way which provides insight into the basis of his political theory.

Hitherto I have set forth the nature of Man, (whose Pride and other Passions have compelled him to submit himselfe to Government;) together with the great power of his Governour, whom I compared to *Leviathan*, taking that comparison out of the two last verses of the one

⁶ Job 41:9-10, 33-34 (RSV).

⁷ A. P. Martinich, *The Two Gods of “Leviathan”: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48.

⁸ Job 3:8, Isa. 27:1, 51:9, Amos 3, Psalms 74:14, 104:26.

⁹ John Milton, *Milton’s Poems*, edited by B. A. Wright (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1962), *Paradise Lost*, l. 192-220, p. 163-164.

and fortieth of *Job*; where God having set forth the great power of *Leviathan*, called him King of the Proud.¹⁰

Hobbes goes on to explain that Leviathan “is mortall; and subject to decay”, but also that there is a power in heaven which Leviathan should fear and whose laws Leviathan ought to obey; significantly, Hobbes adds that no such power or obligation exists on earth (275). The reason for his choice is because the “Mortal God” Leviathan is supremely powerful on Earth, just as is the Biblical creature (143). Both are “King of the Proud” —that is, they have power over men. And both are answerable only to God, and not to any earthly authority.

The focus on pride is significant. For pride, Hobbes maintains, is the source of all human misery. The explanation for this comes in a roundabout fashion. “Nature hath made men so equall,” begins Hobbes, that “the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others...” (101). Hobbes extracts from this state of affairs a poignant observation, that “from this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends” (102). Given that Hobbes believes that all men possess “a natural disposition towards anti-social behaviour” and that the individual is “dominated by his appetities”, the danger to each individual is great.¹¹ For Hobbes realises “some people enjoy dominating others,” but that in the state of nature “no one can look for protection from the government – for in the state of nature there is no government.”¹² Therefore, every

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Boston: Dutton Books, 1953), 274-275. All subsequent references to this work will be parenthetically cited by page number within the text.

¹¹ Sim and Walker, 14-15.

¹² Martinich, 49. Another salient point here (which Hobbes makes and which Martinich eventually covers) is that the domination of other men is often *anticipatory*; that is, some men wish to dominate others so as to protect themselves or achieve their ends, for they need not fear those whom they control.

man lives in suspicion of every other man; he is also aware that all other men are suspicious of him. From this, Hobbes concludes,

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man. For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell onely, or in the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known... (103)

In other words, a government (“common Power”) that is capable of keeping men in awe is not an imposition, but rather a sanctuary, for it provides men with safety from the normal state of war that exists between every man.

The way in which such a government is formed is through the making of a contract in which natural rights are transferred to a central authority. Such contracts are unconditionally binding, Hobbes argues, because “In Contracts, the right passeth, not onely where the words are of the time Present, or Past; but also where they are of the Future” (112). Consequently “once that sovereign authority is in place we have no right to contest its wishes, since it is presumed to represent the will of us all.”¹³ The creation of the government is thus described as the issuing of a verbal (social) contract:

This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same person, made by Covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every man, *I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner.*¹⁴ (143)

¹³ Sim and Walker, 16.

¹⁴ Note that Hobbes makes provision not only for Monarchy, but also for Democracy—and for Aristocracy as well. This is important for any political theory that must work equally well under a King, a Parliament, and a Lord Protector. For a further explanation, 155.

The 'consent of the governed' is more than simple individual consent; it is a binding and mutual contract which men issue not only of themselves, but with every other man. The final condition—that every other man also subscribes—is vital. Without it, there is no government. Drawing from *The Elements of Law*, in addition to *Leviathan*, Arihiro Fukuda explains the giving of authority as “the renunciation of private judgement.” When the subjects think the government has violated a fundamental law, they are set free from the duty of obedience, and private judgement (the state of nature, a war of every man against every man) is resumed.¹⁵

Certainly, the condition of a subject under a government which exerts absolute power and control is not to be envied, and Hobbes is aware of this. But Fukuda believes—quite rightly—that the choice which men make in choosing to live in such a social contract is not between freedom and tyranny, but rather between absolute government or the *de facto* state of war that exists outside of it.¹⁶ Yet, for Hobbes, there are moments when a government crosses a line and the duty of the subject to be obedient is lifted. Such a moment characterises the transition from the monarchy of Charles I to the Parliament. Additionally, the government itself can voluntarily abdicate its position, giving the subjects the chance once again to provide the social contract to its successor, as happened after the death of Cromwell. Likewise, the assumption of authority may be peaceable when the government transitions, or it may be built out of the 'state of nature'—war—and be violent, protracted,

¹⁵ Arihiro Fukuda, *Sovereignty and the Sword: Harrington, Hobbes, and Mixed Government in the English Civil Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 52-53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and vicious.¹⁷ Despite these differences in birth, for Hobbes the result must be the same: *Leviathan* must be the government, for it alone can give safety.

Marvell shares the belief that *Leviathan* is necessary for the good government of the realm. In his *Horatian Ode*, the transition from Charles I to Cromwell is seen as a necessary result of the movement of martial and administrative power from one man to the other. When Charles loses the power needed to maintain his crown, obedience is no longer due him. Then, a state of war must exist—and does—until a new power assumes authority: the power of Cromwell. This echoes the difference between *Leviathan* and the “state of nature”, and frees Marvell from obedience to Charles, even as he can concede the king’s former right to rule.

In *The First Anniversary*, Marvell describes the effects of Cromwell having taken up the mantle of *Leviathan*. Because Cromwell has, and exercises, power, good government exists. Yet there are strains of tension; foreshadowings of the future, and speculation on what may come when Cromwell is no more. These predictions are realised in the *Poem upon the Death of the Lord Protector*, when the power which Cromwell held is transferred. Though it seems that it must move to Oliver Cromwell’s son, Marvell realises that power is needed to maintain the authority of the *Leviathan*. Richard Cromwell, Marvell seems to observe, may not be a fit instrument for that task. If so, then the storms of war must be the result: the state of nature in a *Leviathan*-less state.

¹⁷ The idea that a government obtains power from the consent of the people and through military triumph, and can lose it by the same, is key to ‘the Puritan Doctrine of Election’, about which more later.

An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland

Marvell wrote the first of the three Cromwell poems—the *Horatian Ode*—between June and July of 1650.¹⁸ King Charles I had been executed just over a year before, in January of 1649, and the Protectorate had not yet been established—indeed, during June of 1650, Charles II arrived in Scotland to try to recover his throne.¹⁹ For the moment, the political state of England remained fluid, as did Marvell's political position. Unable to forget Charles I (for whom, in 1637, Marvell had written verses in celebration of a new child), Marvell was nevertheless cognizant of the military renown and increasing power of Cromwell and Parliament.²⁰ It is this transitory phase that marks the movement of the *Leviathan* of the English state; from being embodied in the person of the king it is first lost (returning men to the state of war that is inextricable from an anarchic lack of authority), then attained by the victorious and martially powerful Cromwell (creating anew the government and ending the state of war that otherwise naturally exists). The *Horatian Ode* contains evidence of internal contradiction between sorrow for the death of Charles I and excitement for the successes of Oliver Cromwell, mirroring this Hobbesian motion. Marvell wrote three other Royalist poems in 1650 (*Tom May's Death*, *To His Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace*, and *Elegy on Lord Francis Villiers*), and in the immediately following years wrote poems supporting the

¹⁸ Andrew Marvell, *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, edited by Nigel Smith (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), xxiv. All subsequent references will be cited by title and line number from this edition. Abbreviated titles will be employed throughout: *Ode* for *An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*, *Anniversary* for *The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector*, and *Elegy* for *A Poem upon the Death of His Late Highness the Lord Protector*.

¹⁹ Simon Schama, *A History of Britain, Volume II: The Wars of the British, 1603-1776* (New York: Hyperion, 2001), 168-169, 212. In this paper, Prof. Schama's text is used as the primary reference for the historical circumstances and dates of events related to the English Civil Wars.

²⁰ Marvell, xxiv. The argumentation here is mine; the reference is to the source for the parenthetical section.

position of Lord Fairfax—a man who, according to Lawrence Hyman, was at that time neither a Royalist nor a Parliamentarian.²¹ So the *Horatian Ode* might be seen as a poem which perfectly embodies the contradictions and changes taking place in Marvell's apparent allegiance as a result of his internal political thought. It is as if Marvell is bidding farewell to the Royalist cause without malice or regret; setting it aside, knowing that it has served its purpose and been replaced by some other fitting device. Some critics have levelled accusations of irony here—both in the tone of the poem, and in the particular choice of an *Horatian* ode—but even amongst the perceivers of such irony, there are those like Christopher Wortham who are quick to add that “it takes a lot of contortion to read all of these instances of praise as being ironically directed.”²²

Marvell seems to take up the Parliamentarian standard by painting Cromwell as sent by God. Striking at the wayward Monarchy like “three-forked lightning”, Cromwell is then called “The force of angry heaven's flame” (*Ode* 13 & 26). These heavenly descriptions put Cromwell on the side of God and surely, therefore, on the side of right. But Marvell's poetry defies such an easy conclusion:

Much to the man is due:
Who, from his private gardens, where
He lived reservèd 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. (*Ode* 28-36)

²¹ Lawrence W. Hyman, “Politics and Poetry in Andrew Marvell,” *PMLA* 73, no. 5 (December 1958), 475.

²² Wortham, 21.

Marvell quickly shatters the initial impression of unreserved praise. Though society owes him a debt (and even this statement seems a polite throwaway, heavy with irony), Cromwell is painted not merely as the hammer of God's wrath, but as one who ruins the "great", long-established order. In his recent biography of Marvell, Nigel Smith observes that the action of the poem is a "consummate account of Cromwell's ambition" which "takes its guidance from Machiavelli's *The Prince*".²³ (In August of 1656, whilst in Saumur, Marvell himself would be called an "Italo-Machiavellian" by James Scudmore, an Anglo-Irish Royalist, in a letter to Sir Richard Browne, Charles II's ambassador to the French court.²⁴) The arts of peace do not appear until the end of the poem, illustrating Marvell's idea of Cromwell primarily as a master of the arts of war—albeit a Godly one. And so too for Hobbes: according to the philosophy of *Leviathan*, only after Cromwell is secure in power could peace be possible, for peace requires a secure government, and is an effect (not a precondition) of it. But if Cromwell is on the side of God and right, so is the deposed monarch, for Marvell "absolves Charles of shame on the scaffold".²⁵

He nothing common did, or mean,

²³ Nigel Smith, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 82. Smith seems to believe that Marvell's political belief is primarily Machiavellian, not Hobbesian, but this seems an insufficient explanation: why is lip service given to a deposed monarch; why are so many opportunities for self-service passed by; why is Marvell committed to sometimes unpopular, opposition causes? Only a Hobbesian philosophy seems to answer these questions.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

²⁵ Nicholas McDowell, *Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars: Marvell and the Cause of Wit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222. McDowell goes on to declare that "Nobody argues anymore that the 'Ode' is a royalist or even a covertly royalist poem: the debate is about the extent and nature of its Cromwellian and/or republican sentiment..." Whilst I do not think it is necessarily a wholly 'royalist' poem, neither do I believe it is entirely 'republican' or 'Cromwellian' either—and, given his admission about the absolution of Charles I by Marvell, neither does McDowell.

Upon that memorable scene;
 But with his keener eye
 The axe's edge did try.
Nor called the Gods with vulgar spite
To vindicate his helpless right;
 But bowed his comely head
 Down, as upon a bed. (*Ode 57-64*)

For Conal Condren, this moment “brings together the sense of loss, exclusion, and artificiality of the political process,” when Charles I is deprived of his life and his kingdom simultaneously—even though, Marvell tells us, these things are his “right”.²⁶ If this is the case, what can be said about those who deprived him of it? The answer is present a few lines earlier:

Though Justice against Fate complain,
And plead the ancient rights in vain;
 But those do hold or break,
 As men are strong or weak. (*Ode 37-40*)

Marvell thus observes that the ancient rights of Charles I only hold as long as there are men strong enough to maintain them. When this is not the case, there is an opportunity for fate (in the form of Oliver Cromwell) to intervene and remake the “kingdoms old”. *Both* men are (or were, in the case of Charles) on the side of right. When the king lost the strength needed to maintain his rights, it was Cromwell's right to depose him. Thus, Blair Worden argues, Marvell's shift is not a matter of self-preservation, but rather one of acknowledging the

²⁶ Conal Condren, “Andrew Marvell as Polemicist: his Account of the Growth of Popery, and Arbitrary Government” in Condren and Cousins, *The Political Identity of Andrew Marvell*, 179.

transition of “right” from Charles I to Oliver Cromwell as proved by martial success.²⁷ Not so much *might makes right* as much as *might proves right*, for Michael McKeon concludes that Cromwell himself is just an instrument of heaven, and the battles merely reveal what was pre-ordained and fated.²⁸

In 1650, poetically setting Cromwell against Charles I had another useful function. By reducing the struggle for England to a pure binary choice between individuals—and with Charles already dead—the kingdom must go to Cromwell.²⁹ Marvell created this artificial binary not only to show that Cromwell was the only choice left for England, but also to argue implicitly that Cromwell has a consequent duty to proceed. Annabel Patterson agrees with this point, asserting that “the sense of necessity... undergirds the poem.”³⁰ It is this duty—this necessity—which begins with the word ‘must’ in the opening lines and ends with another reiteration in the closing lines. Combined together with the repeated thematic argument, the repetition (of terms *and* themes) acquires indomitable force. With no one else demonstrating God’s favour on the battlefield, Marvell urges Cromwell on, reiterating the Machiavellian argument for might in the final lines: “The same arts that did gain / A pow’r

²⁷ Blair Worden, “Andrew Marvell, Oliver Cromwell, and the Horatian Ode,” in *Politics of Discourse: the Literature and History of Seventeenth Century England*, edited by Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 159.

²⁸ Michael McKeon, “Pastoralism, Puritanism, Imperialism, Scientism: Andrew Marvell and the Problem of Mediation” in “Colonial and Imperial Themes Special Number,” special issue, *The Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983), 53. Worden shows the contemporary argument for force as foundation of government; McKeon derives from this the conclusion that Cromwell is an “instrument of a higher authority”.

²⁹ Michael Wilding, “Marvell’s “An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland”, the Levellers, and the Junta,” *The Modern Language Review* 82, no. 1 (January 1987): 13. Wilding’s idea is that the complexity of politics was reduced simply to loyalty to particular individuals, and he expands on this point with regard not only to Charles I but also to other possibilities, though I maintain (as this paper here argues) that the choice was largely between only Cromwell and Charles I as far as Marvell was concerned.

³⁰ Annabel Patterson, “Andrew Marvell and the Revolution,” in Keeble, *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, 115.

must it maintain" (*Ode* 119-120). The same argument—that strength is necessary to obtain, maintain, and successfully administer government—underpins all of *Leviathan*, and in these final lines shines through clearer than at any other point in the poem.

The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector

In the intervening years which separate the *Horatian Ode* from the *First Anniversary*, Marvell was a member of the Fairfax household. Though Fairfax had sought ostensibly to distance himself from direct involvement in either the Royalist or Parliamentary causes, Pierre Legouis point out that there was a general sense that Fairfax's household was somewhat Royalist in its nature.³¹ Marvell's eventual departure from the Fairfax household seems to indicate a further break with his Royalist past, continuing the path first established in the *Horatian Ode*—a Hobbesian embrace of the dominant power which protects: Cromwell as *Leviathan*. The impression that Marvell was becoming more Parliamentary existed amongst his contemporaries, as well. Legouis has also shown that documentation exists from 1652 or 1653 demonstrating a contemporary belief that Marvell had assisted Milton in the writing of the fiercely Parliamentary *Eikonoklastes* in 1649 (a response to the Royalist *Eikon Basilike* of the same year).³² This is almost certainly untrue, but does show that Marvell was perceived as being increasingly Parliamentary in his mindset. It is therefore not very

³¹ Pierre Legouis, "Andrew Marvell: Further Biographical Points," *The Modern Language Review* 18, no. 4 (October 1923), 417.

³² *Ibid.*, 416-417.

surprising to discover that the *First Anniversary* is sometimes held to be a work of “official propaganda”.³³

If the *First Anniversary* is a work of propaganda, it is a work of Cromwellian—not Parliamentary—propaganda. For, as John M. Wallace argues in “Marvell and Cromwell’s Kingship; “The First Anniversary””, the first one hundred thirty lines of the poem lay out the case that Cromwell is divinely called to the Kingship of England.³⁴ It is Wallace’s position that, in the 1650s, the general argument was that two forms of valid Magistracy existed: the direct call by God, and the call through his people. Though God no longer intervened in the affairs of men directly to choose Kings for them, men were still called to that office by the people; Wallace believes that it is in this manner that Cromwell was called. Cromwell himself seemed to encourage this approach to Magistracy, for he had always represented himself as called by the people; his second speech to his Parliament “invoked a great cloud of witnesses in the three nations” and, Wallace believes, “is the best illustration” of this “Puritan doctrine of election”.³⁵

Despite numerous political impediments to Cromwell's rule (for example, the failure of the 1654-1655 parliament and the consequent use of the military as a prop for his power)

³³ Joad Raymond, “Framing Liberty: Marvell’s “First Anniversary” and the Instrument of Government,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62, nos. 3 and 4 (1999), 313. Raymond argues that the *First Anniversary* is not a work of propaganda; his paper attempts to refute the arguments of those who have argued that it is. I am in general agreement with Raymond’s conclusion, though our methodology differs.

³⁴ John M. Wallace, “Marvell and Cromwell’s Kingship; “The First Anniversary”,” *ELH* 30, no. 3 (September 1963), 223.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 222-223. To reiterate, the preceding statements are paraphrases of Wallace, and the ‘call by the people’ is what Wallace also refers to as the “Puritan doctrine of election”.

Marvell framed the call to Magistracy, and the following coronation, in terms of a continuity of loyalty expressed by the people toward Cromwell:

Hence oft I think, if in some happy hour
High grace should meet in one with highest power,
And then a seasonable people still
Should bend to his, as he to heaven's will... (*Anniversary* 131-134)

The loyalty is continuous, as depicted in the use of the word "still". It is not for the people to be loyal to Cromwell only after he is made king—rather, their loyalty prior to that ascension is itself the call to the highest office. But the deposed King—the former inhabitant of that highest office—is never mentioned, for, as Blair Worden points out, "it is the nation's indifference to Cromwell's godly mission, not the persistence of loyalty to the Stuarts, that impedes the protector."³⁶ In bending to Cromwell's will, they demonstrate that Oliver has the favour of God in the "mediate" form of the call of the Magistracy (such as was expressed with Moses and Jethro), which "after a regular and due manner performed, becomes the Call of God."³⁷ In maintaining their subservience, they prove that Cromwell continues to reign with authority; this in marked difference to the deposed Charles I. But, in a surprisingly frank admission of the *de facto* state of affairs, Cromwell is elevated above his position (which remains unnamed):

For to be Cromwell was a greater thing,
Than ought below, or yet above a king:
Therefore thou rather didst thyself depress,
Yielding to rule, because it made thee less. (*Anniversary* 225-228)

³⁶ Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143.

³⁷ Wallace, 222. Here I have extrapolated my own conclusion from Wallace's initial argument, which was itself presented in the preceding paragraph.

If Cromwell reigns with the authority of the people, it is an authority that has been circumscribed by the act of accepting it. Perhaps this is why the position of "Lord Protector" goes unnamed in the poem; Joad Raymond points out that, prior to signing the Articles of the Instrument of Government, Cromwell had been able to act with unbounded authority.³⁸ To call direct attention to the title would be to call attention to ways in which the position limited the man.

Yet there are those who disagree with the assertion that this is all an attempt to urge Oliver on to the kingship or something tantamount to it. Pierre Legouis argues that "Cromwell will not be king. So at least thinks Marvell, who praises him for it."³⁹ In support, Legouis cites two lines:

Abroad a king he seems, and something more,
At home a subject on the equal floor. (*Anniversary* 389-390)

On the face of it, Legouis appears correct. If these verses are to be taken literally, they clearly place the position of an 'equal subject' above that of a king, at least as far as the author is concerned. But the Marvell who wrote the lines Legouis cites is the same Marvell who wrote the lines suggesting that to be Cromwell was to hold a position greater than any above or below kingship. And, in true Hobbesian style, there is a natural avoidance with regard to any sort of proud or ambitious dialogue. For this reason as well, the title of Lord Protector remains unnamed; the urgings remain veiled; the most direct line of speech is avoided. But this is not to say that Marvell believed that Oliver Cromwell should remain only a virtuous

³⁸ Raymond, 340.

³⁹ Pierre Legouis, *Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 105.

commoner with political power equal to those of his fellows. To declare such is to miss the point of a poem which, drafted in celebratory language, urges its subject on to greater heights and accomplishments.

If Marvell now seems to embrace Cromwell to the point of suggesting that there ought be an Oliver I, he does so not out of partisanship but rather because of his own convictions about the need for strong, Hobbesian leadership. The Marvell of the *Horatian Ode* recognised that valour in arms was a sign of God's choice; so too, the Marvell of the *First Anniversary* recognised that the continuing subservience of the populace was the "Call of God". But Marvell was not merely transporting prior Royalist tendencies to Cromwell. There is no desire for hereditary rule; in fact, Marvell expresses concern for the future in the riding accident section of the poem:

And all about was heard a panic groan,
As if that Nature's self were overthrown.
It seemed the earth did from the centre tear;
It seemed the sun was fall'n out of the sphere:
Justice obstructed lay, and Reason fooled;
Courage disheartened, and Religion cooled.
A dismal silence through the palace went,
And then loud shrieks the vaulted marbles rent.
Such as the dying chorus sings by turns,
And to deaf seas, and ruthless tempests mourns,
When now they sink, and now the plund'ring streams
Break up each deck, and rip the oaken seams. (*Anniversary* 203-214)

The panic of the people is excessive by any standard—nor is the anguish limited to the human populace. When Cromwell falls from his horse, it is as an apocalypse; the end of the world is described by the upheaval of Nature, the Earth, and the Sun. Despite this

apocalyptic clamour, Cromwell is not dead; he survives his fall. Yet, being a man, he must one day die. Thus, these lines serve not only as a reinforcement of the grief men feel at losing a leader they believe to be fundamental and essential—a loss compared to being aboard a foundering ship, alone in the sea without chance of rescue—the verse also foreshadows the future that will, and must, come for a leader who is mortal. Cromwell is made to seem irreplaceable, even though he must needs one day be replaced.⁴⁰

A Poem upon the Death of His Late Highness the Lord Protector

Marvell's concerns were justified. Oliver Cromwell did not wear the crown of England until after his death, and the succession remained a divisive and unclear issue which eventually destroyed the Protectorate. For, though Marvell and the country tried to offer Cromwell the crown, the Lord Protector simply could not bring himself to take it. He genuinely believed that his life should be devoted to the execution of God's plan for the nation, but in giving the reins to God, he never worked out a plan which would have allowed for the existence of the Republic.⁴¹ When Cromwell died, during a tremendous storm on 3 September, 1658, he left behind a government which could not remain upright without him.⁴² In his coffin, the worthies of England put the crown on Oliver Cromwell's head. They anointed Cromwell's son Richard as his successor. But it was too late, for Cromwell had subsumed the Leviathan of the state entirely into himself; the authority and

⁴⁰ Ibid., 341-342. Raymond argues this point (quite soundly) at some length.

⁴¹ Schama, 244.

⁴² Ibid., 240-242.

the power which it commanded was vested personally within him. When he died, that power was dissolved.

Marvell must have suspected that the death of Cromwell meant trouble was in the offing—he almost certainly did not need a portentous storm to drive the point home. Exerting power, and using the authority derived from it, must be the necessary activity of any Hobbesian government. But when Cromwell did not take the crown, the Protectorate, and the idea of a kingless state, was doomed. And when the Protector died, the entire Leviathan of the English state descended abruptly into chaos:

But oh what pangs that death did Nature cost!
First the great thunder was shot off, and sent
The signal from the starry battlement:
The winds receive it, and its force outdo,
As practising how they could thunder too:
Out of the binder's hand the sheaves they tore,
And thrashed the harvest in the airy floor;
Or of huge trees, whose growth with his did rise,
The deep foundations opened to the skies.
Then heavy show'rs the wingèd tempests led,
And pour the deluge o'er the chaos' head.
The race of warlike horses at his tomb
Offer themselves in many a hecatomb;
With pensive head towards the ground they fall,
And helpless languish at the tainted stall.
Numbers of men decrease with pains unknown,
And hasten, not to see his death, their own. (*Elegy* 112-128)

The chaos which follows the loss of Cromwell should be poetically unparalleled, and it is. Not only do the hyperbolic descriptions of the individual facets of chaos show the intensity of the whole, but also the length of the entire passage gives added weight to calamity that is being related. For William M. Russell, Cromwell's death upsets the natural order not only of

the English state, but of the entire world so that, in the final lines, life surrenders to death in a profound reversion of creation.⁴³ Thus, a reversion of the political situation must also be taking place, for the natural powers of creation are surely more unbending than the feeble governments of men. Cromwell came to embody the Protectorate that he brought into being. With no one to succeed him—no one capable of maintaining the power structure through force, might, and authority—the Protectorate he had created could not endure. For Hobbes (and for Marvell), the very fact of Oliver Cromwell’s death would seem to undo, at a stroke, the government that he embodied—and in point of fact, this is exactly what happened.

Oliver Cromwell’s son and successor Richard abdicated, and at once the two forces which Oliver had held in check, the Army and Parliament, began tearing each other apart—and the kingdom along with them. Cromwell had “prudence more than human” with which “to keep so dear, so diff’ring minds agreed” (*Elegy* 218-219). But with the power of Oliver Cromwell no longer extant, the Leviathan dissolved, and once again men found themselves in the “state of nature”. Leveller tracts were published once more, Fifth Monarchists prophesied a new Kingdom of Christ, George Fox published his *Fifty-Nine Particulars*, and Lord Fairfax emerged from retirement. Within a year, Charles II was restored to the throne, his reign backdated to encompass the entire interregnum.⁴⁴ It was as if the revolution had never taken place. The uncreation of the Protectorate had taken just thirteen months. Leviathan had returned, but not in the person of Richard Cromwell. It was

⁴³ William M. Russell, “Love, Chaos, and Marvell’s *Elegy* for Cromwell,” *English Literary Renaissance* 40, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 278.

⁴⁴ These historical facts, and those in the preceding sentence, Schama, 247-252.

Charles II who obtained authority, exerted power, and became the centre of the English state: the new Leviathan.

If Marvell's prophecy of uncreation had come true, it did so despite the optimism with which he had looked upon Richard:

We find already what those omens mean,
Earth ne'er more glad, nor heaven more serene:
Cease now our griefs, calm peace succeeds a war,
Rainbows to storms, Richard to Oliver.
Tempt not his clemency to try his power,
He threats no deluge, yet foretells a shower. (*Elegy* 319-324)

The future Protectorate under Richard is one of peace, and—as Stephen Szilagyí describes it—is covenanted with a “pearly rainbow”, and thus sanctioned by heaven.⁴⁵ Yet there are no references to the apocalyptic or millenarian elements of the other two Cromwell poems, for these described an “imagined apocalypse brought on by Cromwell's excellent rule”, now at an end.⁴⁶ Still, though, these last eighteen lines of the poem are characterised by Szilagyí as having an “excessive artificiality”; Richard grows to Cromwell's stature in a single hour, and is promptly crowned by heaven amidst natural and biblical allusions.⁴⁷ In fact, these saccharine lines with their breezy optimism so lightly displayed seem to engender a response entirely antithetical to their literal meaning. As Donald Friedman says, “The praise of Richard sounds as perfunctory as did Waller's lines on Oliver, and we have a right to the

⁴⁵ Stephen Szilagyí, “Credible Praise: Marvell's Dilemma in His Elegy on Oliver Cromwell,” *Modern Language Studies* 16, no. 3 (Summer 1986), 117.

⁴⁶ Smith, 151.

⁴⁷ Szilagyí, 117.

suspicion that Marvell knew full well that his optimistic prophecies were doomed to prove untrue."⁴⁸

Marvell's praise of Richard may have been neatly aligned with the short-lived enthusiasm of the time. For, genuinely concerned at the death of Oliver Cromwell, and suspecting full well what would result, Marvell still had to remain true to the occasion and praise Cromwell's song, despite any misgivings he may have had. However, unlike the occasions when Marvell praised Oliver in the *Horatian Ode* and the *First Anniversary*, Richard had not yet proven himself. The hand of God had not been seen either in martial successes or in the consistent subservience of the populace. Quite the opposite, in fact, for Richard did not have the support of the Generals (they demanded his abdication), and was subservient to his own duplicitous advisors (such as Anthony Ashley Cooper and Edward Montagu).⁴⁹ Perhaps Marvell represents this lack of actual power when he gives Oliver the power of the deluge whilst Richard commands but a shower.

A tinge of concern runs throughout the *Death of the Lord Protector*, fraught as it is with foreshadowing and prediction. Its calamitous description of the effects of Cromwell's death are immediately preceded by a passage replete with the language of divination:

A secret cause does sure those signs ordain
Forboding princes' falls, and seldom vain.
Whether some kinder powers, that wish us well,
What they above cannot prevent, foretell;
Or the great world do by consent presage,
As hollow seas with future tempests rage;
Or rather heav'n, which us so long foresees,

⁴⁸ Donald Friedman, *Marvell's Pastoral Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 289.

⁴⁹ Schama, 246-248.

There fun'ral celebrates while it decrees. (*Elegy* 101-108)

Marvell here speaks repeatedly of prediction (forboding, foretell, presage, foresees), and follows it immediately with a calamitous description. In doing so he seems to observe not only the effects of the Lord Protector's death, but also to encourage the reader to think of the future; to predict what might follow. If this juxtaposition of prediction and dire description hints at disaster to come, it also further serves to undermine the praise given to Richard at the end of the poem. Moreover, it shows that Marvell recognised how the power system of the English state had been arranged. Surely, there was popular hope for Richard, but it was a hope undermined by the death of his father; the Leviathan in whom all the real power had been vested. Marvell's loyalty would move with the power that commanded it; when Charles II became the power in the land, Marvell seemed to have no difficulty in being obedient to him, despite the plentiful praise for Cromwell contained within his verse. Just as in the case of Charles I and Cromwell in *The Horatian Ode*, Marvell could recognise the authority of two opposed men (in this case, Cromwell and Charles II), for one followed the other chronologically; they did not coexist as simultaneous masters of the Hobbesian Leviathan.

Conclusion

It should now be clear that Andrew Marvell's political loyalties were not to individuals, but rather to ideals. He believed not in a King, or a Parliament, or a Protector, but in the Hobbesian notion of a Leviathan which had the right to power only as long as it

could maintain that power. The acquisition of that power would be shown as right and divinely ordained by victories upon a martial field of action and by the consistent subservience of the populace to that authority. When victory and the people deserted a power—as happened to Charles I and Richard Cromwell—it was evidence that, whatever loyalty one might feel to that authority, its right to rule was at an end. However, it did not negate the previous right which that body had enjoyed. Marvell could thus speak of Charles' right and Oliver's right in the same poem, for these rights did not coexist. One chronologically followed the other.

Oliver Cromwell was no exception: loyalty to his person was also predicated only upon his ability to maintain his authority martially and politically. His death, without a worthy successor, served as an instrument of uncreation. Loyalty to Oliver did not mean loyalty to Richard, whatever the public sentimentality may have called for at the time of the Protector's death. Hence Marvell writes artificially about Richard's qualifications: but by leaving out martial and political accomplishments, he remains internally consistent with the elegy's earlier prophecies of chaos and uncreation that attend the death of the divinely ordained ruler.

In the end, Marvell was neither a Royalist nor a Parliamentarian. No partisan, he was deeply committed to his beliefs about the nature of authority: how it was rightfully granted, proven, exercised, and maintained. Though his allegiances may have shifted, his loyalties never did, for those loyalties were to Hobbesian ideas about the philosophy of government and the structure of the Leviathan state. Obedience was only due to individual men who

occupied positions of command when those men were capable of commanding obedience. Marvell's loyalty was to their positions, not to them as individuals. It is on these matters that he remained philosophically – and poetically – uncompromising.

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